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LOCATING INDIANNESS IN THE WORKS OF ANGLO-INDIAN FICTION WRITERS

Shyamasri Maji

ABSTRACT

This essay situates Anglo-Indian fiction into the corpus of Indian English Fiction and discusses the fictional works produced by writers of the Anglo-Indian community in India and the diaspora. The diasporic writers here considered are in the tradition of Indian English Fiction. This essay studies the works of these well- known and less well-known writers of the Anglo-Indian community through the theoretical frame of 'Indianness,' which is seen in relation to the concept of 'historical sense.' It reviews the tradition of writing Indian fiction in English and examines the dialogue of Anglo-Indian fiction writers with the colonial and post-colonial trends in Indian English Fiction of representing Indianness while misrepresenting Anglo-Indians.

INTRODUCTION

This essay discusses the concept of 'Indianness' from a literary perspective and examines the nature of its representation in the fictional narratives of writers belonging to the Anglo-Indian community located in both India and the diaspora. Anglo-Indian writers who live in India such as Ruskin Bond, I. Allan Sealy, Hugh and Colleen Gantzer, Bryan Peppin and Nikta Lyrad are described as Indian writers in English. Those living abroad such as Keith Butler, David McMahon and Jimmy Pyke are referred to as writers of the Anglo-Indian diaspora because they were born and brought up in India and their Indian connection is strongly reflected in their diasporic fiction. This essay also includes the diasporic writers in the category of Indian English Writing. What distinguishes the two categories of Anglo-Indian writers from the larger group of other Indian authors writing in English is that their mother tongue is English.

Factors such as the history of mixed descent and the westernised ways of cultural representation, which are essential to Anglo-Indian identity, play a distinct role in their perception and representation of 'Indianness.' Since the community is small and few Anglo-Indians have achieved renown as authors, the issue of reviewing Indianness in their writing has not yet been taken up by literary critics and scholars. The present study is an attempt to address this gap in the critical discourse on Indian Fiction in English. It discusses Indianness as a discourse in Indian English fiction. It analyses the works of select Anglo-Indian writers in India and the diaspora to explore how far they have conformed to the conventional trends of representation of 'Indianness' and in what ways they have deviated from it. It also examines the narrative modes they have used in their fictional works and the styles they have followed to fit well into the locus of Indian Writing in English. It examines the long tradition of misrepresenting the Anglo-Indian community by British and Indian writers and studies how such literary misrepresentations have deeply impacted upon the consciousness of Anglo-Indian fiction writers. The overall methodology this study employs is postcolonialism and the principal research method is textual analysis.

INDIANNESS: A THEORETICAL FRAME

Indian English fiction gained prominence in the 1940s and 1950s with the publication of the novels of Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandya and other prominent non-Anglo-Indian writers. It established itself globally as a 'type' with the emergence of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, I. Allan Sealy and Sashi Tharoor in the 1980s. In the journey of Indian English novel from the 1930s to the new millennium, Ruskin Bond and I. Allan Sealy are two important members of the Anglo-Indian community, who became well-known as Indian English writers. Though Rusty, an Anglo-Indian boy from the Himalayan foothills in Bond's fiction, became a popular figure among Indian youth and Sealy's community saga *The Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle* (1988) received critical acclaim worldwide, there is little research on how these authors have represented the Anglo-Indian perspectives in their narration of the Indian nation. This essay looks into the broader context of theorising 'Indianness' in Indian English Fiction, first, with reference to the works of non-Anglo-Indian writers and then, by examining the works of the Anglo-Indian fiction writers, it analyses 'Indian English Fiction' as a discourse representing a historical sense. It argues that among the Anglo-Indian writers this historical sense generates

an anxiety of representation, which may be described as anxiety of *Anglo-Indianness*. The present discussion shows that this anxiety, being connected with their minority status in the socio-cultural ecosystem of India, finds a distinct voice in their fictional writings.

The concept 'historical sense' is borrowed from T.S Eliot's essay 'Tradition and Individual Talent' in which the great litterateur discusses the impact of 'tradition,' which is a thing of the past, on a writer belonging to the present time. Here, Eliot is referring to the literary tradition of the remote past as well as that of the recent past. He observes that this "historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes the writer traditional" (1962, p. 294). He explains that a creative writer or an artist has no meaning alone until and unless he/she responds to the literary tradition that has come down to him/her in the form of historical sense. It connects the past with the present to map the continuities and the discontinuities in the literary tradition/s of different generations of writers. The present essay on Anglo-Indian Fiction uses the concept of historical sense to analyse the dialogue of the Anglo-Indian writers with the tradition of writing fiction about India in English. This category of fictional writing is officially known as Indian English Fiction and it includes in its corpus the fictional works of Indian writers living in India as well as Indian-born writers inhabiting the diasporic space. Although each group writes from its distinct location, the feature that brings them under one umbrella is their connection with the Indian nation, either through nationality or descent or both. The works of the British novelists who wrote in and about India prior to Indian Independence (15th August, 1947) were described as Anglo-Indian fiction in the academic circles for some time. Their works, which belongs to the period of the 'recent past,' played a decisive role in the formation of 'historical sense' among the Indian writers who chose to write in the English language.

