
UNIT 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POSTCOLONIAL SHORT STORY

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit introduces you to the concept of the postcolonial world of literature.

- It underlines the importance of the native language besides the English language in the understanding of the postcolonial literature.
- It offers you a historical perspective of the evolution of the postcolonial short story as a literary genre with its major concerns.
- It introduces you to the leading texts and their writers with specific focus on women writers of the postcolonial short story.

1.1 DEFINITION POSTCOLONIAL

Postcolonial literature is the literature that has grown on the fertile soil of the pristine land, has breathed in free air and does not need to conform to the European literary traditions. When we talk of the postcolonial literature, world literature from sovereign countries like Russia, China, Japan, America and the European countries is not included in it. Instead literature from those countries only which have been the former colonies of the European countries comes within the ambit of consideration. Postcolonial literature is no longer a miniscule body representing a minority rather more and more languages, cultures, countries and ethnicities

are getting added continually to the corpus of the postcolonial genres and is rightly called the postcolonial 'literatures'. Postcolonial literature is not limited to the narrativisation of accidents between the native culture and the so called advanced European culture only. It is not just the literature written in English after the subjugated regions attained freedom from the colonial rule. It is a fusion of the ancient and the modern; it is a retelling of a grandma's folk tale by a grand-daughter. It is an attempt to explore the treasure buried in one's own home. It is an attempt to find one's moorings so as to take off from a firmer base. It is to affirm that a tree which has deep roots stands tall and attains a larger spread. Post colonialism cannot be defined in simplistic terms either by the erstwhile rulers or by the ex-ruled. The perspectives in this regard vary as widely as the regions concerned or the related ethnicities. This is not a body of literature but literatures. It is like a salad bowl or like a wilderness with myriads of flowers of different kinds. Reading postcolonial literature is a kind of experience which offers reading about original sensibilities rich in history and culture and exuding fragrance of the native soil free from the sense of oppression or subjugation or alienation.

1.2 EXPONENTS OF THE POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

The founding exponents of the postcolonial theory, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their seminal text *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* systematically examine the field of postcolonial studies, the dynamics of language and the inter relationships among the different postcolonial literatures. In this book the writers have discussed theoretical aspects of a wide range of postcolonial texts.

1.3 POSTCOLONIAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Literatures from countries and regions which have been erstwhile colonies of the European countries form the body of the postcolonial literatures. These include African countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Sudan and others, the Caribbean and Latin American countries like Chile, Saint Martin, Jamaica, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, West Indies, Barbados, British Columbia, etc. Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Singapore etc., Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Within the limited scope of this unit only some of the fiction writers and some women short story writers are briefly discussed below and accordingly only some of the relevant countries have been mentioned here for reference.

1.4 LANGUAGE OF THE POSTCOLONIAL

The colonial experience generated a new political equation and narratives spun around this new relationship. English became gradually the language of the educated and the literature which is essentially native in its sensibility, characterization and issues came to be written originally in English. The rise of the nationalistic fervor following independence of the slave countries from the yoke of the European rule promoted the literary works to be written originally in the native languages and then translated into English. Some writers translated their own works written originally in their native language into English. It is an irony that some of the writers articulated in their works the painful experience of

subjugation of the natives, loss of land and land rights, onslaught on culture, abrogation and replacement of the ancient political laws, mass religious conversions and oppression of different kinds by the European or mainly the English rulers in the language of the oppressor only, i.e. in English. However it is interesting to note that just as the literature of one region is different from that of the other, the kind of English spoken and used in one region is different from that used in the other. British English is no longer followed as the standard English in the erstwhile colonies, rather these regions have an English of their own. There are now many Englishes all over the world like American English, Indian English, Jamaican English, Kenyan English etc. and these regional varieties are distinct and unique in their own right.

Here is an excerpt from *Caliban's Voice*, a book written by Bill Ashcroft, an authority on postcolonial literature –

*“The unshakeable link between ‘our’ language and ‘us’ has made language not only the most emotional site for cultural identity but also one of the most critical techniques of colonization and of the subsequent transformation of colonial influence by post-colonized societies ... it is incontestable that language is the mode of a constant and pervasive extension of cultural dominance –through ideas, attitudes, history and ways of seeing –that is central to imperial hegemony ... This book pivots on a moment in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* which has become the very symbol of the impact of a colonial language. When Caliban says to Miranda and Prospero:*

You taught me language, and my profit on’t

Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you

For learning me your language

he gives voice to an issue that lies at the centre of post-colonial studies.”

