Chapter II

Principles of Postcolonialism:
Its Growth, Significance and Relevance

Postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. It had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post independence period and from the late 1970s, the term has been used by critics to denote the various cultural effects of colonization. It has also been widely used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experiences of societies that were former European colonies. The colonized have been part of the processes of subjugation subsequent to the European advance around the world. So the term postcolonial is used to cover the cultural arena affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. Bill Ashcroft, G.Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have elaborated the meaning of the term in their book titled Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies as follows:

Post-colonialism/ Post colonialism is now used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire , the
subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and
the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly
perhaps, the differing response to such incursions and their
contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-
independence nations and communities. (187)

Modern literary critics are of the opinion that postcolonial theory is
an area of literary and cultural study that seeks a very strong resistance to
the former colonizer. It has come into being as part of the decentring
tendency of post 1960s thought in the west. It also assumes that the writers
who write back to the centre are representing the people of their society
authentically. Dennis Walder has elaborated that: “Postcolonial theory is
needed because it has a subversive posture towards the canon, in
celebrating the neglected or marginalized, bringing with it a particular
politics, history and geography” (60). The most significant effect of
postcolonial theory and postcolonial criticism is the undermining of the
universalist claims once made on behalf of literature by liberal humanist
critics. There was a preference to judge all literature by a single ‘universal’
standard and thereby, disregard cultural, social, regional and national
differences in views and experiences. The theory does not confine itself to
literature only. There are also fit areas for study like performance media,
art and film. Before going to further details of postcolonial theory, it is necessary to have a glimpse of the historical evolution of colonialism and decolonization.

The British Empire covered a vast area of the earth at the turn of the twentieth century which included large parts of Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada and the Caribbean. But as the twentieth century ended, the world has witnessed the colonial demise and the decolonization of millions of people from the colonial masters. The European colonialism, especially the British, with its demographical and geographical consequences made great impact beyond Europe in many ways. It often started as a matter of terrain: seizing lands, conquering and disenfranchising the aborigines of those lands. It transformed place, reorganized and restructured the environments and changed the people in the colonized nations. It took many different forms and engendered diverse effects around the world.

Frantz Fanon, the Martinician intellectual has described at the beginning of his book entitled *The Wretched of the Earth* that: “This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species” (30). The divisive territorial consequences of colonialism made clear-cut distinctions and discriminations that marked out the colonized as lacking
the same levels of humanity and rights, as the European colonizers. Instead, it treated them as the ‘other’. As Fanon puts it:

In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines. In defiance of his successful transplantation, in spite of his appropriation, the settler still remains a foreigner. It is neither the act of owning factories, nor estates nor a bank balance, which distinguishes the governing class. The governing is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, ‘the others’. (31)

Colonialism should be studied in its relationship with ‘capitalism’ and ‘imperialism’ since it was first and foremost part of the commercial venture of the Western nations that dates back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was at this time that the European colonial powers and individual European travellers like Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespuchi made ‘voyages of discovery’ and pursued the aims and objectives of colonialism to amass vast fortunes and wealth. This naturally led to the exploitation of the natural resources of the colonies and its
disenfranchised people. John McLeod has elaborated in his book *Beginning Post Colonialism* thus:

Colonialism was a lucrative commercial operation, bringing wealth and riches to Western nations through the economic exploitation of others. It was pursued for economic profit, reward and riches. Hence, colonialism and capitalism share a mutually supportive relationship with earth other. (7)

Colonialism flourished with the Atlantic slave trade which engendered the forced migration of millions of Africans to Europe and America as captives and indentured labour which brought the Asian people to the Caribbean islands. This finally resulted in the annihilation of indigenous people in the American continent, the Caribbean and other areas of migration. The Caribbean, more than any other region, has suffered in a devastating manner from colonial exploitation, oppression and marginalization. Bill Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue in their famous book *The Empire Writes Back* that: “in the Caribbean, the European imperial enterprise ensured that the worst features of colonialism throughout the globe would all be combined in one region” (145). The Caribbean had a history of five hundred and fifty years of displacement and
dislocation from the time of Columbus’ discovery of Hispaniola in 1492 to the 1960s. So colonialism can be viewed as a historical manifestation of imperialism. Elleke Boehmer’s very famous and wise definition of colonialism is quite relevant in this context. In *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, she defines colonialism as the: “settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands” (2).

