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A Study on Anti-Colonialism in Ashutosh Gowariker's *Film Lagaan*

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Anti-Colonialism in Ashutosh Gowariker’s Film *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India*,” Submitted to the Central Department of English, T. U; by Bina Das has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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Letter of Recommendation

Ms. Bina Das has completed her thesis entitled “Anti-Colonialism in Ashutosh Gowariker’s Film *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India*” under my supervision. I recommend this thesis be submitted for *viva-voce*.

.....

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Mr. Saroj Sharma Ghimire

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Abstract

This thesis examines the issue of anti-colonial resistance in Ashutosh Gowariker's film *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India*. The main objective of this study is to foreground the game of cricket as a tool of resistance against the Britishers. Through the resistance of the villagers against colonial oppression, the film clearly reveals the consciousness of the colonized people. Primarily, Bhuvan is the most rebellious character who resists against the British domination.

He gets moral victory. The colonized people appropriate the culture of their colonial masters to challenge the latter ones. By presenting Bhuvan as the representative of the colonized people, *Lagaan* advocates the anti-colonial resistance.

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I. Anti-Colonialisms in *Lagaan*

Ashutosh Gowariker's film *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* echoes the anti-colonial resistance and oppression. It is an articulation of rebellious consciousness of the postcolonial people. Anti-colonial resistance has been shown towards the Britishers. The transparency of literary resistance in colonial and postcolonial writing collectively have worked to examine the ways in which resistance in writing must go beyond the mere questioning of colonialist authority. The anti-colonialist resistances in literature must necessarily cut across the individual subject, and as they do so they also necessarily contribute towards that theoretically rigorous understanding of textual resistance which postcolonial critical theory is only now learning how to recognize. The idea of both literary and political resistance to colonialist power is the hidden term, the foundational concept, upon which all these distinctions in the modality of the postcolonial actually rest. It clearly reveals the consciousness of the colonized people. It is a project which has significant roles in the re-creation of the post-colonial discourse. The postcolonial writers adapt the colonial tongue as a strategy to decolonize the colonial centrality. But in the process of decolonization, they don't use it as the colonizers previously did, rather they seize and deviate it. They associate with native features for the reconstitution of the suppressed and dominated culture, language, history and the other aspects of the colonized society. Post colonialism is a type of discourse which resists the imperial power and studies the history of one colonized country and impacts of colonizers on the native culture, language and other native domains.

Primarily Bhuwan is a most rebellious character in the film who resist against the British domination. He from the beginning to the end goes against the British

domination. The main objective of the study is to foreground cricket as a tool of resistance, against the Britishers. The film is about the anti-colonial resistance of the villagers to the Britishers. The starving native farmers have to pay high taxes to the British soldiers for the protection of their lands, delivering most of their harvest to the British Queen. But a villager named Bhuwan stands against powerful opponents and organizes his villagers to learn and eventually defeat their colonial masters in their own game, the Indian villager's under the leadership of Bhuwan, appropriate it so as to get rid of the triple tax, a form of colonial domination, imposed on them by their colonial masters. It is a film about common men led by a strong minded individual to overcome resistance and differences in opinion and standing their ground for a cause against a powerful opposition.

Finally, he gets moral victory in the end. The study will help us see how the colonized people can appropriate the culture of their colonial masters to challenge the latter ones. The most interesting is that the villagers take the cricket to create synergy among them. They learn the game of the Britishers and challenge their colonial masters in their bid to get rid of the increased taxes. Here we can see the mimicry done by the villagers as they imitate the game of the Britishers. Elizabeth sister of Captain Russell, teach them the game of cricket. Through cricket the villagers create synergy among themselves which helps them to get victory in the game at the end.

The present study seeks to explore how the cricket becomes a tool of anti-colonial resistance in *Lagaan*. The story of *Lagaan* is set in 1893 in a village in Awadh. It is a simple tale of peasants of the village on the colonial masters in their own game assumes the nationalist aura or tends to describe the nationalist imaginary. This occurs through the construction of the other in the film. At the outset it should be mentioned that *Lagaan*, unlike many other commercial films, doesn't overtly try to mouth any

nationalist slogans. Thus it is devoid of the hyper- nationalist transcendence (1932) characteristic of many India commercial films. Even subtle references to the motherland are missing. But the strategy which still re-inscribes the nation is by positing the colonized people as an outsider for that matter; every colonized people is an outsider of some sort. But in this case, the colonial people become defined as belonging to outside the nation the white colonizer. This happens through the effacement of others within the nation in the film. The white colonizer appears as the sole exploiter and other exploitative relations are either obscured or made to appear as benign and benevolent as in the case of the local Raja. The Raja's relationship with his people is protective and father like. The delight on his face is palpable. When the villagers are on the verge of beating the English in the cricket match it is not that the Raja's intentions remained unquestioned by the villagers. There is a scene where the farmers blame the Raja for the increase in the rate of tax for the next year.

Bhuwan: We will say we cannot pay *lagaan*
 Not a single grain

Mukhiya: What if rajahji refuses even after hearing us

Bhuwan: Then the fingers of my hand will close in to fist
 What should we do?
 Sell our homes?
 Our cattle?
 Our homes?
 What justice is it to demand double *lagaan*?
 Pitch it up a bit.

The above dialogue demonstrates the rebellious consciousness of the Bhuwan.

Villagers blame the Raja for the increase in the rate of tax for the next year. Because

every Raja collected *lagaan* from the villagers under his rule. The Raja keeps one share and gives the rest to the British. But this potential identification of the Raja as also an enemy is immediately elided by his redemption as a result of the better sense that prevails among the peasants. Thus it dawns on them that the Raja has nothing to do with their misery. In this context, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin opine:

Representation and resistance are very broad arenas within which much of drama of colonialist relation and Post-colonial examination and subversion of those relations has taken place. Representation and resistance are such broad areas of contestation in Post-colonial discourse (85).

