

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE NOVELS OF CHINUA ACHEBE AND SALMAN RUSHDI

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ABSTRACT:

The paper traces the background and studies the main theories and perspectives of post colonial literature. There were already a lot of theories written on this subject. Therefore, the paper does not focus only on presenting these theories but also find their main ideas in practice. It applies them on literary works that are said to be part of the postcolonial literature. The paper selects two authors – Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe. The choice is deliberate because they differ in many aspects. To begin with, their country of origin is different. Rushdie was born in the undivided India. His place of birth now is in Pakistan. Later, he moved to Britain.

Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian novelist, poet, professor, and critic. His first novel *Things Fall Apart*, often considered his best, is his most widely read book in modern African literature. Postcolonial tendencies operate in the historical, socio-cultural, political, economic, linguistic, anthropological and psychological domains. It is concerned with the European colonialization, sometimes the current American, in the twentieth century and its effect on the colonized nations before and after colonialism. The last part is the discourse analysis of the literary works by these two authors employing the elements of post colonialism. The objective is to find similarities and differences in dealing with similar issues on similar backgrounds in their novels.

KEY WORDS: Postcolonial, European colonialism, cultural liberation, colonizer

Introduction:

Post colonialism is a recent theory which saw light in the second half of the twentieth century. Postcolonial theory is interdisciplinary in which other subjects are fused within, with basic intensive cultural and literary bases. The postcolonial tendencies have grown up in the societies which were formerly colonized by the European imperial power. Subjects such as representation, suppression, resistance, race, migration, gender are the focal points of the postcolonial theory. In a response to the imperial European discourse of history, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics, and its representational experiences of writing and speaking, the theoretical body of post

colonialism came into being. However, the historicity of the European colonialism basically remains the main issue in the discussion of the postcolonial studies.

“However, we would argue that post-colonial studies are based on the 'historical fact' of European colonialism, and the diverse material effects to which this phenomenon gave rise.”

The paper finds that European and then American interest in the Orient was political according to some of the obvious historical accounts of it. Moreover, it was the culture that created that interest that acted dynamically along with brute political, economic, and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated.

With its power of representation and capacity to assert a nation's identity and history by giving voice to people, the shift in attention from other literary genres to narrative could be justified. Novel can be widely perceived by even non-locale recipients as it is typically communal and public, in a sense, it precisely depicts and recreates the reality it comes from. The flexibility of novel performing a give-and-take relationship in the postcolonial context as it takes its crude material from the decolonization and resistance contexts, and more importantly it contributes to them. As a result, novel draws attention to it as it mirrors the political activities that are taking place in the colonial context.

In Africa, in which the tribal system dominates society, the cultural consciousnesses have to wage a war against the disruptive impact of colonialism as the colonizer's religion and language obliterated the native's. African novelists depict the crisis of the native cultural identity. To oppose the colonial gaze, Achebe delineates his image of the African man and culture

In this respect, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, Ngugi's *Grain of Wheat* attempt to negate the anthropological and cultural depiction of the black continent. The instances trace the ups and downs of the prevalent hegemonic policy of the colonizer. Generally, the central figures of Chinua Achebe's and Ngugi's novels are in conflict with their external communities for becoming under the colonial destructive impact as well as with colonizer himself. The community undergoes a cultural and religious alienation and is under the impact of the Western education system. The result of that conflict is a damaged socio-cultural formula in the indigenous community. The delineated African protagonists oppose any reconciliation with the colonizer. They have assigned themselves the duty to defend the completely socio-cultural formula and local national sovereignty. Therefore, the African writers in depicting the colonial phase involve in an assignment to recognize the value of the African culture as a norm of a resistance to the foreign domination and, ultimately cultural liberation.

In *Arrow of God*, Achebe depicts the disrupting cultural influences that the imperial policy has imposed on the colony's socio-cultural formula. The arrival of the colonizer has aroused the natives' suspecting their local beliefs. Conflicts are brought with the colonial arrival and result

into the disintegration of the Igbo society, and later on, of the local identity. Ezeulu is the chief priest in the village who confronts the colonial religion and assimilation, and confronts the colonizer's attempts to convert the citizens. He resists the colonial temptation to be an authoritative chief in his village by the colonial administration, which intends to turn him not more than a tool in the colonial's hands. However, Ezeulu is unable to sustain his people's belief away from the Western impact, and even that of his son. The narrative concludes with the sociocultural damage the White man brings after his arrival to the land.

