

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Decolonization and Globalization, in the context of African Literature and especially Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures and Grace Ogot's The Green Leaves*

Anshula Upadhyay, A postgraduate in English Literature from the University of Delhi.

Article received: 11/01/2022, Article Accepted: 05/02/2022, Article Published: 08/02/2022, DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.47311/IJOES.2022.4203>

Abstract

The conceptual idea of decolonization can be revisited and re-evaluated in the context of the divergent identity discourses centered around races and ethnicities. The process of Decolonisation is not alien or isolated; it is rather gradual and syncretic. The paper presents a new nomenclature to the globalized subject as a decolonized and perpetually "recolonized" subject. The conundrum extends itself to cosmopolitanism and globalization due to its universality yet exclusive stance. The paper excavates multiple positionalities and subjectivities in and around postcoloniality.

Keywords: Decolonization, discourse, identity, African decolonization, recolonization, globalisation.

"Let us call people by what they call themselves."

(In an interview on "Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature," Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o) (1.)

Postcolonialism was institutionalized in the last decades of the Twentieth century. The discourse existed in more heterogeneous forms such as oral narratives, theoretical fields, or in aesthetic arts. The inherent heterogeneity of the colonial discourse and its realization in different nation-states creates a plethora of backlash against the predominant ideas of colonialism, it is a continuous process of negotiated resistance and reconstruction, a formation of the postcolonial self.

"The basic confrontation which seemed to be colonialism versus anti-colonialism, indeed capitalism versus socialism, is already losing its importance. What matters today, the issue which blocks the horizon is the need for a

redistribution of wealth. Humanity will have to address this question, no matter how devastating the consequences maybe."

(Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*)

Frantz Fanon's concepts of decolonization hinges on the recuperation of agency and subjectivity, the Colonised things become the decolonized 'New Man.'

Primary sources of postcolonial and decolonization studies focus on a phallogocentric reincarnation post the physical and metaphorical independence from the colonial master. " Dipesh Chakrabarty asserts that complete decolonization never happened. Postcolonial theories are a therapeutic catharsis to come to terms with the trauma of self-alienation under the colonial rule. Colonial legacies continue through power structures and discourses in civil and political society.

There is a continuous process of engagement and contestation of cultural hybridity in the dynamics of postcolonialism, as Homi Bhabha defines it.

'The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white.'

Arjun Appadurai's work, "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization" connects modernity with decolonization and globalization, "the nation-state, as a complex modern political form, is on its last legs." It borrows heavily from Foucault, Habermas, and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, *Modernity at Large* attempts to incorporate the "work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity." (2.)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Hence the process of Decolonisation is not alien or isolated; it is rather gradual and syncretic. The territorial decolonization escalated into the symbolic realms of decolonization and possible counter-discourses to the same. The current historiography needs to be redrawn and Decolonisation is entrenched in the post-war international history, such as the Cold War, Globalization, and Neocolonisation.

Tropical Africa has not in the globalization literature that is under such labels as black hole blank space and the Heart of Darkness, even in the narratives of the twenty-first century. As decolonization evolved even more rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century, it became a volatile topic of discussion. Most of the scholarly work was done by examination of decolonization in a national or regional context of Sub-Saharan Africa as the Europeans 'carved up' the continent in the late nineteenth century. In 'The wretched of the earth,' Frantz Fanon establishes Decolonization is always a violent phenomenon: 'The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and blood-stained knives which emanate from it' Neocolonialism is the 'worst form of imperialism'

The pervasive force of Capitalism recollects a staunch history of oppression and mercantilism. The inception of Colonialism had an entrenched base in capitalistic exploitation which has mutated into the monster of globalization, nowadays.

In "The empire writes back" is concerned with the instrument of writing than with the language it utilizes. It involves the seizing of the means of communication as well as the adaptation of the written language as being crucial to independence from the colonial situation.

