

Chapter 1

Introduction

Postcolonial literature is a new discipline which seeks to offer a new understanding of the world and the condition in which humanity has been finding itself in the past few centuries. Gaining prominence in the last thirty years, it is primarily concerned with the examination of social, cultural, economic, military and political events that were the upshot of the imperial process from the first moment of colonization to the present day. What postcolonial literatures have in common is that they emerged out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension inherent in tin: natives' interface with the imperial power.

Colonialism can be defined as "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* 2). But colonialism is more than occupying others' land. The European colonization of Asia, Africa and America resulted in restructuring the culture, the economy, the politics and even the land of occupation. Therefore modern colonialism "did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economics of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries" (Loomba 3). The flow was in both directions. The colonial

country gave the raw material or the labour and the colonizer gave back readymade material to the colonized countries. Invariably, the profit was always with the mother country.

The word *post*, in *postcolonialism*, also brings in a difference of opinion. Stephen Slemon says, “According to some theorists, after sustained anti-colonial struggle finally brings about national or ‘flag independence’ in colonial locations through a process of political decolonization, a new kind of state formation comes into being” (“Post-colonial Critical Theories” 180). A new state is formed, which is politically free of foreign control and possesses a large measure of political autonomy.

Loomba argues, “the prefix *post* complicates matters because it implies an aftermath in two senses—temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting” (7). Some critics contest the second implication. If the inequality of the colonized country is not totally erased then one cannot proclaim the demise of colonialism. A country may be considered postcolonial if it is independent and neo-colonial if it remains economically and/or culturally dependent (Loomba 7).

Even in the temporal sense, the word *postcolonialism* is not confined to a single meaning, because formal decolonization has spanned three centuries from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Pointing to this fact, Ella Shohat asks, “When exactly, then, does the postcolonial begin?” (qtd. in Loomba 8). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths

and Helen Tiffin answer this question in their book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. They say, “We use the term post-colonial 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 continuing of preoccupation throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (2).

Postcolonialism need not be considered “as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism” (Loomba 12). Helen Tiffin argues:

the term stresses the inescapable historical grounding in the practices and institutions of British imperialism and colonialism and the responses to and legacies of this history across a variety of widely dispersed and vastly divergent cultures. Such legacies—for example, the use of the English language; legal codes; educational practices; philosophical and interpretative frameworks—frequently persist in formerly colonized cultures long after independence has been achieved. In many cases they persist, in widely variant and/or culturally hybridized and syncretic forms, in the present. The ‘post’ in the ‘post-colonial,’ then, to borrow Terry Eagleton’s terms in relation to Romanticism, is not ‘confidently posterior’ to

an epoch, but rather a 'product' of it. ("Plato's Cave: Educational and Critical Practices" 158)

Bruce King divides the postcolonial age into two phases:

During the first phase national political and cultural liberation was the goal. In the second phase cultural and economic liberation became the ideal for groups and movements within and across national boundaries, including black nationalism, feminism, and recent immigrants, each of which claimed its own literature.

("New Centres of Consciousness: New, Post-colonial, and International English Literature" 3)

Martiniquan Frantz Fanon, while talking about the different aspects of colonialism, emphasizes its dehumanizing aspect, thereby pushing its analysis into the realm of the psyche and the subjectivity of the colonized people, as well as those of their masters. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon defines the colonized people as "not simply those whose labour has been appropriated but those in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality" (qtd. in Loomba 24).

When European countries expanded their colonies and engaged in nation building, the travellers, in their writings, provided wrong interpretations of the outsiders. Whoever and whatever the country

the travellers belonged to, they developed fairly similar stereotypes of the “outsiders,” whether they were nearby or in far off places.

Thus laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality are attributed (often contradictorily and inconsistently) by the English, French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese colonists to Turks, Africans, Native Americans, Jews, Indians, the Irish and others. It is also worth noting that some of these descriptions were used for working-class populations or women within Europe. (Loomba 107)

Apart from such misrepresentation, they brought in the discourse of science for their support. They regarded the “other” race as inferior. To justify their standpoint, they developed many “theories.” One among them was that the biological features of each group determined its psychological and social attributes. Linnaeus, in 1758, drew a distinction between *homo sapiens* and *homo monstrosus*. The first category was further bifurcated in John Burke’s *The Wild Man's Pedigree* into the following:

- a. Wild man. Four footed, mute hairy.
- b. American. Copper coloured, choleric, erect. Hair black, straight, thick; nostrils wide; face harsh;

beard scanty; obstinate, content, free. Paints himself with fine red lines. Regulated by customs.

- c. European. Fair, sanguine, brawny; hair yellow, brown, flowing; eyes blue; gentle, acute, inventive. Covered with close vestments. Governed by laws.
- d. Asiatic. Sooty, melancholy, rigid. Hair black; eyes dark; severe, haughty, covetous. Covered with loose garments. Governed by opinions.
- e. African. Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. Hair black, frizzled; skin silky; nose flat, lips timid; crafty, indolent, negligent. Anoints himself with grease-. Governed by caprice, (qtd. in Loomba 115)

These pseudo-scientific stereotypes reinforced the myth of European superiority.

