

Post Colonial Theory : A Critical Study

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Abstract : Postcolonial literature refers to literatures written in English in former colonies. It is also a subject of ongoing debate in contemporary literary and critical studies. Postcolonial literary theory is an emphatic assertion of the need of dealing adequately with the hybridity and specificity of native cultures.



Words : coloniser = ruler, colonised = oppressed country, seeks = search strategies = plans, techniques.

The much-debated term 'Postcolonial' generally refers to writing, culture of nations and people who were once colonised by European powers. Postcolonial theory is an attempt to uncover the colonial ideologies implicit in European texts about the other. Homi Bhabha defines postcolonial as "that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once - colonised Third World comes to be framed in the West." If the origin of postcolonial aesthetics lies in Frantz fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and its theory in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the critical assessment of it dates back to Ashcroft , Griffiths and Tiffin's epoch making book *'The Empire Writes Back'*(1989). While making an analysis of postcolonial theory, it is imperative on my part to explain the term postcolonial and the significance attached to it in the present context.

In the present paper I would like to discuss the post colonial theory and its significance for the colonised country. Edward said's *Orientalism* seeks to study the postcolonial texts in the former colonies in the context of European imperialism. He has defined Orientalism as 'a western style for dominating, restructuring, having authority over the orient." Now postcolonial literature refers to literatures written in English in former colonies. It is also a subject of ongoing debate in contemporary literary and critical studies. postcolonial literary theory is an emphatic assertion of the need of dealing adequately and authentically with the hybridity and specificity of native cultures once consciously ignored as subjects of literature or projected as inferior to the cultures of the colonizing western countries.

Postcolonialism seeks to understand how oppression, resistance and adaptation have occurred during the colonial rule. This means that postcolonialism analyses specific strategies of power, domination, hegemony and oppression utilised by the coloniser in the colony. This includes a vast spectrum of issues :art , economics, political, philosophy, medical , the education system and civil codes, all of which embody, in some form or other, colonial ideology. The postcolonial

theorists included Frantz Fanon , Edward Said , Gayatri Spivak , Aijaz Ahmad and Homi Bhabha.

Fanon suggests that the black man is the 'Other'for the white man. This other is totally an alien, beyond his European self. Fanon suggests that for the black man the white man comes to symbolise power. He can see himself only as the black image of the white man. The black therefore tries to be more like the white man. In the colonial context, the black community and the nation are both controlled by the white man. The Church in the colonies is the white people's church.This church "does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, the oppressor."

The native takes up arms because he is hungry, because he sees his social forms disintegrating and because the settler treats him like an animal. The native wants to be treated like a human. As the struggle goes on, the settlers' police forces behave more "humanly," and the native is addressed as "mister." The native is made to feel that things are changing.

Language especially in schools, became the means of subjugation in the colonial period. Ngũgĩ recounts his own problems in school, when he discovered that "the language of my education was no longer the language of my culture." The colonial child was made to see the world and where he stands in it as seen or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition. For the coloniser the most important area of domination was the mental domain of the colonised.

Postcolonial theorists argue that the literatures written only in English in the earstwhile British colonies should be termed postcolonised literature. They lose sight of the fact that in a multilingual country like india the rich regional literatures written in the postcolonial period are excluded from the domain of postcolonial literature.Thus ,I suggest that litratures written in any language including English in the former British colonies, which seek to assert national identity, describe the culture and tradition of their respective nations should be included in the category of postcolonial literature.To conclude, I should say that postcolonial theory deals with culttural contradictions and ambiguities.

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