



Synonym-izing Globalization and Ecological Imperialism through *God of Small Things*

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on the broader spectrum of globalization which entails assimilation of culture and politics. Globalization 'innocently' suggests bridging all gulfs between the diverse cultures and landscapes for greater 'good'. Refuting the claims of the globalists, this paper argues that globalization has merely brought about the financial, cultural, psychological, emotional and environmental degeneration in the developing countries. Roy's *God of Small Things* is used here as a vehicle of this argument as it portrays the cost of the dream of globalization for the countries on the margin. Roy is at her best attempting to subvert the impacts of Western imperialism in the form of globalization on countries like India and Pakistan. The aim here is to investigate how Roy relates the (dis)integration of indigenous people's lives with the globalization and ecological imperialism. For a clear theoretical understanding of the issue, Appadhuri's perspective on Globalization and Crosby's notion of Ecological Imperialism are used to relate our point of view with that of Roy. Content analysis and close-reading are used as techniques to interpret Roy's novel. This paper would be useful to understand how the powerful states maintain their hegemony through globalization.

KEY WORDS: *God of Small Things*; Globalization; Ecological Imperialism; Colonialism; South Asia; India; Pakistan

1 INTRODUCTION

Roy's *God of Small Things* (1996) is the realistic depiction of the hidden tactics of the imperialistic (mostly Western) world which scavenges on the developing countries draining them massively not only of their natural resources but also the cultural values. Roy, through her straightforwardly blunt style, makes no bones about uncovering the hidden motives behind the slogans of globalization which aims to homogenize the Indian culture by turning the world into a global village. The aim through this paper is two-fold. On the one hand, it relates colonialism and globalization with ecological imperialism tracing its side effects; on the other hand, it analyses the disintegration of an Indian family unity and values due to its hybridity and proximity with the foreign culture.

Globalization is aptly called imperial in its nature as it clearly reflects the motives of the international imperialist forces also reflecting the response of the local communities (colonized states) in adopting the ways of the ruling states. It is evident of the same unequal power relations prevalent at the time of colonization. The difference, however, is only to the extent that it was when the rules were physically and forcibly there to control the colonized nations; but now it is achieved by supplying the ways and tools of so-called modernity. History is repeated in the same dimension but with different scheme. So globalization and the colonization are the two sides of the same coin still controlling and hegemonising world's people and resources. It seems that the movers and the shakers of the world, after the decolonization, found other ways to control the developing countries, i.e., the fastest communication network, 'supra-national operations of economics' and cultural 'commodification'. Globalization is not a straightway of controlling the masses as it had been in vogue in the times of direct colonization. Rather it is systematic, complex and indirect way of maintaining the domination. Globalization did not emerge all of a sudden rather it developed as a result of European industrialization, scientism and as an offshoot of imperialism. It decodes the colonial rhetoric.

Before going into the details of textual evidence it is important to understand the connotation of the term "Globalization" and its connection with colonial and ecological imperialism.

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2 KEY TERMS

2.1 Globalization and Imperialism

Introduced by the powerful states, the concept of globalization is a process of creating the whole new way of life, thinking patterns, designing and procurement of land by multinational companies; in other words, it entails upsetting the entire indigenous patterns of life. Globalization has two known perspectives. The first perspective considers it as entirely a positive phenomenon, promising for growth and advancement of the communities. The theorists favoring this perspective argue that it paves the way for easy outreach to marketplace, services, information and technology which would ultimately lead to collective welfare, progress and prosperity also addressing the global and ecological concerns. The second perspective considers it as merely garbed in euphemism and sweet slogans but actually triggering exploitation and subjugation of the 'developing' countries by the powerful 'developed' states. As is obvious from the current face of the earth, the globalization has extremely harmed the indigenous cultures, traditions and value systems replacing them with the homogenous global language and culture. This 20th and 21st century homogenization is as dreadful an act as that of colonialism itself to remove the connection of the third world countries with their roots (the source of their entire force of culture and social meaning) making them weaker states. Globalization is proving itself as the most sophisticated and effective strategy than colonialism to entirely keep the control over the assets and lives of the indigenous people. Moreover, globalization serves the interests of the entrepreneur power instead of the local communities. There are theorists who take a neutral and objective approach towards globalization [Durham 2006]. They are of the same view as that of the anti-globalization. For them, it brings poverty, dissatisfaction and discrimination, aggravating ecological imbalance. It serves as a blow to the state of solidarity peace and stability, a threat to internal peace and democracy of the communities. These are all the aftermaths of the globalization. It also affects the style of working as it keeps closer interaction between the companies of different countries and thus changes the work patterns and brings an air of so-called competition among companies seldom bothering about the environmental devastations it brings along its way.