Of course, there was a profound difference between the colonizer and the colonized after the process of colonization was completed. The colonizers were deemed civilized while the colonized were considered barbaric. If the colonizers were declared rational, sensible, cultured and learned, then the colonized were dismissed as irrational, insensible, illogical and ignorant. European colonialism always wanted to make sure that there was inequality of power that ultimately made differences between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer wanted to generate a people who would eventually cater to their needs and satisfy their requirements. They realized that colonialism could not succeed without the exertions of colonized peoples. They depended on the energies, skills and indigenous knowledge of the colonized to succeed in their colonial motives.

Bill Ashcroft et al. have quoted the most controversial words of the British
politician and intellect Thomas Macaulay about the English education of Indians in 1835. Macaulay is quoted to have argued that: “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” (375). It shows the extent to which colonialism transformed the identities of the people involved and how colonial situation manufactured colonialists as well as the colonized.

British colonialism began to meet with acts of resistance in the later years not only from indigenous inhabitants of colonized lands but also from members of the European communities who had settled overseas and no longer wished to defer power to the imperial mother land. So a process of *decolonization* started with the once colonized nations establishing the right to look after their own affairs. The first period witnessed the declaration of American Independence in 1776 which announced that the thirteen American colonies, then at war with Great Britain, were independent states, and no longer a part of the British Empire. The second part of the decolonization spanning the end of the Nineteenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century saw the emergence of the ‘dominions’, a term used to describe the nations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and
South Africa. These nations, referred to as ‘settler’ nations, agitated for self-government and political autonomy which they achieved as dominions of the British Empire. Thus Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and finally Ireland won political autonomy and self-rule with full governmental control.

The third period of colonization started immediately after the Second World War in the colonies of Asia, Africa and Caribbean islands subsequent to indigenous anti-colonial nationalism and military struggle. India and Pakistan became independent nations in 1947 and Sri Lanka in 1948. Ghana and Nigeria gained independence in 1957 and 1960 respectively followed by Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. Twentieth century thus witnessed large level of decolonization throughout the declining Empire. The reasons for decolonization were many; the most important being the emergence of various nationalist movements in the colonies that campaigned against the British colonial authority. In addition to politics, there was an economic reason also. After the Second World War, Britain’s status as the world’s greatest economic power declined. There was a tough competition to become military superpower in which America and the U.S.S.R became the world’s superpowers of the post-war era.
Even after independence of the once colonized nations by the end of the twentieth century, historical and cultural consequence in these nations remained stronger. Though the great powers of Europe stopped furthering their fortunes and ambitions through acts of colonial settlement, they opened new areas of exploitation and oppression. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri elaborate in their book *Empire* that: “the geographical and racial lines of oppression and exploitation that were established during the era of colonization and imperialism have in many respects not declined but instead increased exponentially” (43). Colonialism has taken new forms and new agendas in the new political and economic global structure. It takes the form of globalization and liberalization, the militaristic ‘war on terror’, the present transnational economic inequalities, poverty and disease in Africa and the political unrest in the West Africa. There was a subtle process of cultural colonization that wrought great damage to the psyche of the colonized people. Today, the third world nations are in a mess to tackle with the dual problem of regaining their economic stability as well as re-establishing their political, social and cultural growth marred by the colonial system. Elbaki Hermassi throws light on this issue in *The Third World Reassessed* in which he argues that the Third World crisis is neither purely political nor economic because: “the political and
economic are only aspects of a larger crisis that is at the heart of civilizational” (167). Culture does not exist fully beyond the social, historical and anthropological matters of the globe. Edward Said, one of the most important exponents of postcolonial theory, has suggested that culture may will normalize, legitimize and encourage European colonialism. He puts it in his book *Culture and Imperialism*:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include nations that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of class nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as ‘inferior’ or ‘subject races,’ ‘subordinate peoples’, ‘dependency’, ‘expansion’ and authority’. (8)