In the decades following Independence, representation of Indianness in the works of the Indian English writers emerged as the primary criterion to situate these writings within the purview of postcolonial literary discourses. Locating the 'essence' of Indianness is not of utmost importance in the major Indian literatures produced in the vernacular languages, however, it becomes a pressing issue in Indian literature produced in English because English is a foreign language to most Indians (though

technically it is recognised as the second language and also as an official language). To a large section of Indian society the English language still remains the symbol of elitism and Western culture. In her essay 'Anxiety of Indianness: Our Novels in English' Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that "writing in English and writing in the other Indian languages are antithetical enterprises marked by a commitment to, or betrayal of, certain undefinable cultural values" (1993, p. 2607). Against the backdrop of colonial history and anti-English nationalism, the choice of English as a linguistic medium of representing the nation seemed a betrayal to the dominant cultural values that sought to unify the varied groups of people into the imagined community of 'Indians' on the basis of *bharatiya sanskriti* or Indian culture. In the Introduction to *Imagining Indianness: Cultural Identity and Literature*, Diana Dimitrova describes *bharatiya* as "a particular Indian cultural identity that is inherent to India and can only be understood against the background of the plurality of India's languages, myths, religions and literatures—its shared linguistic, literary, cultural and religious history—that is, the ways Indians imagine Indianness" (2017, p. 2). The trend of formulating a homogenised cultural identity, however, should not be confused with *Hindutva,* which campaigns for an extremely politicised version of Hindu religion for establishing Hindu cultural identity as India's national identity.

In this context, Dimitrova specifies that Hindutva advocates for either assimilating or excluding Buddhist, Sikh, Islamic and Christian cultural practices on the premise that these are foreign traditions (2017, p. 3). In such a socio-cultural context Anglo-Indian writers may feel apprehensive of their religious affiliation and their cultural orientations. Though Bond and Sealy have not written explicitly about these issues, they have stuck to their Anglo-Indianness in their perspectives on Indian history and culture. This 'Anglo-Indianness' may be defined as an awareness of belonging, and simultaneously of not-belonging, to the socio-cultural ecosystem of India. The matter of the community's 'belonging' to the sovereign Indian Republic is Constitutionally settled. The question of their 'not-belonging' is discursive and often formulated by politically-conditioned contestation over socio-cultural representations.

In the postcolonial context, Hindutva and Nehruvian secularism are two prominent ideological indices for mapping and reconfiguring the cultural trope of Indianness. While the former thrives on the premise of uniting religion with state politics, the latter

insists on maintaining a rationalistic divide between the two. The spirit of Hindutva has become increasingly prominent since the 1980s, which coincidentally is the period during which Indian English fiction gained international fame. In the works of reputed Indian English writers of the 1980s and the 90s the precepts of Nehruvian secularism emerged as a prominent discourse while dealing with minority issues, fanaticism, communal strife and the rewriting of Indian history. In 'Minority Identity in India: *Midnight's Children* and *A Suitable Boy'* Neelam Srivastava observes that "the two novels share a common ideological matrix which can be traced back to Nehru's idea of the nation as a multicultural imagined community" (2008, p. 49). Both the novels—Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993)—are considered canonical texts of Indian English Fiction. While Seth's novel represents the plight of the Muslims in the post-Partition period from the upper middle-class Hindu secularist viewpoint, Rushdie re-views the history of India's Independence from a Muslim minoritarian position. Although Rushdie created a telling influence with his polyphonic narrative mode and pluralistic style celebrating multiculturalism, his representation of Saleem Sinai, a character born out of interracial union, as a metaphor for cultural hybridity/syncretism has been disapproved by some critics. Loretta Mijares observes that "racial mixture in the literary imagination often becomes a metaphor for something else, and in this process of metaphorization is alienated from history from which it originates" (2003, p. 125). Such a metaphorical representation eludes the reality of mixed descent in the Indian subcontinent. It may increase their invisibility in the mainstream discourse of Indian history, literature and also in the demographic records of the Indian nation. The erroneous Census Report of 2011 which mentioned that there are 296 Anglo-Indians in India may be taken as an alarming sign in this regard (23 Nov. 2022, *The Times of India*).

