



Decolonising Indian Mind and Rajiv Malhotra's 'Predatory-Digested Cultures' Paradigm

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ABSTRACT:

While the ostensible political colonization by the West mostly ended in the world long back, the subterranean cultural colonization of the 'third world' continues unabated, helped by the material success of the West and the inferiority complex present in the native intellectual class. In India, the impetus to shed the colonial baggage through re-writing of history and recovering ancient knowledge, which the postcolonial approach encouraged once, has become a bone of contention between the ruling and the opposing parties, but that is the tip of the iceberg if one considers the various forms of attack on Indian knowledge frameworks and ethos, and on the cultural unity of India. Rajiv Malhotra, a renowned Indologist and public intellectual, in his writings, draws attention to the colonial time plunder and re-branding of Indian knowledge systems according to what he terms as 'predatory/digested cultures' paradigm and details the subtle strategies being adopted even now by the West. My paper examines Malhotra's findings on the basis of ground reality obtaining in India presently, interpolating it to the cultural (read political) theories through which the West intends homogenizing and hegemonizing the rest of the world and which needs to be challenged to thwart the repetition of colonial powerplay.

KEYWORDS: Postcolonialism, inferiority complex, cultural theory, Sanskrit, Indian philosophy

Introduction

The history of mankind is full of wars with short periods of peace punctuating it at times. Many powerful monarchs, despots and rulers possessed by expansionist dreams expanded their empires as far as they could before destiny brought the curtain down on them and their empires a la Shelley's Ozymandias. However, the phase of European colonization during and after sixteenth century of much of the world was different in that the art of cultural hegemony was perfected by the colonizers like no earlier imperialist power had done before. Various means adopted towards that end went beyond looting of resources leading to overall pauperization of the once-rich nations, to denigration of native cultures contrasting these with the material advancement of the colonizing powers, imposition of a European language, corruption of histories of subjugated nations, -- all of which resulted in the inculcation of inferiority complex in the colonized people, something that has not vanished till day even though most countries of Asia and Africa broke the shackles of colonization around the middle of the last century.

As India steps into the eighth decade of independence, we find quite a few scholars evincing interest in Indian history and culture. Rajiv Malhotra, based in the US, is a perceptive thinker, writer, and public intellectual on cross-cultural encounters and world religions, also at home in science and technology. A large number of videos of his public lectures are available on the internet and have generated a lot of interest as also controversy. He is the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the India Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts. In his corpus, he deals with different aspects of colonization of India by the British, starting from their advent on the Indian soil as





merchants around 1600 AD; their metamorphosis into rulers before the British crown took over formally as the ruler of India in 1858.

This paper banks on some key texts by Rajiv Malhotra, viz., *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* (2011), *Breaking India: Western Interventions in Dravidian and Dalit Faultlines* (co-authored with Aravindan Neelakandan, 2011), and *Sanskrit Non-translatables* (co-written with Satyanarayan Dass Babaji, 2020). Apart from these, there are several other books authored by Malhotra. These include *Indra's Net* (2014), *The Battle for Sanskrit* (2016), *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Power* (2021), and *Snakes in the Ganga: Breaking India 2.0* (2022). These texts challenge western hegemony that started with certain western countries colonizing a large part of the world 1500 AD onward, which still continues through subtle mechanisms.

The “Civilizing Mission”

One must remind oneself of the way Indian mind was colonized. The arrival of the East India Company was in the form of a trading company around 1600 AD, but finding opportunity, resorted to what came to be known later as the ‘divide and rule’ strategy and starting with the infamous Battle of Plassey in 1757, grabbed power over vast area of India. An important aspect which Malhotra notes is that the British and other European powers, viz., Spanish, Portuguese, French, etc., who held on to small tracts in the Indian mainland, were bound by a common Christian faith – Catholic or Protestant. The Christian missionaries followed these would-be rulers as they travelled from Europe to India. (“Missionary”). Even though St. Thomas came much earlier to set up church in Kerala, yet the Christian faith lay low as it did not have the backing of the Muslim rulers of India. Now, with the arrival of European traders, the missionaries felt protected. As the ensuing colonial rule was euphemistically termed “civilizing mission”, Christian religion was also reinterpreted to lend legitimacy to the material plunder, thus whitewashing the oppressive colonizing process. A papal bull was issued in 1493 by Pope Alexander VI which authorized Spain and Portugal to “colonize, convert and enslave non-Christians” in the Americas and other lands “to be found in the direction of India...”. This was like a divine permission for all colonizers to occupy lands and loot people there. (Deepak 48-53).

