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Construction of truth and Identity: An analysis of Edward Said and GayatriSpivak's postcolonial theory

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Abstract:

Post colonialism is a word generally used to mean all the cultures of our colonial epoch impacted by the imperial process. Since the outset of the colonial process, post colonialism signifies ongoing concerns and discussions between East and West. It aims to study and analyses the aftermath of colonialism and exploring the truth, restoring the identity of the Independent Oriental Nations. It contains literature from countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Pakistan, Jamaica, and other former colonial British countries. They are sometimes referred to as nations of the Third World. Marxism and Post structuralism influenced the ideas of Fanon to Gayatri Spivak. In the postcolonial period, Euro centrism or Euro centrism is decentered/deconstructed. In this study,

Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial aspects on constructing the truth for exploring colonized people's identity will be discussed based on their famous book Orientalism and Can the Subaltern Speak?

Keywords: Post colonialism, Orientalism, Subaltern, Hegemony, Power, Discourse, Identity, Race, truth, Colonizer/colonized, White/black, Europe/Third world countries.

Introduction:

Post colonialism is a literary study and a theoretical practice that analyzes the effects of the colonial age, that is, the impacts of the colonizer on the colonized. It discusses the experiences of both the colonizer and the colonized. It examines the colonial era's aftereffects or the effect of the

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colonizer on the colonized. This article focuses on constructing truth by defining 'Orientalism' by Edward Said and 'subaltern' by GayatriSpivak. The Subaltern, a term coined and embraced by Marxist thinker and theorist Antonio Gramsci, is an essential strand in postcolonialism. The phrase may refer to the colonized South Asian subcontinent, including a region in several academic disciplines. It will be examined how Western literature depicts the East, the Orient, or the Subaltern characters. It will be clearly understood through this article the fabricated truth made by the West. Some texts mentioned in this paper are William Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of the Darkness*, E.M. Foster's *A Passage to India* to illustrate the concept of truth construction by the powerful, according to Said and Spivak.

Edward Said: Orientalism

Edward Said is one of the postcolonial theorists who directly raise questions against the colonial attitude of the west. He coins the way of seeing the east by the west through the oriental lens. First, it has to be understood that the colonial aspect can be imposed physically, mentally, socially, economically, and culturally. Said's post colonialism theory is mainly based on the false image of the orient or the east, which the west fabricates. By that image fabrication, they want to establish the truth of the east as primitive, barbarous. They have

done well for us by making us educated after making us colonized. He raises questions about disclosing our view in that kind of lens made by the west. This false image is manufactured by western explorers, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators. Edward Said wanted to explore the truth. So that it could help the colonized people to understand their true identity.

According to Said, the West always thinks east as primitive, uncivilized "other" and themselves as civilized. This other attitude is hazardous for the orient people. He also asks why the West needs to civilize the East as their way and the parameters of being civilized. This question sets the parameter of understanding the truth. He concludes that "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony." "Knowledge is never innocent; it is always controlled by power," Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) is informed by this Foucauldian concept. This power-knowledge relationship helps the occident to fabricate truth according to their way. Orientalism is a phrase used to refer to 'the orient' as found, seen, and characterized by Europe and the West. In a literary context, it refers to the West's discourse on the East in all domains, including academic, sociological, and so on, that lacks an eastern counterpart. This dialogue culminates in the creation of a "textual world." It refers to the

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West's attitudes toward the East, to the occident's gaze at the east. Said states that there is a practice of considering the ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West where the West is in the higher position. The West consciously creates this practice. Said believes that the occident wants to exploit the orient in the name of enlightening, civilizing, and humanizing them. Said brings the factor of "us" and "other" give much more importance. According to Said, the colonizing system persists in chaos, coups, corruption, civil wars, and bloodshed imposing critically by the colonizer.

Said explores that a powerful colonizer has imposed a language and culture upon the colonized people or nation. Usually, they ignore the colonized language and culture. However, their main intention is to distort the colonized culture and linguistic tradition so that the populated nation automatically serves the colonizer's purpose unconsciously. Said finds out that it is not psychologically possible to break down the wall of psychological imperialism by practicing distorted culture by the colonized society. Misleading text created by the West for the east work as an agent to spread a new form of imperialism. For Said, it is wrong to separate literature and culture from history and politics. So it is necessary to study both of them together to understand the complex hegemony.

