

Literary Studies in Indian Universities: Notes on the Present Scenario

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ABSTRACT

Literary studies has never been a neutral process of imparting aesthetic knowledge but has proved itself an institutional mechanism of cultural (re)production. Since its inception, English literary studies has been engaged in forming the hegemonic cultural practices in India. Earlier it was a tool of cultural domination in the hands colonial rulers, today it is an institutional stratagem to construct a kind of cultural elitism. Literary syllabus is never impartial accumulation of literary texts but it is an ideological apparatus of someone's vision. It been observed that departments of English in India are passing through a crisis – many of their postulates which were once considered self-evident and universal are questioned and challenged. In the wake of the western critical theories with their anti-foundational and anti-essentialist notions, what has been commonly accepted as essential 'knowledge' is now subject of hermeneutic reassessment. There is a cry for the paradigmatic shift in the pedagogical practices. It is essential to realise that hubbubs over the literary canon that usually centre around what is included and excluded in literary curricula really signify more profound political, economic, and cultural relations and histories. With these preposition in mind, the present paper seeks to address the following queries: What role does the department of English perform in reproducing culture? What are the cultural and ideological implications of university syllabi for literary studies? What is the cultural relevance of what has been sold as "required knowledge"? And who has the responsibilities of designing the best syllabus for the students and how it has been regulated?

KEYWORDS

Literary studies; Syllabi; Cultural Reproduction; Hegemony.

Departments of literature in higher education, then, are part of the ideological apparatus of the modern capitalist state. They are not wholly reliable apparatuses ... (Eagleton 2003: 174-5).

Literary studies has never been a neutral process of imparting aesthetic knowledge but has proved an institutional mechanism of cultural (re)production. Since its inception in the colonial time, English literary studies has been engaged in forming the hegemonic

cultural practices in India. Earlier it was a tool of cultural domination in the hands colonial rulers, today it is an institutional stratagem to construct a kind of cultural elitism (Luhar 2014: 76).

These two epigrammatic standpoints may seem personal discernments but they hint at the pragmatic veracities of the English literary studies in India or in foreign. The earlier pronouncement of Terry Eagleton suggests

that the departments of literature are the ideological apparatus of modern capitalist state. Whatever text they teach as curriculum has certain *values, meanings, and tradition*. They function to materialise the vision of the modern capitalist society and their priorities. The later proclamation alludes to the “fact” that the aesthetic knowledge has disappeared from the literary studies instead it has assumed the form of institutional mechanism for cultural reproduction. Literary studies has been functioning as a cultural apparatus for disseminating hegemony to different social groups – earlier for the colonisers and now for the dominant social-political groups. The present paper highlights how the Indian departments of English reproduce cultural hegemony through their literary syllabi. What are the cultural and ideological implications of university syllabi for literary studies? What is the cultural relevance of what has been sold as “required knowledge”? Who has the responsibilities of designing the best syllabus for the students and how it has been regulated? – these are some of important queries that the university departments are facing today.

The term ‘syllabus’ first made its entry in *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1656 to refer to ‘a table of content’. Its meaning changed in 1889 to denote ‘an outline of lectures or a course’ which proved ambiguous: in some fields the term has been used to mean ‘a course of study rather than a document outlining information about the course’ (Parkes 2002: 55). The terms ‘canon’ and ‘syllabus’ have some interconnections with each other – both pre-eminently mean *a list of texts*. A question that arises here is that if both ‘canon’ and ‘syllabus’ hint at the same thing, where should a boundary line be drawn? Guillory opines that the distinction between these operates in the realm of ‘imaginary projection’ (Guillory: 52). Syllabus seems, however it is not, a disinterested term, whereas the idea of

canon constructs ‘an imaginary’ realm of its authorship, and thus, a list of texts is transformed into a list of representative authors or social identities. Remarking on the dissimilarity between the terms, Guillory notes that the difference lies between the phrases: adding a “*text* by a woman” to the syllabus and “adding a *woman*” to the syllabus. This difference suggests the *imaginary representation*. Syllabus is more inclusive term; it blurs all distinctions. Canon is more exclusive, it vitalises all kinds of distinctions.

