

## Decolonizing Imperial ‘Ghosts’: The Necessity of New Era to Rediscover Indigeneity of India

Jijeesh TK

*Assistant Professor, PG Department of English, EMEA Arts and Science College, Kondotty, (Kerala) India*

### Abstract

India is culturally superior country. Its ancient and wealthy cultural heritage has been attracted many philosophers and intellectuals in the world. Though the culture of India is diverse, there is one string that holds all these diversities together. But many invaders came to India and tried to destroy its cultural wealth. British imperialism made big impacts upon this nation. They used education to implement their interests upon India. Macaulay Minute is an important one among them. It is also a part of the Eurocentric mindset. A postcolonial reading is enough to bring out all these truths. This article is an enquiry upon these things.

**Key Words :** Indigenous culture , Indian Culture , Imperialism , Macaulay Minute , Cultural Overlapping

The term ‘indigenous’ is a very complex term and, thus, it cannot be easily explained. Which one is called ‘native’ and which one is called ‘others’ are not easily be explained. But , simply ‘indigenous’ can be defined to be as any ethnic group that resides in its original location , practices a traditional culture , and speaks a particular language. But, it is not an encompassing definition.

In other words, indigenous people means the people who lived in a place before colonists or settlers arrived, defined new borders, and began to occupy that place. The term ‘aboriginal’ has also the same definition. They are also the people living in a religion ‘from the earliest time’. So, it has much sameness with ‘indigenous’.

### Indigenous Indian Culture

Though India is a country with many different belief systems and life styles, we can see a string of Vedic based life pattern in general in India. The

question of why is it considered only from the Vedic culture onwards is relevant here. The following are some of the answers:

1. It is only after the beginning of human social life that the notion of culture has developed in them.
2. The Vedas are considered, not only in India, to be the oldest scriptures that mention the social life of humans.
3. As far as Vedas are considered, they are the most important contributors that make the order of social life of India.
4. Vedas are considered as the oldest testimony of India and many life philosophies were followed after it.
5. Therefore, the Vedic culture has influenced in Indian life for a long time and has determined its course.
6. Although many other cultures have been collapsed, but still we can see the ripples of Vedic culture in Indian life.

7. The many religions that originated in India, many philosophies, epics, many puranas and the subsequent contributions in art and literature all follow something of Vedic culture.

So, when we analyze all the above mentioned points together, one thing can be considered is that indigeneity of India is very much related to the Vedic culture. Ripples of that ancient culture is still continuing the length and breadth of India. Thus, India has a remarkable and ancient cultural background. This country has accepted various traditions and cultures of various other countries during their invasions. Many religions have come here and become a part of this country. Diversity is seen throughout this culture. But, among the midst of all these diversities it keeps a same temperament. That is, the unity in diversity.

This country has always boasted of a rich tradition in the area of learning and education since olden past. It is a well known fact that people from various other nations came to India to get quality education. One of the famous education systems produced in India in the ancient times was the *gurukula* system. It was a residential type of schooling system originated back from BC in this India subcontinent. This system of education was more prevalent during the Vedic age where students were taught various subjects. This system had given light on how to live a culture and disciplined life.

### **Invaders and Cultural Overlapping**

Many countries and aggressors have invaded to this country. When we look at the Indian history from the BC, we can see this historical fact. It was Alexander in 326 BC, who was the ruler of Macedonia,

attacked this country. He defeated king Porus on the banks of the river Jhelum.

Greeks and some other dynasties also invaded to some regions of India for a short period. Arab traders have visited the western coast of Indian regions since 712 AD, but it wasn't until 1001 that the Muslim world began to make itself keenly felt. The Sind conquest by Muhammed Bin Qusin in 712 AD gave Muslims a strong dominance in India.

Chengiz Khan was the another man, who was a Mangolian who conquered some kingdoms on the banks of the river Indus in 1221. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Khalji dynasty, under Alaudhin Khalji, temporarily extended Muslim rule Southwards to Gujrath, Rajasthan and the Decan, while the Tughlaq dynasty temporarily expanded its territorial reach till Tamil Nadu.

