

## Transitions in Postcoloniality as a Revolutionary Thought across the Subject Societies

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### Abstract

There has to be the necessary change across the pages of history amongst the various fields of knowledge in our social structure. In this context, there has been emergence of a thought that went contrary to the established thought of colonial propaganda. This counters colonial discourse no doubt too many years to have its roots strong in the soil of social, cultural, and psychological phenomena of our society. Though, literary theory, in general, is a way of understanding the nature and function of literary creation. It seeks the relation of a text to the author and to the society by presenting a thesis or the antithesis in literary field that in turn speaks for social forces. This means to evaluate, to elucidate and to interpret the literary processes for the social discourses have always been very effective for the social change. This directly or indirectly leads the effected society to get changed in terms of thinking process. Hence, leads to the intellectually rich and psychologically mature civilization.

**Keywords:** Postcoloniality; Language; Orientalism; Colonizer; Colonized; Identity; Hybridity

### I. Contribution of Post-Colonial Thought

In the English literary theory, many shifting patterns have occurred in different times. Post-colonial theory, no doubt, has emerged from horrible activities of colonialism; but as a movement, it has come into being by adhering to theories of Marxism and deconstruction. Here, the paper will analyze the historical influences in terms of various theoretical turned social discourses given by various social scientists and literary critics.

#### 2.1 Frantz Omar Fanon

As mentioned above, Fanon was greatly influenced by the 'Negritude Movement'. A. D. Cesaire has written large body of anticolonial literature like *A Tempest*, as a counter-text to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Cesaire with other intellectuals in France started the 'Negritude Movement.' This movement promoted the self-assertion and reorganization of the black community in their cultural crisis. He laid stress on speaking native language and believed in a collective force as a tool against colonial invasion. He foregrounded national consciousness, racial determinism and nativity of culture in his works. *Frantz Omar Fanon* born in Martinique was a French psychiatrist. He was also influenced by Freud. His main works are *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), with essays like "On National Culture". The dialectics on racism and on nationalist culture runs throughout his works. He concentrated chiefly on the black communal consciousness and revival of cultural values. He is considered one of the extremist post-colonial critics.

Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, has talked of different issues regarding racism and impositions of the West on the black people. He claims that the black community had to face great hardships at European hands. He boldly criticizes Europeans for this inhuman violence; quotes Francis Jeanson in this context as: "Day after day, that system elaborates its evil projects in your presence, day after day; its leaders betray you. . . Your pride yourselves on keeping your distance from realities of a certain kind. . . (67-68). Fanon said that the white man has biased approach to the colonized blacks to make them feel as parasites, and wholly dependent on them. This puts the black race at the colonizer's mercy. The Whitman, according to Fanon, manages a 'workshop' in different institutions where the black man's mentality is shaped to be submissive. That means the black man is made victim like 'scapegoat'. Fanon writes:

The collective guilt is borne by what is conventionally called the scapegoat. Now the scapegoat for the white society--which is based on myths of progress, civilization, liberalism, education, enlightenment, refinement--will be precisely the force that opposes the expansion and the triumph of these myths. This brutal opposing force is supplied by the Negro (Fanon 1967 150).

The idea conveyed in the Fanon's works is categorical and committed. His works are expressed as radicalism of postcoloniality. He studied the colonial process of the Europe and came out with suggestions that an active rebuttal, against the colonial attack, is needed. As a psychiatrist, he had studied how the colonized societies were ruthlessly suppressed and grew as neurotic. This makes them victim of colonial rules and victim of their own inferiority complex. Because, the white man has

projected his image as a sign of power and development; and his values are made to be believed as universal and absolute. It makes the natives dependent on the colonizer. Fanon with the dream of the black culture, suggested creation of the life-force in their minds for unanimous rejection and reversal of colonial governance. He rejected the assimilation and appreciation of European culture into the native one. Fanon preached the slogan of liberating the self from the offerings of European life-style. He glorifies the biological features of the black to elevate their ego. Wanting to introduce their politico-cultural set-up, the colonizers projected their own way of economic planning. Fanon had a good impression of Marxist philosophy in the context of proletariats and peasants under the industrial colonizers. Influenced by Marxist thinking, Fanon thought of action as necessary tool to come out of the colonial situation. He believed in the collective efforts and suggested a national literature that would exert the national consciousness. He stressed that the emerging force of victims, who had thirst for recognition and humane treatment, can revolutionize the black community. Contextualizing the statement, Bill Ashcroft et al in *The Empire Writes Back* comment about Fanon as:

In essence, Fanon's analysis revealed the racist stereotyping at the heart of colonial practice and asserted the need to recognize the economic and political realities which were underlay these assertions of racial 'difference' and which were material base for common psychological and cultural features of colonized peoples (123).

