

India after independence essay sample

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



Postcolonialism (also Post-colonial theory, Postcolonial studies, and Post-colonialism) comprises methods of intellectual discourse that present analyses of, and responses to, the cultural legacies of colonialism and of imperialism, which draw from different post-modern schools of thought, such as critical theory. In the field of anthropology, post-colonial studies record the human relations among the colonial nations and the peoples of the colonies they had ruled and exploited. [1] Post-colonial critical theory draws from, illustrates, and explains with examples from the humanities — history, architecture, anthropology, the cinema, feminism, human geography, linguistics, Marxist theory, philosophy, political science, sociology, religion and theology, and post-colonial literature — to present the ideology and the praxis of contemporary (neo) colonialism.

Definition

Post-colonial theory — as epistemology, ethics, and politics — addresses the matters of post-colonial identity (cultural, national, ethnic), gender, race, and racism, and their interactions in the development of a post-colonial society, and of a post-colonial national identity; of how a colonized people's (cultural) knowledge was used against them, in service of the colonizer's interests; and of how knowledge about the world is generated under specific socio-economic relations, between the powerful and the powerless. Identity politics comprise the perspectives of the colonial subjects, his and her creative resistance to the colonizer's culture; and how that resistance psychologically complicated the imperial-colony project for the European man and woman. Hence, among the cultural media to aid colonisation was the anti-conquest

narrative genre, which produced colonial literature that ideologically legitimated the imperial domination of a people.

Characteristics

Post-colonial studies entail the critical destabilization of the intellectual and linguistic, social and economic theories that support the Western ways of thinking (Deductive reasoning, Rule of Law, Monotheism), of perceiving, understanding, and knowing the world; thus is intellectual space created for the subaltern peoples to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and so produce alternative conversations to the dominant “ Us-and-Them” discourse, between the colonist and the colonized. Occasionally, the term post-colonialism is applied literally — as the period after colonialism — which is problematic, given that the de-colonized world is filled with “ contradictions, of half-finished processes, of confusions, of hybridity, and liminalities”. [2] Hence does post-colonialism also denote the continuation of colonialism by other means — economic, cultural, and linguistic — by the “ Mother Country”, which are relationships of colonial power that control the production and distribution of knowledge about the world. [2][3]

In *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins clarified the denotational functions: The term post-colonialism — according to a too-rigid etymology — is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naïve teleological sequence, which supersedes colonialism, post-

colonialism is, rather, an engagement with, and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies. . . . A theory of post-colonialism must, then, respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism. — Post-Colonial Drama (1996). [4]

The Western Way of thinking about the world usually reduces the decolonized peoples, their cultures, and their countries, into a homogeneous whole, such as “ The Third World”, which conceptually comprises Africa, most of Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. Post-colonial studies analyses and criticises such an over-inclusive term, and its philosophic functions, to demonstrate that such a fantastic place as the Third World is composed of heterogeneous peoples and cultures, because the impact of colonialism varied by country, people, and culture.[5] The connections among the “ heart and margins” of the colonial empire are demonstrated by analyses of the ways in which “ relations, practices, and representations” of the past are “ reproduced or transformed”, of how knowledge of the world is generated and controlled.[5]

Post-colonial studies recognise that many of the intellectual, cultural, and religious assumptions that underlie the logic of colonialism remain active in contemporary society. [6] Some post-colonial theoreticians, such as Homi K. Bhabha, propose that the individual study of the colonial dominant knowledge of the world and of the Subaltern knowledge of the world, as if they exist in a binary intellectual-relation, perpetuates their existence as homogenous entities, rather than as an ambiguous whole. Hence, the post-

colonial world should give value to the hybrid socio-cultural spaces wherein truth and authenticity are displaced by ambiguity, therefore, the condition of hybridity poses the most profound philosophic challenge to colonialism.[7]

Goals

The ultimate purpose of Post-colonial Studies is to account for and to combat the residual effects of colonialism upon cultures different from the culture of the colonial Mother Country.[6] The principal goal of post-colonial theoreticians is clearing socio-cultural spaces for the voices of all the peoples of the world. This is especially true of the voices of the Subaltern peoples, whose voices previously were silenced by the dominant ideologies of the colonial powers. In the Western world, the Academy is the first place where such a socio-cultural space must be established. In the book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Saïd provided a lucid picture of how the European scholars, who studied what Westerners called “The Orient” (Asia), usually disregarded the perspectives of the Oriental peoples being studied, and, instead, preferred to rely upon their self-ascribed intellectual and cultural superiority to name, describe, and define, and so control, other peoples, places, and things — an attitude forged and facilitated by imperialism. Post-colonial theory establishes the philosophic framework that intellectually destabilizes the dominant discourses of the European West, by critically challenging the “inherent assumptions . . . [and the] material and discursive legacies of colonialism”.[2]