In the departments of English of Indian universities, the syllabus of English for postgraduate studies is designed by a committee called “Board of Studies,” each university has its own committee in each subject. This committee consists of the subject experts-teachers of different class, caste, religion, and region from the same university or in some cases from other university. Ostensibly the members of *Board of Studies* represent all the sections-groups of the society. Hence whatever text that is selected in name of syllabus is considered a result of collective endeavour and thus *secular*. The growing ‘canon concerns’ in the foreign universities encouraged the Indian universities for the canonical revision of the syllabus. This led to the inclusion of many national canons like American, Canadian, Australian, Indian, etc., along with gender-caste-region-based canons into the syllabi of English at postgraduate level. Notable changes have been introduced, at postgraduate stage, in the syllabi of English in last three decades. A study of the selected departments of English of Indian universities suggests that the departments of English have engaged themselves with formation of different canons. In the last three decades, the MA (English) curriculum has undergone a drastic change. It has offered variety of papers. The papers which were offered earlier have been replaced by more thematic, innovative and skill-oriented papers. Here,

an attempt is made to study the relationship between university syllabi and canon formation using instance of the Indian English fictions. The following Table

A shows list of Indian universities considered for the exploration of literary syllabi of MA (English):

Table A: List of Indian Universities Selected for the Study

Sr. No.	Universities Considered for the Present Study	Year of Implementation of MA (English) course*	Under CBCS Yes/No	Given University Code
1.	Andhra University, Visakhapatnam	w 2012	No	AUV
2.	Kakatiya University, Warangal	w 2009-10	No	KUW
3.	Bharathiar University, Coimbatore	w 2012-13	Yes	BUC
4.	Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad	***	No	MANUU
5.	Osmania University, Hyderabad	w 2010-11	Yes	OUH
6.	Gurunanak Dev University, Punjab	w 2012-13	No	GDUP
7.	Karnataka University, Dharwad	d 2011-14	Yes	KUD
8.	Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra	w 2012-13	No	KUK
9.	North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong	***	Yes	NEHUS
10.	Punjab University, Chandigarh	w 2012-13	No	PUC
11.	Punjabi University, Patiala	d 2009-11	No	PUP
12.	Calcutta University, Kolkata	***	No	CUK
13.	University of Jammu, Jammu	d 2010-12	Yes	UJJ
14.	University of Kashmir, Srinagar	***	Yes	UKS
*Note: w = w.e.f. & d = during *** = no specific detail regarding time-period is mentioned in the syllabus				

The first observation of the MA English syllabi of these universities suggests that out of these fourteen universities' syllabi only five universities, to name Kakatiya University, Bharathiar University, North-Eastern Hill University, Punjab University, and, University of Jammu have well-defined learning objectives. Kakatiya University has only overall learning objectives; NEHUS and UJJ have paper-wise objectives, while PUC and BUC have both general and paper-wise objectives. This makes it clear that many of the Indian universities which teach MA (English) still do not have well-defined objectives.

Another important fact that captures our eyes is that apart from the genre-wise, period-wise, nation-wise literature, the university departments of English have also introduced numbers of theme-based papers. It is quite perceptible that in university departments of English, the concerns for the 'region', where they are located, have increased. Many university departments have introduced the regional works in English translation to make the students aware of regional literary output. For instance, Kakatiya University (KUW) which is located in Warangal (Andhra Pradesh) has

introduced Annamayya and Vemana as well as *Bhakti* tradition of Nayanars and Alwars, Virasaivism and its contribution to social reform, Vaishnava *Bhakti*, Haridasa movement etc. in paper named as "Indian Classics in Translation". Similarly the University of Kashmir (UKS), Kashmir has introduced Kashmiri writers such as Shaikh-ul-Alam, Lal Ded, Mahmood Garni, Rasul Mir, Qurat-ul-Ain Haider, Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din, HK Bharati, and HK Koul in the paper called "Translation and Translation Theories". The same is the case with other universities as well.

There were often some complaints that the university departments of English have failed to ensure the quality education. Those who became teachers or lecturers after the university education practically failed in their classrooms; the objective of producing qualitative teachers seemed weakening. The university departments, realising this threat, decided to prepare the students for the actual classroom condition. Hence, the papers that can help the students started appearing in the MA (English) syllabi. The papers like "Language Management and Communication Skills", "Classroom Applications", "Fundamental of Information Technology", "Writing for Academic and Professional Purposes", "English Grammar and Writing", "Communicative English", and "Modern English Grammar and Usage" are the consequences of such efforts of the university departments of English.

