



## Gold, God and Glory: An Analysis of the Historical Intersections in Post - Colonial / Imperialistic Studies.

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**Abstract:** A comprehensive study of colonialism must embrace the socio-political and cultural life of the colony / country in relation with the imperialism in the colonised nations. These colonial powers once enjoyed a unique position in the array of nations because of their imperial greatness. The British were the most successful in establishing and maintaining the widest empire in history for a fairly long period. This study focuses upon the historicization of the diverse theoretical perspectives on the process of colonial process. Starting from the nomenclature, this study goes on analysing the diverse western and eastern theoretical positions with regard to colonialism and imperialism.

**Key Words:** Colonialism/post colonialism, imperialism, Marxism, Neo colonialism, Power, Orientalism

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

The terms 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' are often used interchangeably. But they are not exactly the same in meaning. "Colonia", the Latin root of colonialism, means 'settlement' or 'farm'. The word 'imperialism' comes from the Latin *imperium* meaning 'sovereignty'. It came into currency in the latter half of the 19th century. It was originally used as a derogatory term. And the derogatory sense it still retains. The word 'colonialism' also has such a bad meaning. According to Ania Loomba, 'colonialism' can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods. Quite naturally it denotes oppression, humiliation, and exploitation of the colonized people. But there is one major difference between 'imperialism' and 'colonialism'. The former "can function without formal colonies, but colonialism cannot". (13)

### 2. CONTEXTUAL REVIEW:

#### Theories on Colonialism/Imperialism : A Historical Perspective

Now let us see the different views of imperialism and colonialism expressed by various writers and thinkers. A sort of definition of imperialism can be had from the book, *Imperialism and Colonialism* edited by Nadel and Curtis:

By imperialism we mean the extension of sovereignty or control, whether direct or indirect, political or economic, by one government, nation or society over another, together with the ideas justifying or opposing this process ... Underlying all forms of imperialism is the belief of the imperial agent or nation in an inherent right, based on moral superiority as well as material might, to impose its pre-eminent values and techniques on the 'inferior' indigenous nation or society. (72)

In simpler terms imperialism is the direct or indirect rule of a country by another nation or country with economic and military superiority, In the contemporary circumstances direct imperialism or colonial rule is difficult or impracticable. Therefore countries with imperial ambitions try to control the weaker nations or countries indirectly and terms like "new imperialism" or "neo-colonialism" signify this new agenda. A good instance is the American model of imperialism. The U.S. tries to achieve their selfish aims by imposing their economic domination in other countries.

Robin W. Winks befittingly entitled the book he edited as *British Imperialism: Gold, God, Glory*. The causes and effects of imperialism and colonialism are identified in this book. The main causes are indicated by the very title of the book. 'Gold' itself is one of the major causes. 'Gold' stands not only for the precious metal but also for the profit of the businessman, industrialist, capitalist, etc. After the desire for all kinds of material gains comes the divine or religious cause of imperialism. The western imperialists were Christians and they gave great importance to the soul. It was their bounden duty to propagate their religion among the colonial heathens and to save their souls for the sake of God. Another



compelling cause is psychological. Man has an inborn desire for power and glory. So is the case of nations. Power and glory are inherent in imperialism. Robin W. Winks writes.

The business man's desire for quick and great profits; the psychological drive for power and mastery; the need for raw materials and markets; the naval tradition; a spirit of adventure; strategic and diplomatic considerations based upon an emerging sense of geo-politics; the rise of an inexpensive, sensation seeking press; mass education; the growth of beurocratic civil service; the desire to save souls; the conviction of a mission to 'civilize' the world; the search for God. (32)

"The conviction of a mission to civilize the world" requires some explanation. We have already seen that the word 'imperialism' has a derogatory sense while 'colonialism' has pejorative or disparaging sense. 'Imperialism' implies the tyranny of the imperial power, whereas 'colonialism' indicates the inferior or backward situation of the colony and its people. From the point of view of the western imperialists, the Asians, Africans and the like were uncivilized or primitive. Some well-meaning men of the West deemed it as their duty to civilize these people. Men of this school like Rudyard Kipling regarded themselves as the missionaries of the Western culture in the Orient. According to them this "civilizing mission" was the famous, "Whiteman's burden" or duty. The introduction of Western education, the spreading of Western civilization and culture, the propagation of Christian religion etc, were the means by which the missionaries of Europe tried to redeem the East.

