

Exploration of Common Theme of Post-colonial Perspectives in Colonial Literature

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Abstract

Post colonialism as a literary theory deals with literature produced in response to the experiences both the colonizers and the colonized had during colonization and after decolonization. With inductive reasoning approach on various primary and secondary data about colonialism, neocolonialism and cultural resistance, this article presents representative responses of critics who shaped post-colonial theoretical framework in post-colonial literary discourse. It particularly discusses what post-colonial theory as literary criticism focuses its debates on, how culture, language and other features are taken as one's identities, and why cultural hegemony upon the colonized becomes matter of responses and resistance. From various critical perspectives and analysis of theorists, this article concludes that orientalism as well as other western discourses about the natives and culture of colonized land in any place is just the western style for dominating the colonized, reconstructing ideology, influencing the culture and having authority over them. This paper recommends that the colonized people must adopt counter cultural resistance approach through writing back to reject colonial view like 'oriental' about the colonized people in history in order to correct the western misconception and misinterpretations about the colonized people elsewhere. It is the right way to rewrite colonized history, western cultural hegemony and present reality about any native people and culture on the basis of established critical modals so far.

Keywords: Culture, discourse, domination, hegemony, identity, resistance

Introduction

Colonialism emerged from political and economic interest and is not limited in the analysis of political significance only. It explores the process imperialists and colonists applied to penetrate the colonized places and people. Post-colonial theoretical concepts in recent decades have been extended to various terms such as coloniality, imperialism, hegemony, subalternity, cultural resistance, orientalism, decolonization, neocolonialism etc. which refer to long-standing pattern of power for ruling that emerged as a result of colonialism. Coloniality survives colonialism because coloniality is not simply the aftermath activities of imperial and colonial settlements, it is a socio-historical influence of colonial power upon the colonized communities as well as the experiences and changes the colonizers adopted from the colonized ones.

The term 'post-colonial' in literature has been widely used to refer the literary writings produced in response to the colonial contact from the very beginning up to now. It is "primarily concerned to examine the process and effects of, and reaction to, from the sixteenth century up to the neo-colonialism of the present day" (Ashcroft and etl 188) Its theoretical perspectives got developed gradually when critics endeavored to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization and to dismantle the center/margin binaries of imperial discourse (186). Since colonialism is an expansion of European Imperialism into a distant territory after the Renaissance and implantation of colonial settlements, post-colonialism subsequently signifies the political, linguistic and cultural experience of the societies that were former European colonies (46). Post colonial literature, of course, includes the experience and responses of both the colonized and the colonizer, not only of the time up to the colonization but also of the effects implanted on the colonized societies, and of the experience having taken by the colonizers to their native lands after the end of colonial rules. Since colonial settlements, occupation, purposes and land vary all over the world, the perspectives and modality to view and interpret colonialism differ and the different perspectives have been generated. As Yuval Noah Harari says history is not study of the past, but study about change, this article has attempted to see what changes in the postcolonial perspectives have been in last few decades. It is about the basic nature of colonialism; different perspectives developed in postcolonial frame and common theme of post-colonial perspectives that have been in critical practice so far.

Literature Review

Following few paragraphs are about brief history of when and who said what about colonialism and what perspectives of post-colonial criticism came into practice in late decades of 20th century. Colonialism is the practice of extending and maintaining political, social, economic, and cultural domination over a territory and its people by another people in pursuit of interests defined in an often-distant metropole, who also claim superiority. It is related to the critical analysis and evaluation of what is related to the process of colonization and resistance of it from the colonized people. The response of the colonialized native is the main theme of the analytical approach in making views

and perspectives of the post-colonial theory. Colonialism typically culminates in organizing the colonized into colonies separate to the colonizers' metropole. Another perspective is also taken from the purpose of, not only from dominating and ruling the natives, but also from the intention of establishing colonizer's settlement for ever in the colonized land and be the permanent part of the land and its owner. It is done in América, Australia, in New Zealand and many part of South America by people from Europe. India also became a settler's colony from the people from Middle East from eleven Century and they settled there forever, being the permanent resistant of India. In most of the places the process became a genocide and most of the native people population decreased significantly.

