

Post-Colonial Reflections in Peter Carey's *Journey of a Lifetime*

Meera S. Menon

II B.A. English Language & Literature

"I had known loneliness before, and emptiness upon the moor, but I had never been a NOTHING, a nothing floating on a nothing, known by nothing, lonelier and colder than the space between the stars. It was more frightening than being dead." -Peter Carey

Literature is widening its branches and it encompasses all spheres of life. It reflects the unseen reflections and these reflections have created a huge impact in the academia. Post-Colonial literatures in general talk about the discourses of the 'aftermath' and it brilliantly showcases the plight of the muted voices. The word "Post" means "After." These literatures foreground the brutality of colonialism and also stress the fact that the colonizer's have influenced people's mindscape and landscape. Beauty and Truth are being re-interpreted and re-modified according to the wish of power structures. The supreme irony is that cultures have been modified and the nativism is on the verge of extinction, thanks to western imperialism for this adverse change.

Australian Literatures in general talks about the voiceless communities and how their nation has been misrepresented by the colonizers. Literatures of Protest and Protest Literature play a predominant role in Australian Literature. The element of Protest is a predominant theme in the Post-Colonial writings of Australia. Impact of Western Imperialism is seen very much in people's life styles. Landscape is one of the predominant themes in Australian writings. Literatures of Australia are mainly said to be the voices of the aborigines and these people are not ready to accept the new nuances of culture which are said to be the biggest threat. Post-colonial discourses in general talk about the rudiments of colonialism and the conflict between "Roots" and "Routes". The nativism "Roots" clearly states the origins and the word "Routes" stresses the separation of nativism. It is a highly painful task and these literatures often register the fact that they were living in a society which was said to be the matrix of traditions and the colonizers were not able to understand this truth.

Post-colonial studies analyze representations and identify formations of the colonizer and the colonized in literary and cultural contexts. Further, the adoption of post-colonial studies as a discipline in Western academies, the dangers of neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism in the age of global capital and information networks, the role of nation-state in such a globalizing context, as well as the issues of multiculturalism are being driven. According to Edward Said

resistance has two phases. The actual fighting against outside invasion and ideological resistance to save or restore the sense and fact of the community against the colonial system. Said argues that no matter how complete the dominance of imperialist ideology, there are parts of social experience that it does not cover. Said identifies three topics that manifest in the decolonizing cultural resistance:

- The insistence on the right to see the community's history as a whole, coherently and integrally. Thus a nation's culture and memory are revived and emphasized. Local narratives, spiritual autobiographies, prison memoirs form a counterpoint to Western official discourses, histories or panoptic viewpoints.
- Resistance as an alternative way of conceiving human history. This seeks to disrupt European narratives, replacing them with a more playful narrative style. The works of Marquez, Rushdie, Achebe and Soyinka interrogate the assumptions of imperialist discourse. The nomadic novel transgresses the limits imposed by imperial categories and nativist provincial nationalism.
- Pull away from separatist nationalism towards a more integrative view of human community and liberation. Said suggests that cultures are interdependent, and nationalism is an intellectual trend that favours more generous human realities of community among cultures. This community is the real human liberation heralded by the resistance as an answer to imperialism.

The term "Postcolonialism" broadly refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today. By the middle of the twentieth century, a vast majority of the world was under the control of European countries. At one time, Great Britain, for example, ruled almost fifty percent of the world. During the later half of the twentieth century, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal as well as most African nations, Sri Lanka, Canada and Australia won Independence from their European colonizers. The literature and art produced in these countries after independence has been the object of Post-colonial Studies, a term coined in and for academia, initially in British Universities. This fact gained prominence in the 1970s and has been developing ever since. Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said's critique of Western representations of the Eastern culture in his 1978 book, *Orientalism* is a seminal text for post-colonial studies; it has spawned a host of theories on the subject.

Australian Novelist, Peter Carey is recognized as one of the most influential and celebrated literary figure of the twentieth century. Critics classify him as a bold novelist who vehemently protested against the colonial attitude. He is the only Australian Novelist who has won the Booker prize twice. He is known for the use of surreal in his short stories and he is also being praised for his biting satire, the clarity of his language and sophistication of his vision has viewed him as an important contributor to the contemporary post colonial writings. The writings of Peter Carey also advocates the postcolonial theory for cognitive mapping the post socialist

space, various theoretical arguments have been put forth in favour of this approach, as well as possible counterclaims. The perspective of post colonialism leads to conclusion that, instead of arguing over epistemological adequacy, attention should shift to the benefits and pitfalls of the actual uses of post colonialism in making sense of post socialism.

Journey of a Lifetime is a clear depiction of the man who is caught in the colonial hangover. The supreme irony is that colonialism has shaped the person towards degrading of culture . The protagonist Louis Marrow Baxter Moon is the typical symbol of colonialism. He is a government clerk and for him the assigned duty is to behead the head of the criminal who has indulged in unwanted activities. Baxter Moon’s life-long dream is to travel in a train and owing to the class issues he was unable to do it and the officials have given him the train ticket to execute the duty which was being assigned to him. He dresses himself as a pure Englishman and he thinks that he is English in blood and in taste. The class consciousness which was standing as an obstacle to him is no more when moon starts to imagine himself as an English man.

He is in great excitement and once he boards the train everything was topsy-turvy to him. He gets a cold reception and his co-passengers do not even recognize him. Moon is a little bit upset in the beginning of his train journey and then he meets a prostitute in the train and a dead body in the train. Moon is having drinks and he is in search of ice cubes and he gets them. Later he comes to know that the ice cubes were taken from underneath a dead body. Moon is not able to tolerate the incident and he lies awake that night. When he gets down at the station, he is received by the government officials to execute his duty. When he gets down from the train Moon thinks his dream is very bitter and the train journey experiences are not up to his expectations. He thinks of himself as a very bad person that he had been longing for this train journey.

Peter Carey has employed satire through Louis Marrow Baxter Moon. The protagonist’s name is Moon. The quality of the Moon is it reflects the light of the sun and the protagonist has reflected the colonial attitude. The train symbolizes the post-colonial attitude. It is a well-known fact that Britishers were good in the building of railways, while they removed all obstructions like jungles and hills, and fields in their way. And the impact of colonization is similar in the way it makes the natives get rid of their culture like some obstruction to their becoming westernized. Louis Marrow Baxter Moon thought that travelling in a train was a great virtue, and it is said to be part of the colonial attitude; and through Moon the mindscape of the people can be easily traced. Colonialism in the beginning seems to be very attractive and the colonizers’ attitude is to grab the people’s mindset and they become prey to the colonizers and Moon is a typical example. In the end the people will regret why they had to accept Western Imperialism like how Moon felt once he got down from the train. This paper has brought out the nuances of colonial attitude seen from the life of Peter Carey’s protagonist Louis Marrow Baxter Moon.

Works Cited

Carey, Peter *Collected Stories* Faber & Faber Publishers, Aug 19, 1996. Print

Said, Edward. *Orientalism* Vintage Publishers, October 12,1979. Print

Anderson, Benedict *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Verso Publishers, September 13, 2016. Print

Huggan, Graham *Australian Literature : Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism* Oxford University Press, November 11, 2007. Print

Meera S. Menon

II B.A. English Language & Literature
P.S.G.R. Krishnammal College for Women (A)
Peelamedu, Coimbatore – 641 004
menonmeera@yahoo.com