

Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

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Abstract

Landscape transition, geographical shift and colonialism has a broad impact on literature in india. In the process of colonization, colonizers may impose their religion, language, economics, and other cultural practices. The foreign administrators rule the territory in pursuit of their interests, seeking to benefit from the colonized region's people and resources. This paper studies how Colonialism and imperialism impacts upon colonist languages, literature and cultural institutions and how colonialism in India affected the entire country drastically. Landscape and geographic analysis and transformation greatly influences the cultural and literary scenario of their colonies.

Keywords: *Colonialism, languages, literature, cultural institutions, post colonial, novel, empire*

Colonialism is defined as “control by one power over a dependent area or people”. It occurs when one nation subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it, often while forcing its own language and cultural values upon its people. In other words, Colonialism is a practice or policy of control by one people or power over other people or areas, often by establishing colonies and generally with the aim of economic dominance. It is associated but distinct from imperialism.

Colonialism is strongly associated with the European colonial period starting with the 15th century when some European states established colonising empires. Some scholars refer to this point in history as the beginning of the "Age of Capital," or the Capitalocene, which is an epoch that encompasses the profit-driven era that has led to climate change and global land change. At first, European colonising countries followed policies of mercantilism, aiming to strengthen the home-country economy, so agreements usually restricted the colony to trading only with the metropole (mother country). By the mid-19th century, however, the British Empire gave up mercantilism and trade restrictions and adopted the principle of free trade, with few restrictions or tariffs. Christian missionaries were active in practically all of the European-controlled colonies because the metropolises were Christian. Historian Philip Hoffman calculated that by 1800, before the Industrial Revolution, Europeans already controlled at least 35% of the globe, and by 1914, they had gained control of 84% of the globe

There are different types of colonialism:

- Settler colonialism
- Exploitation colonialism

Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

Dr. Urmil Mahalawat

- Surrogate colonialism
- Internal colonialism
- National colonialism
- Trade colonialism

There are various colonies which are a crucial part of colonialism. Some of the few colonies are:

1. British colonies and protectorates
2. French colonies
3. United States colonies and protectorates
4. Russian colonies and protectorates
5. German colonies
6. Italian colonies and protectorates
7. Dutch colonies and Overseas Territories
8. Portuguese colonies
9. Spanish colonies
10. Austrian and Austro-Hungarian colonies
11. Danish colonies
12. Belgian colonies
13. Swedish colonies
14. Norwegian Overseas Territories
15. Ottoman colonies and Vassal and tributary states of the Ottoman Empire
16. Polish colonies (through vassals)
17. Other non-European colonialist countries

The impacts of colonisation are immense and pervasive. Various effects, both immediate and protracted, include the spread of virulent diseases, unequal social relations, detribalization, exploitation, enslavement, medical advances, the creation of new institutions, abolitionism, improved infrastructure, and technological progress. Colonial practices also spur the spread of colonist languages, literature and cultural institutions, while endangering or obliterating those of native peoples. The native cultures of the colonised peoples can also have a powerful influence on the imperial country. Colonisation directly affects economy, trade and commerce.

In India, British raj, period of direct British rule over the Indian subcontinent from 1858 until the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. The raj succeeded management of the subcontinent by the British East India Company, after general distrust and dissatisfaction with company leadership resulted in a widespread mutiny of sepoy troops in 1857, causing the British to reconsider the structure of governance in India. The British government took possession of the company's assets and imposed direct rule. The raj was intended to increase Indian participation in governance, but the powerlessness of Indians to determine their own future without the consent of the British led to an

Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

Dr. Urmil Mahalawat

increasingly adamant national independence movement.

This period of colonialism in India affected the entire country drastically. In India, there were many impacts of colonialism, many of which can still be felt today. For example, under colonial rule, India was quite dependent on Great Britain for things such as technological advances and manufactured goods. Once India became independent, it began to fall behind the rest of the world. Another impact of colonialism was that the colonization of India led to the rapid spread of the English language. Also, India adapted a European style that changed much of the Indian culture.