Another shift that can strike to even a common reader is that the eradicating distinction between English Language Teaching (ELT) and English Literature Teaching. Of course, there are some institutions which offer the separate postgraduate course in ELT; in many of the universities the postgraduate course in English includes one or two basic paper/s. Initially, for both the courses, there were different syllabi and altogether different institutional set up; now the university

departments of English have realised that a student of English ought to be good at ELT in the same manner he/she is good at papers of literature. However the study of ELT is made optional for the students. Similar is the case with Linguistics. Earlier there was a separate course on linguistics but now it is an optional part of literary syllabus. Thus, the contemporary syllabus of MA (English) has brought the study of literature, language teaching and linguistics together.

Now the study of MA (English) is not limited to English-British literature; numbers of the literatures either in English or in English translation are the parts of English studies. The MA (English) course is stretched to incorporate Indian, American, Australian, Canadian, African and other Commonwealth literatures. Apart from these, Greek, Spanish, Russian, German, Arabian and other literatures are also taught in English translation. The papers entitled as the "World Classics in Translation" and "Modern European Classics" have made the study of classics of the different parts of world possible. The papers named as the "Comparative Literature" and "Regional Literatures in English Translation" has the potential to enrich the students with the knowledge of regional literatures of India. The regional literatures of India is translated English and taken as a good substitute of English literature. There is a strong need of introducing the paper namely "Comparative Literature" in all the universities of India as this paper has the ability of providing a compendium view of regional literary offspring of India. It would bring all the Indian literatures together and would enhance the knowledge of the students. Though the Comparative Literature is in itself a large field, its study at postgraduate level, in form of a paper or two, is really beneficial. The university departments of English have also engaged themselves in formation of new literary canons. The papers named as "Gender

Studies”, “Women’s Writing”, “Indian Diasporic Writing” and “Indian Writing in English” are in fact attempts of forming feminist, diasporic, Indian English canon and others.

The university departments of English have also decanonised some of the subjects. Earlier in many universities, the paper called “Literary Criticism and Theory” consisted of a portion dealing with the study of Indian Aesthetics wherein different Indian theories of literary appreciation were taught but this portion seems vanished in the syllabi of many Indian universities. The students of MA (English) are exposed to the western tradition of literary criticism only. The students must be taught how the Indian theories of literary appreciation can be practised over Indian (English) texts. The decline of the Indian aesthetics in MA (English) classroom would prove fatal for the Indian universities. Similarly in the 1980s the Dalit studies has emerged out as a budding area of study. However the analysis of these thirteen university syllabi

suggests that the dalit studies is ignored intentionally or unintentionally. Many universities have showed their concerns for the Black literature or Afro-American literature but the dalit literature which is home-grown literature is ignored with no reason.

One must appreciate the inclusion of the papers such as “Children’s Literature”, “Literature and Film”, “Cultural Studies”, “Literature and Philosophy”, “Environment and Indian Writing in English” in the syllabi of MA (English). But these papers are not offered by all the universities. Literature, being a product of different societal influences, must be analysed in relation with culture, film, philosophy, environment, etc. “Cultural Studies” has emerged as an important field in the western universities but in many of the Indian universities it is still alien. The same is the case with the “Children’s Literature”. Considering it frivolous, one should not divert his/her attention to the study of mainstream literature only.

