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Postcolonial Consciousness And C. D. Narasimhaiah: An Appraisal

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ABSTRACT

C.D. Narasimhaiah, a commonwealth writer and a postcolonial theorist, has not devoted himself simply to writing theory alone. In his literary criticism are contained certain theoretical principles which will be mentioned in the course of this paper. For the present, suffice it to say that if Gayatri C Spivak and Homi K Bhabha have been responsible for postcolonial theories in the West, Narasimhaiah has been doing the very same thing in a simple, though unsophisticated fashion by writing a literary criticism with a difference. He has not rested after putting down his ideas on paper but has championed the cause of his ideas in practice, contributing to the very face of English studies in India. For about half a century, Narasimhaiah had worked with a mission that literary evaluation and criticism be fair and unbiased. He has attacked English departments of Indian universities for re-cycling second-rate British authors through Ph. D. theses.

Indians writers and theorists have contributed to postcolonial thought in a substantial way. Apart from Edward Said, who is a major figure in the field, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha are the other major theoriststhat shaped this movement. In fact, this is what is generally considered to have been the case in the development of postcolonial theory. What has been missed out, unfortunately, is that C.D. Narasimhaiah who had worked as an anti-imperialist, and whose thought is almost parallel to Edward Said's, had not been noticed in the way that he deserves to be. The reason seems to be that the western theorists had promoted Gayatri C Spivak and Homi K Bhabha because these two have used the language and the framework that has been provided by contemporary western theory itself, whereas Narasimhaiah's has been a voice in the wilderness because he writes as an Indian and his words seem to fall on deaf to the western ears. Through this paper, I would like to foreground the revolutionary ideas of C.D. Narasimhaiah with special reference to postcolonialism. In fact, C.D. Narasimhaiah is, not at par with Gayatri C Spivak and Homi K Bhabha conceptually, he is ahead of them in certain ways. First, some of his work had begun much earlier than theirs in his crusade against the supremacy of the colonisers' thought. Secondly, Narasimhaiah has worked with a zeal, somewhat comparable with Edward Said, in attacking those institutions that have promoted the supremacy of the West over the East. Thirdly, he has monitored the introduction of Commonwealth Literature in Indian Universities and pleaded the case for regional literatures and literatures in translations in India with an open mind. C. D. Narasimhaiah was a "one-man-army" in the field of Commonwealth literature in India. His interest in Commonwealth literature initially began as an extension of his interest in Indian English

literature; but this extension of interest soon became deeply absorbing and wide-ranging, involving not only Indian literatures but also literatures from Africa, Australia, Canada, the West Indies, the Asia-Pacific Region, and others. Narasimhaiah champions the cause of Commonwealth literature. He said that, although once berated as "the lingo of lesser breeds", Commonwealth writing, especially in the Twentieth Century, has fast come of age. It can no longer be dismissed as something imitative or derivative, for it has struck roots in the indigenous experience and has turned inward. Narasimhaiah's continued endeavour has resulted in widening the horizons of this discipline and firming up the validity of its teaching in Indian Universities.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the British Empire covered a vast area of the earth that included parts of Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean and Ireland. At the turn of the twenty first century, there remain a small number of British colonies. The twentieth century has been the century of colonial demise, and of decolonization for millions of people who were once subject to the authority of the British crown. The material and imaginative legacies of both colonialism and decolonization remain fundamentally important constitutive elements in a variety of contemporary domains, such as anthropology, economics, art, global politics, international capitalism, the mass-media and literature. Literary theory and criticism have come to rely increasingly on these processes of history. Postcolonialism is one of the most challenging fields of study that have emerged in recent years. Many of the effects of colonization persist even after the demise of the empire. The reading-practices, representations and values of colonialism are not easily dislodged. Various assumptions of colonialism still remain unchallenged. And hence some critics question the chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath on the grounds that the postcolonial condition began with the onset rather than the end of the colonial occupation. In a way Postcolonialism is a continuation of colonialism. Colonialism has taken many different forms and has engendered diverse effects around the world. Denis Judd argues that" none can doubt that the desire for profitable trade, plunder and enrichment was the primary force that led to the establishment of the imperial structure." (*Beginning Postcolonialism* 7) Hence, Colonialism and Capitalism share a mutually supportive relationship with each other. "Colonialism" is sometimes used interchangeably with "imperialism", but in truth the terms mean different things. As Peter Childs and Patrick Williams argue, "imperialism is an ideological concept which upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one nation by another."(*Beginning Postcolonialism* 7) Benita Parry considers colonialism as "a specific, mutable states, one which preceded the rule or international finance capitalism and whose formal ending imperialism has survived." (*Oxford Literary Review* 34)

