

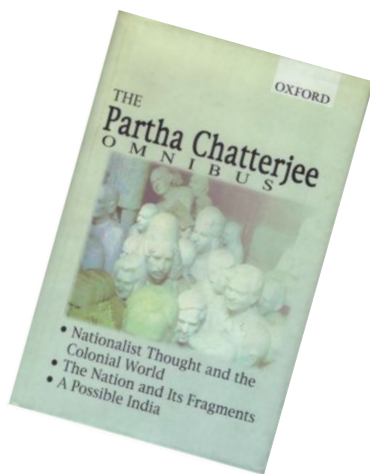
Post Colonial Period

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SUBALTERN STUDIES



Answer 1

In 1980's subaltern studies began to produce different kinds of post-colonial discourse. Ranjith Guha brought radical changes in the study of historiography.

There are different levels of critique against historiography by intellects of subaltern studies. Partha Chatterjee in his book "Nationalist thought in Colonial World" motivates his investigation by the use of Edward said's "orientalism".

It is his response to Benedict Anderson who argues that all western nations have their own writings where as colonized world copied the western nations.

Antonio Gramsci's concept of passive revolution to study the three rationalists. In his book he studies three persons in three phases

- 1.Moment of Departure
- 2.Moment of Maneuver
- 3.Moment of Arrival

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is attributed to Moment of Departure he had a shift in ideology from saying British also belonged to Aryan race to becoming a radical rationalist opposing colonialism.

Mahatma Gandhi is attributed to Moment of Maneuver in which Gandhi's version of nationalism is analyzed. Gandhi rejected "rationalism, scientism, historicism" and dismissed modernity as immoral and irreligious. His strategy was to promote self-sufficiency, village life, cottage industries, moral, chaste living and visions of a coming ramarajya.

Jawaharlal Nehru is studied in Moment of Arrival. This has to erase all the impact of previous era's.

Chatterjee argues that Nehru's ideology is one in which "the central organizing principle is the autonomy of the state; the legitimizing principle is a conception of social justice".

Nehru's ideology was completely different from Gandhi which did encourage modernism, scientific culture.

Answer 2.

Chandra's death was an article written by Ranjit Guha, a historiographer of subaltern studies in 1987. It was detailed analysis of an old court document from mid nineteenth century in the form of deposition to the lower court by the relatives (mother and sister) of a deceased woman, named Chandra. These depositions were written in rustic Bengali without any paraphrasing or punctuation. This article was a classic part of Subaltern Studies as it focuses on the problems of common people and the rights of women.

Chandra had become pregnant as a result of an illicit affair she had with a man name Mangaram Chasa. Mangaram was her husband's sister's husband. Most probably she was forcefully pulled into this affair by Mangaram. Mangaram asked Chandra's family to get her aborted, else he threatened to drive her into a bhek.

Bheks used to be places for people rejected by the society to live in. Living in a bhek could not be considered as a good option as women living there were exploited both emotionally by the society and sexually by the men living there.

As the family had no other option they chose to get Chandra aborted. But they did not have any money to pay for the medicines and the Vaidya (village doctor), was not ready to cooperate. Chandra's mother convinced him to give medicine by all means, like, taking help of some respected elders of the village and selling whatever she had like metal utensils to gather money.

The medicine, administered by Chandra's sister, appeared to work fine: 'the bloody foetus was picked up from the ground with straw and thrown away.' Everything seemed to have worked out but the pain in Chandra's belly continued to increase. Later that night Chandra died. In chandra's sister's words, "I administered the medicine in the belief that it would terminate her pregnancy and did not realize that it would kill her".

The lower court of Bengal convicted Chandra's sister who administered the medicine and sent her to prison. Kalicharan Bagdi, the village doctor was left free by the court and Mangaram was not even summoned by the court.

According to Ranjit Guha, this was an act of transgression. This was in complete disagreement with the modern law. According to him Mangaram should have been the prime convict in the case, then Kalicharan Bagdi, the doctor, and least of all Chandra's sister. Guha sympathised with Chandra's family who tried to collectively cope with the situation they had at hand. In the attempt to induce an abortion in Chandra by herself and her womenfolk that would seem to be an act of surrender to the male norms of sexuality, kinship and family, he sees a "women's solidarity" against such institution of male norms. For him, these women had made a choice to reject bhek as an alternative: this was a choice made by women entirely on their own in order to stop the engine of male authority from uprooting a woman from her place in

the local society. That she lost her life as a result of this effort was. For Guha, this was a measure of the strength of women's solidarity in the given social and historical set up.

Answer 3.

Homi Bhabha is a leading contemporary critic and his concept of mimicry states that the "colonized" always mimics the "colonizer". He has tried to disclose the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse in order to highlight the "colonizer's" ambivalence in respect to his position towards the colonized other.

"A post-colonial person to survive, always has to mimic the western world". It is not true that we totally mimic the western world, we have our own identity. We may take some of the socio-cultural aspects from them but post-colonial people don't totally mimic the west.

Presumably, while copying the master, one has to intentionally suppress one's own cultural identity, though in some cases immigrants and colonial subjects are left so confused by their cultural encounter with a dominant foreign culture that there may not be a clear pre-existing identity to suppress.

Mimicry may ruin the colonial people off their own identity. Mimicry, however, is not all bad. In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man" Bhabha described mimicry as sometimes unintentionally subversive. There is another, much more straightforward way in which mimicry can actually be subversive or empowering : when it involves the copying of "western" concepts of justice, freedom, and the rule of law. The concept of mimicry is not totally wrong, as we the colonized people , always want to be superior and thus end up mimicking the "colonizer".

Answer 4.

Edward Said's book "orientalism" argues that not only our nationalism discourses our resistance to colonialism is also colonized. It presents colonized people as inferior to the west which encourages white racism.

Our resistance to colonialism has bought us the independence and the thought that it is also colonized is not appropriate.

It acts as a limitation to post-colonial studies that it's writings are influenced by the west, which dooms post-colonial studies and encourages white racism.

It presents the colonized as a subject to the west.

Said's generalization and subsuming many countries under one theory, is one of the limitations to the theory.

There is a critique that the theory is 'male domain'.

It is disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of other cultures of the world. So this approach by Edward said encourages white racism.

Orientalism is said to mainly influenced by the west and is the western representation of colonial culture, it presents the colonized culture inferior to the western culture.

Hence I think orientalism dooms post-colonial studies and encourages white racism.

Answer 5

The Subaltern Studies Group or Subaltern Studies Collective is a group of South Asian scholars interested in post-colonial societies with particular focus on South Asia while also covering the developing world in general sense. These historians have anti-essentialist approach, i.e. focused more on what happened among the masses rather than elite class.

According to me the subaltern studies group is an integral part of the historian society. What we do in the future depends on the outcomes of what we did in the past. We learn from our past and act accordingly in the future. Our country has become what it is today because of what happened in the post-colonial period. A number of major changes have only come about in our world only in colonial and post-colonial period. These include:

Major law reforms

- Equal rights for women
- Introduction of personal laws
- Abolition of sati pratha
- Education reforms

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- New education system had English language taught as an integral part
 - It was such that people could adapt to the modern world
 - Basic rights provided to everyone
 - Equality
 - Secularism
 - Right to education
 - Right to information

The study of all of the above aspects is very important in the quest of understanding our modern world. And hence the Subaltern Studies is very important for us.