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### THE PASSAGE OF CULTURAL LEGACY THROUGH LITERATURE IN THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

Bhabha calls culture a “strategy of survival.” It is not easy to classify culture and yet it is a notion that lies at the center of all human understanding, inherited and nurtured. Cultures travel, take route or get dislocated and individuals internalize their experiences and thus culture theory is created by people who live on the margins. Culture refers to people’s way of living, their language, religious beliefs, songs, folklore, drawing, rites and ceremonies, social and political values, and assumptions as to what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate. A Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o says that culture is:

a way of life fashioned by a people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with their total environment. It is a some of their art, their science, and all their social institutions, including their systems of beliefs and rituals...[cultural] values are often expressed through the people’s songs, dances, folklore, drawing, sculpture, rites and ceremonies.

The movement of people, spread of ideas and diffusion of culture highlight the phenomenon of co-existence of the processes of continuity and change that characterizes all societies. It is the resilience of society that enables it to withstand the shock of a culture contact, or of the external forces of change. Stuart Hall observes that there is “no single unproblematic definition of culture....the concept remains a complex one – a site of convergent interests, rather than a logically or conceptually clarified idea.” One must make out permeable boundaries between cultures, because they are always leaking into each other and criss-crossing. Diasporic cultural space is a space where a contestation is continually taking due to which diasporic communities or individuals become janus-faced. During deculturation, individuals learn new cultural habits from the host culture. Much of the immigrant experience in a host culture is predicated on the ability to survive and overcome the challenges that they face, so as to be accepted by mainstream society.

The term 'cultural homelessness' refers to the state of being between cultures, not quite fitting into the host culture and not being able to go back to one's home culture, resulting in a fractured identity. Culture is often rooted and conveyed through stories. Language and cultures change when they come into contact with other languages and cultures. Language is one of the most vital and powerful features of any culture. It is one of the defining features that allow people to maintain a strong identification with their group. The interaction brought about by language affects the culture of the migrants. When people speak an alien language their native culture is also reflected in their expression. Language functions as a social factor in individual thinking, social, control and in opinions. Individual words and phrases, both oral and written, are points of cultural conflict, their combination representing a clash of challenging discourses and ideologies. 'Sandwich' culture, refers to the process of laying or placing something between two layers or to fit tight between two others of another kind. Such a sandwich culture arises out of the pulls of two cultures, namely the parent and host cultures, giving rise to a new pattern of interrelationships between two cultures. This is the reason why the writers set their works against a particular ethos which casts its shadow upon the lives of the characters. Diaspora writers such as Michael Ondaatje, Romesh Guneseckera, Shyam Selvadurai cannot locate precisely their culture since relationship with their motherland is tenuous, and that they are a product of many cultures. Writing is rooted in a culture, that is, writers are products of a specific culture drawing sustenance from it and enriching it in turn. People convert from one religion to another, learn new languages, adopt new values and beliefs, identify with new symbols, and accommodate themselves to new ways of life. Anthropologist Redfield called acculturation as a part of cultural adaptation, "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contacts, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both the groups." Uma Parameswaran argues that it is better to accept the fact that cultural diversities are mutually enriching and are necessary tools for cultural synthesis than simply accept the key word 'assimilation.' Despite the attack of colonization, it is remarkable that the newly independent societies and cultures have not lost their identities.

Nobody can escape the legacy of the colonial past and its traces in academic practices. In fact the impact of colonial consciousness on the immigrant fiction cannot be ignored. The immigrant psyche could be said to be an extended consciousness of colonialism. Many of the Diaspora writers project the colonial and the imperial effect in their works. As a well-known

writer George Lamming once remarked, “Over three quarters of contemporary world has been directly and profoundly affected by imperialism and colonialism...” The colonial settlers acted as the link between the natives and the imperial hegemony, bridging the geographical gap between the colonizers and colonized. The colonial space is an agonistic space in spite of the imitation and mimicry with which colonized peoples cope with the imperial presence. Homi K.Bhabha devised the theory of colonial mimicry. Colonized subjects often imitate the behaviour and dress, values, knowledge and attitudes of the colonizer. In Bhabha’s terms, “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost same, but not quite.” The colonizer makes sure of a projection of his ‘self’ on the ‘other’ in terms of identity or difference. If he believes that the ‘other’ and he are identical then he does not see any difference and will judge the ‘other’ as per his own cultural values. But if he sees the ‘other’ different from him, then he sees the differences. The colonized psyche is so invaded by its own sense of inferiority that the play of colour – of white, brown and black – is greatly influenced by colonial ideas that have been seeped into the colonial subjects. The colonial fantasises are centered on the pseudo-aristocratic world formed with their sprawling bungalows, country clubs, and polite parties or ‘frolics.’

The diaspora discourses also project the postcolonial discourses which is called the theory of migrancy. The term refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. It is often referred to as The Postcolonial critique which has been a ‘theory of engagement concerned with creating agency for the marginalized and oppressed with recovering lost histories and voices and with opening up the academy to the world.”

