CHAPTER II
THE POST(-)COLONIAL THEORY

"The final hour of colonialism has struck, and millions of inhabitants of Africa, Asia and Latin America rise to meet a new life and demand their unrestricted right to self-determination."

— Che Guevara, 'Colonialism is Doomed'

2.1 AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN CONTRIBUTION

The beginning of the end of European colonialism was in the mid-twentieth century. It ended in the Indian sub-continent, for instance, in 1947. Around the same time, the concept of post(-)colonialism started growing in different parts of the world. The concept grew mostly in Africa and Asia though similar concepts were developed in the settler colonies of America and Australasia too. The contributions to postcolonial theory from the African continent and the Caribbean
Islands are highlighted in this section.

A French essay titled 'Discours sur le Colonialisme' [Discourse on Colonialism] contributed to the genesis of African postcolonialism. Published in 1950 and later translated into English, the article was written by Marxist author-cum-activist Aimé Fernand David Césaire (26 June 1913 – 17 April 2008). Césaire points out that colonialism had not put different continents side by side, as was suggested by its apologists, but one under another. Thus, the relationship between different continents was not horizontal but vertical as in a poststructuralist binary. Césaire says that the colonizer was mostly in the roles of a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard or a slave driver. Hence, the colonizer enjoyed an authority of power over the colonized. Césaire rejects the charge that pre-colonial Africa was uncivilized. His argument is that Africa was already civilized in the sense that her communities were basically democratic, courteous and rational. He accuses Europe, on the other hand, of creating problems in the African continent. Holding Europe to be unable or unwilling to solve its self-created problems, he writes:

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.

A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization.

A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization. (Discourse on Colonialism 1)
Aimé Césaire taught at a Martiniquan school where one of his students was Frantz Fanon (20 July 1925 – 6 December 1961). Their acquaintance flourished even as Fanon grew up to be a soldier and, eventually, a psychiatrist. In 1952, Fanon wrote a book titled Peau Noire, Masques Blanches [Skin Black, Masks White]. Translated into English as Black Skin, White Masks (1967), the book describes itself as “The Experiences of a Black Man in a White World”. This self-description indicates that a man’s experiences depend on colour — his and his world’s. If the man’s colour is different from his world’s then, sadly, there could be maladjustments. In fact, the maladjustments were so acute in the case of black people that Fanon wonders if blacks could be considered people at all. Being black was, as if, being abnormal. They were either patronised or hated by their white counterparts, never treated equally. The black people suffered such an inferiority complex that they felt they did not even exist. Fanon quotes Jean-Paul Sartre’s essay Orphée Noir [Orpheus Black] to suggest that if blacks would speak up then their speech would not be pleasant for the whites. ² Fanon regrets that black people are considered outsiders to European culture even if they master European languages. Having mastered a European language, such people would no longer remain fully black yet they could not be white either. The whites were the Superior Other while the blacks symbolised immorality or, worse still, sin. Hence, no black person could be comfortable with his or her self-image. What Fanon resents most is that whites assume all blacks to be a homogenous community. On seeing a black, one white would call out to another, “Look, a
Negro!" When he overheard such racist remarks, Fanon felt dehumanised into objecthood. His deep anguish is apparent in the chapter 'The Fact of Blackness' where he says:

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination. I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'."

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematisation. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together. (Black Skin 112-13)

Black Skin, White Masks is, obviously, a work of non-fiction. However, fiction too contributed to the birth of postcolonial theory. For instance, Things Fall Apart (1958) by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe (16 November 1930 - ) is a novel about how things fall apart in a west African village on the arrival of British
colonialists. It tells the poignant story of a tribal faith being swamped by Christianity and an old village headman losing to a newly-arrived District Commissioner. After the village headman commits suicide being unable to adapt to the change, the novel ends on an ironic note with the District Commissioner thinking of writing a book by the title of 'The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger'. The story seemed to be typical of many colonies around the world.