Fanon's immense interest was in the study of race, nationalism and politics. He believed that if African intellectuals would be reluctant to embrace the native culture, African dream of regaining their heritage would go in vain. The colonizer's partial body of knowledge about and for the colonized society is to reinforce their supremacy. Fanon writes in his essay, "On National Culture" about this self-centered production of knowledge:

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of devaluing precolonial history takes on a dialectical significance today (Dennis Walder 1990 265).

It is well known that memory can be an effective way to understand and appreciate one's culture. Historical roots give a feeling of long and deep attachment with it. This is why, Fanon emphasized the importance of the past and one must preserve and relive it to support the present. As the word *Negritude* has already been projected in a positive connotation by the intellectuals of the '*Negritude* Movement', Fanon carried forward this appealing mission to the literary figures of Africa to present their culture in all its glory and virtue; and efface the West's claim of it as abyss of savagery, fanaticism, and cannibalism.

As mentioned earlier, Fanon made national culture as chief means of resistance against colonial imperialism. He says that people cannot experience national culture just in myths, folktales and national politics. He defines national culture as, "A national culture is a whole body of efforts made by people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the actions through which that people have created themselves and keep themselves in existence" (Fanon 'On National Culture'). Fanon was uncompromising in his ideology against colonial offerings of development and cultural civility. While doing the comparative study of M. K. Gandhi and Frantz Fanon, Leela Ghandhi in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, has written about the Fanon's enterprise of total liberation as, ". . . Fanon is optimistic and confident about the colonised's ability to valiantly resist the cultural viscosity of Europe. . . (19). This means that Fanon with anti-colonial feelings and self-disciplined sermons strongly opposed European invasion on African culture. Suggesting collective violence, he gave a strong blow to so-called sacred mission of colonial empires to humanize African people whom they considered primitive and uncivilized.

## 2.2 Fanon about Language

Language as a means of communication has a greater role in constituting the values, ideals and above all realities of life. We can say that our mother tongue is the centre of our consciousness. Fanon with other African critics like Nigugi Wa Thiongo, took immediate interest in practising and preaching native language. As already mentioned, the colonizers have replaced the natives' history to demean their ancestry. Later, Fanon studied the practice of using language for empowerment of the subject communities. Our language is the make-up of our personality; our identities, values, ethics, aesthetics and other ideals are comprehensible and communicative through native language. Fanon in the conclusion of his essay, "On National Culture" writes about different steps in post-colonialism for encountering with the colonizer. He discussed in this essay that native intellectuals first make sure to rewrite the history that has been 'distorted'; and reflect culture in their writings. They instantly retrieve their past and the experiences that they had with their own people. For this, they dip the consciousness in the reservoir of their memory. According to Fanon, the final phase of postcoloniality is called fighting phase. He writes about this as, He (native intellectual) turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature.

During this phase a great many men and women, who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work . . . feel the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentences which expresses the heart of the people and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action (Dennis Walder 1990 271).

By this, Fanon exposes the areas, whether of psychology or sociology or politics, that largely helped African societies in particular and other colonized communities in general for their recognition in the world.

### 2.3 Edward W. Said

Edward Said (1935-2003) born in Palestine, received education in the US and lived there until his death. He worked there as a Professor of English and Comparative Literature. Said is one of the great post-colonial critics. He studied the causative processes, i.e. the evolution of colonialism by studying culture, knowledge production and power relationships. He was basically influenced by Foucault's discourse. Bill Ashcroft et al in their book, *The Empire Writes Back*, have also discussed Foucault in post-colonial context. Discourse, in the view of Foucault, is the simultaneous process of knowledge and power. It is a knowledge partially produced to sanction certain ideas, norms and behaviours for the subject society. The impositions of these cultural and political practices are legalized under discourse. These views have bearing on his most important works, i.e. *Orientalism* (1978), and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

