

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigation of Postcolonial themes and issues: an overview

Dr.Riazul Hoque, Associate Professor, Deptt. Of English, Rupahi College,P.O. Rupahi, District. Nagaon, Assam- 782125

Abstract:

The postcolonial writing which is a branch of postmodern literature is concerned with the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people of colonial era. It is primarily concerned with the conflicts between suppressor and suppressed, mainstream and marginalized, ruler and subjects and simultaneously it glorifies the suppressed 'other'. It questions the dominant culture and challenges the concept of established authority. It studies the after effects of response and resistance to the legacy of colonization in the areas of philosophy and literature and points out the identity of the subjugated and colonized people. Postcolonial literature has been enriched by some well known postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Spivak Chokraborty, Homi Bhabha, Fanon, Anthony Appiah, Ashcraft, Griffin and Edward Said. A postcolonial text rigorously investigate and interrogates the themes and issues of postcolonialism. Postcolonial books generally deal with the issues and themes of diaspora, hybridity, national identity, subalternity, mimicry etc.

Keywords: post colonialism, postmodern, subjugated, colonial, investigates

Postcolonial is a contested term as there is no consensus yet among the intelligentsia and academicians regarding the common concept of it. The postcolonial writing which is a branch of postmodern literature is concerned with the political and cultural independence of formerly subjugated people of colonial era. It is primarily concerned with the conflicts between suppressor and suppressed, mainstream and marginalized, ruler and subjects and simultaneously it glorifies the suppressed 'other'. It questions the dominant culture and challenges the concept of established authority.

Systematically the literature of the erstwhile colonized countries together is known as Third World Literature. Thereafter it comes to be known as Commonwealth Literature. At present it is in more refined term known as Postcolonial Literature or Postcolonial Studies or postcolonialism. The postcolonial literature

originates in former colonies. It is reflection of changes in social, cultural. Economic and political practices in newly free regions and it rebels against anything that reminds us about former colonial masters. If we explain postcolonialism in historical context, then postcolonialism starts from the time when colonialism is forced to expire. Meenakshi Mukherjee is absolutely right when she refers to Postcolonialism as "not merely a chronological label referring to the period after the collapse of empires. It is ideologically an emancipatory concept particularly for the students of literature outside western world" (Mukherjee 03). Another critic G. Rai supports Meenakshi Mukherjee and observes, "Postcolonialism is an enterprise which seeks emancipation from all types of subjugations defined in terms of gender, race and class. It does not introduce a new world which is free from ills of colonialism; it rather suggests both continuity and change" (Rai 02)

Postcolonialism can be explained in narrow term as a tool of cultural politics and literature at the hands of the writers and politicians who belonged to the countries which were under the control of colonial powers. Though there are different interpretations of the term but most of the postcolonial thinkers came to a conclusion that even after the departure of colonizers, the colonial impacts are still evident in colonized countries.

Postcolonialism can be defined in simple term as "a set of theoretical approaches which focus on the direct effects and aftermaths of Colonisation" (Toronto Conference 2002) whereas Mishra and Hodges explain postcolonialism as "an always present tendency in any literature of subjugation marked by a systematic process of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power" which as they indicate, means that postcolonialism is "already implicit in the discourse of colonialism" (Das 52). Henceforth, it studies the after effects of response and resistance to the legacy of colonization in the areas of philosophy and literature and points out the identity of the subjugated and colonized. Postcolonial literature has been enriched by some well known postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Spivak

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Chokraborty, Homi Bhabha, Fanon, Anthony Appiah, Ashcraft, Griffin and Edward Said.

Some well known postcolonial texts that focus on postcolonial traits are Cinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* (1981), Jamica Kincard's *A Small Place* (1988), Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992), Isabelle Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1982), Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990), J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians and Disgrace* (1990) and Evan Boland's *Outside History: Selected Poems* (1980-1990). This text rigorously investigates and interrogates the themes and issues of postcolonialism.

