

Celebration of Hybridity in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

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Abstract. Post-colonialism studies various facts of relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Hybridity is an important feature of colonialism. It is the creation of transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonialism. The idea of liminality, ambivalence and creolization are associated with the idea of hybridity. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* neatly portrays the effect of hangover of colonialism and neo-colonialism 'have the prison' syndrome is found in Adiga's *The White Tiger*. Here too, the main character shows the love-hate relation with his master. He is captive of a hegemonic structure. In both the novels we find the elements of hybridity caused due to socio-economic changes ushered in the aftermath of the end of British colonialism and in the backdrop of globalization and liberalism.

Keywords: Post-colonialism; hybridity; liminality; ambivalence; creolization; hegemonic; globalization.

Hybridity is an important feature of colonialism. It is the creation of transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonialism. A common space is created when the colonizer and the colonized line together for a prolonged period. An unconscious interchange of faiths, beliefs and practices takes place within the contact zone. There is often a cultural, political and linguistic amalgamation creating a common third space. The phenomena of ambivalence and mimicry lead to such amalgamations. Both the colonizer and the colonized incorporate some of the features of the other party. The colonized subject is partially uprooted from his cultural soil and partially used to the culture of the colonizer, thus taking up what may be termed as a trishanku identity. Thus a hybridity of double fold structure is created the internal identity is affected in the form of ideas, values and cultures, the external identity is affected in the form of dress, hair style, food, language etc. There is a cross cultural exchange in which the colonized is more seriously affected than the colonizer.

According to Homi Bhabha “culture is a fluid system. It is a melting pot in which things are constantly boiling and changing form”. (43) Before the process of colonization starts the colonized subject possesses a pure and uncontaminated cultural identity. However after colonization it ceases to remain static, uncontaminated and pure as culture is a dynamic process; it is an ever-changing and ever-transforming process. Moreover, no culture should be treated as inferior or superior. When two cultures come in contact there happens a mutual and reciprocal interchange between them. Even though Rudyard Kipling writes that East is East and West is West, the twine shall never meet, there are common meeting points of cultural meetings.

The colonizers, however treat themselves superior. They justify the act of colonizing as an act of civilizing. They justify colonizing by claiming the superiority of their culture. This notion is amply manifested in Macaulay's Minutes, where he rejects the Eastern literature and boasts of the superiority of western literature. The colonizer wants the colonized to mimic him and adopt his cultural values and practices. However, he does not like the colonized to be totally like him. Bhabha calls this phenomenon as ‘not quite, not white’. Hybridity, according to Homi Bhabha, “is the effect of the drive towards the cultural assimilation of the colonized, but at the same time it subverts the authority and the self-presence of the imposed culture”. (40) It is not an alternative identity, but “an effect that can in turn be deployed as a ruse against the authority from which it is, in part derived”. (Hiddlestone, 120)

Hybridity commonly refers to the creation of the new cultural form within the contact zone produced by colonization. There is an interdependence in colonizer - colonized relationship and the two mutually construct their subjectivities. According to Homi Bhabha “cultural, identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space”. (108) It is the 'in between' space that carries the burden and meaning of culture, and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important (109) Hybridity can also produce cultural synergy and trans-culturation.

The ideas of liminality, ambivalence and creolization are associated with the idea of hybridity. Liminality is the 'in between space in which cultural exchange may occur. It is the “trans-cultural space in which strategies for personal or communal selfhood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange

between different states” (117) It is, however, not a movement from one identity to another, it is a constant process of engagement, contestation and appropriation. Liminality and hybridity go hand in hand. This liminal space is an interstitial passage between fixed identifications. According to Bhabha, post-moderately, post-coloniality and post-feminism are meaningless of 'post' simply means after. Each of these represents a liminal space of contestation and change at the edges of the presumed monolithic, but never completely 'beyond'. The present can never be “envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past or future; our presence comes to be revealed in its 'discontinuities', its inequalities, its minorities”. (118)

Creolization is a term used in the context of cultural hybridization. The process of cultural intermixing and cultural change leads to creolization. When two or more cultures coexist, there is an intermixing which leads to creole culture. Creolization is basically a sociolinguistic term denoting mixing of languages. This term is applied in colonial discourse to denote mixing of culture and emergence of a 'third space' of culture. According to Edward Braithwaite, “creolization is a 'cultural process' material, psychological and spiritual based upon the stimulus / response of individuals within the society to their [new] environment and to each other”. (52) Braithwaite stresses that “creolization is not a product but a process incorporating aspects of both acculturation and interculturalization”. (52)

A phenomenon associated with hybridity or cultural mixture is ambivalence. It can be understood as a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting the opposite at the same time. (Literariness.org. [cdn.amp project. org](http://cdn.amp.project.org)). It refers to a simultaneous attraction towards and repulsion from an object. It describes a very complex love-hate relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. There is a complicit and resistant relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. The colonized subject not only mimics the colonizer but it also mocks at him. Thus ambivalence is a fluctuating relationship of mimicry and mockery. The concept is related to hybridity because just as ambivalence decentres authority from its position of power, so authority may also become hybridized when placed in colonial context in which it finds dealing with.

