

***A Tiger for Malgudi: Representation of Cultural Deterioration*****Dr Bimala Sharma,**

Associate Professor,

Department of English,

Balmeeki Campus,

Kathmandu, Nepal.

**DOI: 10.53032/tcl.2020.4.6.17****Abstract**

This research article concentrates on cultural deterioration as projected in R. K. Narayan's *A Tiger for Malgudi*. The author picturizes the pain of post-colonial India that was struggling to preserve her pre-colonial culture. The novel depicts how the colonizers injected their philosophies in the psyche of the colonized. The concept of “we superior” allured the society. The temptation of new culture grew more in India and that transformed the society into new hybrid culture. On the backdrop of colonial era, the novel demonstrates a tendency of new culture and its impact upon Indian society. Characters are placed to exhibit how colonized adopt new culture and so much so that they even converse their names to be incorporated in British culture. British culture and practice restructured Indian society. Postcolonial theory and theory of mimicry are applied in this dissertation as a framework for analyzing the condition of Indian culture. The colonial period established British cultures which by mixing with Indian culture turn out to be hybrid deteriorating the traditional Indian culture. With view of advanced culture, Indian society accredited new culture. Colonial period in India transformed social and cultural structure.

**Keywords-** Cultural Deterioration, Decolonization, Imperialism, Postcolonialism**Introduction**

*A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983) by R. K. Narayan replicates cultural deterioration of Indian society. The novel projects postcolonial India which is mesmerized by the aura of English culture hence the people started copying English lifestyle and culture. Although India got independence but Indians were unable to unlearn the new British way of living and culture. Despite their efforts to preserve their own culture it was deteriorating because of the massive influence of the Britishers on the one hand and on the other they started thinking their own as old and traditional. The forceful imposition of the British Raj's ideology and culture dismantled and demolished the deep rooted strong Indian historical culture.

Colonial cultural effect impacted Indian art, tradition, culture, society, economy, politics etc. till date after a long period of decolonization. British imperialism had numerous

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

impressions negative as well as positive where British interest was the key which shackled domestic interests leading to slow development and fragile government. This article concentrates on the characters as Tiger, Captain, Madan, and Clerk in the novel to investigate how these characters are swayed away by the new British culture so much so that their own culture gets deteriorated.

## **Cultural Deterioration in *A Tiger for Malgudi***

It is seen that decolonization is not something that makes a nation independent in practical sense because it is not only a geographical, political and social phenomena but also a psychological one. The colonial rule brainwashes the colonial mentality; therefore, it influences the Indian way of living and it lasts for a long time even after the formal end of the colonialism.

Mostly, Indian elites and high-class people inherit the colonizer's culture; therefore, it heavily influences Indian culture and society. Captain who duplicates Britishers is the representation of colonized Indian as mentioned, "... his dress- trousers, bush shirt and the sun-hat impressed them and he spoke to them in Tamil which endeared him to them" (35-36).

The novel has received innumerable interpretations as Kumar Snehith examines: "A vulnerable tiger looks back over his life ... he makes a dramatic bid for freedom" (4). The colonial Indians are represented as Tiger. Madhura Sarkar mentions: "The irony, allusion and the controlled abandon of the language assert the novelist's claim to the English language as an imposed tool of the colonial subjection" (153). Language worked as a weapon to impose colonizers' political and cultural ideologies. Aditi Chatterjee sees as "The writer, elusive so far regarding his attitudes and commitments, persistent in his denial of philosophical strains in his novels, has at last put in concrete form his convictions and attitudes" (20) which signify that Indian society is based on Hindu philosophy hence writer's beliefs adhere to it. Kedar Kane explains "R. K. Narayan's best gift to literature is... little town of Malgudi... The simple people, their customs and traditions..." (25). Similarly, D.W. Atkinson argues, "... Malgudi a fictional microcosm of India that embraces the organic wholeness of the Hindu tradition. (35)

The adoption of British culture by the colonized Indians imitating the lifestyle is a phenomenon referred as mimicry which suggests craving of both the colonizers and colonized where colonized wanted to be accepted by the colonizers as they are ashamed of their own culture which they are injected as the inferior hence it leads to the cultural imperialism and neocolonialism as Lois Tyson states, "Cultural imperialism, a direct result of economic domination, consists of the "takeover" of one culture by another: the food, clothing, customs, recreation, and values of the economically vulnerable culture until the latter appears to be a kind of imitation of the former" (425-26).