It is not as if the colonizer alone was to blame. Given their different geographical locations, historical traditions, cultural milieux and psychological makeups, each colonized nation contributed its own share to this process of degradation. Indians, for instance, as A.S.Panchapakesa Ayyar says in the introduction to his novel *Chanakya and Chandragupta*, “emasculated by a thousand years of conquest, and embracing the very claims which bound them, and ignorant of their glorious independent political past,” suffered, without protest, all the indignities heaped on their heads by the

British imperialists (13). Nana Saheb, in Manohar Malgonkar's novel *The Devil's Wind: Nana Saheb's Story*, repeatedly laments the lack of unity among the native rulers of India. Tipu Sultan, in Bhagavan S. Gidwani's novel *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*, repeatedly says that the enemy of the Indian people lay within, in the disunity of their rulers.

Gandhiji, in his *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, written in 1908, pinpoints the source of all of India's political ills:

The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them. Let us now see whether these propositions can be sustained. They came to our country originally for purposes of trade. Recall the Company Bahadur. Who made it Bahadur? They had not the slightest intention at the time of establishing a kingdom. Who assisted the Company's officers? Who was tempted at the sight of their silver? Who bought their goods? History testifies that we did all this. In order to become rich all at once we welcomed the Company's officers with open arms. We assisted them. . . . (35)

The implication here is that the East India Company was able to stay in India for a long period due to the inherent slavish mentality of Indians. Political freedom can be won totally only if the mind is also set free.

K.C. Bhattacharya, in 1930, gave a lecture to the students of the Hoogly College where he was the Principal. This lecture is regarded by some people as India's Declaration of Intellectual Independence. It was later published under the title *Swaraj in Ideas*. Bhattacharya compares political subjection and cultural enslavement:

Man's domination over man is felt in the most tangible form in the political sphere. There is, however, a subtler domination exercised in the sphere of ideas by one culture on another, a domination all the more serious in the consequence, because it is not ordinarily felt.

Political subjection primarily means restraint on the outer life of a people and although it tends gradually to sink into the inner life of the soul, the fact that one is conscious of it operates against the tendency. So long as one is conscious of a restraint, it is possible to resist it or to bear it as a necessary evil and to keep free in spirit.

Slavery begins when one ceases to feel the evil and it deepens when [the] evil is accepted as a good. Cultural subjection is ordinarily of an unconscious character and it implies slavery from the start. When I speak of cultural subjection, I do not mean the assimilation of an alien culture. That assimilation need not been an evil; it may be positively necessary for healthy progress and in any

case it does not mean a lapse of freedom. There is cultural subjection only when one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments is superseded without comparison or competition by a new cast representing an alien culture which possesses one like a ghost. This subjection is slavery of the spirit. When a person can shake free from it, he feels as though the scales fell from his eyes. He experiences a rebirth and that is what I call Swaraj in Ideas, (qtd. in K.Ayappa Paniker, "The Postcolonial Experience in Indian Literature" 40)

Paniker says:

The decolonisation of the mind has yet to take place. Political freedom is more easy [sic] to win than economic independence, since the latter can be thwarted indirectly; and economic independence is easier than cultural/intellectual freedom. India today is a living demonstration of this truth. (41)

Gareth Griffiths points out that Edward Said's *Orientalism* provides "a model for considering how peoples and cultures could be partly coerced and partly persuaded into defining themselves by 1.1 ir stereotypes offered by a dominant alien culture." He adds that Said argues that colonialism created non-mutual and hierarchic relations in which the colonized was always marginalized. By having a

thorough knowledge of the other, the colonizer moulded the colonized into whatever best served the economic and political purposes of the colonizer ("The Post-colonial Project: Critical Approaches and Problems" 165).

Griffiths observes that the indigenous culture was metaphorically silenced by the presence of the invading culture. Its voice ceased to be heard, as the colonized was no more in power and the aliens occupied the colony. They did not appreciate the native culture and also regarded it as opposed to the modern. Modernization became synonymous with accepting and promoting the colonizer's culture and rejecting the natives⁷ tradition and culture (166).

Griffiths further says:

The linkages between cultural control, forms of knowledge, and the actual practices of colonial officials, merchants, and missionaries formed a complex nexus; they constituted a powerful and irresistible force. Indigenous cultures and languages continued to exist, though with an increasing tendency to generate new hybrid forms within the colonized culture, usually in modes which reinforced their subordinate position in the newly emerging power structures. (166)

Slemon shows that there is a two-way flow between the colonizer and the colonized:

Bhabha's basic argument is that ambivalence is everywhere in the model as an effect of colonialist discourse. This means not only that there must always be resistance to power within any moment of colonialist articulation; it means also that there must always be an agency to colonialist resistance, not because colonized people simply intend oppositional actions, but because colonialist representations are always over-determinations and are always ambivalent, (qtd. in Bill Ashcroft, "Interpolation and Post-colonial Agency" 180)

Ashcroft adds that the postcolonial reaction is always an effect of colonial action (180).