Globalization, Diaspora and Hybridity

In postcolonial societies, new forces of colonialism emerged in the form of capitalism. Political colonies gradually converted into economic

colonies. The forces of neo-colonialism emerged in the countries which were yet to cope up with the hangover of the erstwhile colonies. Particularly the Third World countries were imposed with an economic colony by the first world countries with the introduction of GATT in the 1990's the whole world became one market. Borders were opened and multinational trade received a boost. The exploitation of the poor countries took a new turn. It became a kind of neocolonialism. Due to Globalization a new era of diaspora began. People started to migrate to rich countries for better job and business opportunities. The U.S became the new dreamland. The process of migration led to a kind of cultural uprootedness on the one hand and efforts of cultural assimilation on the other. The power of wealth coupled with control of ICT has led to the spread of one culture gradually to all parts of the world. A consumerist culture is being promoted across the world in order to promote the market economy. Profit is the new mantra and all exploitations are legitimate as long as they are profitable. Natural resources of the Third World countries are being rashly exploited. The local cultural identity is getting suffocated due to the onslaught of the powerful culture. On the other hand, people who have settled in or migrants to the rich countries are leading a life with a 'trishanku' identity. They are caught between the two worlds. They suffer from a sense of nostalgia or unbelonging. They feel culturally uprooted from their native culture and unable to be properly planted in the new cultural soil, suffering constantly a sense of 'otherness' and loss and yearning. They suffer from what may be called a cultural in betweenness or hybridity. They evolve a transcultures form within the contact zone suffering from deculturation and acculturation. According to C.R Viswesara Rao :

Globalization has five broad definitions. It is represented by large and growing flows of trade and capital investment between countries, it aims at liberalization and borderless economy, it is a kind of universalization or synthesis of cultures leading to a global humanism, it is equated with westernization or modernization and it is a kind of deterritorialisation that no longer maps social spaces in terms of territorial places, and territorial borders.

(IJES, 8-9)

Homi Bhabha in the Preface to the Routledge Classics edition of the book *The Location of Culture* (2004) talks about global cosmopolitanism:

There is a kind of global cosmopolitanism, widely influential now, that configures the planet as a concentric world of national societies extending to global villages. It is the cosmopolitanism of relative prosperity and privilege founded on ideas of progress that are complicit with neo-liberal forms of governance and free-market forces of competition. Such a concept of global 'development' has faith in virtually boundless powers of technological innovation and global communications... (xiv)

Globalization has ushered in a new phase of diaspora, giving rise to diaspora literature. The sense of loss, nostalgia, acculturation, hybridization, anxiety, alienation etc. is found in this literature. R. K. Nayar “identifies six salient features of diaspora literature” (*Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* (190)

- * The shift, contrast and relation between the centre (from where ancestors /parents originated) and the periphery (into which they dispersed):
- * The memory individual or communal of home, including details of childhood landscapes, historical events, people;
- * The sense of alienation in a new society/culture/land
- * A need to retain features from the 'homeland'
- * A reclamation of history of the homeland and childhood spaces
- * A conscious attempt to assent ethnic identity in terms of the homeland, while simultaneously seeking acceptance / assimilation in the new cultures.

Globalization has resulted in an intertwining of diverse cultures. It has also resulted in a kind of cultural uprootedness and hybridity of cultures. In some cases the local cultural values and practices have been submerged under the wave of global cultures. There is, therefore, a crisis of identity and also transculturation taking place in the new socio-economic framework.

This type of hyphenation of culture is also sometimes leading to colonial neurosis, where the hangover of the colonial culture does not allow compatibility with the new indigenous cultural forces. In fact the post-colonial society experiences a kind of cultural doldrum where the colonial culture is not fully forsaken and new culture is not fully incorporated. This leads to a peculiar kind of hybridization. The postcolonial society experiences this symptom of 'inbetweenness'

The Inheritance of Loss neatly portrays the effect of hangover of colonialism and the neo-colonialism. It takes up the ideas of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, cultural uprootedness, the vagaries of globalization and multiculturalism and the protest against internal colonization. The novel has a very broad canvas covering poverty, migration, class, disillusionment from false multicultural values, exploitation, insurgency, gender bias, copycat culture, colonial neurosis and above all loss. The novel deals with the question of cultural hybridity very elaborately. The characters in the novel are cultural hybrids demonstrating the features of ambivalence, mimicry and mockery.

