

# **Study materials on Postcolonialism**

## **Course: English Hons., Sem – VI, Paper DSE – III**

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### **What is Post Colonialism?**

Postcolonialism (postcolonial theory, postcolonian studies, post-colonial theory) is a specifically postmodern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism. Postcolonialism is defined in anthropology as the relations between European nations and areas they colonized and once ruled. Postcolonialism comprises a set of theories found amongst history, anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, film, political science, architecture, human geography, sociology, Marxist theory, feminism, religious and theological studies, and literature.

### **Goals**

The ultimate goal of post-colonialism is accounting for and combating the residual effects of colonialism on cultures. It is not simply concerned with salvaging past worlds, but learning how the world can move beyond this period together, towards a place of mutual respect.

Post-colonialist thinkers recognize that many of the assumptions which underlie the "logic" of colonialism are still active forces today.

A key goal of post-colonial theorists is clearing space for multiple voices. This is especially true of those voices that have been previously silenced by dominant ideologies - subalterns. It is widely recognized within the discourse that this space must first be cleared within academia. Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism*, provides a clear picture of how the scholars who studied what used to be called the Orient (mostly Asia) disregarded the views of those they actually studied - preferring instead to rely on the intellectual superiority of themselves and their peers. This attitude was forged by European imperialism.

To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by them, or as a kind of cultural and international proletariat useful for the Orientalist's grander interpretive activity. (Said, 1978: 208)

Much debate has since taken place regarding how to effectively and fairly incorporate the subaltern voice into social studies. With such a huge mass of criticism against the idea of studying "others", many social scientists felt paralyzed, fatalistically accepting it as an impossibility. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian postcolonialist thinker, rejects this outright. "To refuse to represent a cultural Other is salving your conscience, and allowing you not to do any homework."

Spivak recognizes the project is problematic, as recovery and presentation of a subaltern voice would likely essentialize its message, negating the subaltern masses' heterogeneity. Spivak suggests "strategic essentialism" - speaking on behalf of a group while using a clear image of identity to fight opposition - as the only solution to this problem. Applying this approach, bell hooks addresses the white academic reader on behalf of subalterns in the conclusion to her paper "Marginality as a site of resistance".

This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we meet in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality is the space [site] of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators. (hooks, 1990: 152)

Some postcolonial theorists make the argument that studying both dominant knowledge sets and marginalized ones as binary opposites perpetuates their existence as homogenous entities. Homi K. Bhabha feels the postcolonial world should valorize spaces of mixing; spaces where truth and authenticity move aside for ambiguity. This space of hybridity, he argues, offers the most profound challenge to colonialism. (Bhabha, 1994: 113) Critiques that Bhabha ignores Spivak's stated usefulness of essentialism have been put forward. Reference is made to essentialisms' potential usefulness. An organized voice provides a more powerful challenge to dominant knowledge - whether in academia or active protests.

Frantz Fanon offered a violent prescription for moving beyond the colonial mindset. But violence in Fanon, who was trained as a psychoanalyst, is a cathartic practice aimed at "cleansing" the male colonized psyche from the effects of the epistemic violence of colonialism. That is why Fanon supported the most violent factions of FLN in Algeria. It is important to read Fanon's emphasis on revolutionary violence within the discourse of psychoanalysis.

Ultimately, however, Postcolonialism is a hopeful discourse. The very "post" defines the discipline as one that looks forward to a world that has truly moved beyond all that colonialism entails, together. Mbembe finds it gives him "hope in the advent of a universal brotherly [and I would add sisterly] community". Asking what it means to be human together, post-colonialism aims at decolonizing the future.

### **Subject matters**

"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, speech to the United Nations, December 11, 1964