The East India Company also set up various organs of the government like bureaucracy and judiciary to rule effectively and seemingly judiciously over the areas it acquired through wars or chicanery. Many of them, vested with the authority and charge to survey the country and to codify lifestyle, went about their task with the aim to use knowledge to strengthen dominance as Edward Said rightly observes: “To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for ‘us’ [the colonizer] to deny autonomy to ‘it’—the Oriental country—since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it” (Said 32). The result was the growth of what later came to be called the Orientalists, many of whom were committed missionaries. We must avoid the trap: “To commence any decolonisation one must first recognise and problematise the nature and structure of the colonial project. [...] avoid the construction of binaries, of absolute oppositions” (Chan 1130). So, there were missionaries who transcended the narrow bounds of religion and dug deep into the mines of Indian knowledge as true scholars. Indeed, “At the centre of decolonisation are inextricably intertwined ethical, methodological, epistemological and political dimensions. This is so because of knowledge and power imbrications as well as knowledge and ontology dialectics” (Sabelo 883).

So, without meaning to slam all Orientalists, it must be conceded that many of them carried out their work under the influence of church with a clear motive to underrate the native Indian culture (also called Hindu culture as by then, the term ‘Hindu’ had got established through its widespread use by the Arab invaders) and project the superiority of the Christian West. In this respect, Malhotra and Neelakandan rightly remark: “This [whiteman’s supremacy] became the normative European paradigm from about 1780 to approximately 1850 CE, as successive colonial Indologists theorized and debated how best to map the Indians onto the Biblical framework. These luminaries included William Jones, Max Mueller, Brian Houghton Hodgson, and Bishop Robert Caldwell, among others. [...] their imprint has left modern Indian identities divided and fragmented” (Malhotra &





Neelakandan 42). However, Malhotra could have credited the Orientalists who unearthed ancient scholarly texts and translated these rather objectively. As a proof, we can cite such translations being used as authentic sources in India even now. Albert Weber and A.H. Griffith are the two such authors recommended by Arya Samaj school scholars. (Saraswati & Viraj 106-07).

The infamous Macaulay's Minutes of 1835 proved to be a turning point. Till then, there had been no interference by the East India Company in the field of education which was being imparted through Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic languages. The Mughals did not totally eliminate Sanskrit because, as a scholar avers, "They cultivated deep and diverse ties with Sanskrit thinkers and texts over the course of nearly one hundred years because they saw such activities as a central part of their political project" ("The Mughals"). Macaulay, on the other hand, had a different motive; he wanted to enlist Indians as clerks for the government – another term for the courtly class. Making English the compulsory medium of learning in higher education, replacing Sanskrit and Persian/Arabic was the strategy that furthered the agenda of the colonizers. Alongside, history was re-written, denigrating or obliterating Indian scholarship and classical texts which were mainly of oral type (*Shruti granth*) because, as Malhotra observes, these did not fit into the European definition of written texts with material evidence to support their antiquity. The oral literature was considered "as a primitive and inefficient means of knowledge transmission" (Malhotra 79).

Conceptualizing Indian nation

The inculcation of inferiority complex in Indians was a meticulously calculated move on the part of the colonizers to perpetuate hegemony. Hegemony, as Antonio Gramsci defined it, is the manipulation of value system by the ruling class in such a way that the subjugated accept it willingly as if it were something natural and favourable to them. The ruling class does it not necessarily through violence but through subtle circulation of a crafted ideology. (Eagleton 5). So, a discourse was created that British rule was responsible for bringing about a sense of unity and of being a nation to India – something that had been missing so far. Indeed, when one looks at the multitudes of languages, lifestyles and "cultures" present on the Indian subcontinent, a casual reader of the socio-cultural scene would agree to the suggestion. This was the plea of the British imperialists also who justified their rule on the plea that "if Britain abandoned India then the latter would dissolve into warring factions and that 'anarchy' was inevitable"(Pecanan).