Jemubhai Patel, the judge is a curious case of hybridity. He has been uprooted from his cultural soil and becomes an inveterate anglophile. He loves English life style, English language, food, dress and even architecture. He is a foreigner in his own country. He had studied in England where he was loathed by the Englishmen. This created a sense of inferiority in him. He started to abstain from the company of Englishmen and lived an isolated life. He suffered a psychological crisis, "He began to wash obsessively, concerned he would be accused of smelling. To the end of his life he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light, faded days to sunny". (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 73)

Jemubhai is the only son of an ambitious family. He goes to England for higher studies where he faces racial discrimination. He tries to protect himself by retreating into solitude, which "became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow" (45). He started to mimic the white people. He occupies the liminal space between the black Indian and white British masters. He starts hating Indian and tries to copy not only English manners but also the English sensibility. He loathes his own country so much so that he fails to adjust with his wife Nimi. The judge in the process of copying the white people and distancing from his own people suffers a loss of identity. Desai describes :

Jemubhai's mind had begun to wasp, he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him found his own skin odd coloured, his own accent peculiar. He forgot to laugh, could barely lift his lip in smile [] he couldn't bear anyone seeing his gums, his teeth. They seemed too private. In fact, he could barely let any of himself peep out of his clothes for fear of giving offence... (40)

Quite interestingly, the more he was loathed by the English people, the more he behaved like English. He felt 'barely human' at all. Mimicry serves him as a survival strategy. He resides in an in between world. His obsession with English manners ruined his relations with his wife.

Biju is a disillusioned person. He is supposed to fulfill all the dreams of his father, the cook. When he gets the visa for the US, he is called "the luckiest boy in the whole world". (187) A little after three years from the day he'd received the visa, the luckiest boy in the whole world skidded on some rotten spinach in Harish-Harry kitchen, streaked forward in a slime green track and fell with a loud popping sound. He is not provided with a doctor. He is an illegal immigrants. However, even in such a despicable situation, Biju may not have forgiven his father for not sending him to the US. Desai writes, "Biju could not but feel a flash of anger at his father for sending him alone to this country, but he knew he wouldn't have forgiven his father for not trying to send him either" (82)

The conversation between Achootan and Odissa clearly shows an ambivalent love-hate relationship quite symptomatic of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Achootan wanted a sponsorship Odissa asks :

"Why do you want it if you hat it here?"
Odissa had said angrily to Achootan when he asked for sponsorship. Well everyone wanted it. Everyone wanted it whether you liked it or hated it. The more you hated it, the more you wanted it. This they didn't understand it. (135)

Even Biju's father, the cook is a victim of love for the white people. He is fond of 'angrezi Khana' only. He feels proud that his father was a cook of the white master. In fact he was "disappointment to be working for Jemubhai. A severe comedown, from his father, who had served white men only." (63)

Hybridity is manifested in the manners of Sai. She has been brought up in English manners. She was educated in a convent. Besides, she lives with her grandfather in Cho Oyu copying English manners. The judge ate even his *chapattis*, his *puris* and *parathas*, with knife and fork, insisted that Sai in his presence do the same. (176)

Gyan is very critical of the manners and behaviour of Sai and the judge. He criticizes Sai for her celebrating Christmas. 'Why do you celebrate Christmas?' he asks her. "You are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West embarrassing yourself". (163) He becomes angry and calls Sai a 'copycat' and tells that the people whom they copy hardly like them. "Don't you know, the people you copy like a copycat, THEY DON'T WANT YOU!!!!"

This 'love the prison' syndrome is also found in *The White Tiger*. Here too, the main character shows the love-hate relation with his master. He is captive of a hegemonic structure. It is only at last that he realizes that he is free. He was looking for the keys to come out of prison but he found that "the door was always open". (253) Before he decides to slit the throat of his master, Balram was very loyal to him. He always tried to please his master. The man he hated, he loved too. Balram says: "Why did I feel that I had to go close to his feet, touch them and press them and make them feel good - why?" (193) He explains the reason of this love, "Because the desire to be a servant had been bred into me hammered into my skull, nail after nail, and poured into my blood, the way the sewage and industrial poison are poured into Mother Ganga". (193)

The colonial masters justify the act of colonization and they create a moral frame to sustain the colony. This moral frame or hegemony makes the colonized subject accept the colonization as natural. This structure has been shown by symbol 'Rooster Coop' in the novel. The subject accepts colonial control without any exercise of force :

Here in India we have no dictatorship.
No secret police. That's because we have

the coop. Never before in human history have so few owed so much to so many, Mr. Jiabao. A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 percent as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way, to exist in perpetual servitude; a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emancipation in a man's hands and he will throw it back at you with a curse."

(175-176)

This phenomenon of hybridity or ambivalence gives rise to mimicry in the novel. Balram who kills his master mimics him so much so that he takes his name, "Yes, Ashok! That's what I call myself these days" (302) Balram not only takes the name of his master, he also copies his manners of bribery and all that.

Thus in both the novels we find the elements of hybridity caused due to the socio-economic changes ushered in the aftermath of the end of the British colonialism, and in the backdrop of Globalization and liberalism. A kind of cultural uprootedness and hybridity can be experienced in the two novels.

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