Now the term postcolonialism substitutes the terms Commonwealth Literature or Third World Literature, which includes in its realm concerns like cultural studies, identity, art, language, feminism, globalization, displacement, multiculturalism, and diaspora. The postcolonial literatures ‘emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre.” Post colonial writers from erstwhile colonized countries engage themselves in a process of reconstructing national and personal histories with the objectives of analyzing and understanding their own past. It involves various experiences such as migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, race, difference, identity, gender, place and the responses to the imperial

dialogue in areas of history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experience of bringing them together in dialogue and writing. Third World texts are national allegories and they may be applied to diasporic texts. Postcolonial diaspora theory is an opinion of international mobility and border crossings, and the articulation of diasporic culture, identity and subjectivity as hybrid. This theory shows the difference between the West and the East in the theory of Orientalism.

Orientalism as a style of thought is based on a distinction between the East (the Orient) and West (the Occident) as a starting point for theories and cultural evaluations. This binary, also referred to as the East-West binary is vital to postcolonial theory, and as the Palestinian-American literary theorist Edward W. Said remarked that both the Occident and the Orient were mutually dependent. Said, formally articulated Orientalism as a discourse that created a general conceptual paradigm to analyze the cultural forms of colonial and imperial ideologies. He identified Orientalism as a mode of discourse authenticating domination over the Orient by the West by defining it as an academic discipline, style of thought and a corporate institution. Said defines the Orientalist as “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient... whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist.” The Orient is considered a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories, landscapes and remarkable experiences. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe or the West as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience. The West has depicted the ‘Orient’ as an inferior, backward world, while identifying themselves as a superior world. The ultimate goal of post-colonialism is not simply to recover past worlds, but help to bridge this divide. Like the Occident, the Orient has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it a reality and presence in the Occident.

Postmodernism is a complicated term or set of ideas, that has only emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s. postmodernism has emerged from modernism, follows most of the ideas, rejecting boundaries between high and low forms of art, rejecting rigid genre distinctions, emphasizing pastiche, parody and irony. Postmodern writing favours reflexivity and self-consciousness, fragmentation and discontinuity, ambiguity and simultaneity. Postmodernism, in rejecting grand narratives, favours ‘mini-narratives,’ stories that explain small practices, local events, rather than large-scale universal or global concepts. The ‘mini-narratives’ makes no claim to universality, truth, reason, or stability.

History informs about the people, places and events of the past, repetition of facts arranged in chronological order. It tells about one's ancestors—their lifestyles, occupations, customs and traditions, religious beliefs, social and political systems and cultural patterns, about their problems, aspirations as well as their achievements. Archive material, interviews, photographs and memories of friends are evoked in order to recreate the past. History may be seen in the national and private sense to express what is at once a profound personal quest and a statement about the country. Writers from erstwhile colonized countries and marginalized societies are engaged in a process of reconstructing national and personal histories with the objectives of analyzing and understanding their own past and also as a historical intervention in the master narrative of the imperial races. Rushdie remarks that events in history must always be subject to questioning and deconstruction. The remaking of history will offer new maps for old. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie says, "History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish and capable of giving many meanings. Reality is built on prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance, as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge." M.G. Vassanji, says that a diasporic must not forget his past, for, a person with no history is like an orphan. The fusion of history and fantasy is at the base of several diaspora writers' fictional technique.

As postcolonial theorist Robert Young Points out, the term Hybrid (ity) was first used with reference to 'the crossing of people of different races.' Edward said, in an interview with Salman Rushdie, says, "the whole notion of crossing over or moving from one identity to another is extremely important to me. Being as I am – as well as are, a sort of hybrid." The concept of hybridity has proved very important for diaspora people, as a way of thinking beyond ideas of rootedness, fixity, and cultural, racial and national purity. Hybrid identities are never total and complete in themselves but remain perpetually in motion, pursuing unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription. At a time when the connection between space, place and culture are in a state of flux, new forms of hybrid practices are being defined globally.

Hybridity originated as a result of the dispossession of indigenous people and their forced assimilation, through racism, into a new social order denoting the condition of cultural interconnectedness. For Homi K. Bhabha, the term hybridity is a process, not a position, because it empowers the subject and enables him to negotiate his cultural heritage and the cultural/social reality of his present. Stuart Hall prioritized the concept of hybridity and elaborated that, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and

reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.” The concept of hybridity involves living in a time of constant replacement and reterritorialization as global economy connects, disconnects and reconnects spaces in new ways. An essential element of the hybrid experience is a sense of ambiguity in negotiating the cultural artifacts of the host culture. Hybridity seeks to obliterate differences. It does not alter the subordination attached to the colonial past, but emphasizes the impossibility of recovering the lost purity.

The phenomenon of multiculturalism proclaims multicultural, multi-ethnic societies that promote the politics of difference. Multiculturalism is itself an aspect of post-modernism which connects the local and the global leading to oneness. William S. Bernard an English Moral Philosopher defines the term multiculturalism as, “the totality...the sum of its parts and the parts, while affected by interaction with each other, nevertheless...complementary but individual.” Multicultural societies today are a result of the extensive diaspora that has been taking place especially over the last 200 years, at various levels or social strata. All the countries of the world have become plural or multicultural societies and their capital cities and other metropolis have assumed a cosmopolitan character. In the case of the multicultural writer Ahmad Aijaz a Marxist literary theorist says, “not only does the writer have all the cultures available to him or her as resource for consumption, but he or she actually belongs in all them, by virtue of belonging properly in none.” Multiculturalism is responsible for the production of diasporic writing, is itself an aspect of post-modernism, which proclaims multicultural and multi-ethnic societies, promoting the politics of difference.

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