In order to challenge the cultural, intellectual, and philosophic assumptions and legacies of colonialism, post-colonial studies are based upon working

with tangible socio-cultural identities, connections, and processes, such as cultural identity in a colonized society; the dilemmas inherent to developing a national identity after de-colonization; the ways in which writers articulate and celebrate that identity, often reclaimed from the colonizer, whilst maintaining connections with the colonial Mother Country; the ways in which knowledge of the colonized people was generated and used to solely serve the interests of the colonial power; and the ways in which the literature of the colonial power justified colonialism with cultural representations (literary and pictorial) of the colonized country as a perpetually inferior people, society, and culture. In the event, post-colonialism permits the subaltern peoples reply to the colonial legacy of the Mother Country by writing back to the center, whereby, using the colonial language, the indigenous peoples write their own national histories, and create cultural legacies, for their own national purposes.[8] In post-colonial praxis, Indigenous decolonization is the intellectual impact of post-colonialist theory upon indigenous peoples, usually manifest in their post-colonial literature.

Notable theoreticians

Frantz Fanon

Post-colonialism: Frantz Fanon depicted in the cover of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon analysed the nature of colonialism and the detrimental effects of imperial European colonialism upon the mental health of the coloured peoples who had been subjugated into economic colonies. Hence, colonialism is a source of physical and mental violence that must be violently

resisted by the colonised peoples — because it is the essential nature of colonialism to systematically deny “ all attributes of humanity” of the colonised people. [9] As such, Fanon proposed that violent resistance to colonialism is a mentally cathartic practice that cleanses the psyche, and restores the human self-respect, of the men and women whose political oppression and economic subjugation was established and achieved by means of the dehumanizing epistemic violence of the institutions (social, economic, cultural) of the colonial power; thus did Fanon support the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in the Algerian War (1954–62) for the independence of Algeria from Metropolitan France. [10]

The socio-political analyses of the psychologically detrimental effects of colonial subjugation presented by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* were preceded, in 1909, by campaigns for Hind Swaraj (Indian self governance), by Mahatma Gandhi, which proposed similar analyses of British colonial rule as harmful to the mental health of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent. [11] (See: Benoy Kumar Sarkar) [12] Moreover, such analyses of post-colonialism and its supporting theories, derive from *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), by Lenin.[13]

Edward W. Saïd

Post-colonialism: Edward W. Saïd theoretically developed *Orientalism* and *The Other* to conceptually describe Western misrepresentations of non-Western cultures. The critic Edward W. Saïd developed the term *Orientalism* — originally used in Western intellectual discourse to describe the study and the artistic depictions of “ The Orient” — and extended its denotations and

connotations to describe a binary social relation of the world into “ Orient” and “ Occident”, The East and The West. [14] Hence, Saïd proposed that the Occident could not conceptually exist without the Orient, and vice versa, because they are they are mutually constitutive; each exists because of the other. Notably, the concept of the “ The East” was created by “ The West”, thereby suppressing the ability of the Asian Orientals to express themselves as discrete peoples and cultures, of the Middle East, of the Indian Subcontinent, et al. By means of the Us-and-Them binary social relationship, Western representations of the “ Oriental World”, as inferior and backward, irrational and wild, allowed the Western Europeans to (mis) represent themselves as superior and progressive, as rational and civil, the opposite of the Oriental Other. Power, knowledge, and control

In concordance with the philosopher Michel Foucault, Saïd proposed that power and knowledge are an inseparable binary intellectual relation; therefore, the Occidental claim to “ knowledge” of the Orient gave the West the power to name peoples, places, and cultures, and thus the power to control them, the peoples of The East.[3] The power-knowledge binary relationship is conceptually essential to understanding colonialism in general, and European colonialism in particular, and thus essential to recognising post-colonialism, thus: To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by them, or as a kind of cultural and international proletariat useful for the Orientalist’s grander interpretive activity. — Orientalism (1978), p. 208. [15]

Nonetheless, critics of Saïd's Orientalism propositions said that the homogeneous binary social relation of " Occident and Orient" is limited, in description and application, and proposed that there exist variants of Orientalism within the Western world. About which Saïd replied that the European West applied Orientalism as a homogeneous form of The Other, in order to facilitate the formation of a cohesive, collective European cultural identity. [16]

Gayatri Spivak

Engaging the Subaltern voice: the philosopher and theoretician Gayatri Spivak. The definition of the term Subaltern is the principal contribution to Post-colonial Studies, by the philosopher and theoretician Gayatri Spivak; about which she cautioned against assigning an over-broad connotation, that: . . . subaltern is not just a classy word for " oppressed", for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern — a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern. . . . Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don't need the word ' subaltern' . . . They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse.

