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Hybridity and Nationhood: Deconstructing the Post-Colonial Myth

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Abstract

Two of the most discussed topics in post-colonial theory are hybridity and nationhood. Hybridity is an essential part of post-colonial identity where being 'hybrid' refers to having a mixture of two or more identities located in the self where there is a constant and perpetual longing for one's pre-colonial identity as well as the pressure of embracing the identity of the present circumstance, leading the self to a in-between state. Hybridity in the post-colonial society today may be considered to be a rejuvenation of the folk or tribal identity amidst the growing usurpation by globalization and multiculturalism. Nation in the post-colonial sense means definitely a constructed reality and imagined to bring together people of different geographical location under a common cause. The term 'nation' becomes more complicated as we approach later developments in post-colonial theory where comments are often made on how the nation comes into being with the help of colonial and post-colonial literature.

The assertions of post-colonial theorists like Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, Frederic Jameson, Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha have come under the scrutiny of Marxist theorists who are more interested in the working of capitalism the post-colonial nations rather than in the post-colonial identity of the nations coming under this banner. Theorists like Aijaz Ahmad believe that post-coloniality is only a camouflage to international capitalism and the celebration of hybridity is nothing but a drug to hide the naked reality of capitalism.

Keywords: post-colonial theory, hybridity, nationalism

1. Objective

The objective of the paper is to reflect on the problematic relation between post-colonial theory and capitalism. The paper intends to demystify some of the concepts related to 'Third World Literature' as reflected in the works of Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, Frederic Jameson, Benedict Anderson and Aijaz Ahmad.

2. Research Methodology

The study is undertaken basically in a qualitative approach.

- Source of Data: The primary source of data is confined to *Outside in the Teaching Machine* by Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, "Politics of Literary Post-coloniality" and *In Theory* by Aijaz Ahmad and *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson. The secondary sources include works written on post-colonial theory written by Pramod K. Nayar, Leela Gandhi and Terry Eagleton.
- Method of Data Collection: The available resources on the subject are searched in both printed form as well as in pdf format.
- Methods of Data Processing: The present work will be based on the theoretical interpretation of hybridity, nationhood, nationalism from Marxist and post-colonial background.
- Methods of Interpretation: Methods of Interpretation will be based on the application and interpretation of theory in the work of the mentioned writers. Marxist theories would be applied to understand the validity of the post-colonial theory and its various concepts related to hybridity and nationalism.

3. Deconstructing Post-Colonial Myths

"The political claims that are most urgent in decolonized space are tacitly recognized as coded within the legacy of imperialism: nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, socialism, even culturalism....They are thus being reclaimed, indeed claimed as concept for which no historically adequate referent may be advanced from postcolonial space." (Spivak, 1993)

The above is a quote from Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak's work *Outside in the Teaching Machine* and can be understood as a small summary of what post-colonial theory today may be said to be dealing with. In most cases, which would be elaborated as the paper progresses, post-colonial theory is based on the general idea of the understanding that nationhood, citizenship, socialism or culturalism are a condition bequeathed by colonial rule and post-colonial theory is supposed to deal with the development and structuring of the above mentioned terms.

However, the situation becomes problematic as soon as we concentrate on the term 'legacy' which should mean heritage and a past which definitely well-establishes beforehand that all these above mentioned conditions have been produced by the colonial period and that imperialism or colonialism is over. Be it Frederick Jameson or Benedict Anderson, critics have been repeatedly talking about the growth of nationhood as a heritage of imperialism and democracy as an example taught to us by the colonizer. Ultimately, they speak of no historically adequate referent being available in the post-colonial space- of course in nations like India.

