

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Theme of Anti-essentialism in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*

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The thesis entitled **Theme of anti-essentialism in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*** by Mr. Narayan Prasad Guragain has been submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. It has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Abstract

This present work is an analysis of Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink* through the perspective of anti-essential cultural identities. This work basically focuses on the representation of British and Indian characters in the play and concentrates on the changing or shifting nature of their cultural identities in different time and contexts. Hence, the study analyses the changes in the articulation of these identities and relationships both in colonial and post-colonial periods. The observation of the development of these characters from the first scene to the last scene of the play gives the audience a vital significance that they cannot be defined in the particular features or qualities that we ascribe to a particular cultural identity. The present study, thus, attempts to argue that the play *Indian Ink* is based on the theme of anti-essentialism by putting question mark on the essentialist aspect of cultural identity of the characters presented in the play.

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## I. Introduction

### General Introduction

This research paper is an attempt to show the theme of anti-essentialism in the play *Indian Ink* (1995) by Tom Stoppard. In this context, the researcher tried his best to analyze the representation of various characters in the play and concentrate on the changing or shifting notion of their cultural identity. So, it is an analysis guided by the theories and practices of cultural studies.

The thesis has been divided into four chapters which are discussed under the topics: Introduction, theoretical modality, textual analysis and conclusion. The first chapter focuses on the general background of the author, responses by various critics and the methodology of the research paper. Thinking that the author's background and writing style will be an additional point for the research, these issues are emphasized in this chapter.

The theoretical perspective - anti-essentialism, in cultural studies, is the main concern in the second chapter. As this issue cannot be understood alone, other related theories or issues like - cultural studies, cultural identity, post-colonialism etc. have also been elaborated. So, this chapter discusses those theories and practices which provide an insight in the analysis of the text on which this research is carried out.

In the third chapter or the textual analysis, the representation of different cultural identities, the overall structure and style of the play have been elaborated according to the theoretical perspective discussed in the second chapter. Mainly, the problem in the representation of the essentialist version of cultural identities and their changing, shifting or proliferating nature have been analyzed to prove how the play is based on the idea of anti-essentialism. The discussions over the evidences in the text and other analysis are the main concern of this chapter.

The final chapter or the conclusion proves the main argument of the thesis with the help of textual evidence, writer's background, style of the play and its structure. So, this research paper is an analysis of the text of a play with the help of the theories and practices of cultural studies theorists, specially Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity.

This research paper will completely be text-based library research. While doing the research, through the perspective of cultural studies, the anti-essentialist concept of cultural identity as discussed by Stuart Hall will be the basic theoretical frame of reference in analyzing the various representation of cultural identities in the play. Besides this the post-colonial theory of theatre and drama and the line of thought within post-colonialism for the reinterpretation of colonial representations of the colonized will be another necessary insight while analyzing the written text of the drama.

### **Life and Works of the Author**

The life of Tom Stoppard is quite colourful. He was born on 3 July 1937, in the Czechoslovakian town of Zlín and was the youngest of the two sons of his parents Eugene and Martha Straussler. His early name was Tomas Straussler. He moved with his family in 1939 to Singapore where his father, a doctor with the Bata shoe company, had been posted. Three years later, just before the Japanese invasion in which his father was killed, he moved to India with his his mother and brother. Then he lived in Darjeeling, north-east India, with his mother who was managing a branch of Bata Shoe company there. After four years when his mother was remarried to Kenneth Stoppard, an officer in the British army, Tom duly took the name of his step-father – calling himself Tom Stoppard. Then the family went back to England where his step-father Mr. Stoppard engaged himself in machine tool business.

Though he lived in different places among different communities, English has been Stoppard's tongue almost from the beginning. This first school in Darjeeling was an English-medium American-run institution attended by the children of many different nationalities. In England he joined the Dolphin preparatory school in Nottingham. Then he studied in Pocklington School in Yorkshire as a boarder. After completing his 'A' levels, he left the school, come back to Bristol where his family had settled in 1950 and began his career in journalism that in turn induced him to writing by introducing him with various faces of life, theatre and drama. Joining the *Western Daily Press* in 1954, he, then switched to the *Evening World* in 1958 and worked there as a full-time journalist for the next six years. In the *Evening World* he covered theatre as a second string critic and wrote the weekly film review column for a few months. This journalistic background of his life, actually, has given significant colour in his writing life. Admitting the fact, Tim Brassel writes, "Tom Stoppard's practical attitudes to his craft is in part legacy of this journalistic background, which also helps to account for the considerable range of reading to which his plays bear witness" (4).

Moving from Bristol to Nottinghill as a drama critic for a new magazine called *Scene* in 1962, Stoppard began to write professionally. His first play *A Walk on the Water* was bought and transmitted by Rediffusion television. He was also commissioned to write a novel by Anthony Blend, a publisher. His short radio plays *The Dissolution of Dominic Boot* and *'M' is for Moon Among Other Things* were broadcasted by BBC radio in 1964. In the same year he was commissioned to write episodes of the Light Programme Serial *The Dales* along with other promising British playwrights.



The first major success of Stoppard was *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (produced 1966, film 1990). The Central characters in the play - Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are the minor figures in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Stoppard's characters play games, tell jokes, and have philosophical discussions in the interval of the time between the scenes in which they figure in Shakespeare's play. This play was performed at the Edinburgh festival in 1966 and at National Theatre of Britain in 1967. Having made two hundred fifty productions in twenty different languages, this play established Stoppard's name as a reputed or mainstream dramatist of Britain forever. Because of its trivial events, short-cut and witty language this play was often designated as 'absurdist'. Among the theatre critic it also got the label 'theatre of criticism' concerning its relation to Pirandellian technique of the making of the theatre.

Another important play of Stoppard '*Entre a Free Man*' though it was his first play written in 1960 under the title '*A Walk on Water*', and performed in Hamberg in 1964 and in Vienna in 1966 under different titles, was staged in St. Martin's Theatre of Britain in March 1968. This play is built around one character George Riley who, imagining himself on the verge of success as inventor, keeps convincing himself that his daily life with his wife Persephone and daughter Linda is stifling his creativity and boasts of latest idea to anyone who will listen.

Like *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Stoppard's next play *The Real Inspector Found* (1968) is concerned with the nature of theatre. It is based upon the idea of 'play within a play' to some extent. As the two critics, Birboot and Moon, watch a particular poor thriller, correspondences emerge between them and the characters in the play. Finally Stoppard breaks down the barriers between the two and the critics themselves start to take part in the thriller.

Another well-acclaimed play of Stoppard - *Jumper* (1972) was first performed at National Theatre. It tells the story of work-obsessed philosophy professor named George Moor and his nervy wife Dotty. Commissioned by Royal Shakespeare Company in 1973, Stoppard wrote *Travesties* which was first performed at Aldwych Theatre, London, on 10 June 1974. The play also won the *Evening Standard's* Best Play Award of 1974. This play breaks with Stoppard's previous custom by treating historical figures in an unhistorical setting. Set in Zurich, it tries to bring together a number of distinguished exiles, like: Lenin, on the verge of revolutionary success in Russia; James Joyce engaged in creating the revolutionary prose artifice of *Ulysses*; and the artist Tristan Tzara, who revolted against practically all the established notions of art and culture. However, there is also another 'real' character. Henry Carr, who chanced to be in Zurich in 1917. There is evidence to suggest that Carr met Tzara or Lenin but by his fictitious recollection of these great men, the travesties are perpetrated.

Another play *Dirty Linen*, which was first performed in 1976, was written as one of a series of plays called *The American Connection* presented at the Almost Free Theatre London to commemorate the United States Bicentennial celebration in 1976. Stoppard, for his contribution, characteristically seized on the fact that Berman, an expatriate American, had just applied for British nationality and made this the starting point of the play which Berman himself directed. In this play, a select committee of MP's gathers there to conduct a meeting on the subject of moral standards in the public life and when they temporarily dispose on the summon of the division bell, it is occupied by two Home Office civil servants looking for a free room in which to discuss Berman's nationalization request before it is approved by the home secretary.

Tom Stoppard's another full length stage play '*Night and Day*' opened at Phonix Theatre on 8 Nov. 1978. This play is set within the fictitious African state of Kambawe, where reporter Dick Wagnor and Photographer George Guthesie, two leading journalist from British paper *Sunday Globe* have arrived to cover a rebellion against the government led by Colonel Shimbu.

This next play *The Real Thing*, which opened at the strand theatre on 16 Nov. 1982, tackles the subject matter as love. Presenting two central characters – Henry, an unemotional and semi-autobiographical playwright and Annie, an actress, he enquires whether love and marriage can ever truly be compatible. Showing us their initial love affair, their marriage and subsequent love entanglement, he answers the question in affirmative.