The revolutionary text of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) points out ontological and epistemological difference between 'Orient' and 'Occident'. Orientalism is a western manufactured institution dealing with orient "by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (Said 03). Western World has manipulated the term orient for Eastern World and represented it as "mysterious, exotic, erotic, barbaric, superstitious and irrational" (Khan 85). It gives the image of East as inferior, lazy and wicked and they are having the dependence tendency. According to Orientalists, Western are more educated, civilized and superior and so they are competent enough to subjugate and exploit the colonized people. The Western think themselves as guide and torch bearers for the East. It is the responsibility of the West to educate and civilize the East. Edward Said opines "The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury of every facet of oriental behaviour" (Said 284). Postcolonial books generally deal with the issues and themes of diaspora, hybridity, national identity, subalternity, mimicry etc.

Diaspora is the voluntary or enforced migration of people from their native homelands. Diasporic consciousness has emerged as the subject matter of the postcolonial books. V.S. Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, Hanif Kureishi are the writers who have given outlines to their experiences and the suffering and pain that a diasporic man undergoes when he is dangling for his location. The authors like Avtar Brah, Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha have convincingly presented the predicaments and struggles of the diasporic people.

Postcolonial authors reveal the agony of the men when they become homeless and long for their original homes.

Another important issue of postcolonialism is the hybridity. Hybridity is the creation of new transcultural forms that arise from cross-cultural exchange. The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilization of cultures, can be seen as positive, enriching, and dynamic, as well as as oppressive. Hybridity is also a useful concept for helping to break the false sense that colonized cultures- or colonizing cultures for that matter – are monolithic, or have essential, unchanging features. Hybridity can be social, political, linguistic, religious etc. It is not necessarily a peaceful mixture for it can be contentious and disruptive in its experience. The centre point of postcolonialism is "global mixing of culture's and identities" (Rai 10) and the concept of hybridity becomes one of the themes of postcolonialism. Intermixing of cultures create a hybrid culture. Om P. Juneja terms the colonial hybrid "an ape and/ a rebel" (Juneja 30). Homi Bhabha is also involved with the issue. He focuses on the interdependence of colonized and colonizers in his article "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences". Bhabha proposes for an inter-national culture "not based on exoticism or multi-culturalism of the diversity of culture but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (Ibid 311).

Mimicry is another dominant issue of postcolonialism. It is the way by which colonized people adapt the culture (language, education, clothing etc) of the colonizers but always in the process changing it in important ways. Macaulay's *Minute* (1835) gives "good number of mimic men who are Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay 49). According to Homi Bhabha this type of mimicry involves ironic compromise. The reality is that this mimic man is the only mimic and can not be real one. Bhabha observes: "They are almost the same but not white" (Ibid 384). Globalisation has given birth to 'global justice' by creating an environment for the realization of cultural and political identity. It is better to post the past of colonialism for the bright future of postcolonialism. That day is not far when the postcolonialism will post even the painful memories of colonialism and will make it post-past colonialism.

REFERENCES

Das, Samir K. "Postcolonial Studies", *Modern Critical Theory*, Bareilly: P.B.D. 2005

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ibid.

Juneja, Om P., op.cit

Khan, Munejah. "Colonial discourse in E.M. Froster's A Passage to India", The SPIEL Journal of English Studies, Vol. 2 No. 1 Jan. 2006

Macaulay, T.B. "Minute in Education", Source of Indian Traditions, Vol. LI, Ed. William Theodore de Bary,, New York:Columbia University Press, 1958

Mukherjee, Meenakshi, Harish Trivedi, (ed.) Interrogating Postcolonialism: Theory, Text and Context, Shimla:Institute of Advanced Studies, 1996 Rai G. op.ct.

----- "Postcolonialism: Its Meaning and Significance", The SPIEL Journal of English Studies, Vol. 1 No. 2 Jan. 2005

Said, Edward. Orientalism, New York etal: Penguin Books, 1978

----- "Crisis in Orientalism", Modern Criticism and Theory:

A Reader, ed. David Lodge, Delhi: Pearson Education, 2003

<http://www.Altavista.com> on "Post-colonialism Today: Theoretical Challenges and Pragmatic Issues" based on a Multidisciplinary Conference held in Toronto from September, 26-28, 2002.