Table B: Pre-1980s and Post-1980s Indian English Fiction in MA (English) Syllabi

<i>Pre – 1980s Indian English Fictions</i>	<i>Post – 1980s Indian English Fictions</i>
Ahmed Ali, <i>Twilight in Delhi</i> (1940)	Amitav Ghosh, <i>The Shadow Lines</i> (1988)
Anita Desai, <i>Cry, the Peacock</i> (1963)	Amitav Ghosh, <i>The Hungry Tides</i> (2005)
Anita Desai, <i>Voices in the City</i> (1965)	Amitav Ghosh, <i>Sea of Poppies</i> (2008)
Bankimchandra, <i>Raj Mohan’s Wife</i> (1864)	Anita Desai, <i>Clear Light of the Day</i> (1985)
Bharati Mukherjee, <i>Wife</i> (1973)	Anita Desai, <i>Fasting Feasting</i> (1999)
Chaman Nahal, <i>Azadi</i> (1975)	Anita Desai, <i>In Custody</i> (1986)
Kamala Markendeya, <i>Nectar in Sieve</i> (1954)	Anita Nair, <i>Ladies Coup</i> (2001)
Khushwant Singh, <i>Train to Pakistan</i> (1956)	Arundhati Roy, <i>The God of Small Things</i> (1997)
Krupabai Sathianandhan, <i>Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life</i> (1895)	Bapsi Sidhwa, <i>Ice-Candy Man</i> (1991)
Manohar Malgokar, <i>A Bend in Ganges</i> (1964)	Chitra Banerji Divakaruni, <i>Sister of My Heart</i> (1999)
Mulk Raj Anand, <i>Coolie</i> (1936)	Githa Hariharan, <i>Thousand Faces of Night</i> (1992)
Mulk Raj Anand, <i>Untouchable</i> (1935)	Namita Gokhale, <i>Gods, Graves and Grandmother</i> (1994)

Nirad C. Choudhary, <i>An Autobiography of Unknown Indian</i> (1951)	RK Narayan, <i>Tiger for Malgudi</i> (1983)
Raja Rao, <i>Kanthapura</i> (1938)	Rohinton Mistry, <i>A Fine Balance</i> (1995)
Raja Rao, <i>The Serpent and the Rope</i> (1960)	Rohinton Mistry, <i>Such a Long Journey</i> (1991)
RK Narayana, <i>The Guide</i> (1958)	Salman Rushdie, <i>Midnight's Children</i> (1981)
RK Narayan, <i>Swami and Friends</i> (1935)	Salman Rushdie, <i>The Moor's Last Sigh</i> (1996)
RK Narayana, <i>Man Eater of Malgudi</i> (1968)	Shashi Deshpande, <i>A Matter of Time</i> (1996)
RK Narayana, <i>Waiting for Mahatma</i> (1955)	Shashi Deshpande, <i>The Binding Vine</i> (1992)
Rudyard Kipling, <i>Kim</i> (1901)	Shashi Deshpande, <i>That Long Silence</i> (1988)
VS Naipaul, <i>A House for Mr. Biswas</i> (1961)	Shashi Tharoor, <i>The Great Indian Novel</i> (1989)
VS Naipaul, <i>The Mimic Men</i> (1967)	

Both the periods, pre and post 1980s, differ from each other on thematic line. The pre-1980s fictions generally deal with the themes of freedom struggle, independence, partition, and immediate post-independence condition. The trio of Rao, Anand, and Narayan dominate the field of pre-1980s fiction. Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), and Narayana's *Swami and Friends* (1935) are the social critique of the colonial Indian. They are marked by the quality of nationalism, zeal for social change, and, Gandhian ideology. Most of these fictions propagate the Gandhian idea of annihilation of caste and social distinctions and highlight the grandeur of simple, rustic life. Likewise, Nirad Choudhary's *An Autobiography of Unknown Indian* (1951), Raja Rao, *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), R.K. Narayan, *The Guide* (1958), *Man Eater of Malgudi* (1968) and *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955) are distinguished the Gandhian influence. Emergence of female writers and representation of feminine sensibility is marked quality of pre-1980s Indian English fiction. Bankimchandra's *Raj Mohan's Wife* (1864), Krupabai

Sattianandhan's *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1895), Kamala Markendeya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), Anita Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) and *Voices in the City* (1965), and Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* (1973) tell the story of female heart. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), and Chaman Nahal's *Aazadi* (1975) narrates the trauma caused by the partition of India and Pakistan. V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) and *The Mimic Men* (1967) deal with identity crisis.

One can easily notice that since the beginning of the Indian English fiction, in 1864 to the seventh decade of the twentieth century, hundreds of the fictions have come out but the university departments of English just focus on the writers who have succeeded in winning prizes and praises in India and abroad. It seems that it has been the tendency of the university departments of English to select those fictions which deals with the colonial struggle, postcolonial predicaments, and problems of social life, caste system, and identity crisis. In many of the universities, the departments of English are offering

more post-1980s texts to replace the traditional themes with the emerging. The decade of 1980s is considered as the new beginning for Indian English literature. In the fields of poetry, drama, and fiction, it marked 'newness'. Both the pre and post-1980s Indian English fiction generously uses the trimetric of history, myth, and

culture. The post-1980s fiction is a complex fusion of art and aesthetics; the myth, memory, and culture; as well as native social reality and global aspirations. What make post-1980s Indian English fiction different from the pre-1980s would be discussed in the next chapter.

