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Postcolonial literary theory: A critical study

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Abstract

Postcolonial theory, though a recent theory of three decades back, its application in literature has been put into use for more than a century. This theory was named differently in different colonized countries but an accurate term postcolonialism was given just three decades back to make a common which is accurate. Theory aims at studying the colonized and colonizer relationship in literature. All the colonized writers either write in their regional language or in the language of their colonizers dealing with the post-colonial problems of their countries are treated as the colonial texts.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, mimicry, hybridity, orientalism, chutnification, ethnocentrism, eurocentrism and imperialism

Introduction

Post-colonialism is one of the important branches of social study covering the disciplines like sociology, political science, history, and many others. It has also kept its feet intact in literature. Literature, now a day, has been critically analyzed from the postcolonial perspectives. The fast changing society mirrored in literature is globally analyzed and criticized from the perspective of postcolonialism. Different critics and philosophers, who have paved a path for this new trend in literary theory and criticism, have also different opinions on these disciplines. This is a very accurate term to study the changing Eastern and Africa societies getting influenced by the colonial rules and accepting European cultures as part of their own.

Colonization have brought a radical changes in the social structures and process of society as a result the traditional social values of the third world countries got diluted and converted into a mixed culture which Bhaba termed it as hybridization and Salman Rushdie calls it as "Chatnification." Protest and progress go side by side the third world countries due to the western impact on the native culture and social values.

Edward Said defines postcolonialism as "All the cultures affected by the process of imperialism from the date of beginning of colonization to present day." This is the best definition of postcolonialism in his famous *Orientalism* (1978). This definition is often quoted by different western scholars. The cultures of the Third World countries have been turned to be hybrid within a period of less than two centuries. H Bhabha terms the dilution the colonized cultures as "Hybridity". The European cultures proved to be the most influential affecting the native cultures. The colonized cultures gradually get either eroded or diluted. The young masses were very much attracted for the western education. Gouri Biswanath, a noted Indian scholar in the western countries, discovered that English education was the main attraction for the young masses in India for lengthening and strengthening British Empire in India. Chinua Achebe, in his *Things Fall Apart*, portrays how the Western Education imparted by the missionaries in the church, attract the young masses. Even the Nowye, the son of Akonkwo, the protagonist, the leaders of the resistance movement got attracted and joined in the school of missionaries.

Postcolonial writers evoke or create a preconditioned version of their own nation rejecting the modern and contemporary cultures which tainted with the colonial status of their countries. The contemporary cultures are the direct influence of the western culture which contrast the culture and tradition of the native culture. The writers like R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand and many others India writers write against the western cultures that erode Indian culture fast.

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In these texts of Indian writers in English, an identity crisis is found. The colonized live in conflict identity whether they are European or Indian or mixed. In R. K Narayan's *Vedors of Sweets*, Mali is a typical western young man after returning from the USA. His ways of life and thinking don't match even to a higher educated young man of India. Mali and his father Jagan culturally clash with each other's but at last father came out victorious.

Postcolonial writers strongly detest in hybridity, multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, and cultural polyvalence. When more than one cultures operate in the same space, they mixed each other after a primary clash. The first generation resists but the second generation gets assimilated with the foreign culture as a result two cultures operate side by side in the same space which results multi-culturalism. The colonized accept the culture of the colonizers taking it as the superior to their native cultures. It has been analyzed about the "Hybridity" which Bhabah discussed detail. In the most of colonized countries European culture and native culture mixed together to form a new type of mixed culture which is totally different from the native and European culture termed as the "Hybridity"

Postcolonial literature rejects western literature and their norms establishing the norms of their native literature. It is seen the Indian contemporary poets still compose poems in free verse being influenced by *The Waste Land*. The traditional compositions of poem in melodious verses have unused due to the western influence. In the same the native writers write pick up the style of prose. Really prose is not the form of literature of Indian practice which is incorporated from the western literature. The European has the direct impact on Indian culture and literature.

The postcolonial literature always rejects the Eurocentric literature or European ethnocentrism. European claims that nothing is superior outside Europe. In this way European literature is also superior to the literatures of the other countries. Thomas Babington Macaulay said on February, 2 1835 in his famous *Minute on Education*, "A single shelf of good European library was worth the whole the native literature of India and Arabia." The entire literature of the east even cannot be equal to a fraction of the western literature. He was neither a scholar nor went through eastern literature but his statement was the buzz word which was often quoted to belittle eastern literature and culture.

