

## **NEO COLONIALISM: SOME THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Neo colonialism is an ongoing process. It comprises in it all the concerns and ideas of post colonialism. Eventhough, we cannot seperate Post colonialism and Neo colonialism, we can consider Neo colonialism as a term more suitable to our present day world system. Post colonial writings and literatures always depict the fact that the decolonised nations are not free from the influence of their early colonisers. Agreeing with this concept, Neo colonialism also brings out the hidden agendas of the first world countries. This paper discusses the different ways and policies through which the first world nations continuing their exploitation. Neo colonialism presents the financial dominance of the first world over the third world countries under the guise of 'economic aid'. This paper also intends to bring out the 'panopticon surveillance' and the 'hyper real' nature of Europe. The paper takes ChetanBagath's widely read novel, 'One Night at the call centre' as an example to show how neo colonialism is depicted in literature. The neo colonial powers maintain their authority not directly but through multinational corporates who lead our nation now adays. The concept of 'democracy' need to be analysed once more by living in this neo colonial world.*

**Key words: Neo colonialism, post colonialism, first world, third world, economic aid, panopticon, hyper real, corporates, democracy.**

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Goethe has said that none are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free. Here the question is: are we free or enslaved? Are we living in a Post colonial world or a Neo colonial world? We use the term 'post colonial' since we got independence. It brings to our mind the idea that decolonisation has ended the formal colonialism and now we live in a decentered universe. The decentring of Eurocentrism is made possible first by post modernism. Post colonialism was an offshoot of post modernism. It is largely influenced by many post modern theoreticians like Derrida, Foucault, Franz Fanon, Jean Baudrillard, Lacan, Kristeva, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi J. Bhabha etc.

### Neo Colonialism and Post Colonialism

On the literary level, post colonialism and neo colonialism are seemingly two opposite branches, since the former deals with what is after colonialism and the latter with the new type of colonialism. But both propagate same ideas with a difference. Post colonialism gives the comfortable message that colonialism has ended even though with dangerous consequences. Neo colonialism gives the uncomfortable message of beware of the early colonizers and the new threats they cause. Neo colonialism contains post colonialism in its full sense and more than that. When post colonialism deals with past, present and future, neo colonialism expresses its concerns about past, present and future

The term 'Neo colonialism' is coined by Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of post independent Ghana. The term appeared in 1963 preamble of the Organisation of African States Charter and was the title of his 1965 book, 'Neo Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism'. It became a popular usage in reference to the continued European economic control of decolonized African countries. Kwame Nkrumah called Neo colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism. In his book, he states that the result of neo colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. The struggle against neo colonialism is not aimed at excluding the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed countries. It is aimed at preventing the financial power of the developed countries being used in such a way to impoverish the less developed. Even though the former colonies are now formally independent, they depend on the west for assistance in developing economic and political structures. They borrow money from the west in order to fund for their development resulting a new system of debt. Neo colonialism is the continuous economic exploitation of Asian and African nation states by European and American powers. It is achieved in most cases, not by direct control or intervention but by links

between politicians, the bankers and Chief Executive Officers(CEO's) of private agencies. It uses capitalisam, globalisation and cultural forces to control a nation.

Although the possibility of direct military intervention may be remote, economic sanctions by former colonial masters are coupled with the threat of imminent military action against 'wrongly behaved Asian and African nation - states'. Therefore, neo colonialism may be a more dangerous and insidious form of colonisation. With the granting of independence to colonies a theory of modernisation took hold. For 'modernising' themselves independent countries had to accept western conditions for loans because they desperately needed money to support their own domestic policies. The developed countries took advantage of this 'dependency principle' for imposing their unseen power in Asian and African nations.

According to Walter Rodney and Samir Amin, the economic theorists of post-colonial Africa, European countries and the US dominated the economics of African countries through neo colonialisation in several ways. For example, the extraction and export of minerals cannot serve to develop an African economy because minerals taken away from African soil by western owned corporations are shipped to Europe or America, where they are turned into manufactured goods, which are then resold to African consumers at value added prices.

