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Post-colonialism: A Critical Study Of Indian Culture

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Abstract:

Post-Colonialism refers to the time after Colonization. In this period, state of the mind of Indian people is hybrid and their culture is fragmented. The present paper explores the post-colonialism in the light of Indian culture and tradition. It highlights the importance of Indian tradition and culture in response to the Macaulay's Minutes on Indian Education in 1835 (period of colonization) by taking the examples from Bhat hari's V kyapadiy, Bharat's Nā?yaśāstra, Bh maha's K vyala k ra etc. It describes the emergence of post-colonialism in India, its roots and effect on modern India.

KEYWORD:

Post-colonialism, Indian culture, Macaulay's minutes.

INTRODUCTION

In order to define Post-Colonialism it is necessary to understand Colonialism first. Colonialism is the establishment, upholding, possession and extension of colonies in one terrain by people of another terrain. In the 17th century, European powers established trade with India and ruled over it. Most of the indigenous people were oppressed and enslaved by the ruling power. At the same time, they were forced to give up their cultural heritage and to assimilate the colonisers' culture. The most influential colonial power - the British tried to integrate their language, the major aspect of their civilized culture in India.

Language and literature have always been used as a powerful tool by colonisers in the process of colonisation. The British and the other Europeans like French and Portugese came to India as colonisers but after leaving India they left all pervasive impact of colonialism. Now the challenge for the colonised India was to find an individual way of living. It could not get rid of the Western life style. On the other hand, the colonial powers believed that a colonised nation which adopted and admired Western culture and language would no longer resist the colonisers' occupation. It is appropriate here to cite from abara on *M m s -S tra*, 1.2.31:

“If a man with eyes is led by someone else, it means that he does not see with his own eyes” (Mishra 434).

However, after some years certain opportunities, struggles and various experiences of anti-slavery and anti-colonial movements in India led to the freedom and development of post-colonialism.

POST-COLONIALISM:

In a literal sense, “Post-Colonial” refers to the time after Colonisation. The second college edition of The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as “of, relating to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony”. Post-colonialism deals with the democracy and humanistic concerns of colonised societies after independence. Post-colonialism also deals with conflicts of identity and cultural belonging. Colonial powers come to foreign states and destroy main parts of native tradition and culture. This often leads to conflicts when countries became independent and suddenly faced the challenge of developing a new nation with identity and self-confidence.

What is evident here is that, despite the past of colonialism in the exchange for “flag

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independence” (Slemon 1995:102) that brought neither economic independence nor compensation for that past; imperialism as a concept and colonialism as a practice are still active in a new form (Rukundwa 3). In the last half of the 20th century, the post-colonial theory came into existence for scientific examination as Western intellectuals began to get interested in the “Third World Countries”.

The present paper consists of three sections. The first section highlights the importance of Indian tradition and culture in response to the Macaulay's Minutes on Indian Education in 1835 (period of colonization) by taking the examples from *Bhat hari's V kyapadiy*, *Bharat's Nā?yaśāstra*, *Bh maha's K vyala k ra* etc. The second section discusses the impact of rudiments of colonisation on Indian Education System in post-colonial period. The concluding part of the paper reflects the concept of “hybrid identities” which is the state of people in the post-colonial period.

RESPONSE TO MACAULAY'S MINUTES ON INDIAN EDUCATION:

Veda-s, *Upani ad-s* and *Pura a-s*, and all the great epics of India for instance, *Ramaya a*, *Mah bh rata* were written in Sanskrit and these books are considered to be the basis of culture, customs and traditions. But the impact of colonisation in India turned everything upside down. For instance, Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minutes on Indian Education (1835):

“...All parties seem to agree on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of India contain neither literary nor scientific information. Moreover, they are so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them” (Edwards).

But it is not true for Indian texts as in *V kyapadiy*, in *k rik* 33rd, Bhart hari says, “The known power of an object to produce different effects is inoperative when it comes into contact with particular objects or factors” (Iyer 44). To borrow a scientific precedence, the function of Oxygen is to aggravate fire but when it combines with the atoms of Hydrogen, it extinguishes fire.



