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### ASPECTS OF POST-COLONIAL THEORY

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**ABSTRACT :**

*Postcolonial theory is not a single theory like some other theories such as feminist or Marxist theories. There is no consensus and clarity as regards what definitely constitutes post-colonialism. It has not a single dominant principle. A number of different theories are unified under the nomenclature of post-colonial theory. Diverse post-colonial theories focus on*



*different issues such as literature, art, linguistic, history, political system and ideologies. It is highly impossible that a single theory will deal with all these diverse theoretical developments. But there is one principle which unites all the postcolonial theories- all the postcolonial theories offer a critique of the Eurocentric thinking. Postcolonial theory is invariably anti-colonial.*

**KEYWORD :** *Postcolonial theory , dominant principle , theoretical developments.*

**INTRODUCTION :**

It challenges and tries to subvert exploitative and discriminative practices of colonialist rules anywhere in the world. But even various anti-colonial movements are not same in the varied parts of the world. Anti-colonial movements are defined by context- geographical, cultural, social and political.

The postcolonial theory has its roots in the colonial experience of subjugation in the past. But it doesn't mean that postcolonial theory deals exclusively with the past. While studying the past, it also studies the present realities which invariably are the results or consequences of the colonial past. Postcolonial theory does not belong to a single nation or single continent or a single field of unified theory. We find various thinkers, scholars and writers from various fields and ideologies whose writings can be termed as postcolonial, anti-establishment and anti-Eurocentric. Writers and thinkers such as Toni Morrison, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, came from different backgrounds and ideologies. But still they don't speak for their own culture or for a single ideology. Instead, they speak for the subjugated and oppressed humanity dispersed all over the world.

The postcolonial theorists have used various concepts to describe the effects of colonial rule on colonised subjects and society. One such important concept is alienation. Colonizers have implemented their learning contents and methodologies of instruction on colonised people which has produced and shaped their consciousness. So it has produced a divide between what is taught, inculcated and the surroundings, local environment and culture. Colonisers inculcated that their lifestyle and culture is superior to that of colonised. All this resulted in rejection of local culture, values and environment. It also produced

an irresistible attraction for the culture and lifestyle of the colonisers. Frantz Fanon has explained the concept of alienation in relation with the colonisation of mind. Fanon says that the colonised subject has two worlds—his local world or environment and the world of the colonisers. Here the coloniser's world is considered to be far more superior and standard compared to the world of colonised. The process of consciousness formation is two way and opposite. The coloniser's world and lifestyle are valued and considered to be superior, while at the same time the lifestyle and world of colonised is devalued and made inferior. Acquiring coloniser's life-style and standards is set to be goal of education and development. This produces an alienation from local culture, values and environment.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is another important aspect of postcolonial theory. Hybridity refers to the transformations that take place in both colonisers and colonised people in the process of colonisation and in the aftermath of colonisation. Hybridity also refers to the creation of new transcultural forms in the new space of contact zones of colonisation in the various forms of life such as cultural, linguistic and social etc. Bhabha rejects the coloniser's claim of cultural purity. The concept of hybridity is useful in breaking down the false sense of superiority in colonisers. Colonisers always feel that their culture is unchanging, superior and monolithic. Collier and Geyer-Ryan comment on this aspect of Bhabha's theory in following words:

*Both Bhabha and Spivak , then, elaborate the difficulties of articulating a notion of cultural identity. They reject that identity whenever it is defined merely as the 'other'( the negative image) of a position of coercive power, and their models take on a resonance which disturbs our own readings and position, whatever our progressive intention. ( Collier, Geyer-Ryan, 7)*

He emphasises the interdependence of both coloniser and colonised on each other and says that identities of both are constructed in the process of colonisation. In his opinion the culture of coloniser and colonised interact with each other and this interaction leads to cultural mixedness. Bhabha explains this phenomenon with the language. The language of the coloniser becomes hybrid in the process of colonisation. When two cultures interact with each other, a new culture is created which invariably changes each of the two cultures. This assimilation and integration of two different cultures is enriching and oppressive at one and the same time. Bhabha points out the hybridity and cultural polyvalency in colonial and postcolonial situations. It is possible that an individual may be part of both cultures at one and same time.