> One important antecedent for Postcolonialism was the growth of the study of Commonwealth literature. "commonwealth literature" was a term literary critics began to use from the 1950's to describe literatures in English emerging from a selection of countries with a history of colonialism. It incorporated the study of writers from the predominantly European settler communities, as well as writers belonging to those countries which were in the process of gaining independence from British rule, such as those from the African, Caribbean and South Asian nations.The shift from "Colonial" to "Commonwealth" perhaps suggests a particular version of history in which the status of the colonised countries happily changes from subservience to equality. Commonwealth literature may well have been created in an attempt to bring together writings from around the world on an equal footing, yet the assumption remained that these texts were addressed primarily to a Western English-speaking readership. The "Commonwealth" in "Commonwealth literature" was never fully free from the older, more

imperious connotations of the term.

Theories of colonial discourses have been hugely influential in the development of postcolonialism. They explore the ways that representations and modes of perception are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonized people subservient to colonial rule. Colonialism operates by persuading people to internalize its logic and speak its language; to perpetuate the values and assumptions of the colonizers as regards the way they perceive and represent the world. Postcolonial criticism has not simply enlarged the traditional field of English studies, or refocused attention on neglected aspects or areas; it has also significantly altered the modes of analysis which were dominant within the discipline during the period 1945 to 1980. Most notably, perhaps, it has helped to undermine the traditional conception of disciplinary boundaries. It is ideologically an emancipatory concept, particularly for the students of literature outside Western world, because it makes us interrogate many aspects of the study of literature that we were made to take for granted, enabling us not only to read our own texts in our own terms, but also to re-interpret some of the old canonical texts from Europe from the perspective of our specific historical and geographical location. Postcolonialism is not merely a chronological label referring to the period after the demise of empires. It is ideologically an "emancipatory concept" (*Interrogating Post-colonialism* 1)particularly for the students of literature outside the western world, because it makes us interrogate many aspects of the study of literature that we were made to take for granted, enabling us not only to read our own texts in our own terms, but also to re-interpret some of the old canonical texts from Europe from the perspective of our specific historical and geographical location. It brings severely into question the old idea of "the autotelic nature" (*Interrogating Post-colonialism* 2) of literary text and "the sealed anti-septic" notion of "artistic" value uncontaminated by the "political circumstances of its production and reception - forcing everyone involved in the discipline to rethink the limitations of the Eurocentric / universalist aesthetic norms." (*Interrogating Post-colonialism* 2)Colonialism operates by persuading people to internalise its logic and speak its language; to perpetuate the values and assumptions of the colonisers as regards the ways they perceive and represent the world. Theories of colonial discourses call attention to the role language plays in getting people to succumb to a particular way of seeing that results in the kind of situation. Colonial discourses form the intersections where language and power meet. Language is more than simply a means of communication; it constitutes our world-view by cutting up and ordering reality into meaningful units.

C.D. Narasimhaiah went to "America's Princeton University through Rockefeller fellowship and studied discursive readings in American literature for a whole year."(*English Studies in India* 14) T.S. Eliot's fascination for traditional societies like theIndian, for stimulus, startled Narasimhaiah. Further, Eliot's claim that the Philosophers of Europe were like schoolboys compared with the Indian thinkers, instigated the critical and literary mind of Narasimhaiah. He frankly confesses that "it turned out to be a strong factor in my returning to retrieve the study of Indian poetics as an important aid in the study of contemporary literature, in fact my literature anywhere, thanks to the *'Rasa-Dhvani-Auchitya'* theory, thus imparting to English literature the much desired Indianness." (*English Studies in India*12)

> C.D. Narasimhaiah advises the future critic to open up his horizon of learning. He quotes Matthew Arnold's plea for the study of another literature in addition to one's own; "the more unlike one's own, the better" and advocates "the reading of two literatures: one like one's own, the other unlike one's own. For, if the one reinforces one's faith in one's own literature, the other helps to cause a shakeup, and administer a corrective to one's self-centredness. Without an opportunity