The critical nature of postcolonial theory entails destabilizing Western ways of thinking, therefore creating space for the subaltern, or marginalized groups, to speak and produce alternatives to dominant discourse. Often, the term postcolonialism is taken literally, to mean the period of time after colonialism. This however is problematic because the 'once-colonized world' is full of "contradictions, of half-finished processes, of confusions, of hybridity, and liminalities". In other words, it is important to accept the plural nature of the word postcolonialism, as it does not simply refer to the period after the colonial era. By some definitions, postcolonialism can also be seen as a continuation of colonialism, albeit through different or new relationships concerning power and the control/production of knowledge. Due to these similarities, it is debated whether to hyphenate postcolonialism as to symbolize that we have fully moved beyond colonialism. Postcolonialism as a literary theory (with a critical approach), deals with literature produced in countries that once were colonies of other countries, especially of the European colonial powers Britain, France, and Spain; in some contexts, it includes countries still in colonial arrangements. It also deals with literature written by citizens of colonial countries that portrays colonized people as its subject matter. In Dutch literature a

specific colonial and postcolonial segment is named Indies (after Dutch East Indies) literature. A sub-segment specifically focuses on postcolonial identity formation and culture of the diasporic Indo-Europeans, a (Eurasian) community originally from Indonesia. Its main author was Tjalie Robinson. Colonized people, especially of the British Empire, attended British universities and with their access to education, created this new criticism. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union during the late 20th century, its former republics became the subject of this study as well.

Often, previously colonized places are homogenized in western discourse under an umbrella label such as the 'Third World'. Postcolonialism demonstrates the heterogeneity of colonized places by analyzing the uneven impact of Western colonialism on different places, peoples, and cultures. This is done by engaging with the variety of ways in which "relations, practices and representations" of the past is "reproduced or transformed", and studying the connections between the "heart and margins" of the empire. Moreover, postcolonialism recognizes that there was, and still is, resistance to the West. This resistance is practiced by many, including the subaltern, a group of marginalized, and least powerful.

Postcolonial theory provides a framework that destabilizes dominant discourses in the West, challenges "inherent assumptions", and critiques the "material and discursive legacies of colonialism". In order to challenge these assumptions and legacies of colonialism, postcolonial studies needs to be grounded, which entails working with tangible identities, connections, and processes. Postcolonial theorist Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* has been described as a seminal work in the field.

Furthermore, Postcolonialism deals with cultural identity in colonized societies: the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule; the ways in which writers articulate and celebrate that identity (often reclaiming it from and maintaining strong connections with the colonizer); the ways in which the knowledge of the colonized (subordinated) people has been generated and used to serve the colonizer's interests; and the ways in which the colonizer's literature has justified colonialism via images of the colonised as a perpetually inferior people, society and culture. These inward struggles of identity, history, and future possibilities often occur in the metropolis and, ironically, with the aid of postcolonial structures of power, such as universities. Not surprisingly, many contemporary postcolonial writers reside in London, Paris, New York and Madrid.

The creation of binary opposition structures changed the way we view others. In the case of colonialism, the Oriental and the Westerner were distinguished as different from each other (i.e. the emotional, static, Orient vs. the principled, progressive Occident). This opposition justified the "white man's burden," the coloniser's self-perceived "destiny to rule" subordinate peoples. In contrast, post-colonialism seeks out areas of hybridity and transculturalization. This aspect is particularly relevant during processes of globalization.

In *Post-Colonial Drama: theory, practice, politics*, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins write: "the term postcolonialism – according to a too-rigid etymology – is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naïve teleological sequence which supersedes colonialism, postcolonialism is, rather, an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies ... A theory of postcolonialism must, then, respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism."

Colonized peoples reply to the colonial legacy by writing back to the center, when the indigenous peoples write their own histories and legacies using the coloniser's language (e.g. English, French, Dutch) for their own purposes. "Indigenous decolonization" is the intellectual impact of postcolonialist theory upon communities of indigenous peoples, thereby, their generating postcolonial literature.

A single, definitive definition of postcolonial theory is controversial; writers have strongly criticised it as a concept embedded in identity politics. Postcolonial Theory - as epistemology, ethics, and politics - addresses matters of identity, gender, race, racism and ethnicity with the challenges of developing a post-colonial national identity, of how a colonised people's knowledge was used against them in service of the coloniser's interests, and of how knowledge about the world is generated under specific relations between the powerful and the powerless, circulated repetitively and finally legitimated in service to certain imperial interests. At the same time, postcolonial theory encourages thought about the colonised's creative resistance to the coloniser and how that resistance complicates and gives texture to European imperial colonial

projects, which utilised a range of strategies, including anti-conquest narratives, to legitimise their dominance.

Postcolonial writers object to the colonised's depiction as hollow "mimics" of Europeans or as passive recipients of power. Consequent to Foucauldian argument, postcolonial scholars, i.e. the Subaltern Studies collective, argue that anti-colonial resistance accompanies every deployment of power.