In my position, I may not be very much familiar with the growth of nationhood post independence or post-colonial period of India but definitely I may make a stand if I talk of the "pre-colonial" period of the north-east of India, myself being more familiar with it, and of course the term pre-colonial is problematic too when referring to the history of such states or nations. But, what I would like to defend is that "nationhood" or "democracy" and even "citizenship" have very much been a part of the collective consciousness of the people here which an overall scanning of the recorded political history may suffice. The claim that Britain had bestowed nationhood in India by annexing the different smaller regions is a myth and a myth built up by post-colonial theorists themselves. Nationalism subdivided as good nationalism and bad nationalism, well discussed by Anderson, remains a matter to be objectified later but the point that is made is that "nationhood" in India or north-east India has nothing to do with "historically adequate referent" and has been part and parcel of everyday life of the people for which there has been ample examples. Only their categorization into sub-nationalism and bad nationalism may have been a new phenomena subjected to the formulation of the larger federal state of India. And to speak that there has been "no historically adequate referent" for socialism in India when the communist party of India in all its varieties have led the largest regional governments in some of the biggest states and have held power for comparatively longer durations. It will be in fact a news to those people that they needed education from outside the region to understand communism and socialism.

Now if we come to the term post-colonial, as I have said its use is problematic because if the history of the period ruled by the British is colonial and the time preceding it is pre-colonial which means that the period preceding colonization is only its pre-history and the time following it is nothing but infinite aftermath which is post-colonialism. Ultimately the post-colonial space would never recover from colonialism, in its past, present or future. So this is where comes the problem of the branding of the literature coming from such countries as post-colonial or third world literature. As Aijaz Ahmad adequately questions that if the world is divided into three parts- first, second and third and the first and the second are defined according to their economic systems, the first for its capitalism, the second for socialism then why is it that the third world is defined according to its past experiences which would definitely work like an imposed straitjacket for all those writers writing for that space and their writings would be nothing but post colonial where they are supposed to discuss about the construction of the nation and the celebration of hybridity- especially writers like Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie, which may be benefitting them as individual post-colonial intellectual but it definitely handicaps the literature from this space. I would rather call this area 'space' as it also should declare the deliberate ambivalence that this space has been shoved into without any hope of redemption. As agreed upon by most Marxist critics, Aijaz Ahmad being one of the exemplary, this whole idea of post-colonialism is nothing but penetration of international capitalism into every free space available and terms like hybridity and globalization are nothing but camouflaging of its after effects. Because why do we need to understand "hybridity" as Salman Rushdie explains to us or as Bhabha defines to us because when one refuses to acknowledge the knowledge bestowed upon us by the truest eye, the eye of the post-colonial intellectual, the eye of the intellectual in perpetual displacement, we are stunned by the ground reality of hybridity because hybridity true to its term is nothing innocent but political which not gives the person a new identity to celebrate but only takes him into a crisis because assimilation though may mean mixing up but actually the percentage of identity to be held is determined by the dominating party -on whose terms and conditions are we to assimilate? If we accept the truest eye's view that meaning is made in displacement, definitely inspired by Derrida's deference of meaning.

If the above arguments are sufficient to demystify the importance of hybridity and nationhood as not being an essentiality of postcoloniality we can move ahead with unveiling the camouflage of capitalist imperialism with the grace of hybridity and globalization which not only through its theory wills to justify the conditions prevailing in this space but also insists us as if the 'Third World' is responsible for its own fate. Just like, as we come across Edward Said's Orientalism where he says about the cross referencing which led to the growth of Oriental studies, we again have post-colonial Studies which is not free from such an origin. In other words, whether we name it post-colonial literature, emergent literature or new literature, it is another attempt of colonization or homogenization, something which post-colonialism is believed to be fighting against. And definitely there would be a considerable gap between post-coloniality as faced by Third World countries and the post-colonialism as preached by post-colonial critics and cannot be filled by theories, which celebrate cultural hybridity at the face of systematic victimization of Third World countries by international capitalism and their decreasing chances of participation in globalization.

The war between Marxist criticism and post-colonial theory is an old one. While Marxist criticism generalizes its assumptions based on the omnipresence of capitalism in every social, political structure, post-colonial theory has been demonstrating against the generalizations of a large populace. Post-colonial theory is set against homogenization where it supposes that the main foundation of *Orientalism*, as illustrated by Edward Said in his book Orientalism, is homogenization of the non-Europeans as the negative of the Europeans.

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