POLITICS OF CULTURAL DEHUMANIZATION: A STUDY OF THE POST COLONIAL LIVES

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Abstract:
Colonialism was presented as "the extension of Civilization", which ideologically justified the self-ascribed superiority (racial and cultural) of the European Western World over the non-Western world where the imperial stewardship was thought to effect the intellectual and moral reformation of the colored peoples of the lesser cultures of the world. But, Post colonialism questions and reinvents the modes of cultural perception, the ways of viewing and of being. As anthropology, post colonialism records human relations among the colonial nations and the subaltern peoples exploited by colonial rule. The study presents, explains, and illustrates the ideology and the praxis of neocolonialism, with examples drawn from the humanities—history and political science, philosophy and Marxist theory, sociology, anthropology, and human geography; the cinema, religion, and theology; feminism, linguistics, and postcolonial literature, of which the anti-conquest narrative genre presents the stories of colonial subjugation of the subaltern man and woman.

Key Words: Superiority, Racial, Cultural Imperial, Colonialism, Subaltern, Dehumanization & Colonial Subjugation.

Introduction:

Post colonialism or postcolonial studies is an academic discipline featuring methods of intellectual discourse that analyze, explain, and respond to the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism, to the human consequences of controlling a country and establishing settlers for the economic exploitation of the native people and their land. Drawing from postmodern schools of thought, postcolonial studies analyze the politics of knowledge (creation, control, and distribution) by analyzing the functional relations of social and political power that sustain colonialism and neocolonialism—the how and the why of an imperial regime's representations (social, political, cultural) of the imperial colonizer and of the colonized people.

As a genre of contemporary history, post colonialism questions and reinvents the modes of cultural perception—the ways of viewing and of being. As anthropology, post colonialism records human relations among the colonial nations and the subaltern peoples exploited by colonial rule. As critical theory, post colonialism presents, explains, and illustrates the ideology and the praxis of neocolonialism, with examples drawn from the humanities—history and political science, philosophy and Marxist theory, sociology, anthropology, and human geography; the cinema, religion, and theology; feminism, linguistics, and postcolonial literature, of which the anti-conquest narrative genre presents the stories of colonial subjugation of the subaltern man and woman.

Colonialism was presented as "the extension of Civilization", which ideologically justified the self-ascribed superiority (racial and cultural) of the European Western World over the non-Western world. This concept was espoused by Joseph-Ernest Renan in **La Réforme intellectuelle et morale (1871)**, whereby imperial stewardship was thought to effect the intellectual and moral reformation of the colored peoples of the lesser cultures of the world. That such a divinely established, natural harmony

among the human races of the world would be possible, because everyone—colonizer and colonized—have an assigned cultural identity, a social place, and an economic role within an imperial colony.

The regeneration of the inferior or degenerate races, by the superior races is part of the providential order of things for humanity.

From the mid- to the late-nineteenth century, such racialist group-identity language was the cultural common-currency justifying geopolitical competition, among the European and American empires, meant to protect their over-extended economies. Especially in the colonization of the Far East and in the Scramble for Africa (1870–1914), the representation of a homogeneous European identity justified colonization. Hence, Belgium and Britain, and France and Germany proffered theories of national superiority that justified colonialism as delivering the light of civilization to benighted peoples. Notably, **La mission civilisatrice**, the self-ascribed civilizing mission of the French Empire, proposed that some races and cultures have a higher purpose in life, whereby the more powerful, more developed, and more civilized races have the right to colonize other peoples, in service to the noble idea of "civilization" and its economic benefits.

As an epistemology (the study of knowledge, its nature and verifiability), as an ethics (moral philosophy), and as a politics (affairs of the citizenry), the field of post colonialism address the politics of knowledge—the matters that constitute the postcolonial identity of a decolonized people, which derives from: (i) the colonizer's generation of cultural knowledge about the colonized people; and (ii) how that Western cultural knowledge was applied to subjugate a non–European people into a colony of the European Mother Country, which, after initial invasion, was effected by means of the cultural identities of "colonizer" and "colonized".