In Kwame Nkrumah's point of view, the most important factor for the perpetuation of neo colonialism in Africa is the 'balkanization' of the continent. Colonizers had broken Africa into dozens of administrative units to govern more effectively. This colonial boundaries are the lines within which the African countries had been given independence. Lack of unity between these countries hinder their economic development. For example each produced and exported their cocoa crop independenty resulted in lower prices. He believes that through African unity and co-operation the continent can best combat new colonialism. He promotes inter - African trade to minimize the western influence.

Franz Fanon offers a different perspective of neo colonialism in his works. He sees the exploitative tendencies of western countries as inherent to their capitalist nature. He finds that the African petty bourgeoisie who are western educated and have unhealthy relationship with the colonial powers are responsible for neo colonialism. He accuses them of collaborating with the colonial power to ensure that the interests of both would continue to be met even after the declartion of formal independence. We can apply this to Indian situation also. The doubtful and unethical relationship between wealthy Indians like owners of MNC's who are able to influence the government and our early colonisers can be considered as one of the important reason for the prevailing neo colonialism in India.

#### Foucauldian Reading of Neo Colonialism

Foucault's concept of 'power' and 'governmentality' can be best applied to neo colonialism. An authority can impose power in two ways; one is by rules and regulations like police, law, court etc and the other includes the forms of social control in disciplinary institutions like schools, hospitals, psychiatric institutions etc. Governmentality is the

technique through which government imposes its power. Here the government is neo colonial powers. They govern us not through rules and laws, but through institutions. In the case of India we can see how these colonial powers control our tradition, our ways of living , our culture, our education, our health and even our dreams.

Antonio Gramsci's idea of 'rule' and 'hegemony' can be read in relation to this. According to him, there are two societies- political society and civil society. Political society rules through forces like political parties, trade unions, police etc. It is the normal way of ruling people and termed as 'rule'. A civil society rules through 'consent' as in the case of universities, media and religious institutions. This is called 'hegemony'. In this post modern neo colonial world, western hegemonic culture is popularly considered as widely accepted, normal and legitimate. Anything against this 'celebrated' culture is called crude and orient. The colonial powers always held the idea of 'cultural supremacy'. Their pretention of 'civilizing mission' and 'educating' the south is still continuing as 'the white man's burden'. They still hold the 'burden' of civilizing non- white people.

Foucault's concept of panopticon prison is well suitable to the nature of neo colonialism. The term 'panopticon' or 'panopticism' is very commonly associated with globalisation. It is a mechanism of maintaining discipline in prisons. The idea is that every person is isolated in a small room and they are all observed at all times by a single person from the centre tower. The total deprivation of privacy is the ultimate form of panoptic surveillance. This way power is induced.

A large number of documents detailing surveillance by intelligence agencies such as USA's NSA (National Security Agency) and UK's GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) started to be revealed based on the information supplied by the former US security contractor Edward Snowden in 2010. These leaks revealed a massive surveillance programme that include interception of emails and other internet communications and phone call tapping. Some of it appears illegal while other revelations show the US spying on friendly nations during various international summits.

The US claim that their intention behind this surveillance is just to prevent terrorism. They argue that if other nations have nothing to hide, they need not have to worry about the invasion of privacy. The foreign ministry of India had voiced concerns a year ago about allegations that US agencies spied on the Indian embassy in Washington. Reuters reports on July 3, 2014 that India summon a senior diplomat to explain reports that US National security Agency (NSA) was authorised to spy on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party before he took office and to seek assurances that this would not happen in future . Further, we cannot forget the insult of double frisking faced by Dr. APJ Abdul kalam, former Indian president in the airport. When we think about the real reason behind all this illegal surveillance, we can see the underlying 'fear'. The US is afraid of not of terrorist attacks but of anything that happen without their knowledge. This contribute to the concept of 'hyper - real' Europe. The image that they created through their most celebrated culture is only fake. The orient as fearful and irrational and the occident as fearless and rational is proved to be wrong through their own actions.

## Simulation and Neo Colonialism

Jean Baudrillard coined the terms 'simulation' and 'simulacra' to show that we are living today in a world of the hyper real. Our lives are constituted by images and symbols which have no reference to any concrete object or individual identity. We can apply these terms to explain the real nature of neo colonialism. The hyper- real nature of Europe is revealed to us through their panopticon surveillance. The hyper real atmosphere and culture they impose on us need to be discussed at this juncture through the terms like 'McDonaldization' and 'cocacolonization'.

