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## POSTCOLONIAL THEORIES: A BRIEF STUDY

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### **Abstract:**

*Human beings have habit to dominate over other human beings. For this, authorities, division of people between races, class, caste, religion is almost needed to rule. Western countries as they progress ahead of formal colonies or Eastern countries have discriminated the folks of these Third World Nations. Oxford Mini English Dictionary defines colonialism as “the practice of gaining control over other countries and occupying them with settlers.” The postcolonial literature discussed the issues of colonial and colonizer’s relation and effects on each other after the independence of these countries. Postcolonialism is the study of colonial discourse or colonial criticism. Postcolonialism in literature as it relates to the colonizer’s colonial experiences. The literature of Third World Countries is known as colonial and postcolonial literature. This paper is an attempt to summarize the prominent theories as well as significant aspects of Postcolonialism. Postcolonial theories often opposed to Postmodernism and Euro-centralism.*

**Keywords:** *Postcolonialism, Orientalism, Neocolonialism, etc.*

A critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean Islands and South America, Postcolonialism concerns itself with the study of the colonization, which began as early as the Renaissance, the decolonization, which involves winning back and reconstituting the native cultures, and the recolonizing process (an aftermath of postmodernism and late capitalism, when multinational corporations control the world). Postcolonialism analyses the metaphysical, ethical, and political concerns about cultural identity, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, subjectivity, language, and power while stressing upon the omnipresent power struggles between cultures and the intersection of cultures which results in multiculturalism and poly-valiancy of culture.

Influenced by the poststructuralist and postmodern idea of de-centering, postcolonial literary criticism undermines the universalist claims of literature, identifies colonial sympathies in the canon, and replaces the colonial meta-narratives with counter-narratives of resistance, by rewriting history and asserting cultural identities through strategies such as separatism, nativism, cultural syncretism, hybridity, mimicry, active participation, and assimilation. Backed by an anti-essentialist notion of identity and culture, it critiques cultural hierarchies and the Euro-centrism of modernity. The major theoretical works in postcolonial theory include *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by Franz Fanon, *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said, *In Other Worlds* (1987) by Gayatri Spivak, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft et al, *Nation and Narration* (1990) by Homi K Bhabha, and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) by Edward Said. In literature, indigenous people from previously colonized and marginalized countries have increasingly found their voices, attempting to assert their own visions, tell



their own stories and reclaim their experiences and histories. With the objective of locating the modes of representation where Europeans constructed natives in politically prejudiced ways, post-colonial criticism intends to unveil such literary figures, themes and representatives that have enforced imperial ideology, colonial domination and continuing Western hegemony.

It endeavors to probe beneath the obvious and apparently universal/aesthetic/humanist themes to reveal their racial, gendered, imperial assumptions. Postcolonial critics reinterpret and examine the values of literary texts, by focusing on the contexts in which they were produced and reveal the colonial ideologies that are concealed within. Such approaches are exemplified in Chinua Achebe's rereading, of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Edward Said's rereading of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Sara Suleri's rereading of Kipling's *Kim*, Homi K Bhabha's rereading of Forster's *A Passage to India*. They seek to identify the gaps and fissures within the discourse that provide the native with means of resistance and subversion, and the dissenting colonial with means of articulating opposition.

#### **Some Key Aspects of Postcolonialism:**

##### **Othering:**

Othering involves two concepts - the "Exotic Other" and the "Demonic Other." The Exotic Other represents a fascination with the inherent dignity and beauty of the primitive/undeveloped other, as delineated in Yeats' Byzantium poems; while the Demonic Other is represented as inferior, negative, savage and evil as is described in novels like *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India*.

##### **Diaspora:**

Diaspora refers to people who have been displaced or dispersed from their homelands, and who possess and share a collective memory and myth, and the nostalgic reminiscence of "home" ("imaginary homelands," to use Rushdie's term) or an inherited ideology of "home" becomes a personal identity as well as a collective identity of members of a particular community. They are not rooted in one location and live in the memories of their "Imagined homelands." In the new geographical location, they negotiate their culture and that of the host nation. Indian diasporic experience, for instance, has been extensively documented by authors like Bharati Mukherjee, Meena Alexander, Menon Marath, Dom Moraes, Farrukh Dhondy, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, and many others.

##### **Hybridity / Syncretism:**

The Schizophrenic state of the migrant as s/he attempts to combine the culture of origin with that of the host country, without abandoning either is called 'Hybridity' or "Syncretism". The central theme in postcolonial diasporic literature is the negotiation of two identities - the split consciousness of being both, yet neither completely; the multiple identities or solidarities; or in extreme cases, reassertion of native cultural identity as manifest in cultural fundamentalism.