Decolonising approaches in our times seek "a plurality of perspectives, worldviews, ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies in which scholarly enquiry and political praxis might take place" (Bambra et al 2) What we find in Malhotra is the substantiation of alternative epistemology, methodology and worldview that has not been granted its due. He looks at India not as "a bundle of the old and the new, accidentally and uncomfortably pieced together, an artificial construct without a natural unity" (Malhotra 1). He presents evidence to prove that India had the national consciousness long before the British arrived and that cross-country travel and intermixing of populations was not uncommon. It may be pointed out here that while the western concept of nation is based on uniformity of land mass, language and other external cultural signifiers, etc., the Indian *rashtra* (roughly 'nation') has existed despite the multiplicity of languages, lifestyles and visible cultural symbols which is not understood by the western mind.¹ The unity has existed all along due to the subtle currents of dharmic culture. To prove the point, one can cite references galore to Bharat as a nation occupying landmass south of the Himalayas and north of the Indian Ocean, and called variously – Jambudweep, Aryavarta,

¹ Even the American Sanskrit scholar Sheldon Pollock is unable to inhere this view when he says that "a stable singularity called "Indian culture", so often conjured up by Southeast Asian indigenists, never existed" (Pollock 535). Malhotra in his book *The Battle for Sanskrit* aptly answers his arguments.





Bharat, Bharatvarsha, etc. in ancient texts right from the Rig Veda, the oldest of the four Vedas, to the Puranas.²

The myth that these were the British rulers who created India as a cohesive entity and provided for cross-country contacts and movements through railways and English language is disputed by the fact of location of important pilgrimage centres like the *Chaar Dhaam* (four supreme pilgrimage centres) located at four places in North India; the four revered *maths* or monasteries established by Adi Shankaracharya in 8th century in four corners of India – at Dwarka (Gujarat), Shringeri (Karnataka), Garhwal (Uttarakhand) and Puri (Odisha); the 64 Yogini temples spread all over India and so many others. If we take into consideration the numerous religious fairs like the *Kumbh* with its various versions and scattered locations at Prayagraj, Hardwar, Ujjain, Nasik, etc., then we find that all these drew people from all over the sub-continent and still continue to attract large numbers of people. Malhotra understands India as a unique civilization based on plurality and rues the co-opting of its civilizational matrix into Western universalism which got strength during the heyday of colonialism.

Predator-Prey Equation

The sixth chapter of *Being Different* starts with Malhotra's thesis which is of interest to us here. It is represented by the predator-prey analogy. According to the writer, both Christianity and Enlightenment "developed various conceptual absolutes and endowed these with 'universal' status. The profound assumption is that the shape and direction of world history are leading to a single *Western* goal – be it salvation or scientific secular progress. All people and cultures are forced into the various schemes put forward to bring this about." (Malhotra 307). This insistence led the West to dismantle our indigenous knowledge systems through mapping the disjointed parts of Indian culture on to the western taxonomy which is touted as the objective standard. What they did was to appropriate it much like a predator animal which kills its prey and eats it up, leaving behind the skeleton. The process involved what Malhotra calls "epistemic cannibalization" (Malhotra 309) so that the useful elements are eaten up and digested by the colonizer and the leftover incongruent and seemingly useless ones are presented to the native as being responsible for his miserable state:

The dominant civilization dismembers the weaker one into parts from which it picks and chooses which pieces it wants to appropriate; (ii) these appropriated elements get mapped onto the language and social structures of the dominant civilization's own history and paradigms, leaving little if any trace of the links to the source tradition; (iii) the civilization that was thus mined gets depleted of its cultural and social capital because the appropriated elements are modified to fit the dominant civilization's own history, and these elements re-shown to be disconnected from, and even in conflict with, the source civilization; and (iv) the depleted civilization enters the proverbial museum as yet another dead culture, ceasing to pose a threat to the dominant one. (Malhotra 37).

The process, as we can see, involves extremely dishonest distortion of the original and, on top of it, when it is marketed back, the intellectual property rights go for a toss and the thievery gets a respectable place, in the form of valued possessions of the museums and libraries of the colonizers. (Han). Not for nothing are there demands, every now and then, from erstwhile colonized countries to

² 'Rashtra' finds mention in in Prathvi Sukta in *Atharva Veda* (12.1.8, Vol. 4) and in Book 1 of *Yajur Veda*. Also it occurs at several places in *Rig Veda*. (Saraswati 20-22). Vishnu Purana (Chapter III: Description of Bharatvarsha), besides naming various rivers, mountains, kingdoms, etc. defines India as follows:

"*Uttaram yatsamudrasya himādreścaiva dakṣiṇam/ varṣam tadbhāratam nāma bhāratī yatra santatiḥ.*"

This sloka means: "The country (*Varsam*) that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bharatam; there dwell the descendants of Bharata." (Wilson).



the former colonizing nations to return their artifacts to which there is response in proportion to the present political equation prevailing between, say, England and Egypt or England and India. (Aton).