Other changes which were seen during and after colonialism are as follows:

- Sati: The practice of burning dead man's wife and children eliminated after British invaded
- Cultural impact: The culture of fashion, style and even sports was adopted into India's culture through British rule
- Industrialization: Railroads and other inventions across India were all made possible by the British
- Government: The implement of a united democracy was put into place
- Economy: Development of goods such as tea, indigo, coffee, silk and more

During this time, there was a change seen in literature across the country. To discuss these changes we should first discuss about Indian literature in general.

Indian literature refers to the literature produced on the Indian subcontinent until 1947 and in the Republic of India thereafter. The Republic of India has 22 officially recognised languages.

The earliest works of Indian literature were orally transmitted. Sanskrit literature begins with the oral literature of the Rig Veda dating to the period 1500–1200 BCE. The Sanskrit epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were subsequently codified and appeared towards the end of the 2nd millennium BCE. Classical Sanskrit literature developed rapidly during the first few centuries of the first millennium BCE as did the Tamil Sangam literature, and the Pāli Canon. Later, literature in Marathi, Gujarati, Assamese, Odia, Bengali and Maithili appeared. Thereafter literature in various dialects of Hindi, Persian and Urdu began to appear as well. In 1913, Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore became India's first Nobel laureate in literature. In contemporary Indian literature, there are two major literary awards; these are the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship and the gyanpith Award.

Some of the earliest Indian novels published in England go back as far as the 1780s, and by the beginning of the 19th century, a steady stream of quaintly exotic novels was serving to assuage the British public's curiosity in its ever-growing Indian possessions. Many of these early novels deal with the 'nabobs' of John Company — merchant adventurers who returned from India fabulously wealthy, and flaunted their riches before an astonished London society. Clearly reflected in the novels of this period, also, is the evangelical undercurrent that was to change the course of British policy in India.

It was the enormous psychological impact of the Indian Mutiny, however, that forced the British

Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

Dr. Urmil Mahalawat

public to reassess its somewhat patronizing and optimistic view of foreign cultures and race relations, and stimulated a renewed and perhaps more mature interest in India. The novels and short stories of Sir Henry Cunningham and Philip Robinson attained a measure of popularity in the 1870's, and 1888 saw the publication of Rudyard Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills*.

Whilst world-wide sales of his novels, poems, and stories continued to grow. Kipling's name became anathema in 'serious' literary circles, and even as late as 1942, George Orwell felt obliged to couch his essay on Kipling in the form of convoluted paradox and irony. The 1970s saw a remarkable rehabilitation of Kipling's literary reputation, and the present flood of critical studies shows no sign of abatement. Although Kipling's Indian stories comprise but a small fraction of his total literary output, the quality, range, and authenticity of these stories have established him as the finest exponent of the genre. Nearly all subsequent writers of Indian novels have acknowledged their debt to him, and in this, more than any fickle academic reputation, lies ample testimony to his genius.

The same politicization of literary criticism that chose to dismiss any work dealing with the Empire as 'imperialistic', and made any serious study of Kipling's work impossible for over fifty years, also ensured that a number of other writers of this period went almost totally unrecognized. The Indian novels of Flora Steel and Maud Diver have passed into literary oblivion, and another writer of the 1930s, Edward Thompson, is now chiefly remembered as a minor poet. Born into a family of Wesleyan missionaries, Thompson was himself ordained upon graduation from London University, and spent many years teaching in Bengal. He eventually resigned the ministry and returned to England, where he became a lecturer at Oxford, first teaching Bengali to ICS probationers, and then devoting himself to research in Indian history at Oriel College. His years in India left Thompson with a deep love of Bengali literature and culture, and he was a friend of such great Indian figures as Gandhi, Tagore, and Nehru. His Indian novels, set for the most part in the isolation of small up-country communities, deal sympathetically with the nationalist movement, and see a spiritual reconciliation of cultures and religions as a step towards inevitable devolution of British power. Although it might be an exaggeration to say, as some writers have, that the first volume of Thompson's Indian trilogy ranks with Kipling's *Kim* as one of the finest novels ever written about India, nevertheless his books remain some of the best evocations of British India in the third and fourth decades of this century, and certainly deserve more recognition.