Hyphenated or not, postcolonialism veers toward the vague and intrudes upon decolonization in its cultural considerations. The 'imperial gaze' must be replaced. The politics and dynamics of decolonization followed by newly independent nations of the middle twentieth century often displayed an emphasis on modernisation; the democratisation of politics as the marginalised groups too sought a more global, "deterritorialised" identity. This led to the emergence of post-structuralist and postmodern theories that were opposed to the territorial imagination of the nation-state along with the contradiction against Recolonisation.

Globalisation exacerbates the clash between certain norms of modernisation or modernity and the global momentum of the forces of democratisation. The dialogical side of Decolonisation makes it both topical and universal, and hence the present forces of globalization consummate with the orientalist ideology to create the neo-imperial forces.

Empire after Globalisation revisits the legacy of colonial expeditions like the East India Company's annexation of Awadh and the same dynamics of globalisation in contemporary times. The dictum which Partha Chatterjee uses for the same is 'democracy at home, despotism abroad.'

However the idea of renunciation, reincarnation or liberty had a core lacuna, it was not allowed to include female autonomy or subjectivity. Their bodies were still colonized by postcolonial theorists like Edward Said and writers like Chinua Achebe. My paper concentrates on the peculiarity of decolonization and globalisation in the African Continent from a subaltern perspective of marginalized female writers, Bessie Head and Grace Ogot. Gayatri Spivak is one of the first philosophers to introduce the question of gender into the discussion of postcolonial criticism. Hence the postcolonial female subjectivity is formed around a counter-discourse to the phallogocentric colonized male identity in the contemporary world of globalization.

Bessie Head's humanism and ardent expropriation of the fetishised and hypersexualized female body creates an alternative narrative especially in "The Collector of Treasures;" where the male order receives a literal castration to make an epochal space for the female sorority (3.). Bessie Head distances herself from the "Black Consciousness" of the African Men to indulge in the exploited agency of the Rural Women. She utilises the technique of Oral Bardic Tradition of a female culture to contradict the white colonisers and the black masculine decolonization. There is a staunch criticism of globalization and capitalism which is equated with masculinist hegemony. Women have triply subjugated victims to the parochial ideologies of colonialism, apartheid, patriarchy, and capitalism.

The Pan African decolonization coupled with the emergence of globalization ostracized the anachronic female consciousness; Dikeledi Mokopi violently reacts against the breakdown of familial system, microcosmically representing a schismatic nation.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

"Men and women, to survive, had to turn inwards to their resources. It was the man who arrived at this turning point, a broken wreck with no inner resources at all." Capitalism as a pervasive discourse has created a rupture in the continuum of African folklore and death of the quintessential storyteller as quoted in Benjamin's concept of a decadent storyteller. Head's concept of universal human identity and androgyny subverts the gendered representation of masculinised African women and effeminate African men in the discourse of neo-colonialism.

Head subverts female madness as a vehicle to transverse and recollects the historical memories and personal stories of apartheid South Africa and fiddle with the socio-cultural, racialized, and gendered political stories within the borderlands of a world divided by race and gender.

Dikeledi and her co prisoners have an aberrant community of female beings who decolonized their bodies and sexuality by violently deracinating the male order. Garesego represents the colonised Africa's animalistic man and post-independence rotten new man whose deep involvement with globalisation ruins the communitarian humanity and makes him the masculine emancipated recolonized subject whose chain process of decolonization and then recolonization involved a forced alteration to the already colonized female body.

Paul Theoblo as the man who created himself anew is the ideal new man for Head whose decolonization is contingent on the decolonization and sexual autonomy of the feminine body. I hereby present a new nomenclature to the globalized subject as a decolonized and perpetually "recolonized" subject. Dikeledi violently castrates the recolonization of the African territory by decolonizing her own body. She is the quintessential female gossips who tend to distance themselves from the "male politicization," to form a subculture. Her progeny of male heirs is metaphorically fathered by the new enlightened man Paul Theoblo.

Head depicts a gender complementarily in conjugal relationships that is ordinarily gazed upon as a volatile and axiomatic zone of conflict. Gendered harmony as an idyllic space defeats the recolonized and capitalistic globalisation; it enhances the cathartic process of decolonization.

According to Head, her collection deals "specifically with the information given to about women and their position in society." She portrays sexual promiscuity, brashness, and insensitivity that characterize African society, highlighting, in the process, the gender-specific issues.

