Partition Novels: A post colonial perspective

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"The responsibility for governing India had been placed by the inscrutable decree of providence upon the shoulders of the British race."

Rudyard Kipling

"The loss of India would have been final and fatal to us. It could not fail to be part of a process that would reduce us to the scrap of a minor power."

Winston Churchill to the House of Commons

February 1931

'Postcolonialism' is a protean term, the connotative possibilities of which are extended to suit the various need of theorists. A diverse range of experiences, cultures and problems are strung together under this phrase, and hence, it eludes any monolithic or even comprehensive definition. However, as Spivak rightly points out, "... no rigorous definition of anything is ultimately possible ... yet ... definitions are necessary in order to keep us going, to allow us to take a stand" (1988, 77), in a specific context.

The second edition of the American Heritage Dictionary gives, perhaps, what could only be called a simplistic definition of 'postcolonial' as, "of, relating to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony" (1968). Since the
mid-sixties, the term 'Commonwealth Literature' has been used as the comprehensive label for all English writing that came out of the various British colonies, and a global association known as 'Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies' has been formed, to encourage study and research in the area. However, during the past decade, in particular, the term 'postcolonial' has gained prominence. Meenakshi Mukherjee draws our attention to the new term increasingly gaining ground today:

... the massive Routledge Encyclopaedia project that began nearly a decade ago as 'The Encyclopaedia of Commonwealth Literature', just before publication altered its name to become 'The Encyclopaedia of Post-colonial Literatures in English' .... [The] new term 'post-colonial' foregrounding the political dimension of both the text and context of this literature - - is being used more often, slowly pushing out the old and seemingly apolitical name 'Commonwealth Literature'. The new title of the just published monumental Routledge volumes perhaps puts a seal of authority on this new term, knocking in the last nails on the coffin of the Anglocentric old label. (1996, 5)

At one level, such a change in nomenclature may appear to be an act of pouring old wine into a new bottle, as Bahri points out in "Once More with Feeling: What is Post-colonialism?": 
... one might be tempted to dismiss semantic quibbling and academic versions of digging holes only to fill them again and to settle for the satisfaction that a rose by another name would smell the same and a proboscis by the name of a rose would still smell a rose ... (60)

However, Salman Rushdie has some definite reservation about the use of the term 'Commonwealth Literature'. In his essay 'Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist', Rushdie upbraids the "new and badly made umbrella" (61), under which disparate non-British literatures are forced to huddle, without any regard for their differences. He feels that "non-Western Literature" is being ghettoised, contained and relegated to the margins, in what might be considered as a racially segregationist move" (qted. in Bahri 64). Similarly, Aijaz Ahmad does not approve of the term 'Third World Literature', on the ground that it leads to

... suppression of the multiplicity of the significant differences among and within both the advanced capitalist countries on the one hand and the imperialised formations on the other. (285)

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, in their introduction to The Empire Writes Back, suggests that the term 'postcolonial' is to be eminently preferred,
... because it points a way towards a possible study of the effects of colonialism in and between writing in English and writing in indigenous languages ... as well as writing in other language diasporas. (24)

In their turn, these authors offer the following richly meaningful definition for the phrase 'post-colonial':

The semantic basis of the term 'post-colonial' might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power... We have used the term 'post-colonial', however to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. (1-2)

The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Post-colonial Literatures in English (1994) adopts the above definition, as the definitive description of the scope and the parameters of the postcolonial. Nevertheless, from Trivedi's point of view,

... the seamless, painless view of colonial history which this definition represents may be rather more applicable to the white 'settler' colonies [like Canada and Australia] where the arrival of the imperial power was an act of aggression against a native population (which was quite decimated soon afterwards) but not against what answers for most of their population now, which of course is largely descended from the aggressors themselves. (234)
Despite the different stances of postcolonial critics, it must be admitted that the aftermath of colonialisation can never be anything but fragmentary and explosively diverse. As Anne McClintock points out:

... the singular category 'post-colonial' may license too readily a panoptic tendency to view the globe within generic abstractions voided of political nuance. The arcing panorama of the horizon becomes thereby so expensive that international imbalances in power remain effectively blurred. (86)

It is significant that Wole Soyinka fears a possible marginalisation of the black culture, with the imminent acceptance of the nomenclature 'postcolonial Literature', at the global level:

We black Africans have been blindly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonialism -- this time by a universal -- humanoid abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of 'their' world and 'their' history, 'their' social neuroses and 'their' value systems. (qted. in Katrak 256)

The label 'postcolonial studies' also tends to downplay, or turn a Nelson's eye on, the differences between, and within, various former colonies, as pointed out by Arun Mukherjee:
The postcolonial theorists’ generalisations about ‘all’ ‘postcolonial people’ suggest that Third Worldism and/or nationalism bind the people of these societies in conflictless brotherhood, that the inequalities of caste and class do not exist in these societies and that their literary works are only about ‘resisting’ or ‘subverting’ colonisers’ discourses. (27)

The above phenomenon can be seen evidenced by the stance of Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, who advocate the use of the term ‘postcolonial’, simply because it “foregrounds a politics of opposition and struggle, and problematises the key relationship between centre and periphery” (399). In the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, such a dialectics leads to a new polarisation:

In this swing of the pendulum, marginality is valorised, oppression almost turns into empowerment. On the whole however postcolonialism foregrounds the need for recognising identities, voices and situations that were not granted by the colonial power … (1996, 4)

Spivak also posits the view that, in postcoloniality, “every metropolitan definition is dislodged. The general mode for the postcolonial is citation, reinscription, rerouting the historical” (1993, 217)

Another site for contention in respect of ‘Post colonialism’ has been the presence/absence of the hyphen in the term. There seems to be however no consistency
in the use/non-use of the hyphen in the works of the theorists, in this regard. Significantly, Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge distinguish between two kinds of postcolonialism, signalling the differences through the use or non-use of the hyphen:

The first ... is what we call oppositional postcolonialism, which is found in its most overt form in post-independent colonies at the historical phase of postcolonialism (with a hyphen) ... The second form ... is a 'complicit postcolonialism' ... an always present underside within colonialism itself. (401)

Nevertheless, it must be conceded that the above use/non-use of hyphen with regard to the two opposed modes of usage of the phrase 'postcolonial' has not yet gained currency in critical parlance till date. In their introduction to the anthology of essays Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory, Francis Barker, et al. claim that they have

... distinguished between 'postcolonial' used as a temporal marker and 'postcolonial' etc. to indicate the analytical concept of greater range and ambition, as, in 'postcolonial theory' or the 'postcolonial condition'. (4)

In his analysis of the signification of the hyphen, T.Vijayakumar invests it with a hair-splitting paradoxical meaning, which does seem to take the argument too far:
'I am the hyphen in Indian-American' A.K.Ramanujan is reported to have said... Shashi Deshpande sees it as an understatement. For her, Ramanujan was more than a hyphen, he was a bridge. 'Hyphens unite but bridges connect'. But do hyphens unite? Some like the poet Wendell Aycock do not think so. In his poem titled 'Hyphen-nation' he writes:

'...

The Hyphen only supports. It does not connect

... the hyphen is incomplete

existing between two cultures, it is an

eternal bridge

with barriers and guards at both ends.'

(195-6)

If there is considerable inconsistency regarding the use/non-use of the hyphen in the phrase post-colonialism, there is also no consensus as regards its signification of literature of any particular period. Deepika Bahri extends the use of the term 'postcolonial', not merely to characterise that which succeeds the colonial, "but also the chapter of history following the Second World War, whether or not such a period accommodates the still-colonised, the neo-colonised, or the always colonised" (52). To Carol Breckenridge and Peter Van der Veer:

'Post' implies that which is behind us and the past implies periodisation. We can therefore speak of the postcolonial period as a framing device to characterise the
second half of the Twentieth Century. The term ‘postcolonial’ displaces the 
focus on postwar’ as a historical marker for the last fifty years (1)

The term ‘postcolonial’, as commonly understood, covers the cultural interaction 
between colonised powers and the societies they colonised - - the white settler colonies 
such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia on the one hand, and the non-settler 
colonies in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean on the other. However, the more 
popular usage of the term, as Gauri Viswanathan suggests, is “to signify more or less an 
attitude or position from which the decentering of Eurocentrism may ensue” (qted. 
Bahri 52). However, Arif Dirlik does not agree with the use of ‘postcolonial’ as a literal 
description of what used to be formerly ‘colonial’ societies, or as a description of global 
conditions after the period of colonialism, and suggests that “one does not have to be 
postcolonial in any strict sense of the term to share” in the themes, common in much 
postcolonial discourse (336). Spivak comments that “the United States is not outside 
the postcolonial globe” (1993, 217) either.