McDonalization is a term coined by Ronald Ritzer. It is part of a new global form of techno capitalism in which production and consumption is rationalized and reorganised to maximise profit. On the cultural side, McDonaldization hides the conditions of rationalization with a colourful environment by providing a fun house experience to entertain the customers as well as to fill their stomachs. It draws its customers into a world of simulation and hyper reality. In India, nowadays, in almost all cities we can see many McDonald's centres where students, young people, and couples enjoying. They claim their food as a 'balanced diet' but the fact is that it is 'junk food' that will lead to obesity, cancer and heart diseases.

Interpreting from a Baudrillardian post modern perspective, McDonald's cuisine can be seen as a simulation of food since its artificial products, tastes and pleasures simulate such familiar products as potato fries, Bun etc. The McDonald experience is a hyper real one. It is characterised by superficiality. Customers maintain a fleeting and superficial relation with McDonald's, its employees and its products.

'McDonald's products are wonderful examples of simulations. Each chicken McNugget is a copy of a copy; no original chicken McNugget ever existed. The original, the chicken, is hardly recognizable in the McNugget. The chicken McNugget is "fake chicken"'. (Ritzer 186)

It replaces traditional model of home prepared food with commodified food. Its customers are made to feel that they are virtuous and smart to take out their family, or to treat their friends or to treat themselves to a fast in expensive and ready made meals. Through its advertising and promotion, it provides a picture of family togetherness and social bonding. But the reality behind all this is consumerism and commodification. McDonald's is a symbol of problems such as environmental degradation, dietary dangers, the evils of capitalism, poor working conditions, neglected children and the threat of Americanization. This dehumanizing and irrational sides of McDonalization forces us to think of resistance and alternatives.

Kerala's struggle against the cococola company and its final eradication is an example of survival. This western soft drink company was spoiling the eco system by using underground water unlimitedly for making a harmful. Cocacolonization is a portmanteau word formed from a combination of cococola and colonization. It is an anti-globalisation term. It raises the question that why do we lose our water to factories set up by multinational companies while we see

endless empty pots queued up before public taps in the villages. It stands against the spreading of western goods and the infusion of western especially American values to our local culture.

#### LPG and Neo Colonialism

Liberalisation, privatisation and Globalisation are the three axis of Neo colonialism. This LPG model development is welcomed by the Indian Government and the Indian elite. The hope for a self reliant India becomes futile in this age of privatization and corporate multinationals. The project of corporate globalisation and massive privatization are pushing people off their land and out of their jobs. The tribal people are deprived off their traditional means of sustainable livelihood by establishing mineral based industries. The mining and other industries effect our ecosystem and climatic conditions.

Globalisation is an ongoing war. It is organised not by the Government. But by the corporates. The war is between common people and hidden agendas of the corporates. The corporates gain legality by giving promises of all round development of the country. The war continues in the form of bio-generated food and new atomic policies. Globalisation leads to war between Government and its people. For example, in India, lakhs of people are becoming homeless due to many hydro electric projects. The group of people including tribals, dalits and farmers are thrown out of their living conditions because of globalisation. In each year, around 44 million people are being killed due to lack of drinking water, food and medicine. This number is ten times bigger than people being killed in direct war. So it is the responsibility of all war resisting organisations to boycott and work against these corporates. Globalisation needs humble dismissive customers to fulfill its needs. Under the guise of globalisation, the neo colonial powers always try to attain cultural and financial supremacy.

We live in a world of corporatocracy instead of democracy. Arundhati Roy calls the corporate globalisation by its name 'imperialism'. In their drive to multiply profits, the first-world economies rely on production sites where labour is cheaper, less assertive, less taxed and less protected by states and unions. Arundhati Roy considers Iraq as a symbol of the logical culmination of the process of corporate globalisation in which neo colonialism and neo liberalism have fused. The US government have privatized and sold entire sectors of Iraq's economy. Economic policies and tax laws have been re-written. Iraq has been made to pay huge amounts of money to corporations like Halliburton, Shell, Mobil, Nestle and Pepsi and thus forcing to turn to IMF (International Monetary Fund). Roy says,

'We begin to think of justice for the rich and human rights for the poor. Justice for the corporate world, human rights for its victims. Justice for Americans, human rights for Africans and Iraqis. Justice for the Indian upper castes, human rights for Dalits and Adivasis. Justice for white Australians, human rights for Aborigines and immigrants' (Roy 54)