Besides the above mentioned plays, he has written various plays like *Dogg's Hamlet*, *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979), *On the Razzle* (1981), *Hapgood* (1988), *Arcadia* (1993), *Indian Ink* (1995) and other television plays.

What is most significant in analyzing his various plays is that nothing seems to be a single binding strand that connects his plays in terms to theme and structure except the comic nature and frequent experimentation in styles. Many critics have marked his plays for verbal brilliance, ingenious action and structural dexterity. He is also very well-known for his clever use of language and plot.

The most striking effect is that Stoppard's plays come from their evident concern with structure and with overall pattern. According to John Russell Taylor, "He professes to mistrust most of all the arbitrary in art; the play which works as linear experience from moment to moment; he likes and works towards the feeling of completeness as one piece after another falls into place. . . ." (cited in Stein 147).

In the early stage of Stoppard's writing life when the English theatre was dominated by heated and socially committed playwrights like - John Osborne, John Arden and Arnold Wesker, his plays, which were apolitical and lacked social commitment, invited him a lot of criticism and to some extent made him unpopular. Many critics labelled him as 'absurdist'. But, Demastes has argued, "terms like 'absurdism altered', post-absurdim, and even 'Godot comes' indicated an awareness that these labels fitted rather imperfectly - mainly because Stoppard's absurdism was self-conscious to the point of parody or travesty" (374).

Some perceptive critic ponder the problem of whether Stoppard should be called an absurdist at all. Victor Cahn's excellent book called *Beyond Absurdity*, has essays on Stoppard's place and genre with titles like 'Absurdism Altered'.

Whatever the discussion are, Tom Stoppard writes of the anxiety and confusion of life, of the helplessness of individuals caught up in forces and of the loss of identity and faith. He discusses the philosophical terms, the lack of absolute values, the problem of freedom, the uncertainty of all knowledge and perception.

He develops his ideas through series of comical confusions, and leaves the hero in bewilderment which is both sad and funny. The character may suffer from insufficiency of reason, but the force makes this very lack a cause for enjoyment. He expresses his basis sense of disorder either by making it the subject of his plays and having his characters talk about it or in the forms of his plays which lack the development and coherence in the plot which, thus, are constructed episodically in the chain of arguments and counterarguments.

Despite some critics comment as shameful activity, use of pun is something that adds glory to Stoppard's theatrical reputation. The use of pun in his works forms a verbal elegance. Stoppard's frequent use of pun prevails in the plays like *Jumpers*,

*Travesties* and *Artist Descending the Staircase* and makes the playwright able to amuse the audience.

### **Critics on *Indian Ink***

Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink* (1995) is the edited and expanded version of his earlier broadcast radio play *In the Native State* (1991). This play, along with many other issues, deals with the theme of anti-essentialism, that is-it shows that the cultural identity is not static but is usually shifting and changing according to time, uses and context. This play has received wide ranging and various critical acclaims from different critics and commentators. This play has also been reviewed by nearly every major journal and newspaper in England and America immediately after its publication and performance. However, there seems to be an agreement that Tom Stoppard has written this play experimenting with form, language and visual effects that characterize him as the most witty entertainer and protean dramatist.

Because of Stoppard's some early dramas which focus on trivial subject matter, minimalist and witty language and futile activities related to meaninglessness, some critics have labelled him as absurdist. However there are many critics who have shown his undertones of seriousness and his concern for people in his plays.

Looking at such humanistic attitudes of Stoppard, Victor L. Cahn has analyzed his earlier major plays. He writes "Even though his characters may be isolated, lost figures, they are never turned into one-dimensional figures of standard absurd drama. Always Stoppard insists on dealing with ideas, questions and their responsibilities and human beings" (156).

Some critics have even seen this play focusing on the relationship between colonizers and the colonized. Some have said that this play embodies the theme of interdependence, reconciliation and dialogue between two cultures.

Richard Russell has analyzed this play through the perspective of cultural reconciliations. He has viewed this play as a play "that makes visible a British and an Indian identity born of mutual interdependence and enriched by aesthetic element from both cultures", it is about "the potentiality in political and cultural relations between two countries" (1).

Similarly Ira B. Nadel sees Stoppard's biographical colour in Richard Russell's analysis of *Indian Ink*. Focusing on the colourful cultural background of Stoppard, she sees, "his subject engaged in identity construction drawn from his cosmopolitan background: his birth in Poland, his time spent in India, his education and current life in England and his belated discovery of his Jewish ancestry" (19).

Laurie Kaplan, analyzing the play, concentrates on the characterization of Professor Pike as a 'pompous' thinker. She writes, "Pike is like a Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's court; he understands neither the rules of British hospitality nor the cultural codes of India" (341). Showing his real experience she further writes, "Having lived in India as a child, Stoppard is very sensitive to the strains of Empire that still exist and to the cross-cultural absurdities that inform identities" (340).

Commenting upon the play in Sunday times, John Peter has compared this play with Stoppard's previous play *Arcadia*. In both plays, he has argued, the playwright operates on the boarder line between drama and poetry. He writes, "The words are hunting because they carry an emotional charge beyond their bare meaning; the idea echoes across the play, as if setting up a kind of internal resonance, the symbolism must, a sense of weight and permanence to the passing fact" (15).

Thus, none of the above mentioned critics have explored the theme of anti-essentialism, in the this play, the researcher is going to examine. They have talked about either style, structure of the play, or some other issues except the theme of anti-

essentialism. So, the play will be analyzed with the perspective of cultural studies, to see how it is based on the theme of anti-essentialism.

## II. Anti-Essentialist Cultural Identities

### Culture

Culture, in its general meaning, refers to any context in which meanings are generated specially through symbolic representation. Therefore, it means the shared symbols, signs, rituals and behaviours based on gender, race, colour, creed, sexuality, political affiliation and other possible constructions through which people communicate perpetuate and develop their knowledge and attitudes towards life. Thus, the concept of culture is very broad and it is difficult to define it in specific way.

The term culture has acquired new meanings and perspectives along with the passage of time. In the Roman period it was referred to cultivation of farming and in medieval period it was associated with the development of religious faith. For renaissance humanist, culture was mental cultivation. And this process of personal cultivation, later on was taken as superior cultivation or refinement during seventeenth century. In the late eighteenth century, it was taken as people's whole way of life. It was defined by Arnold as the best that has been 'thought and known' in the world. E.B. Tylor, from the same perspective, has defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tyler 1). The values, norms, structures, institutions, customs and modes of thinking bear primary significance in a culture. so, it is a kind of historically created system of meaning in terms of which "we give form, order, point and directions to our lives" (Geertz 52). Accepting the transmissibility of culture, it can be defined as a form of social heredity, a supra-biological, order of things and events that flows down through time from one age to next.



However, by mid twentieth century, Raymond Williams contrasts all these anthropological definitions with the normative definition of culture but he still claims to represent the organic voice of people. Out of this conflict there emerged a third way of using the term as "one that refers neither to the people's organic way of life nor to the normative values preached by leading intellectuals but to a battle ground of social conflict and contradictions" (Graff and Bruce 421). In this perspective cultures are taken in such a way that they are internally differentiated in systematic ways and therefore cannot be studied regarding simply the homogenous totalities governed by uniform logics and principles. Then culture is not taken as uniform and coherent rather different and divisive. The traditional hierarchy of high culture and low culture was also questioned. In this context Barker writes ". . . with the passing of time and the increased interest in popular culture, a new set of theorist argued that there was no legitimate grounds for drawing the line between the worthy and unworthy" (41).

The study of culture has become wide and vast along with the development of the concept of post-colonial criticism and post-colonial theory of discourse. These new concepts sought the help of foucouldian notion of 'power' and 'discourse' and Gramscian notion of 'hegemony' to analyze the colonial and colonized cultures. These concepts also limited discussions from within and outside the third world countries concerning the condition post-colonial cultures which are often as the result of practices and tendencies of colonialism such as slavery, displacement, emigration, racial discrimination and cultural hegemony. All these factors brought new challenges to culture and are responsible for making the cultures so complex and for creating new hybrid forms.

Edward W. Said, as a cultural critic, observes the relationship between the east and the west and focuses on culture as a form of hegemony. Culture is an ideal for

Arnold but said argues "Culture with its superior position has the power to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, denote interdict and validate, in short i.e. the power of culture to be agent of and perhaps the main agency of powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it too" (Said 19).

Thus, it can be concluded that culture is symbolic representation of any practices and meanings. Though the early thinkers and philosophers took it as ideal, organic and homogenous, study of culture has moved into the spheres of diffusion, stratification hierarchy and relation. Culture, in its relation to community, nation and religions, is also the source of identity.