Table C: Short Profile of Selected Post-1980s Indian English Fictions

<i>Name of the Text</i>	<i>Name of the Author</i>	<i>Publisher (Country)</i>	<i>Award</i>	<i>Author's Religion</i>	<i>Present Place of Domicile</i>
<i>Midnight's Children</i> (1981)	Salman Rushdie	Jonathan Cape (United Kingdom)	Booker Prize (1981) Booker of Bookers (1993) Best of Booker (2008)	Muslim	Britain
<i>The Moor's Last Sigh</i> (1996)			TIME Magazine's Best Book of the Year		
<i>Such a Long Journey</i> (1991)	Rohinton Mistry	McClelland and Stewart (Canada)	Governor General's Award Commonwealth Writers Prize Books in Canada First Novel Award Short listed for Booker Prize (1991)	Parsi	Canada
<i>A Fine Balance</i> (1995)			Giller Prize Short listed for Booker Prize (1996)		
<i>Ice-Candy Man</i> (1988)	Bapsi Sidhwa	Milkweed Edition (United States)	---	Parsi	United States
<i>Tiger for Malgudi</i> (1983)	R. K. Narayan	Viking Press (US) Heinemann (UK)	--	Hindu	India
<i>Clear Light of the Day</i> (1980)	Anita Desai	Heinemann (United Kingdom)	Short listed for Booker Prize (1980)	Hindu	United States

<i>In Custody</i> (1984)			Short listed for Booker Prize (1984)		
<i>Fasting Feasting</i> (1999)		Chatto and Windus (United Kingdom)	Short listed for Booker Prize (1999)		
<i>That Long Silence</i> (1988)	Shashi Deshpande	Virago (United Kingdom)	Sahitya Akadamy Award (1990)	Hindu	India
<i>A Matter of Time</i> (1996)		Penguin India	---		
<i>The Binding Vine</i> (1992)			--		
<i>The Shadow Lines</i> (1988)	Amitav Ghosh	Ravi Dayal Publishers (India)	Sahitya Akadamy Award (1989)	Hindu	New York
<i>The Hungry Tides</i> (2005)			Hutch Crossword Book Award		
<i>Sea of Poppies</i> (2008)		John Murray (United Kingdom)	Short listed for Booker Prize (2008)		
<i>The Great Indian Novel</i> (1989)	Shashi Tharoor	Viking Press (United States)	---	Hindu	India
<i>Thousand Faces of Night</i> (1992)	Githa Hariharan	Penguin India	Commonwealth Writers Prize (1993)	Hindu	India
<i>Gods, Graves and Grandmother</i> (1994)	Namita Gokhale	Rupa & Co. (India)	--	Hindu	India
<i>The God of Small Things</i> (1997)	Arundhati Roy	IndiaInk (India)	Booker Prize (1997)	Hindu	India
<i>Sister of My Heart</i> (1999)	Chitra Divakaruni	Anchor Books (United States)	---	Hindu	United States
<i>Ladies Coup</i> (2001)	Anita Nair	Penguin India	---	Hindu	India

This short profile suggests how the departments of English reproduce specific culture. If one divides the above mentioned writers in Hindu and Non-Hindu

categories, he/she would certainly observe that the majority of the Hindu writers (around 50%) who are taught in MA (English) classroom are Brahmins. Remaining 50 per cent are occupied by

those non-Brahmin writers who are upper-caste westernised Indians. Salman Rushdie, the hero of 1980s, is the only Muslim writer introduced in MA (English). Bapsi Sidhwa and Rohinton Mistry are the Parsi writers, the first lives in the USA and the other in Canada. Apart from these three writers, all are Hindus, Hindu upper caste. The cultural critics like Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Ronald Barthes, John Guillory,