Globalization is also another name of the so-called modernization. The irony of the situation is that the perpetrators of globalization eagerly control the human hands and human lifestyles but not the environment which is the major victim due to the various processes involved to trigger globalization throughout the world. The nature and environment are very sensitive to the human activities and thus react all at once as Stuart Hall (1991) remarks; "when the ill winds of Chernobyl came our way, they did not pause at the frontier, produce their passports and say "Can I rain on your territory now?" [Ashcroft p. 112]"

Globalization certainly has the potential to benefit the people all over the world as is argued by Sulaiman (2014) that educational endeavors and mutual benefits can be reaped through collaboration in the field of education and research. Similarly, the entire world can reap benefits through the digitalization of knowledge as the similar point is raised by Rafiq and Amin (2014).

2.2 Ecological Imperialism

Alfred W. Crosby, the inventor of the term 'Ecological Imperialism', states that Imperialism is the course of action which results in two-way devastation: on the one hand, it changes the interior life of the colonized states including their political, cultural and social structures while on the other hand, it deteriorates the ecologies and time-honored life prototype. And it is a loss which one can never recover. History reveals that wherever these colonizers went they maintained their power by making the local population weak either health-wise by spreading epidemics (which they import from their native places of their origin) or through the ways of settlers which badly affect the local environment by eroding their land through their own so-called modern methods and technologies, e.g., current famines in sub-Saharan Africa has been due to the land exploitation for large-scale commercial plantations. Canada, Australia and the USA (in their colonial times) have been the examples of Neo Europe by producing and exporting maximum resources to the Europe which badly affected their ecological systems and indigenous populations.

The United States is the true example of modern imperialist states in the garb of globalization. Despite the fact that it denies the notion of imperialism publically but its policies demonstrate that it follows and strategically practices globalization using indirect ways. It keeps on maintaining its authority, dominance and control through its slogan of "mass production, mass communication and mass consumption [Ashcroft p. 113]."

The question arises if globalization has the worldwide distribution, why is its center always in the West? The answer is simple that globalization is a derivative of the traditional imperialism of the sixteenth century Western imperialism and exhibits the same essence through the power structures worldwide.

Another important aspect of globalization is that how it works effectively and becomes source of attraction for the local communities or how the local communities react to it? The strategies and tactics of the international groups present their economic, social and educational program in such an attractive discursive ways that their discourses appeal the local groups generally and marginalized groups specifically. These groups take interest in them with the intention of progress and empowerment, the slogans trumpeted in ad displays. Thus, this globalization liberates them from locally created threats but indirectly makes them dependent and subservient to the interests of the imperial powers. The tragedy is that the West through the concept of homogenization not only depletes the originality of the local culture but also does not let it come up equal to its own status of “mini versions of itself [Ashcroft, 114]”. This, however, is still a debatable issue. It is the interaction of local and foreign forces which results in globalization through dissemination and assimilation.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Annabelle Serberny Mohammadi (2006) considers the role of media as a prominent discourse in in globalization of the third world countries. For her the media can play a positive role by reviving the local culture or bring innovation with the fusion of local and international elements. She takes the brighter and one-sided view of the globalization. But our view keeping in mind the God of *Small Things* is neutral as we see this kind of positivity to be short-lived phenomena which will later result in rootlessness and disintegration of the local communities ultimately ending in loss of identity.