### 3. ANALYSIS:

The western views of colonialism/imperialism are profuse. According to a British economist, Hobson, the greatest beneficiaries of imperialism /colonialism were maritime traders, the investors and capitalists with huge idle funds, industrialists and manufacturers of weapons who sought overseas markets for their products and raw materials for their industrial units at home. All these plutocrats could exert great political influence on their government. The national policy was fashioned in accordance with the private motives of these moneyed men. In order to safeguard their overseas interests the British government accepted colonial expansion as the national aim and adopted measures like tariffs, prohibition embargoes, and subsidies. With the help of the imperial government the British traders, capitalists and industrialists amassed immense wealth and through them the home country, England, also grew faster and became the greatest creditor country in the world.

Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) viewed the subject from the Marxist angle of vision. According to some people he "carried Hobson's theories to their logical Marxist conclusion". In his tract entitled, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) Lenin presents a clear exposition of the matter. Imperialism is the "highest stage" or "monopoly stage" of capitalism. He is of the view that "Imperialism emerged as a development and direct continuation of the fundamental properties of capitalism in general" (45). Capitalism grew from its competitive stage to the monopoly stage and this necessitated the establishment of a world empire. The cruel exploitation of labour resulted in over production. And this also necessitated the territorial conquests and the control of colonial markets.

A lightly different view of imperialism /colonialism was presented by Karl Kautsky, another Marxist theoretician. According to him imperialism is a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial, capitalist nation to bring under its control and to annex larger and larger agrarian regions, irrespective of what nations inhabit them.

Lenin criticised Kautsky's definition as "one- sided" and branded it as " unmarxian". He states that the characteristic feature of imperialism is not industrial capital, but financial capital. The characteristic feature of imperialism is precisely the fact that it strives to annex not only agrarian but even the most industrialized regions. Lenin here gives the example of the German conquest of Belgium and the French conquest of Lorraine. Both Belgium and Lorraine were not agrarian, but industrial just like their conquerors. As the world is already partitioned among the various imperial powers the attempts of any one power to annex more territories lead to rivalry and armed encounter with other powers. And this is an essential feature of imperialism.

Lenin says that Kautsky's definition of imperialism is not in keeping with Marxism. It is rather "bourgeois reformism". According to Lenin, Kautsky erroneously separates the politics of imperial from its economics. He disapproves Kautsky's arguments and opines that Kautsky's definition is that it ignores the inherent contradictions of imperialism. Lenin was of the opinion that imperialism would crumble down because of its own contradictions.

The heyday of European imperial or colonial expansion, according to Lenin was the last four decades of the 19th century. The pre-monopoly capitalism of Europe reached its height of development between 1860 and 1880. And it was after that period the boom in colonial expansion and conquest took place. Quite naturally it was an age (1880-1900) that witnessed the intensification of the struggle for the partition or re-partition of the world among the contending



colonial powers of Europe. It was during this period that the transition of capitalism from the pre-monopoly stage to that of the monopoly stage took place.

Lenin then points out that there was a time, in Great Britain at least, when even the imperial minded bourgeois politicians regarded colonies as a burden or a liability to the mother country. It was the period from 1840 to 1860. In 1852, Disraeli, a statesman generally inclined towards imperialism declared that the colonies are a burden of responsibility. But by the end of the 19th century the heroes of the hour were Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain, the open advocates of imperialism.

The major causes of imperialism/colonialism other than politico-economic, was religious. Halevy, the famous French historian of England, in his book *History of the English People in the 19th Century* speaks of the religious excessive and the Support jingoistic causes. The evangelical movement of the 19th century deeply influenced the English society. They took up the propagation of the Bible or Christianity as one of their primary duties. The British government machinery was followed by the Christian missionaries who were eager to win pagan lands and hearts for Christ. The rapid development of modern journalism also helped the growth of imperialism. The people of the colonizing countries were on the look out for sensational news regarding imperial conquests and annexations abroad. And the print media tried to satisfy the jingoistic appetite of the people. An applauding people at home was an encouragement to the imperialist forces and administrators overseas.