> to compare one's own literature with the other(s), evaluations leave things wanting. The comparative approach enhances the scope of dialogue between the reader and the writing in front of him." (*English Studies in India* 17)Narasimhaiah urges the critic to shed the colonial complex and learn to make independent assessments - which in itself is the beginning of the comparative approach: "I wish to make my remarks on the Comparative Approach in criticism as a necessary aid to the proper understanding of literature . . . you can't find a more fertile soil for comparative literature to thrive in than the Indian society with its pluralism and Hinduism in particular, with its ocean-like absorbent quality."(*English Studies in India*19)He further adds that our task should be to talk ceaselessly of the importance of thecomparative approach and cause serious dislocations in English syllabuses and modes of teaching.

C.D. Narasimhaiah played a pivotal role in widening the scope of English studies in India, and freeing them from British hegemony. Though himself trained at Cambridge under the tutelage of F. R. Leavis (whom he still holds in high regard), he was one of the earliest champions of American literature and of the English Studies at Indian Universities. Perhaps T. S. Eliot's claim that the philosophers of Europe were like schoolboys compared with the Indian thinkers, instigated the critical and literary mind of Narasimhaiah to look more seriously at the whole of our forefathers. He candidly confesses that "it turned out to be a strong factor in my returning to retrieve the study of Indian poetics as an important aid in the study of contemporary literature." (*English Studies in India* 12) He advises the future critic to open up his horizon of learning emerging as is one of the very few contemporary intellectuals who have cared to write with a positive, global future in mind.

Perhaps, C.D.Narasimhaiah seems to have becomes one of the unquestioned leaders of Indian literary criticism in English. His long academic career, spanning over several decades has been devoted to very serious academic concerns. He has retained his Indian identity and viewpoint without failing to accept the lessons that his critical mind allows him to take from the West. It is significant that Narasimhaiah works for a cause, namely the upliftment of Indian studies in English, and it is necessary to see his work in that context. He is a kind of pioneer showing Indians the way to a new approach. If some scholars have not welcomed Narasimhaiah's approach it should not be forgotten that whenever a new approach or tradition is in the process of getting established there is, quite naturally, a resistance against it. Narasimhaiah's approach is bound to yield fruit as it consciously combines the healthiest traditions of the West with those of Indian origin.

In fact, Narasimhaiah is one of the few Indians who, in spite of a long exposure to the Western academics, has saved himself from a subservience to that ethos. Narasimhaiah tried to interrogate if the literatures written in English outside the U.K. and the U.S.A. should be called Commonwealth Literature or postcolonial writing? Further, Commonwealth is an extension of the word Commonweal, which means general good or good for the entire community, which therefore must sound most appropriate because we are concerned with the Commonwealth of Learning, and of learned men. An important outcome of the political Commonwealth was the setting up of the Commonwealth Foundation to further consolidate the gains in the realm of culture. Narasimhaiah goes on to add, "for the erstwhile colonial, on the other hand, the gain was disproportionately in his /her favour. Poetry and Fiction in English from the former colonies came to be looked upon as of considerable worth, and even worthy of academic study in English schools and colleges, however slow may have been its progress. It was a 'crippled' dialect of English but admittedly 'colourful' and thanks to it, England ceased to have a hegemony in literary matters, at least theoretically."(*English Studies in India*239)

Perhaps, Narasimhaiah feels that there has hardly been any proper research- activity in the area of English Literature in Indian Universities after independence. The frequent meetings of its branches in different parts of the world including Europe have given extraordinary impetus to the study of new literatures. Narasimhaiah is in fact critical of the use of the word "postcolonial". He asks, "Postcolonial - to whom?" (*English Studies in India* 240) He clarifies "if it suggests a point of time, not all the erstwhile colonies of Great Britain threw off their colonial shackles in the same year. The word therefore must evoke different images in different countries."(*English Studies in India* 240) He further points out that "postcolonial" also suffers from a restricted use as it refers only to creative writing done in English, not in Indian languages."(*English Studies in India* 240) Moreover, claims Narasimhaiah," no one speaks of postcolonial art, painting, sculpture or modes of culinary art or costumes why then must we be tied to postcolonial writing? "And only for the literature written in English?"(*English Studies in India* 240) Narasimhaiah is of the opinion that overall, the influence of English literature and language on the people, especially the writers, is positive since "hardly any of the major writing can be said to have been colonial in its mentality including what was written in the colonial period - much of it, actually was paradoxically a gift of the liberating influence of the English language and literature, not to speak of English institutions and English laws (the penal code is current one gathers in at least 38 countries and in India it is the least amended)." (*English Studies in India* 240) Postcolonial writing, says Narasimhaiah, is marked by a colonial cringe and Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* and *Golden Gate* merely reflect this cringe. He further adds that "if that is what postcolonial writing means it should be beneath critical attention, and not worth our time. The sooner we disown it the better."(*English Studies in India* 241) Narasimhaiah's dislike for the term "postcolonial" is significant. It shows that he never accepts terms and concepts handed down by the West without sufficient investigation and critical thinking.