## **Notable theorists**

### **Edward Said**

Said took the term Orientalism, which was used in the West neutrally to describe the study and artistic depiction of the Orient, and subverted it to mean a constructed binary division of the world into the Orient and the Occident. This binary, also referred to as the East/West binary, is key in postcolonial theory. Said argued that the Occident could not exist without the Orient, and vice versa. In other words, they are mutually constitutive. Notably, the concept of the 'East' i.e. the Orient, was created by the 'West', suppressing the ability of the 'Orient' to express themselves. Western depictions of the 'Orient' construct an inferior world, a place of backwardness, irrationality, and wildness. This allowed the 'West' to identify themselves as the opposite of these characteristics; as a superior world that was progressive, rational, and civil. Furthermore, Said, following Foucault, states that power and knowledge are inseparable. The 'West's' claim to knowledge of the East gave the 'West' the power to name, and the power to control. This concept is essential to understanding of colonialism, and therefore recognizing postcolonialism.

Some postcolonial writers have critiqued Said's homogeneous binary of Occident and Orient, insisting that multiple variations of Orientalism have been created within the western world and are at work. Said believes that Europe used Orientalism as a homogeneous "other" to form a more cohesive European identity.

### **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

Spivak's main contribution to Postcolonial theory came with her specific definition of the term subaltern. Spivak also introduced terms such as 'essentialism', 'strategic essentialism'. The former

term refers to the dangers of reviving subaltern voices in ways that might simplify heterogeneous groups, creating stereotyped impressions of their diverse group. Spivak however believes that essentialism can sometimes be used strategically by these groups to make it easier for the subaltern to be heard and understood when a clear identity can be created and accepted by the majority. It is important to distinguish that 'strategic essentialism' does not sacrifice its diversity and voices but that they are being downplayed temporarily to support the essential element of the group.

Spivak also uses the term 'epistemic violence' (from Foucault) which refers to the destruction of non-western ways of knowing and resulting dominance of western ways of understanding. This concept relates to Spivak's "Subaltern must always be caught in translation, never truly expressing herself" because of the destruction and marginalization of her way of understanding.

Furthermore, Spivak criticizes those who ignore the "cultural others" (the subaltern) and has offered constructive theories for allowing the West to go beyond its current position through self-criticism of western methods and ideals of understanding and exploring the alternatives offered by post-colonialism.

### **Dipesh Chakrabarty**

Dipesh Chakrabarty, writing in the nineties, made a major attempt to chart the subaltern's history of the Indian struggle for independence. In his book *Provincializing Europe* (2000) he seeks to counter scholarly eurocentric views by arguing that Europe should only be seen as "one region among many".

### **Frantz Fanon**

Fanon is one of the earliest writers associated with postcolonialism. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon analyzed the nature of colonialism and those subjugated by it. He describes colonialism as a source of violence rather than reacting violently against resistors which had been the common view. His portrayal of the systematic relationship between colonialism and its attempts to deny "all attributes of humanity" to those it suppressed laid the groundwork for related critiques of colonial and postcolonial systems.

### **Earlier writers**

Although Fanon is generally considered to be one of the earliest writers in this field, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule) had already proposed strongly post colonial theories in 1909. Besides Gandhi, Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887–1949) had authored major works in this field. Vladimir Lenin's work "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", (1916), has also been regarded as one of the most important influences in the development of postcolonial theory.

## **International relations**

### **The Middle East and national identity**

In the last decade, Middle Eastern studies and research produced works focusing upon the colonial past's effects on the internal and external political, social, cultural, and economic circumstances of contemporary Middle Eastern countries; cf. Raphael Israeli's "Is Jordan Palestine?" A particular focus of study is the matter of Western discourses about the Middle East, and the existence or the lack of national identity formation:

"... [M]ost countries of the Middle East, suffered from the fundamental problems over their national identity. More than three-quarters of a century after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, from which most of them emerged, these states have been unable to define, project, and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative".

Independence and the end of colonialism have not ended social fragmentation and war in the Middle East. Larbi Sadiki wrote in *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses* (2004), because European colonial powers drew borders discounting peoples, ancient tribal boundaries and local history, the Middle East's contemporary national identity problem can be traced back to imperialism and colonialism.