### **Cultural Studies**

Cultural studies is an area of studies comprising a host of theories and practices that attempt to challenge and surpass the crisis of modern life by interrogating and dismantling the pre-established patterns and structures. It is composed of elements of Marxism, new historicism, feminism, gender studies, anthropological studies of race and ethnicity, popular cultural studies and post-colonial studies: those fields that focus on social and cultural forces that either create community or cause division and alienation. But it is very difficult to draw the boundaries of cultural studies and post-colonial studies: those fields that focus on social and cultural forces that either create community or cause division and alienation. But it is very difficult to draw the boundaries of cultural studies as a coherent, unified and academic discipline. As argued by Chris Barker, "Cultural studies is a multi or post-disciplinary field of inquiry which blurs the boundaries between itself and other subjects" (5). However, cultural studies is generally taken as the counter-disciplinary tendency of breaking down of intellectual barriers. As Lawrence Grossberg and others have emphasized, the intellectual promise of cultural

studies lies in its attempt to "cut across diverse social and political interest and address many of the struggles within the current scene" (Grossberg 1).

Cultural studies first appeared as a field of study in Great Britain in 1950's out of Leavinism, a concept named after F.R. Levis who argued for a very restricted common in education discarding modern experimental works, as a means of forming mature individuals with a concrete and balanced sense of life. This drew the attention of critics to analyze how the cultural institutions and their cultural production play a role in perception of meaning and cultural practices of ordinary men and women. Following this, Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), E.P. Thompson's *The Making of English Working Class* (1968) and the concepts of Raymond Williams attracted different cultural studies theorist to begin seriously to explore culture's own political function. In 1970's culture came to be regarded as a form of 'hegemony', a term to describe relation of domination that involves not coercion but consent on part of the dominated. In late 1970's itself, cultural studies accommodated Foucoulidian notion of 'Power'. The theme of power and the politics of how it plays itself in the construction of truth, knowledge, discourse, history, literature, subject disciplines and institutions became the main theme of cultural studies. There is, of course, a political commitment in cultural studies. According to Catherine Driscoll, "this commitment has helped draw cultural studies into the controversy over whether the humanities and social sciences have become devoted to uncovering 'political' meaning is cultural forms and practices" (74). Thus with its connection to 'power' and 'politics' cultural studies, as Chris Barker argues, "is a body of theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice" (5) where knowledge is never a neutral or objective phenomenon but a matter of positionality.

As an engaged form of analysis cultural studies raises questions and help dismantle the culture constructions specially within the content and structures of modernity. Similar to the practice of new historicist criticism, M.H. Abrams writes "politically radical exponent of cultural studies orient their writing and teaching towards the end of reforming existing power structures and relations which they view as dominated by a privileged gender role and class" (54). In this sense cultural studies practices veer around the issues of the production of culture and are tied to changing modes of producing culture and cultural subjects.

Relations between structure of power and cultural forms or practices are, thus, the important issues within cultural studies. These issues are however analyzed through and focus on representation because representations are made through certain modes and in certain contexts which help to generate meanings. Analysis of 'everyday life' is another strand within cultural studies. Under this topic, cultural studies focuses on the routine formation and negotiations of identities and cultural locations, including familial, work and 'lifestyle' patterns, the social spaces and language use too.

Thus, it can be argued that the cultural studies is a practice of dismantling the unequal structure and social practices with the help of various theories. It is an assemblage of different approach to research to bring out the controversies through the study of text, symbolic representation and popular cultural forms by observing how meaning is ascribed or generated through the production and consumption of such practices.

### **Cultural Studies through Drama/Theatre**

The word 'drama' comes from a Greek word meaning 'thing done'. It is a form of literary composition meant to be performed in the theatre. Developed out of the

grand feats of Dionysus in ancient Greek, drama by now has acquired a reputed position in literature and performative arts. As the literary compositions or the scripts composed by the dramatists are meant to be performed, dramas possess both the qualities of literary art as well as representational art. Drama, in this sense, as defined by Jacobus, "is the art of representing for the pleasure of others events that happened or that we imagine happening" (Jacobus 1). Rooted in ancient Greek rituals, dramas have become the means of representing rituals, culture, act and society through theatre. And theatre is the place which is meant to reflect our society. Theatre, as V.M. Roberts writes, "holds the mirror upto nature, shows us ourselves - the complicated, contradictory, joyful and sorrowing things that we are, the pattern of tensions between hopes and fears that constitute human life, the inward and outward conflicts that accompany and comprises human existence" (3). In this sense drama and the theatre become a vehicles for the representation of various aspects of human life.

Dramas flourished as genres like tragedy, comedy in Greek period and had already reached its apex. Dramas have been determined culturally and historically and have represented different cultural, social and events in different times. They were, in medieval period, regarded as the direct expressions of peoples' religious concerns and values. In renaissance, during Shakespeare's time, dramas became the vehicle for historical events as well source of aristocratic entertainment featuring music, dance and elegant costuming. In neo-classical age, they were the place of the representation of social evils. By mid twentieth century, they have covered various aspects of society like expression of social manners in eighteenth century, expression of Irish national culture and identity in early twentieth century. Naturalism, realism,

feminism, absurdism and expression of colonialism and sexual repressions are the innovation and experimentation of drama in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In this sense, it can aptly be said that drama, like culture, is a text/performance through which a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored. Drama also represents the real social relationships including the relation of gender, class, race etc. As we are the objects of ideological production and creations of our own socio-cultural history, dramatic text or performances often reveal the problems, controversies or intolerableness of our social realities. As Berry argues "the playfulness and possibilities of dramatic arts offer an exploratory but safe site for disclosures of inequalities, voicelessness powerlessness and injustices" (39). So, drama reveals the difficulties of our societies through representations.

The prevailing marginality, inequality and exclusions are interrogated and disrupted with the various new sets of questions raised by different theories and practices like feminism, post-colonialism, post-structuralism, post-Marxism, post-modernism etc. within cultural studies. Dramatic arts theories and practices, informed by cultural studies, as berry argues:

Offer agency variations on taken-for-granted cultural constructions that are marginalizing and exclusive of different voices, experiences, and histories that do not fit with the dominant, powerful, colonial structures (Such as institutions, representations, discourses) of everyday life (37).

Thus, the relationship between drama/theatre and cultural studies is very intricate, broad and essential too. In the twentieth century the term 'theatre' has been used in its broadest sense that resulted in the expansion of the concept 'theatre'. Specially the avant garde movements in the beginning of the century promoted two

different uses and meaning of the term. On the one hand, they restricted it to a particular art form. On the other hand, they tried to close the gap between art and life diffusing theatre and reality. The term then used to signify any kind of exhibitory, demonstrative or spectacular events such as the performances circus artist, juggler, clowns and the happening in the streets, cafes, parliament and other public places. The rediscovery of 'ritual theatre' in 1960's also led its meaning to any demonstration made by a person exhibiting himself/herself, someone else or something to the gaze of others. All these things - personal, social, political or cultural are the subject of the analysis within cultural studies to study their production, representation and consumption. From the late 1970's, however, as Fischer-Lichte writes "the dissemination of 'theatre' not only as a metaphor, but as a cultural model in different disciplines has increased to such an extent that nowadays it seems to be most heuristic model in cultural studies" (1). In this context, it can be argued that drama and theatre can be best site for research within cultural studies.

### **Post-colonialism**

The term 'post-colonialism' implies both the situation coming after colonialism and the situation in the heritage or aftermath of colonialism both an ongoing liberation and ongoing oppression. First used in the late 1970's as a literary and cultural theory, post-colonialism is an attempt to describe contemporary situation and its culture by focusing on the effects of western imperialism which has dominated the world since the sixteenth century. What is remarkable here is that the non-European people within the vast empire had vast differences as the forms of subjugation varied widely, reflecting the motives behind the act of colonization and the nature of their indigenous culture. They also experienced their domination differently within the same society. In this context, post-colonialism analyzes these various subjugated experiences as the

result of western colonial power and voices them with an attempt to provide an independent position and identity. Post-colonial theory as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have argued:

involves discussion about experiences of various kind migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and response to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, linguistics and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. (2)

Thus, post-colonialism analyses all political, cultural, and linguistic experiences of formerly colonized societies. Since 1980's, such analysis, as Abrams has written "has been supplemented by other theoretical principles and procedures including Althusser's definition of Marxist theory of ideology and the deconstructive theory of Derrida" (236).