C.D. Narasimhaiah says that "Indians of subsequent generations have invariably used the English language in ways Macaulay might not have approved of if only because he could hardly have suspected the immense possibilities of the language a hundred years later." (*Essays in Commonwealth Literature*11) He further adds that "contemporary literature has demonstrated, standard English degenerating into stereotyped writing, inhibiting in the process the creativity of the writer, whereas by deviating from standard English he stands a good chance of scoring his triumphs by neutralizing or taming the conventional structure and syntax, igniting the cliché and playing with intonational contours."(*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 12) Initially, Indians and Africans during colonial days tried to approximate their writing to that of their rulers and "to be told that someone spoke or wrote like an Englishman was the highest compliment paid to a native."(*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 12) Narasimhaiah lauds the courage of Raja Rao because he risked to write in what was then disparagingly called Indian English and made *Kanthapura* possible. Although Rao could not find any reader for his novel he was not disheartened and published *The Serpent and the Rope* in 1960. Narasimhaiah attributes this to several factors which made this incident a reality - "it is a contribution of several factors but none so powerful as political freedom, for it is no mere accident that much African and Indian writing of any value dates from the years of their assertion of political emancipation ... the language itself had acquired a plasticity by which it could affect the American and Irish writer."(*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 12)

It appears as if the daring of American and Irish writers has affected the minds of Indians and Africans and stimulated them to innovate, though defensively, in literary fields. Narasimhaiah feels that none was more binding than the English language which inspired, a wide variety of experimentation depending on the genius of the people who were using it. He further says that "the commonwealth paradox is that the writer in English is still Australian or Canadian, African, Indian, Caribbean and so on like the Irish writer who lived in London but the secret of

> whose strength lay in his Irishness." (*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 15) The advantage of commonwealth writers is that most of them are bilingual, for instance, Kamala Das, writes her Fiction in Malayalam and her Poetry in English while Chinua Achebe, writes Fiction in English and Poetry in his own Igbo. Thus they are better equipped with multiple and diverse experience which enables them to share "strangeness" through their literary creations. Patrick White cannot deny his indebtedness to Australian experience. Narasimhaiah understands this peculiar position of the commonwealth writer and rightly says that" it made no difference even when the commonwealth writer lived away from England: in his own Malgudi as R.K. Narayan or in the United States as Santha Rama Rau or in France where Raja Rao who wrote his three novels in three different kinds of English - to suit village life in *Kanthapura* a highly intellectual - metaphysical plane in *The Serpent and the Rope* and a cosmic consciousness seen through a ration-office clerk in *The Cat and Shakespeare*."(*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 15)