For Bahri, postcolonialism is an inter-cultural or sociological phenomenon, not 
particularly signifying the postcolonial era that followed the industrial revolution and 
geographical expedition of Europe:

... given that the history of humankind is one of exploitation and colonisation of 
various kinds, is not much of the inhabited world in some stage or the other of
postcoloniality? All over the world, people identifying with nations or communities have participated in some kind of colonialist manoeuvre. (55)

Sara Suleri is in agreement with Bahri’s view, and asserts that marginality experienced in any area of any age in history, can be defined in terms of postcolonialism:

Where the term once referred exclusively to the discursive practices produced by the historical fact of prior colonisation in certain geographically specific segments of the world, it is now more of an abstraction available for figurative deployment in any strategic redefinition of marginality. (274)

Such an interpretation of the phrase falls in line with Homi Bhabha’s assertion that

... postcolonial time questions the teleological traditions of the past and present, and the polarised historicist sensibility of the archaic and the modern. (1990, 304)

Thus 'postcolonism, from its humble beginnings as a describer of literature, has evolved today, to the status of theoretical apparatus and a disciplinary entity, posing almost a challenge to recent theories like poststructuralism, postmodernism and feminism. The authors of The Empire Writes Back are of
the opinion that ‘postmodernism’, has contributed to the phenomenal development of postcolonial discourse:

Perhaps one of the most significant reasons for the exponential expansion of the postcolonial discourse is the hot climate generated by the development of postmodern theory and the postmodern critic’s suspicion of an objective historical consciousness. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 162)

Young contends that postcolonial discourse has profited enormously from “the politics of post-structuralism [which] forces the recognition that all knowledge may be variously contaminated” (11)

Ketu H. Katrak gives two reasons, for the recent trend in postcolonial theory, to engage certain fashionable theoretical models:

... 1) to validate postcolonial literature, even to prove its value through the use of complicated Eurocentric models. Or 2) to succumb to the lure of engaging in a hegemonic discourse of the Western theory, given that it is ‘difficult’ or ‘challenging’ often for the sole purpose of demonstrating its shortcomings for an interpretation of postcolonial texts. (256)

Dirlik is of the view, that postcolonism has been very much influenced by post-structuralism and post-modernism:
... [the] crucial premises of postcolonial criticism, such as the repudiation of post-Enlightenment metanarratives, were enunciated first in poststructuralist thinking, and the various postmodernisms it has informed. (336)

Slemon, however, argues that postcolonial critical practice is different from post-structural and post-modern modes of criticism, and the assumption that the premises are the same would make,

... postcolonial criticism radically fractured and contradictory, for such a criticism would draw on post-structuralism’s suspension of the referent in order to read the social ‘text’ of colonialist power and at the same time would reinstall the referent in the service of colonised and post-colonial societies. (1989,9)

Bahri rightly observes that, metropolitan postcolonial theory is replete with post-structuralist methods and the writings of Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari:

The serviceability of post-structuralism for postcolonial criticism aside, the connection between the two, one might speculate, is partly responsible for the latter’s status in the academy, a completely indigenous ‘postcolonial’ discourse being either considered or rendered an impossibility for various reasons: the lingering influence of colonial texts in Third World curricula and universities, the continuing need for legitimisation of the marginal by the central, and the persistent disregard for any productions that might be de-linked from the metropole or Western modular constructs of postcoloniality. (70)
In an article titled “Is the Post in Postmodernism the Post in Postcolonialism?”, Appiah argues that “the post in postcolonial, like the post in postmodernism is the post of the space clearing gesture” (348) and that “... the post in postcoloniality, like the post in postmodernism challenges earlier legitimating narratives” (353). But Helen Tiffin remarks:

It is ironic that the label of ‘Postmodern’ is increasingly being applied hegemically, to the cultures and texts outside Europe, assimilating postcolonial works whose political orientation and experimental formulations have been deliberately designed to counteract such European appropriations, and it might be argued, have themselves provided the cultural base and formative colonial experience which European philosophies have drawn in their apparent radicalisation of linguistic philosophy. (170)

Om P. Juneja points out how both postmodernism and postcolonialism share common strategies of moving away from realist representation:

While postmodernism has its origin in the ‘crisis of authority’ vested in Euro-American cultural institutions having monocultural thinking with universalist claims in the latter half of this century, postcolonial perspective appropriates this crisis of authority as the erosion of that former colonist authority and also as the liberation of the colonial self in which one's own identity may be created and recuperated. (15)
On the other hand, Martina Michael is of the view that the postcolonial theory

...has reformulated the postmodern notion of the subject by shifting our
attention to processes of subject formulation that are closely connected to the
notion of space. (88)

Speaking of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ positions leads us to another closely connected
issue - - postcoloniality and feminism. As Chandra Mohanty argues, in the context of
Western feminist writing about Third World women.

Western feminists alone become the true subjects of this counter-history. Third
World women on the other hand, never rise above the debilitating generality of
their ‘object’ status. (qtd. in Suleri 274-75)

Spivak points at the

... discontinuity, heterogeneity and typology ... (in) sex-analysis, because this ...
cannot by itself obliterate the problems of race and class. It will not necessarily
escape the inbuilt colonialism of First World feminism towards the Third (1988,
153)

It is interesting to note that, Minh-ha is of the view that “the work of
decolonisation will have to continue within women’s movements” (268). Mohanty too
expresses a similar sentiment, namely, the Western feminists are not totally seized with the problems facing women in the Third World:

Western feminism appropriate and 'colonise' the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterise the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes in these (the Third World) countries. (260)

Audre Lorde speaks also of the double burden of the Third World women, for having to fight against not only the patriarchal oppression, but also their own marginalisation at the hands of their white counterparts:

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance, to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear that it is the task of black and Third World women to educate white women in the face of tremendous resistance, as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought. (qted. in Minh-ha 266)

In Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World, a comprehensive account of women's involvement in nationalist struggles in Egypt, Iran, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Vietnam and Korea, Kumari Jayawardena makes the interesting observation that feminist ideas in these regions, were not originally
imported from the West, but inscribed in their own inheritance. Ketu H. Katrak also subscribes to a point of view:

Women writers' stances, particularly with regard to glorifying/denigrating traditions, vary as dictated by their own class backgrounds, levels of education, political awareness and commitment, and their search for alternatives to their existing levels of oppression often inscribed within the most revered traditions. Their texts deal with, and often challenge, their dual oppression – patriarchy that preceded and continues after colonialism… (257)

A striking example for such a dual oppression has been the case of the Telugu poet Muddupalani, a courtesan in the court of Pratapasimha of the eighteenth century, as described by Susie Tharu and K.Lalitha in their introduction to Women Writing in India. Muddupalani’s ‘Radhika Santwanam’ was a ‘sringaraprabanndham’, in which the principal ‘rasa’ evoked was ‘sringara’ or erotic pleasure. Traditionally, in such literature, it is the man who woos his lover. But in ‘Radhika Santwanam’, the woman’s sensuality is presented as the central issue, as she takes the initiative, and it is her satisfaction and pleasure that provides the poetic resolution. It is an unusual work, but it was relatively uncontroversial in its time. In 1911, however it was banned by the British Government, on the ground that it could endanger the moral health of the Indian subjects. Though the ban orders were withdrawn after Independence, it was difficult to find a copy, even as late as the late 1980s, primarily thanks to the influence of the many reform movements. Tharu and Lalitha write:
The story of Muddupalani's life, her writing, and the misadventures of 'Radhika Santwanam' could well be read as an allegory of the enterprise of women's writing and the scope of feminist criticism in India, for it raises, in an uncanny way, many of the critical questions that frame women's writing. These include questions about the contexts, structured and restructured by changing ideologies of class, gender, empire, in which women wrote, and the conditions in which they were read: questions about the politics, sexual and critical, that determined the reception and impact of their work; questions about the resistances, the subversions, the strategic appropriations that characterised the subtlest and most radical women's writing ... patriarchies reconstructed in the interests of Orientalism, imperialism, the Enlightenment, nationalism, among other forces, provide the horizon within which the text articulates its feminist challenge. (15)

Viewed against the backdrop of such a baffling, kaleidoscopic postcolonial context, the structure of the novel acquires ever-innovative dimensions. Mikhail Bakhtin considers the novel's unique, protean form as

... the leading hero in the drama of literary development in our time precisely because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making; it is, after all, the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it. (1981,7)

Alastair Niven is also of the same opinion:
... it would now be impossible to define the modern novel without providing a central place for its creators in Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, Australia, and several other parts of the English-speaking world. In each case one feels that the novelists occupy a pivotal place in the establishment of a contemporary, cultural nationalism. (106)

Hence, an analysis of novels from two different well-marked postcolonial backgrounds, in the light of Weisstein's methodology with specific regard to thematology, may throw much additional light on the relative merits of the authors in question. To Weisstein, the primary components that constitute any standard literary work are "subject matter (stoff), theme, motif, situation, image (Bild), trait (Zug) and topos" (129). Stoff, as defined by Elizabeth Frezel is

... a well-delineated story line (Fabel) existing prior to the literary work, a 'plot', which, as an internal or external experience, as a report on a contemporary event, as a historical, mythical or religious action, as a work already shaped by another writer, or even as a product of the imagination, is treated in literary fashion. (qtd. in Weisstein 136)

The 'stoff' in respect of the postcolonial novels, tends to appear as fairly universal, their main burden being the colonial condition of domination/subjugation, oppression/suppression, imperialism/nationalism and the postcolonial condition of the
elation of liberation accompanied by personal frustrations and disillusionments, a burden of deconstruction and reconstruction and, still more indirectly, the establishment of a national identity. Viewed from such a perspective, William Walsh’s observation with regard to the innovative commonwealth fiction, seems to smack of an implicit, imperialist prejudice:

Perhaps the commonwealth writer’s motto in these matters should be the opposite of the gentle, liberal apophthegm of Forster’s. ‘Only disconnect!’ Cut yourself off from your own past. Unbolt your fierce identity. Dismantle your driving national force, and become something altogether quieter, more passive, a faithful recording instrument. (1973b, xii)

Postcolonial themes, to say the least, are at least as various as the post colonial nations, societies, ethnic groups and the different sects of race, class and gender:

Themes, like symbols... are polysemous: that is, they can be endowed with different meanings in the face of differing situations. That is what makes an inquiry into their permutations an adventure into the history of ideas

(Levin 144)

More importantly, however, Van Tieghem speaks of “the role played by ... (the author’s) own genius, their ideal and their art, in the variations they have played on a common theme” (89). Thus, one comes across themes peculiar to each postcolonial
society as well as common themes, such as the quest for identity explored in countless ways, and subjected to varied treatments. Niven is not far off the mark when he observes:

> It may be becoming altogether inappropriate to speak in terms of national labels ... The impermanence of cultural rootings and the cross-fertilisation of art, society and politics in the modern world ... make national descriptions redundant. (1107)

Nevertheless, for present study, a thematic survey of postcolonial novels has been undertaken under a broad classification of literatures of settler and non-settler societies. In non-settler countries like India and Africa, the main burden of the postcolonial writers has been to revive and rejuvenate an already existing but blurred, literary tradition and culture. On the other hand, settler communities in Canada, Australia and New Zealand have had to develop, in Michael Dahs’s words, “the counter culture of imagination” (qtd. in Tiffin 173)

Canada is linguistically and geographically fragmented into a plurality of cultures, and such a task of creating a ‘counter culture’ is a complex enterprise in its context, as terms like ‘culture’, ‘place’, ‘identity’ and ‘tradition’ connote different things in different contexts. William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, once made a humorous but pertinent remark that: if some countries have too much history, we have too much geography” (qtd. in Woodcock 1994, 188). Northrop Frye’s words
too highlight such a fragmentation of the Canadian psyche, fraught with numerous paradoxes at different levels - cultural, temporal and spatial:

Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity. It is less perplexed by the question ‘Who am I?’ than by some such riddle as ‘Where is here?’ (1971, 220)

In her thematic guide to Canadian Literature Survival, Atwood echoes Frye’s concerns, while relating all existing paradoxes pertaining to Canadian identity, to the situation of the individual Canadian citizen:

Who am I? is a question appropriate in countries where the environment, the ‘here’, is already well-defined, so well-defined in fact that it may threaten to overwhelm the individual. In societies where everyone and everything has its place a person may have to struggle to keep from being just a function of the structure. ‘Where is here?’ is a different kind of question. It is what a man asks when he finds himself in unknown territory, and it implies several other questions. Where is this place in relation to other places? How do I find my way around it? (1972, 17)

The vast empty spaces, largely unknown lakes, rivers and islands, vast stretches of dark forests, endless prairies, rigorous northern climate and the barbaric, rude and ruthless snow, have all forced on the Canadian psyche a sense of isolation in the
physical, geographical and psychological aspects. Frye, in his conclusion to the Literary History of Canada, speaks of a vague, yet comprehensive terror in regard to nature:

... where the winters are so cold and where conditions of life have so often been bleak and comfortless, where even the mosquitoes have been described... as 'mementoes of the fall' ... It is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest (843)

It is the vast expanse of space and relentless, cold cycle of seasons, against which the tiny human individual is pitted for basic survival, that contributes to the sense of mystery and terror in Canada. F.R.Scott writes in his poem 'Lawrentian Shield':

Hidden in wonder and snow, or sudden with summer
This land stares at the sun in a huge silence
Endlessly repeating something we cannot hear (16)

In fact, the geographic and climatic factors have caused the Canadian imagination to be “obsessed with the limitations rather than the possibilities of human experience” (Stouck, 9). ‘Survival’, thus is a great fact of Canadian life, and constitutes one of the major thematic strands running through Canadian Literature. Atwood remarks: “Stick a pin in Canadian Literature at random and nine times out of ten you’ll hit a victim” (1972, 33)
Frye argues, and quite convincingly, that a tendency to maintain 'Old World' ways in Canadian settler societies has produced a tendency to shut out the wilderness and he calls this attitude as 'garrison mentality':

Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier', separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources; communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing and formidable physical setting -- such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality. (1965, 845-6)

In the Canadian context, the term 'regionalism' as W.H.New points out, "shifts its meaning as people attribute different nuances to the notion of 'region' itself" (1970,31). For some, the regions are political units like Newfoundland and Nova Scotia; for some others, regional divisions are based on physical features -- Appalachian Highlands, St. Lawrence Lowlands and the Prairies, for example. For still others, the divisions are based on patterns of habitation such as the Outports, the Eastern Townships and so on. For the 'regional' writers, the immediate reality is physical and local, the here and the now; the cliched goal, rather than the metaphysical or the global:
From coast to coast, Prince Edward Island to British Columbia, these books present a sanitised, endearingly innocent vision of English Canada as an untroubled society living close to the land, free of corruption of the urban industrialisation and characterised by a clear ‘northern spirit’, self made men, self repressed women, and happy endings for those who fulfil the Protestant work ethic. (Gerson 50)

It is an interesting fact that even regionalist aspirations within Canada, may be considered, ways of “deploying geographically specific notions of cultural solidity against centrist Canadian notions of a stable national identity” (Slemon 1994, 1117)

In literature, such a quest for identity is carried out perhaps most effectively through the genre of fiction, by virtue of its being the most reciprocative to human needs and tastes, both in the personal and collective spheres. Alastair Niven observes that in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the novel has become a natural form for writers to use:

The dispossessed indigenous populations, whether Aboriginal Australian, Native North American, Inuit or Maori fostered their oral traditions, but only very recently turned to imported forms of fiction. For the educated settler with an ancestry in Britain it was, however, natural to adopt the novel, the reading of
which had been, and to a large extent continued to be, their main leisure activity.

(1107)

These new writers have had their difficulty in cutting themselves off from the English literary tradition. The sheer vastness of experiences that had so many different values to define, questions to investigate and cultures to vindicate and expound, that they felt that their continuous supine bondage to the old moorings of culture and language of the English mainland, would not simply meet their artistic needs and imaginative expressions. What Pushpinder Syal says about Australian writers is equally applicable to Canadian writers:

... they have had to struggle to define their being 'Australian' without pandering to stereotypes of the 'rough' Australian landscape and people... Australian writing ... is in a peculiar position: it is linked to the English tradition, its writers are 'native' speakers of English, but it is obvious that they cannot regard themselves as 'British' writers or writers working in straight continuity with writers in the English tradition. Its social context reflects the same paradox: it is that of the urban, technological, advanced Western Society, but here is also the outback, the vastness of a continent that figures in their awareness more than it does in a geographically limited Britain (115)

In sharp contrast, for the writers in the non-settler communities, the task has been very different, namely, going back to the past and recovering their lost identity. Chinua Achebe tries to teach the blacks in Africa, through his fictional works, that they
are not without history, and that their "past with all its imperfect form was not one night of savagery from which the Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (44-5). He calls novel writing as an "act of atonement", and as the "ritual return and homage of a prodigal son" (77). Wole Soyinka too, most readily subscribes to similar essential goals in the case of postcolonial writers, the most important of them being, in his view, 'race revival':

It involves, very simply, the conscious activity of recovering which has been hidden, lost, repressed, denigrated or indeed simply denied by ourselves - - yes, by ourselves also - - but definitely by the conquerors of our peoples and their Eurocentric bias of thought and relationships. (114)

With regard to the attitude of the African writers, Jeremy Harding makes the following pertinent point:

Negritude, which proposed that there were intrinsic virtues in Africanness, and above all in blackness, was on the whole inimical to the anglophone writers. 'A tiger' said Soyinka, 'does not proclaim his tigritude'. Nevertheless, the idea of recovery implicit in negritude, of a vigorous, lyrical African culture, suppressed or subdued by colonialism, remained powerfully present to them (5)

Ironically, the very language invented and employed by the Euro-centred ex-colonisers, had to prove its relevance and adequacy in a totally changed cultural,
political and geographical context, from almost a diametrically opposed perspective. Barbara Harlow recognises such a kind of ‘resistance writing’ in respect of the following literary traits among the postcolonial works: “Heterogeneity, fractured genres, polymorphous subjects” (75). To cite another striking instance, while discussing the postcolonial Caribbean novel, John Thieme makes the following observation, highlighting its inevitable variety and diversity:

... fictional reconstructions of the past offer statements on the nature of current Caribbean identity ... The dominant formal characteristic of the Caribbean novel in this period is its use of polyphony. Texts ... either employ multiple voices, or mix generic codes in ways that interrogate the assumptions of stability on which most European realist fiction is based. The replacement of unitary narrative modes by fluid and fragmentary structures can be seen as a response to the pluralist nature of Caribbean society and as characteristic of much post-colonial writing. (1121)