Postcolonial concept of subaltern is drawn from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. M. H. Abrams explains the concept of subaltern in the following words:

*The subaltern has become a standard way to designate the colonial subject that has been constructed by European discourse and internalised by colonial people who employ this discourse; "subaltern" is a British word for someone of inferior rank, and combines the Latin terms for "under"(sub) and "other"(alter).(Abrams , 237)*

Gramsci's explained the control of working class people by capitalist by using the concept of cultural hegemony in which it is impressed on the poor people that the goals and aims of the rich people in society are also goals and aims of the poor. In this way the subaltern people willingly participate in their own oppression. This willingness is acquired either by marginalisation or by partially admitting the goals of oppressed people. The consent of the oppressed people is achieved by using power or soft power. Subaltern consists of peasants, the poor, tribes, workers and women whose voice has been silenced for centuries. They are the marginalised groups in the society. Gayatri Spivak in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* explains the concept of subaltern in detail. Spivak also uses the subaltern for oppressed subjects. She says that subaltern is not allowed to speak. She also makes a point that the knowledge produced by the west is used for its economic interests.

Another two related aspects of post-colonial theory are resistance and self-assertion. Postcolonial theory offers a resistance to foreign interference and exploitation of the colonised people. The colonised subjects' opposition to operations of colonisation in all spheres of life can be termed as resistance. The colonies try to reject the colonial power and restore the local control. Anti-colonial movements that arose all over the world are instances of resistance. Frantz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) illustrates the cultural resistance to the colonising power of France. The other related aspect of resistance is self-assertion. The colonies have their own independent national, geographical, religious, cultural and ethnic identity which colonisers try to subvert by using various means. The colonised people assert their national identities and try to reclaim their regional identities which are subverted by the colonisers. Nativism is a very popular means of resistance in the postcolonial literature. Nativism consists of reviving, reclaiming and popularising the native culture and traditions. Another form of nativism is to reject the literary forms of the colonisers and revive the native forms of literature.

The founding concept of post-colonialism is orient or orientalism. Orientalism exposes and offers a critique of Eurocentric universalism. Edward Said's two books *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* made seminal contribution to the study of post-colonialism and orientalism. The Europeans consider superior anything that is western or European. But at the same time what is not European is considered as inferior or other. The concept of 'other' or 'otherness' is also important in postcolonial theory. The concept is created by the colonisers and it helps in defining what is normal and what is not. The 'other' is anyone who is separate from one's self. The 'other' is considered as primitive and violent. Said says that there is a long tradition of orientalism in western countries which looks at the East as inferior and other. The East functions as a repository or storehouse of those aspects of westerners which they refuse to acknowledge. The orient is considered as a mirror image of what is inferior and alien to the west. The orient is also considered as romantic, exotic and foreign. Patrick Williams comments on recurring concerns in Edward Said's work:

*His focus is the way in which western ideas about the orient have been linked to western military, economic and political acts towards the orient in the course of last two decades. In particular, he is concerned with western representation of the orient- from scientific theories to common-sense notions, from pictorial images to literary narratives- and the forms of the 'knowledge' they produce. (Williams, 272)*

Edward Said pointed out two important things about representations of orient by west. There is sameness in west's representations of Orient. Irrespective of field of knowledge, same ideas recur in the west's discourse on orient. They produce a stereotype about the orient in the minds of westerners. Moreover these discourses always present orient in negative terms. As west portrays orient always as negative and inferior, it helps them construct a positive and superior identity of themselves. The concept of orient is used by European people to create a binary opposition between west and east.

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