Narasimhaiah lavishes praise on the contribution of R.T. Robertson and R. Parthasarathy in enriching Commonwealth writings. He writes, "R.T. Robertson, the Canadian scholar, has perceptively remarked in an unpublished paper that all Commonwealth literature originates from two historical experiences: from leaving one's own home and from an invading culture. The physical and psychic disturbances of wandering between two worlds - physically here and mentally there - must make for creativity in exceptional minds" (*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 15) and further adds that "R. Parthasarathy has registered another kind of tension in his situation, a tension between his Tamil past and his English present. He and others like him would want to write in their own language but not infrequently the writing gets done in English because the tension itself feeds the creative impulse which in his case registered a penchant for the English language."(*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 16) Narasimhaiah is thankful to the contribution of A.N. Jaffares, who helped to collect at the school of English in the University of Leeds teachers with knowledge of diverse Commonwealth countries and their writings of translations in English. Owing to the remarkable contribution of A.N. Jaffares, opportunities were created in England for writers, teachers and scholars from Commonwealth countries to come to the University of Leeds to win attention to their own literatures. Narasimhaiah gleefully acknowledged that: "...Commonwealth countries thus found themselves for the first time at the "giving" end while the "mother country" (England) began to be at the "receiving" end. And what it received was not gold, silver, diamond, Jute, cotton, silk or spices but as they say the "things of the mind and the spirit." (*Essays in Commonwealth Literature* 16-17) This one act alone gave a tremendous boost to the creative talent in Commonwealth countries. The role of the "junior brother" was reversed when those - a very small number, it is true - who for a century and a half or more had journeyed from every corner of the Empire in search of English degrees as the hallmark of achievement, now went to "teach English to Englishmen or simply to live and write fiction, poetry, criticism which was read with respect by teachers who, to the world outside, were the demigods of modern literary scholarship but who now began to explicate the works of Commonwealth writers from the professional chairs in the classroom, the lecture hall and through prestigious journals." (*Essays in Commonwealth Literature*16-17)

> Narasimhaiah alleges that in developed countries, books were written with a strong Western bias which is nothing but " academic imperialism" which fails to lure the creative minds of Commonwealth mass, whereas Commonwealth writers with the myths, legends and superstitions of older and mature societies as is evident in the works of Achebe, Soyinka and Clark of Africa; Anand, Narayan, Raja Rao, Desani and Kamala Markandaya of India; and, Lamming, Naipaul, Harris and Brathwaite of West Indies. He writes in the "Introduction" of *Kanthapura* that: ". . . when it comes to style, the breath-taking long sentences, and repetitions of

> names and words, while sometimes necessary to build up the tempo of the commotion in *Kanthapura*, can also sound highly mannered and they do. But the author has enough stylistic devices to suit a wide range of emotional, mental states. In fact, an outstanding contribution of Raja Rao to Indian writing is English to have struck new paths for a sensibility which is essentially Indian. Indian fiction is English can make headway by continuing the Raja Rao line, which is to say one must have not merely his technique, but his amazingly high intellectual equipment and awareness of the Indian tradition." (*Kanthapura* xviii)

Narasimhaiah believes that "Commonwealth literature . . . represents the forces of counter-culture which may be the hope of technological man, as one cannot fail to see in the works of Patrick White who, is probing a harsh landscape in his fiction, really probes the country of the mind. The vast empties of the land challenged him to fill it with archetypal pioneers who attempt the infinite and enabled their author to create fresh forms out of rocks." (*Kanthapura* 17-18) In fact, on the one hand Narasimhaiah says that since we have a different culture and tradition we should not shy away adding peculiar Commonwealth experience in literature but while doing so we must not imitate the west blindly. He praises Raja Rao's attempt, calling it daring and innovative. Due to Narasimhaiah's neo-humanist bent of mind he has a rather anti-colonial attitude. He speaks of a crisis of "identity" (*Indian Critical Scene: Controversial Essays*13) and therefore has his sympathy for authors of nations that have been governed by the British. He has done a tremendous job in the appreciation and foregrounding of colonialist literature. The Indian author is one of his major concerns. His crusade against imperialism and colonialism has behind it the concern of the humanist as well as the patriot. His plea for the study and respect for Indian aesthetics seems to be the Indian's reaction to the process of history and an assertion against not being taken seriously enough.

One of the major academic events in the literature of the Twentieth Century is that the English literature syllabus "From Chaucer to Hardy" has often made room for "Literature in English" in which English literature has slowly acquiesced in the loss of pride of place with American Literature and Literature of Commonwealth sharing the front rank in the world literature. Time was when Englishmen asked: "Who in the four corners of the globe reads an American book?" Narasimhaiah asserts that "perhaps American Universities were themselves responsible for this devaluation of American literature abroad. One doesn't know of any American University of the Nineteenth Century which had a department of American literature or even a programme which could lead to a degree in American literature." (*Moving Frontiers of English Studies in India*30) On the contrary it is strange that although Indian English literature was introduced in Indian Universities a couple of decades ago, it has become an indispensable part of English literary studies at the post-graduate level in almost every Indian University. Narasimhaiah further says that "there is an immediate justification on our part for the extension of our interest to Commonwealth literature because it brings us close to most of our neighbours, especially, Africa and Australia with Bangla Desh, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Srilanka in between." (*Moving Frontiers*31) From this it is possible to deduce that there is in Narasimhaiah a political side that could be researched upon. Narasimhaiah candidly suggests that conservative England must shed its insularity and must look to the study of Commonwealth literature, in some cases with greater gusto than it did American literature. He further says that the descendants of the "imperishable empire of ideas, literature and language", instead of preaching to others what they themselves did not wish to practise, started in right earnest the study of the literature of their erstwhile colonies, to begin with, in the Universities of Leeds, Hull, Sussex, Stirling and Kent.