Ashcroft further writes: *“Most of the battles fought over language in postcolonial theory stem from a confusion between language as a communicative tool and language as a cultural symbol.”*

The same analogy was also brought out in 1971 by the Cuban poet Roberto Fernandez Retamar, one of the most distinguished Latin American intellectuals of the 20th century who stated:

“Our symbol is not Ariel but Caliban ... I know no other metaphor more expressive of our cultural situation, of our reality.”

1.5 SHORT STORY AS A LITERARY GENRE

A short story is defined as a self contained prose fiction or narrative about an incident or linked incidents evoking a particular effect and which can be read in a single sitting. It is shorter than a novel and revolves around a few characters. Bigger is not necessarily better. In the smaller space of a short story the central theme is often conveyed more poignantly and the characters are also stoutly built up. Small is beautiful. Writers can hone their skills of writing through writing short stories. However, short story as a genre received very little critical attention. This fact is true in the context of the postcolonial short story as well and in the postcolonial critical canon the short story has been systematically sidelined. The

most important thing about short story according to Edgar Allan Poe is that it must have a compact unified effect. In its content short story may range between a highly imaginative tale and a symbolic sketch. Chinua Achebe's "Chike's School Days" and Salman Rushdie's "The Courter" are examples of postcolonial short stories.

1.6 EVOLUTION OF THE POSTCOLONIAL SHORT STORY

The postcolonial short story is a developed version or next generation version of the oral folk tale tradition and the short story writer may be termed as the modern day minstrel. Colonial experience and concerns were not similar in all the subjugated territories across the globe which differed in their respective history and culture hence the stories also differed in their subject matter and its treatment.

In the previous block you have read at length about writings from South Africa which comprises of many nation states proud of their unique history, cultures and literatures and which shared the common predicament of being colonies of Europe in general and of the United Kingdom in particular. Having attained their liberation from the European or the English rule in the twentieth century these erstwhile colonies worked towards regaining their lost moorings by going back to revive and reclaim their heritage. History, culture, language and literature became matters of national pride. This kind of exploration of the native and the aboriginal cultural pride can be witnessed not only among the countries of the African continent but also among the newly liberated countries to the east as well as to the west of Africa viz. the South American countries and the Asian countries including India. Literature in these countries flourished in all its forms. Its reach spread over to various genres viz. novel, drama, poetry, story, folklore and retellings of history and classical literature. Among all these, short story occupies a very snug corner. Innumerable forms of short stories are available which include real stories, surreal stories, fantasy stories, horror stories, gothic stories, comic stories, tragic stories, ghost stories, fairy tales, animal stories, religious stories, didactic stories, mythological stories, heroic tales, bed time stories, stories within stories and stories involving the colonial experience. Some of these forms developed through the oral tradition of story-telling. These stories can quite often be identified as related to a particular time period, geographical location, community and tribe etc. These stories invariably remind the reader of the interesting and captivating features of oral literature. In the present unit we will discuss some of the representative postcolonial short stories. Major postcolonial short story writers will be discussed and we shall also discuss those short story writers who besides writing in their native language not only translated their own stories into English but have also written some of their stories originally in English. Among these writers we shall particularly discuss postcolonial African women short story writers.

1.7 KEY CONCERNS IN THE POSTCOLONIAL SHORT STORY

Challenging colonial authority, challenging patriarchal authority, resolving complications and tensions caused by the colonial rule, greed of the western world in grabbing land, extensive mining, exploiting forest produce, grabbing

