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Abstract: *Postcolonialism with its various aspects is focused in this paper. The present study highlights the key postcolonial issues in Chinua Achebe's novel No Longer at Ease and E. M. Forster's novel A Passage to India. While keeping in view length of the chapters, only the first chapter of No Longer at Ease and the first three chapters of A Passage to India have been analyzed and discussed. The postcolonial issues found in these novels are ambivalence, stereotyping, mimicry, hybridity, representation, orality, binarism and marginalization. Almost both of the novels got these issues in some proportion with different contexts but still with many similarities.*

Key Words:

Postcolonialism, Chinua Achebe, E. M. Forster, ambivalence, stereotyping, mimicry, hybridity, representation, orality, binarism and marginalization

Postcolonial perspective in *No Longer at Ease* and *A Passage to India*



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Introduction

It is a fact that in the colonial era there were different types of colonial representations by the colonizers covering different types of media and different forms of literatures. There were discussions on different aspects of postcolonialism by different postcolonial critics, for example, Trivedi (2007), Bhabha (1994), Spivak (1999) and Said (1978), to mention a few and there were different opinions about different works. So, being related to postcolonial studies, it motivated us to take two novels from the colonial era written by both the colonizers and colonized and conduct a study on how different colonial issues like the problem of representation, Otherness, mimicry, racism, imperialism, stereotypes and many other are represented in both novels. The novels selected in this study are *A Passage to India* written by a colonizer E. M. Forster and the

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second novel that is *No Longer at Ease* is that of an African colonized writer Chinua Achebe. Much has been written on E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* and Chinua Achebe's novel *No Longer at Ease* but still the present study uncovers some dilemmas of the colonial representation and it is hoped that this study will be helpful in understanding the deep thematic meaning of the literary texts and in this way will deepen our understanding of both the texts. The reason for taking these two different novels by different community members is to know that how the colonizer represented the colonized and also to know how the colonized view their representation by the colonizers. As they are lengthy novels, so the researcher decided not to go for the whole of the novels but to stick to some of the chapters. The study was limited to the first chapter of *No Longer at Ease* and first three chapters of *A Passage to India*. The reason for selecting three chapters from *A Passage to India* is their short length.

Before moving to the results and discussion, in order to have some idea about the topic in hand, some of the key postcolonial concepts are explained as below.

Ambivalence: This term was used in psychoanalysis by Freud which is, "a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite" that also means "attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action" (Young 1995, p. 161). Freud used it in the sense of sexual instincts and death instincts (Peter Childs & Patrick Williams, 1997). But in postcolonial studies, it means that there exists a type of fluctuation within the colonial discourse. So, in this study the researcher has used the term in the sense that how the colonizers or colonized are ambivalent in their attitudes.

Stereotype: In postcolonial sense stereotype is used for some type of fixity. What happens in this case is that the colonized are represented by the colonizers with some labels which might not be true but still, in order to legitimize their colonialism, they make use of this fixity. Such example of stereotypes for the colonized is that of "wild, harmful and mysterious" John McLeod (1988, p. 13).

Mimicry: Mimicry is the adaptation and acculturation of the colonizers' culture in some form. In the colonial sense, mimicry is to desire an identifiable Other, who is almost the same but not exactly (Homi Bhabha, 1994). Mimic man is from mimicry who is the person involved in the process of mimicry. This mimicry can take different forms which range from the adaptation of dress to other high cultural values and habits. Mimicry can be useful for the colonizers when it is actual mimicry and not merely an interpretation.

Hybridity: Hybridity is a technical term used to represent the contact between two things which results in the production of another thing that represents both of the objects. Example of this can be the translated copies of Bible into local languages which make the texts hybrid, and which were misused by the local people (Homi Bhabha, 1994, p. 122).

Representation: Representation is the way one thing is represented by some likeness to the original object. Now, it is important for representation that there might be some truth in it, as reality and truth are its basic components. However, it is not always the case as what happened in colonial era where the Orient was represented by different stereotypes and hence the colonizers made their way clear towards the colonialism of the Orient.

Orality: There can be two types of literary representation; one in the form of oral literature and second in the form of written literature. Based on this division some cultures where the practice of oral literature e.g. proverbs, poems and story practices are going on are termed as oral cultures e.g. pre-colonial African, Indian and Arab societies (Bill Ashcroft, et al 1998).