The colonizers never fully pacified the colonized. There was resistance from the moment of colonization. Benita Parry says:

There is of course abundant evidence of native disaffection and dissent under colonial rule, of contestation and struggle against diverse forms of institutional and ideological domination. Inscriptions and sign of resistance are discernible in official archives and informal texts, and can be detected in narrativised instances of insurrection and organized political opposition. Traces of popular disobedience can also be recuperated from unwritten symbolic and symptomatic

practices which register a rejection or violation of the subject positions assigned by colonialism. Such modes of refusal are not readily accommodated in the anti-colonialist discourses written by the elites of the nationalist and liberation movements since they were not calculated to achieve predetermined political ends or to advance the cause of nation-building, the anarchic and nihilistic energies of defiance and identity-assertion, which were sometimes nurtured by dreams, omens and divination, and could take the form of theatre, violated notions of rational protest. (*Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* 38)

One of the problems in postcolonial writing is locating the use of the English language in a history of imperial expansion. Slemon asks, “If language carries a naturalizing drive, one must remember where that language, that notion of the natural, is coming from and question whose interests it is serving” (186). Many Indian writers at the turn of the twentieth century expressed their mind using the alien language and tried to awaken the dormant minds of their people. Using the European language, the Indian writers suggested the way of coming out of the cognitive legacies of imperialism. In short, the decolonization of the mind began to work at the literary level.

Another principle is reading for “resistance” in the text. Slemon points out that Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin advocate this concept:

They begin with the proposition that language is a medium of power: this means, they argue, that post-colonial literary language has to seize the language of the (imperial) centre and (re-place) it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. This, they suggest, happens first by an abrogation or refusal of the normative standards of the imperial culture—the standards of correct grammar, syntax, and pronunciation, for example—and then by an appropriation of the colonizer’s language, appropriately adapted, to the cultural and political ends of the colonized. (188)

Tiffin, citing Gauri Viswanathan, shows how the English language was used for colonialist control in India:

In Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India Gauri Viswanathan demonstrated the ways in which the British in formulating education policies in nineteenth-century India used literature and literary criticism as a means of colonialist control. Not only English literature and literary criticism but the exclusive teaching of other subjects in English in Indian education programmes ensured widespread Anglo-interpellation.

While the most famous document establishing their policy was Thomas B. Macaulay's 1835 Indian Education Minute similar policies were in place in the rest of Britain's Empire. (144)

Colonial education in India tried to fulfil the purpose of the introduction of English. It stressed the universal nature of the colonizer's literature and compared it with the local literature. It developed in the colonized people a belief in the excellence of all things English, instilled its pan-colonial companion, the "cultural cringe," and exercised social control by spreading the English language and projecting the literary culture of England (Tiffin 145).

By spreading the language and by including the language and literature of England in the colonial curricula, the colonizer brought about a change in the thinking of the literate colonized people. This was done from the primary education level. Even children were asked to learn English poems by heart. Thereby they succeeded in realizing the aim of Macaulay's Minute: "Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (qtd. in Tiffin 154).

The colonizer's language was vigorously adopted and appropriated by the colonized for the specific needs of postcolonial self-determination. But their writing had to convince and impress the western dominated system of publishing, distribution and readership

to have any effect. Sometimes it did not even reach the colonized people themselves, because of the people's ignorance of English. "Therefore the major key to resistance became the control of textual representation, the appropriation of language and interpolation into dominant systems of cultural production" (Ashcroft 178).

Imperialism does not always operate in a brutal way. But it does operate hegemonically, "to convince ordinary people that the interests of the ruling class are the interests of all, or that what the dominant culture considers normal, natural and universal is indeed the normal" (Ashcroft 178).

This was brazenly done by the British in the case of the rulers of India. The East India Company virtually "enslaved" the native monarchs of India and virtually "imprisoned" them in their palaces completely under the power of the British Political Agent/ Resident living in the nearby Residency and backed up by the Garrison Force. Malgonkar's novel *The Princes* Kamala Markandaya's novel *The Golden Honeycomb*, Gita Mehta's novel *Raj*, to mention but a few, between them portray how the British imperial power made virtual puppets of the Indian rulers by catching them young: the sons of the native rulers was taught by a tutor appointed by the British Resident, sent to a Chiefs' College administrated by an Englishman taught "to lose gracefully" and generally brought up as brown Englishmen.

More than any other form of self-representation, nationalism has been the important source of influence in the process of colonial resistance. But critics feel that this was not efficacious for a long time, “for nationalism, that discursive strategy which seemed so completely to provide the vehicle for colonial opposition, finds itself replicating the very structures against which it was arraigned” (Ashcroft 181). The resistance also involves “recovering” or rehabilitating an essential cultural identity.

Parry gives the model of resistance as “a unified revolutionary self, standing in unmitigated antagonism to the oppressor, occupying a combative subject position from which the wretched of the earth are enabled to mobilize an armed struggle against the colonial power” (*Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, introduction 30).