raw farm produce, exploiting land resources and worst of all indulging in human trafficking are some of the key issues addressed in the postcolonial short story. The large scale enslavement of the men of the native tribes by the whites in the Caribbean, yoking these black slaves like animals to row the ships, keeping them in chains, their transatlantic supply to America, subjecting them to extreme physical torture and the sub-human treatment meted out to them became the subject matter of a large number of stories woven around the appalling crime in human trade. The agony, both physical and psychological, their longing to return to their native land, the hatred and enmity towards their white masters including their attempts both successful and unsuccessful to break free served as the background of the stories written from the point of view of the oppressed. Before the advent of the whites to these regions, the aborigines were living in a perfectly harmonized society with their own set of laws, rituals, customs, family systems, power equations, occasions of celebration and methods of festivities which were different from those of the white people. The whites considered their way of living as uncivilized and tried to replace it all with their own life style and way of looking at things. This bigotry and sense of false supremacy was met with tough resistance and generated hateful and violent clashes. French psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in his 1961 book *The Wretched of the Earth* analyzed the dehumanizing effects of colonialism upon the individual and the region and has also discussed the implications of building up a movement for the process of decolonizing the individual mind and the nation. Through a critique of imperialism and nationalism it is established that the process of decolonizing was as much through violence as was the process of colonization. Nonetheless negotiated colonizing and negotiated decolonizing are the truths of the existing world. These real experiences and many other related sagas provided fertile soil for the postcolonial story whether it was based on facts or was for greater part fictionalized. During the process both the so-called 'civilised' and the 'savage' underwent a transformation and there emerged the 'new man' who paved the way towards turning the world into a global village. Postcolonial story is the story of the decolonized man making his own destiny by knowing himself and reconstructing himself. It is also the story of realization by the colonizer that the colonized, dehumanized 'thing' is as much human and as much evolved as the colonizer himself. Decolonization spurred the urge to search one's roots via the memory lanes of ancestry, history and oral legacies in order to locate the individual and the community in the pre-colonial past. This search gave birth to a large body of literary treasure. Whether the postcolonial writers reveled in the nostalgia of the past or made the present as the only relevant point of reference, they all spun stories around the struggle for freedom, their diverse glorious indigenous cultures, utopia of equality, their faith in human dignity and ambivalent moods of hope and despair. The journey of the postcolonial story thus originates in the pre-colonial past, moves through the colonial period, coincides with the postcolonial present and aims to culminate in a globalised future.

The indigenous structure was systematically attacked by shaking people's faith in their religion, societal and community laws, traditional medicines and healing therapies, everyday routine and above all education. A system of granting titles, advantageous positions, higher social status and participation in administration was put in place for those who renounced the aforesaid in favour of adopting a whites-centric perception of the world. English was made the compulsory medium of education which struck at the root of analytical and critical thinking, promoted rote learning, suppressed inquisitiveness, caused hesitation in speaking and

generated slave mentality. It turned an entire generation of the so-called educated into obedient clerks and yes-men. The teaching learning environment at the schools was artificial and far-removed from the home environment relegating the mother tongue to a secondary position. These concerns were later voiced by postcolonial writers in various essays and short stories. An envious environment with a spirit of unhealthy competition which pitted the children against one another in schools was promoted. It systematically killed the spirit of unity and cooperation and infused a sense of achievement in betrayal against their own brethren. The missionary schools devised many ways of ensuring that nobody spoke the native language. Punishment was imposed for using the mother tongue and children were rewarded for doing well in the English language. Scientific spirit and mathematical acumen which are language neutral attributes among children were purposefully ignored. The colonial policies hit at the root of the faiths, beliefs and value system of the natives and at their self confidence and sense of national pride. From this insecure sense of self and nation emerged the postcolonial short story.

1.8 POSTCOLONIAL WRITERS –AN INTRODUCTION

The postcolonial writers were all from among the subjugated class of natives; they were born to the colonized population, had the privilege to get educated and learn the language of the colonizer which in most of the cases was English, wrote in their language and continued to write more fearlessly and with greater authenticity even after their country got political freedom. Like Caliban, they used the language to their own advantage as a tool to expose the cunningness, meanness, greed and cruelty of the colonizers or the colonizing nation while also, at times, acknowledging the constructive modernization and advancement brought by the colonizers. There were only a few exceptions in the form of the white writers who like Sinclair, the British writer represented those who migrated to the common wealth countries to settle there permanently and wrote about the colonial experience from the point of view of the oppressed. They rejected the colonial hegemony and recognized endless possibilities in the indigenous potential and the storehouse of immense knowledge inherited and developed through generations.

