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White Face Black Mask: Neo Colonialism and Their Cultural Impacts- Behind the Curtain Truth

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Who is mask.
Who is beyond
Who,
 Son of Who,
Who's who,
 -Jeremy Cronin

Abstract:

Colonialism of Special Type was brought to an end, and this is said to have heralded the birth of freedom. Since Colonialism is a cruel form of capitalism, it will still thrive everywhere till capitalism dies; but might only take up different forms. Neo colonialism is the latest avatar of capitalism in the developing nations like Africa and South Asia. Its foot prints are deeper in the minds of the erstwhile colonies. Its cultural impacts, not like its remnants, but as modernity, civilizations and culture, infiltrate all corners of the world. They have largely meta-narrated the culture, language, religion and general lifestyle of the colonial masters as the standard form for the developing nations or the former colonies to follow. Greatly enamoured by the silvery glitz of consumerism, the men and women try hard and mime the colonists still, from perfumes to sleek wear and from hair sprays to glosses hardly realizing the yet-colonizing or neo colonization motives behind. Hence the present day generations are merely painted butterflies under the cultural flag of capitalism. This paper will try to bring out the colonial cultural impacts that are so thoroughly infiltrated in the minds of natives of South Africa.

Keywords: Blacks, Freedom, Neo Colonialism, Capitalism, Culture & Consumerism

Background:

Indian friends from India advised me not to move with other communities in South Africa except Indians; whites questioned me as to why I could always be seen with blacks, blacks advised me to be watchful whenever I encounter a black person. A black lady said her sexual encounter with a white man was not successful as God forbids that. A black girl said she does not like to marry a black as they are not handsome. An Indian woman said that all blacks stink as they do not use any perfumes (Of course as an advice to me as I do not use perfumes either and that I too stink). Indian man said black girls are loaded with diseases, and so I should not sleep with them. A white lady was uncomfortable when she came to know that I have black visitors to my home. An Indian sternly warned me not to bring any blacks to his home. A black girl said that all 'coloured' people are arrogant and that they drink, dance and fight. A black lady said that all whites are cunning and they loot money from others. A black girl said that Indians

can sell off even a stone for a good price and that they cheat in the name of business. Though many such harsh and notorious statements are around us, few harsher statements against blacks cannot be revealed as I do not wish to add fuel to the fire. At the most, we can come to the following understanding. 1. Long, soft, silky, blonde hair is beautiful. 2. One must use perfume, else they stink. 3. Your food style should be westernized: go to KFC-standard food style 4. Blacks steal, etc. Now may I ask you, “did we attain freedom?” Freedom of what? Freedom at the cost of whom? Freedom for whom?

Introduction:

African and South Asian countries are in different transitive phases now. Though they feel that they have attained freedom, the prevailing situations do not seem so. The colonialism has taken the new form in the imperialistic era where exploitation is ensured to be continued in a new form. The direct control was passed on from old colonizers to new local owners and a new community has arrived in the history sheet of exploiters-comprador bourgeoisie. The finance capital is the virtual colonizers who exploit the broad masses of African and South Asian nations. Both in India and South Africa (though in South Africa the base and mode of the production of the society has still been controlled by minorities) white faces still rule but hidden behind black masks. The path of freedom that ensures equality among people has to go through the new democratic revolution that demanded freedom for the blacks and other colonized countries from their colonizers. The freedom gained in 1994 and 1947 is not real freedom. The concept of freedom in African and South Asian countries require multi facet understanding from everyone. It is not like the freedom of western colonies where just chasing away the colonial rulers could be considered freedom, but chasing them away socially, culturally and more importantly psychologically. The freedom of South Africa did not entitle that the natives of this country started ruling it or that everyone is equal but still the remnants of apartheid could be seen everywhere.