The next year, Frantz Fanon's second book was published by the name 'L'An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne [Year Five of the Algerian Revolution]. It was about the Algerian revolt started in 1954 which eventually led to her independence from French colonialism. The book was later translated into English as *A Dying Colonialism* (1965) but remains obscure till date. It points out, though, that anti-colonial struggles have never been accepted by the colonial powers as reasonable and secular. The struggles were invariably "attributed to religious, magical, fanatical behaviour" instead. (*A Dying Colonialism* 41)

The growth of African postcolonialism got a big boost in 1961 with the publication of *Les Damnés de la Terre* [The Damned of the Earth], Fanon's third book. Its title being extracted from the well-known French song *L'Internationale* [The Internationale], the book describes itself as "A Negro Psychoanalyst's Study of the Problems of Racism and Colonialism in the World Today". This description's forepart, 'a negro psychoanalyst', suggests that a person's race could matter even
in the scientific profession of psychoanalysis. The book, which was translated into English as *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), has a foreword by Sartre. He presents the book as an advocacy of violent anti-colonialism. In fact, Fanon justifies the violence of Algerian nationalists as an inescapable consequence of French colonialism. Apart from the controversial justification of violent struggles, he explains how colonial powers changed colonized societies. The introduction of new laws, for example, was a tactic to perpetuate colonial rule. Law was only one of the many colonial instruments which changed native societies beyond recognition. Thereafter, even if colonialism were to disappear, the pre-colonial culture could not reappear in its original form. Fanon also reiterates certain points made in his first book. He reiterates his complaint that whites assume all blacks to be a homogenous community. However, the fact is that the blacks are as different from one another as the whites. Another point which Fanon regrets is that, in the colonial world, complexion had become destiny. Race had unfortunately assumed an inordinate power over life. Pained at racial discrimination, he says:

> When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. *(The Wretched 32)*
A few years after Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* was published, Chinua Achebe wrote an essay titled 'The Novelist as Teacher' (1965). It was about expanding the novelist's role from a story-teller to a pedagogue. What Achebe wants to teach, through his novels, is the unknown history of pre-colonial Africa. He wants to teach Africans not to be unduly ashamed of their ancestors. Also, the colonial version need not be believed as the gospel truth. In Achebe's words:

> For the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Sartre has called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are as good as the next man but that we are much better. . . . The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. I for one would not wish to be excused. I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past — with all its imperfections — was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf delivered them. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind. ⁵

Almost a decade later, Achebe wrote an essay titled 'Colonialist Criticism' (1974). In it, he questions the practice of literary criticism to search for so-called
universal qualities in literature. He suspects that their search was really for European qualities instead. Hence, he rejects the so-called universality and writes, "I should like to see the word universal banned altogether from discussions of African literature, until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe". (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin The Post-Colonial Studies 13) The article rung an alarm bell for the prevalent modes of literary criticism.

In the following year, 1975, a lecture titled 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness' was delivered by Achebe at the University of Massachusetts. He alleged that the treatment of Africa by Conrad was thoroughly racist. 6 He said that, in the novel, Africa was portrayed as an antithesis to Europe. Africa as a place of peril was shown as a foil to Europe as a place of grace, thereby justifying colonialism. Due to so demeaning a portrayal, Achebe commented, "The question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot." The lecture, with its unambiguous denunciation of a famous novel, has become a milestone in postcolonial criticism of literary works.

Apart from the works highlighted above, there were many others which helped in the development of African and Caribbean postcolonialism. They include works by well-known figures like Leopold Sedar Senghor (Senegal), Wole Soyinka
(Nigeria), Edward Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados) and Wilson Harris (Guyana). Comparatively less-known writers like Denis Williams (Guyana), Emmanuel Ngara (Zimbabwe) and Sam Selvon (Trinidad) have also contributed to the origin of the theory. How their efforts received unexpected support from European philosophers is explored in the next section.

2.2 THE EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

The previous section highlighted the development of postcolonialism in Africa. Many a postcolonialist there had been influenced by Karl Heinrich Marx (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883), a European philosopher. It is, indeed, ironical that colonial Europe contributed to the postcolonial world. In fact, Marx was only one of the many Europeans who influenced postcolonial theory. This section focusses on some of them and their impact on African and Asian postcolonialism.

