

INDIAN HYBRIDITY AND NATIONALISM

Adina PAICU

Lecturer Phd.

University „Constantin Brancusi”, Tg-Jiu, Romania

paicu.adina@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

*MY PAPER IS STRUCTURED IN THREE PARTS. **THE INTRODUCTORY PART** PRESENTS THE CONCEPT OF POST COLONIALISM. IT WILL BE A PRESENTATION OF THE MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS OF THIS CONCEPT, OF THE POST-COLONIAL THEORY AND OF THE RELATION BETWEEN POST COLONIALISM, HYBRIDITY AND NATIONALISM.*

***THE FIRST PART OF THE PAPER** PRESENTS **THE CONCEPT OF HYBRIDITY** WHILE **THE SECOND PART** DEALS WITH **THE CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM**. HYBRIDITY AND NATIONALISM ARE TWO CLOSELY RELATED NOTIONS AND THEY BOTH CHARACTERIZE THE INDIAN SOCIETY.*

IN THE FIRST PART OF THE PAPER, THE CONCEPT OF HYBRIDITY WILL BE EXPLAINED. THIS PART WILL START WITH A GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE TERM HYBRIDITY AND THEN THE RELATION BETWEEN IT AND OTHER BRANCHES OF THE SOCIETY. IT WILL ALSO PRESENT THE RELIGIOUS, LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, CULTURAL ASPECTS OF HYBRIDITY. CONCRETE EXAMPLES FROM THE INDIAN SOCIETY WILL BE PRESENTED IN THIS PART.

THE SECOND PART OF THE PAPER PRESENTS THE CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM. THIS PART WILL BEGIN WITH AN EXPLANATION OF THE IDEA OF NATION, OF THE CONCEPT OF SHARED COMMUNITY AND WILL CONTINUE WITH A PRESENTATION OF THE IDEA OF NATION AS A POWERFUL MEAN OF PRESERVING THE IDENTITY OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE. IT ALSO UNDERLINES THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND HYBRIDITY IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY.

*THE FINAL PART OF THE PAPER WILL BE **THE CONCLUSIONS** AND **THE BIBLIOGRAPHY**.*

KEYWORDS: COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM, HYBRIDITY, NATIONALISM, VS NAIPAUL

Post colonialism – a theoretical presentation

“When Arthur James Balfour stood up in the House of Commons, at the height of British imperial power, on June 13 1910, to answer challenges to Britain’s presence in Egypt, Edward Said tells us (1978: 32), he spoke under the mantle of two invisible foundations of imperial authority – knowledge and power. The most formidable ally of economic and political control had long been the business of ‘knowing’ other people because this ‘knowing’ underpinned imperial dominance and became the mode by which they were increasingly persuade to know themselves: that is, as subordinate to Europe. A consequence of this process of knowing the export of the colonies of European language, literature and learning as part of a civilizing mission which involved the suppression of a vast wealth of indigenous beneath the weight of

imperial control. The date of Balfour’s speech is significant. In just a few years, British imperial power would begin to be dismantled by the effects of the two world wars and the rise of independence movements throughout the world. This political dismantling did not immediately extend to imperial *cultural* influences, but it was attended by an unprecedented assertion of creative activity in post-colonial societies.

European imperialism took various forms in different times and places and proceeded both through conscious planning and contingent occurrences. As a result of this complex development something occurred for which the plan of imperial expansion had not bargained: the immensely prestigious and powerful imperial culture found itself appropriated in projects of counter-colonial resistance which drew upon the many different indigenous local and hybrid processes of self-determination to defy, erode and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge. Post-colonial literatures are a result of this interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices. As a consequence, ‘post colonial theory’ has existed for a long time before that particular name was used to describe it. Once colonized people had cause to reflect on and express the tension which ensued from this problematic and contested, but eventually vibrant and powerful mixture of imperial language and local experience, post colonial theory came into being.

The term ‘post colonial’ is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates, and, it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of the colonial contact. Postcolonial critics and theorists should consider the full implications of restricting the meaning of the term to ‘after colonialism’ or after independence. All postcolonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo colonial domination, and independence has not solve the problem. The development of the new élites within independent societies, often buttressed neo colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations; the continuing unequal treatment of the indigenous peoples in settler/invader societies – all these testify to the fact that post colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. This does not imply that postcolonial practices are seamless and homogeneous but indicates the impossibility of dealing with any part of the postcolonial process without considering its antecedents and consequences.

Postcolonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of these is ‘essentially’ postcolonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field. Like the description of any other field, the term has come to mean many things. However we would argue that postcolonial studies are based in the ‘historical fact’ of European colonialism, and the diverse material effects to which this phenomenon gave rise. We need to keep this fact of colonization firmly in mind because the increasingly unfocused use of the term ‘postcolonial’ over the last ten years to describe an astonishing variety of cultural, economic and political practices has meant that there is a danger in losing its effective meaning altogether. Indeed the diffusion of the term is now so extreme that it is used to refer to not only vastly different but even opposed activities.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1999)

“Post colonialism generally designates a set of theoretical approaches, which focus on the direct effects of colonization. Its primary object of study is the attempt to explain, from historical and political point of view, the term “colonizing” as a form of human exploitation, repression and dependency. Post-colonialism is a powerful intellectual and critical movement which tries to explain the past and culture of former colonies.

