

Post Colonial Writing – Trends in English Drama**Dr. T. M. J. Indramohan¹, M.A., D.HEd., Ph.D.**

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As it appears, the term “Post Colonial” is a relevant one in order to homogenize especially Common wealth literature. Literatures other than British and American require a categorization in the current socio-political context. It is beyond our comprehension that sometimes “Post Colonialism” gets narrowly defined. It is also often misunderstood as a temporal concept meaning the time after colonization has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its government by another state or type of governance it chooses to have. The very power of “post Colonial” writing is a contestation of colonialism discourses and power structures.

The post colonial writing itself has set against the imperial idea of linear time, in other words it is believed to be progress and perfection. However, the concept makes the various stages in the socio- political ambit. The concept is a challenge to the march of western historicism and reorients the globe with an awakened voice expressing itself what its demand are and what its aspirations are. The objective of the theory is to decentre history and recentring of global history around the native land suitable for its own culture and social markings. By and large the post colonial writing takes up the ‘Common Past’. Since the colonialism has affected all the cultures and languages, now it is the time for regrouping and reassembling the lost nativism.

The histories of colonization are the histories of the collisions between the natives and the European communities. Since the colonization involves direct territorial appropriation of another geopolitical entity, combined with forthright exploitation of its resources and labour and systematic interference in the capacity of the appropriated cultural power with political sagacity. The post colonialism in the contemporary sense speaks of the new intellectual life and a force on a par with the western minds. However, the political dismantling did not immediately extend to

imperial cultural influences, but it was attended by an unprecedented assertion of creative activity in post colonial societies. In consequence, this complex development resulted in thwarting the plan of imperial expansion even in the domain of literature but the prestigious and the powerful imperial culture found itself appropriated in projects of counter colonial resistance which drew upon the many different indigenous local and hybrid processes of self – determination to defy, erode and sometimes supplant the power of imperial cultural knowledge. Post colonial literatures are by and large a result of this interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices. As a matter of historical relevance, post colonial theory has existed for a long time before that particular name was used to describe it. The determined endeavour of the colonized people had cause to reflect on and express the tension, which ensued from this problematic and contested area. The efficiency and vibrant mixture of imperial language and local experience resulted in propounding the ‘Post Colonial’ theory.

On the whole the term ‘Post Colonial’ has ambiguity and complexity of the many socio-cultural experiences and differences it implicates. Though the colonies once subjected to imperial rules are now free, still subject in one way or another to overt or suitable forms of new colonial domination or post colonial haunt in forms of its language and cultural interactions. The development of new elite within the freed colonies, the development of critical divisions based on racial, linguistic and religious discriminations. Post colonial experience also involves various kinds, migration, suppression, resistance race, gender and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, economics and philosophy. The fundamental experience of speaking and writing by which all these comes into being. Nonetheless, they are now essentially post colonial, but together they form the fabric of the whole exercise. We use the term post colonial in order to represent the continuing process of imperial suppressions and exchanges throughout the diverse range of societies, in their institutions and their discursive practices. The inherent meaning of post colonialism incorporates the process of imperial forces operation through as well as upon individuals and societies within the ambit of which we witness a series of linkages and articulations.

As Stephen Slemon rightly observes that ‘post Colonialism’. ‘As it is now used in its various fields, de-scribes a remarkably heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises’. The epithet “Postcolonial Writing” a title coined by Spivak and interpreted by Said in order to demark the host of literary output that emerged after the end of the colonial rule in many parts of the world. It is a socio-political ambience with which the writers have chosen to pen their themes in their narratives. The specifics being the subject of colonial rule as well as its legacy upon the colonies. It is rather the mainstream view of the post colonial writing. The colonial legacy has created a hybrid socio-political culture. It now changes our understanding of our transcultural ramifications. In colonial discourse, space is time, and history is shaped around too, necessary movements; the ‘progress’ forward of humanity from slouching deprivation to erect, enlightened reason. The other movement present the reverse; regression

backwards from adulthood to a primordial degeneracy. The movement as it appears in space is backwards in time; verbal consciousness and hybrid freedom, tongueless zone of the pre-colonial, from speech to silence, light to darkness.

In an objective analysis, the theory of “post Colonialism” must be more than a mere chronological sequence of post independent literary experience. Any objective in depth analysis of post colonial literature will reveal that it is a reaction to colonialism and it is a textual expression of resistance to colonialism. It also operates with an objective to elucidate the post coloniality, which gets into certain texts, and also to unveil and deconstruct colonialist power structures. The concept of post colonialism is political equations based on binary oppositions such as first world and third world, ‘White and Black’, colonizer and colonized. Post colonialism taken up hitherto untouched issues like feminism and marginalization. The efficacy of post colonial literature is far reaching and has awakened its readers and people to show their place and prestige among the comity of nations.

According to Stephen Slemon ‘Post Colonial’ literature is a form of cultural criticism and cultural critique; a mode of disidentifying whole societies from the sovereign codes of cultural organization, and an inherently dialectical intervention in the hegemonic production of cultural meaning. (1987:14)

The objective of post colonial theatre is to focus the past and present social milieu including political situation, which often becomes the pivotal issue involving the colonial legacy and the retinue of its disturbing features. Laura Chrisman is of the view that a nation’s contemporary literature cannot be isolated from the imperial history, which produced the contemporary version of the nation (1990:38).

When Europeans made any nation as its colony, they suppressed the local plays. If at all any play was written, it should be designed to colonial officers and troops and also required that the plays produced in the colonies be the reproductions of imperial models in style, theme and content. In a way they are the outposts of the empire. The colonized subject exists in a complex representational matrix, variously situated between opposing forces or figured in opposition to the imperial powers.

