



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

CULTURAL HEGEMONY AS A MEANS OF MARGINALISATION

PRAKASHA N

Lecturer in English, Chitradurga, Karnataka

<https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.7219.98>



PRAKASHA N

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.

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.

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

Historically, colonialism represents the fundamental factor that shapes the concern of African literature. The heart of literary writing in the continent could not have acquired its present identity and function without the painful encounter between Africa and Europe. Colonialism in its radical remodelling of African societies remains one of the major predicaments which creative artists and

literary historians have had to deal with. The literature that even emerged after political independence has been driven by the same imperative.

Chinua Achebe followed a pattern of literary tradition by producing an African literature intended to restore the moral integrity and cultural autonomy of the Africa in the age of post colonialism. The concern that Achebe constantly expresses in literature needs to be located within the tradition that the decolonized subject opposes foreign domination and racial superiority and asserts African cultural sovereignty. When we look into the Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through the lens of Gramsci's thoughts, it established Achebe as a writer of an anti-imperialist movement which marginalised the natives through colonial hegemony. The novel is a counter discourse of Europe's literary intervention in Africa. The course of European advancement changed the paraphernalia of African cultural integrity. According to Ekpo, "It was such an ideological context that Achebe configured the historic mission of his literary interventions as an imperative to defend Africa against past denigrations and to protect them from further imperialist and psycho-cultural aggressions."

In *Ironies of Progress: Joseph Conrad and Imperialism in Africa*. Goonetilleke expresses that:

Conrad's novel is the dominant image of Africa in the western imagination. Conrad's Africa is the dark continent of the European imagination, an extreme stereotype. Conrad exploits the stereotype to the full. He is using Africa as a symbol, a blackcloth into which his characters can project their inner doubts, their sense of alienation. The landscape is mythic, the scenery surreal, the circumstances grotesque.

According to Nelson (2004.22) "A modern classic, *Things Fall Apart* is Achebe's calculated response to the imperialist versions of the colonial encounter. Here, he offers a consistory rearticulating of history that is explicitly designed to destabilize European discursive construction of Africa's past". It exposes the wounds of the colonial oppression and culminates the disintegrated values of primitive ethnicity.

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 Tzar'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.

In the satire '*Animal Farm*', pigs Snowball, Napoleon and Squealer adopt Old Major's ideas into 'a complete system of thought', which they formally name animalism, an allegoric reference to communism. They formed commandments distilled into maxim "four legs are good, two legs are bad". But, Later, gaining the power to administer they modified the commandments,

"All are equal but some are more equal than others".

"Four legs are good, two legs are better".

This is an ironic depiction to the original purpose of the seven commandments which were supposed to keep order within '*Animal Farm*' by uniting the animals together against the humans' evil habits. Orwell allegorically demonstrated how simply political dogma can be turned into malleable propaganda and this is a surface exhibition of marginalisation of commons by capitalistic administration.

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 Mulraj 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.

This is a brief literary discussion of the ideological analysis a great writers in the stand point of Antonio Gramsci's philosophy.

References

- Abdullahi, Khadir Ayinde's *Confronting Racism and Hegemony in World Literature:Extending Achebe's Critique of Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, Arab World English Journal.2014
- Abrahams, M Hand Geoffrey Gait Harphman. *A handbook of literary Terms*. Newdelhi: Cengage Learning, 2009.
- Achebe, Chinua (1959). *Things Fall Apart*. London.Heinemann Books Ltd.
- Anand, Mulkraj, (1935) *Untouchable*, New Delhi.
- Malik, R S and Jagadeesh Batra, *A New Approach to Literary Theory and Criticism*, New Delhi. Atlanta Publishers and Distributers P. Ltd.
- Orwell, George, (1946) *Animal Farm*, Harcourt, Brace and Company. USA.