Turning to a particular discipline as an example, we find that the study of linguistics in the Western academy got a shot in the arms from ancient Sanskrit grammarian Panini's as Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of Western structuralism, was a Sanskrit scholar teaching at Geneva. In his "On the Use of the Genitive Absolute in Sanskrit" published in 1881, Saussure specifically mentions Panini as an influence on the work. (Cardona 465). It is also known that his pupils published a book titled *Cours de linguistique Générale* (Course in General Linguistics) in 1916, i.e., three years after the death of their teacher, which was based upon Saussure's teaching notes. However, Malhotra finds that the references to Sanskrit texts in the notes were left out by his pupils while compiling the book. (Malhotra 238). This is quite credible as the pupils were not well-versed in Sanskrit. Panini's greatness can be gauged from the fact that his method of "auxiliary symbols" was popularized in our times by the logician Emil Post and it became the standard for designing computer programming languages, according to the researchers at the famed Bhandarkar Oriental Institute. (Bhate & Kak, 79-94).

Another instance of re-branding Indian heritage is seen during the Romantic movement in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when the concept of universalism gained strength. Even though the potential of the Sanskrit language to fix Western identity was found to be useful and the Indian spiritualism was appreciated, yet later Hegel's narrative of history as leading to an ultimate blossoming of the universal World Spirit through Western rather than Asian nations was developed and was "exported" to India. Malhotra's thesis is that the colonizers did not simply gain from ancient Indian texts, but appropriated these, and shorn of the inherent substance, marketed these back to India. "Under colonial rule, European colonizers did impose their canonized texts and theories on those whom they conquered. Worse, they completely liquidated indigenous peoples and, with them, their rich and valuable traditions of knowledge" (Malhotra 244). This view is comparable to the present tendency of western powers to treat their interests as those of the world and try to force the kind of globalization that favours the West in material sense. Besides, it camouflages an assimilation process which requires the rest of the world to overlook differences and achieve sameness with the West.

Forging identity

Even the identity of the West was sought to be determined taking advantage of the richness of Indian culture. The issue of identity gained importance with the dawn of the postcolonial theory. Not going into the attempt inherent in the term 'postcolonial' to make colonial time a reference point, one can say that even before this, during the colonial times, it had importance for the European nations which competed among themselves to prove their superiority. In this, the self/other model propounded by Edward Said finds favour with Malhotra, who offers the case of Germany as an example. During the heyday of Romanticism, the origin of European culture was sought to be linked to India because of the richness of Sanskrit literature and knowledge. Sanskrit departments were established in every centre of learning. Germany, according to Malhotra, suffered from an inferiority complex as it did not have a foreign empire or a noble lineage like other European powers – France, England, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Germany, therefore, was in the forefront of claiming Sanskrit as the language of its forefathers who were erroneously called "Aryans" based on the Sanskrit word 'Arya' (meaning a superior person) used amply in Sanskrit literature but it does not denote any race.

German scholars developed the Aryan invasion theory according to which the Aryans travelled from Germany to India and invaded the natives there, settled down there and produced wonderful literature. But then how could Germans clam to be Aryans themselves if they had migrated to India? So, the revised version of the invasion theory spoke of the Aryans coming from India and making Germany their home. (Malhotra & Neelakandan 15-36). This was a flip-flop that must have created amusement. A number of German scholars like Herder, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Max Mueller, et al. worked in this direction and influenced other European scholars too. With the passage of time, the cannibalization happened and alternate theories were propounded by even Hegel and Schelling who "tried to separate Indian religion from Sanskrit texts in order to appropriate selectively the non-



religious aspects of Sanskrit civilization into the German Christian identity” (Malhotra 312-13), as a function of the predator-prey theory. We must remember that Hegel’s linear theory of history became the ground for justification of Western colonial exploitation just as Nietzsche’s Superman theory justified Hitler’s adventurism. These were definitely not the ends propounded in Sanskrit texts.