As Ashish Nandy sees it, colonialism can be viewed as three different periods, in the Indian context. In political terms, it is the period beginning from 1757 with the battle of Plassey and ending in 1947 with India’s Independence. In Intellectual terms, colonialism began somewhere around 1820 and continued till 1930, when Gandhi’s leadership shook off the intellectual domination of the British colonialists. Colonialism can also be seen as a phase, where political freedom had been achieved, but habits of thought continued to persist, especially during the period beginning from 1947 and
continuing up to the present. While the "outer supports" to the colonial culture have virtually come to an end in India, feelings of inferiority and insecurity, anchorage to the West and a sense of subordination still continue in the Indian society. It is a peculiar brand of colonialism which has survived the "demise of empires" (Nandy xi-xvi) In the words of Jasbir Jain:

The systems inherited from the colonisers are no longer relevant but they seem to have taken root, while the values of the native culture are valuable but far too remote in time. In between these two extremes is the postcolonial mind struggling to step outside its creator, the colonial period. (1991, 3)

In such a context the task of a novelist may either be 'retrieval of history' or 're-writing history/tradition'. In Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe retrieves history by questioning European interpretations of Africa, which are purely anthropological and ethnological, ignoring the material of its culture and its people. To quote an eminent critic,

In Things Fall Apart Western historicising is kept at bay while the complexity and communal destiny of culture through proverbs, seasonality, festivals, rituals, multitheism and power balancing and power sharing are established. Simultaneously this serves in each of its facets, to comment on a British system of theological exclusivity, ethnocentrism and hierarchical structuralism. (Tiffin 1998, 724)
In the same manner, when Raja Rao writes a ‘sthalapurana’ in Kanthapura or when Shashi Tharoor rewrites the Indian epic The Mahabharata: The Great Indian Novel it marks a cultural, political and literary event, nothing short of recasting history/tradition. In Kanthapura, Raja Rao

... not only subverts from the form of historical novel, but extends the limits of the individualistic novel form to express the consciousness of a whole village in the collective ‘we’ of the narrative of Achakka, the old woman narrator. History for her is not a linear progression of events in a chronological order or a retelling of great events, but a poetic awakening of the people who figure in these events and of gods and goddesses who bless them in absentia. India’s freedom movement in the 1920s for her, therefore becomes a re-enactment of the Ravana-Sita-Ram myth and also the myth of the Devi. Raja Rao here, by converting history into the myth of the vanquishing of a demon by a goddess renders the intrusion of British history of colonialism ‘illusory’ because of the introduction of the metaphysical dimension of temporality of this intrusion. (Juneja 18)

Again, Shashi Tharoor’s The Great Indian Novel, as the novelist himself says about it, “retells, the political history of the 20th century India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from the Mahabharata” (1991, 30). For example, on India’s defeat in the Sino-Indian war, the narrator comments:
How could you have allowed it to happen? It was a question many of us in the Kaurava party could not resist asking Dhritarashtra when the Chakras invaded, tossed our ill-fed, ill-clad, ill-shod jawans contemptuously aside and inexorably erased the Big Mac Line. By the time our panic stricken response could be organised the war was over; the Chakras had announced a unilateral cease-fire that we were in no condition to reject. In a few humiliating days they had achieved every one of their objectives ... They even shook the credibility of Dhritharashtra's non-alignment, for our blind Prime Minister panicked enough to welcome the offer of a squadron of fighter planes and pilots from the superpower whose alliances he had earlier consistently spurned. It was not, Ganapathi, a time at which we covered ourselves in glory ... (304)

More importantly in India, the colonial experience has been a form of cultural encounter that gave birth to biculturalism. Most of the Indian English novelists upto 1970s deal with this kind of situation. Krishna of R.K.Narayan's The English Teacher, Moorthy of Raja Rao's Kanthapura and Govindan Nair in The Cat and Shakespeare are cases in point.

Beyond any shake of doubt, the task of the postcolonial novelists in the non-settler nations has been different from that of their counterparts in the settler nations. However, the main burden of both has consisted in offering resistance to authoritarianism, recognising multiplicities and valorising the views of the oppressed.
With regard to the postcolonial literary scenario in Canada, one finds that its geographic spatiality, linguistic heterogeneity and cultural disparateness of its population have continued to inspire themes and issues relating to the particular, the regional, the marginal and the ethnic. The two main streams of literature in Canada are those of the English and the French, and the consistent burden of the English writers in Canada has been the struggle to break free from the Euro-centred, traditional modes and the patronising attitude of the big brotherly, Americans, and to find a realistic expression, more pertaining to the region and cultures of the land and its peoples.

The new nationalism has also shaped a generation of novelists, committed to exploring their ancestral roots. For instance, Sheila Watson, Margaret Laurence, Robert Kroetsch and Ruby Weibe map the west; Robertson Davies, Alice Munro and Timothy Findley write about Ontario; Mordecia Richler and Leonard Cohen deal with life in and around Montreal. The love-hate relationship between the Quebecois and the English Canadian, and the crisis over Canadian-French identity are powerfully articulated by writers like Hubert Aquin, Jacques Goadbout and Claude Jasmin. The “suppression of the mother tongue by a colonising mastertongue” (Neuman 402), has led writers like Jacques Renaud, Claude Jasmin, Michael Tremblay and Marie Claire Blais to adopt joual (the speech of the most uneducated French-Canadians), rather than Parisian French, as their literary medium.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there has been an upsurge of Native Canadian Literature. The mythical stories and the Indian way of life find frequent expressions in
the native writers. Writers like Maria Campbell, Basil Johnston, Duke Redbird, George Kenny and Joan Crate exhibit in their writings an amazing vitality and a singular pride in their aboriginal past. Since the 1970s, "the hyphenated and othered" (Salat, 168), Indian, Italian, Chinese and Japanese Canadians, have also been able to acquire greater visibility and voice, Rohinton Mistry, Joy Kogawa, M.G. Vassanji, Uma Parameswaran and Tomson Highway, to name a few.

The emergence of women-writers has been another remarkable feature of Canadian writing in the second half of the twentieth century. Recent novels by women have tended to increasingly explore women’s issues within a nationalistic framework. Of these writers, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence stand out as strong champions in the cause of women.

Atwood’s first novel The Edible Woman (1969) establishes the broad thematic pattern of woman’s endeavour to attain a human identity, that she works out with subtle variations in her later novels. Surfacing (1972), is a novel about a young woman’s quest to reconnect herself with the past, and "records a woman stripping her of social mask, defences and ideals to discover her essential self" (King 1980, 213). Lady Oracle (1976) dwells on the evolution of a girl, Joan Foster, to maturity. In form, it subscribes to the traditional bildungsroman, but takes on different emphases, as its subject is female. In Life Before Man (1979), two women are characterised as prehistoric dinosaurs, one vegetarian, the other flesh-eating, contending over a mate. Bodily Harm (1981) explores the inner life of Rennie Wilford, a young journalist who
blunders into a Caribbean revolution. Though Rennie himself gets exposed to new cultures and new ways of life, she lives mostly in the inner worlds of reminiscence, dream and nostalgia. Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) is a frightening parable set in the twenty-first century in Gilead, in a society, whose patriarchal structure is maintained by ‘Aunts’ and ‘Guardians’, where young women like the narrator, offered, are compelled to play the roles of child-bearing mistresses to powerful males. *Cat’s Eye* (1988) is another of Atwood’s moving retrospective novels, which explores the relations between women, especially adolescents. Her collection of stories include *The Dancing Girls* (1977), *Murder in the Dark* (1983), *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1983) and *Wilderness Tips* (1992), with the last of these dealing with themes of ageing, betrayal and death.

Alice Munro’s favourite literary form has been that of the linked short story and her subjects are mostly women’s relationship with friends, lovers or others. Her first book *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), was followed by *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), a series of stories which chronicles the development of Del Jordan as both a woman and an artist. As a critic has rightly observed, “Munro treats the growth of intelligence and sexuality matter-of-factly, yet within the exaggerated framework of adolescence” (Djwa 1996, 74). In Munro’s subsequent collection of stories, *Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), the title-story explores the ‘inside’ of the head of a woman who has been twice married. There is no doubt about her attitude towards men in general. For her, they are all vain, quarrelsome, bloated, opinionated and untidy. *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978) is an episodic novel, chronicling the interconnected lives of the young Rose and her stepmother Flo. In a pivotal chapter, ‘The
Beggar Maid’, Rose learns that neither she nor her husband can fulfil the other’s fantasy, and their life turns into a veritable battleground. Ten years after their divorce, they run into each other at an airport terminal, and he makes a “truly, hateful, savagely warning” face at her. It is such a type of uncanny violence that Munro explores in this collection. The Moons of Jupiter (1982), The Progress of Love (1986), Friend of my Youth (1990) and Open Secrets (1995) are darker stories reflecting the rootlessness of contemporary life in Canada.