Glenn D'Cruz, an Anglo-Indian filmmaker and academic, criticises Rushdie's metaphorical representation for its racist vibes and considers it as the continuation of the colonial legacy in the postcolonial Indian English novel. With reference to Rushdie's description of Saleem Sinai's character as sterile and physically disintegrating, D'Cruz observes, "The old racial science perception of the hybrid as an infertile haunts Rushdie's novel, indicating the extent to which colonial stereotypes persists" (2006, p. 170). The members of both genders of the Anglo-Indian community have been subjected to stereotyping in Indian English Fiction. Indian writers such as

Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Manohar Malgonkar and David Davidar, have depicted the Anglo-Indian women as a counter to the virtuous image of the Indian woman. This is evident in Chaudhuri's *The Continent of Circe* (1965), Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows* (1962) and Davidar's *House of Blue Mangoes* (2002). Such misrepresentations were absorbed into the tapestry of contemporary Indian English fiction as a hangover of Raj fiction, which represented India, the Indian people and the East-West encounter from the perspective of the coloniser. These novels were mostly written by the British writers who had some experience of living in the Indian subcontinent. In his *Studies in Anglo-Indian Fiction* (2008), M.K. Naik refers to a number of English novelists who represented the Anglo-Indian men as drunkard and lazy and the Anglo-Indian women as unchaste and greedy: Henry Bruce's *The Eurasian* (1913), Alice Perrin's *The Stronger Claim* (1903), Rummer Godden's *The Lady and the Unicorn* (1938), Paul Scott's *Johnnie Sahib* (1952) and *The Alien Sky* (1958) and John Masters' *Bhowani Junction* (1954) (Naik, 2008, pp. 31-54). In *Midnight's Orphans: Anglo-Indians in Post/Colonial Literature,* Glenn D'Cruz classifies their prejudiced representation in Raj fiction as "Seven Deadly Stereotypes: 'The Mimic', 'The Whore', 'The Ditherer', 'The Poor Relation', 'The Pariah', 'The Big Shot'" (2006, p. 30). Such stereotypical images gained momentum chiefly due to the circulation of the colonial myths associated with interracial sexual encounters and mixed descent progeny.

It is unfortunate that even Rudyard Kipling could not refrain from manifesting his prejudices against the Anglo-Indians in his writings. In his story 'His Chance in Life' Kipling describes the Anglo-Indians as inhabitants of the 'borderline.' About their mixed descent, he remarks, "The Black and the White mix very quaintly in their ways. Sometimes the White shows in spurts of fierce, childish pride—which is Pride of Race run crooked—and sometimes the Black is still fiercer abasement and humility, half-heathenish customs and strange, unaccountable impulses to crime" (2012, p. 69). The nineteenth century notions of miscegenation and the role of the colonial mindset in establishing those in epistemological discourses is clear in the following comment from Kipling:

> One of these days, this people—understand they are far lower than the class whence Derozio, the man who imitated Byron, sprung—will turn out a writer or a poet; and then we shall know how they live and what they feel. In the meantime, any stories about them cannot be absolutely correct in fact or inference. (2012, p. 69)

Here, Kipling's tone of ridicule not only reveals his contempt for the Anglo-Indians, but also acts as a clue to explore the absence of Anglo-Indians from the colonial literary space after the untimely death of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio in 1831.

It took more than a century after Derozio's death for the Anglo-Indian community to gain visibility in the literary map of the subcontinent, first with the publication of *The Room on the Roof* by Ruskin Bond in 1956 and then with Sealy's winning of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for *The Trotter-Nama* in 1989. There are several questions that arise from this finding: Why don't we have a great Anglo-Indian writer between 1831 and 1956? Why does the pre-Independence history of Indian Writing in English not mention at least a few Anglo-Indian poets/fiction writers? Did they not involve themselves in creative writing or were their works not published? There should have been a considerable number of Anglo-Indian poets and fiction writers because English is the mother tongue of the community. The Anglo-Indian parents compulsorily sent their children to Christian schools where English was the only medium of instruction. The British colonial rulers preferred the Anglo-Indians in certain stream of employment for their fluency in English. Proper investigation is yet to be undertaken to explain their absence from the history of Indian English Fiction during the pre-Independence period, whether it was a matter of their non-involvement in literary activities or a case of erasure of the publishing records.

