

**Unity in Fragments: Postcolonial debates from Fanon to Bhabha****Dr. Inturi Kesava Rao**Lecturer in English  
V.S.R & N.V.R.College  
Tenali

Postcolonialism can generally be known as the multiple political, economic, cultural and philosophical responses to colonialism from its inception to the present day. The paper has focused on the philosophical dimensions of postcolonialism. It has demonstrated the diversity of conceptual models and strategies used by postcolonial philosophers. The paper has analyzed some the varying strategies. They were contributed by the major philosophers of twentieth century. Postcolonial thought is used to interrogate the underlying political structures of colonialism and the mechanism of colonial structure “Post “signifies a contestation of colonial domination and legacies of colonialism.

Postcolonialism , a child of postmodernism , to use a term Arif Dirlik, issues from postmodernism and the latter is the cultural logic(Frederic Jameson’s term) of late capitalism. Postcolonial critique looks at power relations in various contexts such as formation of empire, impact of colonization on postcolonial history, polity, economy, science, technology and culture, agency for marginalized and subjugated people, cultural and epistemological productions of colonized societies, feminism, sublaternism and postcolonialism, etc.

Postcolonilism should not be separated in academic discourse from the actual, collective national liberation struggle. Postcolonialism is broadly divided between two schools of thoughts. Postcolonial philosophers are of two kinds: one carries the lineage of a Marxist orientation of thought and the other committed to the French poststructuralists. It is necessary to initiate a critical dialogue between postcolonialism and Marxism instead of polarizing the two. However Marxism has an indelible impact on the

colonized and it has played a definite role in the anti-colonial national liberation movements.

Marx has established the philosophical bases on political thought. It has been a product of Marxist criticism. It has been rooted in the anti-colonial national liberation movements taking place in different parts of the world in the mid –twentieth century. It has been indebted to the thoughts of the radical French philosophers of the 1960s. According to Padmini Mongia, “The burden of postcolonial theory, therefore, is the burden of Western philosophy, a rethinking of the very terms by which knowledge has been constructed” (1997: 5). They have developed the habit of employing the devices of post structuralism and psychoanalysis to question the conventional knowledge of power and identity in a less clearly historicised way.

Poststructuralism interrogates the values of the European enlightenment and its claims to universalism. Postcolonialism is grateful to poststructuralists who developed post structuralism and psychoanalysis to interrogate the traditional knowledge of power and identity in a lucid way. Postcolonial theory enriched with the works of poststructuralists. This is the common thread running through postcolonialism. Philosophers have addressed both the politics of colonial oppression and its underlying, unethical representational structures.

Marx’s great analysis of the workings of capitalism, through the exploitation of labour finally, ushers in a social revolution. It has inspired a whole range of postcolonial critiques. The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci has distinguished between the dual function of ideology and the notion of hegemony. Colonial domination has been achieved through combination of coercion and consent which has been a profound influence on critiques of colonial discourse. Gramsci’s ideas have been further improved by Louis Althusser. In modern capitalist societies; coercion is got through a system of “Repressive State Apparatuses” (of the police and the army). Consent is

obtained through “Ideological State Apparatuses” (of the family, the school, and the media, church). They have reproduced the dominant ideology and create the compliant subjects. Michel Foucault has put forward the notion of discourse to account all the ideas. Foucaultian notions have been pervaded in the network of power and recovered the lost voices of the colonized in colonial discourses.

One of the first texts systematically attempted to philosophize the process of colonization. Aime Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950) was the Marxist frame work for the analysis of capitalism. Under capitalism, money and commodities began to stand in for human relations and for human beings. Césaire claimed that colonialism not only exploited but also dehumanized the colonized the subject. It degraded the colonizer himself. He explained this by an equation, colonization= thingification.

Similarly Fanon was not a philosopher, but he was a social philosopher. Fanon, as a student, had a deep impact of Sartre’s teaching as philosophy and sociology its peak. In fact he is a true disciple of Sartre. Fanon’s non-fiction reverberates with Sartrean concepts, phrases, dialectical juxtapositions, paradoxes, and essentialist abstractions. In terms of social philosophy, Fanon started literary career from *Black Skin, White Masks* to *The Wretched of the Earth* whereas Sartre started from “*Being and Nothingness*” to the *Critiques of Dialectical Reason*. The two works of Sartre embodied basically explorations of philosophical method which were strongly influenced by Fanon.

In both writers, there was a visible retreat from the existentialist emphasis on individual freedom of choice, universal reason and social determination. Fanon sustained his interest in the microcosmic units of society. Social philosophers dealt exclusively the macrocosmic social categories and systems. Fanon wrote about French colonialism in Algeria. They highlight colonial exploitation as well as domination and internalization of colonial discourses. They draw the attention to cultural

and epistemological dependence of the native upon the white rulers. Ashcroft says, "The post-colonial emerges from the cultural production of colonized people, most notably from literary production, in English, of African, Caribbean and Indian writers, and it was first systematized in another post-colonial country, Australia." (Ashcroft 2006:65).

Three important postcolonial critics namely Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Hommi K. Bhabha have been influenced by three French thinkers and critics of late twentieth century named Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. Said owes his indebtedness to Foucault, whereas Spivak and Bhabha have drawn freely from Derrida and Lacan respectively. Said's concept "Orientalism", Spivak's term "Subaltern" and Bhabha's terms 'Mimicry', "hybridity" and "the other" have revolutionized postcolonial criticism.