‘Indian Literature in English’ is only one of the voices in which India speaks, as Indian Literature comprises several literatures - - Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. The phrase ‘Indian Literature in English’ itself, has evolved through various options. In the early years of the twentieth century, the term ‘Anglo-Indian Literature’ was incorporated in the Concise Cambridge History of English Literature. However, the term ‘Anglo-Indian’ had to be dropped soon, due to its racial connotation. “Eurasian, Anglo-Indian - - these terms are sometimes used with a snigger and evoke ‘chee-chee’ feeling” (Iyengar 2). So for a long while, the term Indo-Anglian was preferred. In Literature and Authorship in India, published in 1943, ‘Indo-Anglian’ was printed by mistake as ‘Indo-anglican’, which sparked off considerable protest from different quarters. The nomenclatures currently popular among contemporary critics have been, ‘Indian Writing in English’ and ‘Indian Literature in English’. That Indians chose to write in English was a fated outcome of British colonisation of India, a historical accident, a process which could have come to a dead end with India’s
political Independence in 1947, and the adoption of Hindi as the new official, National Language of India. As early as 1964, V.S.Naipaul, in an ironic vein, states that Indian Literature in English, has ceased to exist, with a singular exception:

The only writer, who, while working from within the society, is yet able to impose on it a vision which is an acceptable type of comment, is R.Prawer Jhabvala. And she is European. (qted. in Cronin 204)

To the contrary, the most fertile period of Indian writing in English, actually, began in the 1960s, and it continues to flourish still. One of the reasons for such a spurt of Indian writing in English may be the enormous resistance offered to Hindi as the National Language, by the Indians speaking other languages. So far, English has maintained its stupendous role as a common link language in India. From a historical perspective, the establishment of the United States as a unipolar Super Power, might have also led to the sustained high status accorded to English at the global level. Also, substantial migration from India to the English-speaking countries of the West, and their literary contributions have played a significant role in the world-wide recognition and acceptance of Indian Writing in English.

The Indian government which assumed power soon after Independence was remarkable for its literary talent. Its Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had published in 1936, an autobiography in English, which is remarkable for its literary merits. C.Rajagopalachari, free India’s first Indian Governor General was also a litterateur and
had made remarkable prose translations of the two great Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Mahatma Gandhi’s *The Story of my Experiments with Truth* (1927) is one of the imperishable modern classics in English.

Three of the significant novelists writing at the time of Indian Independence were Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao. Mulk Raj Anand shows how the Indian novel in English might become a powerful expression of social concern. Each of his first three novels, *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), focuses on a specific social evil — discrimination based on caste, child labour, and exploitation of workers in a tea estate, respectively. Raja Rao’s maiden novel, *Kanthapura* (1938), “utilises experimental language, an unorthodox narrative mode, a collective feminine perspective and an ambivalent closure” (Mukherjee 1994, 1129). In the novel, Rao deals with the impact of the Gandhian ideology on a remote village of South India, attempting to represent in a microcosm the changes that were sweeping the entire length and breadth of the subcontinent in the 1930s and would eventually lead to the country’s Independence in 1947. R.K.Narayan’s novels are free of any such social, political or national agenda, or of any stylistic experiment. But his novels revolving around Malgudi, an imaginary small town in South India, are written in a relaxed style conveying his amused detachment that is typically and unmistakably Indian. There are also writers who grew up in British India, spending many years abroad, having inherited a culture in which Indian and British elements were interfused. Nirad Chaudhari is one such distinguished product of a mixed culture, as evidenced by his *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951).
Of the major poets writing in English, Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan were both children of the Raj: “Macaulay’s Children”, as Ramanujan puts it, rather than “midnight’s” (qtd. in Cronin 206). Toru Dutt, Kamala Das, Mamta Kalia and Eunice de Souza are women poets, who have found in English a more appropriate medium to define their experiences as women. Kamala Das’s My Story, records frankly and powerfully the experiences of a woman, on some of which her poems are based. Some other poets like R. Parthasarathy and Arun Kolatkar have been bilingual. The use of English as a literary medium, in a country where it is not used in everyday life, has contributed to the central predicament of the Indian writers in English. According to Raja Rao,

One has to convey in a language which 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 … 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 some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it. (qtd. in Pollard 28)
The prophecy of Raja Rao may be said to have come true, as the recent phenomenal upsurge of the Indian novel in English has shown. Of the novelists who followed the major trio, Sudhindra N. Ghose, the author of a four-volume novel sequence — *And Gazelles Leaping* (1949), *Cradle of the Clouds* (1951), *The Vermilion Boat* (1953) and *The Flame of the Forest* (1955) — is very much ahead of his time with his skill at blending realism with magic and his juxtaposition of myth, legend and metaphor with a realistic and linear narration of contemporary events” (Mukherjee 1994, 1129). Bhabani Bhattacharya, in his *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), depicts a famine that devastated Bengal in 1943, and the hoarding and black marketing that made some people very rich in the war years.

A general sense of well being and self-esteem was generated in the 1950s in India, with India assuming an important role through its contribution to the establishment of world peace. The temporary setback due to the Chinese invasion of 1962, was compensated by India’s repeated triumphs against Pakistan in 1965 and 1967. With the rapid development of science and technology, the Indian industry recorded a dynamic growth. The setting up of Indian Institutes of Technology in some cities in India, signalled the country’s dynamic march towards modernity. The setting up of the Sahitya Academy and the Sangeet Natak Academy gave further impetus to the growth of fine arts in free India. In such a climate, the 1960s proved to be an extremely productive decade for the Indian novel in English.
Manohar Malgaonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), stands out as a panoramic chronicle of the Indian freedom movement. It highlights the political dialectics of violence and non-violence that played a unique role in Indian politics, ultimately paving the way for India’s freedom. The novel presents a double movement: Gian, the weak protagonist who starts as an enthusiastic follower of Gandhian non-violence, by a curious turn of circumstances, is soon driven to espouse a cause of violent revenge, while Debi Dayal, the strong protagonist committed in the past to a violent struggle for freedom, finally gets thoroughly disillusioned and gives up all his efforts. Malgaonkar’s *The Princes* (1963) focuses on the political and personal life of two princes who experience the trauma of loss of power - - and identity - - caused by accession of their princely states to the rest of India.

Discourses for and against colonialism began long ago within the political and intellectual cultures of colonised countries. The early debates were all about the political and economic aspects of the colonial relationship. However, an interdisciplinary approach, embracing psychological, cultural, sociological and economic methods of interpretation, in understanding the cluster of problems associated with colonisation is adopted by theoreticians like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. Fanon found the economic theories inadequate to explain the complexity of colonial experience. According to Fanon, economic exploitation is only one aspect of colonial oppression. Fanon’s psychological therapeutic approach interrogates the existing assumptions and reorients the study of the process of colonisation and decolonisation along psychological lines giving necessary space for the processes of
consciousness and psychic traumas produced by colonialism. His method of interpretation is a combination of sociological, psychological and Marxian concepts. He incorporates racial, cultural and psychological phenomena into the discourse of colonialism. Fanon traces the close links between colonial war and mental disorders. The question of the national culture and the necessity of revolutionary violence to reach socialism, are the major concerns of the book, The Wretched of the Earth (1961). The psychological and cultural dimensions of white racism against the black under colonialism are discussed in yet another book Black Skin, White Masks (1952). The colonial situation is viewed along similar lines by writers like Albert Memmi, Jean Paul Sartre and Georges Balandier.

Edward Said has made significant theoretical explorations of the colonial experience. His famous work Orientalism (1978) portrays how European culture was able to produce the Orient politically, sociologically and culturally. Analysing the role of the cultural text in preparing the ground for cultural and political supremacy of imperialism Said explores ways in which Orientalism conditions the Orient. The Orient that appears in Orientalism “is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later Western empire” (Said, Orientalism 202-203). He believes that the various texts of Orientalism dealing with art, politics, ethnography and literature play a vital role in constructing the Orient and in controlling it culturally.
In his recent work Culture and Imperialism (1993), Said expands his arguments to provide a pattern of relationships between the modern West and the overseas territory. Referring to a wide variety of cultural texts, Said traces the general world-wide pattern of imperial culture, the historical experience of resistance against empire and its cultural implications in this book.

The publication of Europe and its Others in 1984 introduced critics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha. According to Bhabha, problems of cultural and racial difference cannot be fully comprehended using signs of social authority produced in the analysis of class and gender differentiation. He assigns an autonomous position to the colonial within the confines of hegemonic discourse through recovering how the master discourse was interrogated by the natives in their own accents. According to him the object of colonial discourse is to show the colonised as a racially degenerate population in order to justify conquest and rule. It is at the margins of colonial discourse that the practice of colonial authority displays its ambivalence, “in double duty bound” at once a civilising mission and a violent subjugating force. Ambivalence works as a discursive and psychical strategy of discriminatory power. Bhabha writes: “it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalisation; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed” (Location 66). The native subject is ‘commodified’ by the colonialist discourse into a stereotyped object as a
source for colonialist fiction. Bereft of Subjectivity, individuality and originality this stereotyped object is reduced to its exchange value in the colonialist signifying system, the force of ambivalence giving it currency.

Bhabha introduces mimicry both as a strategy of colonial subjection through reform, regulation and discipline, which “appropriate” the “other” and the native inappropriate imitations of this discourse which has the effect of menacing colonial authority. He writes: “colonial mimicry is the desire of a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Location 86). Being a repetition, imitation or a partial representation, mimicry lacks authenticity and originality. This double vision that is inherent in mimicry discloses the ambivalence of colonial discourse and disrupts its authority.