Among the European thinkers who influenced postcolonial theory, one was Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (22 January 1891 – 27 April 1937). He wrote about a number of communist concepts, one of them being 'hegemony'. The word 'hegemony' means the domination of a person or a group by another. Previously, it was assumed that such domination could be only through top-down coercion. However, Gramsci points out that hegemony could be through mutual consent as well. He suggested, with an insight from Machiavelli's works, that one could
consent to be dominated by another due to the superior position of the latter. In other words, people could willingly submit to hegemony. Hence, Gramsci expands the meaning of the word to include:

The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

The apparatus of state coercive power 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed. (Selections 277)

Gramsci refers to those groups which undergo hegemonic domination as 'subalterns'. The word subaltern means a person or a group of low status. Gramsci says that the history of subaltern groups is not the same as that of their nation state because national history represents only the hegemonic groups. Subaltern history, on the other hand, has been mostly obliterated. Gramsci also notes that wherever subaltern history has survived, it is not continuous in flow. This is so because subaltern groups could not counter the hegemonic ones continuously but could do so only intermittently. Gramsci's concepts, of the subaltern and of the hegemon, have been used extensively in postcolonial theory.
Apart from Marxists like Gramsci, post-structuralists Ferdinand de Saussure (26 November 1857 – 22 February 1913) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (28 November 1908 - ) influenced the generation of post-colonial theory. Post-structuralism, as practised by them, was a revisionist version of structuralism since the late 1960s. While structuralism used to analyse texts through their subterranean structures like linguistics and anthropology, post-structuralism began ignoring those structures as culturally conditioned and, consequently, unreliable references. Structuralism had viewed every text through the eyes of its particular author whereas post-structuralism started seeing each text from the angles of its different readers. Incidentally, some theorists graduated from structuralism to post-structuralism once they realised that no text yielded a singular comprehension but as many interpretations as it had readers.

A student of French structuralist Louis Althusser was post-structuralist Michel Foucault (15 October 1926 – 25 June 1984), known for developing the concept of 'discourse'. 8 Discourse, as he meant it, is an institution of thought. Thought is like any material institution in the sense that it has certain limits or boundaries. If those boundaries are transgressed, then that thought itself is considered meaningless or irrational by other people. Transgression of discursive limits is not acceptable to society. Moreover, these discourses are omnipresent because they circumscribe almost everything that we think. In other words, thinking is not as limitless as it is assumed to be. Foucault goes on to suggest that
discourses involve not only speech but also art and, perhaps, science. Thereby, discourses determine human society in a comprehensive way. They are created by the powerful and accepted, unknowingly, by the rest. People are not aware that they are discourse transmitters themselves. The surprising aspect of discourses, though, is that the boundaries or limits are never made explicit. The 'don'ts' are never clarified. Hence, Foucault says,

All manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark. It is supposed therefore that everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that precedes it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences. The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said. The first theme sees the historical analysis of discourse as the quest for and the repetition of an origin that eludes all historical determination; the second sees it as the interpretation of 'hearing' of an 'already-said' that is at the same time a 'not-said'.

(Archaeology 28)

According to Foucault, discourse is inextricably connected to power and
knowledge. Their mutual relationship may be represented schematically as the following: power → discourse → knowledge. It means that power creates discourses which, in turn, create knowledge. To put it in another way, knowledge is limited within the confines of discourse which has been generated by power. Since discourses are the immediate products of power, and knowledge is a product of discourse, it proves that knowledge is the end-product of power. In fact, it is that power which gives knowledge its credibility. Foucault debunks the belief that knowledge is created by reality or any other absolute. Conventional wisdom, however, was that knowledge gives power. By contrast, Foucault provides a new dimension to the relationship between power and knowledge. Hence, he talks of "a certain code of knowledge" implying that knowledge is not really fetterless.

A not unrelated concept is that of identity. Issues regarding identity were explored in detail by French psychiatrist Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan (13 April 1901 – 9 September 1981). In the light of Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacan has pointed out that one's identity is based on similarities with and differences from others. We cannot think of ourselves on our own. Actually, what we think of ourselves is somehow based on what others think of us. However, Lacan says that others are not homogenous themselves. He divides them into an "Other", with a capital 'O', and an "other", with a small 'o'. The former represents society's dominant group while the latter represents the dominated one. In terms of child psychology, a baby sees his parents as the 'Other' and his mirror image as the 'other'. Lacan's
interpretation of identity has had significant repercussions on postcolonial studies.