Similarly the power of a word is changed with the change in place, time and context. Hence it shows the association of both literary and scientific information in the Indian texts.

Macaulay also said: “What then shall that language be? One half of the Committee maintains that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommends the Arabic and Sanskrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing?

I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men who are distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. [...] I have never found one Orientalist who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia” (Edwards).

But we second his thought in saying that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. For instance, *Nā?yaśāstra* and Poetics are the seminal texts in their respective traditions. The Indian mind addressed the issues regarding drama, dance and music quite early in its civilization. *Nā?yaśāstra* is one of the earliest treatises on the performing arts but its relevance is contemporary and universal. It is a source text for literary theory and its influence has been all pervasive. It delineates a detailed theory of dramaturgy. Referred to as *Nā?yaveda* or as fifth *Veda*, it incorporates all the arts and sciences, and enlightens at the same time. It not only encompasses all arts like music and dance but also analyses human life and conditions.

Seshendra Sharma in 'Poetics, East and West' says: “In the West, Aristotle's Poetics is the only book available on the subject in the past. It contains 26 small chapters. Aristotle being a genius, there are instances in the treatise when his mind touches the fringes of profound thought. However his statements are not satisfactory to the mind trained in the Indian Poetics.” In nutshell, this quotation shows the depth of insight which the Indian texts carry.

And that English would make Indians cultured! What they thought of 'White Man's Burden' was not actually to make us civilized and cultured but to be their slaves. Caliban's dialogue of Shakespeare's The Tempest is appropriate here. In Act I, Scene II, he says:

“You taught me language; and my profit on't is, I know how to curse; the red plague rid you, for learning me your language!”

Macaulay said in Minutes on Education: "...It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltriest abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same" (Edwards).

But when we look at the intrinsic value of our own literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign languages, the Sanskrit language is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects. For example, the widely read and famous epics, *Ramaya* and *Mahabharata* which are originally written in Sanskrit have valuable historical traces of India. The common masses learn moral values from these texts which cannot be obtainable from any of the European texts.

Bhart hari, an Indian thinker categorises the knowledge into two types: *L. kik* (ordinary) and *l. kik* (extraordinary). To acquire the second kind of knowledge, the knower has to go through the process of *sadhan*, i.e. preparation. Seeing with "mind's eye" is the ideal epistemology of Indian thought. In *krik* 35th, Bhart hari says that only the jewelers know the value of *l. kik mai* and *gin* (precious stones). They cannot define it to anybody else because the knowledge of quality of any object can be attained through practice. Mira Bai, an Indian saint also said:

"...*Johr k gat johr j ne, k jin johr hoy...*"
 ("...Only a jeweller can know the secrets of a jeweller or else he who the jewel be...")
 (Behari 38-39)

So how can Macaulay know the values of Indian texts without having the proper knowledge and understanding of Sanskrit? Taking another example, Ralph Waldo Emerson, a great essayist and one of the leading intellectuals of America in the 19th century said: "*The Bhagvad Gita* is an empire of thought" (Goswamy 2). Henry David Thoreau said in praise of '*Bhagvad Gita*':

"Everyday in the morning, I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the *Bhagvad Gita*, in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems puny and trivial." (Goswamy 2)

Macaulay's purpose behind criticism of Sanskrit language can be seen in his statement: "... In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that it is impossible for us to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country" (Edwards).

These minutes show that they wanted to make Indians their servants rather than civilized. Can they civilize us whose civilization is 5000 years old? In Indian tradition, knowledge has been composed, stored and preserved in the framework of oral culture. As it is composed in the mind, it is also preserved in the mind, not outside the mind. Indian civilization has always been attached to the values of knowledge. Sri Aurobindo says in his letters of 1905 (p.15),

"We Indians, born and bred in a country where *j n n* has been stored and accumulated since the race began, bear about in us the inherited gains of many thousands of years..."