Pierre Bourdieu and others assume that literary productions entail the idea of “culture capital” and anything that functions as *culture capital* indulges in hegemonic practices. But as discussed earlier, Stuart Hall holds it, the hegemony can be maintained by “winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural” and it can be sustained so long as the dominant classes “succeeds in framing all competing definitions within their range” (Durham 2001: 150). If this hidden agenda fails, it anyway ensures that the presence of the subordinate groups in an ‘ideological’ arena which does not appear *ideological* at all. Such hegemonic control, perhaps, is reminiscent of what Barthes calls ‘mythology’ which performs the functions of naturalisation and normalisation. These assertions lead to an essential facet of hegemony that “it has to be won, reproduced, sustained” (Ibid: 151). Precisely the same apparatus was employed by the Brahmins to maintain their superiority over the ‘other’ castes. An ‘intellectual’ space that the Brahmin writers have formed for themselves is in fact the consequence of their shrewdness which came to them through the colonial transaction. They realised that teaching of Sanskrit to the Indian masses would distort its vitality and would pose challenges to them. They did not want to lose the *culture capital* that they have attained through long-standing pedantic-hegemonic practices. They thought that the socio-religious capital which they had earned

through selling the Sanskrit; similarly they could also acquire newer emergent culture capital through learning English. During the colonial epoch only, they could envisage the formation of English as a global language and took up the opportunity to rule over the masses. They were the masters of Sanskrit, the language of Gods, and wanted to be the master of English, the language of the rulers. Both the languages kept the close to the power – religious and colonial. Since the formation of the caste-system they knew it well that educating the masses imparts the power to control them, hence the Brahmin as a community, first of all, learnt English only to teach the ‘other’ masses and to maintain their hegemony. But the colonial era was the time of cultural insurgency when it was not possible to entice the majority Indians masses only through teaching. They realised that they must integrate the national flavour in their teaching; it had to be made more social and easily acceptable. The increasing caste-consciousness in the colonial era indicated to them that the shifting wind wanted them to cast off their Brahminical self and this was the only way out to win the consent of the ruling the masses. This led to the process of de-Brahminisation which was again a stratagem of reproducing and sustaining their Brahminical hold. Prof. V. K. R. V. Rao opines that

the de-Brahminised Brahmin may no longer be a caste, but his new ways, being in tune with the forces of change, are likely not only to ensure his survival but felicitate his retaining a position of high status and authority (Paranjape 2000: 57)

The de-Brahminisation was a policy to embrace a newer-secular identity without giving up hereditary caste-based privileges. One can easily find this ideological apparatus still present in the contemporary Indian society and these selected fictions points towards this fact.

This is the reason why the post-1980s Indian English fiction seems more Brahminised, elite or upper caste. Prof. Rao who believed that –

Whether in the national movement, or in the fight for democracy and socialism, or migration to urban areas, or in education, or in pursuing science and technology, or in upholding the rights of underprivileged and backward classes, or in adopting western values and knowledge for attacking or qualifying Indian values, or going in for a Western way of life and daily habits, the Brahmin has placed himself in the forefront of the social change, even though it means his shedding the very traditions, values, symbols and way of life that has given him hitherto superior position in Indian society (Ibid: 57).

Though many of the Brahmins have placed themselves in forefront for the social change and easily responded to the progressive social forces and even do not hesitate to adopt the position which goes counter to their caste interests, all these have ideological implications. It is obvious that the Brahminism makes qualitative repercussions on the art and ideas of fiction, however one must ask the question: *is the selection of the post-1980s Indian English fiction for the purpose of syllabus in university departments of English democratic-secular?* As the above arguments indicate, the answer is certainly 'No'. Though the universities have formed "Board of Studies", which ensures democratic and secular process for the selection of texts, there must be some *unseen power* that regulates this process and makes it hegemonic. Probably the selection process of the members of Board of Studies is polemic and more inclined towards the Brahmins or elite groups. Or the members of the Board of Studies are uninterested and passive subject experts who do not wish to introduce any reform. Whatever may be the case, such circumstances points out the inefficiency of the "Board of Studies".