Another European to have influenced post-colonialism was the French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida (15 July 1930 – 8 October 2004). One of the issues he paid attention to was the presence of social binaries. The word 'binary' means 'twofold'. In post-colonialist criticism, the word stands for a pair of opposites with one of its terms dominating the other and also suppressing the ambiguous and in-between spaces. Binaries have been used both by the colonizers and the colonized, but mostly by the former. On the one hand, colonizers used binaries like white/coloured and modern/primitive; on the other hand, the colonized utilised binaries like indigenous/foreign and traditional/new. Interestingly, moral binaries like good/bad and right/wrong were common to both these discourses. Derrida argued that the poles of such dualities were not always rigid but flexible at times, which in turn altered the difference between them. For instance, a binary such as European/Asian is well-known but it gets disturbed on questions about Russia or Turkey because these two countries do not fit in neatly within that pair. Due to this indeterminacy of binaries, an entire text could have its meaning unstable or fluid. Also, the interstitial space within a binary is more often than not a region of taboo and that leads binaries to encourage extreme positions. Moreover, the poles of a binary are not equal in power — the first term dominates the second. Accordingly, most of the binaries are biased in favour of the powerful at any point in time. The predominance of one term over its counterpart in binaries worried Derrida to the extent that he commented,
In a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with a peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralization that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively. . . . The hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself. (Positions 38-9)

The relation between two or more binaries can be even more complex than that between the poles. The examples below can prove the point:

Colonizer  –  colonized,
White  –  coloured,
Civilized  –  primitive.

Such binaries are easily read across but, when arranged in a matrix like the one above, may be read downwards as well. If this binary matrix is read downwards, then the items on the left would form a single pole while those on the right would form the other pole. Reading the matrix downwards, its left and the right poles would show a 'collective' binary i.e. the colonizer who is white and civilized as
opposed to the colonized who is coloured and primitive. That adds a totally new dimension to the apparently simple binaries.

Apart from the writers discussed above, there were other Europeans like Roland Barthes (12 November 1915 – 25 March 1980) who contributed in different ways to postcolonial theory. Americans like linguist Avram Noam Chomsky (7 December 1928 - ) have contributed to the theory too. Nonetheless, the role of Asian writers in developing this theory is immense and justifiably merits detailed discussion.

2.3 ASIAN THEORETICIANS

European communists and poststructuralists, as discussed in the last section, created the background of postcolonial theory. However, the main theoreticians of postcolonialism are from Asia. Noteworthy among them, are Edward W. Said (1935 – 2003), Homi K. Bhabha (1949 - ) and Gayatri C. Spivak (1942 - ). These three theoreticians, coincidentally, had or have extensive connections with the West. Their major concepts are discussed below.

The first and the foremost among Asian postcolonialists was Palestinian activist Edward Wadie Said. He contributed to the theory by analyzing the orientalism of the Western world. The word 'orientalism' means scholarship in
Eastern cultures, whether in fiction or in non-fiction. In the light of Foucaultian discourse and Gramscian hegemony, Said analyzed the existing orientalist scholarship. He argues that the orientalist 'knowledge' was constructed on the basis of a Western discourse about Eastern societies. In other words, orientalism was less a fact-finding mission and more a prejudice-confirming exercise. Said points out that even those orientalists who tried to be factual could not withstand Eurocentric pressures. Said suggests that biased orientalism was accepted by the East because of consensual hegemony. The East had consented to such 'knowledge' because of the dominating position of the West, the former had become subliminally convinced about the projected superiority of the latter. In that way orientalism helped the social, economic and political subordination of the Orient by the Occident. However, it is not only the East which was influenced by orientalism. Said reminds us that even the West was affected, although differently. The West looked upon itself as the opposite of the East in the symbolic sense. It saw itself as what the other was supposedly not — modern. This kind of oppositionality, which thrives on stereotypes, was necessary to strengthen and perpetuate Europe's self-image. So orientalism resulted in increasing the psychological distance between the two hemispheres of the world rather than bring them together. Orientalist knowledge, thus, became a handmaiden for colonial rule. Hence, Said concludes,

My whole point about this system is not that it is a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence — in which I do not for a moment believe — but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose,
according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting. (Orientalism 273)

