



DECOLONIZATION IN HISTORY

Jyoti Tiwari

Abstract: *The essay written here tries to provide answers to three different questions on the decolonization in history namely the concept of decolonization, its effects on the colonized population, its effects on colonizers, and its aftermaths. This paper will analyze the relationship between independence and post-colonialism with the help of a complex study of decolonization, colonization, imperialism, and postcolonialism. The first part of this essay will define these terms with some examples. The paper will try to establish the relationship between independence and post-colonialism with the help of the views of various scholars like Prasenjit Duara, Albert Memmi, and Ania Loomba. In the second part of this article, the paper will take the case study of Zimbabwe including the album cover of Bob Marley's "survival" and the song "ZIMBABWE". By it, the paper will try to trace the process of decolonization and its phases in Zimbabwe. In the process of writing this essay, we will determine the various positive and negative impacts of the process of decolonization on society and the country as a whole. And in the end, the paper will also try to work out on the question of whether decolonization is necessary for development? The article here is grouped into three headings: Relationship between Independence and Post Colonialism; a case study of one country to establish the process of decolonization and the concluding one in which analysis and critique of the process is done.*

Key Words: Decolonization, Post-Colonialism, Independence, Zimbabwe, Colonizers, Historical Development, Political movement, People, Process.

Introduction: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE AND POST-COLONIALISM

Decolonization is an emancipatory process, it has three phases first is independence which is the earliest phase; second is post-colonialism which is the cultural aftermath of independence, and the last phase is the ongoing present scenario which is linked with the movement of the present context. Decolonization was one of the most important developments of the 20th century because it put the world on the stage of history as many colonies got their independence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America¹. It is a process that is still evolving. Decolonization not only means legal sovereignty but includes movement for social, moral justice as well as political freedom from imperialism. Thus it can be said as a movement for anti-imperialistic political autonomy which can liberate the colonized from the impacts of colonizers². Imperialism is the type of advocacy of empire. Its name originated from the Latin word "imperium", which means to rule over large

¹Duara, Prasenjit; ed. Taylor & Francis e-library, 2004; p:1

² Ibid p:2



territories. Imperialism is “policy of extending a country’s power and influence through colonization, with the use of military force or BY OTHER MEANS”. Other means can be the use of technologies, medicines, and different kinds of ideas of freedom, liberty, independence, etc.

According to Marx full-fledged capitalism was necessary and he admired its achievements which are required for the transition to socialism. The beginning period of postcolonialism is a rhetorical question because different countries had a different way of overthrowing the colonization; dynamics of independence are not the same for all the countries. Historical development of any nation can’t be followed by other nations. European capitalism with the railroad, communication system, which in India leads to capitalism and produces its system of socialism. These technologies and ideas spread around the world. Imperialism is one of the stages in the development process of humankind.

In the stages of development, the concept of center i.e. the European power and periphery i.e. the colonies and relationship between them were always uneven. There is a scholar named Hobson, according to him imperialism was the counter result of under-consumption, which means when there was an excess of production and there was no one to consume it, it will lead to surplus and subsequently lead to selling outside the domestic market that means these industrial or developed nations started colonizing other less developed and underdeveloped nations of the third world by restricting their domestic companies, like in the case of India, their cottage industries and their traditional handicraft companies. This will always create some kinds of inferiority complex among the colonized people. It also emerged in the context of denial due to color and origin.

Albert Memmi (1974) in his introduction narrates how de-humanization is essential for decolonization. The experience of many nations has been denying these three processes, they have not experienced all of these even after independence. Women’s movement and gender studies have contributed to postcolonial studies. She repeatedly talked about the recognition; we need to know that of whom and by whom and also in what sense.