So the production of culture which included literature, music, art, and painting reproduced imperial ideological values. Culture was used as a tool to implement the imperial agenda and perpetuate forms of knowledge which supported the colonialist vision of the world.
The colonizers made the effective process of cultural colonization and the suffusion of western cultural values into the social fabric of the existing traditional cultures through school and churches. These institutions disseminated knowledge based on a completely Europeanized curriculum. Subjects like history, geography and literature were taught in European perspectives. Travel literature and travelogues did a major contribution in diffusing Western cultural values and Europeanized versions of history and geography. As a first step of cultural colonization, they propagated myths about the colonized masses that filled their mind with a feeling of inferiority and psychological complexities. Albert Memmi analyses the colonized mind very succinctly as follows:

Constantly confronted with his image of himself, set forth and imposed on all institutions and in every human contact, how could the colonized help reacting to his portrait… The accusation disturbs him and worries him even more because he admires and fears his powerful accuser.” Is he not partially right?”, he mutters “Are we not all a little guilty after all? Lazy, because we have so many idlers? Timid, because we let ourselves be oppressed.” Willfully created and spread by the colonizer, this mythical and degrading portrait ends up by
being accepted and lived with to a certain extent by the colonized. It thus acquires a certain amount of reality and contributes to the true portrait of the colonized. (153)

It is very obvious that the imperialists relied on literature for perpetuating their culture and ideology in the colonies and also for making their own people back home proud of the phenomenon of imperialism and subjugation. The energizing myths of English imperialism and the adventurous spirit of their people to explore, conquer and rule ‘the barbaric’ people were the themes of literature of the period, especially that of the Victorian period. It reached its culmination with Rudyard Kipling who glorified imperialism with the strong conviction that ‘Civilization was the Whiteman’s burden’. This has led to the need for the colonized elites and the Third world intellectuals to rise and articulate their protest against the imperial power. Thus a colonial nationalist writing was emerged with an objective to subvert Western cultural hegemony.

An important antecedent for postcolonialism was the off-spring of Commonwealth literature which emerged from the countries with a colonial history. Commonwealth literature incorporated the works of writers from the European settler communities as well as writers from the
countries gaining independence from the British. Writers from the African, Caribbean and South Asian nations belong to this category. It produced a fast – growing body of literature written in English by writers such as R. K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, George Lamming, Katherine Mansfield and Chinua Achebe. As Bill Ashcroft et al. have put it in *Key Concepts in Post Colonial Studies*: “the term has generally been used to refer to the literatures (written in English) of Colonies, former colonies (including India) and dependencies of Britain, excluding the literature of England” (51). Commonwealth literature, in short, was associated only with selected countries with a history of colonialism.