The cultural crisis depicted in the African colonial phase has been precisely manifested with the dilemma of assimilation the colonizer imposes on the indigenous culture. The colonial discourse Highlights the inaccuracies, generalizations and negating the stereotyped colonial image , The African writer delineates his image of the indigenous culture, people and practices. However, these images never introduce any compromised cultural formula to approve the invaded norms of the foreign culture.

The post-independence depiction of the cultural confrontation in the African context takes the form of the quest for the roots and an identifiable native identity. The perpetuated influences of colonizer are traced in the neo-colonial presence of the ex-colonial values, including the economic and political. Therefore, the African writers attempt to expose the preoccupations of the nation and the nation's cultural and political destiny after the departure of colonialism. The recurrent themes of loss of identity, the Diaspora, alienation, education and Westernization and neo-colonialism prevail in the post-colonial narrative context. Very notably, the post-independence era underscores the perpetuated collapse of the cultural traditions which has started earlier with the coming of colonialism. The native identity gets shaken as the new image of the African only shares his community in his skin colour. In Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo is a marginal man whose skin is black but education and thinking are Western. His own modernized outlook stands over his native traditions, region and tribe. The polarity of his African origin and Western education draws Obi into two opposite directions and turns him alien. Even his relationship with his beloved Clara is physical and lacks true emotions. Obi's dilemma, therefore, is of the whole colonial elite who lack the capacity to find a sense in the new situation which comes from western education.

Politics delineated in the postcolonial narrative basically portrays the national movements and struggle for liberation in the colonized or once colonized nations. The postcolonial narrative texts has shed light on the politics of the colony which demonstrates the colonizer in his rule and colonized while struggling to capture his freedom and the nation's destiny. The struggle has been manifested as simple as the African's tribes struggle against colonialism .In this sense, in the national narrative text a part could symbolically stand for the whole or a man for a nation. Therefore, the novelist mirrors an overall period in the history of nation via a reference to one

national character. for example Saleem in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Saleem is an eyewitness of a nation's history. Through the narration of the Protagonist, an account of the late colonial and early post-independence history is presented. Saleem's and his family's lives expose particular critical events of the Subcontinent history: colonialism, the independence event, the partition, Indira Gandhi rule. The political portrayal of setting gains the pivotal concern of the narrative. However, the various issues that come out of colonialism have been unmasked through Saleem's telepathic potency that he shares with others, which the whole nation faces, such as the religious, cultural, linguistic and political differences in the Subcontinent.

Biographies and autobiographies by or about the national figures appeared at this time. In such works it is taken as self-evident that the experience of the writer or a subject—usually the leader of a mass nationalist movement—is in some way typical. His development has captured in cameo form—the emergence of the politically self-conscious nation. Writing in the form of biographies and autobiographies to depict the nationalist figures occur as recurrent theme. The nationalist experience is taken as a typical to capture his development as a form of the nation self-consciousness. Instead of rendering examples from Europe to follow, nationalist writers have investigated the ant colonial uprising in other parts of the world

In response to the colonial discourse, the intellectuals in the colonized countries set a counterpart discourse which reconsiders and re-interprets the colonial discourse. Thus, post colonialism as counter discourse emerges to achieve the purpose of reconsideration, reinterpretation and reshaping. Having resisted the colonial gaze, the postcolonial intellectuals and writers have reversed the cultural codes of representation to articulate their own voice. The silenced man in the colonized land manipulates the colonizer's linguistic medium to dismantle the colonial discourse and illustrate the self-image.

Novel as a flexible literary genre is used as a postcolonial tool, as it is used to be colonial, to culturally reconsider the distorted image of the colonized, and politically to enhance the masses to resist. The fictitious context, therefore, is featured out with category of encounter between the two opposing cultures. In this way, the fictitious context becomes a battlefield where the colonized is face to face with his colonizer. Therefore, history and culture of the colonized nation are illustrated and celebrated to negate the colonial gaze – which claims that the history of non-western countries is only a blank era – and proves the fact that it is filled with meaningful symbols.

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