Said started his argument with Palestinian cause. However, his intention was not to limit his discussion just to the political crisis in that region. He intended to open an impartial debate on knowledge production, pursuit of truth for human liberalism and denied any restraints by religion, politics or any other source. He transcended national and political purposes, provided a worldwide scope for encompassing many disciplines like art, literature, history, anthropology and academy. He viewed texts of Orientalists as mere creative imagination to serve the selfish motives of their empires. His path-breaking theory and revolutionary project in his book *Orientalism* (1978) is argumentative. He debated across European discourses of cultural and political invasion in the Eastern countries. Said took cudgels against unjust and unfair knowledge production by Orientalists to assert their superiority. He was not writing against European thought but identified and unveiled the misrepresentation of the non-western world. This unjust and partial treatment to the Orient just for the benefit of Europe is termed as 'Orientalism'. The making of certain generalizations about the Eastern people is keenly scanned in *Orientalism*.

Said argued that knowledge produced about the passive Orient, was constructed and circulated by the colonial powers. He adopted the Marxist notion about the modes of hegemonic oppression; and discovered the misuses of institutions like religion and law by the colonizers. He writes:

So impressive have the descriptive and textual successes of Orientalism been that entire periods of Orient's cultural, political, and social history are considered mere responses to the West. The West is the actor, the Orient, the passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and the jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior (A. H. Tak 2004 444).

With this knowledge, Orientalists wanted to create such a social sphere where natives felt inferior and were willing to surrender their self before European thinking. Said historically analyzed the literary exercises of European academies. He found huge number of literary texts of law aesthetics, history, literature, anthropology, sociology written by Orientalists regularly for centuries.

In these texts the Orient was studied from the perspective of the Western ideologies; by this, the Orient was taught, administered, researched and defined by some foreigners. Said studied these texts objectively and tried to evaluate them for cultural and political influences in them. He elucidated these works to unmask the plotting of the Europe against the native's cultural, ethnic and political nationalities. Orientalists proved themselves as true, civilized, advanced to lead the Orient both materially and spiritually. They believed it their sacred right not only to control and conquer non-Europeans but also describe and define them to prove superiority of European race. Said writes in his essay, 'Crisis In Orientalism' as:

Everything they knew, more or less, about the Orient came from books written in the tradition of Orientalism, placed in its library of ideas rescue; for them the Orient like a fierce lion, was something to be encountered and dealt with to a certain extent because the text made the Orient possible. Such an Orient was silent, available to Europe for the realization of projects. . . (A.H. Tak 2004 433).

By this, the behaviors is suggested and consolidated by the colonial conspiracy. The essential binary like, self/other, civilized/uncivilized, intellectual/emotional, savior/ sinner is created.

Said studied these texts of Orientalists for the objective inspection where he judged authors on the basis of their deliberately overlooking the margins. By this, they suppressed the colonized's voice. These methods can be explicitly found in New Historicist readings. That means in the province of post-colonialism, the deep rooted colonialism is questioned to set the ways for decolonization. Because, Said believed that there are some social practices in every society that can hardly be effaced by colonial invasion. Native folktales, ethnic histories and spiritual narratives are to be propounded as defense mechanism.

Further, Said says that some of these Orientalists are predetermined to have discriminating attitude towards the Orient and consider them racially and intellectually backward. These Orientalists, in Said's view, have 'textual attitude' i.e., a mock reality that has been projecting about the East in the texts of Orientalists. But the real confrontation of the East and the West surprised and shocked Orientalists. They referred back to their imagination that they had from Orientalist texts, and started to find faults in the project of Orientalism. No doubt, the West had gained power over the Orient, somehow proved itself to be master through textual illustrations. Said discussed in "Crisis in Orientalism" that these expositions of the West's impartial production of knowledge would lead to liberation and regeneration of subject communities. He writes that "this side (Orientalism) lives its own life, as books about fierce lions will do until lions can talk back." (A. H. Tak 2004 434). This writing back means the awakening of the native from slumber and to hear the voice of postcoloniality. As Said commented that by the end of world War first, both Africa and Asia started to react against the impositions that have been thrust on them by Orientalists. By this,

Orientalist dilemma surfaced and they could not go with their earliest claims and comments about the Orient. Hence, they started to transform these past ideas to the new perspectives by making alteration in them. This shift in their thought finally directed to the contradictions within their own claims of defining and describing the Orient. Said Writes:

The present crisis dramatizes the disparity between texts and reality. Yet in this study of Orientalism I wish not only to expose the sources of Orientalism's views but also to reflect on its importance, for the contemporary intellectual rightly feels that to ignore a part of the world now demonstrably encroaching upon him is to avoid reality. Humanists have too often confined their attention to departmentalized topics of research (A. H. Tak 2004 445).