The colonizers employed different means of repressing the colonized. They did this partly by creating consent or involving the colonized people in creating the states, which, in turn, oppressed them. “Colonial domination involved much repression and coercion, and thus is sometimes analysed as a process which did not involve the consent of the colonized” (Loomba 31). Colonial regimes did not bother about every group of people. They tried to get the consent of a few groups and ignored the others in the civil society. The colonizers did not have the full idea of the land and other things. To gain knowledge of these they used either negotiation or incorporation of

indigenous ideas. They were even dependent upon the natives for access to their lands and their secrets. As Caliban reminds Prospero, he showed the latter “all the qualities o’ th’ isle/The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile” (William Shakespeare, *Temp.* 1. 2. 336-37). But, historically, Prospero projected his knowledge of the island as “discovery.” Discovery in the colonial context means appropriating local knowledge. They used the knowledge of the local experts and the imperialist rested on alien scaffolding. Loomba says:

According to Major Atthur Cotton, called the ‘founder⁵ of modern irrigation programmes, when he first arrived in India, the natives spoke ‘with contempt’ of the English, calling them ‘a kind of civilized savages, wonderfully expert about fighting, but so inferior to their great men that we would not even keep in repair the works they had constructed, much less even imitate them in extending the system’. The East India Company was unable to check the rising river bed of the Kaveri Delta: Cotton finally solved the problem by learning from indigenous experts ‘how to secure a foundation in loose sand of unmeasured depth. . . . (67)

Louis Althusser, a French communist theorist, explored the dialectic between ideas and material resistance. While doing so he opened up a new concept of how ideologies are internalized, how

human beings accept the dominant ideas and make them their own and how they express socially determined ideas spontaneously. Ideologies may be expressions of a social group. But the interests of the social group work with the interpellation between the individual and the society (*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* 218). In India the concept of resistance worked through Gandhi on the entire native population.

The sign or the word, gains meaning if there is a community with shared assumptions. Then the language of that community becomes ideological. When their ideology is conveyed to others it creates a building force among various communities which accept the ideas of the society voluntarily. For example, in India, Gandhiji became the leader of the freedom movement and everyone followed him. His ideas were accepted and people started giving importance to his words and decided to follow him and work for the liberation of India.

British colonialism did not allow British people to have easy social or sexual contact with the local people. They maintained this exclusiveness strictly because they needed exclusiveness to ensure efficient administration. For effective administration management, the British colonizers used existing local authorities. They never disturbed the hierarchy of the colonized people. Instead they incorporated it in their administration. For example, in India, taxes were collected

through hereditary Indian collectors who were responsible for a field sum as laid down in the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Therefore many millions of Indians never met or saw the British. Yet they paid taxes to the British Government. This type of shallow penetration is a prototype of modern imperialism (Loomba 111).

The mentality of the colonizer was revealed in the literature of that time. George Lamming's essay "The Occasion for Speaking," published in 1960, showed how significantly literature can be used in devaluing and controlling colonial subjects as well as in challenging colonialism.

Books like E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* explicitly show rape as a metaphor for imperialism by depicting how an Indian man accused of raping a British woman is in turn violated by a colonial machinery. Some of the writings of that time have the colonial discourse of rape as the central theme.

Apart from creative writing like novels the colonized people gave expression to their opposition to the colonial rule in various other forms. Non-literary texts like newspaper stories, government records and reports, memoirs, journals, historical facts or political writings were also open to analysis of their rhetorical strategies, their narrative devices. They were not necessarily objective but they conveyed the authors' ideas of reality to the readers.

The writings of the “other” which are critical of colonial ideologies can be made to serve colonial interests through an educational system that devalues the native literature. Euro-centric critical practices point to Western literature as of superior culture and value. In order to spread their literature to the colonized countries and to help the colonial administration, the British universities started the study of literature as a separate discipline. “English literature was instituted as a formal discipline in London and Oxford only after the Indian Civil Service examination began to include a 1000 mark paper in it, on the assumption that knowledge of English literature was necessary for those who would be administering British interests” (Loomba 85). Later, as stated earlier, they designed the educational system of India in such a way that the Indian would be Indian only in blood but would imitate the English in all other respects.

By spreading Western literature in India they showed European culture as superior and set the measure for human values, which indirectly helped them in running the colonial machinery successfully. Gauri Viswanathan points this out by examining British parliamentary papers and debates on English education in India. She suggests that English literary studies became a mask for economic and material exploitation. It was also in a way a cultural exploitation.

The colonial classroom, within four walls, became one of the testing grounds for developing attitudes and strategies (Loomba 85). However,

Certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature—for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking—were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition. (Gauri Viswanathan, qtd. in Loomba 86)

The natives who studied Western literature were bound to develop an inferiority complex. This complex developed a cultural control, because the “other” who read English literature found it superior. Therefore it suppressed individuality, creativity and intellectual traditions whether the colonized society had a tradition of its own or not. The colonizer held that the colonized society could not develop on its own independent lines. Loomba says:

Still, it is significant that many recent books on ‘postcolonial literature’ only consider literatures written in English, or widely available in translation, or those that has made the best-seller lists in Europe and the United States. We certainly need to widen our perspective on postcoloniality. (93)

Non-Western literature has to be recovered, given more popularity, recirculated and reinterpreted as a part of the process of decolonisation.

Colonialism violently reshapes physical territories, social terrains as well as human identities. The colonial experience affects the psyche of the colonized people and therefore it lingers even after the colonization ends. Anti-colonial struggles should help the colonized people to create a new and powerful identity not only at the political level but also on the emotional plane. The concept of the nation binds everyone, crossing the barriers of language, territory, religion, race and custom. They all unite to fight the colonizer.