Binarism: Binarism means duality or combining pairs where things almost have opposite meaning e.g. white and black, East and West, and colonizer and colonized. In postcolonial studies, it is stressed that the use of binarism involves the domination of one unit of the pair over other unit e.g. the supremacy of white over black, the dominance of colonizers over colonized and so on.

Colonialism and Imperialism: Colonialism which is the product of imperialism is differentiated by Said (1993) in his book “Culture and Imperialism” who says that colonialism is the lodging of settlements on distant territory and imperialism refers to the “practice, theory and attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory”. More strictly, this term is used for the Britain’s occupations that include Africa, Asia and Canada etc. (John McLeod, 1988).

Marginalization: There are two related terms i.e. margin or periphery and centre. In postcolonial perspective it means exclusion. Usually the colonized are ignored in their rights by the centre and in this way are considered as excluded and marginalized.

Findings and Discussions

Prior to starting the actual analysis of the two texts that is E. M. Forster’s novel *A Passage to India* and Chinua Achebe’s novel *No Longer at Ease*, in order to make the analysis more concrete and substantial, the researcher has tried to make parallel analysis of both the texts. Regarding postcolonial issues with respect to both the texts, this method not only makes the comparison better but also a more holistic. The issues considered are the following.

Orientalism

The very first question that comes to mind is whether the novels considered represent some sort of Orientalism or not. For this purpose, we will go back to

Said's Orientalism and will try to take into account some of Said's definitions of Orientalism. Said (1978) defines Orientalism as any person who is "dealing with it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western Style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient". So, according to this definition both the texts come in the category Orientalism. If we take *A Passage to India* then E. M. Forster himself uses the term in the novel when Dr. Aziz after having a discussion with Mrs. Moore comments on her personality and says:

*"You understand me, you know what I feel. Oh, if others resembled you!"
Rather surprised, she replied: 'I don't think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them.'
'Then you are an Oriental.'" (p-16)*

Now if the novel "No Longer at Ease" though written by a native African Chinua Achebe, is taken then the same is the case with this novel. Ironically, as the basic machinery of the government is still under the control of the colonizers e.g. the judge is colonizer, the boss of Obi Okonkwo is colonizer and so on, the novelist has tried to use the colonizer's language and has given the novel an Oriental touch.

Imperialism/Colonialism

Here, both the terms i.e. imperialism and colonialism are used in the same meaning of Western supremacy. The very theme of both the novels is imperialism and colonialism. Let's take *A Passage to India*. Here in this novel we can see many glimpses of the imperial and colonial power. If the first chapter is taken where there is just a description of Chandrapore, it is said that the place where the white men are living is on high ground as "houses belonging to Eurasians stand on the high ground by the railway station" (p-1). The high ground used here is symbolic in nature which shows the colonizers' supremacy and imperialism. Again on the same page, it is said that "Chandrapore was never large and beautiful, but two hundred years ago it lay on the road between Upper India, then imperial, and the sea and the fine houses date from that period" (p.1), which means that it is the imperial age that is responsible for the development of Chandrapore. Similarly, if we go ahead in the same chapter to the second page of the novel, sky is used symbolically to refer to the colonizer, which is responsible for the good on the earth. The description starts as "the sky settles everything – not only climates and seasons but ... The sky can do this because it is so strong and so enormous" (p-2). Here, sky which means colonizers, are represented as the strong imperial force and can do everything. In fact the very fate of the earth which symbolizes the colonized is in the hand of the sky (colonizers).

In chapter 2, when Aziz, Hamidullah and Mehmoud Ali are sitting together and talk about the colonizers then at this point Mehmoud Ali complains against the colonizer and says that "the red nose boy has again insulted me in Court. I do not

