



POLITICS OF RACISM AND PREJUDICE IN THE WORKS OF POST-COLONIAL THEORETICIANS

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Article Received:18/11/2020

Article Accepted: 20/12/2020

Published online:26/12/2020

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.8.4.183](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.8.4.183)

Abstract

The post-colonial theoretical concerns are analysed through this paper. Here Frantz Fanon, Gyanendra Pandey, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin are the focus of our investigation. Their perspectives on the politics of racism is investigated through this paper.

Keywords: Post Colonialism, Racism, Diaspora

INTRODUCTION

Great numbers of people were dislocated from their indigenous purlieu to serve the economic needs of the West. This marked the inception of a diaspora-community who were treated as surrogate, subhuman, underdeveloped slaves.

The term diaspora comes from the Greek meaning 'to disperse'. It refers to the "voluntary or forcible mobilization of people from their homelands to new regions." In this sense, colonialism is a diaspora movement. Colonialism involves the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of Europeans in the different parts of the world. Most of these settlements became plantations to mete the economic demands of the white populace. For instance, in America Negroes were brought from South Africa as labourers.

INVESTIGATION OF THEORIES

The incessant inflow of workers into the settlements governed by the West gave rise to slavery. Its advent can be marked when Christopher Columbus conquered America in 1492. From that point, slave trade became a common enterprise in the West. Griffiths, Ashcroft and Tiffin's in *Key Concepts in Post - Colonial Studies* proposes:

In 1503, Bishop Las Casas proposed an alternative to indigenous labour in the form of systematic importation of Blacks, initially to work in the mines Charles V granted a patent to a Flemish merchant in 1517 to import four thousand Black slaves per year into Hispaniola, Cuba and Jamaica. The organisation of European slavery over the next three centuries had its genesis in this trading concession. (212 - 213)

The spread of slavery and its acceptance in Europe and America had twin objectives. Cheap labour for the plantations and the desire to establish Europe's culture as civilised against the natives.

Racism can be stamped as an excuse for slavery. The notion of 'race' implies the categorisation of humans into "physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups". It fosters the belief that a specific race can be realised through their physical features, dispatched from one generation to the next "through blood". It also points that the complexities of the "mental and moral behaviour of a human being, the personalities, ideas and capacities" can be related to racial origin.

The need for classification of society in racial lines aided the coloniser to assert their superiority over the natives. It permitted them to draw a binary distinction between the coloniser and the colonised.

Ferdinand de Saussure expounded that the meaning of the words is relational. That is, no word can be defined in isolation from other words. "If we have paired opposites, then this mutually defining aspect of words" is even more apparent. For instance, male and female, mainly have meaning in relation to each other. Each designates the absence of characteristics included in other. This structuralist principle devised by Saussure became the milestone in defining binary opposition in racial terms.

The Manichean binaries, white/black, is used by the imperialist to polarise the coloniser and the colonised into good and evil respectively. The consequence of this binaristic structure is called Euro centrism, which treats everything west as the standard, the Centre. The colonisers began to see and project themselves as the centre, 'the self.' And the colonised, were marked as "the other". The natives were the savage, barbaric and uncivilised 'other', hence the colonisers have to rule and educate them. Euro centrism is observable in the division of the world. First World refers to Britain, Europe and the America, whereas "the native population subjugated by the white - settlers" such as the aboriginal Australians, African - Americans in the USA belonged to the fourth world or the marginal.

Marginality defines the limitations of the colonised. Marginality unintentionally "reifies centrality because it is the centre" that creates the margins. This is understood as a continuous pattern dictated by the colonised in order to practice the oppression and subjugation of certain groups.

As long as the issue of 'the centre' sustains the colonised will find it difficult to have a space in the social set up. As Frantz Fanon suggests in his *Black Skin, White Masks* "The White Man is locked in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness" and this blackness is a "construction by the White folks".

Albeit, the black or those at the margins try to assert themselves, they are manacled with servitude. Fanon comments:

I come to this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origins of the world, and here I am an object among objects. (89)

The colonised are viewed as objects to satisfy the economic needs of the masters. At the same time, they are treated as slaves to provide basis for their superiority complex. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, and the Negro is ugly. (93)

In Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *Key Concepts in Post - Colonial Studies* Lacan defines the 'other' and 'Other' to enunciate how marginality is imprinted within the colonised. For him other - with the small 'o' - designates the "colonised other who are marginalised by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre". The other - with the capital 'O' - can be compared to the imperial centre. It provides the term in which the "colonised subject gains his identity" as a dependent. It acts as an "ideological frame work which helps the colonised understand the world".

But in the end, both the 'other' generates an ambivalence within the colonised. He develops a 'double consciousness'. (169-171)

This is the reason behind Fanon's comment that:

The black possesses two dimensions, one with the fellow blacks and other with the whites. A black man behaves differently with the white man than he does with another Black man. (1)

They accept the 'livery' the white man has fabricated for them in order to shrug off their blackness; they begin to emulate whites in every way possible. This phase in the development of the colonised is termed as the 'adopt' phase. This is responsible for miscegenation, which is the sexual union of different races, especially blacks and whites.

There is a desire for lactification of the race by the Negroes. Whitening one's self begins to be

viewed as a 'way of salvation'. The 'women of colour always yearns for a wonderful night, a wonderful lover, a white man'. Fanon interprets the reason behind the yearning of the black women to become white through a story:

One day, Saint Peter sees three men arrive at the gates of Paradise: a white man, a mulatto and a black man.

"What do you want the most in the world?" he asks the white man.

"Money."

"And you?" he asks the mulatto.

"Glory."

And he turns towards the black man, and the latter declares with a grin.

"I am just carrying these gentlemen's bags."
(131)

The blacks internalises that their existence is meant to serve the whites.

When the desire to sand in the pedestal among the whites sprouts in blacks, the whites begin to gnash their teeth unaccepting. It is because, the move made by the blacks goes against the stereotypical conventions fostered by the masters. At the same time, it creates a disruption in the white/black divide and questions the superiority of the whites. They begin to protest and oppose the moves made by the blacks and propose that they should remain as slaves as it is their ultimate destiny. Out of this oppression came the struggle for emancipation. The slaves began to take measures to enforce themselves. This is termed as anti - colonialism.

Anti - colonialism has taken different forms in different cultures. It is sometimes associated with an ideology of racial liberation. Even though, the European and American started to acquire liberation by 1800s, the new form of slavery remained in the form of indentured - labourers. This form of labour became the main source of acquiring cheap labour since 1833.

The anti-colonial struggle acquired a new phase from the second half of the nineteenth

century, wherein, the colonised started to demand the acceptance of their multifarious cultural differences. They started to emanate a literature of their own which will help them acquire a certain status in the society.

Various reformist movements that gained prominence in the emancipation of slaves, such as National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), became the rallying cry against racist discrimination. Its extortion on the slaves to free themselves from the bondage observed the prejudice of the whites. Ashwini Deshpande in her review of Gyanendra Pandey's *A History of Prejudice: Race Caste and Difference in India and the United States* .

...prejudice was greater against older and more educated blacks. ... They were seen in spaces that were hitherto occupied solely by whites. (134)

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