The postcolonial dominion splits into two consciousness- implicit and explicit where the earlier resists the hegemony whereas latter imposes hegemony on the natives. In the postcolonial societies some suffer from either of the consciousness and some from both as defined as double consciousness which often produced an unstable sense of self (Tyson 421).

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

But post-colonialism desires to heighten the magnificence of history, tradition, culture, ethical norms and other social roots as, Elleke Boehmer says: "Anti-colonial intelligentsias, poised between the cultural traditions of home on the one hand and of their education on the other, occupied a site of potentially productive in betweenness where they might observe other resistance histories and political approaches in order to work out how themselves to proceed" (51). The still existing unawareness about the role played by their colonizers in manipulating their identity, the post independent natives have been greatly confused. Therefore, they have to acknowledge the fact that the colonial mother is not the "loving mother who protects her child from a hostile environment" (Fanon 211). Accepting this atrocious fact, Fanon indicates these sorts of discourses as the "literature of combat" that contests misinterpretation and misrepresentation about the 'oppressors' and 'oppressed' (240). As Bell Hooks marks: "the moment they realized the oppressor's language ...could be restored, that a culture of resistance could be formed" (73). Abrams contends that Postcolonial Studies is the consequence of colonial exploitation, Home K. Bhabha, advances "Postcolonial studies ...viewed through a perspective that reveals the text to which the social and economic life represented in literature was tacitly underwritten by colonial exploitation" (236).

Hybridity signifies mixed identities- the consequence of the orientalist project denoting "ambivalent" bond of colonizers and colonized. Hybridity can be comprehended by referring to Bhabha's concept of mimicry and "ambivalence". Similarly, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin demarcate ambivalence as "It describes the complex mix of attraction and fame that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized" (12). Hybrid culture exists in colonized society where people occupy an in-between space by the mimicry of the colonizers.

In cultural theory, hybridity signifies mixed or hyphenated identities hence it refers to collage and bricolage derived from the aesthetics to modernism. Thus, hybridity is the establishment of new trans-cultural forms. Meenakshi Sharma mentions, "The representations of English not only challenge English self-representations but also provide the inversions and the questioning of the record of the Western discourse" (153). It reflects the historical phenomenon—how colonizers imposed their political and cultural ideologies. On the name of civilizing mission, colonizers impose the education system to the colonized to create an intermediate class of people by refining natives, making them civilized. Giving western education, language, and culture, the mimicking of the western civilization leads to as Fanon defines "Every colonized people in other words, every people whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality" (18).

The contradictory position of cultural interchange and cultural confront is the result of dialogical relationship of diametrically opposites where both endeavors to come to intermingle through dialogue. Thus, hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence are inseparable and interconnected.

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

A *Tiger for Malgudi* projects two key characters with hybrid identities- Captain with English name and Madan who makes English films who are highly mesmerized by English culture which is quite common in India. The Indian political system is cripplingly manipulated by English system as the word 'Collector' exists " The collector, just said: "I will look into your case." (26). Similarly, institutions have English names as "Grand Irish Circus" (29). The British Rule injected a sense of hierarchy where West is superior and East inferior which exists even after decolonization following same structures and pattern which is resembled here:

He called himself O'Brien though he had a brown skin and never uttered a word of English or Irish but spoke only "The Native Language" in order to establish rapport with his public, as he always took the trouble to explain.' Captain always wondered what sort of an Irishman he was, but said to himself, 'If I could call myself Captain, by the same logic he could be O 'Brien.' (29)

This justifies that not only the country the psychology of Indian citizen was also colonized. The blind mimicry of the colonizers turned the colonized as hybrid which deteriorate their native values without natives' notice as Pulami Chakraworthy asserts; "Colonization constructs a nativism which is blind to the divisions and power structures within the now sovereign nation-state" (19). Although colonizers left physically but they still are dominant and present psychologically. Thus, Hans Bertens explains "It focuses on the cultural displacement and its consequences for personal and communal identities ..." (200).