blame him. He was told that he ought to insult me” (p-5). Mehmoud Ali is insulted, still he cannot do anything because they are the colonizers who got the power in hand. He even cannot blame the colonizer who insulted him. The colonizers’ imperial power is so great which makes them so proud that sometimes when they are in search of their equals, they suffer but still cannot leave their pride. This happened with one of the ladies “whose imperial descent could find no husband in the narrow circle where her pride permitted her to mate, and had lived on unwed” (pp-7, 8). The colonizers are so proud that they even cannot bear to talk to the natives as Adela Quested says “I’ve avoided,” said Miss Quested. ‘Excepting my own servant, I’ve scarcely spoken to an Indian since landing.’” (p. 19). Even at this point Mrs. Callendar says that “the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die” (p-20). Similarly, when Mrs. Moore is talking about Dr. Aziz, Ronny comments that “why hadn’t she indicated by the tone of her voice that she was talking about an Indian? Scratchy and doctoral” (p-23). It means that the colonizers even want to show the disgust for the colonized by their body language whenever they are talking about native Indians. They keep themselves not only at high ranks but also with more facilities. On the other hand, the colonized are completely ignored as is the case of Dr. Aziz. When Dr. Aziz was called by Callendar, he has to rush to Callendar’s compound on bicycle as “he laid his hand on the bicycle’s saddle” which “had neither light nor bell nor had the brake” (p-9). This was the miserable condition of the colonized doctor’s bicycle which is in fact stricken by the imperial power. Now, when his cycle’s tire went flat, he has to hire a *tonga* to obey his master but still when he reaches “Callendar’s compound he could with difficulty restrain himself from getting down from the tonga and approaching the bungalow on foot” (p-10). The colonizers were so arrogant that they even did not allow their subordinate to ride something near their homes. Though, Callendar call Aziz to come but when Aziz had gone towards him, he left without leaving any message but still Aziz writes to him as “Dear sir, - At your express command I have hastened as a subordinate should” (p-11). This shows that though the imperial power had done something wrong which should have been condemned but still the colonized subordinate expresses his sorry.

From the above discussion and quotes from the novel it is a clear that *A Passage to India* is overwhelmed by the imperial and colonial discourse. Now, if we take *No Longer at Ease*, here too we can have many instances of colonial and imperial discourse. The very first page of the novel when the trial is about to start and judge is portrayed as “whenever Mr. Justice William Galloway, Judge of the High Court of Lagos and the Southern Cameroons, looked at a victim he fixed him with his gaze as a collector fixes his insect with formalin. He lowered his head like a charging ram and looked over his gold-rimmed spectacles at the lawyer” (p-1). Here, one can judge the supremacy and high position of the colonizer judge from the very depiction. His gold-rimmed spectacles represent his high status which cannot be gained by the colonized people. In the next page after giving a picture

of Mr. Green's punctuality, it is said that "after the game they retired to the club bar. Mr. Green had a light-yellow sweater... some half sitting on the high stools and some squash or gin-and- tonic" (p-2). At this place the white men sitting on the high stools give a hint about the colonizers' imperial manners which not only take hold of their clothes but also their approach and methods of dealing. The imperial forces are so powerful in the novel that when Obi Okonkwo wrote a letter to Adolf Hitler during the war, the resentment is shown by the headmaster as "that he was a disgrace to the British Empire, and that if he had been older he would surely have been sent to jail for the rest of his miserable life" (p-7). They cannot even bear that a letter is to be written by the colonized to the colonizer and if somebody does, he will have to suffer the consequences. This imperialism is not only of the colonizers but also of their language which is known as linguistic imperialism as well. It means that both the novels represent in some form the supremacy and imperial nature of the colonizers.

Representation/Stereotypes

There are many stereotypes in both the novels which are used by the colonizers to give a picture of the colonized representation. If *A Passage to India* is referred to, it is full of such stereotypes. In some cases they are used symbolically but in other cases they are more direct.

If a symbolic representation of India is taken, it is obvious that the novel is divided into three parts; Mosque, Caves and Temple. Mosque is taken as a prelude, and taking serious matters lightly; caves represents not only the inner darkness of the Indians but also spiritual wasteland; and finally temple stands for an escape from the wasteland (George H. Thomson, 1961). In the same way, Indians are stereotypically represented as mean, filthy and religiously hollow and ineffective as the lines from the text shows that "the streets are mean, the temples ineffective" (p-1). In another line on the same page the Indians are labeled as muddy as "the very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving" (p-1). It means that the colonized muddy color disdainfully contrasts with the colonizers' white color. The very existence of the colonized represented is not only mean and abased but also boring and monotonous as the lines of the novel run "so abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil" (p-1).