Partha Chatterjee talks about two types of nationalism:

nationalism as a political movement which challenges the colonial state, and nationalism as a cultural construct which enables the colonised to posit their difference and autonomy. . . . Nationalism proper began, in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress after a period of social reforms when colonial enlightenment was beginning to “modernize” the customs and institutions of a traditional society. . . . But such histories mistakenly believe that. . . nationalism attempts to create its own domain of sovereignty within a colonial society, (qtd. in Loomba 190)

The West is considered supreme in the material world, whereas the essence of the native culture lies in the spiritual world. When the people move towards the material world, the need to protect the latter becomes crucial (Loomba 190). Therefore many religious leaders sprang up in India and showed the people how important spiritual life was to people, for example, Adi Sankara and other spiritual leaders of India. So anti-colonial nationalism commenced and gained momentum not by the imitation of Western notions of liberty, freedom and human dignity but by the touch of the native culture.

Parry and Neil Lazarus, among other postcolonial critics, insist that it is important to remember and acknowledge the enormous power and appeal of anti-colonial nationalism. In this movement all people of that country are involved, forgetting the diversity among them and they fight for a single cause, namely, freedom from the colonizer (qtd. in Loomba 193).

The colonialism of the West followed a variety of ideologies and these ideologies were manifested in different forms in different institutional and cultural practices. But such practices led to global imbalance. Colonialism had an economic and philosophic imperative, but it was not always successful. The colonizer could totally swindle money or completely oppress the people by preventing them from expressing their opposition to any injustice done to them.

Colonial education aims at survival, which was considered bestial in the native tradition. Such education was not in the midst of nature but confined to four walls. Their tools were paper, pen and books. They were disempowered. They were not allowed to learn skills. Instead they were imprisoned within four walls. The colonial apparatus of social control completed the disempowerment and foreclosed every possibility of their retaining their difference. This is how the dominant culture of society has always constructed and set the so-called universal aesthetics and ideologies.

Said and Fanon showed the relationship between the metropolitan (colonizer) and the non-metropolitan (colonized) cultures. Fanon, in *Black Skin and White Masks*, and in her earlier work *The Wretched of the Earth*, “centrestaged the psychological impact of colonialism and the traumatising at the psychic level which survives the end of Empire. Fanon has explored, the manner in which imperialism sets up mirror-images of itself” (qtd. in Nilufer E. Bharucha, “From Commonwealth To Postcolonial Literatures” 63). Since the image is usually distorted and fragmented, it serves two purposes. It boosts the ego of the colonizer and devalues that of the colonized.

The language of imperialism was made superior by introducing its literature and culture to the natives and by incorporating it into

the educational system and making it the “official” medium. Some words assumed new connotations:

This reflected the nodalities of power and distinctions operating within the imperialistic framework. Thus, the terms *metropolitan*, *centre*, *home* were associated with the dominating power and juxtaposed against *native*, *provincial*, *peripheral*, and *marginal*. The latter were signifiers of the dominated and by implication the inferior race. (Bonani Chatterji Singh, "The Polemics of Language in Colonial and Post-colonial Literature" 139)

The colonizer used this language as one of the means to impose unquestionable acceptance of imperial values and dictums. By way of resistance to this a postcolonial literature in English emerged and tried to awaken the national and regional consciousness to an awareness of its difference from the “centre” (Bonani Chatterji Singh 139).

The elite natives, who had mastered the language of the West, handled it and its nuances with some skill. Even though they wrote about their own experience and their observation of India, they had to depend on British publishers or an endorsement by an English author for their works to be accepted by English readers. So they did not openly reveal their anti-imperialist attitude in their writings. “It is only at a later stage, which coincides with national reawakening, that the

possibilities of using language either through subversion or abrogation and appropriation to render differing perspectives and different realities became viable” (Bonani Chatterji Singh 140).

This control over language facilitated the colonizer’s domination and control over the natives and they marginalized the native languages by pointing to the superiority of the English language. As they had the power they established their own notion of “truth,” “order” and “reality” and made the native accept it (Bonani Chatterji Singh 141).

But when the nation awakened and realized the national consciousness and identity, Indians questioned the hegemony of the English language and they even tried to reject it. As a result, “abrogation” and “appropriation” took place in the writings of the natives and thereby different forms of English appeared, for example, Indian English, African English and Canadian English. When different varieties of a language exist, the standard code of the native variety is rejected. So the control of the people through language is attenuated. “These so-called peripheries have produced such a substantial and exciting body of literature in the post-colonial context that the very idea of peripherally and marginality is now open to question” (Bonani Chatterji Singh 141).

As Raja Rao, in his foreword to *Kanthapura*, puts it, the native writer 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 maltreated in an alien language. . . .” (11. pag.). The writers decolonized the language by abrogating it to suit the needs of their expression. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out:

The world language called English is a continuum of ‘intersections’ in which the speaking habits in various communities have intervened to reconstruct the language. The reconstruction occurs in two ways: on the one hand, regional English varieties may introduce words which become familiar to all English speakers, and on the other, the varieties themselves produce national and regional peculiarities which distinguish them from other forms of English, (qtd. in Bonani Chatterji Singh 143)

“The fact that English has been adopted as a medium of communication in the post-colonial context is owing to the historical circumstances of imperial domination and the consequent erosion of indigenous languages” (Bonani Chatterji Singh 143). But today the use of the language is not centered in imperialism; it dissociates itself from the centre and expresses the native experience.