ANGLO-INDIAN 'INDIANNESS'

In the 'Introduction' to his *Locating the Anglo-Indian Self in Ruskin Bond,* Debashis Bandyopadhyay observes, "An autobiographical writer, depending upon the memory of his past life for grist, Bond's subjectivity is constantly informed by an unconscious play of dynamic alterity" (2012, p. 7). According to Bandyopadhyay, Bond's statement, "Race did not make me an Indian. Religion did not make me an Indian. But history did. And in the long run, it's history that counts", is a manifestation of anxiety (Bond qtd. in Bandyopadhyay, 2012, p. 7). At the same time, it underlines Bond's faith in history as a platform for social recognition. Both Ruskin Bond and I. Allan Sealy have examined the history of the Indian nation with an insider's point of view in their works, *A Flight of Pigeons* and *The Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle* (1988), respectively. On the one hand it

ensures their belongingness to the Indian nation and on the other hand it gives them an opportunity to write Indian history from Anglo-Indian perspectives.

Bond's story, *A Flight of Pigeons,* a novella published in the late 1970s, is set against the backdrop of the Rebellion of 1857. It represents this historical event through the eyes of Ruth Labadoor, an Anglo-Indian girl, whose family went through harrowing experiences during the outbreak of the mutiny in Meerut and Shahjahanpur (two towns in Uttar Pradesh). The mutineers had attacked the local church one morning during Sunday service. Men and women from the British as well as the Anglo-Indian community were present. Ruth's father Mr. Labadoor, a clerk in the magistrate's office, was killed. Ruth and her mother were then brought as captives to the house of Javed Khan, a Pathan rebel. Though the Pathan did not harm or disrespect them, at times he threatened to convert them to Islam and proposed to marry Ruth. The story of the novella is based on a true story (Bond, 2010, p.289), which is neither documented in mainstream history books nor reproduced in the works of non-Anglo-Indian fiction writers. Interestingly, Bond heard this story from his father, who was born in Shahjahanpur, and the latter in turn had heard it from his father, who was a soldier (Bond, 2010, p. 289). This incident, which was preserved in the collective memory of Bond as a community narrative instilled in him a 'historical sense' with which he related the past with the present and vice-versa.

In the Introduction to the novella written in 2002, Bond conveys this idea in the following words, "I published this account as a novella about thirty years ago. I feel it still has some relevance today, when communal strife and religious intolerance threaten the lives and livelihood of innocent, law-abiding people" (2010, p. 289). Bond's personal experiences contributed significantly to his fictional writings representing the colonial past as well as the post-colonial present. In his fictional tales of Rusty, Bond establishes the Anglo-Indian boy as not only a resident of the hills in post-colonial India but as one who belongs to the hills. Here, the hills represent not only a topography but also a socio-cultural matrix composed of Anglo-Indians, domiciled Europeans, and the local communities. Rusty becomes the representative of this socio-cultural group and the 'hills' become representative of the history of these people and of how they became an integral part of the place. Similarly, the story of seven generations of the Trotter family representing the Anglo-Indian community in

Sealy's epic novel *The Trotter-Nama*, is integral to the history of Lucknow represented as Nakhlau in the novel. Modelled upon the Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great, who reinvented the religious and the social practices of his time with his magnanimity, the character of Justin, the first Trotter, is a melange of a European and an Indian. He is the embodiment of cultural hybridity in his sartorial, culinary and religious orientations. In other words, he not only sired a mixed descent progeny which with the succeeding generations formed a community, but also a distinct cultural tradition which was neither fully European nor fully Indian. In the scope of Sealy's fiction Anglo-Indianness encompasses tropes of both racial and cultural hybridity. Unlike Rushdie's metaphorical reproduction of Anglo-Indianness, it makes a realistic representation of the community from the eighteenth century to the decades following Indian Independence in 1947.

Regarding the realistic representation of the milieu and ethos in Indian English Fiction, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan placed emphasis on 'Indian sensibility' which involves translation of the indigenous cultural practices into English. In the Foreword to *Kanthapura* (1938), Rao observed, "The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American and Irish life has gone into the making of theirs" (2005, np.). R. K. Narayan conveyed a similar idea through his concept of 'Bharat brand English' in his essay "Toasted English" (2001, p. 269). Both Bond and Sealy have followed what Rao and Narayan explained as representation of the Indian sensibility in the English language. However, their Indian sensibility as it has been represented in *A Flight of Pigeons* and *The Trotter-Nama,* may be reinterpreted as Anglo-Indian sensibility which is often not counted into the theory and praxis of Indian literary culture. There's a striking difference between the Anglo-Indian writers and the Indian writers as far as the matter of representing Indian sensibility is concerned. To the latter, 'Indian sensibility' meant translating the vernacular idiom and indigenous culture into English, to the former, however, it implied re-locating the Anglicised image of the Anglo-Indian community within the multicultural scope of Indianness. Rao's 'Kanthapura' and Narayan's 'Malgudi' represent India in microcosm from the South Indian perspective. Sealy portrays Trotterpurwa, the town of the Trotters or the Anglo-Indians, as the Indian nation with the multicultural pan-Indian outlook of an Anglo-Indian writer. While Rao uses the mythical mode of *sthalapurana* in *Kanthapura* to represent the zeal of the *swadeshi* movement in English, Narayan