The important precursor in establishing the concept of post-colonialism in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Using Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' and Foucault's notion of power, Said has examined the western canonical literature and analyzed the power of the colonizers to represent, define and authorize the 'orient'. He writes:

My intention is that without examining orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage and even produce - the orient, politically, sociologically, militarily and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period. (3)



Given that the colonial discourse has usually represented the 'oriental' as inferior other, 'subaltern' has been standard way to designate the colonial subject. The issue of 'subaltern' is first raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as an attempt to voicing the real subordinate groups. However, as a deconstructionist, she argues that the essential subaltern representation is not possible because of the varieties of elite working themselves as voices of 'other'. She opines that "one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous" (14). In this way within post-colonialism she brings up another concept that is - the understanding of the complex forces that define the interest of any subject position.

As a literary practice, post-colonialism can be taken as practice of producing various narratives and counter narratives by accepting, rejecting and hybridizing the colonial languages, forms and practices. Post-colonial literature is, according to Stephen Slemon, "a form of cultural criticism and cultural critique: a mode of disidentifying whole societies from the sovereign codes of cultural organization, and an inherently dialectical meaning" (14). Post-colonialism, thus, is producing and analyzing literature like cultural criticism, and acts as a challenge to the cultural construction of the colonizers that have changed the cultural aspects of the colonized. Similarly a major element in the post-colonial agenda, according to M.H. Abrams, "is to diestablish Eurocentric norms of literary and artistic values, and to expand the literary canon to include colonial and post-colonial writers" (237).

Within the domain of drama and theatre, post-colonialism has been the perspective for giving voice to the myths, identities and cultures of the coloniseds and even reproducing the western text from their point of view. For the post-colonial writer, Groff and Banfield write, "theatre has meant both traditional indigenous performance - which has often had to be rediscovered and reinvented - and the theatre

that the colonists brought with them from the metropolitan power, usually in particularly impoverished and amateur forms" (11).

In this way, it can be said that post-colonialism is a theoretical perspective, that, in connection to Foucault's notion of 'power', Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' and Althusser's notion of 'ideology', facilitates the writers, critics and reader to evaluate representations, resee them and dismantle the colonialist discourse by giving voice to the subjugated or the misrepresented. Within dramas, as it is directly connected to representation and performance, post-colonialism provides stage to produce, reproduce and criticize the works of both western and non-western dramatists.

### **Cultural Identity**

Identity has become one of the most important issues in cultural studies during 1990's. Though the concept of identity is very difficult to define, it can be, generally, understood as an essence that arises from individual's desire to confirm a vital sense of self-worth and that it is expressed through the signs of taste, beliefs, attitudes, lifestyles and other forms of representations which are recognizable by ourselves and by others. Identity is defined by Cornel west in its connection to 'desire and death'. He writes:

Identity is fundamentally about desire and death. How you construct your identity is predicted on how you construct desire and how you conceive of death: desire for recognition, quest for visibility; the sense of being acknowledged; a deep desire for association - what Edward Said would call 'affiliation'. It is the longing to belong, a deep, visceral need that most linguistically conscious animals who transact with an

environment they participate in. And there is profound desire for protection, for security, for safety, for surity. (West 15-16)

So, identities are constituted, made rather than found by representations. In Balibar's words, "Identity is never a peaceful acquisition it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by another identity or by an erasing of identities" (Balibar 186). The issue of identity in this sense, usually arises when it is thought to be in crisis.

In defining identity, Stuart Hall has conceptualized it mainly in three ways - the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the post-modern subject. The enlightenment subject, based on Descartes famous declaration "I think therefore I am", is associated with the notion that the mind possesses some rational capacities which allow an individual to make sense of and experience the world. It is, as Hall writes, "based on a conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core.. The essential centre of the self was a person's identity" (cited in Barker 168).

Similarly the sociological subject conceives identity as social or cultural product. This notion defines identity in its relation to language, cultural practices and contexts. In this sense, identity becomes not only the matter of self-description but also of the social ascription.

Hall's third conceptualization of identity of the post-modern subject, is very relevant and contemporary too. It takes identity not as a unified or coherent but as shifting, fragmented and multiple. Hall writes, "The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self' -

within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions so that on identifications are continually being shifted about" (cited in Barker 170).

In this sense, identities can be taken as something which is not a state concept rather a shifting concept. And it can be argued that cultural identity is that aspect of individual identities that have something similar in their history, culture and aspiration for future. As Hall argues, "Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like anything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (112).

In this context, colonial experience, for example, is the shared past that constitutes the cultural identities like Indianness, Carribeanness, Africanness and others. Similarly, the shared experience homosexuals and their demand for freedom can be something that constitute the cultural identity of homosexual. However, Hall writes "cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside on which history has made no fundamental mark" (113). So, cultural identity is neither an essential or stable thing nor an imaginative thing. It is something which has histories or past which continually speak to us. Such identities are constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. In this sense cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable point of identification or future, which are made, within the discourse of history and culture. So, cultural identity is usually a matter of politics for 'positioning' or a tendency of identifying and representing itself according to time place and context.

The rise of cultural consciousness among the peoples of the world along with the dissemination of post-colonial theory and the tendency of globalization has

brought the issue of cultural identity at centre of discussion. In the global context, diasporic movement across the world has provided spaces for cultural encounters among various ethnic and racial groups. The consciousness of cultural identity which is highly emphasized within post-colonialism, also gave rise to notion of national consciousness. The consciousness of the self, Fanon writes, "is not the closing of a door to communication. . . National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension" (Fanon 199).

Thus, it can be concluded that identity is something that arises from human beings' desire to identify themselves as different from others. Cultural identity, similarly, is that aspect of identity which shares its past, history or culture and aspiration for future. Though, traditionally the notion of cultural identity was taken to be static or essential, nowadays it is connected to the politics of 'positioning' itself according to time, place and context. In this sense, it can be understood as fragmented multiple and shifting notion.

### **Diaspora**

The term 'diaspora' is originated from a Greek word which means 'to disperse'. In this sense, diaspora is understood as the voluntary and forcible movement of people from their homeland to the new regions. Though, traditionally it was associated with the number of people from 'jew' community living in various parts of Europe, in recent times, it is viewed in its connection to colonialism, which in itself was a vast movement of population i.e. the settlement of Europeans in newly established colonies and dispersion of natives for agricultural purpose, trade and slavery.

The diaspora generated by colonialism also promoted the cultural encounters among various ethnic and cultural groups. The descendents of various diaspora have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and

develop their originacy cultures. This often results into the crediction and modification of various cultural practices and identities. This development of diasporic cultures, As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write, "necessarily questions essentialist models, interrogating the ideology of a unified, natural cultural norm, one that underpins the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse" (70).

Within cultural studies, diaspora brings into attention the issues of races and ethnicities travelling across national boundaries, their sense of displacement, rootlessness and also the urge either to reclaim their past through various representation or modification of their cultural identities through mimicry or acculturation. So, this condition of the people of diaspora makes them feel culturally displaced or tern apart but the diasporic reality isn't static one. As Hall argues:

The diasporic experience . . . is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference." (119-20)

So, diaspora is a new cultural condition, within the study of culture, that has provided a space for juxtaposing, meeting and mixing of various cultural identities. In this sense, because of its vulnerability diaspora is associated with antiessential idea of cultural identity.

### **Hybridity**

Hybridity is generally understood as mixing of two different species. It can, more than this, be in any forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial etc. However, within post-colonialism it is understood as the 'ambivalent relationship' between

colonizer and the colonized or, as Ashroft, Griffiths and Tiffin put it, "creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (18).

Linguistically hybridity includes the new uses of language such as pidgins and creole.

The ambivalence in the relationship between colonizer and the colonized, often revolves round attraction and repulsion, mimicry and mockery and desire of reforming and threat of being resisted. Ambivalence for Bhaba is the 'cultural crossovers' of various sorts emanating from the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized. On this context, it is very clear that hybridity is the new cultural identity or location that rejects any kind of imperial or authoritarian position and the die-hard dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized. Thus, it often provides mediation between and among cultural borders.

However, the concept of hybridity does not remain unproblematic in its definition - 'meeting or mixing of completely separate and homogenous cultural spheres'. Each homogenous culture usually, is divided in the categories of religion, class, gender, age, nationality and so forth and thus already becomes a hybrid in any way. This gives an opportunity to hybrid identities for strategic identification in various sites and contexts. So, being hybrid, as an anti-essentialist position, also means shifting, heterogeneous and multiple identities.

### **Representation**

Representation, in its simplest meaning, means the act of showing or describing anything in a particular way. It has been interpreted in different ways in the disciplines like politics, philosophy etc. In cultural Studies, it is understood as symbolic representation of any socially constructed or activities gestures which give certain meaning in certain context. As representation is the signifying practices which shows the cultural identities and the world view of the people of a particular society,

culture and interest, it is the central issue of cultural studies. But these representations are not abstract concepts. As Barker argues, "Cultural representations and meanings have certain materiality, they are embedded in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, books, magazines and television programmes (8). From these material realities, representations can be studied as the propagation of truth and falsity. According to Peter Canning "representation always concern truth and language, if it is able to tell the truth, is able to lie, to distort and misrepresent" (340). So, representation highlights the practices, beliefs, assumptions of the people of different cultural background and provide a space for creating truth and also analyzing and questioning them.