Kumaraswamy writes that "in places like Iraq and Jordan, leaders of the new state were brought in from the outside, [and] tailored to suit colonial interests and commitments. Likewise, most states in the Persian Gulf were handed over to those who could protect and safeguard imperial interests in the post-withdrawal phase". According to Sadiki, "with notable exceptions like Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, most [countries] ... had to [re-]invent, their historical roots" after

colonialism. Therefore, "like its colonial predecessor, postcolonial identity owes its existence to force".

## **Africa**

The interior of Africa was not colonised until almost the end of the 19th century, yet the impact of colonialism was even more significant to the indigenous cultures, especially because of the Scramble for Africa. The increasingly efficient railway helped European powers to gain control over all regions of Africa, with the British particularly emphasizing goals of conquest. The British Empire sought to build a single railway through the continent and succeeded in building tracks from Egypt to Cape Town.

Many African empires existed in the pre-colonial era, such as the Empires of Ashanti and Benin, and the Kingdoms of Dahomey, the Buganda Kingdom, [now Uganda] and Kongo. Nigeria was home to the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo cultures and Chinua Achebe was among the first to take up this history in the construction of a postcolonial identity, as in *Things Fall Apart*.

Kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was educated at the British University of Leeds and wrote the first postcolonial East African novel, *Weep Not, Child*, in 1964. The later *The River Between* addresses postcolonial religious issues. His essay *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* is considered one of the most important pieces of African literary criticism.

## **Criticism of focusing on national identity**

Scholars criticise and question the recent post-colonial focus on national identity. The Moroccan scholar Bin 'Abd al-'Ali argues that what is seen in contemporary Middle Eastern studies is 'a pathological obsession with ... identity'. Nevertheless, Kumaraswamy and Sadiki argue that the problem of the lack of Middle Eastern identity formation is widespread, and that identity is an important aspect of understanding the politics of the contemporary Middle East. Whether the countries are Islamic regimes, republican regimes, quasi-liberal monarchies, democracies, or evolving democracies, 'the Middle Eastern region suffers from the inability to recognize, integrate, and reflect its ethno-cultural diversity.'

Ayubi (2001) questions if what Bin 'Abd al-'Ali described as an obsession with national identity may be explained by 'the absence of a championing social class?'

## **Postcolonial literature**

Postcolonial literature is a body of literary writings that reacts to the discourse of colonization.

## **Subaltern (postcolonialism)**

In postcolonialism and related fields, subaltern refers to persons socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure.

## **History**

The term, derived from the work of the Marxist theorist, Antonio Gramsci, entered postcolonial studies through the work of the Subaltern Studies Group, a collective of South Asian historians interested in exploring the role of non-elite actors in South Asian history. In the 1970s, the term began to be used as a reference to colonized people in the South Asian subcontinent. It provided a new perspective on the history of a colonized place from the perspective of the colonized rather than from the viewpoint of the colonizers. Marxist historians had already begun to view colonial history from the perspective of the proletariat, but this was sometimes seen as unsatisfying as it was still a Eurocentric way of viewing the globe. "Subaltern Studies" began in the early 1980s as an "intervention in South Asian historiography." While "subaltern" began as a model for the Subcontinent, it quickly developed into a "vigorous postcolonial critique." Subaltern is now regularly used as a term in history, anthropology, sociology, human geography, and literature.

## **Meanings**

The term subaltern is used in postcolonial theory. The exact meaning of the term in current philosophical and critical usage is disputed. Some thinkers use it in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes—a person rendered without agency by his or her social status. Others, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak use it in a more specific sense. She argues that:

subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie....In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural

imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern....Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don't need the word 'subaltern'...They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern.

Subaltern was first used in a non-military sense by Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Some believe that he used the term as a synonym for proletariat, possibly as a codeword in order to get his writings past prison censors, while others believe his usage to be broader and less clear cut. In several essays, Homi Bhabha, a key thinker within postcolonial thought, emphasizes the importance of social power relations in his working definition of subaltern groups as

oppressed, minority groups whose presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group: subaltern social groups were also in a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos uses the term subaltern cosmopolitanism extensively in his 2002 book *Toward a New Legal Common Sense*. He refers to this in the context of counter-hegemonic practices, movements, resistances and struggles against neoliberal globalization, particularly the struggle against social exclusion. He uses the term interchangeably with cosmopolitan legality as the diverse normative framework for an equality of differences. Here, the term subaltern is used to denote marginalized and oppressed people(s) specifically struggling against hegemonic globalization. Subaltern and marginalized people are different in different places and in different historical contexts. In India women, dalits, rural, tribal, immigrant laborers are part of subaltern. In Punjab rural, dalit, illiterate women are the most oppressed.