The relationship between oriental and occidental countries was, generally speaking, the relationship between the colonized and colonizing ones. As such, it was the focus of Indian critic Homi Bhabha. Influenced largely by Lacan, Bhabha introduced the concept of 'mimicry'. He argues that the colonizer is often mimicked by the colonized. These mimicries, although sincere, become embarrassing for the colonizers just as distorted reflections in curved mirrors are. The distortions in the image are uncomfortable for the object, the person whose image it is. After all, the line between mimicry and mockery is thin. The line could be breached inadvertently and prove colonial domination to be a fluctuating authority. Hence, Bhabha says:

If colonialism takes power in the name of history, it repeatedly exercises its authority through the figures of farce. For the epic intention of the civilizing mission, 'human and not wholly human' in the famous words of Lord Rosebery, 'writ by the finger of the Divine' often produces a text rich in the traditions of trompe-l'oeil, irony, mimicry and repetition. In this comic turn from the high ideals of the colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects Mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. (The Location 85)
Bhabha is also associated with the postcolonial concept of 'hybridity'. Hybridity is a fusion of certain elements of the colonizing and colonized peoples. Like a double-edged sword, the colonial hybrid reaffirms the domination of the colonizer while encouraging the insurgency of the colonized. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and hybridity have helped in the unravelling of complex colonial problems.

Homi Bhabha seems to assume that the colonial situation was homogenous to a great extent. However, the validity of such a generalizing assumption is doubted by his compatriot Gayatri Spivak. She takes particular note of the differences within the colonized peoples. Influenced by Gramsci, she says that there existed many 'sub-altern' peoples among the colonized. These sub-alters, whether by class or by gender, had very little representation in the forums of power. Although they were numerically strong, they are practically absent in history because their voices were drowned and their viewpoints ignored by the colonizers and also the colonized who had been co-opted into colonialism. In fact, the absence of the subaltern groups is so noticeable that Spivak wonders if they can speak at all. Hence, she concludes, "In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak." ("Can the Subaltern Speak?") Spivak's main contribution to postcolonial theory is, thus, the awareness of heterogeneity among the colonized. 14 She has little patience for postcolonial fundamentalism and essentialism.

Said, Bhabha and Spivak are three of the most important postcolonial
theoreticians. Despite their major contributions to the field, they have encountered fierce criticism. For instance, critic Robert J.C. Young has sarcastically called them the “Holy Trinity”. (Colonial Desire 163) Bhabha and Spivak, in particular, have been repeatedly criticized for the incomprehensibility of their language. Those are not the only issues in this context, however. Some related issues of postcolonial theory are discussed in the following section.

2.4 RELATED ISSUES

The roles of Africa, Europe and Asia in the development of post(-)colonial theory has been outlined earlier in this chapter. The theory, while training its guns on colonialism, continues to weather a number of internal storms. However, controversies could not prevent the theory from being given clear definitions by various postcolonialists. Some of the controversial issues and suggested definitions are brought to the fore in the following paragraphs.

One of the controversies regarding ‘post(-)colonial’ is the word’s spelling. To hyphenate, or not to hyphenate, that is the question. In other words, ‘post-colonial’ or ‘postcolonial’ — which is the correct form of the word? It is spelt differently by different people according to their ideological predispositions. Those critics who are not heavily influenced by post-structuralism, generally use the hyphenated form ‘post-colonial’. These writers, like Aijaz Ahmad and Benita Parry,
focus on the material effects of the colonial era. Other critics, who are deeply influenced by poststructuralism, prefer the unhyphenated form 'postcolonial'. They include the likes of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak who concentrate on the discursive power of the colonial period. Nonetheless, the difference between the two forms of the word is narrow since their meanings are practically the same. Hence, Bill Ashcroft et al write, "While this distinction in spelling exists, the interweaving of the two approaches is considerable." (Key Concepts 187)