In the second chapter of the novel, Indians are represented as lazy, always late for their work and corrupt. This is noticeable when Dr. Aziz comes late and asks "am I late" and Mahmoud Ali replies "do not apologize," said his host, "you are always late" (p-4). Again Himidullah complains that "you mustn't put off what you think right," said Hamidullah. That is why India is in such plight, because we put off things" (p-8). Here though an Indian is addressing another Indian, these are still indirectly the words of the colonizers who represent the colonized as lazy and it is

said that this is our laziness that we always postpone things which has put India in such a miserable state. In another place the Indians' corruption is also mentioned when it is said "when we poor blacks take bribes, we perform what we are bribed to perform, and the law discovers us in consequences" (p-5). Here, Indians are not only called corrupt but also "color stereotype" black is also used. In fact, it is this white and black dichotomy that brings differences. The Indians are also represented as cannibals and barbarians. This is obvious when Mrs. Moore walks late at the night and she was advised to be aware because there can be leopards and snakes in the darkness. "I think you ought not to walk at the night alone, Mrs Moore. There are bad characters about and leopards may come across from the Marabar Hills. Snakes also" (p-14). Symbolically, the snakes and leopards represent the savage nature of the Indians. Just like the people, the land of the India is also represented as hostile, strange and unusual, as it is said "there is something hostile in the soil" (p-11).

In the same way, *No Longer at Ease* is also never free from this stereotypical representation of the colonized. Just like Indians in *A passage to India*, the Africans in *No Longer at Ease* are also represented as corrupt and lazy. This laziness is shown in the very beginning of the novel when the court is about to begin and the lawyer comes late with his constant excuses and laziness. The judge complains "all right, Mr. Adeyemi. I accept your excuse. But I must say I'm getting sick and tired of these constant excuses about the problem of locomotion" (p-1). Similarly, in many places of the novel those are represented as corrupt who take and accept bribes. When there is the trial of Mr. Obi Okonkwo even many civil servants gave bribes and "paid as much as ten shillings and six pence" (p-1) for obtaining a doctor's certificate that they are ill and could not come to the office. Even the Africans are directly represented as corrupt. For example, when Mr. Green's friend who works in the British Council asks Mr. Green about the situation, he replies "the African is corrupt through and through" (p-3).

After going through both the novel in respect to the stereotypes used, we can safely say that they are the masterwork of colonial discourse which is never free from the use of stereotypes.

Can Subalterns Speak

Here, this colonial issue is addressed by bringing the voices of the subalterns i.e. the subordinate and colonized voices from the texts whether they can defend their rights or not. What happens in *A Passage to India* is that when Dr. Aziz reaches Major Callendar's compound, the first thing he is told that "Major Callendar had driven away half an hour before" (p-11). Although Dr. Aziz was called by him he is absent. What Dr. Aziz does is write a letter as "Dear Sir, - At your express command I have hastened as a subordinate should" (p-11). Dr. Aziz cannot speak as one should at such a happening that you are called but still the person who calls

you is absent. Another thing that happens to Dr. Aziz is that when he leaps off the tonga, colonizer ladies come and drive the tonga without telling Dr. Aziz or granting his permission. But here too he has to remain silent because the subaltern is not allowed to speak.

In the second novel *No Longer at Ease*, the same thing happens that although taking bribes is not good but still if it is as little as twenty pounds then at least one should defend him/herself - but that has not happened here. Mr. Obi Okonkwo who is charged for a bribe of twenty pounds cannot defend himself and in this way has to suffer.

It means that in both the novels the subalterns are not allowed to speak and fight for their rights.

Ambivalence

E. M. Forster in his theme is ambivalent. Though he is talking about decolonization he still uses so many bad things or stereotypes of the Indians which shows that he is trying to legitimize the colonialism. The characters are also ambivalent in their treatment. For example, if Himidullah and Aziz are considered, they like some of the colonizers but dislike the other. Aziz likes Mrs. Moore but comments about other ladies as “all Englishwomen are haughty and venal” (p-7). He also dislikes Major Callendar and discusses this matter with Mrs. Moore. If we take the treatment of colonizers, they are also ambivalent. Adela Quested is in India to see the real India which is impossible without seeing the Indians which she denies. So, all this means that there is to and fro motion in the novel which shows its ambivalence. However, no such examples of ambivalence were found in *No Longer at Ease*.

Mimicry

Though examples of mimicry were not found in the chapters analyzed of *A Passage to India*, Dr. Aziz in the later chapters becomes a mimic man. In *No Longer at Ease* Obi Okonkwo who is wearing “a smart palm-beach suit and appeared unruffled and indifferent” (p-1) is represented him as a mimic man. Similarly, the “stewards in the white uniform” (p-3) also represents mimicry.

Binarism

In *A Passage to India* there is abundance use of binaries like good and bad and black and white. The same is the case in *No Longer at Ease* where the same relationship exists. For example, “One beer for this master” shows master and slave relation, which is at the heart of the novel and is a good example of binarism.