Cultural and religious purpose became the deeply rooted intention of the colonizers and it became a driving force and motivating force to the natives of the new settlement. It divided the native people because the justification the conquerors gave about the reasons behind the economically poor condition of the native, their backwardness in modern education and technology, in dress up and other social activities rather play a vital role on so called civilizing mission of colonizers and it cultivated everlasting social cultural value system of mimicry in to settlers' manners of living and strengthening their intention and of dominating the land for ever.

In analysis of the colonial purpose, justification, implied intention of the colonizers and responses of the native people as well as the experiences of the colonizers, new approach in critical view came in the name of postcolonial theory that emerged in the mid-20th century. It became challenge to Eurocentric perspectives. However, the it has not been a single approach in the challenge but because of various views of the critics, there occurred various perspectives. Some of the pioneers and their perspectives have been briefly reviewed and the core principle of the postcolonial theory is extracted from the review of the history. It is the main theme of this article.

First wave of post-colonial view emerged from Frantz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*. This book closely analyses the reasons of the colonizers to dominate new land and people, indicating the intention of economic exploitation, culturally and ideologically enslaving the mentality of the native and exploiting the native natural resources. Aim Aimé Césaire in the mid-20th century also advocated for the resistance of the colonialism and they both explained why colonialists attempted psychologically to affect the people and create alliance to colonizers' culture and ways of life and generate a psychological fear of losing one's status if not followed the dominant culture in the land- that is anticolonial concept.

Anti-colonial movements were primarily stirred by thinkers like Frantz Fanon who analyzed the psychological violence of colonialism among the colonized and the latter's necessity of liberation struggles. The next phase of post-colonial critical perspective developed with a view that explaining their culture, language, and social system are defined and narrated as powerful means of making domination because the justification of the rules of colonizers in the colonized land is just the false discourse of

perpetuating colonial power structure. Edward Said's *Orientalism* claimed that Orientalism is not any true explanation of oriental reality but a Western style of thought for influencing, motivating, dominating and restructuring mental orientation of life style of the natives by the western rulers in the colonized land. This view supported extensively in the late 90's though the discourse got slightly changed to different arena of human society. The Subaltern studies Group theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty, Homi K Bhabha stood at the center of marginalized people in governance and decision-making process of a country's policies and they advocated that western academic practices and political discourse deliberately took support of few elites of the country they colonized and marginalized greater number of natives, made their voice low and kept it unheard. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", and Homi K. Bhabha's concepts like hybridity and mimicry in works such as *The Location of Culture* explored about the power of the marginalized voice and ambivalent condition of colonial power in the mentality of most of the natives in the colonized land. In the 20st century, the postcolonial perspectives have expanded and extended to multiple area to explore the impact coloniality and resistance responses to people both in voice and actions. Feminists in the western and colonized regions also have raised their voices from double marginalized perspective. It is the culture of the native country that marginalized the women and the colonial practice also intensified the domination on women and weak. Consequently, they got suppressed from double dominations. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's advocacy for the decolonization and strengthening African languages and literature, Chinua Achebe's resistance to colonial narratives about African cultures and history in his book *Things Fall Apart* gave a new dimension of analysis gradually in critical responses of people who supported post-colonial theory in general.

Post colonial at present has been voiced through issues like neo liberalization, globalization, neo colonization and so on. In recent decades, the concept and perspective of neo-colonialism makes an advocacy that former colonialist diplomatically maintain relation to the formerly colonized as well as other nations and make them economically and politically dependent to the powerful nation and perpetuate the relation of "us" referring to the dominants, especially the western nations and "them" referring to the formerly colonized nation, if not economically, politically and militarily dependent to the powerful countries. Theories like maximum, post structuralism, queer theories and psychoanalysis have also considered colonization and decolonization in various corners. Though so many theories and perspectives have advocated post-colonial theoretical approach in redefining and restructuring colonialization and decolonization, it has been much difficult to pinpoint what really the core issue is of various post-colonial perspectives in different phases and theorists. This is the main issue of this article and problem is stated from this point of view.