Cross-cultural writers do not use Standard English but assert their identity through language variance. The intention is to ensure

that they do not see themselves as an extension of the metropolitan culture. As Bonani Chatterji Singh says:

Writers belonging to this continuum use techniques of code-switching and insertion of the vernacular as a means of abrogating standard English and appropriating its usage as the linguistic medium 'english'. . . . The polemics of post-colonial discourse is concerned with the metonymic function of language variation. The insertion of pidgin, creole, vernacular rhythms, dialect and colloquialisms in the texts serve [sic] to differentiate its culture context from the standard or core language culture. They act as signs or signifiers for a part of that culture which then stands for the whole. (1.44-45)

The postcolonial writers use English as a linguistic medium rather than as the language of imperialist discourse.

There were many great writers in India's vernacular languages even in ancient times. But Indian English Literature is a recent phenomenon. The nineteenth century saw only Indian imitations of Western literature. The Indian English writers had had their education through the medium of English and had also learnt English literature. Impressed by Western literature, they expressed their ideas adopting Western genres, Western techniques and Western styles. When the freedom movement gained momentum, the writers took the

problems of the period in hand and expressed them in forceful words, which sensitized the readers. After Independence, shaking off the colonial vestiges, Indian English writers have concentrated on self-discovery and self-assertion. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar succinctly comments:

To be Indian in thought and feeling and emotion and experience, yet also to court the graces and submit to the discipline of English for expression is a novel experiment in creative mutation. There are successes as well as failures, and the failures are perhaps more numerous than the successes. (*Indian Writing in English* 5)

G.S. Balarama Gupta states: “The British encounter with India, taking place as it did at the political, sociocultural and literary levels, generated new political ideas, a social reorientation, and new forms of literary expression in English—one being Indian literature in English, the other British writing on India” (*Indian English Literature: Some Forays* 3-4).

When the Indian English writers began to express their ideas in fiction, they were not sure of the right approach to the problems of the time. But the national movement and the leadership of Gandhiji showed the right direction to the creative writers:

As the national movement got underway and the impact of Mahatma Gandhi started being felt, socio-political

issues crystallized and the need for social reformation became imminent. Beginning with K.S.Venkataramani's *Kandan, the Patriot* (1932) and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) the Indian novel continued to discuss how the status of the neglected and the downtrodden could be raised and the right of the people recognized for freedom from hunger, illiteracy and political slavery. (R. S. Singh, "Indian Fiction in English" ■ 22)

K.S. Ramamurd describes how, at later stages, the Indian novelists writing in English no longer merely imitated the Western writers but developed their own style:

A novel written by an Indian writer will certainly be Indian without any conscious effort on the part of the writer to the extent to which it depicts Indian life and culture, reflects faithfully the life and spirit of the Indian ethos and grapples with the problems and tensions generated by the rather unique way in which an individual's life and character are determined by home, family and society in the Indian social milieu. It can be peculiarly Indian in respect of its form, narrative techniques employed and the manner in which it adapts

the English language to the native sensibility. (*Rise of the Indian Novel in English* 4)

One of the unjustly forgotten Indian English novelists is K.S.Venkataramani. Kaveripatnam Sidhananda Venkataramani was born on 10.6.1891. His parents were Sidhanathan and Yogambal. He was their only son. He was admitted to school when he was seven years old. As his father was a government servant, he spent his childhood in various villages. The rural beauty and prosperity registered in his mind and this later came to be prominent in his writings. He was also attracted to learning law, which was a coveted profession in his time. He joined the Law College and became a lawyer. He was apprenticed under the renowned Sir. C.P. Ramasami Iyer.

But he did not prosper in the legal profession. Instead he responded to the urgent demands of his time and concentrated on writing. He developed a wide circle of friends and spent time in discussing matters related to the problems of the country and gave expression to such ideas in his writings. He considered, this a service to his country.

He was proud of his native place Kaveripatnam, because it is one of the renowned places of Tamil history. It is situated on one of the branches of the Cauveri where it flows into the Bay of Bengal. It was once the subsidiary capital of the Cholas. One of the great

classics of Tamil literature, *Cilappatikaram*, mentions its glory thus: “Praised be sweet Pukar! Praised be sweet Pukar, for it is as famous as the glory of the (Cola) royal line all over the wide world, encircled by the waters of the sea” (“Pukarkkantam,” canto 1).

Venkataramani spent most of his early years in the countryside around Thanjavur. He spent much of his time sitting beside the river and the sea, losing himself in reveries. In his novels and short stories many of his characters retreat to the seashore and find peace of mind. He always prefers a country setting to one of the city.

While replying to the felicitations on his sixtieth birthday, celebrated in Madras in 1951, Venkataramani described his boyhood years thus:

‘As a little boy, I was always extremely active, hilarious and ecstatic, always roaming in sunshine, cutting new tracks across the meadow, shunning the old. The rain-bearing clouds and the monsoon eclipsing the sun thrilled me with maximum joy, and with rainfall. I always ran away from home, to the worry of my parents, to the nearest hill and dale—my younger years were spent in such area—bundling the How of rain-water into little pools, cutting new channels thereby and creating new cascades over boulders of rock, clapping hands in all solicitude, unmindful of the drenching in the monsoon rain till

somebody came from home and took me away!’ (qtd. in N.S.Ramaswami, *K.S.Venkataramani* 15-16)

Venkataramani was against the concept of the school bound within four walls, and this idea is reflected in his writings. When he went to the National High School, Mayavaram, he discovered the Cauveri and his vocation:

The sacred Cauveri gave me a new freedom and joy and made me a lover of Nature with interest in man.