The Persistence of Freedom Fight and the Emergence of New Apartheid despite Freedom:

It is a common belief that during the middle of the twentieth century, in USSR when the private property was brought under the control of state, and as comrade Stalin claimed that with the nationalization of industry and collectivization of agriculture—no exploiting classes existed in the Soviet Union. But the legendary Mao-Tse-Tung, the chairman of erstwhile socialist state China recognized the need to take up the freedom struggle though the oppressed classes come to power. As a common man who emerged from the post-colonial country like China he understands the political and cultural clash between the oppressor and the oppressed. He said that even in the state of freedom, the remnants of past remains. As pointed out by him in his '*On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*' in 1957:

“In China, although in the main socialist transformation has been completed with respect to the system of ownership...there are still remnants of the overthrown landlord and comprador classes, there is still a bourgeoisie, and the remolding of the petty bourgeoisie has only just started. The class struggle is by no means over. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the different political forces, and the class struggle in the ideological fields between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will continue to be long and tortuous and at times will even become very

acute. The proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world outlook and so does the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the question of which will win out, socialism or capitalism, is still not really settled.” (52)

Let us consider the South African situation where the apartheid government that gave utmost importance to whites was thrown off in a ‘peaceful’ manner. The brokering has entitled the whites to keep whatever they have and whatever they have exploited and taken from the blacks already and freedom has been reduced to a form of agreement where the blacks have paid a heavy price. So eighty-seven percentage of the fertile land remains with the whites, who are actually the minorities of South Africa. Now South African people believe that they are ruled by themselves and that no apartheid regime prevails. The say that South Africa has attained freedom strongly implies that the apartheid regime is completely over. Unlike few countries that have thrown away the exploiting classes through revolutionary means, South Africa has attained freedom through peaceful means wherein as a result the base of the society was not broken into pieces, but maintained as it is. The means of production is still with old owners and the mode of production is still semi-feudal and semi-colonial. This theoretical perspective has severe political implications. The country like China where economic changes happened during the Mao regime deserved and underwent the sociological and cultural changes. Thus one can imagine the amount of changes that are supposed to happen in the South African society that attained freedom ‘peacefully’. Putting it in a different way, I must say that beyond the remnants of the old apartheid regime, the contradictions in the post-apartheid regime will give rise to new apartheid elements, which can coalesce into new form of apartheid. If we reconsider the words of William Hinton and apply them into this specific situation of South Africa, we must say that this post-apartheid era must be regarded as a transition from apartheid to equal society. As such it bears many contradictions within it; many inequalities and disparities that cannot be done away over night or even after several decades.

These inequalities such as pay differentials between skilled and unskilled work and between mental and manual work, the differences among whites, Indians, coloured and blacks, and differences between the economic, educational, and cultural opportunities available in the white’s area and black’s area are inherited from the apartheid society. As long as these inequalities exist they generate privilege, individualism, careerism and capitalist ideology in support of ‘whitism’. They can and do create new WHITE FACES IN BLACK MASKS who gather as the new privileged elite and ultimately as a new exploiting class. Thus this free society in South Africa can be peacefully transformed back into neo-Apartheid. Thus the birthmarks of old apartheid society continue to be reproduced in new configurations in the post-apartheid society. There are still strong substantial influences in decision making power and the spheres of cultures in this society. The maximum de facto power is with the whites (like 87% percentage of the lands), and they hold major wealth with better living conditions and also better standard and access to social resources such as education, culture, information and lifestyle. This is the material basis for the development of new WHITE FACES IN BLACK MASKS in this post-apartheid society. In order to make the transition from post-apartheid to equal society, these inequalities in political, economic, intellectual and cultural resources, and class and race differences must be narrowed down and eventually eliminated. This requires mass campaigns and political struggle that would enable the oppressed masses, especially the blacks, to master all aspects of society and overcome the age old difference between mental and manual labor. Only

then can the goal of equality of –from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs be fully realized.

Revolution in the Superstructure of the Post Apartheid Society:

Most of the parties in South Africa starting from African National Congress to the recently launched Economical Freedom Fighters party speak of the land revolution in South Africa. In the provincial council meeting of South African Communist party in which I was one of the participants, the leaders have understood the importance of agrarian revolution and also the need for it. The Zimbabwean style of reclaiming the lands by the poor (I do not support the word ‘illegal confiscation’) started attracting the South African youth and they will soon enforce it in the agendas of all parties of South Africa. But the redistribution of lands alone does not bring the equal society which we have been expecting and propagating for. The changes in the base by means of controlling the productive forces alone will not yield the expected result. But the revolution in the superstructure of the post-apartheid society predetermines everything. Of course the agrarian revolution and bringing all the lands and other properties under the control of the oppressed, especially blacks, presuppose every revolution. But in a post-colonial country like South Africa, a cultural revolution without any sympathy on the remnants of the old apartheid system and the former agents of it is much needed. A physical, cultural and psychological annihilation of the remnants of apartheid through Cultural Revolution after the complete agrarian revolution in the form of protracted new democratic revolution would give the desired results.