A decolonized people develop a postcolonial identity from the cultural interactions among the types of identity (cultural, national, ethnic) and the social relations of sex, class, and caste; determined by the gender and the race of the colonized person; and the racism inherent to the structures of a colonial society. In postcolonial literature, the anti-conquest narrative analyses the identity politics that are the social and cultural perspectives of the subaltern colonial subjects—their creative resistance to the culture of the colonizer; how such cultural resistance complicated the establishment of a colonial society; how the colonizers developed their postcolonial identity; and how neocolonialism actively employs the binary social relation to view the non-Western world as inhabited by The Other.

The neocolonial discourse of geopolitical homogeneity conflates the decolonized peoples, their cultures, and their countries, into an imaginary place, such as "the Third World", an over-inclusive term that usually comprises continents and seas, i.e. Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. The postcolonial critique analyses the self-justifying discourse of neocolonialism and the functions (philosophic and political) of its over-inclusive terms, to establish the factual and cultural inaccuracy of homogeneous concepts, such as "the Arabs" and "the First World", "Christendom" and "the Islamic World", actually comprise heterogeneous peoples, cultures, and geography, and that realistic descriptions of the world's peoples, places, and things require nuanced and accurate terms.

Post colonialism is the critical destabilization of the theories (intellectual and linguistic, social and economic) that support the ways of Western thought—deductive reasoning, rule of law and monotheism—by means of which colonialists "perceive", "understand", and "know" the world. Postcolonial theory thus establishes intellectual

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spaces for the subaltern peoples to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and so produce cultural discourses, of philosophy and language, of society and economy, which balance the imbalanced us-and-them binary power-relationship between the colonist and the colonial subject.

As a contemporary-history term, post colonialism occasionally is applied temporally, to denote the immediate time after colonialism, which is a problematic application of the term, because the immediate, historical, political time is not included to the categories of critical identity-discourse, which deals with over-inclusive terms of cultural representation, which are abrogated and replaced by postcolonial criticism. As such, the terms postcolonial and post colonialism denote aspects of the subject matter, which indicate that the decolonized world is an intellectual space "of contradictions, of half-finished processes, of confusions, of hybridity, and of liminalities" In Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics (1996), Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins clarified the denotational functions, among which:

The term *post-colonialism*, according to a too-rigid etymology, is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naïve teleological sequence, which supersedes colonialism, *post-colonialism* is, rather, an engagement with, and contestation of, colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies. A theory of post-colonialism must, then, respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism.

The term post colonialism also is applied to denote the Mother Country's neocolonial control of the decolonized country, effected by the legalistic continuation of the economic, cultural, and linguistic power relationships that controlled the colonial politics of knowledge (the generation, production, and distribution of knowledge) about the colonized peoples of the non–Western world.

The cultural and religious assumptions of colonialist logic remain active practices in contemporary society, and are the bases of the Mother Country's neocolonial attitude towards her former colonial subjects—an economical source of labor and raw materials. Hence, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), the theoretician Homi K. Bhabha argued that so long as the way of viewing the human world, as composed of separate and unequal cultures, rather than as an integral human world, perpetuates the belief in the existence of imaginary peoples and places—"Christendom" and "The Islamic World", "The First World", "The Second World", and "The Third World". To counter such linguistic and sociologic reductionism, postcolonial praxis establishes the philosophic value of hybrid intellectual-spaces, wherein ambiguity abrogates truth and authenticity; thereby, *hybridity* is the philosophic condition that most substantively challenges the ideological validity of colonialism.

The critical purpose of postcolonial studies is to account for, and to combat, the residual effects (social, political, and cultural) of colonialism upon the peoples once ruled by the Mother Country. To that end, postcolonial theoreticians establish social and cultural spaces for the non–Western peoples—especially the subaltern peoples—whose native cultures were often suppressed by the Western value systems promoted and established as the dominant ideology of the colonial enterprise, said cultural suppression was meant to civilize the natives in the European image, as proposed and justified by the French philosopher Joseph-Ernest Renan in the book La Réforme

intellectuel et morale (1871), and by the German philosopher G. F. W. Hegel, in the essay "The African Character" (1830).