Said admits in *Culture and Imperialism* that colonial literature can reflect the truth of the periphery, and this can be used as resistant power of the periphery. They have to understand how to explore reality. This resistant literature cannot be separated from politics and history. This can prepare society to be prepared to fight intellectually against the domination of the centre. This leads Said to study the themes of resistance culture, showing how the natives could, eventually, produce their own vigorous culture of opposition. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said focuses on three primary metropolitan cultures, British, French, and American, to show how even their current identities are the product of power.

Said has discovered a new set of thinkers in the marginal society who had written about colonialism, race, and identity of their own. The thinkers are CLR James, Tagore, and Fanon, and their work can realize the impact of colonial aggression. The writings can be enlightening the marginal to get the strength to think free can speak free from the suppression and repression of imperialism. Said theories the very culture of the colonized nation can be the strong base of opposition and resistance at some length. He remarks that the first task of the culture of resistance is to reclaim, rename, and re-inhabit the land. With that task, other assertions, recoveries, and identifications will be grounded quietly.

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Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Subaltern Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is indeed a feminist critic, literary theorist, and Indian scholar. She has often described herself as a "practical Marxist-feminist deconstructionist." She was Derrida's follower and his interpreter. She was the author of Derrida's "Of Grammatology" preface by a translator. She also translated Mahasweta Devi's writings, such as *Imaginary Maps* and *Breast Stories*, into English, along with different critical appraisals of the texts and Devi's life and work style in general.

Instead of revealing errors, Spivak wants to see how truth is constructed. The concept of the subaltern is essential to Spivak's theory. The "Subaltern" means "lower rank" in military terms. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci borrowed this term. In her book 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' the first political history showed that the subaltern groups' voice was shifted. By reading that book, it realizes that she is a woman from the third world, an unfortunate marginal guest, an American professor, a middle-class exile from Bengal, and sometimes a success story in the American university system. In the topic's positioning as a Third World subject, she was taken for granted. In this writing, she reveals the irony that subalterns have brought to the fore by giving practical remarks against unfair domination and inequality in a consciousness of their rights. It denounces the injury

inflicted on women and non-Europeans in the Third World. The subaltern, who cannot speak or are silent, wants to give a voice. The voice is for expressing the truth for them. It focuses on widow sacrifice speculations. She tries to reestablish the presence of the women authors whom their men submerged. She explores Women's Double-Colonization (Dalit/Black women). Through the example of a Hindu ritual, "Sati," she states the constructive truth process used by the West to make us psychologically colonized. She urges us to make ourselves much more conscious and critical to look up what the West gives us in the name of enlightenment.

'Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988) by Gayatri Spivak is concerned with the methodology used when the West does ethnographic research. In the illustration of the Indian Sati ritual of widow suicide, which features prominently in her work, Spivak mainly focuses on the first section, which explains the ethical challenges of using universal ideas and frameworks to understand a distinct culture. After that, it discusses a range of prominent western authors, including Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida. In her essay, she broaches the issue of sexual and gender identity in the piece. As defined by Spivak, persons who belong to third world nations are said to be "subaltern." Because people are separated by gender, class, race, area, religion, and other stories, it is hard for them to speak out. The divisions

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make them weak to understand their true condition. They will not be able to rise in unison because of these divides. In the Marxist theory of Antonio Gramsci, the second-rung officer in the ranks of the unorganized masses is known as the subaltern. To succeed in the workers' revolution, they must be politicized and organized by the leaders. Ranajit Guha advocated that the Subaltern Studies Group focused on the disenfranchised people of India by utilizing the word 'subaltern.'

She criticizes the West's Eurocentric views. She believes that knowledge is never neutral; Western economic interests and power constantly influence it. For Spivak, knowledge is a commodity or product exported from the West to the Third World. Western scholars have always portrayed themselves and their knowledge of Eastern cultures as objective. The knowledge of the third world is always constructed with the West's political and economic interests in mind.

