Chapter – III

POSTMODERN ELEMENTS IN POSTCOLONIALISM
Modernism with its probing fingers of experimentation left nothing untouched. With the awareness dawning on the political and aesthetic leaders of the period, a systematic code was laid down to control every aspect of life. People accepted them because it was exhilarating and it provided a room for academic exercises. This state of affairs continued up to the 1940s. It was readily adopted by feminists and theorists of postcolonialism. This welcoming was a mixed boon because the element of radical scepticism was disturbingly present.

The doubts expressed on the introduction of postmodernism is analyzed by Mark Hawkins – Dady when it was argued that the element of scepticism that had become a part of the new phenomenon should not be wrongly viewed. Skepticism was not to be viewed as an annihilator of existing positive values. It was out to examine them. Every age has its own pet theories and
manifestations. Modernism played with consciousness and form. These features were mirrored in different genres of literature of the twentieth century. Modern literature could not remain impervious to the repeated knocks of postmodernism. Under a vastly changed condition, postmodernism invaded the domain of literature, particularly in fiction. This particular genre was subjected to innumerable treatments. McHale has given a very interesting argument on postmodern fiction. Based on his assumptions that postmodernism was “not a found object, but a manufactured artifact” he gave his personal opinion on contemporary novels by Umberto Eco, Thomas Pynchon, Joseph, McElroy, Christine Brooke-Rose and various cyberpunk-science-fiction writers, although the scope of reference is expectedly wide. A person like Linda Hutcheon concludes that postmodern texts problematize the traditional way of looking at history. She turns to the politics of postmodernism, which she memorably describes as “double-coded”, in the sense that parody (a staple of most postmodernist forms) both subverts and legitimizes what it parodies. Postmodernism is thus a politically contradictory phenomenon in which “authorized transgressions” abound.

Modern fiction was conversant with the use of history and myths. Their use was extended under postmodern fiction-mixed genres that do contain historical narrative, nature writing.

The traditional attitude that was shown by the modern writers began to be disregarded. Time was conceived as a sequence of movements; time remained as an immeasurable entity. If ideas were churned out of the real environment and the internal world of the mind, the postmodernists took their inspiration from some of the most unexpected areas like electronic technology,
physics, entropy, virtual reality, space-time – continuum. Thomas Pynchon’s works, for example, \textit{V} (1963), \textit{The Crying of Lot 49} (1966) and \textit{Gravity’s Rainbow} “are based on the complex metaphors which, instead of acting as anchors of sense, scatter meaning across a wide terrain. Exhaustive in scope, they include references to electronics, the history of the US postal system, information theory, ballistics, the second law of thermodynamics and many other weighty topics.

Despite this encyclopaedism, Pynchon mocks the urge to construct a grand narrative out of these disparate materials. Pynchon was in favour of adopting Technocriticism in his works. What is so singular of technocriticism is that it allows a rethinking on the traditional construction of a line of story which was linear in character. There is no beginning, middle and end. The very body of the text may be manipulated to achieve the desired end. Various other added accessories may be put on show along with the text. All of these things can be done with the clicking of a mouse. In this way “The text is now a network, or a “city of texts”.

A writer like Ronald Barthelme serves as an example of one of the most important literary characteristics of fiction. The surreal world is created through juxtapositioning the opposite against the first image. He admitted that he always considers the opposite of a proposition. This double image abounds in his works. The double-mindedness are clearly etched in “Me and Miss Mandible” and “The Temptation of St. Anthony.”
The principal of contradiction can be found to show that Barthelme was following the tradition of postmodern writing with a single mindedness. Barthelme thought with introspection on one occasion:

People read the fiction with after-images of Rolls Royce's and Rolexes still sizzling in their eyes. This was very much indicative of the double mindedness of postmodernist fiction.7

Postmodernism has let fiction mixed with genres other. The freedom given to the writer is one that was never thought of. Just as many images and texts come and go with the click of the mouse, the writer borrows, mocks, imitates and puts himself in the position of an input device. This is how another fiction writer, Kathy Acker, did with the works of fiction. Originally a fiction was read and enjoyed because it possessed all the trappings of a typical novel. There should be a plot propelled by real and near-real characters. The psychological motivation present in it moves both the plot and the reader. This could not be found in her creations. Employment of details, that too, of graphic descriptions of pornographic scenes became her hallmark. This could be found in Blood and Guts in High School, Empire of the Senseless (1988) and Don Quixote (1986). She expressed that she wanted to do something nasty to novel.