Marginality

When we read the first three chapters of *A Passage to India*, effects of marginality start coming up to the surface. The residential areas are separated. The colonized live in an area which is neither beautiful nor attractive and has a dearth of facilities. On the other hand, the colonizers' area is more attractive and with many facilities like "a long sallow hospital" (p-1). The collector even arranges a Bridge Party to "bridge the gulf between East and West" (p-20). The irony is that instead of decreasing the gap, it further increases the gap and results in the marginalization of the Indians. Similarly, the Indians are even not allowed to enter, as Dr. Aziz Complains to Mrs. Moore that "Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore club even as guests" (p-18). After having a cigarette once with Vakil Mahmoud Ali, Ronny now says that "I prefer to smoke at the club amongst my own sort" (p-22). The gulf is great that no attempts can be made to bridge that gap and stop marginality.

Similarly, in the novel *No Longer at Ease* the whole Umuofia town is ignored and kept marginalized. "Many towns have four or five or even ten of their sons in European posts in this city. Umuofia has only one. And now our enemies say that even that one is too many for us" (p-6). This is the case of marginality that even the towns are ignored.

Hybridity

Finding hybridity in such a short part of the novel *A Passage to India* is a challenging work and hence, when the researcher searched for such examples, no direct examples of hybridity were observed. Still there are certain moments in the text that represent some form of hybridity. If we take Adella Quested who time and again says that she wants to see the real India - but how it is possible? The real India is made hybrid by the colonial forces. They have even tried to make their culture hybrid by introducing club systems and many other activities.

Likewise, *No Longer at Ease* also presents some examples of hybridity. When Mr. Ikedi visits Umuofia township and "tell the gathering how wedding feasts had been steadily declining in the towns since the invention of invitation cards" (p-9). This also shows the cultural hybridity of the colonizers' culture where the invitation card system prevailed and the colonized culture where no card systems prevailed, but now due to the influence of the colonizers, the colonized have also started using invitation cards and in this way cultural hybridity has taken place.

Racism

In *A Passage to India* if taken in broader sense, has an element of racism in the form of different communities like Hindus, Muslims and Christian. But if Indians

are taken as one race as a whole then we can observe some inferences to this category in the concerned chapters of the novel. As a different race, Indians are dealt differently. In one place it is even said by Dr. Aziz that “Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore club even as guests” (p-18). Similarly, the westerners are addressed as red and white as said “Begum, with red face and hair” (p-14) and the Indians as black and muddy as “when we poor black take bribe” (p-5) and “the inhabitants of mud moving” (p-1).

In the same way in *No Longer at Ease*, racism is not only on the higher level between the westerners and the Africans but also within the same African community as well. For example, it is said “Who is this useless girl? Her name is Clara who is an Osu by birth and marrying an Osu is not considered good in Umuofian society”. This is a clear example which shows the element of racism in *No Longer at Ease*. Again we can say that both the novels give a touch to the problem of racism within such communities.

Nationalism

Both the novels have some elements of nationalism. In the novel *A passage to India*, nationalism is brought forward by the playing of national anthem. In the party where there was “Cousin Kate” at the same time the national anthem was also played as the lines of the novel says “Meanwhile the performance ended, and the amateur orchestra played the national Anthem.” (p-18). The anthem shows the colonizers’ nationalism where they stopped their other activities and kept indulging in their source of nationalism.

The Umuofia Progressive Union (p-4) in *No Longer at Ease* is also a symbol of Umuofian nationalism. This union serves as a kind of education movement which collects money from the people of Umuofia and sends brilliant Umuofians for higher studies abroad. In other words, union got the spirit of nationalism.

Orality

There are examples in both the novels which represent the oral culture of the concerned communities. It is said about Aziz that “presently Aziz chaffed him, also the servant, and then began quoting poetry, Persian, Urdu, a little Arabic” (p-8). It means that the Indian got this oral culture in the form of poetry.

On the other hand the novel *No Longer at Ease* has numerous examples which confirm the oral culture of Africa. As there are many examples but just to provide some evidence, one of the proverbs used in the novels is “Anger against a brother was felt in the flesh, not in the bone” (p-4).

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that both the novels have colonial issues. However, here some of the issues are analyzed with respect to both the texts but if a detailed

investigation of the whole of the novels is taken, it is possible to locate almost every colonial issue. Furthermore, E. M. Forster who himself was a colonizer has written the novel while representing his true brain image but on the other hand Chinua Achebe who belongs to the colonized is more ironic in his description of the African people. In other words, he is talking in the colonizers' language.

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