# Defining Postcolonial

Understanding postcolonial involves thorough description of the postcolonial theories by Said, Spivak and Bhabba. The importance of the concept of postcolonialism rests in the literary discourse used in colonial as well as postcolonial historical periods. Colonial and postcolonial are somewhat connected because there is a relation to the subsequent term as well as some opposition (Williams and Chrisman 3). European domination on its colonies in various parts of the world through which, it compelled the colonised to accept its institutions and norms followed by the political freedom of the colonies brought about the age of postcolonial around the globe. Western powers have strategic, economic and political reasons for colonising territories and that purpose has been given in their literary works as well like Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (Huggan and Tiffin 141). The ending of twentieth century saw coining of the term postcolonial like many others such as postmodern, poststructural, and many others. The Britannica Encyclopaedia describes postcolonialism as a historical period depicting the after effects of Western colonialism (Ivison). Around 1980s, “Commonwealth literary studies and colonial discourse analysis become part of the then emerging (and now vast) field of literary, cultural, anthropological, political, economic, and historical enquiry into the consequences of (Western) colonization that we call ‘postcolonial studies’.” (Bertens 173) The word postcolonial was used in 1970s as an alternative for postfreedom or independence problems around the globe. Postcolonial can be understood as a colonial experience after the departure of Western colonists about their own culture.

Edward Said’s Orientalism has been regarded as a turning point to the understanding of postcolonial. Orientalism challenged habitual ways of seeing, institutionalised a colonial discourse as well as offered “genuinely novel and liberatory possibilities” (Williams and Chrisman 127). He highlighted the disproportion between East and West in terms of depiction of Western superiority over East. He used the terms “Orient”, “Other” and “Occident” in order to highlight the connection between Western and Eastern cultures. The three terms are interconnected and inform about Western ideologies about their consideration of superior and inferior. Orientalism can be described as a “distillation of essential ideas about the Orient-its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness” (Said 144). Orientals were seen as “problems to be solved or confined” due to which, their lands were taken over (Said 145). People in the postcolonial lands are not seen as individuals, but masses that need to be taken care of based on their uncontrollable emotions and sensuality (Barry 194). All the attributes that the West has bestowed to the East and its culture like barbaric, primitiveness, sensuality, decadence, laziness and irrationality are for instituting supremacy of the West over the East. The adverse characteristics of the East construct the West as “rational, democratic and progressive”. For the West, it is the centre while “the East is a marginal other that simply through its existence confirms the West’s centrality and superiority” (Bertens 178).

Like Said, Spivak’s work is of importance for understanding the concept of postcolonial. With postcolonial consideration of identity, nationality and destiny, Spivak’s work also draws attention towards class, gender and ethnicity. She analyses her own neo-colonised world along with the Western and Indian texts. She is quite harsh about patriarchal societies and the inferior position of women. She highlights the need of the “other” in even the master works of English literature and the lack of acknowledgement, the other suffers (Brooker, et al 224). As per her criticism, in postcolonial literature, women face a dual marginalisation based on their “other” status in society, their being subaltern (Bertens 187). Spivak uses the term subaltern for describing about the other within. The female in the Western society is marginalised and those in colonial and postcolonial societies are doubly marginalised and hence gain a subaltern, a lower status having no history, no ability to speak and in deep shadow (Bertens 187). Along with women, she also informs about the labour class, homeless and other socially deprived people who are subaltern because of their postcolonial status. She points out that if the subalterns in Western works of literature like the heroine of Jane Eyre, Frankenstein and others cannot speak and face oppression and silencing, the postcolonised have double issue in facing such oppression and silencing (Brooker, et al 224). Spivak has identified the gaps in postcolonial theorising along with presenting her own theory, which is mostly about feminist postcolonialism.

Homi K. Bhabba’s postcolonial theory helps in understanding the linked concepts. “Bhabha’s primary interest is in the ‘experience of social marginality’ as it emerges in noncanonical cultural forms or is produced and legitimized within canonical cultural forms” (Brooker, et al 226). Bhaba like other postcolonialists has attached new terms with the concept of postcolonialism. He has given the concept of hybridity that can be described as connection between all the cultures due to which, they cannot be detached. According to Bhabba, the colonial and the colonist are the same, but not quite. The Western missions of civilisation, domestication and subjugation were based on colonial repetition, mimicry and resemblance. They wanted to create colonial subjects alike them, but there was ambivalence. “The obligation on the part of the colonized to mirror back an image of the colonizer produces neither identity nor difference, only a version of a ‘presence’ that the colonized subject can only assume ‘partially” (Brooker, et al 227). The identity of colonised is attached to their colonisation.

Western powers have continuously attempted to devalue the past of the colonised considering its pre-colonial era as a “pre-civilised limbo or even a historical void” (Barry 193). Reclamation of past or their original identity as the first step of being postcolonial is also questionable because the sufferers cannot separate their origination from their being colonised. Postcolonial means that they have to accept that a constant attempt was done for eradication of their originality while they should retain their own identity. Fanon explains in “Algeria Unveiled” that there were various attempts for disintegration, destruction of the originality and humiliating the essence of Algeria by attacking the veil of women of the land (Fanon 37-38). Colonisers showed interest in claiming anyone dehumanising, barbaric and sadistic to meet their notions of colonisation. The postcolonial aspect is still under consideration as the form of colonising has changed into other forms. Such a form is tourism as Carrigan explains that “just as plantation economies greatly benefited imperialist regimes, so tourism – ironically classed as export industry – remaps aspects of these asymmetrical flows” (Carrigan 19). Kincaid informs that the natives living in small places where tourists are widely attracted are poor and they remain poor and a source of attraction for the tourists (Kincaid 18-19). Therefore, the reasons of Westerners’ visit to the native lands are their own self-interests, economic and strategic reasons, and self-entertainment and so on.

The postcolonial theorists have tried to understand the colonial motives, their texts and various forms of their governance to inform about the reasons of their control and subjugation of the colonies. Even after leaving the lands formally, they intend to maintain their control through other means like imposing the supremacy of their literature, becoming tourists and discoverers and maintaining their authority in the centre. Said, Spivak and Bhabba try to discover the after and analyse the European motives of colonising and their futuristic missions regarding Orientals and their territories. Postcolonialism is the period when the colonised face the after effects of colonialism and try to seek their self and postcolonial refers to the state after the colonial control. The colonists in the lieu of categorising themselves as superior attached inferior traits to colonise and intentionally tried to dehumanize them by attacking their ideas, society and culture.

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