The critical perspectives and analyses presented in the book Orientalism (1978), by Edward Saïd, argued that, in dealing with non–Western peoples, European scholars applied the high-abstraction idealism inherent to the concept of "The Orient", in order to disregard the existing native societies, and their social, intellectual, and cultural ways of life, in Asia, the Middle East, and of the Muslim peoples. That, in their stead, Orientalist academics substituted their European interpretations and representations of what is and what is not "Oriental", and of who is and who is not "an Oriental". That Orientalism supported the self-ascribed cultural superiority of The West, and so allowed Europeans to name, describe, and define, and thereby control, non–European peoples, places, and things.

To that end, post colonialism critically destabilizes the dominant ideologies of the West, by challenging the "inherent assumptions and the material and discursive legacies of colonialism", by working with tangible social factors such as:

- Anthropology, by means of which Western intellectuals generated knowledge about non-Western peoples, which colonial institutions then used to subjugate them into a colony to serve the economic, social, and cultural interests of the imperial power.
- Colonialist literature, wherein the writers ideologically justified imperialism and colonialism with cultural representations (literary and pictorial) of the colonized country and its people, as perpetually inferior, which the imperial steward must organize into a colonial society to be guided towards European modernity.
- Postcolonial literature, wherein writers articulate and celebrate the postcolonial identity of the decolonized, native society, an identity often reclaimed from the colonizer, whilst maintaining the independent nation's pragmatic connections (economic and social, linguistic and cultural) with the Mother Country.
- Native cultural-identity in a colonized society, and the dilemmas inherent to developing a postcolonial national identity after the de-colonization of the country, whilst avoiding the counter-productive extremes of nationalism.
- In the definition and establishment of a postcolonial identity, the literature of the anti-conquest narrative genre is the praxis of "indigenous decolonization", whereby writers explain, analyze, and transcend the personal and societal experiences of imperial subjugation, of having endured the imposed identity of "a colonial subject". By means of their postcolonial literature, the subaltern peoples reply to the Mother Country's perceived misrepresentation of their humanity; an African example is the novel Things Fall Apart (1958), by Chinua Achebe, about the Nigerian experience of being part of the British Empire. Using the native varieties of the colonial languages, the Anti-conquest narrative addresses the Mother Country's cultural hegemony; by "writing back to the centre" of the empire, the natives create their own national histories in service to forming and establishing a national identity after decolonization.

Notable Theoreticians:

In The Wretched of the Earth (1961), the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon analyzed and medically described the nature of colonialism as essentially destructive. Its societal effects—the imposition of a subjugating colonial identity—are harmful to the mental health of the native peoples who were subjugated into colonies. Fanon wrote the ideological essence of colonialism is the systematic denial of "all attributes of humanity" of the colonized people. Such dehumanization is achieved with physical and mental violence, by which the colonist means to inculcate a servile mentality upon the natives.

For Fanon the natives must violently resist colonial subjugation. Hence, Fanon describes violent resistance to colonialism as a mentally cathartic practice, which purges colonial servility from the native psyche, and restores self-respect to the subjugated.

As postcolonial praxis, Fanon's mental-health analyses of colonialism and imperialism, and the supporting economic theories, were partly derived from the essay Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916), wherein Vladimir Lenin described colonial imperialism as a degenerate form of capitalism, which requires greater degrees of human exploitation to ensure continually consistent profit for investment.

To describe the us-and-them "binary social relation" with which Western Europe intellectually divided the world—into the "Occident" and the "Orient"—the cultural critic Edward Said developed the denotations and connotations of the term Orientalism ,an art-history term for Western depictions and the study of the Orient. This is the concept that the cultural representations generated with the us-and-them binary relation are social constructs, which are mutually constitutive and cannot exist independent of each other, because each exists on account of and for the other.