Out of these twenty one fictions, sixteen fictions have won some literary prizes or at least they have been shortlisted for the prizes. These sixteen fictions are introduced in the syllabi of more than two universities. Salman Rushdie's *The Midnight's Children* (1981), which is introduced in seven universities, occupies the first rank if one looks at the number of repetition of post-1980s Indian English fiction. If one considers the list of both pre and post 1980s Indian English fiction, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) surpasses the popularity of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and is introduced in twelve out of thirteen universities. Those fictions which are not awarded any award or prize are introduced once only. This tendency suggests that the university departments of English are fascinated by the award-winning fictions or writers. Awarding prizes do not reflect over the quality of the text or by no means have they hinted at standardised practice, they only show the influence of the west. Whatever the west stamps as good by awarding prizes are warmly welcomed by the university departments of English. The valuation of literary texts through awarding prizes does not guarantee aesthetic value. Terry Eagleton believes that "value is always 'transitive' – that is to say, value for somebody in a particular situation-and ... always culturally and historically specific" (Huggan 2001: 28). Similar to other cultural forms, a literary text does not have intrinsic value – its value is contingent. Hence the award which is announced on its contingent value does not emerge as a locus of immanent value. Such prepositions lead to the following observations of Graham Huggan:

One such regime of value pertains to the Western (Euro-American) education system, which is increasingly invested in the promotion and certification of "marginal" products. Another is the metropolitan publishing industry, which has placed its stake in the postcolonial as a

convenient device for merchandising of exotic-culturally “othered” – goods. Both these agency arguably participate in what we might call an “alterity industry”: one which involves the trafficking not only of culturally “othered” artefacts but of the institutional values that are brought to bear in their support. As I have argued elsewhere, postcoloniality implies a common condition of contradiction between anti-colonial ideologies and neo-colonial market schemes. ... It is rather to see that work as being bound up in a late-capitalist mode of production, where such value-laden terms as “marginality,” “authenticity,” and “resistance” circulates as commodities available for commercial exploitation, and as signs within a larger semiotic system – the “postcolonial exotic” (Huggan 1997: 412).

Literary prizes entail a *symbolic* value which is generated by the western academy and the metropolitan publishing industry. Through promotion and certification of the literary texts in the form of awarding the literary prizes, they hegemonised the literary studies. It seems a neo-colonial strategy of the ruling the literary products of the ‘marginalised’ countries. Pierre Bourdieu opines that the literary prizes exist in the wider regime of the symbolic consecration and are announcers of the cultural capital. They do not simply represent a significant achievement of the writer but claim a monopoly of judging-legitimising the writer’s work:

The fundamental stake in literary struggle is the monopoly of literary legitimacy... the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves writers; or, to put it in another way, ... the monopoly of the power to consecrate the producers or products (we are dealing with a world of belief and consecrated writer is the one who has the power to consecrate and to win assent when he or she consecrates n author or

work—with a preface, a favourable review, a prize, etc.) (Huggan 2001: 5)

Bourdieu finds at least four “agents of legitimation” engaged in the formation of cultural capital. They are: writers, literary industry, media, and the audience or the “valuing communities”. The writers and the audience play passive role, whereas the literary industry, which includes publishers, booksellers, reviewers, etc., and media, both print and electronic, are actively engaged agents of this process. These active players have the power of endowing the consecrated authority to those texts which have potential as well as to those which do not have. In present times, the financial sponsorship of the literary awards has raised many questions at its authenticity. Numerous literary awards are sponsored by the transnational corporate houses. The sponsorship of the literary awards guarantees a huge publicity to such companies which function as an authority of deciding the worth of the texts. Bourdieu observes that the contemporary corporate houses have overtaken the earlier hierarchical systems of public and private patronage through which ideas of literature and literary value were upheld. The Sahitya Akadamy Award, the highest recognition for literature in India, is sponsored by the State or the government. Those who function as the mediatory between the State and the writers, in fact, are not always the men of literary taste. Besides, the selection process is always influenced by the functioning government. It has been often observed that the writers whose texts support the ideology of the ruling government are awarded with the prizes. Even the criteria for the selection of literary texts go on changing with the shifting State authority. Even those who work as a Jury in the selection committee are often the teachers of the university whose literary taste is formed through the English education system and are influenced by the western tradition. In

nutshell, one may argue that awarding prizes do not guarantee aesthetic values. However, the university departments of English in India are fascinated by the award-winning fictions.