To be able to tell something in a broader sense we have to have some experience. The question of experience is what is the meaning of being Muslim, being Hindu, and the specific case of being Algerian. De-humanization leads to the independence struggle and consequently independent nation. Unveiling can be used as the metaphor's lack of recognition sometimes leads to the independence movement. The colonized to prove that they too are workers they have to work hard (Albert Memmi; 1959). For them to be industrious is better than being lazy. In the



1950s due to French colonization in Algeria the Muslim women there, were trying to unveil themselves to take part in independence struggle but in the post-colonial era, they were again going back to veil themselves sometimes by wearing burkha and sometimes by wearing a burkini. With the veil or without veil the position of women in Algeria was changing.

In the history of decolonization, the clothing played a major role. It connects east and west. For example; some of the inventions in clothing like Nehru jackets, shirt jacks, etc. Clothing attempted to become a bridge between the east and west.

Burkini, which was introduced in France in the post-colonial phase, was an example of that meeting. Within colonization, clothing was very much required for indigenous or say native people to appear in society. There were many examples where natives were not allowed to enter some places. Posters were made like “dogs and Chinese not allowed”; and “coats required” and as much as “tie required”. Such posters were pasted during colonization. But still, after independence, we think about our clothes before going out anywhere. This was the impact that colonizers and colonization left on us.

Decolonization is a process of which independence is one phase and postcolonialism is another. P.Duara (2003) identifies sovereignty, new policy, a flag of their own, etc. as symbols of independence. Independence was processed by the nationalist movement Africa and other nations had various independence movements. British have its colonies in Asia, Africa, West Indies, North, and South America but after the 2nd world war, all these colonies started achieving their independence. Ania Roomba's (2015) book helps us to understand how the independence movement shaped the future of these nations. Within India, we can notice different kinds of movements with various types of notions. Like the Kashmir Movement, North-East Movement, Dalits Movement, and the Maoist Movement. These movements repeatedly question the kind of independence that the nation has.

In Canada, Australia, America, New Zealand, the aboriginals the native people, Red Indians are saying that colonization hasn't ended and we haven't achieved our independence yet. Therefore still after independence, there is a European style of President, Prime Minister, the court (judiciary), and even European history is being taught in the books. So according to this, we are still not fully independent. So the question of independence which hasn't achieved yet did not only confine to India but also to other nations as I mentioned above. One of the things that characterize independence was that the theories that have been given by those people who were



all part of such movement.in the first half of the book by Duara. P, 2003 they talk about experts like Gandhi, Nehru, etc. and in the other half, there are experts of universities.

Ania Loomba (2015) starts with a line that if you are not solving problems in our civilization then you are a decadent civilization (p 181) i.e. the problems created by European civilization have not been solved by the independent nation. Each phase of decolonization creates new sets of problems. She talks about feminism and the women's movement in independent America. They were free means independent but they were denied many basic rights. Here we can also talk about how America a slave country has now come up as the superpower of the world.

Post-colonialism is a phase of decolonization process which is about the production of knowledge which is being done now in the universities. According to Frantz Fanon (1959), clothing was one of the most important features of Algerians independent movement. The ways we dress constitute our identity, our culture. Independence movement highlights the differences between colonizers and colonized but post-colonialism reveals the differences within the independent nations.

The critique by P.Duara on independence is that independence was achieved by certain classes. Gandhi wanted industriousness to come from the bottom. He wrote, "Hind Swaraj" which was a manifesto for decolonization.

The worst sufferer of this decolonization process in India after independence was Kashmir. I'm saying this because the post-colonialism phase in India was very much understood by their people. The people there were very much conscious of their identity and origin. The people there were willing to recognize as "Kashmiri people". This word itself contains very deep meaning within it. My motive for raising this issue here was to grant the attention of us to the point that independence not only bring prosperity but also long term conflict. Like the case of Kashmir, which is repeatedly getting into the tug-of-war between India and Pakistan? The sufferer in the sense that post-colonial theories continuously bring the question of identification and recognition. The people there want to know that from where they belong to from India or to Pakistan. Therefore we can say that decolonization not only includes political freedom but also involves social, cultural, economic, linguistic freedom. Decolonization has both positive and negative aspects.