Notably, "the West" created the cultural concept of "the East", which according to Said allowed the Europeans to suppress the peoples of the Middle East, of the Indian Subcontinent, and of Asia, from expressing and representing themselves as discrete peoples and cultures. Orientalism thus conflated and reduced the non–Western world into the homogeneous cultural entity known as "the East". Therefore, in service to the colonial type of imperialism, the us-and-them Orientalist paradigm allowed European scholars to represent the Oriental World as inferior and backward, irrational and wild, as opposed to a Western Europe that was superior and progressive, rational and civil— the opposite of the Oriental Other. In "The Exile as Interpreter" (1993), about Said's Orientalism (1978), A. Madhavan said that "Said's passionate thesis in that book, now an 'almost canonical study', represented Orientalism as a 'style of thought' based on the antinomy of East and West in their world-views, and also as a 'corporate institution' for dealing with the Orient."

In concordance with the philosopher Michel Foucault, Saïd established that power and knowledge are the inseparable components of the intellectual binary relationship with which Occidentals claim "knowledge of the Orient". That the applied power of such cultural knowledge allowed Europeans to rename, re-define, and thereby control Oriental peoples, places, and things, into imperial colonies. The power–knowledge binary relation is conceptually essential to identify and understand colonialism in general, and European colonialism in particular. Hence,

To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by them or as a kind of cultural and international proletariat.

Nonetheless, critics of the homogeneous "Occident–Orient" binary social relation, said that Orientalism is of limited descriptive capability and practical application, and proposed that there are variants of Orientalism that apply to Africa and to Latin America. To which Saïd replied that the European West applied Orientalism as a *homogeneous* form of The Other, in order to facilitate the formation of the cohesive, collective European cultural identity denoted by the term "The West.

Spivak introduced the terms 'essentialism' and strategic 'essentialism' to describe the social functions of post colonialism. The term 'essentialism' denotes the perceptual dangers inherent to reviving subaltern voices in ways that might simplify the

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cultural identity of heterogeneous social groups, and, thereby, create stereotyped representations of the different identities of the people who compose a given social group. The term 'strategic essentialism' denotes a temporary, essential group-identity used in the praxis of discourse among peoples. Furthermore, essentialism can occasionally be applied by the so-described people to facilitate the subaltern's communication in being heeded, heard, and understood, because a strategic essentialism is more readily grasped, and accepted, by the popular majority, in the course of inter-group discourse. The important distinction, between the terms, is that strategic essentialism does not ignore the diversity of identities (cultural and ethnic) in a social group, but that, in its practical function, strategic essentialism temporarily minimizes inter-group diversity to pragmatically support the essential group-identity.

Spivak developed and applied Foucault's term 'epistemic violence' to describe the destruction of non–Western ways of perceiving the world, and the resultant dominance of the Western ways of perceiving the world. Conceptually, epistemic violence specifically relates to women, whereby the "Subaltern [woman] must always be caught in translation, never allowed to be truly expressing herself", because the colonial power's destruction of her culture pushed to the social margins her non–Western ways of perceiving, understanding, and knowing the world.

Moreover, Spivak further cautioned against ignoring subaltern peoples as "cultural Others", and said that the West could progress—beyond the colonial perspective—by means of introspective self-criticism of the basic ideals and investigative methods that establish a culturally superior West studying the culturally inferior non–Western peoples. Hence, the integration of the subaltern voice to the intellectual spaces of social studies is problematic, because of the unrealistic opposition to the idea of studying "Others"; Spivak rejected such an anti-intellectual stance by social scientists, and about them said that "to refuse to represent a cultural Other is salving your conscience allowing you not to do any homework.Moreover, postcolonial studies also reject the colonial cultural depiction of subaltern peoples as hollow mimics of the European colonists and their Western ways; and rejects the depiction of subaltern peoples as the passive recipient-vessels of the imperial and colonial power of the Mother Country. Consequent to Foucault's philosophic model of the binary relationship of power and knowledge, scholars from the Subaltern Studies Collective, proposed that anti-colonial resistance always counters every exercise of colonial power.