The story revolves principally around a game of cricket played at the end of the 19th c between a team of British imperialists and a ragtag team of Indian villagers. The film is set in a place called Champaner, a village adjacent to a British military Cantonment. This fictional settlement described in the subtitles as a small village in the heart of India, can stand for any village anywhere in British administered India.

The time is the hot season of 1893 and the monsoon rains have not arrived. The ensuing draught has made the fields around the village barren. The Champaner villagers depend upon a healthy crop harvest not only to feed themselves but also to pay *Lagaan* to the local Raja who himself must pass this on as a protection tribute to the British. In vain, the distraught villagers beg the Raja to intercede for them with the British in order to have the tax rescinded in this rainless year.

Kachara:	Clouds
	Dark and dense come the swirling clouds
Villagers:	Dark and dense
	Roar the clouds

The thunder reverberates

Lakha and Goli: How lethally does lightning flash

Bhuwan: The clouds make my heart race

Gauri: The clouds make my heart race

Bagha: O black cloud, pour down your rain

Old man: Wield not lightning flashy sword

But instead the arrows of raindrops

The clouds bring rain their wake

Swirling darkly the clouds come

Bhuwan's mother: Who knows what God is punishing for? During later half of the 19th c, a small village in north India is facing draught wing, sowing, praying for the rains and reaping their harvest. The Commanding officer at the cantonment, the sadistic and arrogant Captain Russell savors their predicament and taunts them by capriciously offering them a way out of paying the tax in the form of a wager if the villagers can beat the British Cantonment side at the game of cricket, he will waive the tax for 3 years, but if they lose the villagers will have to pay the British a triple levy. The match will take place after 3 months. Russell gives the protagonist Bhuwan the unenviable task of accepting or declining the wager on behalf of the village. The villagers knowing, Bhuwan to be impetuous and proud, wait anxiously in silence for his response. When he finally accepts the challenge, they are devastated feeling sure the situation is hopeless. At first, everyone in the village is deeply resentful towards Bhuwan since nobody Bhuwan included has ever played cricket or knows the rules:

Bhuwan: It is not all difficult, Tipu.

They play it all wearing pants and call it "Kirkut"

We wear loincloths and call it gilli-danda Get it?

Our fathers and grandfathers played gilli-danda

This game is just like gilli-danda, catch very good.

What a catch, well done, Tipu. Isn't it easy?

When the villager's representatives go to meet Captain Russell to discuss the situation Captain Russell challenges them to a game of cricket with his team after 3 months young villager Bhuwan accepts the challenge and starts to build his team of villagers for the showdown with their colonial rulers. Game totally alien and unknown to them. If they win they get their wish, if they lose however, the increased tax burden will destroy their lives. Yet following his semi-convincing explanation that cricket is nothing more than a sophisticated version of gilli-danda, a bat and ball game played as children, some of the Hindu men side with him. Unfortunately, these men especially Bagha the mute temple guardian and Guran the fortuneteller, are driven more by a great passion to defeat the British rather any skill at cricket clearly, Bhuwan will need help from outside the narrow reach of his upper caste Hindu brethren. This comes from Russell's sister Elizabeth. Outraged by her brother's cruel treatment of the villager's, undertakes to teach Bhuwan's team the finer points of cricket and later from the three outsiders who fill the remaining positions in Bhuwan's team Ishmayeel the Muslim potter, Evan the Sikh former spy, and Kachara the untouchable sweeper. The inclusion of these men, as I will argue below seems to embody some kind of Gandhi an ideal of intercommoned co-operation as the best means not only to beat the British but also to establish a healthy post-colonial Indian nation.

Elizabeth: Tell them that I would like to help them learn the game

Ram Singh: Yes Memsahib

Elizabeth: I am with u

From now u will play with this ball

Bhuwan: Oh wow

Memsahib your support has really lifted our spirits

Elizabeth: Thank u.

Bhuwan thus begins to prepare the villagers for the match. He is aided in his efforts by Russell's sister Elizabeth who feels that her brother has mistreated the people in the villages: "Tell him I know what happened is unfair, and I want to give them a fair chance" (scene 1). She knows injustice has been done. That's why she wants to give an equal chance. This is negative conscious of the oppressors. She speaks in favor of the villagers and helps them. She thinks that the villagers are being oppressed by her brother Russell. The final forty-five minutes or so of the film are taken up by the drama of the cricket match itself. Game takes place over three days. The first days play ends with the British having achieved a comfortable score in their innings. On the second day of play, a turning point comes when the untouchable Kachara bowls three of the British batsman out in quick succession with his devastating spin action, eventually it is the villagers turn to bat and the opening partnership of Bhuwan and Devan starts well as they pile up the runs. Soon though the village team is in trouble when Devan is unexpectedly run out and Ishmayeel also a good batsman is forced to leave the field injured after being hit by a savage delivery from the British fast bowler. On the final day, as the game comes down to the last few balls.

Bhuwan the only batsman to have survived is partnered by the last villager; the crippled untouchable Kachra. The situation looks hopeless for the village side. But with five runs left to make on the very last ball, Bhuwan smashes the ball high into the air-captain Russell, standing in a deep fielding position, catches the ball and the villagers seem to have lost. The final twist in the plot, however is that Russell has

caught the ball outside the boundary, meaning that the catch is void and Bhuwan has searched victory with a spectacular Tendulkar –style six at the end of the film. The Champaner cantonment is disbanded and Russell is ignominiously transferred to the wastes of Africa. The film closes with the monsoon rains bringing relief and promise of a full harvest.

Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India has been analyzed and interpreted through various perspectives by different critics since its release. Some critics read it from feminist perspective. For instance, Pavitra Saundra in her essay “Meri Awaaz Suno: Women Vocality and Nation in Hindi Cinema” analyses the theme song of the Bollywood blockbuster *Lagaan* 2001 as:

Lata Mangeshkar monopolized female playback singer for over four Decades and is known as the ideal voice of Indian femininity. The *Lagaan* theme song juxtaposes a saccharine, ultra feminine Mangeshkaresque voice with two female Choruses. One sensual and aggressive the other Light and airy. These varied female voices body a range of sexual, national and racial meanings and evoking an Indian that seems inclusive and progressive (144).