Temperamentally I was a textbook scholar till then, but the river Cauveri, Edmund Burke, Sri Aurobindo, Bankim Chatterjee’s Vande Matharam’ and the partition of Bengal taught me the mere futility of books and text books and the arid, opulence of a mere scholar reared for the slaughter house of examinations. They inspired me with the first patriotic sentiments and love of humanity and of my country, and *the joy in the making of a new life; for even as a boy I felt that something was wrong in the existing order* [emphasis added].’ (qtd. in Ramaswami 16)

He did not change this view till his end. In his writings he tried to set right this wrong and he also suggested the right direction. M.K.Naik in “The Political Novel in Indian Writing in English” says that, in centuries with long histories of invasion and rule by foreign powers, the artists inevitably became teachers, helping the nation to an

awareness of itself, its aspirations and its troubles (17).

Venkataramani became such a teacher and helped his nation to an awareness of itself, its aspirations and its troubles.

His ability to use English in writing and speaking was revealed even when he was at the National High School, Mayavaram, in 1906. His first talk before his schoolmates was on the partition of Bengal. He wrote an essay about the functioning of the Mayavaram Municipality, which was published in the *Indian Patriot* and excited a many-sided reaction in Mayavaram.

When he was practising law at Madras, he was made a member of the Senate of Annamalai University. He was widely known in various universities of North India and delivered lectures at various universities. In 1947, he worked as educational advisor for rural development at the Rajasthan Alwar *Samastanam* (court).

Venkataramani launched a magazine with the help of N. Raghunathan, who later became the Assistant Editor of the *Hindu*. Venkataramani published many articles, sketches and stories in the *Swatantra* and the *Swarajya*. These stories were later collected and published under the title *Jatadharan and Other Stories* with a preface by Raghunathan.

Venkataramani wrote essays, short stories, musings, novels and many research articles. He published over a dozen books in English and some of them were translated into Tamil, Hindi, Sanskrit

and Telugu. He also published a weekly magazine named *Bharatha Mani* in Tamil. Later it became a monthly magazine. He had to close it down due to financial reasons.

He started a publishing house named Svetaranya Ashrama, through which he published all his works. It had its main office at Kaveripatnam and a branch office at Maylapore, Madras. He had a plan to set up a printing press in a village and publish many books but he could not do so. In short, Venkataramani's real vocation was writing. -'-. . . ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Venkataramani's English compositions are: *Paper Boats* (1921), *On the Sand-Dunes* (1923), *Murugan—The Tiller* (1927), *Highways in Astrology* (1927), *The Next Rung* (1927), *Renascent India* (1928), *A Day with Sambhu* (1928), *Kandan*, *The Patriot* (1932), *Kamakoti Peetam* (1932), *Dr. Annie Besant: A Tribute* (1933), *The Indian Village* (1936), *Jatadharan and Other Stories* (1939), *My Ashram Plan for Rural Uplift* (.1947), *After Gandhiji: Our Problems* (1948) and *Swaraj Constitution* (n.d.).

Many foreign writers have praised Venkataramani for his writing. Paul Brunton, an English journalist, met him in person and wrote about him in his famous book *A Search in Secret India*.

Ramaswami says:

Idealist and patriot that he was, Venkataramani was fundamentally a propagandist. This word has acquired

some unfortunate overtones, but in his time, particularly when the freedom struggle was raging, to be a propagandist in the service of the nation was the highest honour an Indian writer could hope to achieve. (1)

The people received Venkataramani's works with great expectations as they excited patriotism in the readers. Iyengar, who was a close friend of Venkataramani's, reviewed Venkataramani's novel *Kandan, The Patriot* at a very tense moment in the freedom struggle. There was a rumour that the novel would be banned. Therefore Iyengar did not even bother about his examinations but spent his time in reviewing the novel (Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English* 281).

Venkataramani's *Paper Boats* sketches the Indian style of life and Indian customs. Venkataramani does not talk directly about his life's mission, i.e., rural uplift. The village stands only in the background in this collection of essays and sketches titled "The Indian Beggar," "On Fishermen," "Village Cricket," "The Hindu Temple," "My little Arunalam," "The Hindu Pilgrim," "My Grandmother," "My Neighbour," "The Jagath Guru" and "Saraswathi's Marriage."

In the next book *On the Sand-Dunes* Venkataramani uses a different genre, an extended homily. In his foreword, V. Narayanan comments aptly that Venkataramani "muses on modern life, its

miseries and its oblivion or the glorious heritage of Man” (*On the Sand-Dunes* ix). Venkataramani exhorts man to be reconciled to the village and lead a simple life.

Highways in Astrology is the odd man out among Venkataramani’s writings. He has written this under the pen name of *Kumba*. He chose this name as he was born in the *Kumba lagna* (an astrological category). Here he talks about the common rules and conventions of astrology.

Venkataramani says, “*Renascent India* and *The Next Rung* had a common birth and I left the twins in the same cradle putting but a thin screen of feather-weight paper between”. (*Renascent India*, preface, n.pag.)