## **Theory**

Postcolonial theory tries to understand the power and continued dominance of Western ways of knowing. Edward Said's work on *Orientalism* is related to the idea of the subaltern in that it explains the way in which Orientalism produced the foundation and the justification for the domination of the Other through colonialism. Europeans, Said argues, created an imagined

geography of the Orient before European exploration through predefined images of savage and monstrous places that lay outside of the known world. During initial exploration of the Orient these mythologies were reinforced as travelers brought back reports of monsters and strange lands. The idea of difference and strangeness of the Orient continued to be perpetuated through media and discourse creating an "us" and "them" binary through which Europeans defined themselves by defining the differences of the Orient. This laid the foundation for colonialism by presenting the Orient as backward and irrational and therefore in need of help to become modern in the European sense. The discourse of Orientalism is Eurocentric and does not seek to include the voices of the Orientals themselves.

Stuart Hall argues for the power of discourse to create and reinforce Western dominance. The discourses on how Europe described differences between itself and others used European cultural categories, languages and ideas to represent the other. The knowledge produced by a discourse gets put into practice and then becomes reality. By producing a discourse of difference Europe was able to maintain its dominance over the "other" thereby creating a subaltern by excluding the Other from the production of the discourse. Alik Shahadah comments on this by stating that: The Eurocentric discourse on Africa is in error because those foundational paradigms which inspired the study in the first place were rooted in the denial of African agency; political intellectualism bent on its own self-affirmation rather than objective study.

### **Engaging the Voice of the Subaltern**

Joanne Sharp, following Spivak, argues that other forms of knowing are marginalized by Western thinkers reforming them as myth or folklore. In order to be heard the subaltern must adopt Western thought, reasoning and language. Because of this, Sharp and Spivak argue that the subalterns can never express their own reasoning, forms of knowledge or logic, they must instead form their knowledge to Western ways of knowing.

The abandonment of one's customary thoughts, and the subsequent adoption of Western thought is necessary in many postcolonial situations. The subordinated individual can only be heard by his oppressors if he speaks their language. Therefore, filters of conformity muddle the true voice of the subaltern. These filters manifest themselves in a multitude of ways.

In Colonial Latin America, for example, the subaltern must utilize the filters of religion and servitude in their language. In order to appeal to the good graces of their Spanish oppressors, slaves and natives would mask their own voice with the culture of the Spanish Crown. In 1600, Francisca de Figueroa brought an appeal to the Crown. Francisca, an enslaved African woman in Spain, is requesting to join her enslaved daughter in the America's. As an Afro-Iberian woman, she must repress her own native tongue, and speak Spanish with her adopted Spanish tongue.

“Francisca de Figueroa, June 1600 Francisca de Figueroa, mulatta in color, declare that I have in the city of Cartagena a daughter named Juana de Figueroa. And she has written to call for me in order to help me. I will take with me in my company a daughter of mine, her sister, named Maria, of the said color. And for this I must write to Our Lord the King to petition that he favor me with a license so that I and my said daughter can go and reside in the said city of Cartagena. For this I will give an account of what is put down in this report. And of how I Francisca de Figueroa am a woman of sound body and mulatta in color...And my daughter Maria is twenty years old and of the said color and of medium size. Once given, I attest to this. I beg your Lordship to approve and order it done. I ask for justice in this. On the twenty-first day of the month of June 1600, Your Majesty's lords presidents and official judges of this house [Casa de Contratacion) order that the account she offers be received and that testimony for the purpose she requests given.”