Globalisation came with the ideas of prosperity and comfortable living. But we can see that it causes more harm than comfort by paving way for the profit oriented neo colonialism. According to Vandana Shiva, globalisation and trade liberalization have led to increase in costs

of production and rising costs of food. Thus the farmers earn less and pay more which lead to farmers' suicides and increase in malnutrition. In her essay, 'The Social Costs of Economic Globalisation' she states that under the globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation' agenda of the World Bank, World Trade Organisation and International Monetary Fund, trade is more unfair than free. The growing gap between domestic prices and world prices refutes the claims of the free trade. Corporations gain by low commodity prices, people lose with rising costs of essential commodities. Due to the inseparable nature of culture and economy, this neo liberal ideology of development and globalisation cause a cultural backlash. She says, '...economic globalisation has hijacked culture, reducing it to a consumerist monoculture of McDonald's and coca-cola on the one hand, and negative identities of hate on the other'. (Shiva 26). As Friedman puts it,

'Globalisation has a distinctly American face. It wears Micky Mouse ears, it eats Big Macs, it drinks Coke or Pepsi and it does its computing on an IBM or Apple Laptop, using Windows 98, with an Intel Pentium II processor and a network link from Cisco systems' (Ritzer 177)

The advocates of LPG model development claim that 'There Is No Alternative' (shortened as TINA) to economic liberalism. TINA was a slogan used by former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher to emphasize that free trade, globalisation and liberalism are the only ways for modern societies to develop. However, there are a large number of people who proclaim anti-globalisation concerns. Their slogan, 'There Is A People's Alternative' (shortened as TIPPA) is getting wide acceptance. Globalisation is always criticized for being anti-poor, anti-democratic and anti-environmental. The critics call for a democratic nature of development. Medha Padkar argues that development should be 'pro-poor'. It should depend on resources, capacities and needs of the local population rather than dictated by forces of globalisation.

#### Neo colonialism and Indian English Literature

Many post colonial writers have depicted the effects of colonialism, decolonization and neo colonialism in their literature. Writers like Arundhati Roy, Chetan Bhagath, Manjula Padmanabhan, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Aravind Adiga etc. have expressed their views, thoughts and concerns through their writings. While accepting the theory 'art for art's sake', we can see that the neo colonial writers write for 'art for life's sake' also. We cannot neglect the fact that literature is the mirror of society.

#### A Neo Colonial Reading of Chetan Bhagath's 'One Night At The Call Centre'

Chetan Bhagath's most interesting and celebrated novel 'One Night At The Call Centre' is about the need of Indian empowerment in a highly globalized neo colonial world. Bhagath is a young writer who writes about youth. In this novel, we come across a group of youngsters leading a depressed life in a call centre named 'Connections', where they work for Americans to solve their problems with electronic equipments.

Bhakshi, the parasitic manager is a real representative of the officers who always try to build up their career on the sweat of others and who have great admiration for westerners and western countries. (He plans to go to Boston by cheating his colleagues) At the beginning of the novel, Syam, the protagonist is introduced to us through a nightmare in which he is struggling for his life from the hands of his boss Bhakshi. The whole atmosphere of the novel is dominated by the insecure feeling of cost cutting and losing jobs.

Names are symbols of identity for everyone. Here in 'Connections', the employees change their Indian names to western in order to make it understandable for the Americans. Thus VarunMalhotra is changed into Victor Mell, SyamMehra to Sam Macry and RadhikaJha to Regina Jones. The humiliation of an American citizen towards India is displayed in a conversation between Vroom and his American customer Mr. William Fox. He behaves very arrogantly with Vroom. Eventhough Vroom manages to tackle him with his 'hot reply', he bursts out into anger and desperation when he hears Fox's comments about India. He asks 'when will u change your dusty country'? (Bhagath 109). Vroom gives a reason for why this dim-witted Americans act superior to us. He says, '...not because they are smarter. Not because they are better people. But because their country is rich and ours is poor. That is the only dlamn reason. Because the losers who have run our country for the last fifty years couldn't do better than make India one of the poorest countries on earth'.(Bhagath 110)