PART TWO: CASE STUDY OF THE STATE OF ZIMBABWE

In this project, I am going to correlate the album “survival” and its cover by Bob Marley and the process of decolonization in Africa in general and in Zimbabwe in particular. In this essay, I am also going to narrate the political, social, economic, and geographical aspects of the decolonization process in Zimbabwe. And this with the help of the country’s independence struggle, country’s flag, economy, geographical boundary, land reforms, business practice, and currency. In brief, I will also describe the colonial rule of whites over there. In this, I have chosen Zimbabwe as my core topic because it has a very rich and distinct type of history. In my knowledge, this was the only country where political power after independence has remained in one hand till recently. And with no doubt I’m talking about Robert Mugabe, he is the only person who was ruling Zimbabwe since independence till 2017 sometimes as President and other times as Prime Minister assuring the highest controlling authority in his hand.

ABOUT THE ALBUM COVER



³<https://genius.com/Bob-marley-and-the-wailers-survival-lyrics>



According to me by just focusing on the album cover we can talk about the whole history of Africa in one fold. We can talk about its colonialism, post-colonialism, and decolonization. The album's front cover depicts 48 African flags, 14 of which are now obsolete, and the flag of Papua New Guinea⁴. The album's title appears in white City typeface with the Brookes slave ship engraving in the background⁵. The flag of a nation is the symbol of the first phase of decolonization in itself. Most of these flags remained the same since its independence but some of them changed entirely like in the case of Zimbabwe. And even some of them were obsolete means were not in use in the present. Behind the name “survival” we can see some Mesopotamian cave drawing like thing at one look. But in reality, it was a picture of a ship in which African slaves were placed like fishes in the container. The genesis of the image which depicts in cross-section and overhead view the number of enslaved individuals that the Liverpool slave ships the Brookes could legally hold⁶. As part of the visualization of the Atlantic slave trade, the image offers a very specific perception of the past. In effect, it forms a displacement for the consideration of Britain's complicity in the enslavement of millions of Africans⁷. By talking about the Brookes ship we are engaging with the colonial history of Africa by situating the condition of their men in terms of the slave trade. As we see on the cover the flags of 48 countries from which 14 of them were obsolete now. What this implies? This implies according to me that initially these countries existed but due to the decolonization process they get attached to some other country means they get dissolved or they got their name changed due to the process of decolonization. The flag of Zimbabwe has also been changed several times, in initial days it consists of British within its flag but it has been removed as a sign of decolonization. The name Zimbabwe was not from always there, because it was a product of time. I'm telling this because it was before independence was south Rhodesia, which was dominated by the white population though they were in minority. And it became Zimbabwe after independence under the leadership of Mugabe.

ABOUT THE SONG: “ZIMBABWE”

In the year 1979, Bob Marley presented the lyric “So soon we'll find out who is the real revolutionary, and I don't want my people to be tricked by mercenaries.” These lines appeared in the song “Zimbabwe” from the album Survival, released in 1979, and was performed at the first Independence Day of Zimbabwe in April 1980. This is, really, a day of celebration, but there was

⁴[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survival_\(Bob_Marley_%26_The_Wailers_album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survival_(Bob_Marley_%26_The_Wailers_album))

⁵ IBID 1

⁶“The Brookes - visualizing the transatlantic slave trade” Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past and the Institute of Historical Research, 2007

⁷ IBID



some chaos due to riots in Salisbury later renamed Harare, capital of Zimbabwe at present. But despite remaining social disturbance, it was time for great joy. Zimbabwe had been ruined by civil war for almost a decade; liberation had finally arrived. Or had it?⁸

Robert Mugabe was elected as the first president of the coalition government who would rule Zimbabwe after it became officially independent. But the infamous Mugabe turned out to be both a mercenary and a trickster. Until the day of his death, the persistence of his deceit, his endless and limpet-like claim to power, as well as his apparent possession of the much-coveted elixir of life has mystified the world. Having transformed the bread-wicker bin of Africa into the clean bowl it now is through his property recovery arrangements and demonstrations of political brutality on his assaulted masses, Mugabe is a hostile symbol, whose name on the visitor program to the Pit of Fire comes directly after Idi Amin and Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia. "I didn't mention Hitler, I'll leave that to Mugabe: "Hitler had only one objective: justice for his people, sovereignty for his people, recognition of the independence of his people and their rights over their resources... If that is Hitler, then let me be a Hitler tenfold" (quoted by The Mail & Guardian Online at the funeral of Dr. Swithun Mombeshora in 2003)⁹.