The term post-colonialism appeared for the first time in the second half of the 20th century and it soon lost its original historic meaning being used in a wide range of fields.

If we interpret the meaning of this term, literary, “post-colonialism” refers to the status of a land that lost the status of a colony and has regained its political independence.

Another more complex definition of the term post-colonialism refers to the sum of economic, politic, social and cultural features, which characterizes former colonies. It also explains the way in which these countries deal with their colonial heritage because the long periods of colonization modified profoundly the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of these societies.

We cannot talk about post colonialism without mentioning the term decolonization.

Decolonization is a process that is very important for the cultural and intellectual aspect of the former colonized people minds. The main idea of the decolonizing process is to convince them that their attitudes towards power and oppression must change drastically. A fine example in this case is the Indian population after India regained its independence in 1974.

Until recently, the concept of post colonization was an unexplored territory but since 1950, the Western countries began to pay a special interest to the “Third World countries”. This subject became even subject of study in the American universities and later on in the European ones.

A much-debated aspect of post colonialism in these universities is the clash of cultures. A frequent question is the following: how much of the original cultural inheritance of the colonized countries remains after their colonization. As known by everyone, the colonizing process is not something mutually agreed by countries involved but a most violent process during which the colonizer imposes his values and believes to the colonized people. Although they gain their independence, their minds still bear the scars of the colonization. Therefore, the colonists’ failure of total independence made the process of decolonization rather tense and emotional.

Post-colonialism also deals with the conflicts of identity and cultural belonging. Colonial powers came to foreign states and destroyed parts of the native tradition and culture; furthermore, they continuously replaced them with their own ones. This often led to conflicts when countries became independent and suddenly faced the challenge of developing a new nationwide identity and self-confidence.

As generations had lived under the power, of colonial rulers, they have more or less adopted their Western tradition and culture. The challenge of these countries was to find an individual way to identify what belonged to them. They could not rid of the Western way of life from one day to another. On the other hand, former colonial powers had to change their self-assessment. This continuous duality is the essence of the decolonization process while post-colonialism is the intellectual direction that deals with it.

So how is this difficult process of decolonization being done? One viable solution is by the power of language and not by military violence. Language is the intellectual means by which post-colonial communication takes place. This is most important as most colonial powers

tried to integrate their language, the major aspect of their civilized culture, in foreign cultures. Many Indian books related to the post-colonialism period are written in English.” (Paicu, 2010)

HYBRIDITY

“The first chapter of my paper discusses the concept of **hybridity**. It is one of the main consequences of colonialism.

Hybridity is an important part of the postcolonial field, and, as in the case of colonialism, is a large domain.

It is just one of the numerous effects of colonialism underlined, as process, in one of the British former colonies: India. Here, colonialism has led to “a pseudo-aristocratic world the Anglo-Indians created with their sprawling bungalows, country clubs, and polite parties or ‘frolics’”. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1999) This world publicly displayed a civilized society and considered the natives’ inferior beings incapable of surpassing their own condition. Their ‘mission’ was to free them from their ignorance and to abandon “their cruel and barbarous practices”. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1999)

Another important aspect of hybridity is the free labor market for the British Empire. In this regard, the British Empire had much to gain because many “Indian peasants and tribal were hired locally to cultivate a cotton dye in a system that has been described as ‘indigo slavery’ or they were shipped to remote territories as ‘coolies’ a form of indenture labor.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1999) This form of masked slavery had an awful impact on the Indian life because, by being shipped in other parts of the country, the Indians could no longer work their lands and maintain their businesses. The British colonialists preferred their own products and they forced the Indians to accept them. This situation raised the Indian unemployment to alarming cotes. Many Indians saw their small businesses collapse and died simply of starvation. It had to pass many years for things to get better.

I will talk next, about the process of hybridity as the result of the meeting between Europe and Orient.

The author Edward Said, in his work *Orientalism*, presents a face of it that is familiar to Europeans: “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences [...]. The Orient is not adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting idea, personality, experience.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1999)

What the author Edward Said referred to in this fragment is the perfect embodiment of the blending between two different continents, each praising with their cultures and traditions, with their people, both similar but so distinctive in the same time. Maybe the fascination of the European travelers and colonialists, along history, was the result of the Orient’s close doors. For a long time it was, just as the fragment above said, a world of mysteries and secrets, an entire different world with its own rules and social and political boundaries. Europe was also an old continent with an interesting history and fascinating traditions. Their contact caused much

distress to both of them from a certain point of view but, in the same time, it had a positive effect because it brought together these two different cultures and underlined what was best in each of them.

What we must understand about these two worlds – Orient and Occident – is the fact that each of them has its own characteristics and why not personality. For example, “[...] the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either. We must take seriously Vico’s great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities – such locales, regions, geographical sectors as ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ are manufactured. Therefore, as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other. [...] one must go on to state a number of reasonable qualifications. In the first place, it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was essentially an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality...there were - and are – cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West.