Within cultural studies, thus, representation is the main subject of analyzing and investigating how meaning or truth is generated in variety of context. In contemporary post-colonial theory, representation is closely related with the Foucauldian concept of 'discourse as representation'. Representation in its connection to discourse has the power to define, stereotype and idealize anything. Under Marxism, representations can be viewed as the articulation of 'ideology' of the interest of ruling or the dominant class. The new historicist also take representations to see the materiality of history. M.H. Abrams, in this connection, defines representation as, ". . . formations which are the ideological products or cultural constructs of the historical conditions specific to an era" (183-184).

Edward Said, as a cultural critic, was also interested to see how the 'orientalism' as a western discourse was produced through various problematic representations in both factual and imaginative texts. In *Orientalism*, he writes:

My analysis of the orientalist text therefore places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invisible, for such representations as



*representations*, not as 'natural' depiction of the orient. This evidence is found just as prominently in the so called truthful text as in the avowedly artistic text. (21)

So, orientalism as a discourse is the geopolitical awareness of the western scholars. This awareness is propagated through aesthetic, scholarly, economic sociological historical and philosophical text and is distributed through multiple text or representation about the orient.

Therefore, representation is the articulation of any symbols, signs and gestures which are socially constructed and possess meaning in its own context. The representation in its connection to 'power' or 'ideology' can both represent and misrepresent the realities. It is a main subject of study within cultural studies.

### **Essentialism**

Essentialism is a philosophical concept that defines any 'thing' on the basis of some essential properties. The essential properties of a thing are the ones it needs to possess to be the thing it is. In cultural studies, it is understood as the concept which takes any meanings or identities to be permanent, transcendental or static. According to Chris Barker, "Essentialism assumes that words have stable referents and social categories reflect an essential underlying identity" (20). So, essentialism is a notion which takes truth as stable and the social categories like femininity, black identity, Asian identity as fixed universal things. Essentialism, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue, "is the assumption that groups, categories or classes of objects have one or several defining features exclusive to all members of that category" (77). In the study of some issues like cultural identity, race, gender etc., we often ascribe certain essential characteristics to identify or distinguish these categories from others. And these characteristics are understand the ground of permanence. So, colonial

discourse, for example, often created a position to dominate, subjugate and exercise hegemonic control over the colonized with its power and ideology. This position of colonizer further propogates the essential stereotype and this propogation is maintained through representation in various texts.

Though the concept of essentialism is proved as flawed notion by the post-modern theories like deconstruction, post-colonial criticism and post-structuralism, it has been taken as the necessary position for recognizing and voicing the real dominated or oppressed groups. This issue arises as Gayatri Spivak problematises the proper identification of 'Subaltern' in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak ?". Though there is usually a politics in the representation of interest of subaltern, essentialism is accepted as strategy to identify and differentiate the basic opposite notions like black-white, coloniser-colinised, oppreser-oppressed etc. This is often termed as strategic essentialism.

So, essentialism is a concept that assumes the essential characteristics of the group and categories like Black, white, male, female, colonizer colonized etc. and takes them as the universal features negating the problem in defining such categories and their changes or transformation. It is also the notion of cultural identity which is taken as permanent or static.

### **Anti-essentialism**

Anti-essentialism is a concept that rejects all the essential or the static notion of the categories any groups like male, female, black, white etc. It problematizes their universalities. Moreover, it denounces the notion of transcendental truth and falsity and shows them as relative or shifting notions. In cultural studies, anti-essentialism is taken as the influence of the theories and practices like, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and deconstruction. For, post-structuralism no truths, subjects and

identities are found outside language and language itself does not possess stable referents. So, language is unable to represent fixed truth and identity. Post-colonialism is an strategy to resee the establishment of 'truth' and its deliberate representation by the colonizers as the propogation of their discourse. Thus, it rejects the 'truth' and essential representation created or made by colonizers. Similarly, deconstruction deventors and problematizes all kinds of truths and meanings of any text.

The concept of anti-essentialism is frequently used in connection to identity in cultural studies. Identities are not the real things but are the description in language. As Chris Barker argues, "Identities are dismissive constructions which change their meaning according to time, place and usage". He further writes, "The idea that identity is plastic is underpinned by arguments referred to as anti-essentialism" (166). Thus, anti-essentialism defines identity not as a collection of traits that we possess but as something we create, something always in process, a moving towards rather an arrival.

The anti-essential perspective of cultural identity is first discussed by Stuart Hall. For him cultural identity is not fixed or essential notion but is subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. He writes, "It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. Like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation" (112). Thus, for him cultural identity is not an essence but a continually shifting position, and the points of difference around which cultural identities could form are multiple and proliferating. So it, on the one hand, rejects the static notion of cultural identity and on the other hand problematises the representation of the particular groups like white, black, Asian, female etc.

Thus, the notion of anti-essentialism, in its opposite meaning to essentialism, rejects all the essential notion of cultural identity and shows its shifting, proliferating and multiple forms.

### III. Theme of Anti-essentialism in *Indian Ink*

#### Critical Summary of the Play

Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink* (1999) is the edited and expanded version of his earlier radio play *In the Native State* (1991). Based upon an imaginative story on the relationship between the people of two different cultures or specially between English colonizers and Indian colonized, the events of the play *Indian Ink* fluctuate between two different setting, that is, Jummapur village during the colonial time of 1930s and London and Jummapur during the post-colonial time of 1980s. However, these differences in time and setting are connected to each other with an attempt to re-interpret the past according to the present situation.

Structurally, and thematically too, Stoppard uses this parallelism to show the cross-cultural complicity that exists between Flora and Das in colonial time frame and between Mrs. Swan and Anish in the post-colonial period.

As *Indian Ink* begins, Flora Crewe, a literary figure of London is seen on the station platform of Jummapur. This travel, though revealed later in the play, is a part of the treatment of her degrading health. She is, then, received by Commaraswami, a member of the local theosophical society. Then the scene suddenly shifts to London - the Shepperton garden of Mrs. Swam. Mr. Swam, there, discusses with Mr. Eldon Cooper Pike, a pompous American professor who tries to collect and interpret the works and letters of Flora Crewe. The scene again shifts back to India and Flora is seen talking with Coomaraswami about religion and visiting temples. In the house of Coomaraswami, after her lecture on the literary life of London, she is asked various questions on the literary life of London by the Indian audience. They ask questions in such a way that they themselves have lived in London and observed the lives of various English literary figures. This shows the subjugation of Indian people to the

vast discourse of empire and surprises Flora too. In the same lecture she meets Mr. Das, an Indian painter. He is very much subjugated to empire and has similar fascination to English culture as his fellows do. He visits Flora many times in the Dak House and they sit together - Flora writing poems and Das painting a portrait of her. Flora, during their conversation, asks Das to be more Indian than he is now. Because of her romantic behaviour, Flora wants to be more close to Das but Das, as a subjugated and colonized Indian, cannot be so close to her and feels rather discomforted. However within this interaction between Flora and Das there are some short scenes set in London where Mrs. Swan and Pike try to interpret the letters and poems of Flora through which these events of the past are enlivened to present.

Then, suddenly in the London scene, Anish Das, the son of Nirad Das appears. He comes to meet Mrs. Swan to discuss about his father and Flora who had once lived in India during colonial period. In their conversation, Mrs. Swan wants Anish to be more Indian. But Anish, who studied in London and even married an English girl in order to settle there, seems to be more British than Indian. However he has a strong sense of national, cultural aspect of his life. He even protests the English rulers and the Indian Maharajas for having jailed his father. With the symbolic things empire like sugar, tea, language and painting, Mrs. Swan tries to impose her superiority. Discarding all these things, Anish affirms to his cultural past and takes pride at them. These all things which are heard in the scene come in their connection to the interpretation of the past. The scene again moves to Indian setting where the life of Flora is seen in Jummapur Dak House again. Mrs. Das offers a book as a gift to her. Again back in London, Anish is seen discussing with Mrs. Swan. He, this time, shows his reaction to colonial education, history and expresses his role as a modern Indian painter. Recalling his past memory he tells Mrs. Swan that his father liked to

read. Browning, Tennyson, Macaulay and Dickens very much. He admits that the English education had made them loyal to the colonizers. He calls the 'Sepoy Mutiny' the first war of independence. In this case, he protests imperial history as one-sided and incorrect. He also claims that the Indian science, architecture, literature art and culture as a whole was, more splendid and older than the British so the British came to India. He says that England is his home now. As a painter, his role is not as figmative as his father but he is now deconstructive. This marks a crucial argument on part of Anish as he often tries to deconstruct the gets made by empire on various aspects of his life or symbolically the life of other colonized. However, Anish, like his father who had drawn a portrait of Flora, also draws a pertain of Mrs. Swan thinking that it will make them friends.