As the British power and influence in the colonies began to wane, the newly independent nations such as Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa in the African continent and Australia produced new literary work that seemed important outside their countries. The Post war period marked a permanent demotion of the imperial power in the face of national strivings, especially with the granting of independence to India and with the Suez crisis of 1956. The literary and cultural expression of these strivings during the long process of decolonization produced some of the first writings in English which include the novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao in India, to the fiction, drama and poetry of the African writers NgugiwaThiong’o (Kenya),
Wole Soyinka, Chris Okigbo (Nigeria) and Kofi Awoonor (Ghana) in the 1930s and 1950s respectively. Thus, the first school of commonwealth literature was founded at Leeds University in 1964 and the first Commonwealth Literature Conference was subsequently convened by the Leeds enthusiasts. Mulk Raj Anand and Achebe were recognized as great writers and a new category of literary study emerged. William Walsh, Professor of Education and Commonwealth Literature Fellow at Leeds, wrote a book entitled *A Manifold Voice: Studies in Commonwealth Literature* which reckoned the great authors who wrote in English outside Britain and the USA and who contributed to ‘the canon of literature in English’. The book included the studies of such great authors as V. S. Naipaul, R. K. Narayan, Anand, Patrick White, Katherine Mansfield, Nirad Chaudhuri and Chinua Achebe. There was a shift from ‘Colonial to Commonwealth’ which might suggest a particular version of history in which the status of the colonized countries changed from subservience to equality. Commonwealth literature identified six major divisions of writing – Indian, African, West Indian, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand. ‘New Literatures’ was a term used as an alternative to commonwealth literature and later postcolonial literatures.
The term ‘Postcolonial’ has gained significant currency in contemporary literary and cultural theory and the basic claim implied by the use of the term in relation to literature is twofold. First, it is intended to promote and celebrate the ‘New literatures’ emerged from the former colonial territories. Second, it asserts and advocates the need to analyse and resist continuing colonial attitudes. There is a great shift of perspective on the part of writers who strongly feel that their story is to be articulated by none other than themselves. The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has very clearly identified this shift when he writes about his experiences as a writer. Achebe puts it thus in an essay titled, *Named for Victoria, Queen of England*: “At the university I read some appalling novels about Africa (including Joyce Cary’s much praised *Mister Johnson*) and decided that the story we had to tell could not be told for us by anyone else no matter how gifted or well intentioned” (70). There is an obvious indication in this statement that the colonized, until the end of colonial rule, were deemed to accept that they were always the object of someone else’s story and history. Achebe decides to question this assumption by telling the story of the colonized. *Things Fall Apart* is the result of such a determination to retrieve the history of a people who are subjugated and made silent.
The origin of postcolonial aesthetics can be traced in Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) while its theory lies in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) and its critical analysis dates back to the publication of the historical book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (1989). The term ‘postcoloniality’ operates at two levels—first, as a historical marker of the period following decolonization and second, as an embodiment of intellectual approaches influenced by post-structuralism and post-deconstruction. The term has been used to replace the earlier terms like ‘Third World’ or ‘Commonwealth Literature’ since the late 1980s. The term gained more currency with the publication of *The Empire Writes Back* and *The Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literature in English* by Ashcroft et al.

The authors seek to broaden the scope of the term ‘postcolonial’ in the following words:

- The literature of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh,
- Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta,
- New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries and Sri Lanka are all Post-colonial literatures. The literature of the U.S.A should also be placed in this category.
- Perhaps because of its current position of power, and the
neo-colonizing role it has played, its postcolonial nature has
not been generally recognized. But its relationship with the
metropolitan centre as it evolved over the last two centuries
has been paradigmatic for post-colonial literature
everywhere. What each of these literatures has in common
beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics
is that they emerged in their present form out of the
experience of colonization and asserted themselves by
foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by
emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the
imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively
post-colonial. (2)

Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha have
popularized the theory in the later years. Aijas Ahmad, a very renowned
postcolonial theorist, has pointed out the lack of certainty about the use of
the term ‘postcolonial’ in an article ‘The Politics of Literary Post-
coloniality’ as follows:

As the terms ‘postcolonial’ and ‘post-colonialism’
resurfaced during the 1980s, this time in literary and cultural
theories and in deconstructive forms of history-writing, and
as these terms were then conjoined with a newly coined ‘postcoloniality,’ this surfacing included no memory of how the term had come into being in the first place. In some usages, the word ‘postcolonial’ still attempted a periodisation, so as to refer to that which came after colonialism though this sense of periodisation was itself used differently by different critics. (281)

