

# Revisiting the Cultural Politics of the Colonizer and the Colonized in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*

R. Bala Krithika  
*University of Madras*

**Abstract** - Claim means to assert ownership. The colonizers usually claim colonized place since they get to know more about the people and the place. Francis Bacon quoted, "Knowledge is power". The more the knowledge about something, the more power one has over it and they can exercise control over it.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonising methodology: Research and indigenous people*, projects how the colonizers establish the positional superiority of western knowledge and argues how colonial people "came, saw named and claimed" by using the examples of Abel Tasman and James Cook. By looking at the case of Maori and their contact with the British, she forcefully argues that all accounts of events are seen through imperial eyes and the master narrative is therefore established from their perspective.

In Frantz Fanon's *"The wretched of the earth"*, the dehumanizing effects of colonization upon the individual and the nation are discussed and the relation between the colonizer and colonized as master and slave, which ultimately tells the colonizers control on colonized.

This paper aims at bringing out the cultural politics of colonizers and the colonized and also stresses how gradually their initial contact becomes dominating in the later stage. That happens only because of the colonizer's gain of knowledge of the colonized people as Nietzsche rightly says "will to power" and "will to dominate". Here the colonizers dominate the colonized by taking a control over them. The very thought of having a control makes them feel superior. This paper would analyse these texts in the aspects of how claiming plays a significant role in the world of colonizers and colonized.

**Index Terms** - Decolonize, Dehumanize, Claiming, Imperialism and colonialism

## INTRODUCTION

In the history of colonization, we have seen a change not only in the general cultural sphere but also in the sphere of social, political, and economic practices. Colonizers usually try to overpower the other lands coercively by demolishing the indigenous culture

thereby taking the stand of a dominant. The relationship of both colonizers and colonized is dominant and subservient one because colonizers feel they are superior and colonized feel they are inferior. As Vine Deloria, Jr quoted, "Those who discovered and conquered other lands were entitled to them, their riches, and their spoils. The conquered people could be treated as slaves, banished to other lands, or assimilated into the society and institutions of the conquering people"

Colonizers attempt to impose their own culture by controlling the indigenous people and they go the extent of making them forget their own culture by attempting to civilize them. Colonized people gradually lose their cultural values and they forget their way of living their life. Right from food habits to the language they speak, they follow the colonizers and it is this aspect that makes the colonized stand subservient. They feel that that they are dependent on the colonizers. Dependency complex is seen in the minds of the colonized. "Dependency theory is when the colonizing states exploit their colonizing regions that enhance their own development and accumulation of capital. When wealth and resources are extracted from the colony, colonist stunts the development or undo past development"

As a black man, after being subjected to the domination of the whites and enduring the pain by being submissive, Frantz Fanon quoted,

"I start suffering from not being a white man insofar as the white man discriminates against me; turns me into a colonized subject; tells me I am a parasite in the world so I will try quite simply to make myself white; in other words, I will force the white man to acknowledge my humanity. But, Monsieur Mannoni will tell us, you cannot, because deep down inside you there is a dependency complex"

Albert Memmi in his *Black skin white masks* rightly said, "The colonial situation manufactures

colonialists, just as it manufactures the colonized". It is the colonization that created the identities for both colonizers and the colonized as dominant and submissive one. The way the person looks at the world in terms of both cultural and geographical aspects is by his wage understanding of the world. That is what, provoke him and make him explore the world, and in the process of exploring, he also tries to have a control over the land as many orientalist do. To quote Edward Said "Orientalism is the western style for dominating, restructuring, and having an authority over the orient. As a result of colonization, there is the internalized oppression felt among the colonized as a result of which, they feel inferior since they are being colonized by other group and this is termed as colonial mentality. They believe that the cultural values of the colonizer are much more superior to their own. By creating such kind of impression among the colonized, the colonizers achieve their goal and they also feel superior as they have established a control over the colonized.

Decolonization is a process by which colonies become independent of colonizing country. It is not only the removal of the domination of non-indigenous forces that occupies the geographical area of the colonized but also 'decolonizing the minds' from the colonizers thoughts that are imbibed in the colonized, which made them feel inferior. The main reason behind the decolonization is that the colonized people thirst for independence. They wanted to free themselves from the domination of the colonizers.

Decolonization was achieved when colonized people wanted to liberate themselves. Franz fanon in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, said "Decolonization is truly a creation of new men. But such creation cannot be attributed to a supernatural power: the 'thing' colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation". Here he means decolonization creates a new man which frees himself from dehumanizing qualities unlike colonization, which makes them submissive and exploited. The very thought of fighting for liberation itself creates new men which makes a man powerful.

*The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon talks about the impact of colonization on the colonized and how they overthrow the colonizers with their effort that turned out be a remarkable one. As a black man he witnessed the brutal war for independence in 1950s in France and it is this experience which made him to

narrate the minds of colonizers and the colonized. The book is about the decolonization in Africa, especially in Algeria.