The oral poetry or songs on pre-colonial heroes are found in the works of Ogot and Ngugi. Ogot returns to the precolonial presents of the Luo to critique Kenya's post-independence present. Ogot projects herself into the post-independence discourse when she re-writes one of her community's myths.

Decolonization and globalisation created a "Literary Barrenness" of East African Literature. The overwhelming presence of masculine discourse in Postcolonial Literature creates a dysfunctional as well as dystopic scope for female enunciation. Ogot's writing technique includes the combination of older forms of folklore and contemporary post-independence Africa. She fundamentally devises a counter-hegemonic narrative, critical of both European Modernity and African phallogocentric exclusion of female subjectivity. She writes back to both the empire and patriarchy. Her fundamental idea of counter-discourse fiddles with silences and eloquence for the female characters. She tends to be a catalyst in decolonizing the character representation and articulating autonomy for the women.

In "The Green Leaves," the idea of collective informs the gender relations and communitarian or individualistic liberty (4.). Nyagar's transgression of the tribal dictum incriminates his individualistic egoism juxtaposed with communitarian altruism. It is symptomatic of the tragic schizophrenia of the decolonized self in a setup of globalisation and neo colonialism. The conundrum of tradition-modernity is a discourse of hybridity between the tribal rules and the Enlightenment virtues of the west. The death of Nyagar is a metaphor for the ritualistic expulsion and negation of a Recolonized identity pervasive in pre-independence as well as in the age of globalisation. This touches upon the tribal discourse on scapegoatism where the communitarian defense against the foreign ideological invasion can be fulfilled by a ritualistic sacrifice of the subject who had gone astray.

Ogot deflates the tragic hero status of Nyagar, unlike the tragic Okonkwo of Things Fall Apart, as he becomes a victim of imminent capitalism. Nyamundhe's initial silence

RESEARCH ARTICLE

makes her the representative of a colonized and oppressed voice. She mirrors the decolonizing techniques in the novel, including the use of vernacular language and English and subversion of the western realistic techniques to create a subaltern voice. The Luos people are symptomatic of the urge for decolonization as they repudiate the western ethics of justice and their hideous idea of colonizing Nyagar's body through an Autopsy. They strive for a ritualistic communitarian cremation against the colonial disembowelment of the liminal Nyagar.

The voiceless Nyamundhe articulates a violent attack against the colonization of her sexuality either by the clan or the colonial state by using the lamentation song as a measure to assert her agency. She completely abandons the native patriarchy or the western orientalist discourse and hence escapes the double colonization. The white man in the narrative is a symbol of anarchy. Like the Igbo people in *Things Fall Apart*, Luo people to strive for a new self, decolonized from the white or the entrenched tribal ideas. There is also a subversion of the male bardic storytelling tradition and the western ethnographic tradition as Nyamundhe's songs establish a female-communitarian process of decolonization.

Dikeledi's perpetration of a violent castration holds a feminine communitarian analogy with Nyamundhe's cathartic song. They are a ritualistic reassertion of a decolonized re-articulation and sexual autocracy, free from the native patriarchy or the western diminution; they create a decolonized luminal structure against the anachronic and formless form of globalization.

"All these mourners cheat me now
Yes, they cheat me"

Globalization as a discourse has tried to neo-colonize and create a bleached identity for the Black being. The capitalistic venture tries to exploit the already repressed female subjectivity.

"A formulation of decolonization in which autonomy and self-determination are central to the process of liberation and can only be achieved through a self-reflective collective practice. The process of decolonization, like any transformation of self, must come from a reflective evaluation of one's person.

That is, it requires self-reflexive collective practice in the transformation of the self, reconceptualization of identity, and political mobilization as necessary elements of the practice of decolonization. When decolonization is accepted as a fate by the person, they then reconsider the perspective of the dominant group's ideologies on issues such as the heterosexual, patriarchal, colonial, racial, and capitalist influences in their own daily lives and the world around them."

(Chandra

Talpade Mohanty)

REFERENCES

Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o
The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon,

Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, Arjun Appadurai