

Postcolonialism

Definition:

- There exists no clear definition
- Literally/Historically: The time after colonialism (Britain once ruled almost 50% of the world)
- Compromises several theories/thoughts (ending “-ism”)
 - reaction to and analysis of the legacy of colonialism
 - framework that challenges inherent (angeboren) assumptions
- Can be found in philosophy, film, political science, sociology, literature etc.
- Criticism: The word “postcolonialism” alludes to the fact that time of colonialism is over → not so: former colonies still dependent/strongly influenced (for example economically and culturally)

Characteristics:

- “Mental Decolonization”
- Resistance to the West
- Relationship between two cultures (the settlers and the settled) → contradictory and ambiguous
- Exchange of thoughts from both perspectives
- Problems resulting from independence:
 - Dealing with the power of independence (→ settled)
 - Dealing with the loss of power (→ settlers)
 - Altogether: Dealing with the past
- Conflicts of identity:
 - Destruction and replacement of deep-rooted traditions by Westerners during the period of colonialism
 - Now: Challenge of creating a new national identity
 - Challenge of finding identity for every individual

→ Difficult **identification progress**

Key Words:

- hybridity: two cultures in one person
- multiculturalism: acceptance or promotion of cultural diversity
- transculturalism: interaction between cultures that shapes the different cultures; dynamic of cultures

European Colonialism (1880-1914)

-The 19th century was permeated by imperialist policies of the European major powers (UK, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Russia)

-They built and controlled African and Asian territories and claimed the power over social structures, government and economics

-Some Goals of colonialism were:

- territorial and strategic strength
- economic opportunities
- political prestige



TIMELINE on Indian History

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1500 BC | - | The first wave of Aryan immigration into India |
| 8 th century | - | Arab invasions |
| 12 th century | - | Turkish invasions |
| 15 th century | - | Arrival of European traders |
| 1526 | - | Establishment of the Mughal Dynasty. |
| By 1600 | - | The Mughal Dynasty rules most of the Indian subcontinent |
| 1619 | - | The British set up their first trading post in Surat |
| 1757 | - | Battle of Plassey, the East India Company begins colonization |
| 1857 | - | First War of Independence, the Indian Mutiny is defeated by the British, the Mughal Empire is defeated, all political power in India is transferred from the East India Company to the British crown |
| 1885 | - | Indian National Congress founded |
| 19 th century | - | The Raj: British control of the political affairs of the whole of India |
| From 1920 on | - | Indian leaders such as Mohandas Ganhdi transform the Indian National Congress into a mass movement to campaign against British rule |
| 15 th August 1947 | - | Independence from Britain after non-violent resistance led by Gandhi and Nehru; division of the subcontinent into the secular Democratic Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan |
| 1971 | - | As a result of the war between the two countries, East Pakistan becomes the separate nation of Bangladesh |
| 1974 | - | India detonates a nuclear bomb |
| 1998 | - | After a series of nuclear tests, India declares itself a nuclear state |
| From 1990 on | - | Extensive reforms change India's socialist-inspired economy into a rapidly growing market economy; India is now considered an emerging economic superpower |
| 2004 | - | The Indian National Congress Party wins the general elections, former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh is sworn in as Prime Minister. |
| 2006 | - | India and the USA agree on a treaty: allows USA to supply civilian nuclear technology. India practises a "no-first-use" nuclear policy |

Postcolonial Literature (“New English Literature”)

- Reaction to the discourse of colonisation; literary critique to racist or colonial texts
- Attempts to illegitimize the idea of establishing power through conquest
- Theories/ philosophical reflection on de-colonization and the new political and cultural independence of former colonies

Important Postcolonial Theorists

Edward Said

- American writer and academic → ranked among the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century
- Born in Jerusalem in 1935, when the city was part of British-occupied Palestine
- Israeli forces captured West Jerusalem in 1948 → Said’s family fled with other Palestinian refugees to Cairo
- eventually attended Princeton and Harvard and settled in the U.S., where he became a professor of comparative literature at Columbia University
- The most influential of Said’s many books is *Orientalism* (1978): Criticism of European biases towards Islamic world → theory that these biases led to colonialism

Salman Rushdie

- British-Indian author
- Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born in 1947, in Bombay, India
- He was sent to England at age fourteen to attend Rugby, a private school; later he attended Cambridge University
- Author of several famous books:
- *Midnight's Children* (1981) → story about the fictional character Saleem Sinai, who is born exactly at midnight on the 15th of August 1947, the day of India’s independence → his life’s story is closely connected to the history of India
- *The Satanic Verses* (1988) → after publishing this novel, Rushdie was sentenced to death by the Iranian president Khomeini and since then has to live under cover
- still very successful author; honored with many different awards and prizes

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

- Indian literary critic and professor at Columbia University
- Born in Calcutta (West Bengal) in 1942 into a middle class family; she belonged to the first generation of Indian intellectuals after the independence
- After graduation from university, she borrows money to go to the USA where she completes her Master’s in English and earns her PhD and dissertation and teaches at Iowa University
- Publishing regularly on issues of Marxism, Feminism, Globalisation, Postcolonialism, she is a « para-disciplinary, ethical philosopher » (self-description)
- She is best known for the article "Can the Subaltern Speak?", considered a founding text of postcolonialism, and for her translation of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*.

Racism and immigration in the UK in the 1960-1980s

- the decline of the British Empire became inevitable
- 1950s: Immigration wave to the UK from its colonies (mainly India, Pakistan, the Caribbean, Uganda)
- Britains Nationalist parties turn their attention to internal matters:
- general opposition to post-colonial states, immigration and immigrant communities in the UK
- customs, traditions and the character of the British people should be safeguarded
- during the 1970s, violent rallies of nationalistic and patriotic parties against minorities

Enoch Powell

- He was a senior politician of the Conservative Party and member of Parliament between 1950 and February 1974
- He was dismissed from the Shadow Cabinet for his controversial 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech: he openly opposed mass Commonwealth immigration to Britain.
- The speech unleashed a storm of racism and fuelled the rise of fascist parties like the NF (National Front) who supported Powell
- The speech was also followed by strikes opposing his views

Quotes from Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood Speech

"It is the supreme function of statesmanship to provide against preventable evils."

Here is the means of showing that the immigrant communities can organise to consolidate their members, to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens, and to overawe and dominate the rest with the legal weapons which the ignorant and the ill-informed have provided.

As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood'.

That tragic and intractable phenomenon which we watch with horror on the other side of the Atlantic but which there is interwoven with the history and existence of the States itself, is coming upon us here by our own volition and our own neglect. Indeed, it has all but come. In numerical terms, it will be of American proportions long before the end of the century.