

Cultural Hegemony as a means of Marginalisation

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to elucidate the realistic disclosure of domination of 'one world' over the 'other.' In the stand point of Antonio Gramsci's ideological thoughts, the endless battle of oppression is vividly discussed in the writings of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiango of African Literatures. If we analyse the 'cultural hegemony' in the Elite literariness of modern writers in the Indian literatures like Mulkraj Anand's *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and other and Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Wine*, *That Long Silence*, Anitha Desai's *Cry*, *The Peacock*, the stereotypical portrayal of marginalised world is succinctly discussed.

Key words- Marginalisation, oppression, irony and protest.

I. Antonio Gramsci, a brief Introduction

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist intellectual and politician, who can be seen as the perfect example of the synthesis of theoretician and politician. He developed the notion of 'Hegemony' in his *Prison writings* when he was imprisoned in the fascist government of Benito Mussolini between 1926 to 1937. In Philosophy and in sociology, the term 'cultural hegemony' has denotations and connotations arrived from the Ancient Greek word '*hegemonia*' indicating leadership and rule.

What is cultural hegemony?

The theoretical application of cultural domination was a Marxist analysis of 'Economic Class' (base and superstructure) which Antonio Gramsci developed to comprehend 'social class'; hence. Cultural hegemony proposes that prevailing cultural norms of a society, which are imposed by the ruling class. (bourgeois).

- Hegemony was a term previously used by Marxist such as Vladimir Lenin to denote the Practical leadership of the working class in a democratic revolution.
- Gramsci greatly expanded this concept, developing an acute analysis of how the ruling capitalist class controls commons by domination.
- Lenin held that culture was 'ancillary' to political objectives, but for Gramsci it was fundamental to the attainment of power that Cultural Hegemony be achieved first.
- Gramsci gave much thought to the role of intellectuals in society. Famously, he stated that all men are intellectuals, in that all have intellectual and rational faculties, not all men have social function of intellectuals.

II. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, a voice against Hegemony

The literature that is produced by 'others' about 'our' land and cultural diversity is always constitutionally stands below the sublimity of natives. In this case, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* directly draws the attention of the world. The novel focuses on the disintegration of Native heritage and much admired and adored age old ethnicity of Umuofia, a village in which the novel set in. The aftermath of colonialism influenced the native people to imitate the Coloniser's culture, this is what Homi K Bhaba terms it as Mimicry.

The colonial advancements left the debris of dismantled cultural, socio-political spheres in which Achebe attempted to unearth the asset of indigenous treasure. In order to conserve the primitive wealth Achebe succinctly presents the dominance of European values which Colonel Smith who controls the clan with his imperialistic imposition of Western Culture, in support of this, Native people of Umuofia themselves support the establishment of Church which appears to have conquered the originality of Africans. In the stand point of Gramsci, African culture where the sacrifice of Ekefuna, a boy handed over as a ransom for losing the wrestling match, was victimised as per the native practice of Umuofia.

In the Novel, Okonkwo, the protagonist, who beats his wife for an excusable deed, as a result he got excommunicated from the clan to abide by the law of the land which seems to have paid the orients to brain wash the local people. A few practices like this are the major which became the stuff and more an impeccable source of writers like Achebe. Deliberately, Achebe used the exclusive cultural settings to defend and exhibit as a voice against the western dominance. Achebe's this masterpiece seems as a fundamental legal law of the land and as a bundle of microcosmic world where all the practiced laws woven closely.

As a literary giant Achebe writes all about the cultural riches and political dominance over it in all his literary works. He upholds the originality of Africa as the flag bearer of its land. So, he was revered as the adamant voice of African against Western dominance.

III. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* through Gramsci's lens

George Orwell's famous satire *Animal Farm* showcases the bureaucratic administration and domination of *haves* over *have-nots*. In Russia, by ending the Tsar's despotic rule, the capitalist government came to power just intended to make the condition worst to have victimised the commons. This is a vivid analysis of human imbalances by themselves on the grounds of power.

To make it precise and a bit wise, in this *Animal Farm* Pigs named Major, Snowball and Squealer came to power after the death of Man, who owned the farm, but the calamity of Farm was drastically went in an unbelievable way. The Pigs assured required and demands of all farm dwellers before they became leaders but it was said earlier "Two legs are bad, four legs are good", "all are equal", later it was repaired as "All are equal but some are more equal than others". Orwell profoundly analyses the Proletariat's grievances under that deadliest rule of Stalin who succeeded his brother as the obsolete administrator of Russia under him all the life of common people was merely living dead. Orwell satirises the complete inequality and demoralisation of voiceless in Russia.

IV. Cultural hegemony and marginalisation in Indian English writings.

As there is no respite for natives under Oriental domination as a result the effects are keenly documented in the Indian English writings. The idea of cultural degradation of race has been located in the writings of Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*, in which she documents the inescapable confinement of the protagonist Maya. The character is arrested by the culturally bound constraints, she was cornered emotionally in her marital career due to the desertion of her father's affection. In the writings of Mulkraj Anand's *Untouchable*, the caste based domination over the untouchables and their helplessness as a means of exploitation by high caste people which can be marked the character Sohini was defaced in the novel and the suppression of voiceless people.

V. Conclusion

In the past, the cultural hegemony, according to the Marxist thinkers, was a tool that used to measure the parameters of economic imbalance of the state and for centuries it remained so, but today it is drawn to the national and international literary discourses. As Mathew Arnold says culture is an influential perfection of man. So, the man is the one who always bound to carry on the ethics and lifestyle of the society in which he lives. This is a brief literary discussion about an ideological analysis of great writers in the stand point of Antonio Gramsci's philosophy.

VI. References

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