

What is post colonialism in africa?



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The final hour of colonialism has struck, and millions of inhabitants of Africa, Asia and Latin America rise to meet a new life and demand their unrestricted right to self-determination.;

Che Guevara

The researcher would like to enquire into the veracity of the term ‘ Post-colonialism’. According to definition, post-colonialism is a specifically post-modern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism. Post-colonialism comprises a set of theories found amongst philosophy, film, political science, human geography, sociology, feminism, religious and theological studies, and literature.[2]

The ultimate aim of post-colonialism is seen as the destruction of the colonial ways. It is not a concept that talks about salvaging the past worlds but moving altogether away from the period, into an era of mutual respect and understanding. Another important aspect of post-colonialism theorists is making space for multiple voices. This holds good especially for those voices, that were dominated by strong ideological forces, i. e., the subalterns.

Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, an Indian literary critic, theorist and self described “ practical Marxist-feminist-deconstructionist” is best known for her article, ‘ Can a Subaltern Speak?’, considered a founding text for post-colonialism.[3]Her main contribution in post colonial theory came with her definite definition of the term ‘ subaltern’. She also introduced terms such as ‘ essentialism’, ‘ strategic essentialism’. The former term refers to the dangers of reviving subaltern voices in ways that might simplify

heterogeneous groups, creating stereotyped impressions of their diverse group. Spivak however believes that essentialism can sometimes be used strategically by these groups to make it easier for the subaltern to be heard and understood when a clear identity can be created and accepted by the majority. It is important to distinguish that 'strategic essentialism' does not sacrifice its diversity and voices but that they are being downplayed temporarily to support the essential element of the group.[4]

Another important contributor to post-colonial theory is Frantz Fanon. In his book, 'The Wretched of the Earth', he analyzes the nature of colonialism and those subjugated by it. He believes colonialism to be as source of violence. Critiques for further studies into colonialism and post-colonialism was laid down by his portrayal of the relationship between colonialism and its attempts to deny 'all attributes of humanity' to those it suppressed.[5]

In some senses, post-colonialism is seen as the destabilizing of the colonial effect. In India, the colonial era is said to have originated from the time the British step foot in India as the East India Company in the 1600's. Since then they expanded their territorial control over Indian lands as the years went by and within no time had the trade, revenue, judicial and all other economic aspects of the country in their hands. The British rule in India had greater negatives than positives which continue to have its effects in post-colonial India. Be it in politics or cinemas. The real question is how colonial is post-colonial India. Even though the British have left India, their ways have been integrated into every part of the Indian system to such an extent that its functioning without the British touch is impossible. The system of education evolved by the British can be viewed as both advantageous and

disadvantageous , the disadvantages having the upper hand. The system of education evolved was the Rote system of learning. This was learning merely done by habitual repetition and memorising. This made the Indians , what V. S. Naipaul would describe as, ' Mimic Men', where the Indians are nothing but mimics of the West. The only advantage that could be seen was that everyone, irrespective of which class they belonged to were to sit together and learn from the same text. But this can hardly be seen as secular when the British considered themselves superior to the entire Indian race.

Even though, the common opinion is that the colonial era started with the British rule in India, many still beg to differ. Some are of the opinion that, it wasn't the British who started the colonial rule in India but it was the Islamic invasion in the 10th century and continued from the Delhi sultanate to the Mughal Empire. When the British came to India they were colonizing and already colonized state that was celebrating freedom from the Mughals.[6]

The post-colonial studies is a huge range of studies ranging from politics to cinema. The researcher would like to concentrate on two aspects of education and poverty.

The Indian Colonial Legacy

The researcher is of the opinion that in order to thoroughly understand the post-colonial situation of India, one has to understand the colonial structure that was prevalent in India.

Andre Gunther Frank describes India aptly as the ' development of under-development'. The colonial structure in India was such it would reproduce

itself unless it was shattered. The colonial structure in India had four distinct features.

The first was the integration of the Indian economy to that of the world economist system. But this integration was complex and complete and was done in such a way that the Indian economy was subservient to the others.

The second was the twin processes of unequal exports and imports that took place simultaneously. India was a hub for raw materials such as jute, cotton etc. Thus the British, adopted a system of production in India whereby, it specialized in the production of raw materials. In the same sense, British specialized in the production of manufactured goods. Thus, India exported raw materials and foodstuffs whereas it imported manufactured goods.

However, this exchange was an unequal one to the detriment of the Indian economy. India was merely reduced to the status of a mere agrarian appendage and a subordinate trading partner of Britain. Thus, it obtained the characteristics of a classic economy. This feature of colonialism continued even though certain labour-intensive industries such as those that manufactured jute were created and exported their products and certain machines and tools, though on a paltry scale were imported. The main reason of the low productivity of the Indian economy as compared to the other metropolitan countries including the British, was in particular, the system of international division of labour . This system had been integrated into the production systems of the metropolitans countries which resulted in the production of high-technology, high-productivity, high-wage and capital intensive goods. Whereas India produced, low-wage, low-technology, low-

productivity, labour-intensive goods. Thus, international trade became an instrument of exploitation and underdevelopment.