Yet, within the *Lagaan* utopian nation and certainly within the film industry and broader social milieu, women with ethnic and sexually provocative voices are often deemed dangerous and are disallowed from speaking for the Nation. The social norms embedded in *Lagaan*'s female singing voices thus reveal the limit that Hindi film music imposes on the voice of the nation and vice-versa. She further says that *Lagaan* suggests,

The juxtaposition of the voices for the characters Mai, Elizabeth
And Gauri lays bare three modes of participation in the nation: as

National symbol, as benevolent and supportive outsider and as Active, politically involved citizen. The vastly different vocal Differences in the position and roles within the national family (145).

According to Pavityra Sundra, we learn to distinguish among different women, we learn to distinguish among different women, only some of whom can epitomize India and truly participate in the national community within the productive voices of the women in Lagan lurks a vehemently nationalist and religious agenda, one that is only partially revealed in the visuals and the narrative of the movie. Likewise, Nissim Manathukkaren interprets it in the light of cricket and nationalism. In this regard he rightly says:

The result is not only that the nation becomes the legitimate Community, but also that the imagined nation becomes the Mask worn by the ruling classes to cover their face exploitation. Thus the nationalist rhetoric here could be seen as a strategy employed by the ruling coalition led by the bourgeoisie to overcome the crisis of legitimacy which it is facing in the present. It also contributes to the myth of a benign and benevolent traditional order which was only interrupted by modernity represented by the colonial state. That is why it is imperative to recover. The silence of the fiction that Lagaan portrays (4582).

Fusing the two Mannathukkaren argues that the linkage between cricket and nationalism dates at least to the last quarter of the 19thc. Unlike the view of conventional historiography, which sees it as a more recent phenomenon. Basing himself on the sound argument that development of Indian cricket can only be meaningfully analyzed by placing it against the wider political canvas of the colonial

state, Mannathukkaren contends that the game become the mirror through which an Indian identity asserted itself or is appropriated for the purpose of resistance against the colonial state.

In contrast these critics have not noticed the anti-colonial in *Lagaan*. They only viewed it in terms of feminism and nationalism. In this regard, it becomes clear that though the film had been analyzed through various perspectives, the post colonial theory had not been applied. So the focus of the researcher will be on the postcolonial of the film. Postcolonialism addresses reaction to colonialism in a context that is not necessarily determined by temporal constraints. Postcolonial plays, novels, verse and films then become textual and cultural expressions of resistance to colonization. Therefore, postcolonialism is both a textual effect and a reading strategy. Its theoretical practice often operates on two levels attempting at once to elucidate the post-collegiality which inheres in certain texts, and to unveil and deconstruct any continuing colonialist power structure and institution.

The semantic basis of the term postcolonial might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It has occasionally been employed in some earlier work in the area to distinguish between the periods before and after independence (colonial period and postcolonial period). We use the term postcolonial however to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupation throughout the historical process initiated by Europeans imperial aggression. The term Post colonialism refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity itself are represented in the modern era after many colonized countries gained their independence. However some

critics use the term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today.

Postcolonialism is a type of discourse which resists the imperial power and studies the history of once colonized country and impacts of colonizers on the native culture language and other native domains. The term has been subsequently widely used to signify the political, linguistic and other cultural experiences of societies that were once the former European colonies. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* writes “ Postcolonial literature have emerged out of colonization and asserted[...] the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of imperial centre which makes them postcolonial” (2).

Webster's New International Dictionary (1954) defines Resistance as an act or an instance of resisting; opposition, passive or active (2120). In general term, resistance is an act of resisting to another or opposition either it is active or passive in form. To be specific, resistance is the central textual strategy in the postcolonial scenario. Resistance has become a major area of contestation in postcolonial discourse. Resistance is taken to posit the standpoint of the third world writers. Discourse of resistance emerged as a reaction to colonialist representation and consumption that the representation persists. Postcolonial textual resistance has taken many forms; nevertheless resistance notion emerged along with the western project of modernization over third world countries. In this context Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin opine as:

Representation and resistance are very broad arenas within which much of drama of colonialist relation and postcolonial Examination and subversion of those relations has taken place. Representation and

resistance are such broad areas of contestation in post-colonial discourse. (85)

They relate the resistance with the colonial project. Postcolonial literature is a result of interaction between the imperial culture and the complex indigenous cultural practices. Resistance has various forms and parameters. In this context Slemon opine'' [...] resistance literature, in this definition can thus be seen as that category of literary writing which emerges as an integral part of an organized struggle or resistance for national liberation''(107).

In general resistance is opposite ideas, plans upon existing rules and systems. Resistance we argue should be defined as those behaviors and cultural practices by subordinate groups that contest hegemonic social formations, that threaten to unravel the strategies of domination; consciousness need not be essential to its constitution. Resistance doesn't exist outside of the system of power relations. It is, instead, inherently part of the relation. In modern- day Norma- lizing power relation, this tends very much to isolate and individuate. Resistance into a series of special cases which do not allow generalization. Resistance has important consequences for power. Neither domination nor resistance is autonomous; the two are so entangled that it becomes difficult to analyze one without discussing the other. To use resistance in its more traditional sense would mean not to consider the very processes by which power is often tested and eroded by the actions of the subordinate, and by which it reconstitutes itself in response. Prevailing approaches to resistance often also impede a fuller understanding of the ways in which struggles in everyday life can grow into large-scale and conscious challenges to the political or social order.

Postcolonial is a type of discourse which resists the imperial power and studies the history of one colonized country and impacts of colonizers on the native domains.

The term has been subsequently used to signify the political, linguistic and other cultural experiences of societies that were once the former European colonies.

Colonized people culturally displaced and identity less .In such situation, their culture and language become hybrid and hybridity, mimicry, fragmentation and displacement become the thematic of postcolonial writings. However the literary activities in the colonized countries have attempted to subvert the colonial centrality to spread the national subjects of language, culture, history and other aspects which were marginalized by the imperial centre.