The discriminatory nature of colonial authority refers to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection. Bhabha envisages this condition as “hybridity” which according to him is the “revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Location 112). Bhabha’s concept of hybridity marks a significant deviation from the accepted notions of colonial authority. It reverses the effects of the colonialist repudiation so that the denied knowledge enters upon the dominant discourse and intervenes in the exercise of authority producing a
crisis in the colonial authority. Bhabha refers to this transformation as the displacement from symbol to sign. According to him hybridity “displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination” (Location 112). So he feels that colonial power produces hybridisation and reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses. It turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the most prominent of the postcolonial critics. Though she teaches in America, Spivak originally belongs to India. A non-white radical feminist with Marxist sympathies, Spivak uses poststructuralist theories like deconstruction to formulate a postcolonial theoretical perspective.

The first volume of Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society appeared in New Delhi in 1982. The publication of these texts along with a host of others dealing with issues of race, colony, empire and nationhood indicated the shifting attention and interest in the intellectual production. Challenging the existing historiography as elitist, the Subaltern Studies group uses the perspective of the subaltern to combat fiercely the continuance of the colonialist knowledge in nationalist and mode of production narrative. The subaltern is not an eternal category. It is a historical construct that resists the appropriations of colonial and nationalist elite. Gyan Prakash in his essay, “Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography” writes: “The subaltern is a figure produced by historical discourses of domination, but it nevertheless provides a mode of reading history different from those inscribed in elite accounts”
Subaltern Studies aims to recover the peasant from elite projects and positivist historiography.

The anticolonial critique of the past was centred around the dualism of coloniser and colonised. It treated the dualism as an emancipatory power. However postcolonial theory problematises both colonial and nationalism and tries to analyse the "link between structures of knowledge and the forms of oppression of the last two hundred years" (Young, 2). Nationalism while displacing the colonial authority shares the ideology of modernity and the "Enlightenment notions of freedom and democracy" (Mongia 5). Thus it is true that nationalism depends on the very structures that it tries to dismantle. Though considered to be a sign of modernity, the nation inscribes the changing social reality. Benedict Anderson comments on the origin of nationalism in his Imagined Communities: "Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it out of which as well as against which it came into being" (19). He points to the ambivalent emergence of the nation as a system of cultural signification moving in-between different cultural traditions. Thus postcolonialism rejects not only the "Western imperium but also the nationalist project" (Appiah, 353) and seeks an alternative method of resisting colonial containment. It dismantles not only the political, economic or cultural domination but the very terms by which knowledge is constructed.
So the origin and development of postcolonial theory can be traced back to the inadequacies of the existing anticolonial discourses and the socio-historical pressures emanating out of the new awareness about the operations of colonial powers at various sites including that of knowledge production. Its central task is the critique of Eurocentrism and the repudiation of the narrative of modernity. Aiming at the reformulation of the knowledge and identities authorised by colonialism, the postcolonial intellectual goes beyond nationalism, “to undo the Eurocentrism produced by the institution of the West’s trajectory, its appropriation of the other as History” (Prakash, 87). The Western ideology that postcolonialism confronts, operates not just through the Eurocentric discourses but has penetrated into the national body politic affecting both the public and private realms. As the imperial discourse “operates through its authorisation and deployment by the nation-state” (Prakash, 89) during the post independence period, the confrontation is more intimate, occurring within the national body politic, within the psyche. The intimacy of the “self and the other”, the coloniser and the colonised and the discourses of domination and resistance suggest that postcolonial criticism “occupies a space that is neither inside nor outside the history of Western domination but in a tangential relation to it” (Prakash, 87). Postcolonial criticism developed in accordance with these issues posed by the new historical context goes beyond other political concepts that resist colonialism while sharing many of their concerns. Padmini Mongia elaborates on them:

The political concepts that have shaped modern history - - democracy, the citizen, nationalism - - no longer seem adequate for coping with contemporary
realities. The rise of new social movements around such issues as race, gender and ethnicity, have revealed the limits of older conceptions of community, individual and nation. Profound changes such as decolonisation, the movement of peoples on a hitherto unmatched scale, and new distributions of global power, have led to instabilities which have revealed that the old narratives of progress and reason are inadequate for addressing contemporary realities and the numerous fractures that attend them. Postcolonial theory has been formed as a response to these pressures even as it offers a means of speaking of them (5).

Originating in the new global scenario, the postcolonial discourse addresses the contemporary issues relating itself to and at the same time distancing itself from all oppositional discourses that try to subvert the imperial authority.

The postcolonial period witnesses a transition in the nature of colonial authority and the state. If the metropolitan bourgeoisie has domination over the state during the colonial period, the post independence period presents a more fluid situation where the national bourgeoisie, landowners and metropolitan bourgeoisie compete with each other for the domination over the state. Hamza Alavi’s observation on postcolonialism in A Dictionary of Marxist Thought is relevant here. According to him, these oppositional forces operate within a “single peripheral capitalist mode of production in which the various classes are all located, the metropolitan bourgeoisie having a structural presence in these societies” (83). So the postcolonial societies reveal a structural similarity brought about by the common experience of colonialism though
differences do exist between individual nations. This similarity originates from the common experience of colonialism. Helen Tiffin in her article “Postcolonialism, Postmodernism and Rehabilitation of Postcolonial History” defines postcolonial as a term, which is “used to describe writing and reading practices grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe but as a consequence of European expansion into and exploitation of “the Other worlds” (170). Tiffin without doubt relates postcolonial writings to the historical experiences like the European expansion and exploitation of ‘the other’ worlds.

Reiterating the interrelationship between the historical experience of colonialism and postcolonial writings, Tiffin identifies the rudimentary dialectic of colonialism that stratifies the colonised world into two, the coloniser and the colonised. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin refer to this homogeneity in the postcolonial societies, in their famous work, Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures, when they observe that “they emerged in their present form of the experience of colonisation” and that they “asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power” (2). It is true that the tension between the imperial power and the colonised is a continuous process that runs throughout the postcolonial period.

Analysing the Indian situation, it is true to say that the social transformations that formulated a postcolonial society in India began to appear in the early period of colonial rule. It created structural transformation within the society forming new classes, new forms of oppression and new social formation with certain classes or
groups dominating over others. The Industrial bourgeoisie and the substantial peasants acquired dominance in India during the Raj. Heterogeneous in nature, these classes included various types. The land-owning class included those who cultivated substantial holdings on "capitalistic" lines with hired wage labour and those who continued "feudalistic" production with tenancy. The industrial bourgeoisie comprised small urban business in control of single industries, monopoly business establishments with interests spread throughout the country and an educated middle class made up of various professional elite, including lawyers, doctors and the civil service personnel. The natural subordinates to these classes were landless labourers, petty traders, the urban work force and other unemployed or scarcely employed classes. Referring to the essential multiplicity of these classes R. Sudarsan in an article, "The Political Consequences of Constitutional Discourse" writes: "These classes were in themselves heterogeneous" (60). The heterogeneity of the different classes in confrontation makes the dialectical struggle a complex phenomenon.

The colonial state in India can be differentiated from the metropolitan capitalist state, as the former has been established by external forces while the capitalism in Europe emerged from internal contradictions within an earlier mode of production. Preserving the pre-colonial social formation and integrating the economy with the world capitalist system, colonialism in India heavily retarded the growth of Indian economy. The nationalist movement brought together various groups with conflicting interests against colonial rule. The movement itself was a site of struggle between different classes for control over it. Entering into a series of alliances between the
bourgeoisie and other dominant classes and mobilising the subordinate classes under its leadership the nationalist project aimed at the reorganisation of the political order. But the effort was moderated in two quite fundamental ways. Partha Chatterjee writes:

On the one hand, it does not attempt to break up or transform in any radical way the institutionalist structures of "rational" authority set up in the period of colonial rule. On the other hand, it also does not undertake a full-scale assault on all precapitalist dominant classes; rather, it seek to limit their former power, neutralise them where necessary, attack them only selectively, and in general bring them round to a position of subsidiary allies within a reformed state structure (Nation, 212)

The ambivalent attitude of the nationalist movement is shared by the independent state. The post-independence period indicates a shift in the power structure with the emergence of a complex power centre, where various forces contend for supremacy while compromising on sharing power. While indicating a political shift from colonialism to national democracy, the transfer of power failed to materialise the aims of the national movement. During the post-independence period, the state continued the legacy of a colonial state though with certain shifts. Though the national bourgeoisie was able to establish its dominance, the post-independence state was a site of various confrontations. Kalpana Wilson comments on the nature of this transition thus:
... the structure and apparatus of the state remained largely identical with those of the colonial state which had been used to reshape the Indian social formation according to the needs of metropolitan capital. And the same alliance with the rural dominant classes which had enabled the bourgeoisie to dominate the independence movement now proved to be a major constraint upon capitalist transformation. The state thus became the focal point for a number of different contradictions whose strength varied over time: contradictions between different sections of the dominant classes, between the interests of imperialist and indigenous capital, as well as between the producing classes and those who appropriated their surplus (249-250)

Tracing the confrontations between various classes for hegemony over the state during the post-independence period Kalpana Wilson towards the continuance of the colonial power structure and the change that the colonial agenda undergoes during pre-independence and post-independence period.