Statement of Problem

Researchers so far have studied and highlighted impacts of imperial domination upon the natives, clashes between colonizers and the colonized, racial and religious

prejudices, socio-cultural and economic impacts etc. This article is about brief introductions to the models and perspectives of interpreting colonization, anti-colonization and neo-colonialism practices, socio-political and cultural hegemony, and resistance of the colonized people in colonized contexts. In other words, it is about what people do and say about colonization and how different attitudes to coloniality shape post-colonial theoretical perspectives after decolonization in most part of the world. Therefore, the researcher has basically two queries about the problem: who and when historically initiated explanations and purposes about colonial rulers generally advocate about their rules upon and developed different anti-colonial perspectives and what has been a common theme of all perspectives.? Based on these questions the research objectives are set up.

Objectives of the Study

The research work primarily aims at exploring opinions and attitudes of some representative writers to colonization, cultural hegemony and cultural resistance of the colonized. The study has two objectives: what post-colonial critics react to the coloniality and consequently developed different theoretical models for interpreting colonization and decolonization and what became the common themes of post-colonial theory. Therefore, the study has only focused on the areas as pointed out in the objectives and research questions.

Methodology and Theoretical Modality

This research is an outcome of close reading of primary as well as secondary texts about colonization and cultural hegemony from resistance perspectives. The approach has been inductive through study on various text resources. Conclusions are drawn from different views given by leadings critics and writers on the justifications of anti-colonialism or resistance of cultural and political domination of colonizer through inductive reasoning and retrospective and introspective analytical approaches. The modality of interpretation and conclusion was drawn from the representative texts of pioneers of critics in colonization and decolonization.

Discussion and Analysis

Post colonialism is one form of practice which results from the ideology of imperialism, and specifically concerns the settlement of one group of people in a new location (Mc Leod 7). Post-colonial criticism is the study to know how the natives were marginalized and alienated culturally, just being persuaded “to internalize its logic and speak its language; to perpetuate the values and assumption of the colonizers...” (Mc Leond 18). Post colonial discourse therefore is the discourse that got developed as the discourse of domination from the colonizers to the colonized. It includes discourse on common wealth literature, third world literature, black literatures, diasporic writings and literatures written in English in any place except literature from native English speakers in the native land (Green and Bihan 291). Thus, literature produced from the experience

and responses to colonial rules has been the general perception about the post-colonial literature. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, post-colonial theory involves discussions about the experiences of various kinds: migration slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history” (2). Therefore, the semantic implications of the term ‘post-colonialism’ which merely means ‘after colonialism’ may not include all these ranges of human experiences. To state this reality Padmini Mongia writes:

It (post-colonial) is a historical marker referring to the period after official decolonization as well as a term signifying changes in intellectual approaches, particularly those which have been influenced by post-structuralism and deconstruction, secondly in the last ten years, the term has been deployed to replace what earlier went under the name of ‘Third World or Common wealth’ literature to describe the colonial discourse analysis, to deal the situation of migrant groups within first world stake, and to specify oppositional reading practices. [...] The problems surrounding the issues of definition and the purview of colonial theory reflects the difficulties of engaging with such notions as representation, identity, agency, discourse and history. (2-3)

This view clearly states that post-colonial perspectives in literature developed with various reading practices based and guided by the experience of the colonized people particularly and of colonizers on the basis of their intention and experience and achievements of the colonizing purpose. In specific mention, post-colonial critical approach in academic field noticeably began from the French theoretical analysis particularly from the late 20th century theorists like Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jack Lacan and others. In this reference Bart Moore Gilbert says that post colonialism is theoretical work that got initiated and shaped or developed with a primary affiliation with French theory advocated by French theorists.

Post-colonial criticism and its development and elaboration in studies got strengthened notably through the works of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha (1-2). Here Gilbert points out that post-colonial theory opened an ample space for critical debate for critics and theorists from both spheres- the Western colonizers and the colonized ones from different continents). This is more aptly expressed by Bill Ashcroft and et al in *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* thus:

Post-colonialism/postcolonialism is now used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre-and post-independence nations and communities. (187)

The pervasiveness of English language in the formerly colonized land has also generated two kinds of responses. Some agreed to accept English just as a medium of power

conveyance. Critic like Chinua Achebe accepts the language in speech and writing. He thinks that he can only be able to convey message to others in English. Ngugi Wa Thiong advocates for the abolition of English language from academic studies and replaces it with African Language and literature. He writes, “The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation (287). He does not see complete independence of his state unless they get complete freedom from the language retention.