One of the greatest achievements of Narasimhaiah has been his pivotal role in steering the course structures of English studies in Indian Universities. His career which spans over four decades can be divided into two parts. The first has anti-imperial and anti-colonial tendencies, and the second foregrounds him as a Postcolonial. Narasimhaiah's essay on Macaulay (*Indian Critical Scene* 1-12) is an example of his anti-colonial concerns. His downgrading of authors such as E.M. Forster and Jane Austen could be traced to the same source. Postcolonial literature, as Elleke Boehmer (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphor* 3-4) tells us, is one which critically examines the colonial relationship. It is not simply a writing which comes after empire. It is writing which sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives. This kind of writing is marked by experiences of "cultural exclusion and division under empire."

Narasimhaiah's quest for Indianness and an appraisal according to Indian standards and Indian aesthetics can be seen as postcolonial. In a way we should judge by our own methods and not by the master's alone. This spirit seems to lie behind his approach. Narasimhaiah's nationalistic writing is truly postcolonial. He has therefore worked like a missionary in order to promote the study of Indian, American, Australian, Canadian, and African literatures. In short, he has helped in changing the imperialist/ colonialist courses and has built up an impressive theory to support the change. "Dr. F.R. Leavis", says Narasimhaiah, “the greatest champion of Englishness England has produced in the present century in the realm of letters, has himself admitted in *The Living Principle* that the creative conditions that produced the English language that made Shakespeare possible have vanished on that final triumph of industrialism." (*Indian Critical Scene*222)

Perhaps, western criticism is biased against Indian English literature and our own intelligent Indian critic too hardly notices the uniqueness of our literature and instead tries to interpret our literature on Western terms and conditions: "The intelligent Indian critic has not helped to improve the situation by bringing to his study of Indian English fiction either his profound awareness of India or the sophistication which Shakespeare, Eliot, and Lawrence have been privileged to receive at his hands." (*Indian Critical Scene* 223-24) Postcolonial consciousness lies at the back of much of what Narasimhaiah has to say. Kipling's *Kim* is rated over Forster's *A Passage to India*, because Forster's work is in a more colonial setting than Kipling's and Kipling gives a truer representation of India, says Narasimhaiah. Kipling of late figures in much postcolonial critical practice. Other Indian novelists and poets are similarly rated according to their representation of India. If this is a fault in Narasimhaiah, it is also the fault of Postcolonialism. Some of the most highly acclaimed authors don't find his approval. Even Aristotle and Wordsworth are not spared. But by and large authors that cater to the West are the ones that annoy him most. And he cannot forgive an Indian author who smacks of derivatives. This aspect only goes to prove that Narasimhaiah is highly postcolonial in his response. Further, he is also troubled by the fact that the Indian and African novel, and the novel of the islands in-between, are lumped together under the caption of "Third world literature." He says that Indians Had yet to realise that to lump together Black and Brown novelists from India, Africa and the islands in-between under the caption "Third world literature, is a political solution to a very delicate aesthetic problem.” (*Indian Critical Scene*224)

> Narasimhaiah's thorough study of Nehru led not only to *Jawaharlal Nehru* and a lengthy article on him in *The Swan and the Eagle, but* also probably to his desire to write on Gandhi. Nehru acquired the British "tentativeness of approach" which Narasimhaiah valued. This tentativeness was reflected even in Nehru's language. Instead of speaking a language of positive

affirmation, Nehru had a "singular absence of cocksureness - he gropes, searches and travels instead of having arrived." (*The Swan and the Eagle* 79) Another aspect of Nehru which catches Narasimhaiah's attention is his "Individual experience - self-discovery." (*The Swan and the Eagle* 85) Considering the cultural divergences between the British and the Indians, Narasimhaiah says, English literature must not, and cannot, affect the Indians the same way and their response to it cannot be the same. But today there is no notable critical work on English literature which intelligent British scholars can read with respect, because so much of it (Aurobindo is an exception) is echo, echo of an echo.

