



Postcolonial English in the Context of Languages and Empires

Dr. Parag Bombatkar

Associate Professor, Tirpude College of Social Work, Nagpur,

Email: pgbombatkar@gmail.com

Dr. Goldie G. Baghmar

Assistant Professor, S.N.Mor College of Arts and Commerce, G.D.Saraf Science College Tumsar,

Email: baghmarg1967@gmail.com

Abstract

Colonization is referred to as a process of settlement by the Europeans in non-European countries. Colonization mostly hit the native cultures, thereby altering them significantly. Colonization, thus, cannot be seen as an innocent settlement in a new place, it is rather an intentional mode of exploitation based on the difference in race, culture, knowledge and political governance. Going by the history of languages, it is evident that language and empires have always travelled together. This trend of using English got easily transferred into the literary sphere. Roots of the debate about English as a colonizer language are also found in the context of globalization. Postcolonial writers across the world have diverse approaches and have shown an uncomfortable relationship with the language of colonizers. The discourses of knowledge production like science, medicine, and technology require translation. In the global humanitarian movements, awareness about local conditions needs to be shared effectively.

Key words: colonization, hybrid, decolonized, international, language, globalization

Colonization is referred to as a process of settlement by the Europeans in non-European countries such as Asian, African, South American or Australian regions. While migration of human beings is an old process on earth, colonization that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century unleashed a violent encroachment and exploitation of native races and regions by the Europeans. Colonization mostly hit the native cultures, thereby altering them significantly. As a result, new hybrid forms of culture came into existence. Colonization, thus, cannot be seen as an innocent settlement in a new place, it is rather an intentional mode of exploitation based on the difference in race, culture, knowledge and political governance. Accordingly, the term post-colonial specifies a transformed historical situation and cultural formations which

arose as a result of changed political scenario and circumstances. It describes a completely new experience of ideologies. The decolonized nation clings to own independence by preparing its own strategies and programs for social and economic growth. The colonial influence however, is still apparent in the newer cultural forms.

Postcolonial English: Going by the history of languages, it is evident that language and empires have always travelled together. Colonization required the Europeans to gain social, legal and political control over the acquired region. The natives were forced to speak the language of the colonizer. English faced colonization by Latin during the early phase as Latin continued to be the language of scholarship, power and prestige. It is also worth mentioning that before English, there

were languages and literatures like Norse, Welsh, Latin and others. English dominated and suppressed Celtic, Welsh, Cornish and Gaelic. English, Dutch, Spanish, French and Portuguese where the languages acquiring 'International language' status because of their expanse across their own geographical borders into Asia, Africa and South America where these Europeans their machinery of empire. Incidentally with vast expansion of British Empire, Spanish and Portuguese empires shrank significantly resulting, in English language replacing Spanish and Portuguese as the most dominant imperial language.

English Literature: Even today, there seems to be confusion about using the term literature in the curricula. Worldwide, English literature is studied as a subject which includes literary figures like Walter Scott (Scottish), Oliver Goldsmith (Irish), and James Joyce (Irish). There were Europeans like Joseph Conrad, and authors such as Samuel Beckett who wrote considerably in other languages. Thus, English literature has covered under itself distinct languages like Welsh and French. It is interesting to note that 'England' itself is only one component of Britain alongside units like Ireland, Wales and Scotland and there is no regional relation between English Literature and other regions under Britain. The non-English writers in English have bent and molded the language to their purpose. Irwin Welsh, Roddy Doyle, and others have captured Scottish dialect reading English language often including slang, street talk and working-class styles in second half on the twentieth century.

Gandhi, in the Hind Swaraj argues that giving millions of people knowledge of English is like enslaving them. He goes on to add that the foundation that Macaulay advocated for education has enslaved them. It is the English knowing Indians who are responsible for enslaving Indians. Thus, the nation will curse such Indians and not the English.

This trend of using English got easily transferred into the literary sphere. Arguably, one of the first-generation leading Indian writer and novelist Raja Rao has expressed the anxiety of the post-colonial writer that also talks about the

difficulties faced by such writers in catering the Indian readers. He expresses many difficulties faced by the postcolonial Indian writers such as cultural and social factors involved in the selection of language, whether writing in colonial language will imply continuing colonization, if the indigenized version of the English language possible and will it be possible to use the colonizer's language while retaining cultural identities.

Roots of the debate about English as a colonizer language are also found in the context of globalization. The countries having started to recuperate from the assault of colonization found a new challenge in the form of globalization. English is undoubtedly, the language of globalization represented largely in business, economy and management. This shows that, language has a close relation with socio-economic processes. In this way, English becomes the strong contender for the status of 'global language'

Language Dilemma: Postcolonial writers across the world have diverse approaches and have shown an uncomfortable relationship with the language of colonizers. For instance, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o wrote in English in the beginning ending up switching to his native Gikuyu. The argument he made is that to use a language is to adopt and accept its cultural and other values too. Thus, in a way, such writers had to accept the colonizer's values.

Some like Chinua Achebe have opted to write in English. The aim is, according to them, to indigenize English. While in some cases, people use and write in their own distinctive languages as their mother tongue provides them a ready option if they wish to abandon English as a form of expression. Salman Rushdie, the experimental of language, has readily mixed standard English with Mumbai Street slang, Hindi songs to produce some outstanding effects in his writings consistent use of local metaphors, slang and colloquialisms is a way of experimentation that bring in alterations in the colonizer's language. Such local dialects and vernacular forms submerge into the local language and become indicators of that culture- like the

language of Reggae or Calypso in the Caribbean and Indian metropolitan English.

The process of translation, in the colonial context also served a crucial purpose. The Western powers readily gained access to the 'reality' of the colony through the process of administrative and social control over the colonized. the discourses of knowledge production like science, medicine, and technology require translation. In the global humanitarian movements, awareness about local conditions needs to be shared effectively.

It may be concluded that postcolonial writings as literature is a form that critically manifest history of oppression, both internal and external colonization, racism with a particular emphasis on the issues of race and ethnicity. It is a literature of emancipation and transformation. Postcolonial English can also be looked upon as an alternative English tradition emerged with globalization and indigenization. Globalization is never a unified process. Global events and cultural transfers help the humanitarian movement as native cultures find new relations with foreign cultures only to welcome and accept them.

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