Therefore, Said's main purpose of study was to reform humanity that is to provide the consciousness and analysis of origin and manipulation of knowledge in social, political, and cultural fields. His goal was to search knowledge for justice, truth and liberation of mankind.

#### 2.4 Homi K. Bhabha

Homi K. Bhabha was born in Mumbai, India in 1949. He is a twentieth century cultural critic and post-colonial theorist. He studies culture in literary practices. He is influenced by Foucault, Fanon, Said and Derrida. Being an Anne F. Rutheberg Professor of English and American Literature and Language, he is also the Director of Humanities Centre at Harvard University. He has used the terms like 'ambivalence' 'mimicry' 'hybridity' 'liminality' and 'third space' to construct a new version of post-colonial theory. By his philosophic competence, Bhabha has appropriated the above terms in the context of post-colonial debate. This appropriation has opened a new perspective for the colonized society to have space in the contemporary world. Using deconstructive strategies, he has revolutionized the movement of post-colonialism. Under it, he has reinterpreted and replaced certain concepts that were the foundation of colonial and neo-colonial discourses.

Bhabha has written many essays, most of them are published in his famous work *The Location of Culture* (1994). Besides, his other work, *Nation and Narration* (2000) contains essays from other post-colonial thinkers with an essay by Bhabha himself. Bhabha talks of culture, its formation and the validity of identity in relation to experiences from numerous perspectives. His main focus is on the identity formation at both individual and social levels, especially in the colonial confrontation. As he challenges the set standards that were established and continued by colonial masters, he differed from previous post-colonial writers. He does not agree with the acceptance of fixed identities of the colonizer and the colonized. In this context, Bhabha opposes Saidian unilateral attitude when he found only subject community is not affected by colonial masters. Besides, Bhabha investigates the reasons for the notion of the colonizer's identity that is taken as a yardstick for the recognition and validity of the subject community. Bhabha exposes many processes and experiences in the colonizer's world that indicates to the reduction of power in the colonial practices.

Bhabha adapts the term 'liminality' (means threshold) in the post-colonial context. This term has been used by Victor Turner, British cultural anthropologist, in the context of diasporic literature. Bhabha uses it for the transformative process of identity in the colonizer-colonized relationship. He says identity is always on move through different positions. It gets challenged with the passage of time in different cultural environments. The 'liminality', in the post-colonial context, is a space, where there is negotiation of racial, cultural and identity differences between the colonizer and the colonized. Hence, there is no such essentialist trait in class, caste or race of any individual. By this, Bhabha provides a suitable ground to oppose the unjust colonial definition of identity of different peoples. The colonizers want to affirm the colonized's identity as static - brutal, lustful, savage and uncivilized - and desires to consolidate this notion to justify their indispensable role in the subject community. Rejecting this, Bhabha says that identity is always in flux. There is both the effect of natural tendency of human beings and effects of confrontation with different cultural set-ups in the identity formation. In an introduction to his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha gives an indication of moving beyond the conventional thinking. The word 'beyond' is used as a metaphor for the continual formation of identity. He writes,

The move away from singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions - of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation - that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities... (Bhabha 1994).

Bhabha denies the fixed binaries that were main tools of colonialism. He used the word 'third space' where there is no existence of the colonizer and the colonized, but newly found identity called hybridized identity. This is an innovative construction of mindset where imaginary sphere is set for the colonized society to refresh their suppressed psyche. By this, new facet of reality, strictly fixed meaning and representation of identity, culture and race gets blurred. Bhabha comments in this context, "It is that third space though unrepresentable in itself, which constitute the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensures that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 1994 37).

Moreover, Bhabha has used some terms with literary and theoretical inclination to project his counter-discourse against the colonial discourse of power structures.

