

# A Postcolonial Reading of Mervyn Morris's *Judas*

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## Abstract

Literature is a medicine to cure the diseases like alienation, loneliness, racial discrimination, gender biases, etc. Literature project society what actually they are. The portrayal of society is different from one another. The projections of characters from literary pieces are evidence of the pathetic condition of reality. Mervyn Morris is a Caribbean writer from Jamaica. He wrote six volumes of poetry, "Judas" is one among them which expresses the progressive conviction of Morris. This poem is narrated from Judas perspective. The basic principles of postcolonial study are inherent in this poem. Postcolonial study discusses principles like identity, nationality, ethnicity, gender, subjectivity, language and power in this new critical enterprise. It also concentrates on metaphysical, ethical, political and ideological issues. This paper is critically looks at the conviction of Mervyn Morris through the character of Judas in the "Judas".

**Key Words:** *Master and disciple, Cunningness, Victim, Partiality.*

Morri's poem "Judas" has multiple layers of reading such as psychological, deconstruction, colonial and postcolonial reading. A critical analysis of literature, culture and history of former Spanish, French, Dutch and English colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America needs a term post-colonialism which comes closer to defining the new mode of critical discourse. Imperialism, colonialism, anti-colonialism, neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism, commonwealth literature, third world literature and new literature in English are common ideas comes under a single umbrella called post colonialism.

Literature and culture are two sides of the same coin which reflects political and ideological struggles in post-colonial reading. Robert Young's conviction "the founding movement" of postcolonial theory was the journal *Ticontinental*, launched by Haven *Ticontinental* on 1966, which first made an attempt in the literary arena against imperialism. In postcolonial reading Amie Cesaire is considered as a pioneer and his tenet *Discourse on colonialism* in French and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* are forerunners in this field during 1950s.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), George Lamming's *The Pleasure of exile* (1960), Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Edward Said's land mark work *Orientalism* (1978), Gayatri Spivak's *ThePost-Colonial Critic* (1990) are the remarkable examples of postcolonial works. Colonial studies can be sub divided into two entities. The first one is anti-colonial accommodating both nationalist and nativist are well characterised in literature. The second variety of colonial discourse is Hybridity and in-betweens. Hybridization focuses on racial, linguistic, ideological and cultural levels. In India postcolonial writing was fore grounded by Homi Bhaba's writings. He claims that both mockery and mimicry continue to be the past of postcolonial writing as it was during the colonial times. The dilemma of culture is given main concern in postcolonial writing. In Caribbean literature, Mervyn Morris registers his observation through his poems. His poem *Judas* also looked in various dimensions.

Morris debunks the allusion of Jesus Christ and his disciples in a different way. In general, the readers look at Judas as someone who betrayed Jesus for obtaining money from the ruling authority. The whole human society accused the unjustful action of Judas from generation to generation. But this poem presents the case in a different context that Judas is a superior disciple other than John, Peter and Mathew. Judas is psychologically sick when Jesus Christ treats him as inferior among the disciples. This leads him to prove that he is obedient and loveable compared to other disciples. The cunningness of Judas may be justified through his conviction. He starts making

cunning plans against Jesus Christ to prove that he loves him very much more than Peter the rock, Mathew and John.

All the twelve are from some locality but the God (Jesus Christ) was partial to them. The Lord (Jesus) discriminated the disciples according to their locality. Even though Judas is also from Galilee (Galilean) like John, Peter, Mathew, Jesus ill-treats Judas as an evil person. Judas becomes a victim in the hands of his master. The master and slave relationship is very well portrayed in Morris "Judas" in apt manner. Jesus act as master and Judas is his slave, he (Judas) must obey his master's wish.

This makes him annoyed and he revolts against Jesus Christ. Judas whole heartedly loves Jesus very much more than his favourites John, Mathew and Peter. Judas accuses Jesus, when Jesus treats him partially. The general conviction of human society is that Judas is basically money minded, but this is not real. He wants to revenge his master, so he accepts the proposal of the authority in the form of getting money.