chooses to represent India as a postcolonial territory of both exotic and spiritual reality in his well-known works such as *The Guide* and *The English Teacher*. It is through these methods of narration that Rao and Narayan struggled to keep intact the borderline that existed between the cultural domains of India and the West. Later writers such as Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy were not inclined to highlight this borderline. Instead, they represented the gradual infusion of the western practices into the social and personal lives of middle-class Indians.

In the matter of representing the borderline between the West and the East, Sealy has deviated from Rao, Narayan and his contemporaries. The oeuvre of his literary works includes critically acclaimed novels such as *The Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle* (1988) and *The Everest Hotel: A Calendar* (1998). His recent works include *The Small Wild Goose Pagoda: An Almanack* (2014) and *Zelaldinus: A Masque* (2017). *The Small Wild Goose Pagoda: An Almanack* (2014) is a non-fiction piece. In these works, Sealy has experimented with the literary forms of the East and the West. The forms are highlighted in their subtitles. Literary forms such as *nama, calendar* and *almanack* are oriental in terms of origin and have been used by Sanskrit and Persian writers in the past. *The Trotter-Nama* is written in the form of an oriental chronicle. According to Sealy, the "*nama* was a medieval historical form that encouraged invention" (Sealy, 2014, p.128). Popular examples of this genre include *Baburnama,* an autobiography of the first Mughal Emperor Babur, *Humayun-Nama* by Gulbadan Begum, and *Akbarnama* by Abu-l-Fazl. Sealy incorporates the *nama* form with magical realism, a literary style of prose-fiction born and developed in Latin America. In 'Fictionalised Identities: Remodelling Anglo-Indians,' Jade Furness justifies Sealy's use of magical realism in the following observation:

> The lack of documented sources may be one of the reasons Sealy has chosen not to write a realistic historical novel about Anglo-Indians. It may also be that writing a solely realist story about this community of people would be an act of collusion with the hegemonic representations of history that excluded such marginalised groups. However, in order to recuperate Anglo-Indians into a history that has been either unrepresented or misrepresented, Sealy has chosen the narrative literary form of magical realism. For, it is only through the imagination and its interaction with what is known to be real that he can restore to Anglo-Indians their sense of belonging and being a part of an Indian history that impacted not only at the global, political level but on the individual lives as well. (2021, p. 415)

The history-fiction interface in *The Trotter-Nama* not only inverts the centre-margin dynamics of representation but also highlights the postcolonial invasion of Western literary forms. Sealy's inter-cultural forays into Indian classical poetics, are both experimental and innovative. In *The Everest Hotel*: *A Calendar* (1998) Sealy revives the classical tradition of Kalidasa's epic *Ritusamhara* (garland of seasons). The chapters of this novel are named after six seasons in Indian folk culture: Summer, The Rains, Autumn, Frost Time, Winter, Spring and Summer. The title of the seventh chapter is a repetition of the first chapter. It communicates not only the cyclical order of seasons in nature but also the circular pattern of time in the narrative. His recent works *The Small Wild Goose Pagoda,* an autobiographical piece set in Uttarakhand, and *Asoca: A Sutra,* a historical novel on Ashoka the Great, the third king of the Mauryan Empire who gave up war after embracing Buddhism, present a wider panorama of cultural syncretism by re-viewing the local narratives and the national issues from a pan-Asian perspective. His style echoes Jawaharlal Nehru's views on secularism:

> We can never forget the ideals that have moved our race, the dreams of the Indian people through the ages, the wisdom of the ancients, the buoyant energy and love of life and nature of our forefathers…their splendid achievements in literature, art and culture, their love of truth and beauty and freedom…their toleration of other ways than theirs, their capacity to absorb other peoples and their cultural accomplishments, to synthesize them and develop a mixed culture. (1985, p. 509)