The third feature of colonialism in India, which is perhaps the most important, was the appropriation of the social surplus generated by the British. The small rate of internal savings made it almost impossible for future investments within the country. The most important factor, was the ‘Drain’-the unilateral transfer of social surplus or potential investible capital to Britain by the colonial state, its officials, foreign merchants and other capitalists through unrequired exports. According to RC Dutt, the drain constituted nearly one-half of India’s net revenue. Another reason of the transfer of Indian surplus to the British was through military expenditure. Almost 30-50 per cent of the surplus was diverted for imperial purposes. It enabled Britain to expand and maintain its imperialist stronghold on Africa and Asia. The British government spend very little on the development of agriculture and industry, social infrastructure and nation-building activities such as education and health. Even the tax structure was highly inequitable and regressive. The poor were over burdened by the salt tax.

The fourth basic feature of colonialism was the subordination of the Indians to the British by the colonial state and in constructing, determining and maintaining other features of a colonial state. India’s policies were determined in the interests of the British economist class. No state support was provided for the Indian agricultural industries which lead to agricultural stagnation. In the nineteenth century, the colonial state refused to take any steps to check or slow down the ruin of handicraft industries and the process

of deindustrialization. The colonial state imposed free trade in India and did not give any protection to its infant industries.

Some major developments that occurred in the 1930-1940 imparted a certain strength and base for post-independence development, different from most other post-colonial societies. These positive features related to the development of a small but independent, Indian-owned and controlled, industrial base and the rise of a substantial indigenous industrial capitalist class with an independent economic and financial base.

INDIAN POST-COLONIALISM

Poverty

At the time of Independence and even after more than years of that, the concepts of welfare, secularism and development are matters of utmost importance. The projects of a welfare-state have gradually been on the decline due to changing economic policies brought about by processes of globalization. The imperative reason for welfarism was the wide-spread poverty and ignorance. Even after more than fifty years of Independence, more than 35% of the Indian population still exist below the poverty line, and problems of acute food insecurity still continue to occur.

The government has concentrated a great deal in bringing Green Revolution to agriculture, just as how the British had done to their economy, but completely neglected the rainfed agriculture, which accounts for more than 70% of the land under cultivation. The concentrations of people below the poverty line are higher in those areas where this is rainfed agriculture. Ironical but true. One such place is the Kalahandi district in Orissa.

Since 1985, Kalahandi was seen food crises of alarming dimensions. Officially recorded as drought but critics call it famine. The Baidyanath Mishra Commission Report 1991 officially stated the deaths occurring due to starvation. The report documented the terrible conditions of poverty, unemployment and absence of proper sanitation facilities. It recorded high rates of migration in search of wages and food. It also recorded high levels of indebtedness and exploitation of the rural especially the tribal poor. The commission also pointed out that a large portion of the development funds that were rendered to this district were used wastefully. Neither the emergency feeding nor the gratuitous relief nor the somewhat poor levels of development funds have enabled the poor in this area to be relieved of hunger or to helped them gain an independent mean of survival. Resources that have flown into Kalahandi have been misutilized , misadministered and even misappropriated on the way to whom it deserves.

The researcher would like to draw a parallel between the colonial times and post-colonial times as regards the misappropriation of funds. Earlier, the colonial state would use the economic social surplus to serve their own interests without paying attention to the needs of the locals. Even in post-colonial times, it is ironic, that the same behaviour is rampant even after gaining independence. Earlier, it was the whole of the Indian state who was subservient to the British as they colonised the locals. Today, the situation cannot be said, is very different, because it is the wealthier classes who colonise and restrict the rights of the lower classes. The landless tribals are treated more like subjects than citizens. Even the Mishra Commission suggested that the people be educated by the welfare functionaries of the

government, as to how to assert their legal and constitutional rights, and that their rehabilitation should not begin or end with giving government subsidies as largesses (1991: 64).[7]

The reactions to cases such as Kalahandi have been democratic and parliamentary, but many a times, the reactions to unjust social processes have been from parliamentary, as can be seen in the case of the Narmada valley Projects and the Sardar Sarovar Dam. The latter is the first of the collective works of the Narmada Valley Projects. This project has been projected as necessary for economic growth and for providing drinking water to drought-affected areas. This claim has however, often been questioned by critics. In this situation the citizens are at a double advantage as compared to the citizens of Kalahandi, because they are landless labourers and are additionally victims of involuntary displacement and even sometimes even of forced eviction.

The researcher would like to note that in colonial times, there were uprisings against the unfair economic plans of the government which were unparliamentary. Even today, the same continues, where the marginalized are suppressed but refused to be so which result in agitations eschewing the institutions of formal democracy and even result in the boycott of elections.

Post-partition aftermath

The happiness of the long and arduous process of gaining Independence in 1947 was marred by the trauma of partition. This led to a change in the landscape of literature during this point. This point in history was a nodal point in the shift of literary culture. The horror and the unleashed

mindlessness could not be explained in any way. The Hindi and Urdu writers were faced with a new social landscape which was characterized by people shifting base from one place to the other, envisaged with expressions of despair and unhappiness. The partition resulted in questions of identity, homelessness, alienation and rootlessness. This was highlighted in the writings of this period by writers such as Krishnan Chander , Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishna Sobti etc. Their writings were characterized by feelings of anger and negation.

The partition saw the expulsion of ten million Hindus and Sikhs Pakistan and seven million Muslims from India. This led to ethnic conflicts between the borders resulting in terrible wars. The after math of this still is visible today in the controversy of Jammu and Kashmir.