Rudyard Kipling, in his "White Men's Burden" says that the eastern people are savage and backward. They cannot guide themselves by reasoning and rationality rather whims, illiteracy and superstitions guide them taking important decisions. So they need to be trained by the western people which are the duty of the west.

Foreground of the marginality is the chief task of the native literature. The postcolonial theory as epistemology addresses the matter of identity. In the native literatures the local writers always focuses to get back their lost identity which was eroded by the western culture during the postcolonial period. The Indian writers like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao focus on the local and the glorious tradition of India. The trio treats western culture as sabotage to the local culture. They criticize and satirize the young mass adopting the western culture even snubbing their own.

The imperialism not only forced the colonized to adapt the western administration and rational laws but also imposed the western culture on the people through various pressers

of administration. They apply all the tricks for imposing the western culture on the colonized countries, in *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe portrays how the white people tactically get hold of the western Nigeria and created sense repulsion of the Igbo culture among the young mass and the local people who were ostracized from the communities from the different grounds.

The western people proved to be clever studying the eastern society and pointing out the loopholes. They attacked on the weak points of the colonized countries through the process of the imperialism.

There is a debate among the scholars regarding the origin of the colonialism in the colonized countries. Different scholars differ regarding the origin of the colonialism. When it set its feet in the eastern land is a hot debate. But Arif Dirlik, a noted scholar, says, "Postcolonialism began when the third world intellectuals arrived in the first world academe". Dirlik proves that the intellectual of the colonized countries spread western culture in their land snubbing their own culture or going against their own culture either for the personal gain or for attraction. They were the quintessential boys the locality whom the young mass followed and imitated blindly as a result the western culture spread in the third world countries.

The first step of the colonial writer is a focus on the glorious history of the colonized countries which is unknown to the people after colonization. The Indian writers writing in English generally pick up the theme of history. The history of freedom movement often gets propriety as the heroes of the freedom movement appeal to the readers more than any other characters. Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie write about the history of India. They do not glorify the history of India rather they fictionalize history twisting it for readers' acceptability. They rewrite history through fiction. History has got a new shape through the postcolonial writers like Rushdie and Ghosh.

The postcolonial writers do not accept the Eurocentrism in literature and cultures so they revive the glorious past of their native land through their writings. They are very national while accepting and rejecting the norms of the western countries. Some postmodern writers of the postcolonial trends mixed up the eastern and western norms in their writings. They write portraying problems which is not permanent. When the problems are solved and no more in the mind of the peoples, it becomes social history. The literature becomes the social history in fiction.

In India the postcolonial writers of regional languages often criticize English language. Fakir Mohan Senapati and many others deal with destructiveness of English education to the modern young men who are cut off from the tradition accepting the western cultures. The English educated young people misbehaved their parents which Senapati portrays through the character of Gopan in his short story "Dakamunishi". In the same way Chinua Achebe portrays how the young mass of the lower Nigeria get attracted for English education. In the biography of Sri Aurobindo, the biographer Manoj Das writes that the father of Aurobindo wanted his sons not have any contact with the non-English people in England least his English accent would be affected. This was the colonial mind set of the colonized whose attraction of colonized language gave an edge to them to rule over the vast land of Asia.

The postcolonial literary theories developed by the different theorist in different times show how the colonizers and

colonized mind set is going on despite end of the political rules. The western countries still rule the colonized countries through their culture though they have been politically ceased to do so. The colonized always think that the colonizers are superior to them so they imitate the colonizers. In this way the colonized people imitate the cultures of the colonizers even at the cost of their own cultures. It is termed as “mimicry” by Bhabha. Colonial writers satirize the colonized mimicry. They sketched different characters satirizing how they imitate the western culture snubbing their own.

In course of time it is seen that some colonized countries like India are economically growing faster than that of the U.K and the modern Indian Diasporas are becoming the power centre in Europe and America. India Diasporas are the prime minister, ministers, Justice and business tycoon of the UK and the vice president of U.S. In this way the postcolonial mind set is vanishing among the elites.

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