Narasimhaiah laments that the British and American scholars had no time for the scholars of Commonwealth countries except when they were under pressure to write testimonials and forewords to their books. Nevertheless, says Narasimhaiah "these were the scholars who denigrated Indian literature in English and treated our literature as beneath contempt because, such was their Anglo-phobia, they were convinced, Indians couldn't write English until Dame Bradbrook assured them that easy communication made communication indepth, precarious for Englishmen themselves." (*The Function of Criticism in India* 28-29) A priceless opportunity for the colonial in India, Africa and the West Indies is to try his hand at creativity through the English medium. Where the African and the West Indian exhibited courage, it was fashionable for the Indian intelligentsia to line up behind Nirad C. Chaudhuri and Naipaul and Prawar Jhabwala, again, because they are the ones the British press highlighted for reasons best known to them.

Narasimhaiah praises Aurobindo for "Aurobindo has shown in his *Future Poetry* and the three volumes of correspondence, how Indian criticism could have functioned with self-respect and relevance to our context. Considering that he was able to come up with certain remarkable insights into English and American literatures well before T.S. Eliot or F.R. Leavis is a tribute to his astonishing originality and critical intelligence which shows all his faculties fully awake. He had all the credentials in him to give a direction to English studies in our Universities and serve as a vital link with the Indian past as no one else: "speaking for myself, I have no less to learn from him in my Indian context than from Dr Leavis, if anything, more. In any case Indian and occidental mentalities must meet and interact so as to revitalize our critical standards." (*The Function of Criticism in India* 39-40)

Narasimhaiah further says that the need for a common poetic for Indian literatures today is part of a larger realization since Independence, of the need to forge forward. On the one hand, thanks to a long period of colonial rule, we tended to look up to Western models - First English, then European - for our writing, and look at Western literature exclusively through Western eyes, both of which led to a complacency which made us dependent on Western critical criteria and even values, in dealing with our own literatures and inhibited exploration of viable Indian alternatives. On the other hand, it was perhaps rightly argued that despite spells of resurgence since the turn of the First Millennium, both colonial rule and centuries of decadence had resulted in our loss of touch with the vital past of India. Understandably, we began to convince ourselves that "traditional Indian Poetics was inadequate in responding to literatures of the present day while, strangely, this fear did not seem to extend to Aristotelian poetics." (*The Function of Criticism in India* 43-44)

Although, Delight and Instruction have been said to be the ends of literature in the West, in the Indian tradition, says Narasimhaiah, "literature has an immediate and an ultimate use: immediately, there is in the presence of a work of art a *prayojana*, usefulness, such as sensitizing the mind, likened to cleansing of the dust-covered mirror and awakening, or

unfolding of the lotus of man's inner being; the ultimate use, *Purushartha* is in the nature of value which consists in cultivating an attitude, so aptly described by Matthew Arnold as the Indian virtue of detachment."(*The Function of Criticism in India*47) Obviously, the function of criticism is to help the reader to realize these two ends of literature by means of elucidation and evaluation of the work in front of him.

While praising Aurobindo, Narasimhaiah laments that Aurobindo's criticism has suffered neglect, because of the author's fame. He was a sage as well as a public figure, and hence the author in him was eclipsed by the other sides in his make-up. While we in this country have taught ourselves to accept the omniscience and unquestioned greatness of British poetry, Aurobindo, says Narasimhaiah, tries to understand if this poetry has received similar acceptance on the Continent, its next door neighbour. It is most remarkable how Aurobindo realizes that as critic of poetry he should act as a link between English literature and his own country's cultural scene, warns that we shall understand this failure if we look with "other than English-trained eyes." This total collapse of "other than English trained eyes", says Narasimhaiah, is the Indian predicament today. (*The Function of Criticism in India* 97) While Leavis builds up the great tradition in English poetry and fiction, Aurobindo thinks the history of English poetry has been more that of individual achievements than of a constant national tradition.

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