The very essence of what a postmodern fiction looks like can be found in Kathy Acker's words:

Sexual transgression, passages of lyricism, occupations of the space, of otherness, the use of different genres (romance, science-fiction, pornography, adventure), the plagiarizing of high and popular cultural works
Cervantes, William Gibson, the representation of fluid subjectivities and the questioning of notions of originality and realism. The hilarious Hello, I'm Linda Erica Jong (1984) is a send-up of the consciousness-raising, sexually liberated feminist fiction of the 1970s, of which Jong's Fear of Flying (1973) is a prime example. It plays with Jong's realist aesthetics and links sex and death in ways the relentlessly upbeat Jong would never do. It is also a skit on the death of the author (Big, not italics) and concludes with a drawing of a tombstone which bears the legend 'RIPE. J' ... while Kathy Goes to Haiti (Big italics) (1978) alternates chapters of seeming autobiography with material lifted from pornographic sources.

There are so many controversial elements in the books of Acker. The pornographic elements look objectionable. Her books show that so many creative paths can be taken by a person at the same time.

Postmodern literature is mainly concerned with exploring the self. The act of writing is as important as the elements of narration present in the work of fiction. In If on a Winter's Night a Traveller (1979), Calvino uses the viewpoint of the second-person narrative. In the novel a reader is found reading. Finding the book to be faulty the reader reads the first chapter many times. When he reads another new copy he finds the narrative to be different drastically. The reader comes into contact with the female counterpart in a bookshop. The story revolves round the relationship between the two readers and the other doing with a variety of first chapters: "which the first Reader 'reads' in his replacement book."
Writing American Fiction (1961) and Stalking the Billion – Fooled Beast: a Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel (1989) show that literature can change colours. Roth's essay gave the hint that any writer could play with fantasy and self-consciousness. There was an appeal to return to realism. Roth wanted novelists to be more concerned with depicting the chaotic and disordered way of life of the city. He attempted to bring a balance by using the journalistic approach of Balzac and Thackeray to the urban New York. This international phenomenon had many writers from surprisingly different parts of the globe, viz. Günter Grass and Peter Handke (Germany); Georges Perce and Monique Writing (France); Umberto Eco (Big) and Italo Calvino (Big) (Italy); Augela Carter (Big) and Salman Rushdie (Britain); Stanislaw Lem (Poland); Milan Kundera (former Czechoslovakia); Mario Vargoes Llosa (Peru); Gabriel Garcia Márquez (Colombia); J.M. Coetzee (South Africa); and Peter Carey (Australia).

These writers had many things in common. The important features were worldly chaos; a loss of the awareness of time; free use of pastiche; treatment of words as sign materials that are broken up into pieces; ideas are scattered; mental illness; a failure to locate difference of discourse. These features are starkly visible on the literary attempts of the contemporary writers. According to John W. Aldridge –

virtually everything and everyone exists is such a radical state of distortion and aberration that there is no way of determining from which conditions in the real world they have been derived or from what standard of sanity they may be used to depart. The conventions of verisimilitude and sanity have been nullified. Characters inhabit a dimension of structureless being in
which their behaviour becomes inexplicably arbitrary and unjudgeable because the fiction itself stands as a metaphor of a derangement that is seemingly without provocation and beyond measurement.  

As argued by Linda Hutcheon ‘Historiographic metafiction’ that deliverably distorts history can show clearly how postmodern fiction functions. It may be in the forms of apocryphal history, anachronism, or the blending of history and fantasy. It was Hegel who suggested that history could be regarded as a work belonging to art. History can be read and enjoyed like a novel because the reader knows when the end will come. Writing history is like writing a novel because like fiction history is endowed with connected plots which appears to function freely of human design. The self-conscious distortion of history occurs in Malcolm Bradbury’s *The History of Man* (1975). Patricia Waugh says:

Like much British self-conscious fiction, however, the novel manages to suggest the functionality of ‘reality’ without entirely abandoning realism. The only *blatantly* metafictional moment is when an academic novelist, clearly recognizable as a surrogate for Bradbury himself, scurries across the corridor of Watermouth University where the novel is set .... A close analysis of the history of *Man*, though, reveals an intense preoccupation, formally as well as thematically, with the notion of history as fiction. Even the opening paragraph is less a piece of realistic prose than *parody* of realism.