Another controversy of postcolonialism is regarding its historical and geographical range. It is not certain when and where postcolonialism started because imperialism, if not colonialism, existed right from the dawn of civilization. For instance, the Mauryan Empire in India, the Roman Empire in Europe, the Aztec Empire in North America and the Inca Empire in South America existed during the Ancient Age. The Mughal Empire, the Chinese Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire flourished during the Mediaeval Age. British, French and other west European empires thrived during the Modern Age. American imperialism, or neo-colonialism, seems to exist even in the twenty first century. The continuity of imperialism over the ages makes identification of any specific postcolonial era difficult. Hence, critic Ella Shohat asks pointedly, "When exactly, then, does the 'postcolonial' begin?" (103) 15

Still another postcolonial controversy is regarding the two types of colonies — 'settler' colonies in Australasia and America, as distinct from 'occupier' colonies
in Asia and Africa. Many Europeans settled permanently in the former colonies, displacing large sections of the indigenous population, but not in the latter ones. Consequently, racism was more prevalent in 'settler' colonies than in the 'occupier' ones. Given these differences, and many others, it is doubtful whether discussing all colonies together would yield fruitful results. It has been feared that indiscriminate application of the term 'postcolonial' could create problems, rather than solve them.

One more unresolved issue for postcolonial writers is regarding their linguistic choices. There is no unanimity as to whether they should write in their vernaculars or in the colonial languages. While Ngugi wa Thiong'o (earlier known as James Ngugi) has renounced English in favour of his native Gikuyu so as to reach his national readers, Chinua Achebe continues to write in English in order to reach a global audience. Justifying his choice, Achebe said, "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience." (Morning Yet on Creation Day 103)  

Postcolonialism has some difficulty with feminism about the role of women in colonial times. While postcolonialism accuses white women of complicity in colonialism because they were white, feminism points to their helplessness because they were women. Feminist postcolonialists like Jenny Sharpe sidestep this controversy by arguing that white women were used by white men as psychological weapons in colonial battles. White men sometimes alleged that
white women were raped by colonized men — such allegations, whether true or not, frightened both white women and colonized men into submission. Citing the allegations of rape in *A Passage to India* and *The Jewel in the Crown*, Sharpe says that “fear-provoking stories have the same effect as an actual rape . . .” (*Allegories* 67) Incidentally, Shakespeare’s Prospero had accused Caliban of threatening to violate Miranda. Whatever be the role of white women in colonialism, the role of their coloured sisters has been less controversial though. Both postcolonialism and feminism agree that coloured women were victimized on two counts, their colonized status as well as their gender.

Another unresolved issue is regarding the etymology of the term ‘postcolonial’. In the literal sense, the prefix ‘post’ means ‘after’. Accordingly, the word ‘postcolonial’ implies ‘after the colonial era’. However, postcolonial studies are not limited to those events which happened only after the colonial era. Postcolonial studies encompass many events which occurred during the colonial era too. In other words, ‘postcolonialism’ as a word is slightly different from ‘postcolonialism’ as a study. The difference is narrow but significant — what is not postcolonial in one sense, may be so in another. 17 For example, anti-colonial movements were not postcolonial occurrences in the chronological sense. However, anti-colonial movements are closely studied in postcolonial theory. Aware of this semantic confusion, critic John McLeod warns, “The term postcolonialism is not the same as ‘after colonialism’, as if colonial values are no longer to be reckoned with.” (*Beginning Postcolonialism* 33)
A further problem with postcolonialism is its multi-disciplinary usage. Since the late 1940s, the term has been used in economics and other social sciences. From the late 1970s, it is being used in literature and other cultural arts. At times, the term has been used in physical sciences too, notably in medicine. Conceding the confusion, critic Ania Loomba writes, "This difficulty is partly due to the interdisciplinary nature of postcolonial studies which may range from literary analysis to research in the archives of colonial government, from the critique of medical texts to economic theory, and usually combine these and other areas." (Colonialism xii)

The multi-disciplinary nature of the term 'postcolonial' has led to its unthinking application. Such indiscriminate use, or misuse, of the term incensed Stephen Slemon so much that he wrote in his essay 'The Scramble for Postcolonialism':

It has been used as a way of ordering a critique of totalizing forms of Western historicism; as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of 'class', as a subset of both postmodernism and post-structuralism (and conversely, as the condition from which those two structures of cultural logic and cultural critique themselves are seen to emerge); as the name for a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings; as a cultural marker of non-residency for a Third World intellectual cadre; as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonial power; as an oppositional form
of 'reading practice'; and — and this was my first encounter with the term — as the name for a category of 'literary' activity which sprang from a new and welcome political energy going on within what used to be called 'Commonwealth' literary studies.