1.9 CANONICAL TEXTS

Some of the foremost texts which carry a discourse on racist undertones and take up the issues of political and cultural independence termed as postcolonial are mentioned here. These canonical texts paved the way for the postcolonial movement which offered to the world a body of literature diverse in content but unified and unique in its appeal. *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft and others is considered the seminal text for a critical understanding of the postcolonial genre. *Things Fall Apart* a novel by Chinua Achebe from Nigeria is about the influence of the Christian missionaries and colonialism on the Igbo speaking Umuofia tribe of Nigeria. *The Wretched of the Earth* by the French psychologist Frantz Fanon, as discussed above, presents the psychic perspective of colonization. *Midnight's Children* is a novel by the British Indian Author, Salman Rushdie which deals with India's partition and its freedom from the British rule. *Orientalism* is a cardinal text of postcolonial culture studies of the colonized

territories of Asia, North Africa and the Middle East by the Palestinian American critic Edward Said. *Black Skin White Masks*, another book by Franz Fanon, is about effects of racism and dehumanization on the psyche of the colonized populace. *Decolonising the Mind* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a collection of essays about politics of language in African literature and the role of language in the history, culture and identity of a nation. Ngũgĩ's novel *Petals of Blood* set in the newly independent Kenya was a novel written by him originally in English which he himself translated into Gikuyu. He wrote his subsequent works originally in his native language, Gikuyu. *Season of Migration to the North* is a novel in Arabic by Tayeb Salih, one of the greatest twentieth century authors of Sudan. It shows the impact of colonial rule and European modernity on the rural culture in Sudan. *Nervous Conditions*, a novel by Tsitsi Dangarembga, the first ever book by a black Zimbabwean woman published in English takes up gender issues besides issues of race and colonialism in the present day post-colonial Zimbabwe. *A Bend in the River* by Nobel laureate V. S. Naipaul from Trinidad and Tobago is among the hundred best English language novels of the twentieth century. It faithfully renders the plight of a member of the Indian community in Africa but ascribes to the African Blacks kind of a "mysterious malevolence". It is praised as a "full-bodied masterpiece" and simultaneously accused of defending European Colonialism in Africa. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* a landmark novel in Spanish is considered the magnum opus of the Columbian postcolonial author Gabriel Garcia Marquez. This widely acclaimed novel has been translated into thirty seven languages. Ania Loomba an Indian scholar of postcolonial studies is a professor of English literature at the University of Pennsylvania. *Postcolonial Shakespeares, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* are some of her acclaimed works. *The Inheritance of Loss* by Anita Desai deals with the contemporary issues of multiculturalism, terrorism, economic inequalities and loss of identity. *July's People* is a speculative novel by the South African author Nadine Gordimer in which she predicted how apartheid would end in South Africa through a violent civil war. Another historical political novel, *Burger's Daughter* by Gordimer, winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize in Literature, details the attempts of a group of white anti-apartheid activists in South Africa to overthrow the colonial government. Both these novels were banned at that time by the then government in South Africa. In Block 1 of this course you have learnt about Nadine Gordimer and have read in detail her novel *July's People*.

Besides the above mentioned writers and their representative postcolonial texts there are many other writers of repute who made valuable contribution to the corpus of postcolonial fiction, some of whom are : Alfian Saat of Singapore, Saint Lucian poet and playwright Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, George Lamming of Barbados, Canadian Indian writer Rohinton Mistry, Ayi Kweon Armah of Ghana, Pablo Neruda from Chile, Witi Ihimaera of New Zealand, Novelist Caryl Phillips born on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, writer and scholar of racial cultural study Paul Gilroy of Britain, and one of Australia's greatest writers David Malouf.

1.10 WOMEN WRITERS OF POSTCOLONIAL SHORT STORY

To make you aware that the postcolonial writers' world consists of a mammoth body of literature which is still growing and to acquaint you with its pioneers

and star writers, some names along with their leading works are mentioned above. However, your course outline suggests that the focus here is more on women writers. In this block you are going to read short stories by three women writers, one each from the eastern, western and southern part of the African continent. For a wider understanding of the range and their global spread let us have a look at some notable women writers of postcolonial short story and fiction and their representative short stories. The three African women writers whose one story each you have to study in detail in the units which follow are not being harped upon much here. A short introduction of almost twenty other women writers and their works is given below. The postcolonial world is broadly divided into five regions, viz. Australia and New Zealand, Africa, Latin America, Asia and the rest of the world. The women writers being discussed below are grouped accordingly. It may be viewed as a list of suggested readings. As an illustration summary outline of one of the stories, namely, “Ghosts” by Edwidge Danticat and gist in a line or two each of all the ten stories in a collection of short stories, namely, *‘Bodies of Water’* by Michelle Cliff is also given below –