The self-conscious distortion of history that comes about as a result of parody needs deep probing. The appearance of parody is a good signal of literary change. It is used to undermining earlier conventions of fiction that
have become stale; it is described as clearing a new path for fiction. Parody can be double edged by being either destructive or creative. Self conscious parody results out of the application of 'laying bare the device'. Russian formalist theory sees such a parody as a renewal of literary development. This is because defamiliarization or making strange connotes a literary dynamism. Metafiction can bring a new life to fiction through the employment of 'making strange' because it has come to be known that the conventional novel has become inauthentic.12

Transformation may be the origin of pastiche. There is a tendency to leave behind the reality of life and take shelter in a haven of artistic freedom that leads to self-consciousness, self-reflexiveness and self-mimicry. The material is, most often, sought in the past. The person who practices pastiche is not interested in the real thing; he goes for imitating a pre-existing art.

Pastiche provides a lot of power and help to fiction and old forms. But the world offered by it is somewhat dark. Life has no meaning; it is described as a bundle of meaningless movements – a fruitless ontological exercise. The individual loses his or her identity. It merely becomes a symbol of a unit of a society. The concept of morality seems to have escaped its notice.

A disparaging connotation is always attached to the term 'pastiche'. It is allowed to burden itself with such expressions as being made-up, derivative, not complete, disingenuous. In Margaret Atwood’s Surfacing the nameless heroine criticizes a character for acting like pastiche:
The flower flowed into my eyes, I could see into him, he was an imposter, a pastiche, layers of political handbills, pages from magazines, affiches, verbs and nouns glued on him and shredding away, the original surface littered with fragments and tatters..."13

Instead of being moral, pastiche is formal. It is against the contents of target texts. This can be seen in Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style*. There "a most banal incident - a bus passenger's queer hat and his being observed a little later in a Paris square by the other passengers - is presented from ninety nine different viewpoints ..."14

As pastiche relies heavily on mimicry, the target text is always affected. But it abstains from judging it. As mentioned above, pastiche is always ready to destroy the original appearance, structure and content of a text, but it does it without any preconceived sense of judgement. Parody may claim a status of superiority in the act of subversion; this is not so with pastiche. Pastiche is closer to game and role playing.

According to Flann O. Brien pastiche and postmodern fiction go together to show that,

Pastiche can be a means of renewing and reactivating old forms. Since pastiche carries a double strain, tension is inbuilt in it. This double strain can also be an economic way of suggesting the whole ambience of the target text by just signaling it to the reader who is then expected to recall that text. Pastiche demands a well-informed reader.15
Modernism hates fragmentations; for postmodernism it is an occasion for celebration. The role played by fragmentation over literature, that is postmodern, is not far to seek. John Hawkes’ plot, character, setting and theme serve as the true enemies of the novel. The basic elements like plot, character, settings, themes came to be reduced to mere shadows of the former selves. It was Jonathan Baumbach who commented that reading a story was not a story at all. If modern writers wrote with fragmentation in mind, it was more out of a nostalgia for a unified and harmonious past. They were not happy if they had to present a scrappy picture. On the other hand, the postmodern writers hated the sense of completeness that was associated with the traditionality of narration. Many radical approaches were adopted to bring about a total divorce between the past and the present structuring of the narrative. Even an ending is multiple as exemplified by *The French Lieutenant’s Women* (1969) by John Fowles. The novel shows the inconclusive relationship that happens between Charles Smithron and Sarah Woodruff. The story is set against the love story conventions of 1867; it did not allow itself being regarded as a regular historical romance because there were so many interpolations and experiments.

The narrative is halted by Marx, Darwin; it becomes a part of the story. The story concludes with three possible endings. The works of Richard Brautigan and Donald Barthelme are full of space, titles, numbers or symbols indicative of inconclusions. As stated by Raymond Federman certain spaces, not intended for writing, are filled up with irrational graphics and discourses. This new approach can be found in William Gass’s *Willie Masters’ Lonsome Wife* (1967). The pages are differently coloured. The layout is very unusual; various types of fonts decorate the novel Barry Lewis states:
With works such as these by Fowles, Brautigan, Barthelme and Gass it is difficult not to be reminded of the famous epigraph to E.M. Forster’s *Howard End*: ‘Line in fragments.... Only connect ...’ We can counterpoint this with an utterance by a character in Barthelme’s *See the Moon?* from *Unspeakable Practices. Unnatural Acts* (1968). Fragments are the only forms I trust.16

In many works based on tryouts, fractured elements seem to be the most protrusive. A sort of telegraphic style, that shows a freedom characterized by disconnected words that are no longer cemented by syntax, seems to reign supreme. Marinetti wrote that such a vogue naturally sacrificed understandability. This principle of fragmentation sets aside the dilatory, and employs the sudden meetings that take place between the surprising and the disaffirmatory. “They are, to be sure, connected by the schema, who holds them in a rigidly ordered unity, but what is felt in reading the chapters themselves is a vigorous incohesiveness”17