There are multiple layers of meaning to consider when engaging the voice of the subaltern. First, it is clear that in Francisca's eyes, it is crucial for her to portray herself as servile. There is no remote hint of pride or defiance in her words. In this letter specifically, Francisca does not mention her own religion. By identifying herself as a Catholic, her favor would probably have been granted sooner. In fact, one of the first questions the Inquisition asked Francisca's neighbors concerned her religion. Upon finding out Francisca was “not of Moorish or Jewish caste or of those recently converted to Our Holy Catholic Faith”, but that she was a third-generation Catholic, her request became more regarded. So that Francisca may attain what she requests, she must subject herself in her own letter. Francisca constantly identifies herself in her letter, by her “mulatta” race. Rather than claiming lineage as an African woman, she degrades herself by constantly identifying herself with the label the Spanish gave her heritage. This form of self-subjugation is a pure example of how the voice of the Subaltern sounds: self-relegating

and trapped behind a megaphone of colonialism. As Colonial Historian Fernando Coronil asserts, our goal must be “to listen to the subaltern subjects, and to interpret what I hear”, and to engage them and interact with their voice. We cannot ascend to a position of dominance over the voice, subjugating its words to the meanings we desire to attribute to them. That is simply another form of discrimination. The power to narrate somebody’s story is a heavy task, and we must be cautious and aware of the complications involved.

Spivak and bell hooks question the academic engagement with the Other. To truly engage with the subaltern they argue that an academic would need to decenter him or herself as the expert. Traditionally the academic wants to know about the subaltern's experiences but not their own explanations of those experiences. hooks argues that according to the received view in Western knowledge a true explanation can only come from the expertise of the academic. The subordinated subject, gives up their knowledge for the use of the Western academic. hooks describes the relationship between the academic and the subaltern subject:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk.

We must not take a lumbering aspect of superiority while studying these voices. The Subaltern's story is a way that we can build a bigger historical picture for ourselves. It allows for us a revealing look at a society, from the perspective of the most powerless individuals that live within its confines. Yet, we must read into these stories tenderly. Or else, we risk further subjugating and further complicating the voice of the Subaltern.

### **Development discourse**

Mainstream development discourse built on knowledge of colonialism and Orientalism. It focuses on modernization theory which follows the idea that in order to modernize underdeveloped countries one should follow the path of developed Western countries. It is characterized by free trade, open markets and capitalist systems as the way to development. Mainstream development discourse focuses on applying universal policies at a national level.

Victoria Lawson critiques mainstream development discourse as recreating the subaltern. The discourse does this by: being disengaged from other scales such as the local or community level; not considering regional, class, ethnic, gender etc. differences between places; continuing to treat the subjects of development as subordinate and lacking knowledge; and by not including the subjects' voices and opinions in development policies and practices.

While the subaltern by definition are groups who have had their voices silenced, they can speak through their actions as a way to protest against mainstream development and create their own visions for development. Subaltern groups are creating social movements which contest and disassemble Western claims to power. These groups use local knowledge and struggles to create new spaces of opposition and alternative futures.

### **What is appropriation in postcolonial literature?**

Post-colonial literature consists of writings and texts that discuss the colonial relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. These texts often focus on the de-colonization of a region through its search for independence from the colonizing power. Post-colonialism additionally acts as an opposition to the ideals and attitudes in colonial literature which emphasized and glorified the violent actions of imperialism. Examples of post-colonial novels are "Heart of Darkness" by Joseph Conrad and "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe.

Appropriation is the process of one culture adopting and conforming to the elements of another culture. In post-colonial literature, appropriation occurs as colonized land is composed of many cultural influences from both the native people being colonized and the enforced cultural values of the colonizers. Appropriation is often discussed in post-colonial literature through the perspective of the colonized; they reject conforming to the culture of the colonizers who have taken over the land and seek independence. It can be seen as equally problematic if majority groups attempt to appropriate from minority cultures. As they borrow elements of minority cultures without knowing the extent of the cultural significance or meaning of the practice, majority groups can change the meaning of these elements to the detriment of the minority culture.

*N.B: You may also watch the AV material prepared by me on Youtube at :*

[https://youtu.be/5ffApc22x\\_A](https://youtu.be/5ffApc22x_A)

**Consulted Readings:**

<http://www.academicroom.com/topics/what-is-postcolonialism>

<https://study.com/academy/answer/what-is-appropriation-in-postcolonial-literature.html>

Habib, M.A.R; A History of Literary Criticism; Blackwell Publishing; Oxford, UK; 2005.