While on one hand, the Western colonizers sought anchoring for their identity, on the other, they tried to negate the strength of Indian epistemological texts. Karl Marx was another German influenced by Hegel. Both these gentlemen denied India any history, and this helped the colonizers legitimize their exploitation. Sure enough, Indian *itihasa* is different from the western notion of history but it does not mean there was no agency or initiative. How can one forget the great kings like Ashoka and Vikramaditya who created vast empires on the Indian subcontinent? How could the Pallavas and the Sri Vijaya empires extend their trade and cultural ties up to Indonesia in South East Asia, if there was no agency? We still find the cultural imprint in almost all these countries – Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc. Why would scholars from China, Japan and other countries come to study at the great universities of Nalanda and Taxila if there were no scholarship in ancient India? All these glorious chapters of Indian history were downplayed not only by the colonizers but also by some Indian historians with colonial mindset, who followed the western historiography and dittoed the western version of India being a statist rather than a dynamic society, as historian Ranjit Guha notes. (Guha 44-45).

Failure of Postcolonialists

Continuing our study of colonial impact into present times, we find that around the middle of the 20th century, when many countries including India achieved freedom after a prolonged struggle, the postcolonial theory got formulated through the efforts of scholars from some freshly liberated countries. These scholars included Aime Cesaire, Albert Memmi, Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Edward Louis Gates, Mahatma Gandhi and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Malik & Batra 143-150, Nayar 157-166, Habib 159-170). As the former colonies set upon the project of re-building their respective nations, the colonizers of yore came under attack for their past misdeeds. However, in order to blunt the attack and to be on the right side, the former colonizers succeeded in changing the direction of attack. As scholars argue: “Eurocentrism has largely rendered invisible the sociological perspectives and work of both scholars of colour and societies they come from. In addition, Eurocentrism in the discipline also allows for intrinsically racist and colonial theory and findings to be developed and disseminated within academe and among the public” (Bhambra et al 10). Instead of attacking the colonizers for the exploitation, they were told that the exploitative structure still existed within their societies and that they would do well to shoot their arrows on their own societies. It was a mischievous mapping of the colonizer-colonized paradigm on to the native polity which sowed the seeds of distrust and division among Indians. According to Malhotra, some foreign universities and foundations offer inducements to Indian scholars in the form of fellowships and scholarships to conduct research, but follow a covert agenda of indoctrinating them so that they consider themselves different from other communities in India, leading to dissensions and divisions in Indian society. (“Rajiv”). This may or may not be true but there is strong evidence given by the writer.

An example of this kind of brainwashing of academics was evident in the answer given during an interview at the time of death of Queen Elizabeth II by an Indian professor of Postcolonial Studies at the University of Cambridge. On being asked to react to the demand for reparation by Britain for the colonial-time loot of India, she stated: “Are those Indians who want the British to face up to what happened during the age of empire and even make reparations, quite as enthusiastic about facing up to oppression and atrocities that take place in India? To make reparations for centuries of caste exploitation, for instance?” (Gopal). So, in the same breath, the direction of postcolonial attack gets changed regardless of the fact that India is now not a colony but a sovereign democratic state represents the will of the people and works under the electoral mandate to lead society on the path of progress. Thus, through these contemporary theories, the erstwhile colonizers have re-invented themselves as saviours and based on their time-tested model of ‘divide and rule’ re-directed the assault on to the differences within the erstwhile colonized countries. The current theories of Wokism





and Critical Race Theory which discount merit for an equal outcome rather than equal opportunity are directed towards that end only, says Malhotra in an interview. (“Breaking America”).

According to the postcolonial theorists, the methodology followed by court historians and the discourse created by the powers-that-be in the past ought to be investigated. Attempts towards this end have been tardy due to opposition from vested interests embedded in the universities and research centres of erstwhile colonizing countries even as there are strong Sanskrit departments there. A recent example of how a dubious piece of research in Panini’s grammar was granted Ph.D. by Cambridge University shows the attempt by foreign universities to project their image as the authentic research centres for even Sanskrit classics, which should ideally be the preserve of Indian *gurukulas* and research organizations.³ While it would be reasonable to accept the West as leader in the field of science and technology because of the accumulation of scientific knowledge and paraphernalia there, it would be hardly fair to believe it to be equipped with the essential means to decipher or elaborate classical Hindu concepts or texts because the culture there is hugely different from the culture of India, and the concepts and texts are rooted in Indian culture.