The absence of togetherness that was found in some of the modern writers could again be detected being continued with zeal never seen before by postmodernists. It cannot be denied that discontinuity is a manifested part of a big pattern. A supposition of unity gathers the fragmented parts together. The unification remains only in an abstracted form because the separate parts maintain their own independence. According to Jacob Korg, “What the reader experiences is not a triumph of form over unruly materials, but rather a meeting between chaos and a hypothetical order in which chaos loses none of its rights”18 Fragmentation was, thus, seen as a result of experimentation that
changed into a subvertive attempt that tried to do away with an imagined totalizing compulsoriness seen in the previous works of modern writers.

On the other hand being postcolonial is an indication that it is part of a vast historical spectacle. It covers “all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.”19 This “ism” has been the target of miscellaneous definitions and remarks. Some have deliberately misinterpreted it, while others are not equipped properly to deal with it.

People belonging to different areas of studies have provided the most contentious and widely-differed definitions on it. A view given by one belonging to Political Science will differ a lot from the one given by a person belonging to literature. Minority - group activisms operate around individuals: (Fourth World micronationalisms – e.g., Webb, King), ‘Third World’ formations of a nationalist/anti-imperialist kind of (Parry, Shohat), and the grouping of critical practice centred around Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin’s *The Empire Strikes Back* characterized by Stephen Slemon as ‘Second World’ theory.

Truth, according to Foucault, has to do with statements that are to be pronounced as to be true through a group of conclusions. He has not yet given an explanatory verdict as to why they are true. Foucault is more involved with the concept of power that goes along with the utterance of truth and knowledge. In the hands of Marxists those determining decisions are analyzed against the context of socio-historical factors. This question of truth is not a part of the critical exercise performed to expose the true nature of postcolonialism. The
question is “whether like imperialism and colonialism it refers to a configuration of definite social and cultural features, which is a site not only of debate and struggle.”

The term “postcolonialism” is now widely used, with a high degree of frequency in the colonized states. While discussing the question of postcolonialism everybody seems to be unaware of the far-reaching consequences of nationalism. It is this hypothetical attitude that exposes the half-hearted appropriation of resistance by postcolonialism. So Hiren Gohain says that,

it is bound to remain blind to certain inherent problems in its position. For example, the post-colonial critique of the dominant Western discourse is silent on the contradictions... of the point of view from which the critique is made.

Colonialism acted as a force through the formations of opportunistic discourses. They were intended to act indirectly, but with a hidden design of putting a particular group under its control. The plan may be different, but postcolonialism also has used discourse to dismantle the fortress once known as colonialism. There is the evidence that the remnants of colonialism still remind people of a past legacy. Postcolonialism looks on these residues with the conviction that their removal physically and mentally is very necessary to bring about a new turn in the lives of those who once suffered under colonialism. It has, therefore, adopted certain tactics to meet the colonial legacies on a more than equal footing. This has resulted in a type of literature
full of daring strategies. All of such threatening poses have brought no visible changes because they maintain aloofness.

The truth is that postcolonialism as a discourse was put up through a mutual understanding between theorists of the Western world and those living in the third worlds. The real picture that is thrown up through this collusive venture is the fact that as a discourse it does more good to the colonial Western countries. So, Hiren Gohain concludes:

Postcolonialism is thus a concept that seeks to accommodate the tension of still ‘subaltern’ but restless former colonies to the still hegemonic intellectual structures of the West.\(^22\)

Under colonialism everything is Eurocentric; it is full of a compelling disposition. The temptation to undermine it is the basic purpose of the existence of postcolonialism. The latter hopes to find a substitutive arrangement that will drive away the colonial ghost. This colonial venture is the reason for the mushrooming of new movements and “isms” under the names of feminism and subaltern awakening. Satish C. Aikant remarks that “In the colonial context it has meant revising the notions of liberal humanism that provided ideological justification for colonialist enterprise.”\(^23\) This is tantamount to saying that colonialism flourished under the patronage of an idealism that is inimical to the aspirations of the subdued class.