Jesus Martin Barbero (2006) also gives his view keeping in mind the Latin American context in mind that the richness of local culture comes out when it gets exposure through media and thus results into a distinctive form of cultural heritage. By saying so she has missed the very important issue related to the collapse of indigenous culture, values and environment and this is what I intend to bring to the limelight through this paper. For Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2006), globalization is the name of ‘hybridization’. He terms it ‘Creolizing cultural form’. For him, it is ‘an unproblematic valorization’ [Durham p. 581]. But the objective research over the issue may bring the clear view that this hybridization is equal to split of identity. And it has been pointed out by many South Asian authors like Jhampa Lahri, Abdulla Husain, Zulfikar Ghos, and Bapsi Sidhwa.

The views of Douglass Kellner and Richard Kahn (2005) that media has given freedom to the people either comment in favor or against the globalization, capitalism and war indicate the same vein of the issue that there is no pressure of freedom of expression which is the beauty of globalization. Whereas our view towards globalization is not in the air keeping in view the lives of the people of South Asia. The way they are portrayed by Roy (1996) is an ample proof of the fact that hegemony has been maintained by the West in either way. Whether there is a matter of repressive state apparatus or ideological we are the victim of this globalization through split identities, deterioration of culture, solidarity with the imperialist forces and cultural homogenization.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To support and develop our research work Alfred W. Crosby, (1986), the inventor of the term ‘Ecological Imperialism’ and Appadurai’s ideas (2006) have served as the framework of the paper. For Crosby, ecological imperialism means two-way deterioration, i.e., of ecology as well as culture. We find the same in Roy’s novel where the family members get dispersed and disillusioned in maintaining their relationship with one another. Moreover, devastating changes in the environment have been clearly pointed out by the author. The other aspect, the author highlights, is the inclination of the people of that area towards the overseas employment and relationship which ends in deterioration in terms of Appadurai. He mentions this brain-drain as the worst kind of thing in making the home country weak. We find the same view in Roy’s representation of the events. In Appadurai opinion, the inhabitants of Asia in general and South Asia in particular get all impressions about migration through the Western media. The imagination built through this discourse makes the people move to the foreign land for the better future perspectives. Thus this flow results in dislocation of the people in many ways, i.e., geographically, socially, culturally

and psychologically. The globalization according to Appadurai is synonymous to homogenization which is very threatening for the loss of local culture and solidarity.

5 METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method of research is used for the critique of Roy's novel with the help of Appadurai's conception of the cultural dimension of Globalization. For this purpose, the text of the novel is viewed through the technique of Literary Close-Reading. According to Cuddon (1997), Literary Close Reading entails a preliminary analysis of a literary work from a specific perspective. In this way, if we mean that the *God of small things* is viewed from the perspective of globalization and colonial imperialism including the disturbance of ecological patterns. It would mean that we have selected only the relevant details of the novel skipping the irrelevant ones. Then the next step taken is the interpretation of the analyses of the selected text in the light of Appadurai and Crosby's views on globalization and ecological imperialism respectively.

6 ANALYSIS

In Roy's novel the impact of globalization and ecological imperialism can be viewed very aptly. We notice the life in Ayemenem is thickly and densely covered with vegetation thirty years ago (1960s). The writer's technique of emphasis on the serenity and greenery as the good ecological habitat for the wild insects and animal is a great emphasis on the goodness and vitality of the life before the meddling of foreign media into the affair of the village. Things adopt depressing course since the intrusion of foreign media. In the same chapter, the writer takes us upside-down of the same picture thirty years later (1990s); "...the bank of a river that smelled of shit and pesticides bought with World Bank loans. Most of the fish had died." [Roy p. 14] Ecological Imperialism is reflected in dustgreen trees, mossgreen, smoky stink of urine in the police station. When Estha re-returned and walked all over Ayemenem he walked along the banks of rivers that smelled of shit and pesticides bought with World Bank loans, most fish had died. River is unfit for swimming as well. River has changed into a swollen drain. More rice for the price of river shows the exploitation of resources by the colonizers. Stale glucose biscuits in dim glass cases with flies at Abhilash Talkies shows that expired commodities of the West find their market in third world countries. Abhilash Talkies is also the result of globalization. It is the place where Estha is molested by Orangedrink Lemondrink man. It becomes a place where he loses his innocence and Estha goes into silence for the rest of his life.