This portrayal of Mugabe is all the more tragic in light of Marley's verses in the melody "Zimbabwe". "Every man's got a right to decide his destiny" Marley sang, trusting that privilege had at last been perceived in this a portion of Mother Africa. This was such a confident time for the nation, having authoritatively gotten autonomy from the British in 1965 with the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Marley was all in all correct to state "To divide and rule will only tear us apart" portraying the Eurocentric approaches in Africa also called "divide and conquer", however the political circumstance that took after the British presentation went from awful to more terrible, practically identical just to its brother's political association, the politically-sanctioned racial segregation administration in South Africa. However, both of these could not hope to compare to Mugabe's Zimbabwe. "No more internal power struggle; we come together to overcome the little trouble." This phrase can be seen in the sense of the problem of apartheid in Zimbabwe and the agenda of exploitation. In Rhodesia, one percent of white people are holding seventy percent of arable land and also dominating over the black population. Mugabe tried hard to develop solidarity in Zimbabwean, by redistributing agricultural land which was at that time in the control of white people, with no compensation and on first-come, first-serve bases. This was for some sounds like amazing but in reality, it was very unjust for whites because according to order any black can use any means to gain the right to property. But this resulted in hyperinflation and in the present scenario they were living on the programs sponsored by the United Nations. By all this,

⁸<http://www.songplaces.com/Zimbabwe/Zimbabwe/>

⁹<http://www.songplaces.com/Zimbabwe/Zimbabwe/>



we can assume that what Bob Marley thinks of Zimbabwe when he has sung this song on the day of independence and what it became after that under the leadership of Mugabe.

NOW THE QUESTION IS WHAT DECOLONIZATION MEANS TO MUGABE?

Mugabe in 1986 said “white people needed to be liberated from their false sense of self-importance – black needed to be liberated from their false sense of rejection”. Does this sound like liberation? Of course, Marley’s often-idealistic lyrics contained in them the seeds of doubt. His proposition, “so soon we find out who is the real revolutionary,” was not idly stated, he knew the risks¹⁰. It wasn’t so long ago that every inch of Zimbabwe, once known as “Rhodesia” after the British miningmagnate Cecil Rhodes, was owned by a clique of white colonialists who made up 4.3 percent of the population. The masses of black Africans were brutally enslaved and forced to live under punishing exploitation, while Zimbabwe’s land and natural resources were taken violently and divided amongst European settlers¹¹. Now according to the above statement, it can be seen that Mugabe was trying to create the situation for whites the same as the condition for blacks before independence. For Mugabe, the feeling of nationalism is the most important thing. His ideology was that political independence is nominal without economic freedom, and thus he argued during liberation negotiations in 1979 that Zimbabwe would only agree to a “willing buyer, willing seller” agreement provided that the United Kingdom offer black Zimbabweans the funds needed to purchase land forcibly taken from them by white landowners¹². Around the 2000s Mugabe gives the order to forcibly seizure of white’s land and it also went violent in some cases. But it led to a very great economic crisis in which government printed around one-hundred-trillion-dollar banknotes but it doesn’t work and in the end, Zimbabwe accepted the US dollar and South African Rand. He wants to first decolonize territorially, then socially, and in the end economically. His intention was not bad I guess but his approach was not good.