They should not call themselves subaltern. — Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa (1992)

[17] Spivak also introduced the terms essentialism and strategic essentialism to describe the functions of post-colonialism; [5] the term essentialism denotes the perceptual dangers inherent to reviving subaltern voices in ways that might simplify the cultural identity of heterogeneous social groups, thereby creating stereotyped impressions of the diverse identities who compose the given group; the term strategic essentialism denotes a temporary, essential group-identity used in the praxis of inter-group relations, discourse among peoples. Moreover, essentialism occasionally can be strategically applied — by the so-described group of people — to facilitate the social-communication task of the subaltern, in being heeded, heard, and understood, because a strategic essentialism (a fixed and established subaltern identity) is more readily grasped and accepted by the popular majority.

The important distinction, between the terms, is that “ strategic essentialism” does not forego (come before in place of) inter-group diversity, but that, in its practical function, it temporarily minimizes inter-group diversity to support the essential element of the group identity. In a development of Michel Foucault’s work, Spivak applied the term epistemic violence to describe the destruction of non-Western ways of knowing the world, and the resultant dominance of the Western ways of perceiving, understanding, and knowing the world. Epistemic violence conceptually relates to the Subaltern, wherein the “ Subaltern must always be caught in translation, never truly expressing herself”, because of the colonial power’s

destruction of her culture, and the marginalization of her way of understanding and knowing the world.[5] For example, in Colonial Latin America, the oppressed subaltern woman conformed to the colonial culture of the Spanish Empire, and applied the filters of religion and servitude to her voice and language, when addressing the colonial oppressor.

In order to appeal to the good graces of their Spanish masters, slaves and natives masked their own voices and language with the cultural voice of the Spanish Crown. Spivak further cautioned against ignoring the Subaltern people as “cultural Others”, and proposed that the West could progress — beyond the perspective of post-colonialism — by means of introspective (examining 1s own tot n feelings) self-criticism of the basic ideals and investigative methods that feature a superior Western perspective in the study of non-Western peoples and cultures.[5][19] Hence, the integration (mixing of pl previously kept apart) of the Subaltern voice to the field of social studies is problematic, given the criticism, by social scientists, against the idea of studying “others”, which thus appeared infeasible; nonetheless, as an intellectual, Gayatri Spivak rejected such an anti-intellectual stance by social scientists, and said that “to refuse to represent a cultural Other is salving your conscience . . . allowing you not to do any homework.” [19] Moreover, post-colonial studies rejects the colonial cultural depiction of subaltern peoples as hollow mimics of the European colonials and their Western ways; and also rejects the depiction of subaltern peoples as the passive recipients of the power of the colonial country.

Post-colonial nations

Postcolonialism as a literary theory (with a critical approach), deals with literature produced in countries that once were colonies of other countries, especially of the European colonial powers Britain, France, and Spain; in some contexts, it includes countries still in colonial arrangements.[22] It also deals with literature written by citizens of colonial countries that portrays colonized people as its subject matter. It is suggested[by whom?] that there is a broad analytical division between the postcolonial nations and those nations that have been able to continue to forge nationalist unity and those marked by internal ethnic nationalist challenges. There is a strong commitment to the common political rules and institutions when it comes to the political elites from divergent political and ethnic backgrounds. There are various cases where such elites have created inclusive polyarchical regimes that are based on the accommodations, negotiation and fundamental acceptability of social interests present in Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, and possibly South Africa.

The second pattern that is seen in postcolonial nations has been associated with the degeneration of civic nationalist unity when it comes to the wake of parochial which is ethnic nation-protecting. This is done by narrowing the patrimonial regimes that are based to cling to power by relying on an exclusive pattern of rule. This is seen in the worst cases in areas such as Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The nation state simply breaks apart into either separate communal movements being the no nationalist aggrandizing goals or the mixed interethnic movements with separatist goals. In both of these cases there is a big

support by the military resources and a big social support to make sure that the perpetuation of relativity circumscribed territorial goals.

Criticism of national identity

Scholars criticize and question the recent post-colonial focus on national identity. The Moroccan scholar Bin ‘ Abd al-‘ Ali argues that what is seen in contemporary Middle Eastern studies is ‘ a pathological obsession with ... identity’.[30] Nevertheless, Kumaraswamy and Sadiki argue that the problem of the lack of Middle Eastern identity formation is widespread, and that identity is an important aspect of understanding the politics of the contemporary Middle East. [27] Ayubi (2001) questions if what Bin ‘ Abd al-‘ Ali described as an obsession with national identity may be explained by ‘ the absence of a championing social class?’[31]

Post-colonial literature

Main article: Postcolonial literature

Postcolonial literature is a body of literary writings that reacts to the discourse of colonization.