

Transcultural Society in A Post-Colonial World

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“Transcultural” is a term that refers to the life style of the people from different culture or national communities. It indicates movement across time, space and other cultural boundaries. Transcultural society is a group of people, living as a community, where different culture, religion and language work together with much understanding. It is a society which extends through all human cultures. It is an ideal of freedom embracing all the peoples of the world. Transculture is different from multicultural, Inter-culture and cross culture. Multicultural society is relating to different culture in which people live along side one another, but each cultural group does not interfere in another culture and it has no unnecessary interaction and engagement with each other. While interculture is the exchange of culture. Intercultural society has deep understanding and respect for all culture, where no one is left unchanged because every one learns from one another and grows together. One more type of society comes under post-colonial world and that is cross cultural society. It deals with the comparison of different cultures. In cross-cultural communication, differences are understood and acknowledged and can bring about individual change, but not collective

transformations. In cross-cultural society, one culture is often considered 'the norm' and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture.

The Term 'Transculture' is coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1940 to describe the phenomenon of merging and converging culture. It is an emerging sphere, where humans position themselves free from the limitations of the primary cultures of their home environment. The elements of transculture are freely chosen by people rather than dictated by rules and prescriptions within their given cultures.

Post colonialism means something that has a concern only with the national culture after the departure of imperial power. But in actual practice, it has to be understood only reference to colonialism. Like colonialism, postcolonialism is 'a state of consciousness', a crucial stage in the continuum of our cultural process and self awareness. Colonialism involves two types of imperialism-political & cultural. Therefore, 'myth and history', 'language and landscape', 'self and other' are all very important ingredients of post colonialism. Post colonial theory is using terminology like 'The oppressed', 'The colonized peoples' and 'the indigenious' to describe post colonial societies What is disturbing is that it confers the 'Subaltern' status on the entire post colonial world.¹

Ashcroft, Gareth and Tiffin describe the term 'Post colonial' in his widely known book "The Empire Writes Back"- "we use the term post colonial to cover all the culture, effected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. In the past, The British had an extended empire during the 19th century and this empire has a strong impact on all its territories. These Territories were of two kinds-firstly Canada, New Zealand and Australia in which the English people colonized and established their culture. Secondly, India & Nigeria and some other African Countries where Britishers were ruler and imposed their institutions and norms."²

In the colonies of the third world, colonisation was a system of institutionalised political force by which a powerful country controlled the destiny of a weaker country therefore it was natural that the people of that country fascinated by the culture, life style and every thing of the ruler and automatically a sense of inferiority and contempt for their own culture and values works in their mind. The spiritual and moral maiming of natives began to admire the rulers for everything and under value their own tradition.³ The impact of this tendency can be seen in number of books of English Literature. Few examples are here-

The novel ‘By-By Blackbird’, written by Anita Desai, while portraying the lives of coloured immigrants, presents “an authentic study of human relationships bedeviled by cultural encounters.⁴ Adit, the protagonist of the novel, leads a settled life as an immigrant in London with his English wife Sarah, the leading female character of the novel. He has good job and with his considerably lucrative income, maintains a living which has comfort and pleasure. He regards England as ‘a land of golden opportunities and material prosperity’.⁵ He points out to Dev, his friend, who just arrived there as an immigrant.

“Oh I think Gold, Dev, gold. I see gold every where.....gold like Sarah’s golden hair.”⁶

Dev considers English language and literature as a tool to produce the ‘class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but England in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.’⁷ Adit, too, reveals the impact of the colonial era on his vision of history and culture. He considers colonial relation as main reason that brought two distinct culture like India and England together which produces a transculture- “.....It was the magic of England.....her history and traditions and the susceptibility of the Indian mind to these elements.....the reconciliation of two cultures hovering in the air like a thrush with a laurel leaf held in its beak.”⁸

Transculture offers a universal symbolic palette on which any individual can blend colors to produce an expressive self-portrait. Bharati Mukherjee's 'Jasmine' is a story of a Punjabi rural girl who is known as Jyoti in her village. In this novel, a girl passes through different stages, as Jyoti becomes Jasmine, from Jasmine to Jase and from Jase to Jane. Her journey starts from a small village of Punjab-Hasanpur, from Hasanpur to Jullundhar and then from India to the U.S.A. In this gradual process of migration, she has to pass through the different environment and society. These changes have tremendously affected her life. She does not remain same at the every stage of her life. As the change permits her, she has to adjust according to that.

In America, she became a victim of exploitation because in the beginning she could not adjust with the change. Lillian suggests her "To become American by talk & walk". American society and environment have taught the Indian immigrants to change their former cultural identity. So according to change, in America, Jasmine has to adjust her survival therefore she converts herself into Jase. With Taylor and Wylie, she becomes the "Day Mummy" for Duff. Gradually she becomes familiar with the American way of living life.⁹

Although transculture depends on the efforts of separate individuals to overcome their identification with specific cultures, it also describes the process of interaction between cultures themselves. In Mauritius, the caribbean Islands, Fizi, Trinidad & Tobago, Singapore, there is a mixed culture which is half Indian and half their own. Even in Singapore, there are different type of cultures-European, Chinese and Indian. All work together and this is transculture. Bhojpuri, a sister of Hindi language is very popular in Mauritius but Hindi is not popular in caribbean countries while large no. of Indians have been residing there. English is an official language there. Therefore, being geographically remote from India and in close proximity to the United States, the caribbean Indians inevitably feel less attracted of the

feudal Indian traditions in comparison to the more dynamic, glamorous materialistic American culture, American songs, music, cinema and products.¹⁰

Indians feel very much at home in liberal places like Dubai where they have re-created another India, resonant with Hindi language, film songs, music dances, food products and entertainment, even Hindi is a popular language there. In U.A.E., where total population is 04 million in which Indian 30,000, Pakistani 40%. and Phillipines 15% and the balance Europeans. The Arabs identify themselves, with the Hindi language and Indian culture and this alliance makes a transculture.

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India is the best example of transculture where the people from different religion, caste & culture are living together and “unity in diversity” is the soul of this country. Our indian concept is superior to all the doctrines, where it is said-

“Ayam nijah paro veti garna laghuchetsham

udaar charitanaam tu ‘Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam’

.....means 'This is mine, This is yours, such calculation is made by mean minded people and for broad and open minded people, whole the world is a family.' And now mostly people have understood this truth in this age of 'Globalization' and this is transculture because it is the thing that connects man to man and above all hearts to hearts.

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