I have been critical to Mugabe throughout the article; one can say it was a Eurocentric approach towards his policies. But Zimbabwe is a low-income, food-deficit country, ranked at 150 out of 189 on the 2019 UNDP Human Development Index. Currently, 72 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line (living on less than USD 1.25 per day). Thirty percent of the rural poor are considered to be 'food poor', or 'extremely poor'¹³. Land reforms were generated and that too violently, under the name of post-colonial reform. It was said that it will benefit black

¹⁰<http://www.songplaces.com/Zimbabwe/Zimbabwe/>

¹¹Mugabe victory in Zimbabwe: Dictatorship or decolonization? Published time: 12 Aug, 2013 11:54 Edited time: 12 Aug, 2013 12:04

¹²Mugabe victory in Zimbabwe: Dictatorship or decolonization? Published time: 12 Aug, 2013 11:54

¹³<https://www.wfp.org/countries/zimbabwe> ; 2016 © World Food Programme



population it was shown some 6,000 white farmers were replaced by 245,000 black farmers, and while the move initially created chaos and earned Mugabe titles like “Africa’s Hitler,” agricultural production has normalized to 1990s levels and resettled farmers grow 40% of the country’s tobacco and 49% of its maize¹⁴. But no one benefited as Mugabe was transformed into Hitler. In Mugabe’s regime which is continuing since independence black people see him as a Decolorizer and white people see him as a colonizer. But despite all these demerits he was now and then and that is due to his decolonization policies and also he has made a place in and minds if African or black Zimbabwean.

The heart of the Twentieth century did witness the independence of a large number of African and Asian countries but not all the countries had a smooth transition on their decolonization track. Zimbabwe was one of the examples. In this latter sense, post-colonialism as a process of contesting the impact of colonialism after formal independence and decolonization as a process of removing control of indigenous peoples by other groups overlap. The object of decolonization is not just government, but also other areas such as economics and its effect on the culture, ideas, and institutions of imperial domination.

PART THREE: CONCLUSION WITH CRITICAL ANALYSIS

We cannot generalize the concept of decolonization. It has different implications in different parts of the world. For example, the decolonization process of America was different from the decolonization process in the African and Asian countries. Even with in the same country the process and results were different for example in china the decolonization process varied from region to region. The meaning of decolonization as a process has itself been differently evaluated over time¹⁵. The imperialistic policies were the root cause of colonization. Therefore the anti-imperialist nationalism can be said to be the precursor to the decolonization process. These people who experience constant denial and humiliation because of their color and origins, but they were also people who, like Mahatma Gandhi, clearly recognized the contradictions these actions presented to the western doctrines of humanism and rationality¹⁶. These principles of humanity and rationalism which the European powers preached were itself in the conflict of the treatment they gave to the colonized people. The colonized people were discriminated in every sphere of life which itself was in contradiction of humanism and rationalism. They were even discriminated at places that provided basic utility goods. The relationship between the European colonizers and the colonized was always in favor of the colonizers.

¹⁴Mugabe victory in Zimbabwe: Dictatorship or decolonization? Published time: 12 Aug, 2013 11:54

¹⁵Duara Prasenjit; chapter 1; Taylor and Francis group 2004 p:2

¹⁶IBID P:3



“The connection between an ideological standpoint and the writing of history is a perennial one. A check on the work of the great historians, including Herodotus and Thucydides, quickly exposes their passionate concern with ideology. Their irresistible moral, political, and sociological comments are particular manifestations of more general ideological standpoints. Classically the great historians have been self-appointed public prosecutors, accusing on behalf of the past, admonishing on behalf of the future. Their accusations and admonishments have been set in a rigid framework of presuppositions, both about the nature of the good man and about the nature of the good society, in such a way that these presuppositions serve as intimations of an implicit ideology.”¹⁷ The ideological preoccupation has always been a part of historical writings be it any great historian. The European historians who have described the history of Asia and Africa are not even the part of either the country or the continent about which they have written. The history written by them cannot be validated for example the history of Dalit written by a Dalit is more validated than the history of Dalit written by a non-Dalit. Even though the writings by Dalit can be more biased than a non-Dalit. The history written by Mahatma Gandhi was of his experiences in the colonial period and was succeeded by the decolonization but the history which is written by Bipin Chandra is a post-colonial theory based on his research.