The British Public Schools also contributed towards the success of imperialism. They instilled into the pupils imperialistic feelings. We can say that not only the battle of Waterloo but also many colonial wars were won on the playgrounds of public schools like Eton and Harrow. The public schools nurtured not only brave soldiers but able administrators as well. According to A.P. Thornton "the public school spirit became one of the most potent of the imperial elixirs. The ideas young boys obtained in their formative period from the public schools formed their personality. The proud products of these schools transmitted the public school heritage to the younger generations. The influence of the ideals, the idols and books connected with the Empire was far reaching.

Another cause was the Whiteman's feeling of racial superiority and his desire to rule. Rene Maunier, famous French author, in his work, *The Sociology of Colonies*, presents us with a classic, statement of the matter. "Power-imperialism is in a word, the wish to dominate for the sake of dominating: 'the will to power' as Nietzsche called it. It is this passion which underlies the lust for power, a mania and a rage which the moralists condemn. Hobbes called it 'the desire for power'. When this manifests itself not merely in the individual, but in the collectivity, and more particularly in a nation, we have power-imperialism". Maunier's best individual model for "passion for power" is Napoleon. The very same classical passion manifests itself in some nations old and new. The two classical examples are Greece and Rome. The Greeks and Romans worshipped Victory in war as goddess, *Athena* in Athens and *Victoria* in Rome. They were primarily Goddesses of power, and only secondarily of wisdom.

National pride is an important factor in imperialism. Maunier says: "National pride is lust for greatness and lust for power ... Amongst writers .... who exalt energy men like Stendhal and Nietzsche ... have told us how the nations become possessed by this passion for command"(23). This is the motivating force behind all sorts of imperialism like power-imperialism, spiritual imperialism and cultural imperialism. All three derive their inspiration from one first principle, the idea of purity of peoples and races. This idea of purity proceeded from another idea, that of holiness. The white men, especially of Europe presumed that they were the chosen people of God and therefore they had purity, holiness, and primacy. According to Maunier, holiness has been the basis of spiritual imperialism, and primacy the basis of cultural imperialism.

According to Stendhal, the 19th century French author, power is the greatest of all pleasures. By virtue of his supposed racial purity, holiness and primacy the western white man thinks that he is entitled to enjoy the pleasure of power. With this sense of superiority his race has tried successfully to establish a world empire in order to rule, convert and enslave the so-called inferior or weaker peoples. The Whiteman's faith in the superiority of his blood or race gave birth to terms like Albinism, Latinism, and Saxonism. We have already seen the so-called "white man's burden". Essence of Albinism is that the white man, by virtue of his complexion is qualified to rule over all the non-whites of the world. This divine right to rule the world is not without duties. And therefore it is almost a burden to be carried out. The concept of Albinism was put forward by Thomas Carlyle, the 19th century British author. According to him a powerful, domineering ruler is the real hero. He is all praise for the genuine hero. Maunier points out that it was Carlyle "who was the first to speak of 'dominating' and of 'dominated' peoples. It was he who preached a universal despotism for the virtue and the advantage of the white peoples".

If Carlyle was the professor of this "doctrine of the White Man" in the 19th century, Rudyard Kipling was its champion in the 20th century. The 19th century anthropologists also supported the theory of the white man's primacy among the peoples of the world. Another view of imperialism was put forward by Schumpeter in his essay titled "A Sociological Theory of Imperialism: An Atavism". According to him imperialism is atavistic in character, it is an



element that stems from conditions not of the present, but of the past. Since the vital needs that created it have passed away for good, it too must gradually disappear, even though every war-like involvement, no matter how non-imperialist in character, tends to revive it. Hence the point to be stressed is that every war is likely to re-establish imperialism of any sort, because in a war there will be victor and loser. And as the victor can dictate terms to the vanquished the former can have a kind of imperialist control over the latter. As imperialism is atavistic in nature it is likely to raise its ugly head again in the long stream of history