In the scene buck in the Dak House, Flora is seen having conversation with Mrs. Das. She is addressed as 'memsahib' in the guest house. Mr. Das tells Flora that he leant English from the books of various English writers and he also tells that he wants write like Macaulay. However, out of his mimic and subjugated mind, Mr. Das also reveals the fact that the English education instead of producing 'babus' produced lawyers, journalists, civil servants and finally Gandhi. As the story moves on there arrives a colonial officer Captain Durance to know about Flora. Knowing that she came along the footsteps of Chamberlain, a communist by this thought, he becomes suspicious about Flora and her relation with Das and Coomaraswamis Captain Durance, unlike Flora, interprets India and its people sensitively or politically. He also calls English people as 'civilized lot' and invites Flora to dinner and dance. Back in the scene of London, then, Mrs. Swan and Anish discuss about the political situation of Jummapur. Mrs. Swan tells Anish that Jummapur was ruled by His

Highness the Rajah. Then she talks about the days when she stayed in India with her husband. She also talks about Pike with Anish.

Shifling to the setting of Jummapur, Das and Grewe are seen talking about art. Beginning from the concept of 'Rasa' in Indian art, Flora talks about the stereotypical image of Indian woman in Indian traditional art. In this context, she even talks about sex.

In an another scene of India pike is seen searching some evidences about Flora and Das. Pike stays at Jummapur Palace Hotel, which was once the palace of native Maharaja. He takes photographs of the tree, beside the Dale House, which Flora has mentioned in her letter. Pike actually gets nothing except that old tree. Everything others have been changed and Indian now looks very different than it is mentioned in Flora's letter. He tries to see many other things which he finds in Flora's letter but is impossible. Again in Loudon's scene Mrs. Swan takes Anish to her cupboard and shows the unfinished painting of Flora Grewe by Nirad Das. Anish suddenly becomes emotional and even weeps.

Then the scene again moves to India of the past. Das talks about the Raj and the problems faced by theosophical society. He tells Flora that Mr. Chamberlain's lecture in the society had made it suspend for a year. He mentions how suspicious are the Maharaja and the British about the society. When there is a minor tussle between Flora and Das over the painting Flora suddenly has an attack of breathlessness. After that there are also the scenes of Flora in bedroom and bathroom which perplexes Das. In a conversation following this event, Das also admits the argument made by Mr. Chamberlain that the Indians were robbed by the colonizers. However in his practice of painting, Das does not seem to avoid idealizing the works of British artist and



writers. Because of her romantic motive Flora frequently asks Das about Radha and Krishna while talking about Indian art and myths.

The second act of the play begins with the scene of Jummapur club where the British gentlemen along with their mistress gather and dance on the holidays. Flora visits the club as she was invited by Captain Durance. In this club she talks with other English men and women mainly about love and about English literary figures like Kipling, Houseman. The following scene shows the present time in India where Pike is in search of evidences about Flora. He discusses with Dilip about the impact of colonial culture on the life of Indians. He also meets Mr. Ram Sunil Singh who had worked as punkhawallah of Flora during her visit to India. He, thus, becomes able to prepare footnotes on various issues which are mentioned but are not clear to him. Then, in the next scene, Flora is seen with Captain Durance talking about her health. Durance talks about the death of English people in India and their cemetery. He tells Flora about his life in India as an any officer. There is an indication that Durance loves Flora though he knows that she is an scandalous women. He also talks about the growing people's movement for independence.

In the following scene, in London, Anish describes his days in London with Mrs. Swan. He also remembers his father and learns from Mrs. Swan that he was accused of conspiring to cause a disturbance at this empire day celebrations. In the next scene, Pike discusses about India and the relationship of Flora and the Maharaja. In the next past scene, Flora visits the Maharaja who is seen quite gallant in dealing with foreign women. He shows Flora the collection of his automobiles. In the next scene pike himself visits the Rajah who is now a minor politician. In the London scene, Anish scoops more on the relationship between his father and Flora.

Finally, it is revealed that Flora has passed away and Eric, the husband of Mrs. Swan and Nell are seen near her gravestone. In the final scene, Flora sets out for Jaipur reading a book by Emily Eldon. Thus, the play, moving between two different settings and time, focuses on the characters of two different generations showing the differences that have appeared in the post-colonial era. Representing both the colonizers and the colonized, the play also brings into account both the cultural aspects of people. In this way, Stoppard concentrates on the cultural differences and change in their identities that are seen due to the passing of time, context, location and other cross-cultural phenomena. So, concerning how the different cultural identities are represented, I have analyzed them in two different perspectives, that is, essentialism and anti-essentialism, in the following topics.

### **The Essentialist Version of Cultural Identity**

As *Indian Ink* is a play about two different cultures, it represents the cultural identities of the characters from both of these cultures. These two cultural identities represented here, particularly, are Indian and British cultural identities. Analyzing this play through an essentialist perspective, which is also a traditional or classical perspective to conceive any cultural phenomena or identities, various evidences and symbols supporting this can be found in the play. Though not the dominant issue in the play, essentialism, an implicit acceptance of the playwright about the essence, manner or behaviour which characterize a character from a particular cultural group, is here used to analyze only that part of the play which concentrates on the colonial time in India. In this sense an essentialist perspective is used only to support the anti-essentialist perspective, which is the main issue of this thesis, by differentiating the first with the latter one.

From the very beginning of the play, there are certain features or characteristics of the characters from India and British cultural background, who seem to be designed by some pre-conceived notion or essences which not only characterize them but also differentiate them from each other. These static pre-conceptions or even, we can say, stereotypes can be found in the playwright's conceptualization of geography, setting or characterization. Through out the events of the play, which represent the 1930's India, there are a lot of stereotypes about India, which are based on essentialist perspective. These perspective of the playwright define the geography and cultural identities of Indian characters. In the first scene of the play there is the representation of Indian life which revealed in the stage through the letter of Flora. It mentions India as a poor country with hustle and bustle of their life under the grip of poverty. Her description about the main goes like this– "... stopping now and again to be revictualled through the window with parts of tea and proper meals on matinee trays, which, remarkably, you hand back through the window at the next station down the line where they do the washing up..." (Stoppard 365). She further writes about the poor condition of Dak house as ". . . a verandah looking out at a rather hopeless garden. . . but with a good table and chair which does very well for working. . . and a wicker sofa or sorts for not working . . ." (369). Thus, this reveals the poor condition of life of the common Indians. There are further representations of the common Indians. There are also the representations of the kitchen and bathroom of the house which are quite miserable. The tin tub in the bathroom and a shower with a head as big as a "Sunflower" show their poor condition.

Besides poverty, the representation of subjugatedness of Indian characters scoops the underlying essentialist perspective of Stoppard in his representation of these characters. In the play, these characters possess a high degree of aura and respect to

the British characters and British mother country. They have so much curiosity about the literary life of Britain that it even perplexes Flora. She mentions in her letter:

The sightseeing with picnic was something of a progress with the president of the theosophical society holding a yellow alongside, sometimes two to a bike, and children ran before and behind I felt like carnival float representing Empire - or depending on how you look at it, the Subjugation of the Indian people, and of course you are right, darling, but I never saw anyone less subjugated than Mr.

Coomaraswami. (372)

The subjugatedness in the characterization of Mr. Das is also not so less. He carries with him an imagination so vast that his artistic practice in his native land is often guided by this imaginative reality of Britain. He feels highly inspired by the artistic tradition of Empire. In this conversation with Flora he longingly says:

I hope to visit London one of these days. The Chelsea of Turner and the Pre-Rephelite Brotherhood ! Rosselti lived in Cheen Walk ! Holman Hunt lived in Old Church Street ! 'The Hierling Shepherd' was painted in old Church Street ! What an inspiration it would be to visit Chelsea ! (376)

This condition of being subjugated and a respect to foreign colonial literature is deeply rooted to foreign colonial literature is deeply rooted in the creation of other characters too. On a discussion after her lecture at Mr. Coomaswani's house, Flora faces some questions which reveals their aura to colonial literature. One question asks "Does Mr. Wells write his famous books with a typewriter or with pen and ink ?" (374). In her answer Flora says that Mr. Wells writes with pen and ink, a waterman

fountain which was gifted to him by his wife. This answer creates an appreciative hubbub among the Indian audience.