Orientalism, 1978, inspired by Gramsci and Foucault, examined how the knowledge that the colonizers formed about their colonies helped continually to justify their subjugation. The legitimacy of colonial rule was secured through constructed and ill-motivated notions like inferiority of the native, lack of intelligence of the black, white man's burden, etc.

Edward Said analyzed in detailed how western people construct their apprehension and knowledge of orient. His chief purpose is to identify the ways in which the people of the orient are reduced to mere anthropological riddles and transformed into ideal colonial subjects. Knowledge of the orient is formed through anthropology and linguistics and the very act of knowledge formation endows the west with authority over the others. Orientalism developed through the serious efforts of scholars who translated texts, codified grammars and prepared dictionaries.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a feminist Marxist deconstructivist, points out that the subaltern can be authentically retrieved and represented. Spivak feels the need for developing deconstructive self-

awareness so that the subaltern historians can recognize the retrieved subaltern consciousness as an image of unrepresentative and non-definite identity rather than a maker of the true thoughts and activities of the subalterns. In the words of Gyan Prakash , subaltern studies project, “ derives in force as postcolonial criticism from a catachrestic combinations of Marxism, post-structuralism, Gramsci and Foucault, the modern west and India, archival research and textual criticism” (1994:1490).

Subaltern means the colonized/oppressed subject whose voice has been silenced. The term has a relevance to the study of Third World countries. In the late seventies a group of British and Indian historians decided to launch a journal in India to espouse the cause of subaltern studies. The history of subaltern studies has been given by David Ludden in course of an introduction to a book, titled *Reading Subaltern Studies* edited by him .Leela Gandhi and Ludden put the subject of subaltern studies in its proper perspective.

Spivak’s work draws on both Marxism and poststructuralist ethics. Her readings of Marx tend to focus on textual slippages and moments of ambivalence. She explores the indeterminacy in his notion of value. This form of reading is itself deconstructive and yet she also criticizes the blind spots of Derrida’s engagement with Marx. One of her key concepts is the subaltern or native informant. Her works denounce the ways in which subaltern women in particular have been silenced, and she shows how their voices echo between the lines of Western philosophy and literature. Her work is also distinctive for its self- consciousness. Subaltern studies borrow postmodernist ideas and methods for textual analysis. Postmodernism is not a complete break with modernism. Postmodernism cannot be understood without referring to capitalism. Therefore, postcolonial criticism must also be explained in terms of capitalism and neo-colonialism

For Spivak it is impossible for us to recover the voice of the subaltern and to establish her viewpoint. Colonialism and patriarchy both oppressed

women and it is difficult for the subaltern articulate her point of view. Spivak laid stress on gendered subaltern- women are doubly oppressed.

In 1990 postcolonialism has become influential and there are many books on it. Homi K. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture* (1994) have made theoretical contributions. Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory* (1992) criticized postcolonial theory from Marxist position

Many postcolonial writers are often bi-lingual. Homi K. Bhabha developed the term hybridity to capture the senses of both cultures. Hybridity refers to the integration of cultural signs and practices of the colonizing and the colonized cultures, producing something familiar but new. The cross-fertilization of cultures can be enriching as well as oppressive. Hybridity Shows that colonized or colonizing cultures are polyethnic. “ hybridity is problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other denied knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority- its rules of recognition”(Bhabha 1994:114) . Native rejects the deconstruction of traditional society by colonial customs, but at the same time hybridity occurs.

The postcolonial theory describes the struggle of the native in retaining old culture and tradition after the colonizer has entered their lives. It stresses resistance as subversion, peaceful or violent or as a mixture of both, private or public, open or secret, as opposition or mimicry. But the question is: How can the once-colonized reclaim identity in English or French? It is a language that now but was not its own language. The natives in Africa or Asia struggled with the newly arrived European colonizer culture. Postcolonialism exposes culture's colonial history, and helps the society to value itself. “Postcolonialism links between the structures of knowledge and the forms of oppression of the last two hundred years”

(young 1991:2). We judge our life and life and culture against the standards of the West.

We have been taught to feel inferior not only in matters of political and economic affairs, but also in cultural and knowledge practices. As a result, there was a loss of traditional self, culture, beliefs, the style and values. There was an emergence of new self, new values and new beliefs. They were modified, apparently more self – aware, yet crippled in many respects. There is annihilation of the native culture since the culture of European is believed to be superior. Postcolonialism looks at the clashes of two cultures, basing on Eurocentric superiority.

Post colonies dismantled colonial institutions, but the same perspective remains in fundamental epistemological grounds. Knowledge of colonial language brings socio- economic advantages. It is a tool of power, an apparatus of domination and mark of elitist identity. English continues to be a language both of power and social prestige. English's encroachment on indigenous culture and traditions, Ngugi called for its complete rejection by the natives. Language is a means of identity and tool of empowerment; the drive towards identity. Therefore it often centers on language.

Postcolonial theory has been motivated by various thoughts of postmodernism, post-structuralism and Marxism. "In the main, the intellectual history of postcolonial theory is marked by dialectic between Marxism on the one hand, and post structuralism/postmodernism," (Gandhi 2001: viii)

The difference between the postmodern and the postcolonial becomes blurred. The confusion is caused partly by the project of postmodernism. The deconstructions of the centralized, logo centric master narratives of European culture are similar to the postcolonial theory of dismantling the centre/Margin binaries of imperial discourse. Postcolonial theory lies within cultural studies and is associated with radial literary theory and criticism,

Gramscian and Althusserian Marxism, idea of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan and various feminist schools of thought.

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