The term ‘Postcolonial’ has been used to describe writing and reading practices grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe which was a consequence of European expansion and the exploitation of the other parts of the world. This is because there is a continuity of pre-occupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. But the postcolonial writings foreground the imperial power and emphasize the differences from the assumptions of imperial centre. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* write “Postcolonial literature have emerged out of colonization and asserted [...] the tension with the imperial power of imperial centre which makes them post-colonial.” As Simon During writes:

The post-colonial desire is the desire of decolonized communities for an identity [...]. In both literature and political the post-colonial drive towards identity centers around language [...] partly because identity is barely available elsewhere. For the postcolonial to speak or write in the imperial tongue is to call forth a problem of identity [...] (125).

The history of distinction between English and English has been between the claims of a powerful centre and the intersecting usages designed as peripheries. In such case,

the language of periphery shaped by an oppressive discourse of power has been the site of most exciting and innovative literature.

Postcolonial writers in the discourse of post-colonialism try to emphasize the distinctive features of the particular national, regional, cultural and linguistic features of the colonized society which depict the inheritance in literature of complexity to account the particularity. In such situation not only the regional feature but also the colonial tongue gets hybridized or syncretised. It is a way to “decolonize the normative value of standard English” (Empire53). In this regard, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write, “privileging of the ‘margin’ in the postcolonial writing asserts [...] the syncretism and hybridized nature of post-colonial experience, [...] refutes the privileged position of a standard code in the language and the monocentric view of human experience (*Empire*40). The postcolonial condition becomes the situation where the colonized language, culture and history are re-made and reconstituted through the formation of English. John Dockers in the “Neocolonial Assumption in University Teaching of English” also focuses that the colonized countries should create literature placing their own culture and language at the centre and English becomes suitable means to express voices which is improved to fit their cultural experiences in the discourse of post-colonialism. He says, “The challenge of the postcolonial literature is that by exposing and attacking anglocentric assumptions directly and it can replace English literature with the world literature in English” (445).

As such postcolonialism refers to the discourse which tries to resist the imperial power circulating through the means of language and strategically supports the culture, language, history, myth and other aspects of colonized countries gain the audience of their own that become distinct, on the one hand, and strike the colonizer’s

sense of superiority through the use of syncretism and hybridized methods on the other. In this matter, they have contributed to the transformation of English and in the dismantling the ideological assumptions that have buttressed the canon of that discourse as an elite western discourse (*Empire*76). This is the way of decentring the English as canon and it is reduced within a new paradigm of the international English studies. Thus linguistic multiplicity outlines the complexity of culture, society and language that foreground as the variance, difference and marginality as the norm in the discourse of post-colonialism.

Decolonization is the process that refers to the dismantling the earlier assumptions of colonization over the colonized countries in terms of culture, language, history and other aspects of colonized impacts. It is the process that tries to dismantle the colonial relations as circulated through the discourse created by the colonizers. It is the only the process of dismantling the colonial power but also of reconstituting the colonized culture through the process of appropriation. The postcolonial writers adapt the colonial tongue as a strategy to decolonize the colonial centrality. But in the process of decolonization, they don't use it as the colonizer previously did, rather they seize and deviate it. They associate it with native features for the reconstitution of the suppressed and dominate culture, language, history and the other aspects of the colonized society. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin say that decolonization in term of language has to do with the process of textually constructed world where the writers of the postcolonial country abrogate the "standard English and reconstitute it by which the language is made and taken to bear the burden of one's own cultural experiences" (*Empire*38). They further write neologism, innovations, tropes and imaginative usage generally allow the horizon of language itself to be extended. But English language in postcolonial literature "may

be the way in which it constructs difference, separation and absence from the metropolitan norm. But the ground on which such construction is based is an abrogation [...] and a dismantling of its imperialist centralism” (*Empire*43). The relationship when the colonizer and the colonized posits the important questions that of possibility of decolonizing the culture and language of the implies and how it should be achieved. This asserts the need of recapturing the pre-colonial language and cultures. The hierarchical feature of colonization is subverted through the process of decolonization. This asserts the peculiar strength of the post-colonial societies.

Thus, Ashutosh Gowariker’s film *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* has been analyzed from the perspective of postcolonial change the oppression and resistance against the colonizer. It shows the white colonizer as the sole exploiter and the colonized as the oppressed. It shows the postcolonial resistance. It is concerned with the colonized people and their mentality. The film *lagaan* clearly demonstrates that if a group of diverse Indians can put aside their communal differences, and beat the British at their own iconic game, then they can also prevail in the anti-colonial struggle to create an independent India. After all, immediately following the defeat in the game Russell is exiled to Africa and the British cantonment is disbanded, bringing to an end the British control of Champaner.

The game of cricket is turned into a classic instance of what post-colonials like to call the Empire writing back. The colonized seized the language of the colonizers to re-inscribe themselves with it. Doing, so they take control of their own self-representations and thus resist, subvert, and ultimately overturn the designs of their conquerors. With anti-colonialism so much in the air, this competition –the only situation in which India and imperial Britain could meet literally on a level playing field-carried enormous symbolic weight. Thus cricket was no longer a mere game, but

rather the site where during the imperial era; the colonized made culturally manifests their resistance to British rule. To beat the colonial masters the quintessential English sport becomes an existential necessity and an article of faith. But what makes Lagan's special is that it not only vernacularizes cricket but also biligaulisesit. The monoculture of the colonial master is not merely resisted in the latter's own tongue, but in a multiplicities of tongues. In fact, the language that the characters speak in the film is itself a hybrid of Russell is exiled to Africa and the British at their Bhuwan is a most rebellious character in the film that resist against the Colonial domination. When Captain Andrew Russell, the British captain of the nearby cantonment demands double of the usual land tax from the villagers. Bhuwan refuses to go along with the proclamation and also encourages the villagers to go to the palace to say that they cannot pay the lagan of that year. But when the villager's representative go to meet Captain Russell to discuss the situation, captain Russell challenges them to a game of cricket with his team after three months, in spite of the ignorance of the game also a young villager Bhuwan accepts the challenge and starts to build his team of villagers for the showdown with their colonial rulers. They learnt the game of the colonizers and at the same time they defeat them. As a result the Indian people get success in defeating the colonizers.