Similarly, the representation of Mr. Das shows him completely a mimic man. He even doesn't possess any consciousness that he should idealize his own culture and history. He rather usually idealizes the colonizers because he has been hegemonized by the English language. Though he tries to achieve perfection in his artistic practice he usually feels himself inferior to his ideal that is the British artistic tradition. Concerning how he learnt English, in a scene, he says, "From books. I like Dickens and Browning and Shakespeare, of course - but my favourite is Agatha Christie ! *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* !. Oh, the woman is a genius ! But I would like to write like Macaulay" (392-93).

The representation of Indian society is also based on the premise that it is chaotic, irrational and dangerous. In the past scenes of the play there are such several evidences concerning this. In his conversation with Flora, Das says, "I was buying chutney in the bazaar when a thug escaped from the chokey and killed a box-wallah for his loot, creating a hullabaloo and landing himself in the mulligatawny" (392).

The cheating, loots and lack of trust are other features that surround the Indian society as represented in the early part of the play. In the Dak House itself the jar of duck pate itself is found stolen when it is sought at the time of lunch. They even suspect Nazrul, a worker at home, for stealing but Das believes this is impossible because "stealing would be against his religion". Moreover, Das believes that Indians are talkative and have no sense of punctuality. When he is late to return home, he says "No, not at all. There is no one waiting for me. But the servants will return and. . . We Indians are frightful gossips, you see" (425).

In an another conversation between Flora and captain Durance, there is a pre-conception that India is a exotic land where the lives of people is very vulnerable and they die very easily. Durance says "People here drop like flies - Cholera, typhoid, malaria men, woman and children, here one day, gone the next" (438).

Captain Durance, being an English officer in India possess a 'White man's burden' to be looked up with an aura. This pre-conception in his as well as other British characters' characterization is another essentialist version of their identity. In the play these characters are treated with a sense of fear by the Indians. There is also a clear demarcation line between both Indian and British identities in this part of the play. The British are characterized by their the social events such as cricket, polo, horse race, dance and literary discussions. Durance invites Flora to club to join other British people living there. He asserts, "We're a reasonably civilized lot and there is usually dancing on Saturdays, only a gramophone but lots of fun" (399). Thus, this dialogue demands the Britishers to be more superior than others. Durance, further, shows his disappointment when he finds Flora living in such a house. He thinks that British should not me mixed up with Indian and for that they should stay in the residency. He tells to Flora "the game is different here by putting you up at the residency you would have gained respect, not lost it" (397). Thus, the fact that it was despite Flora's personal visit, Durance treats her as politically sensitive person. But actually, by doing so; Stoppard shows how the British superiority used to be maintained in India.

On the other hand, the representation of Rajah is also based on the traditional myth of Indian Rajah showing his luxurious life, romantic manner and flirting nature. The Rajah is treated as typical representation of Indian Rajah, thus behaving him with a difference. He is feudal in his manner and boasts at his property. He says to Flora,

concerning his collection of automobiles, "Unfortunately, I cannot show them all at once because I have many more car than mechanics of course" (454). He further tries to show the pride of Indian art. he says "There are one or two things in my apartments which have drawn favourable comment from historians of Indian art" (456). His romantic and flirting behaviour is further exposed when he gifts Flora a painting which is quite erotic.

In this way, the events in the play, which deal with the colonial India, introduce us some characters from both British and Indian culture. The design of Indian characters and Indian society as well as the British characters and British society seems to be made giving them some features which are very common and similar in all traditional western canonical literature. The Indians are shown as poor, exotic, subjugated and mimic people who usually idealize the colonial art and culture. Similarly, the British are shown as superior, civilized, educated and politically conscious people who are often treated with an aura. So, these are the essentialist features of both British and Indians identities. However they are shown as changing in later part of the play.

### **The Anti-Essentialist Version of Cultural Identity**

As analyzed in the above pages of this thesis, the events which shows the colonial India of 1930's in the play, focuses on the identities of both Indian and British characters that seem to be constructed through essentialist perspectives. The presuppositions in designing their identities are based on static and unchanged notion of cultural identities. However, in the events which show the post-colonial Britain and India, there are situations in which such static versions of cultural identities are questioned. The characters are seen something different from what they were considered before. The development of these characters and their situation after a

long time and in a different context make them define themselves and in a different way. This questioning of static notions of identities not only include the individual characters from both the cultures but also the concept of geography, culture and history.

In case of individual characters, the second generations of the characters in the play sharply contrast the previous generations of characters. If Nirad Das, the character who belong to previous generation of colonized Indian people had idealized the culture and artistic tradition of Britain, Anish Das, the character who belong to the second generation or post-colonial Indian people, assets strongly to his own cultural past and history. In the play, Anish Das is son to Mr. Nirad Das. Similarly, Mrs. Swan is sister to Flora crewe. The relationship between Anish Das and Mrs. Swan is very different from the relationship between Nirad Das and Flora crew. If the past relationship between Nirad Das and Flora was based on the historical ground of colonizer and colonized, the relationship between the characters of second generation is based heavily on universal humanitarian ground except some problems in their views. Thus developing such characters and representing them on the stage Stoppard strongly argues the anti-essentialist nature of cultural identities showing that the cultural identities are the definitions that change, shift or becomes multiple according to time, uses and contexts.

The questioning of pre-conceived notion of Indian and British cultural identities begin in the play from that moment when the second generations of characters are projected on the stage. When Anish Das first appears on the stage, his main mission is to learn about his father Mr. Nirad Das. In this context, he finds himself in problem not only because he is often mistaken by Mrs. Swan and others but also because he has to protest the hegemony of the colonial culture and its



consequences in his life. On the other hand Mrs. Swan is very clever and witty and she often views Anish with the stereotypical eyes. Her witty use of the symbol of 'sugar' is interesting and worthy of discussion.

**Mrs. Swan** I've forgotten your sugar.

**Anish** Actually, I don't take it.

**Mrs. Swan** Oh, I thought you'd be more Indian. (384)

This is the conversation of the tea time when Anish appears first on the stage. She imposed the 'sugar' to be his or specially of Indian. This is as stereotype to look at an Indian because sugar is traditionally a gift from Indian and other colonies for Britain. However, many things have changed in the post-colonial era. Anish himself is different from his father because he studied in London, made many Britain itself. Though he is also an artist he is not an artist like his father. He says, "Oh. . . yes. Yes, I am a painter like my father. Though not at all like my father, of course" (384). Furthermore he affirms to the universalist or transnational definition of 'artist'. He, in this case says: "I suppose I am not a particularly *Indian* painter . . . not an Indian painter *particularly*, or rather . . ." (385).

Unlike the mimicry of his father Anish Das critically looks at his English education. His father actually didn't know the impact of English education in his life but for Anish English is now a tool to strike back to the empire. He has actually taken advantage of the English language. He also says that the colonizers made them loyal with English education. He says to Mrs. Swan, "The education succeeded admirably ! In Jummapur we were 'loyal' as you would say, we had been loyal to the British right through the first war of independence." (389).

Anish also possesses a strong opinion against the colonial version of Indian history. In his conversation with Mrs. Swan he defines his national history through

his own native perspective. The Rising of 1857 in India, to which British call 'Sepoy Mutiny', is the first war of Independence for him. He very cleverly opposes Mrs. Swan's idea saying "Dear Mrs. Swan imperial history is merely. . . no, no - I promise you I didn't come to give you a history lesson" (389). He, actually, intends to say that imperial history is merely a European or colonial perspective which is created in order to dominate or subjugate the colonized. Affirming his pre-colonial history, Anish Das attempts to define himself through his own rich tradition and glorious history. In this case he argues:

We were up to date when you were a backward nation. The foreigners who invaded *you* found a third-world country ! Even when you discovered India in the age of Shakespeare, we already had our Shakespeare. And our science - architecture - our literature and art, we had a culture older and more splendid, we were rich ! After all that's why you come. (390)

In this way, by making him defend his culture and history, Stoppard uses the characterization of Anish Das to indicate the change in his cultural identity from previously uncivilized and subordinate identity. Stoppard makes Anish speak of his cultural identity, in post-colonial time, which is equal or as superior as the then colonizers' cultural identity.

There is also an another strand which shows the change or shift in the identity of Anish Das. While comparing the two generations of characters in *Indian Ink*, there is an important difference concerning the relationship of an Indian with an English character. Nirad Das in the past was very hesitating to stay with an English women in a room. Once, when he is alone with Flora, he says in fear and hesitation, "To tell you the truth, this is the first time I have been alone in a room with an English

woman" (426). But the situation in 1980's London is different. Unlike his father Anish has no any hesitation in staying with any English man or woman. Unlike his father, he is married to an English girl who works as model. What is significant here is that she is not a model to Anil as Flora was to Nirad Das. He tells to Mrs. Swan:

**Mrs. Swan** Of course. Is she still your model ?

**Anish** No. my work is not figurative now.

**Mrs. Swan** What is it now ?

**Anish** Well, deconstructive. ( )

Thus, Anish doesn't idealize his model or his wife. He clearly mentions that he has deconstructed the colonial aura from English women and has given them a humanitarian position. In this way we find the Indian character gaining a position of a rational, civilized and an independent human being. Reinterpreting his history, reaffirming to his culture and regaining his position thus, there is a shift and change in his cultural identity.