While Sealy deviates from the general trend of representing Indianness in Indian English fiction through his experiments with the literary forms, Nikta Lyrad, a lesser-known Anglo-Indian writer, conforms to it through his representation of the emotional and spiritual journey of his protagonist in his debut novel *Miscegena: Crossing the Bridge* (2021). Its story begins with the Anglo-Indian protagonist's search for his white father, an Englishman called David. The Englishman abandoned the family after the second World War and returned to England. His mother, an Anglo-Indian, believed that her husband died in the war. She worked as a private nurse in Baroda, a town in Gujrat (India), to raise her children singlehandedly. When the son discovers the truth about the father, he hides it from his mother and gives up his quest to find his father. Instead, he decides to rediscover his Indian identity as an Anglo-Indian and an historian. His pursuit takes him to every nook and cranny of South India—the villages, the forts, the temples, the monuments, the museums. In the course of his journey as

a scholar, he not only writes books on colonial history but also changes his name from David to Dravid, which suggests his conviction to affiliate with the indigenous Dravidian race and culture.

He did not change his religion or his community affiliation but the change in his name shows his desire to be recognised as a son of the soil rather than being identified as a white man's offspring. After retiring as a Professor in History, he chose to be a gardener at Auroville in Pondicherry. This choice parallels the Vedic tradition of *banaprastha*, a phase of life during which an individual detaches oneself from family matters. His representation of India and Indianness is similar to that of R. K. Narayan, who in *The Guide* and *The English Teacher* dwells on the themes of spirituality and renunciation as ways of attaining enlightenment. David aka Dravid's quiet repose in Auroville is reminiscent of the emotional and the spiritual journeys of Raju the guide, and Krishna the English teacher. Like Narayan, Lyrad's India is located in South India, which is not just a geographical location but a spatial territory that distinguishes itself from the Hindi-speaking North in its linguistic and cultural orientations. Although he does not create a fictional town like that of Narayan's Malgudi, his decision to explore and stay in the South with 'Dravid' as his name, definitely conveys his conscious effort to follow the footsteps of R.K. Narayan in his representation of the postcolonial 'imagined community.' Auroville, in this context, is no less than a postcolonial utopia. Here, communal strife does not take place and corruption cannot touch the inhabitants. They abide by the norms of the *ashram* and the necessary items of life are distributed equally among all residents. It is the abode of peace and spiritual happiness, which in Lyrad's vision is the microcosmic version of the ideal nation state. In the three Anglo-Indian novels discussed above, the Anglo-Indian identity of the protagonists corresponds to the clause of mixed lineage in Article 366(2) of the Indian Constitution. According to this clause, the evidence of a white European father as the source of genesis on the paternal line is mandatory. The first Trotter in Sealy's *magnum opus* was a Frenchman. He changed his identity from the French 'Trotoirre' to the English 'Trotter' after the fall of the French in the hands of the British in eighteenth century India (Sealy, 1988, 1999, p.118). He married Sultana, a Muslim woman of the Prophet's line. The successive generations of the Trotters emerged as a result of this interracial marital alliance. In *A Flight of Pigeons*, Mrs. Labadoor's father was also a Frenchman, who served in the Maratha army. He, like Justin Trotter,

had married a local Muslim woman. In Lyrad's novel, David's father was an Englishman and his mother an Anglo-Indian.

The prerogative of a European ancestor in the male line is an important issue for historicising Anglo-Indian identity and at the same time it may be an inevitable factor for triggering 'anxiety of Anglo-Indianness' in their Indian consciousness. This anxiety is apparent in most of their fictional writings, through the representation of a search for the 'white' father or through the description of the family tree tracing their white European lineage. The trend continues in the diasporic fiction of Keith Butler and Jimmy Pyke. Butler is an Anglo-Indian writer currently settled in New Zealand. Pyke (d. 2016), an Anglo-Indian writer from Darjeeling, India, emigrated to the United Kingdom in the early 1960s.

RECALLING INDIA: ANGLO-INDIAN DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVES

In the fiction of the Anglo-Indian writers living in India, the narrative of the English father serves primarily as evidence to historicise the minority status of the Anglo-Indian characters settled in India. Unlike these novels, in the Anglo-Indian diasporic fiction, the father issue features as the mnemonic lens through which the Anglo-Indian character in the diaspora looks back into his/her pre-emigration phase of life in India, the country of his/her birth. It also provides the writer with the point from where he/she can start historicising his/her identity as an Anglo-Indian. The memory of the English father in this context serves as a utopian centre around which the images of postcolonial dystopia keep moving in the diasporic consciousness of the writer. In *The Secret Vindaloo* (2014), Butler's representation of the English father smacks of postcolonial sarcasm and irony. In this novel, Jack Marks, the Englishman, is reduced to the 'powerless' figure of a nominal father of the Anglo-Indian protagonist Puttla Marks, whose biological father was Gomeze, probably a Luso-Indian. At the time of Puttla's birth, his aunt had named him as 'Puttla' meaning 'thin' in Bengali and had said that, "He shall live between two fatherth, like a hyphen" (Butler, 2014, p. 21). Puttla's 'nominal' connection with the English *pater* certified him as a British subject. Being a British subject, however, was not same as of being a British citizen. Although his mother had thought that this certification would enhance the social status of her son, it soon turned out to be a jigsaw blade that cuts a wooden board forward and backward simultaneously: "Accepting a British subject passport had rendered her son