##### **Double Consciousness:**

A major concept formulated by W.E.B. Du Bois, double consciousness echoes Frantz Fanon's contention of the divided self in *Black Skin, White Masks* that the black always sees himself through the eyes of the White. Du Bois described double consciousness as "two souls, two thoughts...in one dark body", which Meena Alexander later altered as "many souls, many thoughts... in one dark body"— pointing to the migrant's experience in multiple subject positions — a recurrent theme in the writings of Ben Okri, Amitav Ghosh, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, Caryl Phillips and others.

##### **Subaltern:**



Subaltern is a term introduced by Antonio Gramsci to refer to the working class, and used and popularized by Gayatri Spivak in the postcolonial context, in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. In this essay, Spivak raises issues about the voice of the subaltern in rebellion against the colonizer, and the authenticity of the voice of the subaltern - whether s/he speaks or is spoken for? Thus, Spivak ridicules the hypocrisy of postcolonial discourses that claim to raise the voices of hitherto unheard, while they inadvertently serve to perpetuate the marginality and the subalternity of the oppressed. Spivak's essay was a critique of the work of the Subaltern Studies group including Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Shahid Amin and others.

**Mimicry:**

Mimicry demonstrates an ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonized subject mimics the colonizer by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, language, attire, values etc. In doing so, he mocks and parodies the colonizer. Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behavior of the colonized. Homi Bhabha notes that mimicry is the process by which the colonized subject is reproduced "as almost the same, but not quite" — it contains both mockery and a menace; it reveals the limitations in the authority of the colonial discourse, almost as though the colonial authority inevitably embodies the seeds of its own destruction.

**Nation:**

The postcolonial writers are conscious of their role in nation-building. In postcolonial literature, the nation-building project seeks to erase the colonial past by rejecting and resisting the Western constructions of the "other" as primitive, savage, demonic etc. and by seeking to retrieve a pre-colonial past that would help them redefine a nation and project a destiny and future. However, the postcolonial methodologies and epistemologies are almost always mediated and manipulated by Western ones, and the native realizes that the destiny of the post colony is not as ideal as had been dreamt of earlier. Postcolonialism brings with it a new process of exclusion, marginalization and "subalternation", as Gyanendra Pandey argues, "minorities are constituted along with the nation", and a continuation of colonialism through the formation of elites.

**Race:**

According to Michael Banton, race is a concept that has been the basis of discrimination and disempowerment. Race has become a central category in social, political and cultural theory. Critical race studies, which includes studies of race in literature and culture, ethnicity studies, studies of minority literatures, and specific traditions in literature and philosophy, explicitly addresses questions of race and racial discrimination. Issues of race and ethnicity lead to collective, communal identities and have a larger political and social significance. The political reading/ critical practice of racial studies have had significant impact within Cultural Studies, Media Studies, Black British Studies, and Asian American Studies etc. The race turn has also been instrumental in the development of cultural movements like Black Arts and Harlem Renaissance. W. E. B., Du Bois in his writings like *The Souls of Black Folk* criticizes the scientific racism - Eugenics, Social Darwinism and Nazism — which gives rise to "biological discrimination". He also argued that racism was socially constructed, that it emerged through social discourses and practices and was not scientifically demonstrable.

**Gender:** Postcolonial gender discourse discusses the double colonization of women by both imperialism and patriarchy. In postcolonial literature, gender and sexuality have become prominent themes in the last decades of the 20th century. Gender and the role of women in the postcolonial



countries have been the focus in the writings of Anita Desai, Ama Ata Aidoo, Suniti Namjoshi, Buchi Emecheta, and Nawal El Saadawi. The linkage between gender and the racial / ethnic identities has been the subject of numerous autobiographical writings by native Canadian and African-American women like Gloria Anzaldua and Maria Campbell.

**Black Feminism:** The domination of the black male in the civil rights movement and the white woman in the feminist propaganda necessitated the emergence of Black Feminism detailing the inextricable connection between sexism and racism. Alice Walker's *Womanism*, Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class* and Kimberlee Crenshaw's *Identity Politics* discusses the marginalized, intersectional plight of the Black women. The Black feminist lesbian organization, Combahee River Collective, started by activists like Barbara Smith, is ideologically separated from "white feminism." The CRC questions conventional social hierarchy with the white man at the center and began creating theory which spoke of the combination of problems, sexism, racism etc. that they had been battling.

**Neocolonialism:**

Neocolonialism refers to the continuing economic dominance and exploitation of the "politically-free" Third World countries by the European imperial powers. Neocolonialism is most often achieved not merely through state control by Euro-American powers, but by a nexus between politicians, bankers, generals, and the Chief Executive officers. International aid and developmental initiatives are very often aligned with economic policy diktats that disable Third World economies. Neocolonialism, therefore, is a more dangerous form of colonialism.

To conclude, the main purpose of this paper is to bring all the major theories of Postcolonialism together in a summarized it and make a short study. After the independence of the Third World Countries still they face the effects of colonialism. The conclusion of all above theories is that postcolonial critics reject the imperial master narrative of capitalist Postmodernism.

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