The Mughal empire established their rule over Indian subcontinent since 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Mughal empire was founded by Babur and many others subsequently followed as rulers over Indian. The Mughal emperors ruled over Indian subcontinent from 1526 and after their declination they continued around 1850.

Many nations and religious sects, including Portuguese, have invaded to many parts of India with the aim of proselytizing. They invade to this country with the intention of converting Indians into their religious groups and became a great terror impact to this nation. The Goa inquisition, an extension of the Portuguese inquisition in colonial era of Portuguese India, was a notable incident among them.

But, British invasion to India has made much more impact upon this nation. British colonialization has made great

impacts upon the socio – political – economical and cultural life of this nation. An analysis will show that the British effect is still here in Indian life. The ‘British Raj’ or the rule of British on Indian subcontinent was started from 1858 and continued up to 1947.

The impact of the rule was not ended in 1947. The cultural overlapping made by the British rule over India and its culture during this period is not small. Indians began to think that Indian culture was inferior to British culture. The Indians started to think that everything about the British, such as, clothing, food habits, lifestyles, language, etc. were better than the Indian. A culture of slavery began to take shape in Indian minds. That much was the British overlapping over India as an impact of British rule. This condition is still present, even if minor. That is the reason why some intellectuals say that the ‘ghost’ of the British also needs to be evacuated from this country and it is the need of the hour.

### **Macaulay Minute and its Impact**

Lord Macaulay was a British Historian and Whig party politician. He served on the supreme council of India during the period 1834 and 1836. He was the major figure behind the introduction of English and western concepts in education systems in India. His suggestions and ideas on Indian education system had been published in 1835 and it is known as ‘Macaulay Minute in Indian Education System’. This Macaulay Minute has made great impact on Indian minds. He has tried his level best to inject British culture in Indian blood. He used education system as the means to implement his imperialist propaganda.

His evil propaganda is fully revealed through one of his known statements about the implementation of Macaulay Minute: He wants to create a sect of people, “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, and English in taste, opinion in moral and in intellect”. Macaulay always argued in favour of English. He rejected the claims for Sanskrit and Arabic languages against English and states: "English is the key to modern knowledge and therefore more useful than Arabic and Sanskrit. English stand pre-eminent even the language of the West of India. English is the language sponsored by the ruling class. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East ".

Macaulay had a firm faith in the superiority of the West over the East, both aesthetically and intellectually. He divided the world into two extreme divisions – the civilized and the barbarians. He placed Britain as the representative of high civilization. This mindset is obvious in his statement: "It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltriest abridgement used at the preparatory schools in England ".

His Eurocentric mindset is obvious in an another statement: "I have never found one among them who could deny that that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia". This is Macaulay Minute and the master brain behind it. An analysis of this obviously shows how much would be the dangerous impact of it upon Indians.

### **Cultural Imperialism Over India**

Generally speaking, Indian minds still keep a mind set which is inclined to the West. European life style is very much attractive to many Indians. No doubt, it is not a problem, if people are attracted to a foreign culture and if it is rationally attractive. But, in the case of some Indians, it is not so. They consider India and Indian life is inferior to the British on some baseless – irrational notions. These notions can be sometimes found out created by the conscious propaganda works of Macaulay type European scholars. That is what the unacceptable part in this issue.

The Western culture started to influence India during 19<sup>th</sup> century after when the British established their colony in this country. The Western culture keeps a superiority among the others and it is considered as the most advanced one. It has started to influence the Indian people greatly. That influence is still here in Indian minds, years after the Britishers left India. This could be for the multiple reasons like fascination, dreamy autonomy etc. The dangerous thing which should be mentioned here is the degradation of Indian culture in Indian minds. Many Indians consider western food, western style of dressing, their style of living are superior to Indians. Thus, they try to imitate to become such a western person to feel proud by themselves.

India has great acceptance to take good things from every culture. So, adopting positive sides of every culture is not at all a problem to India, but it should not be a way to destroy the core of Indianness. A close observation will result us that the western culture is based more on materialism, whereas Indian culture has a strong spiritual base. India considers both spirituality and materialism are necessary for a complete and

comprehensive human life. But, the new generation people consider Indian spiritualistic tradition is fully irrational and not at all based on scientific, rational thoughts. And they are led by a misconception that rejecting the tradition is the way to be a modern and cultured citizen with scientific mentality. This mind set is also a byproduct of Western influence.