The voice from Indian sub-continent raised by the theorists like Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha from the states once colonized developed resistance criticism to the Western debate of domination. As a result, the post-colonial theory got extended and flourished in the both societies- former colonizers and colonized which established rather a binary identity and in both places. Bhabha talks of how post-colonial criticism emerged and developed in the following way:

Post colonial criticism bears witness to unequal and uneven forces of cultural and social authority and uneven forces of cultural and social authority within the modern world order. Post colonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of the Third World countries and the discourses of “minorities” within the geopolitical division of east and west, and north and south. [...] They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments with the nationalization of modernity (437).

The decolonized Easterners found many misreading and misrepresentations of their culture, art, literature, social values and history. As a result, the post-colonial criticism covered up a broad field of study that needed correction.

Neo-Colonialism: A Change in Colonial Exercise

Neo-colonialism simply denotes the continuity of colonialism but changing concepts and perspectives on the nature of imperialism and colonization. Elleke Bohemer says, “Neo- colonialism is economic control by the West in once colonized countries under the guise of political independence, democratic strengthening and so on” (9). Power resides around economy and the concept of cultural superiority. It is one of the major driving forces of the colonizers to shadow people in former colony. So, the continuing Western influence upon the economy, politics, culture as well as ideologies of the colonized people after decolonization is neo-colonialism. This difference in influence demarcates the difference between colonialism and neo-colonialism. The awareness didn’t force them to radically reverse the power relation between the victors and losers because the presence of the colonial system or practices in every aspect of social and cultural life is powerfully residing in the colonized nations. As a result, such communities or states have developed hybridity culture. In this reference in ‘*Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*’, Nkrumah says: “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is

directed from outside” (4). Nkrumah here declares that the independent state rulers after decolonization are not free from the colonial influence; they have been rather less confidential in exercising authority. Nkrumah realized this influence in a deeper level and he has commented neo-colonialism rather a worst form of colonialism because he thinks its influence in the policy formation for governance is slow process of assimilating the decolonized people into the Westernization.

To sum up, Neo-colonialism in essence is similar to colonialism though the ways the natives were ruled are different. The colonialism through direct rules from the colonizers to the colonized and the decolonized states during neo-colonialism through inculcating general ways of thinking and doing things in the ways the former colonizers did, if not by influencing the decolonized people in educational, cultural and economic policy generation and implementation. The neo-colonialists entered the formerly colonized nations again as business traders, educationists, school teachers, military trainers, researchers etc and again began to rules the nations indirectly as resource persons.

Post-colonialism and Resistance

Post colonial criticism in literature has close affinity to resistance. It is of course resistance to colonialism- the protest against the discourse of the colonized power which vehemently claimed that colonialism is for teaching civility and leading indigenous people to development. Post colonial discourse inspires the formerly colonized people to enhance the grandeur of their history, tradition, culture ethical values, norms and other social rules. It is an endeavor to renew and establish their own identical value and freedom of feeling pride to what they have in their own identical place. The post-colonial discourse therefore primarily pivoted round the power that the colonizers imposed upon and influenced the colonized to be in ambivalence, mimicry and get into a gradual process of assimilation to the colonizers’ culture. The colonized writers’ experience of colonizers was like that of a child with an unloving mother, who was not much reluctant to protect her child from a hostile environment (Fanon 211). The colonizers’ role to manipulate the colonized socio-cultural identity through acculturation process, just hegemonizing them on their economic and cultural discourse is what the colonized writers resisted through literary discourse. Therefore, the focus of the colonized is on re-studying their history and realizing how the history was distorted by the colonial rules. In this regard, Franz Fanon points out the need for comprehending the colonizers’ purposing of establishing cultural domination on the colonized country and influence the people to accept newly imported colonized culture thus:

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding the people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to be the past of oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it... the effect consciously sought by colonialism was driven into the native’s heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, and bestiality. (210)

This comment is very open, straight forward and sounds spontaneous from what Fanon understood about western colonization. The colonizers intended to exploit and assimilate the native people into their civility, into their cultural cage and keep them in the predicament of assimilation. When post-colonial writers who resisted this kind of intention behind the colonial rules became combatants against coloniality. The discourse developed during post-colonial period, and the discourse that vehemently rejected the colonial intention became the literature of 'combat' in Fanon's view (240). The colonials aim to spread their superiority on the colonized land, through humiliating the natives by misinterpreting indigenous civility and cultural value, social practices etc needed to be revolted, rejected and denounced.

Cultural resistance is a feeling of difference, a power to identify oneself and reshape one's own culture. In this regard, Fanon says, "History points out a well-defined path to fight for national culture in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation that makes the building of culture possible." (212-213). So, freedom from political control over a nation by colonial power is the first necessity of cultural freedom because the state machinery controlled by politics always used culture and language as secondary means of power control upon people on the one hand, and a good penetrating tool for cultural assimilation of the native people to the main stream culture of the rulers on the other. In the similar fashion, the decolonized people also thought discourse in the same language (the language of the colonial people i.e. English) is a good means of writing back, a most effective tool for resistance because both colonizers and the colonized understand it well. This perspective is best understood by Bell Hooks who asserts that the oppressor's language seized and spoken by the tongues of domination, the colonized could be a space of bonding and intimacy that can be helpful to cultural resistance (73). So, whether it is the subaltern among the colonized or the elites in the post-colonial world, they all want to be together in expression; by exploiting the colonial language as a means of powerful expression to a larger number of audiences in order to voice aloud to the people they expect to hear their voice against coloniality.

Conclusion

Critics have viewed colonization from different angles and perspectives. Key theoretical models often applied in criticizing and analyzing colonial texts are based on anti-colonial theory, settler colonial, neocolonial, and cultural resistance theoretical models. Post colonial theory often views things from cultural, political, economic and linguistic perspectives of colonization and neo colonization. Orientalism is a key concept and frame work of Edward Said describing colonizer's advocacy of colonization and justification for their rule in new land with rhetorical repetition of east as other and western people as right persons to rule the less civilized and back warded East or African etc. Subaltern studies on the other hand focuses on the suppression and control of marginalized people in a society where elites are given right for the information and participation in main stream of national activities to some extent, but the subalterns are excluded from the main processes of social, cultural and economic activities of colonized

country. Resistance generates from strong desire of recognizing oneself, particularly from the cultural perspective of how the colonizers dominated the native. The natives repeatedly argue that the new arrivals used their power to oppress the native and enjoyed the right and access to native resources. The domination it advocates should be resisted and if possible, even counter resistance must be launched for the dominant.

Denouncement of Western discourse about the nature, culture and civility of the colonized people of any part of the world in discourse is the fight for the cultural reconstruction, revival to what had been subdued, and regaining the power that would revitalize native cultural spirit and social identity in their own features. Rejection to the western discourse and literature about the colonized and the oriental has been essential because much English literature about the Eastern people and places were produced through the social political context of Western exploitation upon the Eastern and mostly it has encompassed the perspective that reveals the social and economic life tacitly underwritten by deliberate western explanation about them. In brief, the core and common theme of all post-colonial theoretical perspectives is to shape and revive national, racial, ethnic and gender identities. Next is to reclaim their original language and disrupt the colonial language and traditions. The third is to challenge the dominant narrative of the Western rulers and generate resistance strategies to all kinds of dominations. And the last is to revitalize the native history and reinterpret it from their own perspective and native contextual reality, but not from Western perspectives. This paper also recommends that the colonized people must adopt counter cultural hegemony approach through writing back to reject colonial view like 'oriental' about the colonized people of any land in history in order to correct the western misconception and misinterpretations about the colonized people elsewhere. It is the right way to rewrite colonized history, western cultural hegemony and present reality about native people and culture.

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