In *Renascent India* Venkataramani describes his philosophy of rural uplift in fifteen chapters. He states the circumstances which have led to the condition of having to pay special attention to rural reconstruction. He clearly presents his idea of an ideal Indian village and the problems that Swaraj India will face and suggests how a real paradise on earth can be achieved.

A Day with Sambhu follows the style of *On the Sand-Dunes*. Here the author talks with a schoolboy and advises him on how a boy should live from dawn to dusk. The style is simple and informal. Venkataramani openly turns a preacher, teaching his countrymen how to live a truly Indian life.

Venkataramani's *Kamakoti Peetam* appeared earlier in *Paper Boats* under the title "The Jagath Guru." Later he published, it separately in order to motivate people to lead a life of piety and reverence.

In *Dr. Annie Besant: A Tribute*, Venkataramani praises the English lady for her Home Rule Movement, which quickened the Indian freedom movement.

The Indian Village was originally one of the chapters in *Renascent India*. Venkataramani published it again as a separate book because its theme, namely, rural uplift, was his obsession.

Jatadharan and Other Stories is a collection of short stories with the following titles: "Jatadharan, the Pial Teacher," "Jatadharan and His Marriage," "Collision," "Destiny," "Indumati," "The Bride Waits," "A Fractured Arm," "Illumination" and "In Quest of Power." These stories were written at different times during 1915-25.

In *Jatadharan and Other Stories* the main motif is service to the rural people, particularly by way of teaching. Whatever the profession or the status of the main characters, they ultimately last turn to be teachers and work for the uplift of the poor village people and to effect rural development. Jatadharan, who is a successful college student, becomes a pial teacher at Kakalani. Kittu, though an incomplete Intermediate, by chance becomes a primary school teacher and works

for the uplift of villagers. Ramanujam, a Station Master, loses his job due to the carelessness of his pointsman. He finds solace in starting a school at Akkur for the young.

C.Subramania Sastri and Sundaram are affected mentally by their respective government jobs. The plight of the government official is pictured very clearly in both the stories. In this collection all the government servants resign their jobs and opt to work for their own people. The stories are fables that preach to the readers to serve the people and develop the village.

My Ashram Plan for Rural Uplift repeats Venkataramani's ideas on the Indian village and village administration expressed elsewhere on so many occasions.

In *After Gandhiji: Our Problems*, Venkataramani speculates on who will lead India after Gandhiji and discusses India's foreign policy and internal problems. He insists on a decentralized mode of government, which can serve the public better than a centralized government.

Swaraj Constitution was published earlier as part of *Renascent India*, but Venkataramani published it again separately because the theme was close to his heart.

The two novels of Venkataramani, *Murugan—The Tiller* and *Kandan*, *The Patriot* were received well by everyone. Srinivasa Iyengar has summed up the two novels thus: "Murugan is an exponent of

Gandhian economics, as Kandan is an exponent of Gandhian politics” (*Indian Writing in English* 279).

Venkataramani started writing when the country was moving towards Independence and when the people had plunged into the freedom struggle. So, quite naturally, most of his writings echo Gandhian ideals and breathe nationalism. But he was concerned more about the problems that India would face after Independence and suggested solutions in his writings. It would be an understatement to say that Venkataramani dedicated his life to creating a new India. Writing in both Tamil and English, he wanted to revive the old greatness and glory of the Indian village and make the people realize how important villages were to India.

A close reading of Venkataramani’s oeuvre reveals a postcolonial strain in all his writings. The outstanding feature of his writings is that he often points out the superiority of Indian culture when compared to the Western one. He records resistance to the Western culture. He also opposes the educational system introduced by the British into India. He points out various drawbacks in the system. He insists on the decolonization of the mind, which will enable the people to free themselves completely from colonization and understand the nature of the native culture. Indian culture, according to Venkataramani, always aims at the common good, leading a simple

life, being content with what one has, sharing the excess with the needy, living in tune with Nature and so on.

Many of Venkataramani's contemporaries admired him but, later, he was ignored in literary circles. A few critics have written about him. They happen to be his close friends. Scholars have published very few papers on his writings. But none has focused attention on the postcolonial strain in Venkataramani's works. Hence the present study. 1

The present thesis is organized as hereunder. The first chapter attempts to define postcolonial writing, traces the evolution of Indian English writing, places Venkataramani in the chronology of Indian English Literature, presents a brief biographical sketch, sums up his writings and suggests a postcolonial reading of his oeuvre as appropriate. The second chapter re-reads Venkataramani's novels as postcolonial texts. The third chapter analyses Venkataramani's collections of short stories and sketches for a postcolonial strain. The fourth chapter analyses Venkataramani's non-fictional writings for a postcolonial vein. The final chapter sums up the preceding chapters, draws conclusions and suggests potential areas of further research.

This thesis has been written and documented according to the guidelines provided by the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* by Joseph Gibaldi, sixth edition (New Delhi: East-West, 2004).

Note

1 The paucity of secondary material on Venkataramani's writings forced the present researcher to depend predominantly on the primary sources. Moreover, the postcolonial strain in Venkataramani's writings could be brought out and highlighted only by quoting extensively from the primary sources.