### Eastern Perspectives on Colonialism/Imperialism

We have seen so far some of the western views on imperialism/colonialism. Now let us take a look at the views of some eastern writers. First of all we have to consider the views expressed by Sardar K.M. Panikkar. In his book, *Asia and Western Dominance*, Panikkar deals with western imperialism in the East during the de Gama epoch. According to Panikkar, the de Gama epoch is 450 years long and it started with arrival of Vasco De Gama in Calicut in 1498 and ended with the receding of British armed forces from India in 1947 and of the European forces from China in 1949. The eastward thrust of Europeans was originally meant to counter act the westward expansion the Islamic imperialism. But after the removal of the Islamic forces to Christendom, the European powers came to the east one after another in order to monopolise the spice trade. In addition to the spices eastern goods like tea and textiles flowed into Europe. But after the industrial revolution in the west the Europeans had to find markets in the east for their manufactured goods and investment opportunities for their capital.

In spite of the manifold changes and developments that took place during the 450 years, "the de Gama epoch presents", according to Panikkar, "a singular unity in its fundamental aspects. These may be briefly stated as the dominance of maritime power over the landmasses of Asia; the imposition of a commercial economy over communities whose economic life in the past had been based not on international trade, but mainly on agricultural production and internal trade; and thirdly the domination of the peoples of Europe, who held the mastery of the seas, over the affairs of Asia. It was an age of maritime power, of authority based on the control of the seas " (78). Here what Panikkar says is a historical fact. Only a country that dominates the seas can have colonies overseas. "Britannia ruled over the waves," (as the poet sang) and therefore she could easily rule over a vast empire.

In connection with western imperialism the meanings of "Orient" and "Orientalism" are reviewed by Edward W. Said. In his famous work, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, published in 1978, Said speaks of some new notions of the westerners regarding the Orient or the East. The world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident. The Orient has a "special place in European Western experience". The East is lying very near to Europe. The greatest, richest and oldest colonies of Europe were here in the Orient. It is also the source of the civilization and languages of Europe. At the same time the Orient is the Occident's cultural contestant. "The Orient has helped to define Europe or the West as its contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience ... The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture ... " Said then tries to identify the content of Orientalism. It expresses among other things, a certain will or intention of the Occident to understand, in more cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate what is a manifestly different world i.e., the Orient.

"The east is east, west is west/ Never shall the twain meet," so sang Rudyard Kipling. This view is partial or one sided. The Occidental people came closer to the Orientals. Naturally there has been much exchange of goods as well as ideas. The east and the west could know each other in a better way. All these resulted in deeper mutual influence. Because of these reasons it is wrong to regard the East and West as water-tight compartments. In this context we can say that the history of the Orient is also the history of the Occident. In the words of Edward Said "Orientalism is a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with our world"

## 4. CONCLUSIONS:

### Re-writing History : New Perspectives

The modern developments and the post-colonial studies have rendered our notions of history incomplete and old fashioned. More over, the objectivity and truthfulness of conventional historical accounts have been called in question. And therefore we have to re-write history, seeing the past in the proper perspective. Our interpretation of and approach to history as an account of the past has already undergone a change. According to the old conception history is the story, glorious of course, of the victor. Everything is seen and narrated from the victor's or the ruler's point of view. The ruling or the privileged classes are the heroes of this kind of historical narration. This elitist history is a sort of "head over heels" affair. It is quite unsatisfactory. And in its stead we must adopt a 'subaltern' position in our historical narrative. The losers, the aborigines, the inferiors or the common masses must be given due recognition in our history, because they constitute the basis of the socio-economic and political edifice.





The Westerners were prejudiced against us and they distorted the history of the country during the colonial period. That is why our nationalist historians in the post-colonial period re-wrote the history of India under the British imperial yoke. But the new history of our historians also has short comings. They gave, of course, due importance to the national aspirations and the native rulers. But they also failed to give due attention to a large section, even the majority, of the Indian population. The new postcolonial, subaltern, migrant historiography brings the un hitherto absent issues to the forefront. The plight of women, labourers, dalits, tribals and such other weaker sections of our society find a place in the new history.

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