"That evening, not so long ago  
The master fingers in the dish" (265 Literary Polyrhythms)

On the evening of last supper they sat beside Jesus to listen to his noble ideas, Jesus used his power against powerless (Judas) and announced I (Jesus) chose all the twelve for my noble purpose, but one of them is devil. This indirect statement indicates the character of Judas. All the eleven wonder who is the devil, but they easily identify that Judas is the person. Judas justified in his thought, that his master showing a partial treatment to him.

"Did I not choose  
You twelve, yet one of you's a devil" (265 Literary Polyrhythms)

Jesus criticized the evil intention of Judas and his disciples also give a negative opinion on him. The accusation of Judas against Jesus Christ is that he never trusts me even though I truly love him. The psychological jealousy of Judas is not only towards Jesus Christ but also his favourites like John, Andrew and Peter. He starts to dislike them too, because they are from same locality and region. Jesus is partial in his attitude even when he chooses his cosy band. All these people stand at right hand of Jesus but Judas is refused to stand that position. He is completely disappointed at the action of Christ and Judas thought that Christ made unjust towards him. The postcolonial aspect of reading this poem is that the disciples of Jesus are from the same locality but Jesus chose some of them as his favourite, he fails to treat them all as equals. This statement is providence the following lines:

" the point is  
Jesus never trusted me  
John, who's favourite, he's  
From Galilee. Like peter,  
Andrew, all the cosy-band" ( 266 Literary Polyrhythms )

Jesus reveals that one of you will kiss me to prove his vengeance. The postcolonial reading highlight that the powerful dominate the powerless. When time comes the powerless retaliate with the help of their master's language. Judas use this opportunity in his favour, Jesus declared that he will kiss and betray him. So Judas pre-planned for mocking glance at Christ. He wants to take revenge for the partial treatment given to him;

" Tonight I kissed him  
And I saw  
That mocking glance again" (267)

Jesus is partial even in his creation, the ironic representation after creation is Judas who becomes villainy evil. The game played by Judas may be justified. The major accusation of Judas against Jesus Christ is that he has no identity and recognition in the eyes of Jesus Christ. The basic and fundamental problem of colonial aspect or post-colonial aspect is 'identity'. Judas looks for his identity from his master but in a group he did not get recognition in the eyes of Jesus. But John, Peter and Andrew are recognised as loyal disciples in the eyes of Jesus, this made him (Judas) work against Jesus to prove that he loves him very much is the form of 'kissing'.

The general conviction of Judas and his action are totally cunning in nature. He himself acknowledges that money doesn't matter for betraying his master and hand him over to cruel authority. He completely surrenders him soul to devil or heartedness towards his master.

" The point is not the money. I'll

Go give it back, for hell  
What's thirty bits of silver?" (267)

For Judas money doesn't matter but he wants to prove that he also loves Jesus. In *The Tempest*, the Caliban also retaliates against his master Prospero in the inland which native of Caliban rather than Prospero. This idea was well presented by Petro Almovor (Petro Almovar) he reread Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is filled with colonial overtones and pictures the master and slave relationship unabashedly. Caliban replied to his master Prospero "I learn your language to curse you..." (*The Tempest*). Like the same manner Judas also takes his sword (action) before Jesus declared that he will 'kiss' me in order to betray me to the authorities. Judas also uses that action 'kissing' to prove his vengeance towards his master for partiality.

"I would not sell  
The master, he's for free. Just  
Preserve my purity of hate  
For him I served and loved so well  
My lord, the master of my fate  
Always with help his trust" (267)

The end of the poem contains the whole idea of post-colonial study. The speaker (Judas) himself acknowledged that he longs for an individual identity from his master. He wants to prove his whole hearted love towards his master in the form of betraying and kissing. But these two actions become the cause of his down fall. Even though he is considering as an evil character among the disciples, he had true heart with him.

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