#### ▪ *Ambivalence*

The word is used by Bhabha for representing colonial trauma whether of the colonizer or the colonized. The term 'ambivalence' as noun means uncertainty of desire and its opposite i.e. the positive and negative feelings within an individual towards same thing or person. It has got its development in psychoanalysis to describe between wanting a thing and wanting its opposite. Bhabha says that on the one hand the colonizeds are in dilemma whether to reject or accept the colonial offerings. They are never surely against the advancements and changes that are imposed by the colonial master. This inconsistent will of the colonized leads them to ambivalence. The colonizers on the other hand are also indecisive whether to refine the identity of the colonizeds by restructuring their religion, culture, and other institutions or to keep them unchanged. They are confused that the changes in the identity of the colonizeds can lead them (the colonized) to approximate the colonizers. This can efface the authority of colonial masters. They desire both the resemblance of the colonizeds with them, but fears of the extinction of their own dominance in the process. Hence, this dual approach towards the subject community left the colonizers too in an ambivalent state. According to Bhabha, this conflictual state of the colonial discourse grows as a source of its own destruction. This deconstructive argument proves the so-called centre itself as an object of study that is doubtful, indefinite and unbalanced.

#### ▪ *Mimicry*

The word 'mimicry' means an act of copying and imitating closely. Bhabha uses the term to show the ambivalent nature of the colonizer-colonized relationship. He says that the colonizers intend for the natives to look to their masters as a role model. That means, they should start imitating their masters to acquire the foreign culture. But the native's imitation is never complete and remains in the halfway. Because, it is hardly possible for the natives to come out of their own cultural set-up completely and practise the colonizer's culture accurately like them. This act of half mimicry is against the intention of the colonizers. Hence, it disrupts the colonial discourse. Experiences like these prove as a sort of mockery on the claims of the colonizer's supremacy. This act of natives against the will of the colonizers disturbs heavily the colonial project of consolidating their power. Bhabha comments about it as, What they all share is discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same *but not the quite*) does not merely 'rupture' discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence, By 'partial', I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual' (Bhabha 1994 86).

This way of native's mimicry is, in one or the other way, a disobedience to the colonial authority. They tried to transform the natives but at the same time get into the phobia of the colonized's emerging as the rivals in colonial discourse.

#### ▪ *Hybridity*

In Latin the term *hybrida* means something of mixed origin or composition. Bhabha has suitably applied it to the post-colonial debate. Rejecting the fixity of the colonizer's set identity; he projects his counterpoint in support of the colonized societies. He says whether it is identity or culture or ethnicity or race, somehow, all are contaminated by other ones. The idea of purity and distinctness, in the above mentioned concepts, is far from possibility. This notion of 'hybridity' that is explained and exposed by Bhabha, reverses the political and cultural strategy of the colonialism. This strict and fixed concept of identity constructed by Orientalists, gets deconstructed by the contemporary version of post-colonialism.

Under this view, a person who lives in different cultures and gets assimilated in them becomes a hybridized identity. In this case, one remains neither the colonizer nor the colonized but a hybrid free from any peculiarity. With these shifting patterns of identity, Bhabha objects to the Orientalist's essentialising the colonized's identity. The stage of identity formation, where meaning is undecided, denies the homogeneity of the previous identity binaries. Bhabha writes in this context,

The margin of hybridity, where cultural differences 'contingently' and conflictually touch, becomes the moment of panic which reveals the borderline experiences. It resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups, sipahis and sahibs, as homogenous polarized political consciousness (Bhabha 1994 207).

With these discoveries in the cultural studies, the concept of identity is said as multi-processed where all have tendency to grow and develop under the influences of different cultures.

### 3. Conclusion

To conclude the paper, it can be said that post-colonialism has evolved over decades through the discourses by many writers. These writers have explored the impact of politics, culture, nationalism and identity of both the colonizers and the colonizeds. Post-colonial theory broadened its scope by taking into consideration the significant concepts of literary theory regarding different social issues. This has vehemently contributed for the development of human values in the suppressed society of Africa and Asia in particular and at global level in general. In the beginning, critics like Cesaire, Fanon took some hard steps to reject the colonizer's governance and asserted their status. Later, others like Edward Said unveiled the biased and exploitative schemes of the West. Homi K. Bhabha gave another version of the colonizer-colonized relationship that destructuralized the fixed concepts of the colonial process. This provided a strong impetus to the subject communities for their development in the contemporary times. In the modern times, new researches are carried out to expose the neo-imperialist processes that are exercised under the garb of diplomacy, development and rehabilitation of the colonized societies. But the positive changes

beyond the biased and ideological discourses are always to be embraced and encouraged for the further developments of human civilizations.

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