II. Anticolonial Resistance in *Lagaan*

Ashutosh Gowariker's film *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* clearly reveals consciousness of the postcolonial people. It clearly reveals the anti-colonial consciousness of the colonized people. They associate with native features for the reconstitution of the suppressed and dominate, culture, language, history and the other aspects of the colonized society. Primarily Bhuwan is a most rebellious character in the film who resist against the British domination. The film is seen from the anti-colonial perspective.

The people of the villager have their own worldviews. They have their own ways to perceive things and explain them. Religion becomes the centre for the anti colonial people. That is to say the conscious of the anti-colonial people tends to be religious. They get spiritual energy from the religion. *Lagaan*, too does not shy away from this issue at all. For instance, Rajah Puran Singh thinks that his subjects are facing hardship because of not worshipping the Siddheshwar Temple. He further says:

Rajah Puran singh:	For the three years My people haven't worshipped at the Shiddheswar Temple They believe that [...] worshipping there will end the hardships They faced last year.
Captain Russell:	But the temple is in land ruled by Rajah Diller Singh, your cousin And your enemy.

The temple on top of the hill is clearly Hindu, but it becomes the centre of the spiritual energy of the entire village. Muslims and other minorities are seen dancing in

front of it because it is portrayed as a symbol of faith and cultural unity rather than the shrine of any domination or religious community. Similarly, after the long dry season one day dark and dense the swirling clouds come in the sky and the villagers sing the melodies of the monsoon (scene 1). But when the dark and dense roar the spreading clouds the thunder reverberates and the villagers remember the God and say:

Bagha: Oh look!
 How lethally does lightning flash
 Oh God!
 We celebrate too soon.

Bhuwan's Mother: Who knows what God is punishing us for?
 That India is and will remain primarily a religious society, not just God fearing with conventional piety, but God –reliant in moments of crisis and is thus emphasized. This is further clarified by the villager's song Paalanhaare, a bhajan (Hindu hymn) asking for divine intervention when their defeat seems imminent. Their song goes like this:

Bhuwan's mother: O Savior
 O pure of essence
 Our Dearly Beloved
 O Savior
 O pure of essence
 We have no one but u
 Ease our troubles
 O Lord
 We have no one but u
 Gauri: You alone are

Our sole support

You alone are our protector

We have no one but you [...]

O Lord

If not you

You have filled the moon with light

The Sun shines only because of you

Your splendour lights the sky with stars

O Lord

If not you, who will preserve

O Savoir

O Pure of essence

We have no one but u.

Who will preserve this life? [...]

Bhuwan:

If you would hear us

O Lord we make this plea

Grant the suffering courage may hardship never

Defeat them

To the neck give your protection

So they live in peace

To devotion

Give strength

You are the Lord of the Universe

Listen to this plea

When the path is dark

Give us the boon of light

O Saviour

O Pure of essence

We have no one but you

Essence our trouble

O Lord

We have no one but you.

In referring thus to the devotional song that Bhuwan's mother leads at the village temple, Choate *Lagaan* invokes the rhetoric of faith that is at the core of the villager's sense of themselves as a group. It becomes clear that people were conscious and tends to be religious not for religion per se but for boosting up their self –confidence thereby regaining their strength as well as to live in peace. This enables them to persist on. People of the village are from the remote place or villages that are detached from the mainstream history of the country.

The film is set in a fictitious place called Champaner, a village adjacent to a British military cantonment. This fictional settlement, described in the subtitles as a small village in the heart of India, can stand for any village anywhere in British-beautiful areas; administered India (Scene 1).The narrator describes the setting of the film as follows: This dialogue is spoken by one of the narrator of the film:

Champaner.

A small village in the heart of India.

The people of champaner depended on agriculture

Like those in thousands of villages.

A British cantonment

Bordered the village.

The setting is completely a rustic place. The time is the hot season of 1893 and the monsoon rains have not arrived. The ensuing drought has made the fields around the village barren. In this sense, Gowariker doesn't choose to write about the city area or developed places or beautiful areas. He chooses to write about the barren land.

Champaner, the setting of the film is barren and remote place. The Champaner villagers depend upon a healthy crop harvest not only to feed themselves but also to pay lagan(land tax) to the local raja, who himself must pass this on as a protection tribute to the British. The distraught villagers beg the raja to intercede for them with the British in order to have the tax, resided in this rainless year but in vain. The commanding officer at the cantonment, the sadistic and arrogant captain Russell, savors their predicament and taunts them by capriciously offering them a way out of paying the tax in the form of bet and says:

Captain Russell: I will cancel the Lagaan.

But u must defeat us in this game.

This is the condition:

You beat us at this game and you won't have to pay

Lagaan [*lagaan*].

I am serious.

You beat us in this game and I will cancel your tax.

But if you lose you have to pay triple tax.

That is three times the *lagaan*.

If the villagers can beat the British cantonment side at a game of cricket, he will waive the tax for 3 years, but if the villagers lose, they will have to pay the British a triple levy. The match will take place after 3 months (scene 1). Russell gives the protagonist Bhuwan the unenviable task of accepting or declining the wager on behalf

of the village. The villagers knowing Bhuwan to be impetuous and proud wait anxiously in silence for his response. When he finally accepts the challenge, they are devastated, feeling sure the situation is hopeless. This aesthetic expresses the binary divisions of centre-margin, self-other, good-evil; black-white which he argues is the characteristic feature of such societies and their art. Jameson provides postcolonial critics seeking to develop Fanon's analysis Manichean of duality with the necessary model of a reflective relationship between social process and text. Contemporary accounts such as these argue that the 'truth' of post-colonial societies, like that of other repressed, or silenced communities, is ideologically determined. It stems from a construction of the self- as subject in relation to the other. In this context, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin opine:

Representation and resistance are very broad arenas within
Which much of drama of colonialist relation and post-colonial
Examination and subversion of those relations has taken place.