The modus operandi of study in any other linguistic community would be the translations which are but a distorted way to study the hallowed texts. The language, as we know, comes with its cultural baggage, and it is well-nigh impossible to understand completely through translation the exact meaning and significance of a term from another language, much less if the source language happens to be Sanskrit. It is difficult to translate Sanskrit terms into English because in Sanskrit, the word, sound and meaning – all go together. Malhotra and Babaji, in their joint work, *Sanskrit Non-Translatable* have pointed out inadequate or mistranslations of 54 Sanskrit terms like Kavya, Dharma, Rashtra, Akasha, Devta, Ahimsa, and Itihasa which are generally translated into English as poetics, religion, nation, space, gods, non-violence, and history respectively. Their view with regard to translation of ‘dharma’ is that “The non-translatable nature of Sanskrit and all that this implies are compromised by the cultural digestion of dharma into the West.” (Malhotra & Babaji 10). While the flaws pointed out in case of some terms like Ahimsa seem overworked, a word like ‘Yoga’ has gone into English lexicon as such even though uninitiated into Sanskrit may only mean physical exercises by it and not all that it stands for in Patanjali’s *Yogasutra*.

West-oriented theories

For long, the West has assigned to itself the right to be the arbiter of all tastes and a standard bearer in various fields of knowledge and has sought to apply its yardsticks to other thought systems in the world. While the colonizers went about doing this merrily during the colonial period due to their political supremacy, after the end of empire too, this trend has remained in place due to the lack of farsightedness or self-interest of the powers-that-be in the postcolonial world.

The Eurocentric domination of the academia continues not only in India but in UK itself as Bamba et al discover in their anthology *Decolonising the University*. They have raised the issue of positionality to advance their viewpoint as teachers and students of colour with the avowed objective to “re-situate these phenomena [colonialism, empire and racism] as key shaping forces of the contemporary world, in a context where their role has been systematically effaced from view” and besides “to offer alternative ways of thinking about the world and alternative forms of political praxis.” (2). Essentially, this is linked to politics in a big way and Malhotra takes up these very aspects, i.e., underlining the colonial stranglehold that operates now through other means, viz., control of intellectuals through

³ Mr. Rishiraj Popat of India submitted a thesis to Cambridge University which was accepted and he was bestowed the Ph.D. degree on that basis. The thesis claimed to have solved a grammatical problem in Panini’s classic grammar book *Ashtadhyayi* that had reportedly eluded solution for around 1800 years. The claim was disputed vociferously by Sanskrit scholars in India who showed that there was no such puzzle in the first place. (“Rishiraj”)





monetary allurements and ever-new though skewed theories. Certainly, the hegemony of the white academia has been glaring since the days of colonialism which have been the “privileged site of knowledge production” (2).

During the colonization, apart from the large scale oppression and exploitation, the sense of self was taken away and that was the meanest thing that happened to the colonized people. In this, the western academy was complicit: “Taking colonialism as a global project as the starting point, it becomes difficult to turn away from the Western university as a key site through which colonialism – and colonial knowledge in particular – is produced, consecrated, institutionalised and naturalized,” aver Bamba et al (5). Quoting John Hargraves, they point out that “It was in the university that colonial intellectuals developed theories of racism, popularized discourses that bolstered support for colonial endeavours and provided ethical and intellectual grounds for the dispossession, oppression and domination of colonized subjects” (Bamba et al 5). Again, quoting Adam Vaughan, they point out that “Products of university research are still strategically deployed in the pursuit of imperial projects conducted by Western states and firms in former colonies” (6).

Categories and standards are decided by the West taking its own situation into consideration. Thus, if a society outside the privileged West does not wish to conform to any category of say, feminism – liberal, radical, Marxist or any other – it has little option available! While feminism of yore is acknowledged as having many variants like Americans, British, French, etc., there is no recognition of Indian situation which is subsumed under the Western rubrics of patriarchy, oppression, etc., as if there were nothing positive about the situation of women. It forsakes history of female agency in India, as for example, the scholars like Gargi, Maitreyi, et al belonging to the Upanishada period, or women’s active participation along with men in the freedom struggle in 19th and 20th centuries which is a unique feature of Indian history and stands tall in comparison to the situation in the West during the corresponding periods.