A discussion on postcolonialism will look out of place unless it is coloured by the concept of nationalism. Such an approach always brings it in contrast against the global American post-modern culture. This culture is one
that is beyond the reach of those whose professed inclination towards nationalism sets them apart. The sharp contrast is because of the social and geographical location of the two “isms”. As for postcolonialism, it is described as being confined to those countries that went through the painful journey of colonialism. Writers and critics belonging to these countries are believed to give expression only through national allegories.24

The idea of nationalism differs from the slightest to the extreme, as far as countries belong to different parts of the globe. It will be wrong to group together these countries and discuss the question of nationalism under the same critical assessment. The differences are the result of the manner of opposition set up against the colonial powers. Such a nationalistic defiance succeeds according to the manner it was guided by the informed singular or multiple individuals. What is interesting is the fact that nationalism is a cementing factor for a people with different interests. This ability to bring together groups of people under the banner of nationalism is to be scrutinized by not excluding the social and historical perspectives.

The problem of the Indian nationhood began occupying the mind of the Indian people as many changes took place during the post-independence period. Many binary happenings gave birth to problematic discussions. Santosh Gupta thus writes that,

Among these debates the foremost is the one concerned with the definition of the nation. Constructing nationhood seems to be a different exercise for the imagination as many new voices, perceptions and locations begin to contest a mono ethnic, monolithic
concept of elitist, upper class, patriarchal hegemony.... Since independence new circumstances have given rise to many new pressures and standpoints. For Raja Rao India is a "not a country (desa), it is a perspective (darsana), a "metaphysical idea" .... For Salman Rushdie it was important to first define and decide "whether India was one nation or several ...." He constructs in his works a personal and partial image, emphasizing his personal point of view.25

Once such an internally solidified structure becomes a reality, the process of decolonization as a mechanical step comes into existence. The failure and the success of this mission of decolonization hangs on a clear-headed ability to distinguish between these two aspirations. Boehmer was aware of this dilemma when he states that decolonization,

can never be focused primarily at a discursive level ... the struggle for selfhood is much more than the subject of self-reflexive irony. In a third-world context, self legitimization depended, and depends, not on discursive play but on a day to day lived resistance, a struggle for meaning which is in the world as well as on paper.26

Various strategies, as if acting to destroy the foundation of colonization, have been employed to decolonize the hangover of imperial occupation. This effect has occupied the efforts of most of the postcolonial writers and intellectuals. This attempt was seen on the levels of language, ideology and an intense attitude of commitment. This approach of decolonization move away from the above-mentioned path and take on a new hue in the form of violence – that may be both physical and intellectual. Such a reaction of the colonized was instilled in the Indian writer by his masters, the colonizer. The strategy that was successfully employed by the occupiers never came to be forgotten by the
oppressed ones. It became, again, a potent method of wreaking vengeance on
the previous masters and their methods. As such there was nothing wrong; this
was how the people trying to decolonize thought of. In fact “the native creates
himself/herself through violence.”

Anderson said that “the members of even the smallest nations never
know most of their fellow members … yet in the minds of each lives the image
of their communion.” This is indicative of the fact that the notion of the
nation that came to be imagined in the postcolonial period was one that
materialized between literary attempts and the sense of nationness. This was
particularly true in the case of the novel and the newspapers. The concept of
the nation is a shapeless one. But this vague awareness was captured and
utilized to unify the fragmented concepts that made up a nation.

The concept of nationhood remained as distant dreams in the minds of
the Indians, specially, the creative people, because they grew up bereft of a
quantifying sense of belonging to a political structure. The endeavours put in
by the literary people were preparations for a final encounter with the real
sense of a nation and nationalism. Pradip Kumar Patra offers this view:

Again novels in the post-war period are unique because they operate in a world where the level of communications, the widespread politics of insurgent nationalism and the existence of large international cultural organizations have the topics of nationalism and exile unavoidably aware of one another. The idea of nationhood is not only a political plea, but a formal binding together of desperate elements. And out of the multiplicity of culture, race and political structures grows also a repeated dialectic of uniformity and
specificity: of world culture and national culture, of family and of people. One of the many clear formulations of this can be found in Fanon’s statement that it is at the heart of national consciousness [that it] lives and grows.29

Though nationalism plays an important role in the third-world fiction, the different reverberations that reflect a chaotic scene shows that paradoxically postcolonial novel is not nationalistic. Some attacked independence for they remained nostalgic about the European situation that existed before independence came. This can be seen in the works of Manohar Malgonkar and V.S. Naipaul. Again some writers like Tayeb Salih, Sipho Sepamla and others engaged in active anti-colonial activities of fiction. Others remained being fascinated by the atmospheric charm of a “dominant culture”.30

A writer like Leela Gandhi is ware of the contradictions that infest the postcolonial literary theory. It is to be accepted that nationalism was rarely accorded the importance it deserved. The notion of “nation” is not helped directly by the postcolonial novel because the dialect through which it is expressed belongs still to those who once manipulated a literary medium to subdue a subcontinent.31

The postcolonial period is described as being one where people are without political and historical ideas. If the novel once served as a repository of these ideas, this is not so again because they are exhausted in the postcolonial period. Just as nature hates the presence of vacuum and lets another agent fill it, in the like manner, “revolutionary consciousness” began to take the front seat in the medium of the novel. The uncomfortable situation mentioned above
began to be replaced by the works of writers like Nadine Gordimer and Salman Rushdie and they are described as “redressing such an adequacy”.