The ancestry of postcolonial criticism and theory can be traced to Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, both published in French in 1952 and 1961 respectively. Fanon was a Martinique–born black psychiatrist and anti-colonialist intellectual who wrote from the perspective of a colonial subject in the thick of decolonization, addressing other colonial subjects. He placed the cultural aspect of colonial and postcolonial history at the centre of his discussion. Various anti-colonial theories have influenced the oppressed peoples of the world; but *The Wretched of the Earth* has articulated more effectively, profoundly and lastingly than any other anti-colonial work on behalf of and to the colonized. A controversial introduction to the text by Jean-Paul Sartre presents the thesis as an advocacy of violence. It is
considered by many to be one of the canonical books on the world wide
black liberation struggles of the 1960s. Within a Marxist framework, using
a cutting and nonsentimental writing style, Fanon draws upon his horrific
experiences in Algeria during its war of independence against France. He
addresses the role of violence in decolonization and the challenges of
political organization and the class of collisions and questions of cultural
hegemony in the creation and maintenance of a new country’s national
consciousness. The opening chapter of the book ‘Concerning Violence’ is a
caucistic indictment of colonialism and its legacy. It discusses violence as a
means of liberation and a catharsis to subjugation. Fanon eloquently puts it
as follows:

The uprising of the new nation and the breaking down of
colonial structures are the results of two causes: either of a
violent struggle of the people in their own right, or of action
on the part of surrounding colonized peoples which acts as a
brake on the colonial regime in question. A colonised people
is not alone. In spite of all that colonialism can do, its
frontiers remain open to new ideas and echoes from the
world outside. (54-55)
The Wretched of the Earth was a major influence on the works of revolutionary leaders such as Ali-Shariati in Iran, Steve Biko in South Africa, Malcom X in the U.S and Earnesto Che Guevara in Cuba. Only Guevara was primarily concerned with Fanon’s theories on violence; for Shariat and Biko, the main interest was ‘the new man’ and the ‘black consciousness’ respectively. Fanon’s influence extended to the liberation movements of the Palestinians, the Tamils, Africans, Americans and others.

In the text, he talks about identity, justice and power in the context of several ideologies. These categories can be better understood in the context of two groups, the colonists and the natives. The identity of these two groups can be clearly seen in Fanon’s representation of the struggle. The natives see the colonists as ‘the others’. They came from Europe and took over the native’s land and made them slaves in their own land and society. These people’s individual rights were taken away, and they were forced to live a life of oppression. The colonists took over the upper class, pushed everyone else down because they felt that their way was better. Therefore, the upper class wrote the history of the oppressed nation. The only way to get the oppressed nation into history is to make the individual rise up and decide to write what he has seen or heard. So the natives are fighting for the justice of their “national culture”. They want to build a
nation on that culture, not on the values somebody else says they must abide by.

The ‘Negritude’ movement, conceived in Paris during the 1930s by a group of Francophone writers influenced Fanon to a degree. The movement was associated with the great nationalist writers including Aim’eC’esaire of Martinique, Leopol Senghor of Senegal and Leon Damas of French Guiana, who attempted to identify and affirm a whole ensemble of black cultural and literary attitudes, ranging from protest and anger to a celebration of the ‘primitive’. It worked with many of the central tenets of the ‘myth of the nation’ and aspired to be a pan-national movement and finally paved way for a nationalist representation in writing with a strong resistance to colonialism. It also aimed at uniting peoples living in different nations through their shared ancestry and common origins.

Aim’eC’esaire, from the French Caribbean colony of Martinique and Senghor, from the French African colony of Senegal, found themselves identified by the French n’egres, a derogatory insult that sounds like the racist term ‘nigger’ in English. Outraged at the Orientalist attitudes of the French, they fought back at derogatory views of the black peoples and held them profoundly valuable. When the colonial discourses represented black people as primitive and intellectually inferior, having no culture to claim as
their own, C’easaire and Senghor wrote in praise of the laudable qualities of the black and their culture. So the negritude movement reconstructed ‘blackness’ as something positive and valuable and returned a sense of dignity to their cultures. They exhorted people of black African descent to embrace their ‘characteristics of the African soul’ with pride and dignity. Both of them were passionate humanists who believed that the long-term aim of Negritude was the emancipation of the entire human race, and not just black peoples, from subjugation to colonial thought. Though it is widely criticized that Negritude upholds separatist binary oppositions like the distinctions between white and black, African and European, it has given a start to the nationalist representations in the postcolonial situation.