1.11 FROM AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

- a) Patricia Frances Grace: This Maori writer from New Zealand was the first female published writer. She has to her credit more than a dozen collections of short stories and children’s fiction. She is the key figure in the field of Maori literature in English. Her works written in the Maori language have been translated variously in French, German and English. She won many prestigious awards. Her first collection of short stories is *Waiariki*. At 82 she is still an active writer.
- b) Alice Tawhai: This short story writer of Tainui and NgaPuhi tribe of New Zealand writes under the pen name Alice Tawhai maintaining anonymity. She calls herself as one who writes in colours. She has published several collections of her short stories. Her stories present an account of bittersweet experiences of the ethnic minorities in New Zealand, a land of wonders. Her characters include circus workers, tattoo artists, sex workers, immigrants, bikies, wild children and people living on the fringe of the society. She has a natural and dream like skill for story-telling. Her stories contain compassionate humour, sensory imagery and an impressive flow and freshness of language. Writing is like painting and poetry for her. Her collections of short stories include *Festival of Miracles* (2005), *Luminous* (2007), and *Dark Jelly* (2011). Alice is widely anthologized in New Zealand.

1.12 FROM AFRICA

- a) Bessie Head: Bessie Head took up contemporary, postcolonial and gender specific issues in her stories but consciously avoided the polarity which existed among the whites and the anti-apartheid groups. Born as the child of a black South African worker and a white upper class woman she got marginalized like an outcaste in the country of her birth. You will read in the next unit about this author and her story ‘The Collector of Treasures’.
- b) Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana: Ghana which was formerly known as Gold Coast being situated between two rivers and being on the western coast of the continent of abundance, Africa was greatly exploited by the European

countries. Not only were the forest resources and rich metals and minerals plundered but the tribal people were also hunted, chased, enslaved and smuggled to Europe and across the Atlantic to the newly discovered land of America so much so that the Gold Coast and the adjoining Ivory Coast region came to be known as Slave Coast. Aidoo's stories are her expressions of resistance as an African nationalist woman. In the story 'The Girl Who Can't' a seven year old girl is viewed as trapped in the perceived inadequacy of her body as if a fulsome body were the be all and end all of a woman's life. Her grandmother is worried that her thin legs may not prove to be capable enough to bear children while her mother who shares this skepticism thinks that the least of all that her legs can do is to walk her to school. The girl puts her legs to a surprising use when she becomes the racing champion among juniors. The grandmother carries the trophy won by her on her back like one carries children.

- c) Grace Ogot: You may read about this Kenyan author and study in detail her short story 'The Green Leaves' in one of the units which follow.
- d) Nadine Gordimer: This prolific fiction writer has to her credit twenty one collections of short stories besides thirteen celebrated novels. To name a few *Beethoven was One-Sixteenth Black and other stories*, *Loot and Other Stories* and *The Soft Voice of the Serpent and other stories* are some of the collections of short stories by her. She occupies a very prominent place in the literary canon. Among some must read stories are "Six Feet of the Country", "Once Upon a Time", "A Beneficiary", "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet", "Loot", "Africa Emergent" and "Not for Publication".
- e) Buchi Emecheta: This Nigerian author, a champion of female rights, wrote more than twenty books which include novels, plays, an autobiography, stories and other writings for children. "Apart from telling stories I don't have a particular mission. I like to tell the world our part of the story while using the voices of women," said Emecheta in an interview.
- f) Yvonne Vera: This Zimbabwean author had a writing career of only 12 years cut short by her death at the age of 40. Her first published book was a collection of short stories, *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals*. Then there followed five novels, distinguished for their poetic prose. The recurrent theme of her works is the difficult history of Zimbabwe. She occupies an important place in the postcolonial African Literature.
- g) Tsitsi Dangaremba: Writer of the acclaimed novel *Nervous conditions*, Dangaremba of Zimbabwe, besides being a novelist is a playwright, poet, activist, short story writer, publisher and a film maker. *A Family Portrait*, a collection of short stories, is the first book of short stories by her.

1.13 FROM LATIN AMERICA

- a) Edwidge Danticat: This Haitian American writer's stories mainly revolve around the themes of national identity, revolutionary struggle, diasporic politics and mother-daughter relationships. She has written many novels. *Krik Krak!* and *Everything Inside* are collections of her short stories.