In depth study of drama through the conceptual frameworks developed in post colonial period involves a thorough reading of the socio-political situation of the colony concerned and the ramifications they ushered in all become the integral part of dramatic literature of that country. The field of inquiry is categorized into three divisions. One is language part of it, second is the arrangement of theatrical space and time and the third one is narrative technique and performance. Technical aspects apart, postcolonial drama in general is a committed one with a message to its land. In the grouping sequence, countries that lie off the European continent are chosen for the present study. As the concept is as vast as the countries are only drama from

Australia, Canada and Caribbean are chosen for the current study purpose. The objective being that they are powerful writers and put forth their agony and ecstasy in their plays.

The question of race, nation, class and ethnicity, culture and community are difficult terms in their local as in their global formations. The analysis of the post colonial drama passes through such concepts as hybridity, cultural fusion and cross ethnic, translational intermixture including strategic political indemnification. The next category in this aspect is race and nation, which seem to have fallen along the historical wayside of post colonial studies, these constructs and the broader political and cultural analysis continue to influence us very much.

The meaning of race as the post colonial context as an unstable and decentred complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle and a racial formation as the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed. To locate in the post colonial ambits is to fix identity. In the 1980s a few post colonial plays devised by whites fell into certain representational trap by depicting sentimentalized racial versions. For instance plays in Canada, Australia and New Zealand exhibit the ways in which the images of the indigene have been circumscribed by a semiotic field that is limited to violence, nature, sensuality, historicity and invitation of indigenous forms of communication. They often create a particular atmosphere either to elicit laughter or to create tragic tension. Indigenous characters have functioned as stage features, setting, and at times, as foils against the normative values of white society.

As regards the portrayal of gender in post colonial plays is they admit androgyny as merely as hypothetical category which can be dissolved into male or female when the biological markers of sex are known. A few plays gave account on feminism interest in destabilizing gender binaries. They also demarcated areas of woman's subjugation under imperialism. Often the contriving of women's modesty became the subject matter and inter racial gender anathema became an analogue for the colonizer's violation of the land, and also for related forms of economic and political exploitation.

Whatever may be the theoretical issues involved post colonial writing, it needs to be recognized within its limited scope to address to the wide social and political issues affecting post colonial societies. It is a significant one because in greater and wider perspective the study generates new literary avenues and opens up new vistas for the colonized and to the past imperial forces, they serve as a mighty intellectual force emerging with a power to check the resuscitation or re-amalgamation of the powers of the yester years.

To cite an instance, the last scenes in the Canadian playwright George Ryga's the Ecstasy of Rita Joe exhibits the rape and murder of the central protagonist by three white men is a message of the brutal behavior of the imperialist forces and the judicial system. The play shows Rita Joe as the site on and through which the disciplined imperial patriarchy is played out as her body is

marked by capture, and sexual outrage. Socially and politically she functions as an emblem of native culture in Canada and her death focuses the triumph of imperial forces. This type of imperial atrocities find a significant place in post colonial plays whether they are from the black writer's plays or from the colonized nation of different categories.

Similarly Australia playwright Janis Balodis' 'Too young for ghosts shows whites' invasion of indigenous land in Australia who's the aboriginals inhabited. In a complex cross over scene in which the same actors play Aboriginal and Latvian women simultaneously. The play in gripping manner exhibits the rapes of two aboriginal women with the sexual assault of their Latvian contra pant in a displaced persons camp after the Second World War. Close on the heels Dorothy Hewett's the man from Mukinupin (1979) stages the rape of Aboriginal women through a savagely ironic song with details the settler's attempts to conquer the recalcitrant nature, a project explicitly figured as the male penetration of female space. The subjugation of women in general besides outraging of their modesty finds a significant place in post colonial plays. All these sexual violence suggests women's bodies often function in post colonial plays as the spaces on land and through which larger cultural battles are fought. As their bodies are anatomized by the imperial eye, the women became a commercial commodity and thus denied all sense of subjectivity. They are constructed as objects and fit to be subjugated to the white masters.

In the case of Africa and India, as well as in the Caribbean, the colonial woman was expected to offer sexual, social and reproductive labours in the service of the empire.

'Sistren Theatre Collectives' Belly Woman Bangarang (1978) takes up the issue of western medicine as part of its focus on teenage pregnancy in Jamaica, and attempts to reclaim the birthing process through the use of African based rituals which emphasis female power. Nonetheless, post colonial drama invests female fertility with great symbolic importance but subordinates women to the interests of the colonized patriarchy. In India and Africa, male writers are inclined to image the land as a mother and to present the woman as signifier of nationhood. In Caribbean Drama also we get the same treatment of woman. Michael Gilkes' Couvade (1972), which invokes as Amerindian birthing ritual to articulate the play's complex vision of a unified post independent Guyana. The custom of couvades requires the father to be to undertake a trial or ordeal which his wife is in labour. Post colonial plays by and large permeate with native moorings and portray in a significant way the native culture and local fervor. Post colonial plays in vast the audience with substantial and varied viewing frames and atmosphere to reinterpret the site of colonial authority. The plays written during post colonial period are malleable and resonant vehicles for subverting and problematising the roles of identity, subjectivity and corporeality that colonialism has assigned to the colonized subject.

In short post colonial plays have resuscitated the respective nation's socio-cultural and political dignity from the imperial compression. By and large the plays written after the end of colonialism are committed to champion the nationalist feeling and to inculcate a new vigour in

the minds of the people with an awareness of their national pride and cultural values. They do not theorize any particular aspect but articulate the categories of social and psychic identity and their labile new deployments across the ideological spectrum and it is a discipline stands away from the superpower's hold and carve a niche of their own in the history of race, culture and politics.

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