In 1997, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of India's Independence, Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism was an important exhibition curated by R. Siva Kumar at the National Gallery of Modern Art.

In his catalogue essay R. Siva Kumar introduced the term Contextual Modernism which later emerged as a postcolonial critical tool in the understanding of Indian art, specifically the works of Nandalal Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Ram Kinker Baij and Benode Behari Mukherjee.

Siva Kumar argues that the Santiniketan artists did not believe that to be indigenous one has to be historicist either in theme or in style, and similarly to be modern one has to adopt a particular trans-national formal language or technique. Modernism was to them neither a style nor a form of internationalism. It was critical re-engagement with the foundational aspects of art necessitated by changes in one's unique historical position.

In the postcolonial history of art, this marked the departure from Eurocentric unilateral idea of Modernism to alternative context sensitive *Modernisms*.

The brief survey of the individual works of the core Santiniketan artists and the thought perspectives they open up makes clear that though there were various contact points in the work they were not bound by a continuity of style but buy a community of ideas.

Several terms including Paul Gilroy's *counter culture of modernity* and Tani Barlow's *Colonial modernity* have been used to describe the kind of alternative modernity that emerged in non-European contexts. Professor Gall argues that 'Contextual Modernism' is a more suited term because "the colonial in *colonial modernity* does not accommodate the refusal of many in colonized situations to internalize inferiority. Santiniketan's artist teachers' refusal of subordination incorporated a counter vision of modernity, which sought to correct the racial and cultural essentialism that drove and characterized imperial Western modernity and modernism. Those European modernities, projected through a triumphant British colonial power, provoked nationalist responses, equally problematic when they incorporated similar essentialisms."

In *Provincializing Europe* (2000), Dipesh Chakrabarty charted the subaltern history of the Indian struggle for independence, and countered Eurocentric, Western scholarship about non-Western peoples and cultures, by proposing that Western Europe simply be considered as culturally equal to the other cultures of the world, that is, as "one region among many" in human geography.

Derek Gregory argues the long traces in history of British and American colonization is an ongoing process happening even today. In the Colonial Present, Gregory traces connections between the geopolitics of events happening in modern day Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq and links it back to the us-and-them binary relation between the Western and Eastern world. Building upon the ideas of the other and Said's work on orientialism, Gregory critiques the economic policy, military apparatus, and transnational corporations as vehicles driving present day colonialism. Emphasizing ideas of discussing ideas around colonialism in the present tense, Gregory utilizes modern events such as the September 11 attacks to tell spatial stories around the colonial behavior happening due to the War on Terror.

As a literary theory, post colonialism deals with the literatures produced by the peoples who once were colonies of the European imperial powers e.g. Britain, France, and Spain and the literatures of the decolonized countries engaged in contemporary, postcolonial arrangements in the British Commonwealth with their former mother countries. Postcolonial literary criticism comprehends the literatures written by the colonizer and the colonized, wherein the subject matter includes portraits of the colonized peoples and their lives as imperial subjects. In Dutch literature, the Indies Literature includes the colonial and postcolonial genres, which examine and analyze the formation of a postcolonial identity, and the postcolonial culture produced by the Indo-European peoples, the Eurasian folk who originated from Indonesia; the peoples who were the colony of the Dutch East Indies.

To perpetuate and facilitate control of the colonial enterprise, some colonized people, especially from among the subaltern peoples of the British Empire, were sent to attend university in the Imperial Motherland; they were to become the native-born, but Europeanised, ruling class of colonial satraps. Yet, after decolonization, their bicultural educations originated postcolonial criticism of empire and colonialism, and of the representations of the colonist and the colonized. In the late twentieth century, after the

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dissolution of the USSR (1991), the constituent soviet socialist republics became the literary subjects of postcolonial criticism, wherein the writers dealt with the legacies (cultural, social, economic) of the Russification of their peoples, countries, and cultures in service to Greater Russia.