The role of the novel as a means to assert the anti-colonial view of the third-world novelists remain highly debatable. While others claim that “nationalism” was never a dominant factor in the game of exorcizing the spectre of colonialism, a critic like Frederic Jameson never doubted the role of nationalism. He sees a distinct devotion of fiction writers in their frantic attempts to bring back to consciousness the lost memory of whole nations and people.

The meaning of nationalism has a different tone and formulation. This approach has often been employed by Indians writers to analyze postcolonial works, with the result that they always present a twisted view which is neither digestible nor appreciable. That is why Satish C. Aikant asserts that,

If post-colonial theory has to evolve as an emancipatory project, it has to review the discourse of nationalism.

This is based on the assumption that history, which is a close relative of culture has been reinterpreted in the light of the supposed presence of different discourses. Such a standpoint allows the Indian nationalism to be differently looked at. No one can ignore the impacts that different cultural discourses will have on the interpretation of nationalism. In truth, the fine line drawn between the two types of nationalism that often appear with different roles is the result of the complex cultural happening that always determines the meaning of certain idealistic stances. The need to know this difference is important because
when nationalism is discussed in the light of Western interpretation, it would certainly lead the writer or the critic into confusion.

The imperial occupation of India took place under the employment of different approaches. Physical power paved the way to make inroads into the systems of the subcontinent. It came through trickery and diplomacy. The physically subdued people, thus, came to be weakened by internal bickerings. What was most unintentionally forgotten was the fact that the text also helped a lot in the process of domination, and letting the people feel that they were blessed by being under the administrative control of the foreigners. The natives were not aware, at the beginning, that it could one day be used again to tackle the conquering masters and their remaining influences. In the postcolonial period texts became tools that could undo the devious machinations of the colonial powers. This was not forgotten when Leela Gandhi mentioned that the text could be the most “significant instigators and purveyors of colonial power and its double, postcolonial resistance.”

That textuality could play a vital role in the interpretative phase of the imperial occupation was clearly mentioned by Lawson and Tiffin who were not aware of their penetrative and maintaining power. In the initial stage the dirty jobs were done through guns but they were continued, and became a part of the imperially manipulative means of palliation.

Third-world people knew that their total enslavement came through textuality. This consciousness allowed discourse and textuality to play important roles. What remained in the postcolonial period were remnants of imperial powers that still did not allow the independent people to act in a
situation that was free from the control of colonialism. Colonial power still continued to haunt the people in areas of culture, politics, judiciary and self assessment. The people may be denizens of politically demarcated area, but the feeling that the unseen ghost of colonialism still persisted to pop up in unexpected areas of life showed that imperialism did not fail to give up its claim, and physically, on the mind and knowledge of the people of India. Lawson and Tiffin thus said:

Just as fire can be fought by fire, textual control can be fought by textuality .... The post-colonial is especially and pressingly concerned with the power that resides in discourse and textuality; its resistance, then, quite appropriately takes place in – and from – the domain of textuality, in (among other things) motivated acts of reading.\textsuperscript{37}

Various interpreters on the role of the literary text feel that the colonialists were never at a loss on the way of cheating the Indian people with their brand of education which was offered as disinterested humanist activities. The possibility of a revolt was always on the horizon. The British felt that because their of being subordinated physically, mentally and intellectually, the anticipated future threat coming from the side of the natives was always a reality. As a last resort, they offered the humanist face of an administrator that was out offering a gift in the form of English literature. The truth is evident to everybody that the English had multi-faceted interests in controlling the mass of humanity of the subcontinent. They never failed to look on the Indians as consumers of their kind of business-oriented schemes. As such the promise of pedagogic enlightenment promised carried various connotations for
postcolonial critics and writers of the colonizers. Such a state was visibly felt when Gauri Viswanathan wrote that,

> the literary text functioning as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state, becomes a mask for economic exploitation ... successfully camouflaging the material activities of the colonizer.”

The English wielded the text as a weapon that reflected both the faces of an economic exploiter and a humanist.