One extraordinary exception to the many Indian novels consigned to limbo by the intellectual tenor of the times is E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* which, to judge by the proclamations of many critics, is the only English novel ever written on the subject. Such evaluations would seem to be the product of the kind of literary philistinism that dismisses science-fiction as a literary genre, but condescends to acknowledge the third-rate SF novels of such second-rate 'serious' writers as Aldous Huxley. Whatever the purely literary merits of *A Passage to India*, it stands condemned by both Indian and British writers for its inaccurate portrayals of both communities. Forster spent a total of twelve months in India, and it is perhaps unfair to criticize the validity of the personal impressions he gained during this short time. The fact remains, however, that the critical acceptance of *A Passage to India* has served to draw the attention of educated readers away from other, more authentic novels.

Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

Dr. Urmil Mahalawat

The twenty years after the end of the Second World War were dominated by the novels of John Masters. When an aspiring writer called Molly (M. M.) Kaye tried to interest a publisher in her first novel on the Indian Mutiny, she was told that it had no hope of success, as 'Jack' Masters had already cornered the market for that kind of book. Coming from a family that traced its Indian roots back for more than five generations, Masters followed his father into the Indian Army, in which he served until Independence in 1947.

By the 1970s, little was left of the greatest empire in history, and the British public, now fully absolved from any unpleasant imperialistic guilt feelings, could settle back and thoroughly indulge itself in unfettered nostalgia for a departed age. Whether this nostalgia was but a reflection of the same dissatisfaction with modern urban life that popularized pine furniture, brown bread, and fake Victorian packaging, or whether it sprang from a true fascination with a vivid and turbulent era in Britain's history, there is no way of telling. Suffice to say that there has been a very real change in the attitude of both scholars and the public towards the Empire in general, and India in particular.

One of the most striking indications of this renewed interest has been the extraordinary success of M. M. Kaye's *The Far Pavilions*. Published in 1978, this enormous 950-page saga of 19th century India sailed effortlessly to the top of the British best-seller lists, where it remained for several months. Repeating the same unprecedented success in the United States, it has sold more than five million copies world-wide. Although much of the book would appear to be sheer swashbuckling fantasy, almost all of it is based on recorded historical events, many of them intimately connected with members of Molly Kaye's own illustrious family. The runaway success of *The Far Pavilions* gave new life to *Shadow of the Moon*, her first novel, published in a grossly truncated form in 1956. Reprinted in its original version in 1979, this novel of the Mutiny proceeded to repeat the success of *The Far Pavilions*. Like *The Far Pavilions*, virtually the whole of the narrative is based on real events, and was inspired by an unpublished letter written by one of the female survivors of the Mutiny — once again proving that truth can be much stranger than fiction.

Another remarkable novel dealing with the Mutiny is J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur*. Unlike most Mutiny novels, it avoids the oft-recorded events of Delhi, Lucknow, and Cawnpore, and focuses on the defence of a small fictitious town by a band of ill-assorted Englishmen. Farrell died before he could complete his second Indian novel, but it is a measure of public interest in the subject that this fragment was published in its incomplete form.

Whilst epic novels such as Valerie Fitzgerald's *Zemindar* — again about the Mutiny — continue to satisfy the British public's appetite for massive romantic novels with exotic settings, the same cannot be said for Paul Scott's magnificent *Raj Quartet*. The success of this enormously complex tetralogy attests to a much more mature interest in the turbulent years before Independence. At first glance, the chief protagonist of the *Raj Quartet* would seem to be the mirror image of the hero of *The Far Pavilions*, the former being an Indian raised and educated in British public schools, and subsequently totally unable to re-adapt to Indian society, the latter being a young Englishman raised by Indians, and finding his loyalties and affections tragically divided. The parallel between the two works does not, however, go beyond this superficial similarity. Whilst *The Far Pavilions* is a splendidly written

Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

Dr. Urmil Mahalawat

adventure yarn which recaptures much of the atmosphere and excitement of India in the 19th century, the Raj Quartet is a complex psychological tapestry of inter-related subjective realities, accurately mirroring all the fears, uncertainties, and animosities of both Indian and English communities on the eve of Independence.