stateless! He now had to have a visa to stay in India! A six-month stay had been granted him!" (Butler, 2014, p. 32).

In Pyke's *The Tea Planter's Son,* Alfred Stephens, an Anglo-Indian lawyer, succeeds in meeting his English father, who had abandoned his Nepali mother and him in India during the last days of the British Raj after emigrating, but the father issue, which was crucial to his Anglo-Indian identity in India, was of no help in resisting racism in multicultural Britain. He neither condemned his father's irresponsible behaviour nor showed any emotional exuberance on meeting him. The father's existence hardly mattered to him. Through his reminiscences, he narrates the never-ending plight and acute poverty of the labourer community in the tea gardens to which his mother Mylie belonged. Like his father, who had come to India as the Manager of a tea estate in 1938, there were many other Englishmen who came to work as administrators in the tea gardens during British rule. Their liaisons with local women had become a recognised custom among tea planter employees. Most of these men abandoned their partners at the end of the tenure of their service and their Anglo-Indian children were raised by their Indian mothers with the help of the Church and the Christian missionaries. Although he had the privilege of receiving an English education, Stephens recalls his experiences of being discriminated against at boarding school for his swarthy skin colour (2014, p. 64).

The reflections of these writers on India are not similar to other Indian born diasporic writers. While homesickness is foregrounded in the writings of the other Indian-born diasporic writers, it is in a way absent in the fiction of these diasporic Anglo-Indian writers. To the latter, 'Home' or 'homeland' is connected with the problematics of their mixed descent identity. In the colonial period, most Anglo-Indians saw England as 'Home' but the British never considered them as their equals. There were a few Anglo-Indians who looked upon England as their fatherland and India as their motherland, but this did not solve the issue of their belonging and non-belonging to either of the two nations. When the cultural scenario changed in India after Independence, their 'Englishness' came in the way of their affiliating with the 'Indianness' that had a distinct opposition to the former. This was one of the reasons for large-scale emigration of Anglo-Indians from India to the 'white' countries such as the United Kingdom, the Canada and Australia. The Anglo-Indian diasporic fiction that emerged in the last two

decades highlights their economic insecurity and cultural alienation in post-Independence Indian society. Factors such as the gradual fading away of the colonial culture and depletion of job quotas for Anglo-Indians are evident in the postcolonial nostalgia of Puttla Marks in *The Secret Vindaloo*. While taking the citizenship test at Melbourne Detention Centre, Puttla recalls their days of poverty in India and his mother's hardships. The Anglo-Indians had to adjust with the changes taking place in every social sphere, including school education. In his recollection of his school days in Calcutta, Puttla describes the postcolonial situation in Anglo-Indian schools that incorporated the learning of Bengali, a vernacular language. Puttla observes that it was neither easy for the Anglo-Indian students to learn Bengali, nor was it a comfortable job for Mr. Ghosh, the non-Anglo-Indian teacher, to teach it to them:

> Mr. Ghosh came in mopping his brow with a white handkerchief. He was reading the test paper. His job depended on the results of the examination. It was not easy teaching Bengali to these brown Anglos, because they thought themselves British and prized English above Bengali. Yet if the examination results were not good, the Christian Brothers would hold him responsible. (Butler, 2014, 100)

Puttla's memories of his experiences in India and Australia move to and fro like a pendulum, thereby giving the narrative a non-linear structure. This structure is suggestive of disruption of time which plays the lead role in the construction of history and historical consciousness. Puttla's personal history as well as his collective memory was full of disruptions, which Butler represents with magical realism and postmodernist flippancy. The passport certifying him as a British subject made his stay in India uncertain, and his failure in the citizenship test prevents him from achieving the status of an Australian citizen. In India, his identity was that of a British subject and in Australia his identity was that of an immigrant. His awareness of inhabiting an in-between space on the interstices of cultures and races makes him feel devoid of history. Finally, Puttla realises that he has no home/land of his own and decides to remember his sojourns in the geo-political territories in terms of numerical figures—the first land, the second land and so on.