Though Fanon was sympathetic to the negritude movement, he rejected the call for the nostalgic celebration of a mythic African past central to Negritude writings. Fanon’s representation of the nation’s people was influenced primarily by Marx’s writings on class struggle and economics and his theorising of the resistance to colonialism refused the universal idea of the ‘Negro’ and the pan-national aspirations of Negritude. Being a trained psychiatrist, he observed the psychological effects of the colonial situation on the verge of decolonization. To him, the reason for the atrocities against the natives was a symptom of sadistic, racist anger basic
to the colonial system. Underlying the commonality of themes in racial and poststructuralist theory is the attempt to come to terms with the disjuncture between a belief in equality and progress and a society that can seem to deliver neither. Fanon is unhappy with such a society. Sartre’s famous preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* makes this point clear:

> Liberty, equality, fraternity, love, honour, patriotism and what have you. All this did not prevent us from making anti-racial speeches about dirty niggers, dirty Jews and dirty Arabs. High-minded people, liberal or just soft – hearted, protest that they were shocked by such inconsistency; but they were either mistaken or dishonest, for with us there is nothing more consistent than a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters. (22)

These words throw light on the European way of dehumanizing the non-Western ‘others’. David Caute has recorded that while colonialism has created Karl Marx by capitalistic exploitation, Garibaldi by Sicilian poverty, Lenin by Russian autocracy, Gandhi by British Imperialism and Fanon by White racism, it has also created “the wretched of the earth”,

...
“the untouchables” and “the castaways” through various forms of oppression and exploitation (2).

Edward Said is described as the founder of Anglophone postcolonial theory whose magnum opus *Orientalism* (1978) examines how the Western image of the Orient has been constructed by generations of writers and scholars, who thereby legitimized imperial penetration and control. He has defined ‘Orientalism’ as: “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). The book, based on selective extracts from some Western Orientalists, ignores the representations of the Orient in the works of William Jones, Max Muller and others. He blames the Western Orientalists for their refusal to permit the Orient to speak for itself. The greatest influences upon him were the Italian Marxist cultural critic Antonio Gramsci and the French post-structuralist Michel Foucault, who theorized how power is internalized by those it disempowers through ideology, discourse or language. Said refuses to concede to the West a monopoly of humanistic values.

Said’s indictment of the Western Orientalists is based on the assumption that the colonial powers were guided by them in their handling of the colonies. He states that colonial powers like Napoleon and Ferdinand de Lesseps were guided by Western Orientalists and their
knowledge about the Orient was based on books written on the tradition of French Orientalism. Said further elaborates this idea:

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual, and arising out of circumstances similar to the ones I have just described is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most importantly such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. (94)

He analyses the principal dogmas of Orientalism and writes that the Western Orientalists misrepresented the Orient in the following respects:

1. It was assumed that the West is rational, developed, humane, superior, the Orient is aberrant, under-developed and inferior.

2. The Orientalist was guided by the classical texts in his attitude to the Orient rather than modern Oriental realities

3. The Orient was considered to be unchanging and uniform.

4. Finally, since the Orient is incapable of defining itself, an objective assessment of the east must be made by the Western Orientalist.
Said identifies a European cultural tradition of ‘Orientalism’, which is a long standing way of identifying the East as ‘other’ and inferior to the West. The Orient features in the Western mind as a sort of surrogate which means that the East becomes the repository or projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge (cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness and so on). But paradoxically, the East is seen as a fascinating realm of the exotic, the mystical and seductive, where the people are mere anonymous masses rather than individuals, their actions determined by distinctive emotions like lust, terror, fury etc. Their emotions and reactions are decided by racial considerations rather than by aspect of individual status or circumstances. The Western knowledge about the East is not generated from facts or reality, but from preconceived archetypes that envision all ‘Eastern’ societies as fundamentally similar to one another, and fundamentally dissimilar to the ‘Western’ societies. This discourse presents the ‘East’ as antithetical to the ‘West’.