Likewise, *A Tiger for Malgudi* portrays resistance as Edward Said claims: "The idea of rethinking and re-formulating historical experiences" (352-53). The post-colonial India which wants to resist colonizers' culture has been projected by the Tiger. The complexity and the difference in the usage of English by the native and the colonized justifies the problem of hybrid in the post-colonial world. Captain and Master represent the colonial influence in the decolonized India where they still are under the spell of British Raj hence, the R. K. Narayan through the Tiger tries to inject the idea of revival of traditional India. As hybrid is prevalent in the colonized Indian society despite the efforts made by Raja and Madan to resist it they cannot escape as all are brain washed with the colonizer's philosophy of superiority and inferiority.

The departure from the native culture and the assimilation of the colonizer's culture create a sense of up rootedness which turn colonized into dilemma as elucidated, "I can't remember that man's name now, Govind, Gopal, or Gund? I don't know (130). Their tremendous aggression to British lifestyle assist them recognize their problem and they realized liberation from the colonizers' ideologies can only free them and for that they need to restore their own traditional culture and free themselves from colonial hegemony.

Madan and Raja represent Indian national culture although they face difficulty in preserving themselves from the colonizer's influence. The colonization colonizes each and every aspect of the colonized. The submissive tendency to ape the west is discernable in the

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

intellectual attitudes along with the behavioral patterns of the educated Indians. The impact of imperialism on culture is hence institutionalized and is the most discernible characteristic of the hegemony of the British.

The novel replicates the impact of ideological governance of British cultures even in the post-colonial India. The educated Indians were happy to be slaves of British masters. English is taken as superior thus Captain delivers an English speech. Raja explicitly portrays the colonized Indians' dilemma: "You are asking a profound question. I've no idea who I am! All my life I have been trying to find the answer" (103). Master's instructions to Raja when he leads him to safety are equally suggestive. "The eye is the starting point of all evil and mischief. The eye can travel far and pick out objects indiscriminately, mind follows the eye and the rest of the body are conditioned by the mind" (134).

Mentioning colonial exploitation, Leela Gandhi pens: "colonialism does not end with the end of colonial occupation: thus, the very notion of colonial after-math acquired a doubling inclusive of both the historical scene of the colonial encounter and its dispersal" (17). Although the colonial empire is toppled down still it reigns psychologically. Frantz Fanon studies how colonial authority works to create their images in colonized country. He argues that colonial culture constructs a canonical representation in colonized country. After decolonization Indian people attempted to restore Indian culture and tradition.

According to Gyan Prakash, "Postcolonial criticism... is a radical rethinking and re-formation of western canonical representation. It tries to dismantle the western representation about the orient (8-9). R. K. Narayan presents the postcolonial India where Captain and Master metaphorically represent British people. Raja who represents colonized India is shackled in Master's cage is tactfully portrayed by the author:

I myself shuddered at my own reflection on the still surface of a pond while crouching for a drink of water, not when I was really a wild beast, but after I came under the influence of my Master and learnt to question, 'Who am I?' Don't laugh within yourself to hear me speak thus. I'll tell you about my Master presently. (iz)

When Raja is awake from his unconsciousness *langoor* teases him saying "saved you right". Indian feels dominated as Raja articulates, "I have often felt guilty at reminiscing, but my Master, who reads my mind has said that there is nothing wrong in it and advises me not to curb it- it being also a part of my own life" (15). The act of captivating Raja is similar to English domination. The Captain becomes a disciplining factor in Raja's life. Raja expresses how Indian people become slave as Raja experiences with Master:

The man who had transferred me from the forest stepped out of his jeep and said, after a glance in my direction, 'He is all right. Now run up and see if the end cage is ready. This animal is used to human company and a lot of free movement. We must keep him where people will be passing. The open-air enclosure must also be available to him, when the wild ones are not let out. (II)

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

'Master' and ' Captain' both although symbolize English culture, Captain represents hybrid as described, “He must be conceited, fancying himself to be a human being: smoking cigarettes, sitting in chairs and drinking tea from cups, wearing trousers and coat and cap and spectacles, and chattering merrily all the time” (45). Despite both Captain and Master being Indian citizens adopted English lifestyle who represent true intellectual generation who seems to be ready to change and changed. R.K.Narayan proposes Indian not only needs to re-examine the British Raj instead a revisit of their own foundations.

Raja, Captain, Clerk and Master resemble cultural disaffection which is generated because of the uprootedness which consequently is reflected in their powerlessness in executing power. Too much dependence has crippled them from running the country effectively and take the course of development. Therefore, natives were defined as savage, backward, and undeveloped or they are rejected. Lois Tyson explains, “Because their technology was more highly advanced, and they ignored or swept aside the religions, customs, and codes of behavior of the peoples they subjugated” (419). In a colonial society, colonized mime the colonizers thinking colonizers as superior to them that Bhabha points as “almost the same, but not quite” (150) instead it appears as mockery or parody. Similarly, Ashcroft et.al, elaborate “copying of the colonizing culture, behavior, manners and values by the colonized contains both mockery and a certain ‘menace’, ‘so that mimicry is at once both mockery and menace” (140). The colonized attempts to demonstrate superior to get better position through mimicry. Bhabha intensely reinforced providing European education to create an intermediate class by training certain Indian elites who would be brown in color only and almost white in terms of their cultural training, manners, languages, mode of speech and accent.

The previously colonized still face inferiority because of hegemonic colonial spell which brands them inferior as they are culturally, politically and economically fragmented and confused so much so that their college’s name was named by British as Albert Mission College and it is same even after decolonization which justifies that they don’t want to change rather they adopt it. Not only the name, English language has colonized Indian minds who feel pride in articulating English words and sentences which is the symbol of superiority hence Captain delivers a speech in English:

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, Romans, and countrymen, as Shakespeare said, I love my circus and the animals that have made my business a success; and I have pitched my tent here because I love Malgudi; I love Malgudi because I was born and grew up here. I was a backwoods boy- living and playing in the dust of Abu Lane. They sent me, hoping to make a scholar of me, to Albert Mission School, but fate willed it otherwise. (58)

This is an example of postcolonial literature which is directed to revitalize its indigenous history and culture subverting all the set images of the Orient. The Captain is an Indian citizen dialogues about nationalism using English which signify that although they want to

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

restore their own traditional culture but they fall in their own trap of colonized psyche which feels proud in joining missionary schools and speaking English. Likewise, Captain and Madan desire of making English film and winning an Oscar—"Captain remarked after his inspection, you are truly great to be able to transform Ginger Field into a film studio" (87).

Colonialism is not merely an act of occupying the land of a colonized country instead it is an amalgam of assimilation with new partly leaving original. The Indian society was spiritual earlier to the colonization but it is more materialistic now as mentioned, "Jaggu a film star makes more than one girlfriend...He is inspired by his friends who believe that we can enjoy after having a lot of money because money can buy everything in life. "You are going to be rich and can afford two houses for two wives. You can sleep with one half the night, get up and go in a car to the other the other half of the night...Lucky fellow" (94). The colonized mimic the colonizers. Mimicking the colonizers become what Bhabha says, "almost the same, but not quite" (150) hence, what they mimic also appears as mockery or parody as he furthers; "copying of the colonizing culture, behavior, manners and values by the colonized contains both mockery and a certain 'menace', 'so that mimicry is at once both mockery and menace" (140). Similarly, Frantz Fanon elaborates; "Every colonized people-- in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is with the culture of the mother country" (18) that leads to hybrid. Thus, hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence are indivisible and interconnected.