They relate the resistance movement with the colonial project. (85)

Postcolonial literature is a result of interaction between the imperial culture and the complex indigenous cultural practices. Resistance has various forms and parameters. In this context, Stephen Slemon opines, "resistance literature, in this definition can thus be seen as that category of literary writing which emerges as a integral part of an organized struggle or resistance for national liberation" (qtd. in Ashcroft et al.107).

At first, everyone in the village is deeply resentful towards Bhuwan, since noone, including Bhuwan, has ever played cricket or even know the rules. But he convinces the villagers and says:

Bhuwan: Was there any choice?

I ask you, did we have a choice?

What else could we do?

Is not double *Lagaan* unjust?

Are we strong enough to pay it?

Tell me, anyone has paid it?

This is not a calamity. It is an opportunity.

This is n not bravado

You have to get burnt to save your home from fire.

I know.

I know we are weak.

But this way we have hope.

And I want to turn hi hope reality.

This game for our fields and harvest. Since once.

This given extract also shows his rebellious consciousness at falling his semi-convincing explanation that cricket is nothing more than a sophisticated version of gilli-danda, a bat ball game they all played as children. Some of the Hindus men side with him. Unfortunately Bagha, the mute temple Guardian, and Guran, the fortune – teller, are driven more by a great cultural palimpsest with the post-colonized world, to defeat the British rather than any skill at cricket. They tend to rise up against the hegemonic forces even by learning their game. Cricket for Bhuwan and his team becomes a hybrid cultural practice. Hybridity is “The creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft18).

Hybridity occurs in postcolonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler-invaders disposes indigenous peoples and force them to assimilate to new social patterns. It may also occur in later periods

when patterns of immigration from the metropolitan societies and from other imperial areas of influence continue to produce complex cultural palimpsest with the post-colonized world. Most postcolonial writing has concerned itself with the hybridized nature of postcolonial culture as strength rather than a weakness. Such writing focuses on the fact that the transaction of the postcolonial world is not a one-way process in which oppression obliterates the oppressed or the colonizer silences the colonized in absolute terms. In practice it rather stresses the mutuality of the process. It lays emphasis on the survival even under the most potent oppression of the distinctive aspects of the culture of the oppressed and shows how these become an integral part of the new formations which arise from the clash of cultures characteristic of imperialism. Finally it emphasizes how hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen to be the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth. We can see here in the game of cricket as the Indians don't know about cricket but they appropriate the Britisher's game and defeat them.

Despite their poverty, they are proud of their rebellion against the power that pushes them to margins. In a way they tend to have similar kind of consciousness regarding their opposing forces. They are certainly happy about their deed. Later all the villagers support Bhuwan. It reinforces the integrity of the anti-colonial people in their fight against the hegemonic powers. It also emphasizes autonomy of the anti-colonial people. Helen, Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins opine:

Post-colonialism addresses reaction to colonialism in a context that is not necessarily determined by temporal constraints. Post-colonial plays, novels, verse and films

Then become textual and cultural expressions of resistance to colonization. (45)

Therefore, postcolonialism is both a textual effect and a reading strategy. Its theoretical practice often operates on two levels attempting at once to elucidate the postcolonialism which inheres in certain texts, and to unveil and deconstruct any continuing colonialist power structure and institution.

When the British demand the double *Lagaan* with Rajahji and the latter makes the proclamation of the double *Lagaan*, Bhuvan refuses them to go along with the proclamation and also encourages the villagers to go to the place to say that they cannot pay the *Lagaan* of that year:

Mukhiya: Whether we put into the right hand or he left it is still
we who pay.

I say we all go to the palace and talk to him.

He has seen these clouds too.

We will say we cannot pay *Lagaan*.

Not a single grain.

He even says that if they refuse to curtail the *Lagaan* of the year, he is ready to fight against them: “Than the fingers of my hand will close into a fist”. The following dialogue further clarifies the rebellious consciousness of Bhuvan:

Mukiya: What if Rajahji refuses even after hearing us?

Bhuvan: Meaning? You will fight?

If it is necessary, than I will.

Mukiya: Have you lost your mind?

If you offend Rajahji, we will all be ruined!

Bhuvan: Is your life joy and comfort right now?

Mukiya: I won't let the whole village come to harm!

Because of the poor economic background, the lower class people are always dominated in the society. But these colonized people resist this domination by either in silent mode or by acting something. These lower class people in the society have got their consciousness about their class. When they show consciousness, their consciousness is radical. They always pose extremist consciousness and reject the truth as construct.

Truth is what counts as true within the system of rules for a particular discourse. Power is that which annexes, determines, and verifies truths. Truth is never outside power, or deprived of power, the production of truth is a function of power. The struggle for power over truth in some senses mimics the metropolitan impulse of dominance. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin opine:

Language is a fundamental site of struggle for post-colonial Discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language. The control over language by the imperial centre whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a standard against other variants which are constituted as impurities or by planting the language of empire in a new place remains the most potent instrument of cultural control. Language provides the terms by which reality may be constituted; it provides the names by which the world may be known. (22)

One of the most subtle demonstrations of the power of language is the means by which it provides, through the function of naming, a technique for knowing a colonized place or people. As we see how the villagers learnt the colonizers language as language became the strategy to defeat the colonizers. To name the world is to

understand it, to know it and to have control over it. To name reality is therefore to exert power over it, simply because the dominant language becomes the way in which it is known, in colonial experience this power is by no means vague or abstract. A systematic education and indoctrination installed the language and thus the reality on which it was predicated as preeminent.

Braj Kchru shows how in the Indian situation the language has provided a neutral vehicle for communication between contesting language groups, while the Indian novelist Raja Rao voices in a piece written as long ago as 1938, the challenge of the postcolonial writer to adapt the colonial language to local needs. The determination to use the language as an ethnographic tool has been a more common response of postcolonial writers. The appropriation of the language is essentially a subversive strategy, for the adaptation of the standard language to the demands and requirements of the place and society into which it has been appropriated amounts to a far more subtle rejection of the political power of the standard language. In *Lagaan* the protagonist Bhuvan express the consciousness of his class and shows his anger in such a way:

Bhuvan: What should we do?
 Sell our homes?
 Our cattle?
 Ourselves?
 What justice is it to demand double *Lagaan*? (Scene1).