Unlike Puttla, Alfred Stephens in *The Planter's Son* thinks of India as his home. Even after living in London for forty years, it was an unhomely place to him due to the racist encounters and the personal losses. During his long stay in London the only Anglo-Indian family he had met was that of his wife. This highlights the relative invisibility of

Anglo-Indians in multicultural Britain. Although he patiently overcame the threats of racism and succeeded in his profession as a criminal lawyer, he felt dejected after the 9/11 terrorist attack. Pyke's novel ends with Stephens getting ready to return to his mother's house in the tea gardens in Darjeeling. The return journey is suggestive of his disillusionment with the Anglo-Indian obsession of filiating with the English father and affiliating with the white society symbolising the 'fatherland.' The reflections of Butler and Pyke on the so-called multicultural societies show that equal and adequate representation of Anglo-Indians in the diaspora is yet to take place. In their fiction, the scope of multiculturalism like that of postcolonialism is limited.

A common thread in the fiction writings of the Anglo-Indian writers in India and those in the diaspora is their passionate effort to represent the Anglo-Indian woman as a good wife and an ideal mother. This is evident in the representation of the following characters: Mrs. Labadoor in *A Flight of Pigeons,* Ivy in *Miscegena,* Angela in *The Tea Planter's Son* and Iris Tyro in *The Secret Vindaloo.* They are strong, intelligent and compassionate women. The characters of Ivy in *Miscegena* and Iris Tyro in *The Secret Vindaloo* are remarkable since they raise their children singlehandedly. Mrs. Labadoor's character exudes great courage. With her stamina and presence of mind she resists the Pathan's threat of religious conversion and also succeeds in postponing his marriage proposal. The images of these Anglo-Indian women contradict the images of the Anglo-Indian woman as a seductress and a gold-digger in the works of several British and Indian writers. This rewriting of Anglo-Indian femininity is their response to the legacy of colonial stereotyping and racist misogyny in colonial and postcolonial fiction.

CONCLUSION

The output of Anglo-Indian literary works has increased in the last two decades. This reveals the community's interest in retrieving and restoring their history in a creative way. The Anglo-Indian fiction writers in India have refashioned Indianness by infusing Anglo-Indian sensibility into it. Their postcolonial vision has broadened the dimension of postcoloniality in Indian English Fiction. To the diasporic writers of the community Indianness is the key to explain and explore the community's history in the multicultural societies outside India. As observed in the two diasporic novels discussed above, the limitations and the possibilities of multiculturalism contributed to the production of this

set of debut works recounting the experiences of the Anglo-Indian self and the community. The authors of these debut fictions are first-generation immigrants. Their reception of and response to pre-Independence history and the post-colonial situation are inevitably linked with their experiences of socio-cultural and political representation as members of a racial Minority group in India. The Anglo-Indian writers in India too have presented a microscopic view of the problematics of their representation in postcolonial Indian society. Recently, the 126th Amendment of the Constitution Bill (2019), which proposed to abolish the provision of nominating Anglo-Indian representatives in the Lok Sabha and some state Assemblies, has intensified their anxiety of representation. In the last two years, publication of Anglo-Indian fiction from small Indian presses (e.g. Lyrad's *Miscegena* published from Notion Press) and on Amazon Kindle (Bryan Peppin's *The Nowhere Man*) is evidence of literary protest from Anglo-Indian writers of Indian English fiction. With the rapid increase in the number of Anglo-Indian writers, it can be hoped that the community will find better representation in Indian English literature. In colonial times, as well as in the first two decades after Indian Independence, the nomenclature 'Anglo-Indian fiction writers' was used to refer to both Indian and British authors who wrote English fiction on India. However, in the present time, it refers to the writers of the Anglo-Indian community in India and the diaspora. This is a positive change that definitely enriches the scope of cultural diversity in Indian English Fiction.

Shyamasri Maji *is an Assistant Professor in English at Durgapur Women's College, affiliated to Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, in West Bengal, India. She received her PhD degree in English from the Department of English and Culture Studies, the University of Burdwan. Her doctoral thesis is titled* Anxiety of Representation in Select Anglo-Indian Writers (2018). *Her research articles in Anglo-Indian Studies have been published in international journals such as* Antipodes: A Global Journal of Australian/New Zealand Literature, International Journal of Anglo-Indian Studies and Economic & Political Weekly*. She is the recipient of Independent Research Fellowship 2018-2019 at Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata. Under this fellowship programme she completed a short-term project on Indian documentary films on the Anglo-Indian Community. She can be reached at shyamasri.2010@gmail.com*

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