Cultural Revolution:

When Amilcar Cabral talks about culture, he says:

“When Goebbels, the brain behind Nazi propaganda, heard culture being discussed, he brought out his revolver. That shows that the Nazis, who were and are the most tragic expression of imperialism and of its thirst for domination—even if they were all degenerates like Hitler, had a clear idea of the value of culture as a factor of resistance to foreign domination. History teaches us that, in certain circumstances, it is very easy for the foreigner to impose his domination on a people. But it also teaches us that, whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned. Implantation of foreign domination can be assured definitively only by physical liquidation of a significant part of the dominated population.” (1)

The above said situation happened in South Africa too. As Lord Macaulay who implemented the new education system in India said, the cultural and educational impacts of colonialism of special type produced WHITE FACES WITH BLACK MASKS in South Africa. The negative impact of culture among the people of South Africa had made the everlasting impact on the oppressed masses, especially on the blacks here. The apartheid culture has liquidated practically all the population of South Africa, thereby eliminating the possibility of cultural resistance. In order to maintain the domination, the imperialistic apartheid has created theories which, in fact, are only gross formulations of racism, and which, in practice, are translated into permanent siege of the indigenous populations in the name of civilization, refinement and democracy. Until and

unless the revolutionary culture is broken out in the streets of South Africa, the real freedom would not be possible. Culture is a powerful weapon for maintaining the status quo or for transforming the society. Thus, there must be a call for the Cultural Revolution to criticize the White culture which is a product of bourgeois ideology, culture, customs and habits, and to create the multi-media explosion of music, plays, ballets, paintings, short stories and poetry that will serve to build the equal society against the remnants of apartheid. The reclaim of language, revolutionary culture and revival of folk arts especially of the blacks alone can lead us to the shining path of freedom. Many would deny my arguments merely by saying that my statements are provocative, and that I have made them in order to create cracks in a 'peaceful' post-apartheid society. But the examples that follow would prove enormously that a revolution which presupposes the cultural changes is the need of the hour in this society.

Black conscious movement played a vital role in redefining blackism and also in deconstructing whiteness. But this ideology which dates back to the 1880s has been borrowed from many foreign writers. Frantz Fanon who wrote the monumental work *The Wretched of the Earth* says,

“The native had become psychologically incapacitated, no longer capable of action. The native detested white society, but was envious of it. Realizing that his own skin prevented him from ever attaining the privilege, the native despised his own blackness... The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed”. (13)

The whites who dominated the blacks not only dominated them physically but also psychologically. So in order to liberate themselves from the chains of 'Whiteness', the blacks must deconstruct the white culture, values, traditions and other cultural outlooks. Not only that, they must be proud of their culture, their traditions, languages, dress codes, their outlooks and behaviors, which is in fact not so easy as the pre-colonial essence is surely lost in a post-colonial scenario. The real freedom is not only in the retrieval of materials they have lost at the hands of whiteness, but in the redevelopment of the goodness of their lost culture and innocence. Steve Biko, the pioneer in the Black Consciousness movements further supports and elaborates this point saying,

“...the realization by the Black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the normal which is white. It is a manifestation of a new realization that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. Black consciousness therefore takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life.”

The Strong Remnants of Apartheid:

According to Mao, the remnants are not the dying surplus, but they have life in them to exploit. Historically, remnants prove as symptoms of disease. Merely curing the symptoms will not cure

the disease. To cure Africa and its rich culture of the White disease, the white culture should be cured. As Edward Said in his path breaking work *Orientalism* says, the Occident (of course whites) belittled the culture of Orients in order to portray themselves and their culture superior to the blacks. Similar method of belittling the other to construct one's superiority was followed by the agents of apartheid. When its cultural implications are mixed with the needs of capitalism, a superstructure that belittles the native African culture and that which upholds the white culture is constructed. The black consciousness movement's understanding of this policy can be well explained by the following quotation:

“Steve Biko diagnosed the problem of oppression in South Africa as a problem of culture. This is because Whites described African culture in derogatory terms, and Black South Africans were ashamed of their history, and their 'primitive' religion and art. Blacks were ashamed of their skin colour, and it is believed that some Black women adapted themselves to wigs with long European hair to hide their African hair. This relentless denigration of black African culture created a sense of inferiority that rendered Black South Africans incapable of action and revolt. Biko realised that political revolution would have to be preceded by a revolution in how Blacks saw their past and culture – their very blackness. He had often spoken about the unique qualities of African culture, and the destructive influence of western culture.” (Ibid)

The people who claim that South Africa has attained freedom in 1994 must take a look at the income of hair wig manufacturers. Thousands of millions of money flowed into the multinational business. If one considers that wearing a wig is a personal wish of someone and that the state or a researcher does not have any business in intervening into it will certainly cut out a sorry face once he/she comes to know the root cause of this so-called fashion statement.