Imitation of Western dressing styles, their food habits, least interest in Indian languages like Sanskrit, over inclination to English language, rejection of family system, life without moral base, etc, are signs of indications of this Western slavery mindset of Indians. Even when a marriage invitation letter is type of for rural area here, many prefer English language to type it. That is, they think the English language in that invitation letter would be a show of their ‘high’ standard. It is nothing but mental slavery. This westernization has greatly affected our traditions, customs, our family setup and many other things. Degradation in marriage bond can be a big threat to the family setup of India, where family bond is one of the great specialty of Indian society. Mere living together for physical pleasure is degradation to the sacred marriage system. This is not generally perceived as an Indian way of life, but, mainly a western lifestyle.

An another fact against the above mentioned anxieties over Indian culture is, many westerners seek Indian philosophies and its lifestyles for a better living and consolation in life. Yoga, Ayurveda, Indian Philosophies are widely acceptable in western countries now-a-days. Yoga centres, Vedanta Societies, movements like ISKCON (International School of Krishna Conscience), etc, are notable in

many western countries. Yoga – meditation centres are highly respected in European – American countries.

### **Aryan Invasion Theory in Indian Education system**

It is considered as Aryan invasion theory is an another propaganda of British intellectuals to show the superiority of Europe. This theory says that Aryans are a race of people who come from somewhere in the parts of European land and settled into Indian regions and they produce their own literature and that literature is called the Vedic literature. That is, it comes under the theory of Eurocentrism. Here also, they claim that the origin of language, the origin of literature, the origin of philosophy and origin of high culture, come from European regions and they settled into different parts of the world and they make others cultured. British collaborations of the Aryan invasion theory became powerful and convenient ideological tool in generating legitimacy for British rule. In its most classical and colonial tinged incarnation are portrayed the Aryans as a highly advanced and culturally superior race in the ancient world locating the original home in Northern Europe. All the greatness of Indian civilization was ascribed to Aryans, thus implying that if India were to ever achieve greatness again a return to Aryan rule was imperative.

By many ways this Aryan invasion theory can be proved as a false one and a sophisticated theory to make a notion that the West is superior to the East. Structural commonality of Indo European group of languages could have been achieved without an Aryan invasion.

An another criticism of the Aryan invasion theory lies in the interpretation of

the word ‘Arya’ to mean a ‘race’, ‘nationality’ or even a linguistic group. Critics suggest that the word ‘Arya’ as used in the Rig Veda and other texts is better translated as one who is noble in character or noble in deed or perhaps hailing from a noble background. Hence, to use the term ‘Aryan’ to describe the racial or national characteristics of an invading clan or clans would naturally be erroneous. Thus, if an invasion did take place, and if the invaders identified themselves as ‘Aryans’, it would merely reflect their claim to notable status, and would not reflect upon their national or racial origin.

In the final analysis, it is clear that Aryan invasion theory was a discovery by colonial intellectuals for Eurocentric dominance. A colonialist agenda is clearly visible here in its creation. But, the most pathetic condition is, even in India, students in schools and colleges are being taught this fake theory even now.

### **Decolonizing Imperial ‘Ghosts’; Re-discover Indianness in India**

The exodus of the ‘ghosts’ of the imperialist powers is the need of the hour of India. Everyone should try to evict the ghosts of imperialism that keeps Indian mind from ‘India’. Excommunication of the imperialism does not mean that we should not accept anything from others. We must be willing to accept everything that has positive aspects and are acceptable anywhere in the world. It is true that during the British rule many positive things were created which are beneficial to India. But, an inferior and slave mentality is not good. Many Indians still think that all which is Indian is low in standard and which is British is high. If this thought is a product of British imperialism, then it

needs to be removed from Indian minds. Only then will India be able to cultivate a self-respected nation and grow itself in

terms of self-respecting people in it. So, a re-discovery of Indianness is very much needed here.

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