After getting independence one has to recognize the sense of liberty or freedom i.e. they should realize that they are free from the colonial impression like oppression, slavery, the era of the dominance of colonial culture, language, etc. Sometimes the decolonization leaves its positive impressions and sometimes negative. The positive impact which I can see from postcolonialism is the fusion of culture of colonizers and colonized. It may be possible that some of the impacts of colonialism may be good for a section of society and bad for another section like the impact of the dominance of colonial language in India. Even post-independence i.e. after the end of the colonial period the equality of national and local languages is not present. The dominance of English (the language of colonizers) continues as can be seen from the fact that the knowledge of English has become a precursor to various jobs, and higher judiciary, etc. Further, the large no of English medium schools justifies the fact that the language of the colonizer is still embedded in society. Anti-imperialist Nationalism which opposed the colonizer during the colonialism era and contributed to independence also changed its form and priorities by silencing the various movements like women's movements, lower-class movements, labor movements, etc. During the colonial period this nationalism was itself an amalgamation of all these movements but post-colonialism all these changed. I realized the relationship between independence and postcolonialism and the necessity of the development of decolonization. And hereby decolonization I mean various movements ongoing in the various parts of the world on the issue of education,

¹⁷Ibid chapter 7; Society and ideology; Kwame Nkrumah; p:69



race, economy, land reforms, society and many more like the black lives matter in the United States which brings the voice of oppressed blacks to the front, Rhodes must fall which deals with the question of identity and education, idle no more this movement is for decolonization and anti-globalization rights in Canada. When we look back at three phases we find particular interdisciplinarily like how independence changed the future of some nations. Inter disciplinarily still emerged in an independent nation so we must be interdisciplinary to achieve decolonization but this theory is negatively working in the case of Zimbabwe which is my case study in this project. The two phases of decolonization can be said to go smoothly in Zimbabwe i.e it achieved complete independence in two phases. In the first phase it got unilateral independence from colonial rule in 1965 and in the second phase it got independence from white minority rule in 1979. Decolonization has gone wrong after that because after the independence the economy has suffered a lot resulting in the highest inflation in the world. Mugabe wanted to get rid of every trace of colonialism but his economic policies had some negative consequences as written above. Decolonization is not a metaphor because people who got the benefits were not the one who was targeted; instead, recolonization is happening. There has to be a blurred line between independence and postcolonialism which should always remain in place. The absence of it would result in clashes. Black lives matter is coherent for indigenous people because their lives have not mattered yet. Because the conditions for some remained the same before independence and after independence. Like the situation of plantations and the lives of black women. The question of reparation is arising in western countries which is also one of the processes of decolonization movement. It deals with what colonizers had done with the colonized people needed to be reverted by compensating their (colonized) successors by the successors of the colonizers. A case for reparation is to hold the state accountable for providing good living conditions. The reparation movement is a part of a large decolonization movement. There were different conceptions of reparations and redistribution of land and wealth is one of them. This redistribution of land and wealth was followed vigorously in Zimbabwe.

History has to be grounded somewhere, we need to know how much in the past we have to go to correct something in the present. The cold war was the attack on the decolonization. Decolonization in 1940-50 happened to break ties with colonization but today's decolonization is dealing with identity, indignity, political groups, linguistic groups, and many more things. Decolonization is not a metaphor as it brings together the culture and economy of colonizers and colonized.



BIBLIOGRAPHY:

DUARA, P. (2003). SOVEREIGNTY AND AUTHENTICITY. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. FANON, F. (1959). A DYING COLONIALISM. GROVE PRESS.

LOOMBA, A. (2015). COLONIALISM/ POSTCOLONIALISM. ROUTLEDGE PUBLICATION, NEW CRITICAL IDIOM.

MEMMI, A. (1965). COLONIZER AND COLONIZED. PLUNKETT LAKE PRESS.