Postcolonial literary study is in two categories: (i) that of the postcolonial nations, and (ii) that of the nations who continue forging a postcolonial national identity. The first category of literature presents and analyses the internal challenges inherent to determining an ethnic identity in a decolonized nation. The second category of literature presents and analyses the degeneration of civic and nationalist unities consequent to ethnic parochialism, usually manifested as the demagoguery of "protecting the nation", a variant of the Us-and-Them binary social relation. Civic and national unity degenerate when a patriarchal régime unilaterally defines what is and what is not "the national culture" of the decolonized country; the nation-state collapses, either into communal movements, espousing grand political goals for the postcolonial nation; or into ethnically mixed communal movements, espousing political separatism.

In the essays "Overstating the Arab State" (2001), by Nazih Ayubi, and "Is Jordan Palestine?" (2003), by Raphael Israel, the authors deal with the psychologically fragmented postcolonial identity, as determined by the effects (political and social, cultural and economic) of Western colonialism in the Middle East. As such, the fragmented national identity remains a characteristic of such societies, consequence of the imperially convenient, but arbitrary, colonial boundaries (geographic and cultural) demarcated by the Europeans, with which they ignored the tribal and clan relations that determined the geographic borders of the Middle East countries, before the arrival of European imperialists. Hence, the postcolonial literature about the Middle East examines and analyses the Western discourses about identity formation, the existence and inconsistent nature of a postcolonial national-identity among the peoples of the contemporary Middle East.

In the essay "Who Am I?: The Identity Crisis in the Middle East" (2006), P.R. Kumaraswamy said:

Most countries of the Middle East, suffered from the fundamental problems over their national identities. More than three-quarters of a century after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, from which most of them emerged, these states have been unable to define, project, and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative. Independence and the end of colonialism did not end social fragmentation and war (civil and international) in the Middle East. In *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses* (2004), Larbi Sadiki said that the problems of national identity in the Middle East are consequence of the Orientalist indifference of the European empires when they demarcated the political borders of their colonies, which ignored the local culture, the geographic and tribal boundaries observed by the natives, in the course of establishing the Western version of the Middle East.

In the event, "in places like Iraq and Jordan, leaders of the new sovereign states were brought in from the outside and tailored to suit colonial interests and commitments. Likewise, most states in the Persian Gulf were handed over to those Europeanised colonial subjects who could protect and safeguard imperial interests in the post-withdrawal phase. Moreover, with notable exceptions like Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, most countries have to reinvent, their historical roots after decolonization, and, like its colonial predecessor, postcolonial identity owes its existence to force.

National Identities:

The concentration of postcolonial studies upon the subject of national identity has determined it is essential to the creation and establishment of a stable nation and country in the aftermath of decolonization; yet indicates that either an indeterminate or an ambiguous national identity has tended to limit the social, cultural, and economic progress of a decolonized people. In *Overstating the Arab State* (2001), by Nazih Ayubi, the Moroccan scholar Bin 'Abd al-'Ali proposed that the existence of "a pathological obsession with identity" is a cultural theme common to the contemporary academic field Middle Eastern Studies.

Nevertheless, and Sadiki said that such a common sociologic problem—that of an indeterminate national identity—among the countries of the Middle East is an important aspect that must be accounted in order to have an understanding the politics of the contemporary Middle East.

Conclusion:

This topic traces key areas of scholarship constituting the domain of 'everyday postcolonial politics' in India, New Zealand and Australia, and the local terms and debates that inform, contextualize and animate them. We discuss how postcolonial studies have been shaped by questions of its appropriateness or otherwise to analysis of local cultural politics, and the particular emphases it has developed to address that context. We then bring postcolonial studies together with the field of cultural studies more broadly, and its foundations in analyses of the 'everyday lives' that the proximity of postcolonial studies to cultural studies characterizing the essays presented in this issue points to a specific conception of 'politics' that finds the priorities, concerns, and relations of power and resources, as integrally – even intimately – bound up with life at the everyday level; as inseparable from the social and semiotic regimes of representation, and as insisting on the necessary implication of the scholar and scholarship in its object of analysis.

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