Antonio Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ influenced Said significantly in writing the book. Fundamentally, hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interest of all. Ideological and cultural domination is more important and effective than political domination. Hegemony is important because the capacity to
influence the thought of the colonized is by far the most sustained and
potent operation of imperial power in colonized regions. A fine example of
the operations of hegemonic control is illustrated by Gauri Viswanathan
who elucidates: “the humanistic functions traditionally associated with the
study of literature—for example, the shaping of character or the
development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking—
can be vital in the process of sociopolitical control” (2). The Indian
intellectuals hailed ‘Orientalism’ in the wake of Indian cultural history.
They pointed out that English Literature had been an instrument of British
colonialism and a powerful vehicle for imperial authority.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, one of the pioneers of Postcolonial
criticism and an immigrant Third World academic, uses her location to
problematisate the postcolonial situation and to understand continued
Western domination. She calls herself a Marxist-feminist-
deconstructivist’ whose concern is with the imperialistic, neo-capitalist
market strategies of the West to control, manipulate, and exploit the Third
World population. She articulates for the women who are exploited and
suppressed in a double bondage in the colonial and patriarchal system.
As a Marxist-feminist, Spivak emphasizes the materialist grounding of all
personal, emotional and aesthetic experience and relates the problems of women’s oppression and exploitation in patriarchal system with those of economic and political systems. In her widely discussed essay ‘Explanation and Culture: Marginalia,’ Spivak shares her experience of marginality in a seminar. The writers of the Third World countries are known as the voices from the margin. Margin is synonymous with ‘otherness’. Europe is the centre that wants an identifiable margin. As Spivak writes: “the putative centre welcomes selective inhabitants of the margin in order better to exclude the margin” (107). The post colonial critics seek to overcome the stigma of ‘marginality’ and Spivak also believes that it is Eurocentric to choose only such writers who write in the consciousness of marginality and christen them ‘Third World’.

Spivak’s theory of the ‘construction of knowledge’ by the West is very relevant in the postcolonial context. She perceives that the First world constructs explanations/Knowledge to ‘explain’ the other. Humanities in the Western and US academia have become a source of constructing knowledge of Asia, East and the other postcolonial world. She criticises the construction of knowledge in the U.S.A., the Western world and the use of technology to disseminate the constructed knowledge. High level
technology is used in the production and dissemination of knowledge; but there is no neutrally created knowledge. The constructed knowledge has a clear political purpose, aiming to justify: “explain the culture of consumerism, high fashion and advancing technology” (107). Edward Said has also argued that the construction of Orientalism, was primarily directed by the West’s colonial expansion during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Spivak and other postcolonial critics hold the view that the construction of knowledge in the centers and western universities produces a specific culture that defines, prescribes and writes the scholars. It is also responsible for power equation.

Homi K. Bhabha, a diaspora writer like Said and Spivak, has popularised the postcolonial theory through his books, Nation and Narration and The Location of culture. He has given currency to new terms like ‘hybridity’, ‘mimicry’ and ‘otherness’ to explain postcolonial theory and the state of the ‘colonized’ in the postcolonial era. Bhabha has observed that: “the term postcolonial is increasingly used to describe the form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once colonized Third World comes to be framed in the West” (1).
Bhabha’s term ‘mimicry’ is very important in postcolonial theory, since it has come to describe the ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and colonized. Colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, values and institutions and it results in a ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha has defined colonial mimicry as the: “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (122). Bhabha’s term ‘mimicry’ again comes under further scrutiny by Christopher Bracken who makes a point by way of explaining it in the following words:

Homi Bhabha exposes the ironic, self – defeating structure of colonial discourses in “Mimicry and Man”. He notes that when English administrators dreamed of converting India to Christianity at the end of the eighteenth century, they did not want their colonial subjects to become too Christian or too English. Their discourse foresaw a colonized mimic who would be almost the same as the colonist but not quite. However, since India’s mimicry of the English blurred the boundary between ruler and ruled, the dream of anglicizing Indians threatened to Indianize Englishness – a reversal the
colonists found intolerable. Mimicry is, therefore, a state of ambivalence that undermines the claims of imperial discourse and makes it impossible to isolate the racialized essence of either the colonized or the colonizer. (506)