Moreover, Anish Das cannot be defined with an adjective 'Indian' alone. Since he has married an English girl and settled in England, he is also a diaspora and a British citizen. Because of his education and profession he has been happy to live in his new home. He is no more a guest rather an inhabitant of England. He asserts this with Mrs. Swan. He says, "Oh-home ! I didn't mean I was a guest in England. England is my home now. I have spent half my life here. I married here" (391).

This assertion also indicates that the traditional notion of 'British' cultural identity cannot remain static along with the passage of time and contexts. The Britishness does not include the 'whites' only rather includes all the immigrants living in Britain like Indians, Arabians, Africans etc. This shows the shift appearing in British cultural identity. So, Anish is also a diaspora whose identity is created out of

the movement pushed by colonialism. There are also some other indications that inform us in the play that Anish is a hybrid identity in terms of his cultural consciousness. He tells to Mrs. Swan, "I went home (after the death of my father). It was still 'home'. But to my shame I found the rituals of mourning distasteful. I wanted to return to England, to my new friends. And I did" (447). The 'home' in his speech means India which was home of his father. As he grew up in England, educated himself there and tried to adopt himself in English culture, he seems to have a negative feeling towards some Indian rituals which are based on superstitions. This new cultural consciousness has made him a hybrid that is - not completely Indian, not completely British, but possessing both of them culturally.

Similarly, the characterization of the 'Rajah' in play by Stoppard also support the notion of anti-essentialism concerning the cultural identity. We can find an enormous shift in the representation of Rajah in the post-colonial situation. If, in the colonial period he is defined in terms his political power, luxury, feudal manner and romance with women, in the post-colonial Indian he seems to have lost all these features and he is defined in this phase only as a member of parliament. We can notice this in the two parallel scenes that are well organized to show the difference by putting him once with Flora and later with Pike. When the Rajah is brought to the stage with Flora, he boast at his power, property (represented through the collection of automobiles) and luxury. He even shows his relation with Bendor, a duke of England. He boasts: "He is my neighbour in the South of France. I go to the South of France every year, you see, for my health. (He laughs) But you have come to India for your health !" (455). He also stands in from with the British colonizers at this phase. He says, "In 1857 the danger was from fundamentalist - today it is the progressives

Marxism. Civil Disobedience. But I told the Viceroy, you have to fight them the same way, you won't win by playing cricket" (456).

But in post colonial time when he as brought together with Pike on the stage, we do not notice any of such boosting with him. The time has changed so in his identity. This time he is even not suited to be addressed as 'His Highness'. He says to Pike:

Actually, I am, in fact, just one of 542 members of the Lok Sabha, the house of people, popularly elected, I am happy to say, by this district. Thank you so much for your book (Pike's collection of Flora's letters). I have already read the Indian letters. Perhaps you are wondering what happened to my grandfather's motor cars. (460)

Thus, in the post-colonial period, the Rajah cannot be defined in the same way he was defined in the colonial period. His present reality gives him a different cultural identity which is a shift to his identity of the past.

The representation of Indian society is also different in the events (of the play) related to the post-colonial time. The past society characterized by poverty, backwardness and uncertainty has been replaced by an educated and industrious society. All the colonial symbols seem to be fading. There is the representation of a character called Dillip who belongs to a middle-class Indian citizen. In his meeting with Professor Pike, who has come to India to get further information concerning Nirad Das, Flora, Durance, Rajah and their relationship, he defines India in a different way. The independence as a historical changes everything in India except some remaining practices of English hegemonic culture. Shirt, pant and tie becomes his usual uniform in the hotel where there was the palace of the Rajah in the past. He

worries about the influences of empire specially languages and culture still remaining there. He says:

Yes, it's a disaster for us ! Fifty years of Independence and we are still hypnotized ! Jackets and ties must be worn ! English-model public schools for the children of the elite, and the voice of Bush House is heard in the land. Gandhi would fast again, I think. Only this time he'd die. It was not for this India, I think, that your Nirad Das and his friends held up their home-made banner at the Empire Day gymkhana. It was not for this that he threw his mango at the Resident's car. What a pity, though, that all his revolutionary spirit went into his life and none into his art. (451)

In this way, Dillip seems to have dissatisfaction with the influences of colonial and neo-colonial practices still prevailing in Indian society. By protesting these he draws a picture of ideal Indian in his mind. Thus it can be concluded that the identities of all the characters are changing, shifting or being multiple. The essentialist notion on any identities do fade away reconstructing themselves as different and possessing various faces with themselves. The cultural identity of both British and Indians become anti-essential when they enter into the first scene and leave the stage at the last scene of the play.

#### IV. Conclusion

The play *Indian Ink* by Tom Stoppard brings together the characters from various cultural background and make them interact in the stage. In doing so, and adding his special of mastery of the use of wit in dialogue he has given the comic sense to the play. In this perspective, the play is very interesting, funny and amusing when we see the difficulties in the understanding of cultural meaning of each other's culture. But besides this, the representation of cultural identity of the characters from different cultural background is the most important aspect in the play. In the play there are mainly the characters which belong to four different cultural background - Indian, British, the Rajah and the American. However, the major characters in the play are from British and Indian cultural background.

The observation of the development of these characters from the first scene to the last scene of the play gives the audience a vital significance that they cannot be defined in the particular features or qualities that we ascribe to a particular cultural identity. It means that the representation of, for example, an Indian does not remain same in the last scene as it was represented in the opening scene of the play. In this sense the cultural identity of a person is interpreted in the play as something other than static, and unchanged. Hence, it is something that changes, shifts or becomes multiple as Stuart Hall has argued.

Questioning the essential ground of cultural identity the play takes to that condition where the essential perspective of cultural identity completely fails. The development of the characterization of Indian characters Nirad Das and Anish Das is something that is never coherent. If their cultural identity, the identity characterized by one's history, culture and power, was assumed to be static, both the father and son would be similar. But the play shows a vast difference in their identification in

different situation. Nirad identifies himself with Flora as subordinated colonized knowingly or unknowingly. Anish Das who comes from the same culture and background identifies himself with Mrs. Swan as an Indian but still something different from his father. He redefines his position in the history by questioning the colonial history. He also makes an interpretation of his father's work through his own cultural perspective. His reading of his father's painting of Flora affirms his own culture not the English culture. This shows the change in one's consciousness. Of course, problems in representing the essential cultural identity is further problematized by the new identities like diaspora and hybridity. These are the positions from which Stoppard has defined Anish Das. So, Anish is taken as 'Indian', 'diaspora', 'hybrid' as well as 'British' too. This situation gives chances for him to define himself in any way he requires in different situations and contexts. This design of the play is of course supported by the concept of anti-essentialism in cultural studies.

Another important aspect in the play is that its style is very different from the traditional play. The style is itself an experiment in the sense that it merges past and present, here and there and superior and inferior. The projection of scenes are made in the style in which both 1930's India, 1980's India and England come together. There are no linear development of events rather they are like a collage of the different scenes. The use of language is also experimental because in most the places there are broken speeches and they mean something different from what we expect. So, even the simple statements mean more than they can. Thus, it can be said that it is a postmodern drama. And being post-modern it obviously questions the essentialist perspectives of identities that the play comes across. Thus, the characterization,



setting, structure, dialogue everything is experimentations on the ground of anti-essentialism.

One major factor in dealing with the issue of cultural identity has something to do with Stoppard's own biography possessing a colourful life, he himself had to exercise very hard to know about his Jewish ancestry. He knows this fact very late in his life. He cannot dismiss the discovery of his past but neither does he completely accept it. Thus, he himself possesses multiple identities - Polish, English, Hybrid and diaspora. His position of taking no position, of being able to hold contrary points of view without conflict, shows the welcoming posture of ambiguity about the supposed certainties of history and biography. His such vision, re-reading of the past and reconstructing the cultural identity is expressed through mostly the doubling of time periods with each other in some of his works like. *Indian Ink*, *Arcadia*, the invention of love 'Coast of Utopia' etc. Thus, his own multiple identities based on anti-essentialism are often reflected through some of the fictitious characters in his works. In this line, it can be argued that this play *Indian Ink* is also based on the theme of anti-essentialism by putting question mark on the essentialist aspect of cultural identity of the characters presented in the play.

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