A fleeting look over the publication profile suggests that out of *twenty one* fictions only *seven* fictions are published in India (around 33% only). Penguin India, Ravi Dayal Publishers, and Rupa & Co., and India Ink are the only four India-based publishing houses. Rest of all (around 67%) are located outside of India. It means that India creativity still largely depends on the western publishing houses for its emergence. The west still has the monopoly over the publication industry and thus hegemony over literary creativity. The publication industry is not simply an economic sight but is field of culture production. The publishing literary text is in fact production of cultural goods. The publishing industry creates, what Bourdieu says, symbolic goods. One which has the power to authorise symbolic good has the power to dominate. Because of this, the western publishing houses decide what Indian readers ought to read and how their literary taste should be shaped. What Indian read considering good is first stamped as good by these publishing mega-players; they stamp it good in favour of the west. And what the west can favour as good is generally that thing which supports its hegemonic ideology. Hence, one may conclude that the most of the Indian English fiction which have come to India through foreign publication agencies are supportive of the western hegemonic practices. Another important fact is that the most of publishing house are multinational corporate houses. The texts which are produced in these houses are guaranteed a wide publicity and huge readership. The wide publicity and readership do not penetrate upon artistic and aesthetic quality but are economic strategies of these corporate houses. Thus, the consideration of the Indian English

fiction as an artistic construct certainly requires some serious pondering.

Another important aspect for the consideration is the authenticity of representing India. Out of the twelve living writers (except R.K. Narayana who passed away in 2001), six writers are non-resident Indians. They have lived in foreign land for considerable years of their life; they hardly visit India regularly. India lives in their imagination. When such writer writes a novel on Indian theme, it certainly arouses a question about the authenticity of his/her experience and of the disinterestedness of cultural representation. Salman Rushdie, in this connection, observes that the writers who write outside of India will “create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (Rushdie 1991:10). For these writers, there is no single India but manifold Indias. Hundreds of the versions of India take shape in their mind. Rushdie adds:

Writing my book in North London, looking out through my window on to a city scene totally unlike the ones I was imagining on to paper, I was constantly plagued by this problem, until I felt obliged to face it in the text, to make clear that... what I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that: ‘my’ India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of the possible versions. I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, but imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect, and I knew that my India may only have been one to which I (who am no longer what I was, and who by quitting Bombay never became what perhaps I was mean to be) was, let us say, willing to admit I belonged (Ibid: 10).

So the Indian writers who write from the abroad in fact deal with, in Rushdie's terms, "broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost" (Ibid: 11). Rushdie's observations make it clear that numerous shreds of memory function as an inspirational source for the non-resident Indian writer. So whatever they write, it cannot be claimed true, it is memory's truth. Similarly the attempts of discovering Indian culture from the texts of such writers lead to disappointment. However, despite of physical disconnectedness with one's country, one remains emotionally attached with one's nation when he/she is out of India. This attachment with nation's past is a kind of endearment to the memory. This memory helps him to preserve the same cultural tradition from which he/she has departed at a certain point in the past.

Thus, it is for sure that the curriculum of the university departments of English is not an accumulation of artistic and aesthetic values. The artistic and aesthetic strength of literary texts is determined not by indigenous practices but by the imitation of the western criterions. It is also observed that the 'common' man is missing in the syllabi of the MA (English) in the Indian universities. Most of the texts which are selected by the

curriculum-makers are written by the Brahmin or the privileged caste. Very few texts deal with the common masses of India; in their narration as well they centre on the privileged castes of India. Most of the writers by their profession are engaged with the 'white colour' jobs and have received good education in India or abroad. Hence, the voice which Indian English fiction reflects is in fact a voice of the elite and not common. It also becomes visible that the most of the texts which are selected for MA (English), in the selected university departments of English, have won or at least are shortlisted for some literary prize. So again this leads to a question: is it the case that these texts are stamped as good by awarding prizes that is why the students are made to study them? Another point of observation is that around 67% Indian fiction are published in abroad; thus what is claimed as an Indian product has originally get birth in foreign publishing press. It also hints at an important fact that Indian creativity is still dominated by the west; what the west decides good and publish, the Indian reads that much as Indian writing. The most of the famed Indian writers do not reside in India, they write from abroad. Hence what they write has an imprint of imaginary homeland.

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