When the villagers demand Bhuvan to ask for forgiveness to the white master, he refuses to do so. Rajah Puran Singh also resist against the white suppression. When Captain Russell asks him to eat meat to do his work, he refuses. The following dialogue clearly shows his resistance:

Captain Russell: Eat the meat, your Highness.

You eat this meat and I will talk to Diller Singh.

Puran Singh: As I told you, I am a vegetarian.

Hum Shakahari hai.

Captain Russell: Just one piece of meat.

You eat it and consider your job done.

Eat the meat.

Puran Singh: How is my eating meat connected to the temple?

Captain Russell: It is not connected; I just want to see you eating meat.

Puran Singh: Captain Russell.

I cannot betray my religion in order to do my duty.

I am sorry.

White dominates the villagers for no reason. The aforementioned dialogue represents the same thing. The villagers are imposed double *Lagaan* by Captain Russell. This is opposed by all the villagers. One woman pours her anger to the Britishers and says: “Double *Lagaan!* Demon! Why don’t you just skin us alive/ our plight is not hidden from the Rajah! Even then, double *Lagaan!*”

Spivak theorizes the silence of the doubly oppressed subaltern woman, her ideas on imperialism’s epistemic violence extends to posting the native male and female as a historically muted subject. The story of colonialism which she reconstructs is of an interactive process where the European agent in consolidating the imperialist Sovereign self, induces the native to collude in its own subject formations as other and voiceless. Thus while protesting at the obliteration of the native’s subject position in the text of imperialism, Spivak in her project gives no speaking part to the

colonized, effectively writing out the evidence of native agency recorded in India's 200 year struggle against British conquest and the Raj discourses to which she scathingly refers as hegemonic natives or reverse ethnocentric narrativization. The disparaging of nationalist discourses of resistance is matched by the exercitation of the role allotted to the post-colonial woman intellectual, for it is she who must plot a story, unravel a narrative and give the marginalized people a voice in history by using the resources of deconstruction in the service of reading to develop a strategy rather than a theory of reading that might be a critique of imperialism.

Similarly, when Ram Singh makes commentary of the game in favors of the villagers and says that "the people of the village get four more runs with this," Captain Russell slaps him (Scene 2). Responding to that he again shouts. Slogan "come on, brothers! Let's get rid of *Lagaan!*" with the villagers as a resistance. The Britishers abuse the villagers without any cause. One of the white soldiers in the film beat Bhura when he touch the cricket ball and order to arrest him:

White soldier: you are not supposed to touch the ball!

Bloody darkie!

Villagers: Long live your Highness!

Rajah: What are you all doing here?

Bhuwan: Forgive us we came to see you, not to see their stupid game.

We are desperate here and now he hits Bhura.

The given line also demonstrates the rebellious consciousness of the Bhuwan. He even fights with the white soldiers when the latter tries to bit him. Similarly, Captain Russell beats one of his village workers, Arjan when the latter makes a small mistake of pricking the horse foot. The relation between the colonizer and the colonized posits

the important questions of possibility of decolonizing the culture and language of the colonizers. Postcolonial societies have centered on what decolonization implies and how it should be achieved. This asserts the need of recapturing the pre-colonial languages and cultures. The hierarchical features of colonization are subverted through the process of decolonization. This asserts the peculiar strength of the postcolonial societies. The process of decolonization has importance of carrying the cultural and linguistic values of the postcolonial societies. It is a project of which has a significant role in the re-creation of the postcolonial discourse. In this context, what Russell further says resembles the Colonial brutality:

Captai Russell: How dare you hurt my horse?

Hurt my horse, will you?

I will destroy you people!

I will take so much Lagaan you want have a rag on your backs.

You bloody slaves will remain crushed under our boots!

This is the colonial violence upon the colonized. They abuses the colonized for trivial matter or for no reason. They even beat them to death. After he is beaten severely, Arjan comes to know his position. And his challenged the officer and says: “However thick the sole may be, Sahib it wears out. Then the nails begin to prick” (Scene1). He quits his job and joins the Bhuwan’s team. The following dialogue between Bhuwan and Arjan further clarifies it:

Bhuwan: Arjan, what happened?

Arjan: Bhuwan, I have been blind and stupid.

I m with you now.

Tell me, how can I help?

Bhuwan: That's great. We are coming together to form a fist.

Bhuwan's clarification of his acceptance of the bet also proves his rebellious consciousness. He says:

Bhuwan: I swear on your, mother!

I did what was right.

I feel rage when we pay *lagaan* to the Rajah.

And he gives it to those filthy whites.

You tell me, Mother.

Who ploughs the earth to show the seeds?

We do.

Who waters it?

We do.

So why should we fill their coffers?

Deva Singh Sodhi is another character who strongly resists the colonial oppression.

At first he "was in the British army" (Scene2). So he asks Bhuwan to include him in their team to fight against Britishers. He wants to be in his contempt against the Britishers:

Bhuwan: Devan Singh Sodhi

I hear you have vowed to fight the British.

Devan: Yes, but not with sticks and spears.

With bat and ball.

Whether with sticks and spears bat andball. I want to be in every battle against the British.

Let me lend a helping hand in this fight, Bhuwan.

This shows his strong desire to fight against the British Empire in India. So he also wants to join that team to fight against the British. He also has acknowledged about the cricket game.

To fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of the culture possible. In the same way here the villagers do for the nation. When Elizabeth asks him what he knows about the game he says that, “Two things, memsahib when I throw the ball, it is to shatter all three stumps. And when I hit the ball, it is to smash it to pieces.” As Frantz Fanon writes:

There is no other fight for culture which can develop apart the popular struggle. Perhaps unconsciously, the native intellectuals since they could not stand wonderstruck before the history of today’s barbarity decided to back further and to delve deeper down ,and let us make no mistake, it was with the greatest delight that they discovered that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory and solemnity. (154)

When Bhuwan’s team is training under the supervision of the white woman, we spot Kachra, the untouchable, standing on the margins-literally, as the ball rolls before him. Bhuwan asks Kachra to throw ball back. A petrified Kachra, with a small broom in his right hand, his left hand handicapped is sweating. Here Bhuwan tells him to throw the ball, and Kachra does it with his disabled left hand. The ball spins wildly. Bhuwan is terribly impressed and wants to include Kachra as the eleventh man they have been looking for. Predictably, the other members oppose the move to induct an achhut (untouchable) and they say:

Mukhiya: No, no.

We will not play! [...]

This damn untouchable!

Bhuwan: Play with us?

Mukhiya: No way!

He cannot play with us?

That's right. We will not mingle with an untouchable.

Bhuwan: This cannot be.

It's unthinkable.

As the lower caste people are dominated by the higher caste people 'they are doubly marginalized people in the colonized country. So Kachra is doubly marginalized. They say: fight the British with a silly game if you please, but don't commit dharam-bhrast (sacrilege). When the British tread on your toes, you can justifiably fight them, but practices like untouchability are legacies not to be questioned. Surprisingly, while Kachra poses a problem, being tutored in the game by a white woman (Elizabeth) is not problematic. But after Bhuwan convinces them they accept the Kachra's participation.

Jameson provides contemporary accounts such as these and argues that the truth of Postcolonial societies, like that of other oppressed, or repressed or licensed communities is ideologically determined. It stems from a construction of the self as subject in relation to the other. Marginalized people always love freedom because of the extreme domination.

So Bhuwan, the protagonist in order to defeat the Britishers and feel the sense of freedom accepts the game of cricket. So after accepting the wager he says to villagers:

Bhuwan: Have you forgotten? If they win, we will be happy
For three years.

Just think.

No *lagaan* for three years.

You know what that means?

It means our grain will be ours.

Only ours.

Not a grain to be given.

The welfare of our children, our entire village is in this.

Our sweat will run as blood in our veins.

These lines show his love for freedom. He thinks that after defeating Britishers, they will be free and they will run their life in a comfortable way.

At last they defeat the Britishers in the game and lead a happy life. Not just Champaner, but all the villagers in the province did not have to pay *lagaan* for three years. Captain Russell pays for his capricious behavior. Besides having to pay triple *lagaan*, he was transferred to the central African desert. Elizabeth returned to England with Bhuwan in her heart. She did not marry and remained Bhuwan's Radha all her life. Bhuwan and Gauri had a splendid wedding. Rajah Puran Singh himself blessed them enhancing Champaner's status even more.

Here we can see Bhuwan, the protagonist has a deep sense of anti-colonial resistance. We can see spirit in him; finally he became able to resist the Britishers. He has a dream to free the village from the colonial rule. Such spirit resonates among the villagers of Champaner. In the film, Bhuwan from the beginning to the end goes against the white dominations. And the villagers resist against the Britishers and also rise up against the white oppressors. By presenting Bhuwan as the representative of the colonized people *Lagaan* advocates the anti-colonial resistance.

III. Cricket as the tool for Resistance

This thesis has analyzed Ashutosh Gowariker's *Film Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* from the perspective of anti-colonial resistance. The Film reveals the consciousness of the colonized people. The protagonist named Bhuvan is a most rebellious character in the film who resist against the British domination. The film is about the anti-colonial resistance of the villagers against the Britishers. The starving native farmers have to pay high taxes to the British soldiers for the protection of their lands, delivering most of their harvest to the British Queen. But a villager named Bhuvan stands against powerful opponents and organizes his villagers to learn and eventually defeat their colonial masters in their own game. The Indian villagers under the leadership of Bhuvan, appropriate it so as to get rid of the triple tax, a form of colonial domination, imposed on them by a strong minded individual to overcome resistance and differences in opinion and standing the ground for a cause against a powerful opposition. Bhuvan is the main character who embodies the rebellious consciousness from the beginning to the end. He accepts the challenge and defeat the Britishers in their own game cricket.

The present study seeks to explore how cricket becomes a tool of anti-colonial resistance in *Lagaan*. It is a simple tale of peasants of the village on the colonial masters in their own game assumes the nationalist aura or tends to describe the nationalist imaginary. The Champaner villagers depend upon a healthy crop harvest not only to feed themselves but also to pay *Lagaan* to the local raja, who himself must pass this on as a protection tribute to the British. The distraught villagers beg the raja to intercede for them with the British in order to have the tax, rescinded in this rainless year but in vain. The commanding officer at the cantonment, the sadistic and arrogant Captain Russell, saviors their predicament and taunts them by capriciously

offering them a way out of paying the tax in the form of bet. If the villagers can beat the British cantonment side at a game of cricket, he will waive the tax for three years, but if the villagers lose, they will have to pay the British a triple levy. Russell gives the protagonist Bhuvan the unenviable task of accepting or declining the wager on behalf of the village. The villagers knowing Bhuvan to be impetuous and proud wait anxiously in silence for his response. When he finally accepts the challenge, they are devastated feeling sure the situation is hopeless.

At first, everyone in the village is deeply resentful towards Bhuvan since no one, including Bhuvan has even played cricket or even know the rules, game totally alien and unknown to them. Unfortunately, Russell's sister Elizabeth, outraged by her brother's cruel treatment of the villager's undertakes to teach Bhuvan's team the finer points of cricket. Bhuvan finds the selection of the team as the real challenge, as no one has really played cricket, they do not even own a bat or a ball. The defeat of British colonial rulers at the hands of Indians, but situates the struggle for decolonization on apparently mutually exclusive domains cricket, an elite, sport and anti-colonization. Bhuvan has a deep sense of anti-colonial resistance. The villagers also to resist rise up against the white oppressors. Finally, by presenting Bhuvan as the representative of the colonized people *Lagaan* advocates sthe anti-colonial resistance.

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