The intellectual thoughts, morality and the depth of knowledge of Indian texts can be illustrated by comparing them with the Western texts. In Indian tradition, there are 18 major vidya -s (theoretical disciplines), and 64 kal -s (crafts). The 18 vidya -s are: the four *Veda*-s, four subsidiary *Veda*-s (*yurveda*, *Dhanurveda*, *Gandharvaveda*, architecture), *Purana*, *Nyaya*, *Mimamsa*, *Dharmashastra* and *Vedanga* (phonetics, grammar, metre, astronomy, ritual and philology).

Again by comparing Eastern and Western thinkers, Bhama, an Indian thinker with Plato and Aristotle, the Greek philosophers; East stands at the highest pedestals. To Plato, we owe the division of poetry into the dithyrambic or the purely lyrical. Aristotle lays emphasis on the two essentials of good writing – clearness and propriety. However, 'Poetics' and 'Rhetoric' both follow the same line but Rhetoric is more significant for its comments on composition in prose and style in general. However, one source of charm is common to both (prose and poetry) – the use of metaphor. But Bhama gives five types of

figures of speech and sub-divides it into various parts. And Bhāṣya gives more divisions of kāvya i.e. on a deeper level. He has given detailed description about the doṣa-s (faults) generally found in poetry which are not described by any western thinker. Thus, after reviewing a number of examples, it can be said that Indian tradition is considered as the richest tradition as compared to the other ones.

IMPACT OF COLONIZATION ON INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM:

Macaulay's minutes on Indian Education have a major impact on Indian Education System. English turned out to be a compulsory language in India. The greatest fallings occurred in India during the British rule. Education is one of the most remarkable examples; for no more crushing blows have ever been struck at the roots of Indian National evolution. However, the number of Indians who wish to learn and use English has been growing steadily for the last two centuries. We all know that English has come to stay in India. The ruling classes in India have embraced English with suitable modifications to the contents of lessons and the lexicon that are used in textbooks and taught in classes. English has become the language of higher and the affluent classes in the Indian subcontinent. The lower and deprived classes try to emulate the model set by their peers. The net result is that English will continue, and no central or state government will dare to abolish it from the curriculum in India. Globalization makes English a value added language, the access to which becomes a passport for jobs around the world.

It is also recognized that English could not and would not be taught by the native speakers of English in India. This is economically impractical, and politically inconvenient, and sometimes would be viewed as a disastrous step. The former colonies of Britain such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and several African nations have provided for the teaching of English mainly through their nationals. This step has far-reaching consequences for the quality of English language instruction and its use in these countries, but the people of the Indian subcontinent have admirably “resolved” the problem with their own nuances. The leading schools and colleges continue to seek a competence for their students similar to that of native English speakers. It is possible that this trend would gain momentum as Indians begin to generate more wealth.

CONCLUSION:

The state of Indian people in the post-colonial period can be reflected through the concept of “hybrid identities”. This hybrid phenomenon unfortunately does not re-produce the old Native Culture nor does it bring a totally new culture but it produces a dislocated culture, a mixture of worlds – a “fragmented and hybrid theoretical language” within a “conflictual cultural interaction” (Young 2001:69; Loomba 1998:15). For instance, the post-colonial Indian literature, unfortunately, is not having as much depth and morale as that of our classics and is neither a representative of our culture.

So we have to develop the Indian intelligence through gaining the knowledge of Indian tradition and culture; to make it possible for India to resume her place amongst the nations, not only as a competitor in material production, but also as a teacher of all the true civilizations, a leader of the-future, as of the past. In the last words of Buddha to his beloved disciple:

“O, Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves; be ye refuges to yourself.
Hold fast to the dharma as to a lamp; hold fast to the dharma as a refuge.
Look not for refuge to any one beside yourself” (Puruker)

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