Bhabha like Said, argues that colonialism is informed by a series of assumptions that aim to legitimize its view of other lands and peoples. He writes that: “the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (101). Hence, there is an emergence of colonial stereotypes that represent colonized peoples in various derogatory ways. But departing from Said’s concept of Orientalism, Bhabha argues that this aim is not fully met since the discourse of colonialism fails to function according to plan. The Oriental is a radically strange creature with curiosity and concern. But on the other hand, the discourse of colonialism attempts to domesticate colonized subjects and abolish their radical ‘otherness’ and thus brings them inside Western understanding. In Bhabha’s own terms: “colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (101). According to Bhabha, ‘hybridity’ is a kind of negotiation between the colonizer and the colonized.
He seems to stress the idea that both the colonizer and the colonized are interdependent, both politically and culturally. His concept of ‘otherness’ is derived from Lacan’s ‘Other’ and Fanon’s idea of ‘Other’ as binary opposition between the White and the Black.

Postcolonial studies often involve a prolonged engagement with issues such as terrain, people and their relationships, wealth, power and its resistance, historical continuity and change, representation and culture, knowledge and its construction. Though postcolonialism is ‘the discourse of the colonized’ as described by Ashcroft, it has the potential to assemble new communities with political and ethical commitment to challenging and questioning the practices of domination and subjugation. Theories of colonial discourses play a very influential role in the development of postcolonialism. They explore how representations and modes of perception are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep the colonized subservient to them. Colonialism creates the notion in the mind of the colonized that it is their birth right to rule over other peoples and there is a deliberate process of colonizing the mind. They do it by persuading the colonized to accept and internalise its logic and speak its language. Language has played a leading role in colonization. Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* presents the colonizer and colonized paradigm. Prospero
stands for the colonizer and Caliban for the colonized. Prospero is on a
spell of unrestrained activity of ‘happy making’ as the beneficent character
of his allegorical name may suggest. But in reality he makes only his
daughter and his own self ‘happy’. He never wants to make Caliban happy as
he had tried to outdo Prospero, his master. He has thus earned the
coloniser’s condemnation as ‘a devil, a born devil’. In the final scene of the
play, which is a scene of reconciliation that puts an end to the colonial
period, the ‘rarer action of virtue’ is meant for Prospero’s people and not
for the colonized. Instead of feeling repentance or seeking forgiveness
from the colonized, Prospero is audacious and arrogant to them and speaks
about Caliban admonishingly: “He is as disproportioned in his manners, As
in his shape” (Act V sec I 200-201)

The English canonized texts played their role as the most influential
medium for the colonial civilizing mission. Leela Gandhi, in her book,
Post colonial Theory: A Critical Introduction cites Macaulay’s infamous
minutes of 1835 as an evidence to support this argument. She writes:

As evidence for this argument, critics frequently cite

Macaulay’s infamous minute of 1835, which defended the
introduction of ‘English Education’ in colonial India on the
grounds that ‘a single shelf of a good European Library was
worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia’.

Macaulay’s valorisation of English Literature at the cost of indigenous literatures is taken as a paradigmatic instance of canon formation. Arguably, his hierarchy of literary value establishes English literature as the normative embodiment of beauty, truth and morality, or, in other words, as a textual standard that enforces the marginality and inferiority of colonized cultures and their books. (144)

*The Tempest, Robinson Crusoe and Heart of Darkness* are obvious examples of postcolonial canonized texts. Post colonial writing is held to repudiate the canon. Readers have started realizing and treating works from Europe’s former colonies as the antithesis of canonical writing and as an instrumental component to recover their traditions obliterated by imperialism. So post colonial literature revises canonical texts and concepts, and readers have learned to approach post colonial literature as a critique of Western tradition involving the rewriting of specific works like *The Tempest* and *Heart of Darkens.*