A second qualification is that ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force or more precisely their configuration of power also being studied. To believe that the Orient was created and to believe that such things happened simply as a necessity of the immigration, is to be disingenuous. The relation between Occident and Orient is a relation of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony....

And finally a third qualification refers to the fact that one ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1999)

I chose such a long citation from Edward Said’s *Orientalism* because I believe that his writing reflects exactly the meaning of hybridity as blending of cultures.” (Paicu, 2011)

INDIAN NATIONALISM

“Nationalism is generally acknowledged to be one of the great driving forces - perhaps even the most powerful of them - in modern history. This statement will probably not meet with much opposition, but it might very well evoke a polite question as to its precise meaning, or even the blunt comment that it has no meaning at all. The problem is that no concise and acceptable definition of the concept of nationalism has been formulated thus far, not without understanding the fact that many historians, and political theorists as well as practitioners, have attempted to find one. Probably no definition combining conciseness with relevancy is possible in the case of a concept which, in common parlance, covers such disparate phenomena as the nationalism of revolutionary France about 1800, Italian nationalism about 1860, Indian nationalism about the beginning of our century, Russian nationalism in the era of Stalin, and African nationalism at present. For that reason, any general definition is apt to be lacking in substance, like this one quoted from H. Kohn, a well-known authority on the subject: "Nationalism is the state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state." Apart from containing the word "nation", badly in need of definition itself if this definition of nationalism is

to be of any use, this sentence does not convey very much. But this is a fact of which Kohn is well aware: his definition is not a conclusion, but only a starting-point for further argument. [...]

We will feel free to use the term "Indian nationalism" if we are able to make clear what we mean by it. In other words: we think we may be content with a very vague definition of nationalism if we are able to point out the special features of Indian nationalism as we see it. We might start from the truism that nationalism is a kind of group loyalty. But, like every truism, this one, too, poses more questions than it answers. What exactly is the group involved? And has the loyalty it commands any special qualities when compared with other loyalties? The group involved is, of course, the nation, but then, what is a nation? To this question, there are two kinds of answer, an "objective" one, defining the nation by more or less outward qualities like the possession of a territory, of a common language, culture, religion, history, and so on, and a "subjective" one, stressing the consciousness of a group that it is constituting a nation because its members wish to do so. In the first case, the nation is mainly looking backwards for its legitimating. This attitude suited many European nations which in the 19th century already existed as fairly homogeneous groups - we are thinking of the Germans, the Italians, the Hungarians for instance. With them, nationalism was an attempt to make the boundaries of the state and those of the nation coincide. In the second case, however, it is the future which has to prove the nation's right to exist. This attitude had to be assumed by many recently acknowledged Asian (and African) nations made up of rather heterogeneous components, which had been brought together by foreign domination and were united mainly by the urge to get rid of it.

Possession of a territory is considered as the least dispensable of these outward qualities. Territory " ... is the only element, with the will of the population itself, whose presence is generally considered as the sine qua non of the realization of a nation." The reason - or one reason, at least - might be that a territory is necessary for the establishment of a state, which is the political self-expression of a nation. The doctrine of nationalism, as Kedourie expounds it, "divides humanity into separate and distinct nations, claims that such nations must constitute sovereign states, and asserts that the members of a nation reach freedom and fulfillment by cultivating the peculiar identity of their own nation and by sinking their own persons in the greater whole of the nation." It is this separateness of nations that makes it impossible for any of them to accept being ruled by another nation. Nationalism can never be a purely "national" matter; it is always, to some degree, setting off the nation it is serving against other nations, or against foreigners. Remarkably of ten it takes the form of a fight for freedom and independence, and quite naturally so in the case of colonial peoples. Remarkably of ten it takes the form of a fight for freedom and independence, and quite naturally so in the case of colonial peoples. Anti foreignism, notably anti-westernism, has been a clearly visible component in Indian nationalism since the days of Tilak at least. A drawback of this tendency, however, is that the foreigner may become the scapegoat for all evils besetting the nation. This too may be observed in the case of Indian nationalism; not a few nationalist leaders told their followers, and probably thought themselves, that poverty and internal strife would cease once the British Raj was ousted from power. Anti-westernism, in most colonial relationships, was intensified by racial antagonism, which in India seems to have made itself felt, notably since about the year 1890, more strongly than before. The concept of a nation as a separate identity with a character of its own raises, for those who are becoming aware of this fact, the question as to the nature of this identity. In plain words: when a man realizes that he is an Indian and as such fundamentally different from

Englishmen, he will be inclined to ask himself what exactly it means to be an Indian, or wherein his Indian-ness exists. It is only when some progress on this road has been made that the fight for political independence will make sense. Minogue describes nationalism as a three-stage process, consisting of an initial stage of stirrings, characterized by the search for a cultural identity, a second stage marked by the struggle for independence, and a third stage of national consolidation.” (A. C. NIEMEIJER, 1972)

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I chose to present these two concepts in my paper because I consider them representative for the Indian nation.

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