The current craze for Postmodernism needs examination here. As a term, it seems to denote advancement over modernism so that its use might add to the stature of the contemporary West vis-à-vis non-West. However, the scholars define it as a descriptive statement about the existing state of knowledge, or rather put bluntly, the existing frustration in the West over the contradictions in their own ideologies and philosophies. The French thinker Jean Francois Lyotard, the exponent of postmodernism, tried to subsume many ideas, tendencies and disciplines current in his time and pronounced the death of all grand narratives including Marxism. But how lop-sided was this assessment of the socio-cultural and economic formation obtaining at a particular point of time, is pointed out by the American literary critic Frederic Jameson who comments on the contemporary situation as “the world-wide victory of an aggressive, entrepreneurial capitalism and [...] the collapse of the Marxist distinction between base (the mode of production) and superstructure (culture in its widest sense)” (Bertens and Natoli 2002, xiii). A reductive way to sum up the developments is that while the Right has won the economic order of the world, what with the MNCs holding sway over governments; the Left has won in the field of culture by reifying all ideals of past and subsuming under mainstream what was hitherto considered low culture. So, Lyotard’s judgment of the death of all grand narratives seems hollow.

One finds the colonizing traits in Postmodernism, which can be taken as the theoretical validation of homogenization and globalization which in effect is westernization. Western taste in food, dress, lifestyle, etc. is advanced by MNCs running food chains, producing newer automobiles, or organizing beauty contests. Making postmodern a universal signifier would mean a totalizing approach even as postmodernism debunks all grand narratives. But it is not true for India as Malhotra avers: “We are simultaneously traditional, modern and postmodern.” (“Modernity”) and he is supported by the acclaimed author Arundhati Roy who comments, “India lives in several centuries at the same time” (Roy 187). We have the rich and the poor, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the advanced and the backward existing simultaneously and peacefully in a carnivalesque, democratic manner. All that these arguments emphasize is that the West is at the crossroad not knowing what to believe in.



Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that the exploitation of the colonies by the colonizers happened at a mind-boggling scale. Renowned scholar Shashi Tharoor's famous lecture at Oxford Union Society details it all in case of India ("Dr Shashi"). Well-known economist Utsa Patnaik has quantified the British loot at 45 trillion through the trade route during 1765-1938. (Hickel). But the most dangerous and lasting till day is the impact of assault on Indian culture and knowledge systems which instilled inferiority complex in Indians. In many of his books, Malhotra takes up in detail the history of colonization and the continuing postcolonial attempts at disseminating coloured pictures of our ancient knowledge, thus creating distrust in Indians about their rich heritage even though India has a huge treasure of native knowledge systems, literatures and thousands of years of civilizational experience. Any number of examples can be cited to show the inferiority complex, as for example the way Indians value the certification from the West even for things that should ideally be judged by Indians. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, underlined this complex while delivering his customary Independence Day Address on Aug. 15, 2022. He outlined five vows to be undertaken by all Indians in order to regain the glorious status that India once had in the world; one of these was abjuring the colonial mindset.

While India is struggling to recover the effaced history and re-write the corrupted one, the western powers are arraigned against this judicious attempt with the intent to perpetuate their hegemony in contemporary times, as for example, sponsoring of atrocity literature (Malhotra & Neelakandan 182-88). There are issues at home too, mainly on account of some historians influenced by the West, and they include even the left intellectuals who would ordinarily be expected to be arraigned against the imperialists. The sympathizers of the present dispensation believe that an Indic Renaissance – "the re-inscription of indigenous consciousness onto contemporary Bharat" (Deepak 12) – is set to give up the colonial baggage in various fields – law, education, history and discovering Bharat as the constitution mentions "India that is Bharat." A large number of writings and videos are flooding the public domain and creating a new discourse even as there are historians arraigned on both sides. What is required is an objective approach so that no change in government confuses the learners and no harm is done to truth as far as possible.

This is nobody's case that India disconnects totally from the knowledge systems of the rest of the world. That is well-nigh impossible in the present world where mutual give-and-take is the norm. While the West has much to give in the field of modern science and technology, India has a large repository of spiritual and philosophical texts as also the skilled human resource to power the West. But one must mind Mahatma Gandhi's words, who, while writing in his journal *Young India* (June 1, 1921), famously compared Indian culture to a house: "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." What he suggested is presently Rajiv Malhotra's battle cry, as the latter believes that positive cross-cultural interface can happen only when the powerful culture does not harbour motives to subjugate the other.

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