Her story “Ghosts” is about the life of Pascal, a slum boy whose parents used to rear pigeons for a living in their village. People would buy these pigeons for a bizarre custom which his parents found disgusting. They moved to the outskirts of a city and started a restaurant. His brother Jules moved to Canada with his girl friend while Pascal worked as a news writer for one of the most popular radio stations, Radio Zorey. Gang leaders and other criminals used to visit the restaurant and talk freely about their activities. Once when he overheard Tiye, a one armed, bald headed gang leader it struck to Pascal that he could run a radio programme “Man to Man” on these people. He discussed his plan with his friends and many gang members also came to know of Pascal’s plan. His idea was stolen by other people and they started airing the programme on Radio Zorey. Pascal was teased by the visitors and they instigated him to take action but Pascal did not want to react. Radio Zorey building was torched by the Tiye gang and Tiye named Pascal as the mastermind. Pascal was suddenly arrested and given third degree torture in the prison cell. His family including his brother spent huge sums and made all out efforts to free him but failed. When Tiye struck some deal with the police and the judges Pascal was released. Tiye visits their restaurant again and Pascal by noticing his prosthetic arm dreams of running a radio show by the name “Ghosts” on people with lost limbs.

- b) Michelle Cliff: This Jamaican American writer of novels, short stories and prose poem stakes up issues of multicultural identity, race and gender and attempts to view history from a perspective different from the mainstream narrative. She probes the psychological and historical distortions imposed by colonialism. *Bodies of Water* (1990), *The Store of a Million Items* (1998) and *Everything is Now* (2009) are some of her books of short stories. Some of her stories contain themes of prejudice and oppression from the point of view of the immigrants. Some stories are based on historical events like the civil rights movement, the Holocaust etc. Her stories depict the common man’s courage, fortitude and determination to rise above his circumstances.

The collection *Bodies of Water* comprises ten stories with compelling social themes clustering around man’s inhumanity to man whether in a political scenario or in a historical one. The title story “Bodies of Water” is a story of an old woman reaching out to a brother from whom she was separated. The brother and sister relive, through letters to each other, their childhood days of harsh upbringing, particularly the trauma related to the early discovery of the brother’s homosexuality. “Election Day 1984” is about a spinster who reveals her involvement in a murder and explains to a new immigrant her decision to rescue a child only to give him away for his own benefit. “Burning Bush” is about the mass murder of her family by a 75 year old woman. “Columbia”, the only story with a Jamaican setting, is about a boy who is forced by his employer to kill his pet doves for food. “The Ferry” is about a boy in his teens who loses his father to alcoholism. “Screen Memory” is a story in the flashback about a girl who could pass for a white and become an actress. “A Hanged Man” is about the torture inflicted on the black slaves and the pre civil war hypocrisy. “A Woman who Plays Trumpet is Deported” is about a black American woman artist who flees America after the lynching of her brother and then dies in a Nazi concentration camp. “American Time, American Light” is the story of an elderly Vietnamese who dies in an abandoned farmhouse in New England,

America. The last story in this collection “Keeper of All Souls” portrays the itinerants’ search for a free society. The ironic fulfillment of their search lies at Sam’s altar where relics from the past of parallel lives are arranged and rearranged after their deaths by Sam, the recorder of lives and deaths.

- c) Jean Rhys: Jean Rhys was born and grew up in the Caribbean island of Dominica. She was sent for her education to England where she lived for most of her life. Her early experience in the Caribbean had given her a viewpoint for stating the case of the ‘underdog’.
- d) Andrea Levy: Andrea Levy is regarded by many as the voice of the people who migrated to Britain from the commonwealth countries after World War II. Her father belonged to the Windrush generation who arrived in Britain in 1948 from Jamaica. She was born in London in 1956. In her essay in *Six Stories and an Essay* she wrote: “The racism I encountered was rarely violent or extreme but it was insidious and ever present and it had a profound effect on me.”

1.14 FROM ASIA

- a) Anita Desai: An alumna of Delhi University Anita Desai was thrice shortlisted for Booker Prize for her novels, *In Custody*, *Clear Light of Day* and *Fasting, Feasting*. She is a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, U.S. *The Artist of disappearance*, *Diamond Dust and other Stories*, *Games at Twilight* and *Fire on the Mountain* are some collections of her short stories. She has written half a dozen novels and a dozen collections of short stories.
- b) Mahashweta Devi: This postcolonial writer was born in Dhaka of the pre-divided India which is now the capital of Bangladesh. She settled in Calcutta, India. She wrote most of her works in Bengali. Her works are translated in many languages. Ordinary people with extra ordinary grit are the inspirations behind her writings. She has also been an activist for the rights of the marginalized people like the tribals, and the Dalits. Her works tally goes beyond a hundred.
- c) Suchen Lim: Born in Malaysia, Suchen Christine Lim is a citizen of Singapore who has written many books for children, several novels including *Fistful of Colours* and books of short stories of the unsung, unsaid and uncelebrated in Singapore titled *The Lies that Build a Marriage* (2007) and *The Man Who Wore his Wife’s Sarong* (2017).