The imperial authority creates a mediator class to disseminate the colonial dominance. Frantz Fanon contends:

Every colonized people-- in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes white as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (18)

Colonized therefore suffer from the inferiority complex. Adopted into postcolonial theory, as Ashcroft and et al claim; "It describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and the colonized" (12). It means complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relationship within a colonial subject. It also characterizes the way in which colonial discourse relates to the colonial subject, as it may be both explosive and nurturing at the same time.

R. K. Narayan attempts to project how colonialism colonized Indian mentality. The British colonizers employed English language as a tool to gain administrative power but the contact with the diversities created English hybridized. The hegemony of the new elite colonizers has seized the original India. Although colonizers have left still the Indian psyche is not liberated which is reflected by the characters in the novel. The colonized long after the

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

independence too lose their freedom and identity. Indians are unable to retain any longer hence, they are agitated against colonizer's hegemony and are suffocating hence, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's notion of resistance has been employed.

## Conclusion

To sum up, primarily, colonizers injected the ideology of superiority. This ideological psychology governed the Indian mindset trying to adopt the British culture which help colonizers meeting their interests. R. K. Narayan, a postcolonial author explicitly clarifies how British ruled India. It shows colonial influence has dominantly remained in Indian society. As a result, the Indian society has been shown that it is not free from colonial shadow though their physical presence is no more in the country. Narayan projects this colonial hegemony upon Indian society pondering on the issues as- political, religious, cultural, economic and social influences over the country.

Firstly, the English names as the novel exposes the reality behind the colonial culture in India even in the post-colonial India where English names as Captain, Albert Eisenstein School, Abu Lane Road, Elman Road, Grand Circus and collector etc. still exist which justify the society is still psychologically colonized. Secondly, the attire as Captain imitates English lifestyle, he wears coat, pant and hat. Not only this the psychology that Captain thinks that English life style will help him control the society and people that is why he delivers speech in English and feels superior to the others. Although India got independence from the British Raj and colonizers disappeared physically but psychologically Indians are still colonized as their art, culture, tradition, religion and the basic philosophies of existence all have been ruined and shackled. The earlier adoption and assimilation have now become the challenge to decolonize India completely which has deteriorated Indian culture as R. K Narayan with help of Raja and other characters has tried to portray in this novel.

## Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Atkinson, D. W. "R.K. Narayan A Tiger for Malgudi." *A New Way of Expressing and Old Theme*. Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1985, p 235-241.
- Bhabha, Home K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction*. OUP Oxford, 2005.
- Chakraworthy, Pulami. *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty: London: Rutledge, 2002.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1968. Print.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

# The Creative Launcher

An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English

[www.thecreativelaucher.com](http://www.thecreativelaucher.com)

- Gyan, Prakash. "Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography." *Social Text*, no. 31/32, 1992, pp. 8–19. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/466216](http://www.jstor.org/stable/466216).
- Hans, Kohn. "Postcolonial World." *The Review of Politics*. 3.18 (Jul. 1956): 256. Print.
- Hooks, Bell. "This is Oppressor's Language/ yet I need it talk to you': Language, a Place of Struggle." *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts*. Eds. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carole Maier. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1995. 70-77.
- Kane, Kedar. *Modern South Asian literature in English*. Greenwood Press, 2003. Print.
- Narayan, R. K. *A Tiger for Malgudi*. Penguin, 1983.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism. 1965." New York: International, 1966.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 1978.
- Sarkar, Madhura. *Indian Writing in English* (3<sup>rd</sup>ed.). Sterling Publishers, 1983.
- Sharma, Meenakshi. "Narrating Indian History in Fiction from an Indigenous Perspective" A Native Response. "The Inside View: Native Responses to Contemporary Indian Novel. Ed. Rangrao Bhongle. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003, 147-156.
- Snehith, Kumar. *Short stories of R.K. Narayan: themes and conventions*. Renaissance Publications, 2001. Print.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today*. New York: Routledge, 2006.