These words draw the picture of Indian youth who want to raise their nation to compete with western arrogance. Vroom states his situation as 'Taking calls from losers and being asked to help with loser jobs'.(Bhagath 112).Everything that is western is considered as excellent and sacred. In this novel, Priyanka'sfiancee Ganesh is referred to as 'Mr. Microsoft' Since he holds a good position in American Microsoft company. Priyanka's mother compares him to the 'useless call centre boy syam'. This concept of hyper, real, 'sacred culture, is torn into pieces by Bhagath with the interesting equation '35=10'. The instructor of the call centre teaches this equation to the fresh trainees. This is a big blow on the hyper real nature of Europe (America). The instructor says to the class,

'...a thirty five year old American's brain and IQ is the same as a ten -year -old Indian's brain. This will help you understand your clients. You need to be as patient as you are when dealing with a child. Americans are dumb, just accept it.'. (Bhagath 46).

The employees' experience at the pub called 'Bed' makes us ask whether these things are happening in India. The hostess of the pub advices them, 'to dress up for Bed'. She doesn't consider the Indian dress style suitable for western pub culture. The 'bouncer' demands to check Priyanka who according to him look like 'she could cause trouble'. This shows how our promising Indian Youth is ready to suffer such nonsense that questions their individuality only because they need to enjoy like western people. This culture spoils our generation's identity.



At the pub, pointing to a US politician who speaks in favour of war in CNN, Vroom says, 'Americans are sick. Look at him. He would nuke the whole world if he could have his way'. (Bhagath 185). Radhika says humorously that they won't blow up Gurgaon since they need all call centres. Vroom's utterances about this new colonisation is relevant. He complains that our government does not realize that Americans are using us. There is an entire generation who sacrifice their lives while working in call centres. He expresses his great interest to do something for the development of India and his readiness to work day and night for that without complaining.

Bhagath satirises the commodified India through the 'incredibly happy' advertising picture of Sahara Mall. People sometimes fail to realize the hyper real nature of advertisements. The consumerist culture widens the gap between rich and poor. It effects our age old dream of social and economic equality very badly. Syam relates some of be emotional situations of his life to the sound of frying french fries in McDonald's restaurant. McDonald's, cocacola, pizzahut and pub culture have become part of our youth's life style. Bhagath brings out the message of the novel through the presence of 'God'. Eventhough the call from God and the 'virus confusion' at the end of the novel seem to be unconvincing, it gains applause through the relevant message. God says, 'Americans may have many things, but they are not the happiest people on earth by any stretch. Any country obsessed with war can't be happy'. (Bhagath 209) The employees want to hit Americans and at the same time take advantage of them. They play with 'American fear' which is behind all this war sentiments and surveillance.

They manage to scare Americans by telling them that terrorists have hit America with a new computer virus that will take their country down. The only solution is to call 'connections' and report their status. The text written in the popped out pages, 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog' is highly symbolic; India as the quick brown fox and America as the lazy dog. India's victory over American neo colonialism is celebrated in this message. They become successful in recovering their company from loss and securing their jobs. The most congratulating thing is that Syam and his friends hear the 'inner call' and change their lives as said by God

In India, intellectual neo colonialism spreads its hands through 'brain drain'. The emigration of professionals like doctors, engineers, chartered accountants to the developed nations like UK, USA, Canada hinders our nation's development. The students from India's premiere institutions like IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), Regional Colleges of Engineering, AIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) include in this group of emigrants. They contribute in immense level in the development of their destination countries. Many of them become citizens of the countries to which they migrate. The brain drain can be stopped by a change in youth's mentality and by providing good educational opportunities and working conditions in one's own country. Here we can use the motto of 'appropriation' for our benefit. The students who emigrate to European and American countries in seeking better educational opportunities, can use their ability for the progress of their own nation instead of utilising their valuable lives for the early colonisers.

In Neo colonialism, we can say that the past gets recycled and emerges in unexpected ways. Neo colonialism is a dynamic process. It doesn't spread in some fixed or permanent manner and to some fixed areas. It changes its aim according to the situation. The post colonial nations should be vigilant and should be able to recognize and resist this filthy disease called 'neo colonialism'. We should stop living in a fool's paradise of freedom as Goethe has said. Arundhati Roy says, 'The point is that the battle must be joined. As the wonderful American historian Howard Zinn put it : "You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train"' (Roy 61)

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