The most befuddling issue of postcolonial theory is its love-hate relationship with the West. On the one hand, it criticizes the Westernization of colonial times; on the other, the theory depends on Western roots itself. As has been pointed out in earlier sections of this chapter, postcolonialism has been greatly inspired by Western philosophies like Marxism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis. In fact, Aijaz Ahmad has alleged that many Asian and African postcolonialists "live and do their theories" in First World countries. Despite such Western colours, postcolonialism is substantially an anti-Western philosophy.

The theory of post-colonialism, like all other theories, has been criticized on many grounds. It has been accused of failure to reflect the entire spectrum of colonialism — the colonized natives at its one end, the colonizing foreigners at the other with mestizos and creoles in the middle. The difficulty of post-colonialism lies in the fact that though all these groups were created by the same process, colonialism, their experiences of it were not the same. What compounds the difficulty for post-colonialist theory is that even for any one group, the experiences differed from colony to colony because of a host of variable factors. The experiences of all colonies could not have been the same because there were too
many colonies for that to happen, with almost 85% of the land surface being colonized in the 1930s.

Whatever be the unresolved issues of postcolonialism, there have been a number of definitions for the theory. The definitions highlight different aspects of the theory and may be read in conjunction. For instance, Homi Bhabha's description of the theory emphasizes its political aspect. He said, "Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities' within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south."

However, one needs to remember that postcolonialism is not a wholly political phenomenon. It also includes social, economic and cultural aspects of the countries affected by colonialism. Many critics have kept in mind the large canvas of postcolonialism and defined the theory in a wholesome manner. For instance, Hans Bertens describes the theory thus: "Postcolonial theory and criticism radically questions the aggressively expansionist imperialism of the colonizing powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism and that it sees as still dominant within the Western world." (Literary Theory 200) Similar accounts of postcolonialism have been offered by other critics too.

The foregoing paragraphs enumerate some of the issues and definitions of postcolonial theory while the previous sections of this chapter give an idea about
the inter-continental development of postcolonialism. Together, they form the base on which a postcolonial critique may be made for a particular writer. It is on this basis that the present thesis critiques Nirad C. Chaudhuri’s writings.
NOTES

1 Césaire coined the word "thingification" to describe the acute objectification of the colonized by the colonizers. (Discourse on Colonialism 21)

2 This reminds us of Caliban's speech: "You gave me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse." (The Tempest 1.2)

3 Things Fall Apart got a sequel titled No Longer at Ease (1960).

4 Fanon justifies Algerian violence as follows: "The Algerian's criminality, his impulsivity, and the violence of his murders are therefore not the consequences of his nervous system or of the characterial originality, but the direct product of the colonial situation." (The Wretched of the Earth 250)

5 In another essay, 'Africa and her Writers' (1963), Achebe said that African writers need to concentrate on their social responsibility whereas European writers may focus on their individual expressions.

6 According to Achebe, Conrad's Heart of Darkness was "a story in which the very humanity of black people is called into question."

7 Gramsci also busts the myth of "common sense" as something manufactured by the dominant group and internalized by the dominated.

8 The word 'discourse' is derived from the Latin cursus which means 'running to and fro'.

9 Lacan was influenced not only by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud but also by structuralist philosophers Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ferdinand de Saussure.

10 Lacan's term for the "Other" is grande autre (grand other).
Derrida has been an influence on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who translated his *Of Grammatology* (1976) into English.

Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook criticize Said for mixing post-structuralism of Foucault with Marxism of Gramsci, two apparently incompatible theories. *(Comparative Studies* 141-67)

Bhabha says that mimicry showed the colonized to be “almost the same, but not quite”. *(The Location of Culture* 86)

Emphasizing the fact that the subaltern is not a monolithic entity, Spivak says, “One must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous.” *(Can the Subaltern Speak?’* 26)


As far as the language of English is concerned, Achebe said that for him “there is no other choice.” *(Morning Yet on Creation Day* 103)

Neo-colonialism, which is also a form of colonialism, too is studied by postcolonial theory.