1.15 FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD

- a) Doris Lessing: Born in Iran to British parents, Doris Lessing spent her formative twenty five years in southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) before coming to Britain. She is winner of the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature. Her stories in her collection of short stories titled *African Stories* are set in Zimbabwe. She has written at least twenty books of short stories. Her first novel *The Grass is singing* was published in 1950. During her long period of creative writing from 1950 to 2013 she wrote a whole range of fiction and non-fiction including Drama, Poetry Collections, Cat Tales, Autobiography, Memoirs and Essays.

- b) Wena Poon: Wena Poon is a writer of short stories in English and is settled in the U S. She is the true representative of her generation — multi-cultural, transnational and continental. Her stories are set in London, New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, Hanoi and all over.
- c) Alice Munro: Alice Munro, the Canadian short story writer, is the recipient of the 2013 Nobel Prize for literature. Her works do not fall strictly in the category of the postcolonial but this author is the most faithful to the genre of the short story. Her stories are straight from life; they grow on her experiences. She explored relationships in her stories most of which are very short. She has a unique and terse way of understanding things and saying them.
- d) Jhumpa Lahiri: Jhumpa Lahiri is an American postcolonial novel and short story writer of Indian roots. Experiences of the Indian immigrant in America form the bedrock of her writings. Her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, 2000. Another of her short story collections, *Unaccustomed Earth* won the Frank O'Connor International short story award, 2008. *The Lowland* and *The Namesake* are her other notable works.
- e) Elleke Boehmer: Elleke Boehmer, a professor of World Literature in English at the Oxford University is one of the founders in the field of postcolonial studies. Boehmer is known internationally for her well researched study on the after effects of the colonial rule. Her short story collections are *Stories of Women* (2005), *Sharmilla and Other Portraits* (2010), and *To the Volcano* (2019) about which J.M. Coetzee remarked, "...with passion and intelligence, and rare moral insight, Elleke Boehmer traces the scars left on the psyche by the tortuous histories of the South."

1.16 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

- a) What do you understand by postcolonial literature? How is it different from other literature?
- b) Who are some of the pioneers of postcolonial short story? Write about any two representative short stories.
- c) Chart the growth of postcolonial short story.
- d) What are the major issues generally discussed in the postcolonial short story?
- e) Write a note on the language of the postcolonial literature.
- f) Discuss any five African women writers of the postcolonial short story.
- g) Discuss the contribution of the non-native writers to the postcolonial literature.

1.17 LET US SUM UP

- Postcolonial literature is the literature from those countries which have been the former colonies of the European countries. It encompasses many languages, cultures, countries and ethnicities and is rightly called postcolonial literatures.

- Postcolonial literature is essentially native in its sensibility though the language is English.
- Postcolonial short story is the modern day version of the oral folktale and it presents a fusion of the native culture and the colonial experience.
- The postcolonial writers are either from the subjugated educated class of the natives or from the Europeans who migrated to the common wealth countries to settle there permanently and wrote about the colonial experience from the point of view of the oppressed. They rejected the colonial hegemony and recognized endless possibilities in the indigenous potential and the storehouse of immense knowledge inherited and developed through generations.
- The postcolonial short story challenges the colonial as well as the patriarchal authority. Greed of the western world in grabbing land, extensive mining, exploiting forest produce, grabbing raw farm produce, exploiting land resources and worst of all indulging in human trafficking and large scale enslavement are some of the key issues addressed in the postcolonial short story.
- Postcolonial story is the story of the decolonized man making his own destiny by knowing himself and reconstructing himself. It is also the story of realization by the colonizer that the colonized, dehumanized 'thing' is as much human and as much evolved as the colonizer himself.
- There is a long list of postcolonial fiction writers, both men and women which include writers like Ngugi wa Thiongo, Chinua Achebe, Nadine Gordimer, Salman Rushdie, Pablo Neruda, David Malouf, Grace Ogot and so on.
- In the end women writers of postcolonial short story are discussed under five regional categories to help you understand the global spread of the postcolonial literature.