The tradition of wearing hair wigs takes us to the apartheid regime where hair-test was done to find out the pseudo whites. The long, soft and silky nature of the hair is associated with the then ruling class. The Whites who have soft, silky, blonde hair (look at the adjectives, how they are not simply words, but impregnated with rich class culture) due to their climatic conditions, set the standards, and their nature of hair becomes the touchstone for beauty. In order to reach the heights of soft, silky and blonde hair, Indians and blacks spend money on shampoos and all creamy luxuries for their hair. Though the geological understanding of equator regions scientifically gives the reasons as to why Africans have short wooly hair and Indians have black long hair, none would have ever thought that the nature of a person's hair would play this much reactionary role in support of colonialism. The entire human community is after soft, silky hair and the reason behind that lies in the apartheid of South Africa. The phrase “Hair splitting arguments” is very famous among communists and philosophers. Hair is considered as a thing of nil significance in some parts of the world. This is just an example to show how much Biko's words mean. Now, most of the Black women have adapted themselves to wigs with long European hair to hide their natural African hair which they are ashamed of as it does not fall under the made-up 'fashion statement'. If this cultural colonization prevails in South Africa, how can one say that South Africans have attained freedom? One does not have a problem when people use hair wigs out of their own interest, but now since it is has become a clear cut symbol of apartheid, it needs to be addressed. A cultural revolution is much anticipated to teach people

politically how they carry the symbol of slavery on their heads and how they are culturally dominated and of course economically exploited. There is another notorious saying in on round. Blacks steal. Yes, I have no objection in that saying, they steal. But I have problem with that particular word “stealing”. I would be happy rather the word “stealing” is replaced by “reclaiming”. Immediately after their landing whites stole entire lands from the native blacks and that is called as primitive accumulations and when blacks reclaim not everything, but little it is called stealing. So steal more, it would be primitive accumulation, you are farmer, but steal little, it is theft and you are thief.

The next phrase goes, “blacks stink”. Yes, they stink as I stink. Because the working class who work all the time stinks. The ruling class or the exploiting class, those who hardly indulge in any physical work or who are proud of mental labours and belittle manual labour never stink. But the very word ‘stink’ has to be questioned and deconstructed. When one of my friends who has always used perfumes in his life went to a village for his research, he was told by the villagers that he stunk. For the Indians, Whites eat ‘all leaves’. For the whites, Indians eat fire. Indians mock the west for using toilet paper. But whites mock Indians as they do not use toilet papers. A little white girl made fun of me when she saw me eating without a spoon. As legendary Lenin said, “No standard values are in this world”. But human beings especially in the post-colonial countries, those who mime the whites and the rich class (I would say that their noses are trained) to say that perfumes smell good but a working class black man’s sweat smells bad. When one analyzes the class and cultural contexts here, he/she would come to the conclusion that the body odour of the exploiting classes, indifferent to perfumes they use, smell bad, but the sweat of the working class who work for the betterment of society and people always smell good. Even one’s nose comes under this class perspective. Without deconstructing these apartheid remnants that give umpteen millions of money for the multinational companies, how can one say that South Africa has attained freedom? I was told by one of my Indian friends that fair girls in South Africa get married very easily. All the post-colonial countries starting from all African countries to South Asian countries, people still remain the slaves of White colonialism. This cultural slavery is well spun with capitalism and its money making. The local rulers and ambassadors are used to promote this slavery in the name of beauty/fashion and thus capitalism thrives upon the money of the still inferior colonized. The alarming obsession of our African people with white skin and their huge appetite for skin whitening products are nothing but the cultural impacts of still prevailing apartheid. Neo colonialism belittles the native people’s culture and complexion and makes them envy the culture of their rulers. It exploits them after the so called freedom too. It develops the ruler’s culture and mixed both the culture and exploitation carefully. The consumer culture is nothing but the cultural exploitation of consumers. These whitening creams are the carriers of the apartheid regime that belittles the blacks and praises the whites up.