The text became the vital means to counter the colonial influences. But the voice of the native, that was raised loudly to show that he was protesting, relied heavily on the genres created by the West. It was done with a political intent. The Indian writer knew that a Western situation could be challenged only by a Western genre. He, as such, used the novel, but with the inside being filled up with the aspirations and fears of the native people. The method of adopting a foreign genre was sometimes termed as a mimicry because the postcolonial literary exercise relied on a means that was not a product of the Indian soil. The radical writers were always desperate enough to take up any weapon if only it was to be able to cut the root of colonialism that lingered. This question of mimicry as an anti-colonial means is well expressed when Homi Bhabha says:

> Between the Western sign and its colonial significance there emerges a map of misreading that embarrasses the righteousness of recordation and its certainty of good government.
Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* is often cited as an important example of mimicry that attempts to subvert the intentions of an imperial power. A small Indian village comes under the Gandhian principles of passive resistance. What the villagers felt was very new which they had never thought of earlier. While trying to build up this story the writer, Raja Rao, was put in a position that threatened to question his position as an Indian and a creative writer. He was ready to use a foreign language in mixture with a rural-based Indian story. At the beginning, he was squeamish about the adoption of a language that once belonged to an enemy. He was flooded by the very thought of whether he could convey the various aspects of his story through the alien medium. Raja Rao was careful enough to maintain the properness of the language but he remained worried over the troubles that might result out of the use of Indian idioms. All those facts are now history.

After seeing how Raja Rao exploited the foreign language to stand up against the colonial power, one tends to remember the Caliban paradigm. Caliban applied his mastery over the language of his master as a potential weapon. He was not against the language itself; that language gave him the opportunity to protest against the injustice that he felt was done to him. This was a situation into which most Indian anti-colonial writers found themselves in. The paradox was that they had both to accept and subvert a language and a system. That position put a lot of Indian writers in a quandary. There was no better vehicle to subvert the imperial control over them. Truly they could be described as modern incarnations of Caliban of a fictional world.

Like Caliban, Rao had to take the offensive through an alien language. Leela Gandhi writes of Rao’s appropriation of the English language:
Rao refuses, for personal rather than political reasons, to relinquish the English language as the medium for Indian stories. Instead, he appropriates English on the grounds that it is 'not really an alien language to us', and in so doing, he exemplifies the 'hybridity' and 'syncretism' favoured by postcolonial literary criticism. In his words, 'we cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians'.

Postcolonialism has often served as a kind of refuse for writers who were out to maintain an agreement between them and the colonialists. This may be the case with Salman Rushdie also. It will be difficult to say that this writer derived his inspiration from his environment, which is not at all Western. He has not been able to sympathize with oriental problems because he happened to belong to a privileged group who could feel the tension between the imperialists and the third-world people. Under such circumstances, the writers feel ashamed of publicly announcing their loyalty to an alien culture and system. But they felt the need to write. This happened with Salman Rushdie also. It may be the reason why, as described by Hiren Gohain, Rushdie "preferred for lampoon and burlesque, a self-flagellating attack on hallowed institutions and traditions of the adopted country admired like the performance of a privileged fool." 

Most of the critical assessments on post-colonialism have concentrated on binary oppositions. This view was the main evaluation which was frequently favoured by the colonizers. They intentionally ignored the many-layered ramifications that accompanied a part of history concerned with the duration of postcolonialism. This was particularly true of those, both belonging to the colonizer and the colonized.
The binary phenomenon again extended to the postcolonial critique. In the true imperial style, the colonizers pursued their project on the levels of visualization and it was also translated into reality. Afterwards the anti-colonial powers also came into the consciousness of that project. This was mainly true with the third-world critics and creative writers. That they would be led to a "cultural self-determination" was their dream. If the colonizers had the goal of defrauding a subcontinental consciousness, the colonized ones hankered for theoretical solution through text-based critical stances.

The centrality of text in postcolonial literary and critical theories and practices can be traced back to the rise of writings on deconstruction in the late 1960s. Roger Fowler offers this interpretation:

It is a critique of concepts and hierarchies which, according to Derrida, are essential to traditional criteria of certainty, identity and truth; but which, nevertheless, achieve their status only by repressing and forgetting other elements which thus become the un-thought, and sometimes the unthinkable, of Western philosophy. Derrida, following Nietzsche and Heidegger, tries to expose this partiality, which he calls logocentrism... The logos casts a long shadow: a whole series of preferences in seen to derive, nostalgically, from its value judgements. Speech as, unmediated expression, is privileged in relation to writing, which appears as a suspect supplement to the authenticity of utterance – a distinction already evident in Greek thought.