Spivak accuses Foucault and other critics of cooperating with capitalism and imperialism. Spivak joins Edward Said in criticizing how western writers have represented the third world (subaltern) in academic discourse.

She employs deconstruction to analyze how accurate a statement is. In essence, she claims that the example of

"radical criticism" that emerges from the West today due to a strong desire to protect the West as a subject. "Sati" is her prime example. Sati was a Hindu ritual in which a woman was cremated as her husband's pyre burned beside her. During British rule in India, this tradition was forbidden. While it benefited many women and saved their lives, it also assisted the British in consolidating their power in India. When women's voices were not heard, prohibiting this practice was incomplete. A typical quote goes: "It is said that the 'white males' protected the 'brown ladies' from the 'brown males.'" The Native Americans were known as "barbarians" concerning their treatment at the hands of the British, who were said to be "civilized." The human conscious is randomly created. We do not manufacture our personalities.

Spivak criticizes Foucault and Deleuze for perpetrating "epistemic violence": the transference of Eurocentric knowledge to underdeveloped regions of the globe. She argues that Western academic thought is generated for the sole purpose of helping to further the interests of the business world. Knowledge being exported from Western to third world nations is analogous to any other kind of commercial export. Knowledge is never without significance. It shows that the producer is interested in it. This modern Western education forms our identities, while for those in the third world, Europe becomes the ultimate ideal.

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Some Literary Illustrations

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), Caliban is envisioned as a subaltern and subordinate figure who works for Prospero, who is seen to be the west/colonizer who is a scholarly person. The character of Prospero may be defined as being colonial authority and control personified. As the second son, Caliban acknowledges Prospero's leadership. The English explorer and colonizer Prospero plunders the local people of the New World. To assist in his attempt to civilize the locals, Prospero disguises himself as a member of a tribe from the island of Caliban. Though his name, Caliban, sounds similar to cannibal, his designation is more closely related to Cariban. Author Edward Said used the idea of "Orientalism" in his book *Orientalism* to demonstrate how the Christian cleric Richard Burton, a non-Muslim, could write about the medieval period and the Islamic people without ever having been to the holy lands of Mecca or Medina.

Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe's novel (first published in 1719), may be seen as a classic case of British imperialist behavior. Furthermore, Crusoe may be seen as a depiction of Friday races as well. Robinson is seen as Hercules with a powerful physique, whereas Friday is seen as a Negro and cannibal. This woman that Crusoe met in the orient is similarly represented completely naked. Friday bears the burden of Robinson's language, religion, and God. He instructs the child to call him "Master." To read Friday in

this passage, one should understand that she is rude, uncivilized, and vulgar. The cannibals have portrayed dining on other cannibals in place of Friday after they have dispatched them using the means at their disposal. However, cannibals do eat their kind after they die, but only if they are already dead. Marlowe describes an eastern lady in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). In the book, author Conrad includes a section in which a naked eastern lady greets Marlowe. It is normally a stereotyped depiction of Asian ladies, in which an occidental writer usually portrays the character.

Conclusion:

From the early days of exploration and colonization, post colonialism critically investigates the interaction between colonizers and colonized. Derrida's 'deconstruction' post colonialism highlights the role of writings, literary and otherwise, in the colonial effort, drawing on Foucault's conception of 'discourse' and Gramsci's conception of 'hegemony.' It investigates how these writings portray colonisers (Masculine) as dominant and colonised (Effeminate) as inferior. In recent years, he focused on opposition to Orientalism, which he discusses in *Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism*. However, it would be incorrect to argue that since Said does not enter the latter zone, he implies that the imperialist discourse is all-encompassing. According to Foucault's work, dominance and resistance

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are intrinsically intertwined. GayatriSpivak has criticized Foucault for not listening to imperial conquest as a feature of Western civil society or how colonialism may have altered the contemporary European state's power/knowledge system. To summarize, we cannot overlook Said's importance to establish their own true identity of the East by understanding the truth. He paved the ground for numerous critics, like Spivak, to investigate her views on the same perspective.

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