Abdul R. Jan Mohamed in his article, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature”, perceives two phases of colonialism; dominant and hegemonic. The dominant phase is characterised by the subjugation and violent oppression of the native by the colonialist material practices and the oppressive state apparatus. In this phase, “Colonialist discursive practices, particularly its literature are not very useful in controlling the conquered group” (62). Many factors contribute to the formation of the hegemonic phase, though the most
important one is the ritualised acceptance of the Western form of parliamentary government after independence. During this phase colonial oppression used discursive practices to subjugate the psyche of the native who “accept a version of the colonisers’ entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions, and more important, mode of production” (Jan Mohamed, 62). Jan Mohamed’s differentiation of the colonial experience into two phases - - dominant and hegemonic - - help in analysing the difference between the colonial and post-independence periods. According to him the society undergoes fundamental structural transformation with the acceptance of the Western social structure and its value system. The hegemonic phase begins with this internalisation of the colonial values and its social structure. Jan Mohamed’s division of the process of colonialism into dominant and hegemonic phases takes into account the internal structural changes that the society has undergone as a result of colonial expansion.

Edward Said in his famous work, Culture and Imperialism attempts yet another categorisation. He writes: “In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended, imperialism, as we shall see in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices” (8). Said assigns new meanings to the terms “colonialism” and “imperialism” by connecting them with specific social structures. According to him they are not simple acquisitions but are impelled by ideological formation. These terms refer to two different stages in the history of formerly colonised nation. But it is true that these different stages while different from each other establish a continuity of concerns. While breaking away from the colonial political dominations, nationalism continues to bear
its legacy in the socio-cultural realms. Aspiration towards modernity, rationality and democratic social order is clearly evident in the Indian nationalist movement. Moreover the administrative, educational and legal systems overlap to a great extent affecting the continuance of the power structure. Satish Saberwal in his essay, “Democratic Political Structures” speaks about the Western influence on Indian institutions. He writes: “The political structures launched by the Constitution of 1950 relied heavily on Western institutional styles which stood in sharp contrast to the political styles which had prevailed in India historically” (15). The Western institutions denied normal growth of Indian economy and administrative system and was blind to the real problems and needs of the society.

The imperial regime has affected every area of modern Indian life, like economy, society, politics, administrative structure and the culture. Regarding this overall influence Bipinchandra writes:

A whole world was lost, an entire social fabric was dissolved, and a new social framework came into being that was stagnant and decaying even as it was being born. To turn around a well-known phrase, India underwent a thorough going colonial ‘cultural revolution’. (Nationalism 7)

The abrogation of the internal structure affected various realms of Indian society such as the social, political, administrative, economic and the cultural. The transformation which resulted in the evolution of a new social framework occurred as
an “integral part of the development of colonialism” (Chandra, Nationalism 6). The overlapping of concerns and structures in the colonial and post-independence periods give more authenticity to the term “postcolonial” to refer to the period from the moment of colonisation to the present day. Regarding the continuance of the colonial structure in various systems of governance in India, Partha Chatterjee writes: “The postcolonial state in India has only expanded and transformed the basic institutional arrangements of colonial law and administration, of the courts, the bureaucracy, the police, the army, and the various technical services of government” (Nation 15). He observes a continuity from the colonial period to the post-independent period involving structural and ideological factors.

Commenting on the popular use of the term “post” meaning “after” or “anti” in jargons like postmodernity, postcoloniality and post feminism in his book Location of Culture Homi Bhabha writes: “These terms that insistently gesture to the beyond, only embody its restless and revisionary energy if they transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment” (4). Not only the colonised nations but even the colonisers have to confront its postcolonial history as “internal to its national identity” (6) because of postwar migration and the flood of refugees. So, widely different in nature, postcoloniality developed into a global experience crossing the boundaries of the nation. So even while possessing a global status postcoloniality is divergently placed in multiple cultural locations revealing histories of oppression and strategies of resistance. The traditional concepts of homogenous national culture are giving way to a transnational hybrid culture. Nation is
a contested term today and the idea of a pure national identity can be achieved only through the destruction of the borders of modern nation (Bhabha, 5). The transnational hybrid culture does not indicate transnational homogenous culture, instead the uniformity relies in the hybridity rather than in the elements that produce hybridity.

In part, cultural variety is prevalent even within the national boundaries. The continuing confrontation and the dialectical relationship between nations, cultures and concepts provide an “in-between”, hybrid space. Homi Bhabha writes:

Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an intimacy. It is an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an ‘in-between’ temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history (13)

Informed by this hybridisation of culture, postcolonialism responds to the continuing confrontations in the society at various sites; culture, sex, race, migrancy, history, economy and politics. Intimately associated with the contemporary social praxis, postcolonialism cannot delink itself from anti-colonial and anti-neocolonial discourses and practices. According to Bhabha “Postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent ‘neo-colonial’ relations within the ‘new’ world order and the multinational division of labour”. Such a perspective which connects the postcolonial theory with contemporary reality enables the “authentication of histories
of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance" (6). So postcolonial theory cannot be dissociated from the contemporary struggle against colonial and neo-colonial practices.

The heterogeneity and unity of postcoloniality is resident in this pattern of oppression and resistance. The repetition of this pattern of exploitation and resistance ensures uniformity. The heterogeneity of postcolonial discourses and practices originate from the divergent forms of exploitation instituted by the coloniser and the multiple forms of resistance to it. As Gyan Prakash puts it, “the functioning of colonial power was heterogeneous with its founding oppositions” (96). This heterogeneity originates from the fact that colonial discourse operated as the structure writing and that the structure of their enunciation remained heterogeneous with the binary oppositions that order the discursive field. According to G.N.Devy: in this “elaborate pattern of collaboration and confrontation” (92) the terms “coloniser” and “colonised” are not fixed unchanging entities as they undergo semantic transformation during various stages of social development. This process is experienced in the cultural, ideological and psychological fields as well. They always undergo reconstitution and refiguration.

The operations of postcolonial criticism in these complex directions make it an ambivalent practice. Colonisation in India has to be studied in this direction giving adequate significance to the heterogeneous concerns that influence the postcolonial society. It won’t be right to study colonialism in India wholly in terms of capitalism. When we give foundational status to capitalism we ignore other concerns. Those who
try to rearticulate discourses other than capitalism neglect the story of capitalist exploitation. We have to be cautious enough to avoid both these mistakes. Accepting capitalism as the foundational theme in studying Indian history will show our adherence to capitalist homogeneity. Gyan Prakash explains, “making capitalism the foundational theme amounts to homogenising the histories that remain heterogeneous with it” (93). If capitalism is made the foundational theme in studying Indian history the difference between the metropolitan proletariat and the colonised subaltern will have to be effaced. This may reduce colonialism into the history of development of capitalism in India. Gyan Prakash believes that social identities like class, race, caste, gender, nation, ethnicity and religion are not equal categories. Woman as a social identity is different from a worker, an uppercaste Hindu is no equal to a citizen of India. The peculiar kind of relationship between these social identities cannot be explained through the concept of multiple selves, incorporating a variety of social identities. On the other hand Prakash feels:

... we have to think of the speciality of colonial difference as class overwriting race and gender, of nation overinscribing class, ethnicity and religion, and so forth - - an imbalanced process, but nevertheless a process that can be rearticulated differently. This is the concept of heterogeneity and cultural difference as it emerges from postcoloniality. (95)

It is true that various cultural forms coexist in confrontation and compromise in the postcolonial Indian society. But it is also true that certain cultural forms
predominate over others. The colonial ideology plays a dominant role during the postcolonial period. Nationalist historians assigned a prominent role to colonialism in shaping the economy, politics and culture of modern India. They argued that capitalist development began in Indian society along with colonialism. But the benefits of capitalism were denied to India as the colonial rulers compromised on key issues for their own sustenance and more profit. Thus colonialism developed “the under development” in India. The new framework came into being dissolving the economic and political basis of the old society and the precapitalist mode of production. Colonisation of India was completed by integrating Indian economy with world capitalist economy.

Hamza Alavi in his essay, “India: The Transition to Colonial Capitalism” also differentiates between the European capitalism and the version of capitalism practised in the colonised nations. According to him, “the colonial impact brought about a specific, colonial type of ‘bourgeois revolution’ in the colonies, establishing a structure of specifically colonial capitalism” (1). Speedy industrialisation and the destruction of the feudal structure, the twin functions of a bourgeois revolution did not take place in India. Moreover “the pattern of production was progressively lopsided, geared to the requirements of the metropolitan economy, (i.e. exports) and also providing market for the products of metropolitan industry” (Alavi, 66). Thus the colonialists successfully implemented an economic policy that helped the development of their economy while “developing under development” in India.
But revisionist history challenges the assumption that colonial rule represented a fundamental break in Indian history. Historians like Christopher Bayly, David Washbrook and Frank Perlin argue that the capitalist development began in the precolonial period itself. The economic institutions like commodity production, trading, banking, accounting, educated expertise and industrial entrepreneurs emerged in the pre-colonial period. So the transition from the precapitalist society can be seen as the natural outcome of the peculiar history of “Indian capitalism”. Partha Chatterjee rightly suspects that the revisionist historians attempt “to take the sting out of anticolonial politics...” by situating the origins of colonialism in India’s own precolonial history. Even if we agree with the revisionist historians, regarding the origin of capitalism in India we cannot be blind to the role of colonialism in supporting and directing the development of capitalism in India. So it is true that Indian capitalism was not allowed to develop freely because of the interventions by the colonial regime that protected its own economic interests, hampering the growth of Indian economy.