When we talk about colonial world, it is both colonizers as well as colonized play a significant role. They have their own ideas and beliefs which is contrast in nature. It is the dominating attitude of the colonizers that make them feel superior as they succeed in achieving their objective, which is to have a control over the colonized. The colonized also feel inferior to the colonizers and they follow the orders of their masters. Colonizers control over the colonized because of the thorough knowledge of the colonized people and the place. Francis Bacon quoted, "Knowledge is power". The more the knowledge about something, the more power one has over it and they try to exercise control over it as Neitschze rightly said "Will to power" and "Will to dominate". The very thought of having a control over the other makes the colonized feel superior. Initially colonizers forcefully enter the other colonies, they get to know about the colony, they rename it as their wish and finally they claim the colony as their own, which is what is said by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her *Decolonizing Methodology* as, "They came, They saw, They Named, They Claimed". Colonized people however could not do anything other than accepting what they are imposed to. They were not able to voice out. To that extent they were controlled and dominated by the colonizers.

In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon talks about the brutal treatment of colonizers on the colonized. They treat them literally like animals and not as humans. He said,

"A hostile, ungovernable, and fundamentally rebellious Nature is in fact synonymous in the colonies with the bush, the mosquitoes, the natives, and disease. Colonization has succeeded once this untamed Nature has been brought under control. Cutting railroads through the bush, draining swamps, and ignoring the political and economic existence of the native population are in fact one and the same thing"

Through this he says the colonized are just like mosquitoes in colonial imagination. They are treated as pests rather than humans. This created an impact in Fanon, and he wanted to address this issue by taking it to another level which is violence. He feels that the identity of human is lost. The colonized people neither belong to their clan nor to the clan of the colonizers

due to the colonialism. Fanon rightly said, “colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: who am I in reality”

In contrast to conventional notion of the colonized people, Frantz Fanon defends the right of a colonized people to use violence to gain independence which is said in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Since he has witnessed the aftereffects of the war, he strongly believes in decolonization which is the only way to free them from the mindset imposed on them by the colonizers. The irony that we see in the colonialism is the reversal of force. i.e colonized end up using the violence to overthrow the colonizers which was used by colonizers to enforce their authority over the colonized. The very act of fighting back makes them feel powerful rather than powerless as Fanon said in the text, “At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude”

Fanon, being a psychiatrist was interested in the psychological mindset of the colonized people when they were colonized. His view is that colonized people are not only controlled by colonizers in terms of economic and political aspects but also psychologically. They are felt inferior in the hands of colonizers. They undergo psychological problems because they are treated like slaves. This resulted in the connection of both political problem and psychological health. The colonized people experience depression and other mental problems because of the colonialism. Thus, we could see “The Personal is Political” as said by the feminist Carol Hanisch. Colonialism created the identities of colonizers and colonized which makes it both political and psychological one.

Decolonization would not only make the country free from the colonizers but also free the mind of colonized. The decolonization makes the colonized feel they are independent both physically and mentally. They get relieved from despotism which indeed makes them feel secured as they live their own life by following their own tradition and cultural practices. Colonized people can enjoy their freedom only when they fight for their independence as Martin Luther King Jr rightly quoted, “Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; It must be demanded by the oppressed”

*The Wretched of the Earth*, thus not only stresses the after effects of colonialism, but also stands as a tool

for knowing the minds of the colonizer and the colonized since the writer himself witnessed the colonial rule and shares his experience as a black, who was subjected to domination and suppression. The very identity of colonizer and colonized is created by colonial rule as dominant and subservient. They differ in terms of cultural practices, but the colonizers take the colonized for granted and impose their culture on colonized which in turn followed by colonized by forgetting their own culture.

Colonized people get affected psychologically as they are made to practice the imposed culture of colonizers forcefully. Colonization not only makes them feel inferior but also affect them psychologically. So, he believed that Decolonization is a psychological cure. He said removing colonialism ultimately removes the psychological disturbances in the minds of the colonized as he said in the text. “Total Liberation involves every facet of the personality”

Through the close reading of the text, we get the nuances of how colonizer and colonized have their own mentality which ultimately makes one superior and the other inferior. We could find the similarity in both Linda and Fanon’s ideas. When we compare and contrast these texts, both the writers point out the effect of colonialism, and how the colonized made an attempt to use violence as weapon and decolonized the colonizers rule both geographically as well as psychologically. The colonizers not only succeeded in liberating themselves from decolonizing the land but also decolonizing the mind.

Fanon’s text is more powerful since the writer has attempted to share his own experience by being a black and he points out the very fact that colonialism creates the identity of colonizers and colonized. Colonialism plays a significant role in the lives of both colonizer and colonized. The way in which he stressed the importance of fighting back shows his resistance to the very act of domination of the colonizers. Decolonization is the only way to get relieved from the control of the colonizers, which is what Linda tries to project in her text *Decolonizing Methodology* by using several concepts and Fanon discusses it by way of narrating his own experience with the aim of analyzing the psychology of colonizers and colonized.

Linda’s *Decolonizing Methodology* and Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* support each other as it aims at emphasizing the colonialism and its after effects. Decolonization is the main concern for both the

writers, and they believe that it can be achieved by the colonized when they fight for it, so that they can be independent. Thus, both the texts become complementary to each other.

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