Though we have many rich languages and cultures in South Africa, the enormous importance given to English, the language of colonizers is shocking. Even the very progressive parties like South African Communist Party do not publish their party documents in local languages like Zulu and other languages. Language is not just a language in the post-colonial countries. The English language is looked upon as the symbol of culture, civilization, richness and intellectuality. Language is not knowledge, thus goes a say. Unfortunately, post-colonial countries like South Africa and India that claim that they have attained freedom have not attained

freedom linguistically. The cultural back up that goes with language is too much; the commoners who have better knowledge than English speaking/mimicking species are not respected at all as they could not speak the colonizer's tongue.

If we apply the same research in all aspects of our life, the results would be very shocking. The importance given to western dances in SABC channels and television serials in support of the rich class, especially the white lifestyle, belittles the simple lifestyle of the common blacks. This tags a negative connotation to the simple lifestyle and the people who live without any greed are also tempted to make money at all costs and by all means. This is almost like recruitment for capitalism that is full of greed and which steals from others. Thus the oppressed masses, especially blacks, who were really satisfied with simple lifestyle, change themselves in support of the colonizers. They have black faces but wear white masks. Post-Apartheid society is declared as the equal society. But with the strong remnants of apartheid society, inequality prevails here. Now, in the name of freedom, declaring equality and thereby having entrance exams for higher education and fee structure equally for all students are nothing but forcing equality among all in an unequal society. The impact of Bantu education can last long another century.

Neo Colonialism:

At the request of the revolutionary Black Nationalist Robert F. Williams, Mao has issued a statement in support of Afro-Americans. In that he says,

“The evil system of colonialism and imperialism grew on along with the enslavement of the Negroes and the trade in Negroes; it will surely come to its end with the thorough emancipation of the black people.” (3)

Later in 1968, after the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mao reiterated his support by another statement:

“The Afro-American struggle is not only a struggle waged by the exploited and oppressed Black people for freedom and emancipation; it is also a new clarion call to all the exploited and oppressed people of the United States.” (4)

Mao's call is very much applicable to South African blacks also. Their emancipation is nothing but the emancipation of humanity. The fall of 'whitism' is nothing but the fall of inequality. The capitalism that exploited people in the form colonialism has now changed its stature- not the contour- has started exploiting the colonized people in different ways. Neo colonialism ensures that old exploiters and oppressors are being replaced by new ways. The new rulers in White Faces with Black Masks, knowingly or unknowingly yield themselves to the needs of neo-colonialism and they act as the stooges of it, serving it in the name of development. As Cabral said in his speech “National Liberation and Culture”, the direct rule of colonizers will be replaced by indirect ruling where suppression of black culture and uphold of white culture prevail. He says:

“Recognizing this reality, the colonizer who represses or inhabits significant cultural activity on the part of the masses at the base of the social pyramid, strengthens and protects the prestige and the cultural influence of the ruling class at the summit. The

colonizer installs chiefs who support him and who are to some degree accepted by the masses; he gives these chiefs material privileges such as education for their eldest children, creates chiefdoms where they did not exist before, develops cordial relations with religious leaders.” (4)

Both the ruling classes and the oppressed masses move with lots of experiences. They move on with lots of success and failures. The en masses of blacks are well aware of this new physique of colonialism. Their opposition was expressed in the words of “We Won’t Get Fooled Again,” a song about revolution by The Who, a British rock group in the 1960s and 70s: “Take a look at the new boss, same as the old boss.”

CONCLUSION:

The real fun is of speaking about reconciliation between the losers and looters. Till the looters give up the lootings back to the losers, no reconciliation is possible. Till the material revolution has not been completed, the freedom would be the higher form of stupidity. The cultural impacts of Neo colonialism largely prevail in South African society hidden in simple forms like hair wigs, perfumes, skin colour, skin whitening creams, silver tongue English, White lifestyle, religion, white mode of education and many misconceptions about the oppressed masses, especially blacks. What South Africa needs is a revolution that throws away the capitalist mountain, and it is not only the agrarian revolution that the youth talk about, but the Cultural Revolution like Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution commanded by Mao. The mere nationalizing of the properties or reclaiming of lands from whites does not offer freedom to the oppressed masses, but the clear cut reversal of the prevailing culture to the old, and carefully monitored progressive culture alone could give the masses the much needed positive growth. To attain this, one must bombard the headquarters both physically and culturally.

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