If economic exploitation was one of the foremost crimes that the colonialists committed, the most important area of its domination was the psyche of the colonised. Intervening in the cultural life of the native, the colonialists were able to reshape their perception about themselves and their relationship with the world. Ngugi wa Thiongo observes: “Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self definition in relationship to others” (16). Cultural supremacy is attained through a deliberate undervaluing of the culture of the colonised and establishing the superiority of the
culture and language of the colonised. The imposition of colonial culture on various precolonial formations inserted into colonial societies widely different, social formations. In a country like India where the divisions of religion, caste, creed, region and culture prevail, colonialism produces divergent reactions. Commenting on the culture balance that prevailed in India in the past, Marx and Engels observed that the invaders were conquered by the superior civilisation of India. But the British were the first conquerors superior and so inaccessible to Hindu civilisation (81-82). As a result of various invasions, the languages, cultures and religions of the invaders became part of Indian tradition enriching the cultural framework. This inner urge towards synthesis, derived essentially from the Indian philosophic outlook was the dominant feature of Indian cultural and even racial development, according to Nehru (6). It is believed that Indian culture has the ability to convert into its own strength the challenges raised against it. Nehru writes:

> Each incursion of foreign elements was a challenge to this culture, but it was met successfully by a new synthesis and a process of absorption. This was also a process of rejuvenation and new blooms of culture arose out of it, the background and essential basis, however, remaining much the same (6).

This remarkable talent for adjusting to new situation broadened the base of traditional Indian culture and rejuvenated it on various occasions. It was on this cultural milieu that Europeans exerted their influence. Different from the previous invaders, the Europeans had no plan to settle down in India. Moreover they were
reluctant to penetrate deep into the land and society of India. Comparing the British with previous invaders, Nehru comments:

Every previous ruling class, whether it had originally come from outside or not was indigenous, had accepted the structural unity of India’s social and economic life and tried to fit into it. It had become Indianised and had struck roots in the soil of the country. The new rulers were entirely different, with their base elsewhere, and between them and the average Indian there was a vast and unbridgeable gulf - - a difference in tradition, in outlook, in income, and ways of living. (302-303)

The inability of the new rulers to identify with the Indian race can be explained not only in terms of the race and class differences but also in view of their exploitative politics. While the previous invaders settled and mixed with Indian races making India their home, the British colonialists abstained from such identification. So instead of assimilating themselves with the dominantly feudal Indian society the British utilised the Indian wealth for the development of British capitalism. But in this process Britain acted - - quoting Marx’s famous phrase - - as the ‘unconscious tool of history’ in connecting the stagnant Indian economy with the growing world capitalist economy. The economic consequences of British colonisation, “the drain of wealth and the destruction of handicrafts” (Panikkar, 6) deepened the gulf between the ruler and the ruled.
Bourgeois liberal ideology and scientific temperament of the West inspired the English educated Indians to reshape and reform the traditional Indian institutions. Inscriptions of this bourgeois liberal ideology is visible not only in social activists like Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore and the like but even in the religious reformists like Swami Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswathi. While the pre-colonial religious movements like Buddhism mainly confined to the spiritual concerns like the means of salvation, the religious reform movements in the postcolonial India was not indifferent to the problem of material existence (Panikkar, 97). Signs of such bourgeois perspective is visible in the sphere of economy and society as well. According to K.N. Panikkar,

The basic assumption of economic thinking, even when anchored on opposition to colonial exploitation, was the development of a capitalist order. The critique of the revenue administration and the system of inheritance which facilitated fragmentation of property and hence hampered accumulation of capital, the emphasis on import of capital and technology, the opposition to drain of wealth and export of raw material, and a passionate commitment to industrialisation were all part of a bourgeois vision. (96)

Thus the bourgeois liberalism which is considered to be a logical outcome of British rule played a major role in the production of the nationalist ideology and its eventual hegemony. The power struggle between the nationalist ideology and the colonial one continues throughout the postcolonial period. But the nationalist ideology
reveals its ambivalence. Revealing its duality Partha Chatterjee writes: “Nationalist thought, in agreeing to become ‘modern’, accepts the claim to universality of this ‘modern’ framework of knowledge. Yet it also asserts the autonomous identity of a national culture. It thus simultaneously rejects and accepts the dominance, both epistemic and moral, of an alien culture” (Nationalist, 11). Thus its attitude towards colonial dominance remains ambivalent as it collaborates with the dominant colonial ideology sharing the concepts of modernity while confronting colonialism’s political dominance. So a clear division between the coloniser and the colonised becomes impossible in the postcolonial period. This cultural fluidity is further deepened by the hybridity of the colonial power itself.

Bhabha terms this an “in between” position as it occupies a space that is neither inside nor outside the colonial ideology. The writers of The Empire Writes Back explores this complex relationship thus:

In order to maintain authority over the Other in a colonial situation, imperial discourse strives to delineate the Other as radically different from the self, yet the same time, it must maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorise control over it. The Other can, of course, only be constructed out of the archive of ‘the self, yet the self must also articulate the Other as inescapably different. Otherness can thus only be produced by a continual process of what Bhabha calls ‘repetition and displacement’ and this instigates an ambivalence at the very site of imperial authority and control. (103)
The interrelationship between the "self" and the "other" "coloniser" and the "colonised" reveals the complexity of colonial discourse, the hybridity of the colonial authority and the ambivalence of resistance. According to Partha Chatterjee, the "bourgeois opposition to imperialism was always ambiguous. (Nationalist 25)

This ambiguity can be traced back to its origin in the dominant colonial discourse itself. Nationalism, the emancipatory power, has two important trajectories: "the dismantling of the colonial apparatus and the construction, in its place of new social order" (Chatterjee, Nationalist, 25). While constructing a new social order corresponding to the class interest of the political group that led to the anticolonial struggle it formulates its own hegemonic project in opposition to colonialism displacing the existing pluralities, of the indigenous society (Ahmad, 133). Thus nationalism in effect becomes the site for the construction of a new hegemonic discourse, "which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms" (Said, Culture 269)

Nationalism originated in India within the complex matrix of political and cultural confrontation. Combining bourgeois liberalism and humanism of the West and orthodox cultural chauvinism of the East, nationalism constructed its own ideological position against the colonial domination and the control of tradition.

Ideologies inherently opposed to each other co-exist within the nationalist ideology under the broad aim of anticolonialism, creating inner fragmentation. This
sort of a broad alliance between national bourgeoisie and the other dominant classes weakens the revolutionary fetishism and forces it to stick to a moderate compromise formula. Commenting on this duplication of bourgeois nationalism, Partha Chatterjee writes:

On the one hand, it does not attempt to break up or transform in any radical ways the institutional structures of 'rational' authority set up in the period of colonial rule, whether in the domain of administration and law or in the realm of economic institutions or in the structure of education, scientific research and cultural organisation. On the other hand it also does not undertake a full scale assault on all pre-capitalist dominant classes, rather it seeks to limit their former power, neutralise them where necessary, attack them only selectively, and in general to bring them round to a position of subsidiary allies within a reformed state structure (Nationalist, 49)

The ambivalent attitude resident in the nationalist project has its origin in the confused ideological structure of postcolonial society. Though it welcomed the modern, rational ideas and tried to modernise the customs and attitudes, it compromises with the orthodox feudal forces as well as with various dominant structures revealing its ambivalence. Thus in India the bourgeois revolution was partial and lacked the revolutionary mission of a progressive bourgeoisie trying to create nation in its own image.
The ambivalence of the nationalist project delineates the complexities involved in the construction of the nationalist movement. A confluence of various classes, interests and ideologies, the nationalist movement combined multivalent ideological positions making the resistance movement a complex amalgam of opposing tendency. In order to trace the dialectic that operates at various sites within the postcolonial society it is necessary to identify the opposing movements both in the social or rather institutional and discursive fields.

Colonialism has very little in common with the precolonial institutions and discourses, as it is a violent imposition rather than the product of an internal socio-political confrontation. But the precolonial forms set necessary links with postcolonial social formation by setting a proper socio-political situation suitable for the colonial invasion and subsequent take over of the state. Establishing a central authority displacing the earlier irregular, multiple ruling structures the colonial state began reorienting traditional Indian society using European discourses of modernity, enlightenment, individualism, rationalism and freedom. Often termed by the colonial as well as nationalist historians as the confrontation between medieval and modern, this tradition versus modern dialectic has set the proper background for the emergence of the nationalist movement.

The socio-cultural confrontations unsettle the notions of tradition and modernity and as a result traditional culture becomes non-traditional and the imported Western modernity undergoes transformation. So it is right to ascertain that the two concepts,
tradition and modernity underwent semantic transformation through confrontation and compromise, precipitating a discursive space in which nationalist ideals are flushed and shaped.

The novelists discussed in this thesis consciously or unconsciously adhere to these post-colonial theories and show how the language of the colonisers can be used to write against the colonisers.