The power of the written word was once again reinstated. It contributed to a slow and systematic dismantling of certain hierarchies of values that were once strictly followed. The logocentric metaphysics gave way to the supremacy
of the text. Against this background, the anti-colonial position sought strength from the invincibility of text as a means to dismantle the façade of colonialism. What originated in the West had its application in the third-world countries. Norris was aware of the might of writing and says: “Writing is that which exceeds – and has the power to dismantle – the whole traditional edifice of Western attitude to thought and language.”\textsuperscript{44} It is this dismantling ability that was redeployed by the colonized writers. If it was text that enslaved them, again the attempt was made to undo it through the written word. The powerful nature of the texts was rediscovered through deconstruction.

As a postcolonial novel Rushdie’s \textit{Midnight’s Children} is postmodern because it has used the work as a textual practice. The text remains prominent whether it is used as a tool of self-reflexivity or as a sign of intertext. Seetha Srinivasan writes:

\textit{Midnight’s Children} (1981) forces on the amalgamation of eastern content and western form to achieve the near ideal of a “hybrid post-colonial text.... And for the heightened effect of a post-modern, post-colonial “intertext” with omniscient narration, Padma is a “critic within the text” and also reader and co-creator of the narrative. The richness of technique results in exciting multiple interpretative possibilities.\textsuperscript{45}

Social tensions work wonders on the creative energy of those who think of literature as the last means to provide salvation to all problems seen and unseen. This cannot happen without language acting as a powerful means of communication. Writers, mainly fiction writers, have now come to think of language as something to be talked about. This is a new feature found only
under the postcolonial discourse. Language is the repository of meaning; when the latter is taken away only an optically perceived jumble of letters and words are left. If postmodernist writers are to play with these skeletons of language, it does mean that the formalistic approach of the visual artists has found a parallel in it. An artist working on an image that does not reflect the outside reality thinks in terms of colour, line, value, texture and placement of the positive areas. These elements have nothing to do with photographic representation. They can stand on their own. This intellectual exercise has crept into literary exercises. Rushdie and his followers were aware of what was happening in the global arena of isms. Poststructuralism has been deliberating on the indeterminate nature of the postcolonial Indo-Anglian writers, as such, found it nothing wrong in juggling with the changing nature of language. There is the case of Rohinton Mistry “who describes a Parsi life in terms of a sustained sociology of isolation.”46 The fiction writers are deliberately playing on the undecidability of meaning.

Besides being interested in the contingent nature of identity as may be found in language, they show a keen interest in the way history can become a tool to depict a range of incidents that do not leave behind the individual. At present history has assumed the tone of a subaltern historiography. It shows the banishment of the concepts of high and low art. The episodic life of an individual now invites the same attention as that of a national one. “One cannot however say that the post-colonial Indian English writers were interested in presenting their personal versions of history.”47 History is now more problematized; it reads like a jigsaw puzzle.
Another feature of postcolonial writing is aphasia – a loss of poetic speech. Poetic glibness was never a part of the novels written before Salman Rushdie. G.N. Devy mentions of Raja Rao as an example of such a writer who was not enamoured of verbal dexterity. At present the new Indo-Anglian writers feel the need of talking freely because it will loosen them emotionally and cerebrally from the vice-like grip of traditional narrative. According to G.N. Devy –

That alienation between speech and life seems to have disappeared now. The story-tellers Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Nina Sibal, Gurucharan Das and Balaraj Khanna seem to enjoy the speech-act with the excitement as the poets Jayanta Mahapatra, Vikram Seth and Dilip Chitre enjoy their poetic rhetoric. A similar love for speech is evident among the post-colonial critics like Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Susie Tharusic and Makarand Paranjape. However, this love for speech does not come from a discovery of communicative energy. In fact, in the post-colonial proliferation of language there is at work a kind of desperation which comes out of growing isolation; the linguistic energy displayed by the post-colonials is reminiscent of the compulsive story-telling by men surrounded by dark forests.

This practice of text will come to play an important role in dealing with the postmodern situation as faced by the young fiction writers.
Notes


2 Ibid., P. 530.

3 Ibid., P. 616.


7 Op. cit. 5; PP. 190-91.

8 Ibid., PP. 177-78.

9 Ibid., P. 209.


12 Ibid., P. 65.


18 Ibid., P. 126.


21 Loc. cit.


24 Ibid., P. 58.


30 Ibid. p. 41.


37 Ibid., P. 10.


47 Ibid., P. 114.

48 Ibid., P. 115.