This was all about colonial period. Now let's discuss about post colonial period

The post-colonial literature often opposes the instructions of the Colonialism Era and discusses the impacts and consequences of the liberalization, and investigates the procedure of the developments and the political-cultural independence of the people who have torn the chains of the colonialism. This literature also literarily analyzes the texts of colonial and ethnic tendencies.

With its background of colonial experiences and its present post-colonial culture, India is a comprehensive subject for post-colonial studies and the resulted impacts. In fact, the post-colonial literature in India means freedom from the old cover of the Western thoughts and paradigms, and the emergence of awareness and new intellectual concepts that make "self-expression" important. The post-colonial period in India has resulted in shaping new identities and cultures that through studying and surveying the colonial period attempt to re-explore their marginalized identities and cultures and to constitute a modern society by creating new mental and analytical structures based on the Indian culture. Indeed, the Indian writers have challenged even the post-colonial definitions and parameters, and although in the majority of the Britain's colonies the English language has been the language of the literature of the post-colonial stage, the Indian writers have developed their indigenous languages along with it. Emergence of the post-colonial literature in India is the authentic representation of these attempts and developments

Postcolonial writers differ in their view of the choice of language in Postcolonial writings. Some writers stress the use of native language in their works. These writers strongly believe that their age old customs, manners and traditions can be expressed best in their native language. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Post colonialist writer from Kenya is one such writer who had a successful start in the English language. Ngugi then ceased to write in English and started writing in Gikuyu, a language spoken primarily by the Kikuyu people of Kenya. Another set of writers prefer the usage of the language of the colonisers, may it be English or French. These writers wanted to enhance the international communication, by writing in English. They aim at redirecting the tool of 'language' against the colonisers. The Postcolonial English writers employ the colonisers' language, to oppose the colonisers and to rectify the damages created by them in the historical, social, cultural and economical sectors. However, these writers transform the English language, so as to create a native experience. Postcolonial writers like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and Chinua Achebe are of the view that the imperial language need to be transformed in order to suit the native readers. Therefore, they employed the techniques of "appropriation" and "nativisation" of the English language.

The early exponents of Postcolonial Indian English Literature are Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and so on. The writers of the modern age are Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor and so on. The Postcolonial Indian English Literature

Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

Dr. Urmil Mahalawat

gave enormous scope for the women writers. The women writers who received universal recognition are Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and so on.

The women writers of the Postcolonial Indian English Literature, switched on to the microscopic themes of 'alienation', 'poverty', 'isolation' and 'disillusionment' in the familial lives of the Indian folk. Anita Desai's first novel, "Cry the Peacock", published in 1963, echoes the sufferings and agony of the Indian women folk. Maya, the woman protagonist of the novel, experiences an unhappy marital life. Maya has been married to a middle-aged lawyer named Gautama, who devotes much of his time to his career. The astrologer's prediction about Maya's early demise, makes her nervous. She wants to enjoy life to the fullest, with this minimal time. However, all her sexual advances has a cold response from Gautama. In a sense of dejection, Maya is driven insane, which leads to Gautama's tragic death. Maya's sense of 'alienation' and 'rootlessness' reflects the plight of the entire Indian womenfolk.

Thus, in many works of literature in the Indian subcontinent, the impact can be seen in the wake of colonization, or the establishment of colonies in another nation. The British had a colonial presence in India from the 1700s until India gained its independence in 1947. The people of India, as well as the characters in Indian novels, have expressed the economic, political, and emotional effects that the British brought and left behind. This is true for literature that comes out of any colonized nation and guides the reader to analyze and explain the effects that colonization and imperialism, or the extension of power into other nations, have on people and nations.

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Landscape Transition, Geographical Shift and Colonialism on Literature in India: A Study

Dr. Urmil Mahalawat