The above mentioned lines reflect the devastating impact of the consequences of the Western packages of so-called modern technology and aid schemes for the uplift of the developing countries. Such is the deteriorating effects of the European notion of globalization that it not only is badly affecting the culture but also the ecology of the area. Roy has intentionally shown the contrasting pictures of (23-year) before and after the global imperialism so that the reader may capture the grim reality of the third-world exploitation. This point has also been closely connected to the idea of Alfred W. Crosby's ecological imperialism. For Roy, there is a tiny emerging class of lowly skilled workers who live in "freshly baked, iced Gulf-money houses built by nurses, masons, wire-benders, and bank clerks, who worked hard and unhappily in faraway places [Roy p. 14]." Roy's opinion is well connected with that of Appadurai who talks about the de-territorialization or dislocation of the people for the better future prospects as promised to them by the so-called globalization where the people move or migrate willingly or unwillingly to the foreign land.

Roy herself is one of the greatest proponents of the exploitation and propaganda of the West against the developing countries. If we technically look at the scheme of events with the cause and effect relationship, it dawns upon us that all awful actions are the consequence of the advent of Sophie Mol's arrival in that serene and romantic environment of Ayemenem. Even the disturbance starts as soon as the news of her arrival stirs the environment of the house. Implicitly or explicitly, the reader starts sensing the foul play within the territory. Estha and Rahel are compelled to speak English and they are penalized by Baby Kochamma for ignoring English and speaking their mother tongue. The molestation of Estha happens the very night of her arrival, and the death of Sophie Mol brings the rest of the repercussions, i.e., Velutha's death, Ammu's expulsion from the house and later her death, incest, riverside resort which makes the river weak in the author's words.

The family members are so much obsessed with the thought of Sophie Mol's arrival that their main topic of conversation revolves around the impression she'll form about them especially their clothing and Englishness. For them she's the extraordinary and superior kind of creature. Rahel already starts

developing the sense of inferiority complex in his mind and thinks that she'll get more love from the elders. She starts underestimating herself. She feels that her role is secondary and the prime position belong to Sophie Mol. What Rahel senses started happening after the arrival of Sophie Mol who had been given an extraordinary treatment and preferred over Estha and Rahel. "There would be two flasks of water. Boiled water for Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol, tap water for everybody else [Roy p. 45]." The 'double-decker' cake was baked and decorated for her to feel her special. The house was decorated and Mammachi also adorned herself with ornaments in the honor of the guests. As a reader, we can sense the colonial mind working behind this kind of treatment. But on the other hand, they get cold response from Sophie Mol. She halfheartedly accepts Chako as her real father. She shows great association with late Joe. She refuses to help her grandmother in braiding her hair.

The colonial tactics of overpowering the colonized state completely is to make them forget about their roots. And for this purpose the language is the best medium to erase their identity. So is the case with Baby Kochamma who compels the two kids to forget about their language and learn English. They have been punished for neglecting this rule. Baby Kochamma tries to Sophie Mol and Margaret with her knowledge of Shakespeare. She even tries to mimic English accent. She advises both Estha and Rahel to impress Sophie Mol as they are Indian Ambassadors (but ironically) not by their local culture rather by mimicking English. She praises Sophie Mol by comparing her to the Ariel of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. But ironically her effort falls flat as Sophie has no knowledge about Shakespeare. The resentment and sense of Eurocentricism is another devastating thing for the colonized states. We feel the displeasure of Margaret's father over his daughter's marrying an Indian. It implies that the colonizers know only to exploit the colonized such as Indians but cannot maintain any relationship with them.

The evil designs of the British colonizers are well indicated through the warning of Kuttapen who compares the wickedness of the river with the evil designs of the British. In this way, though for a brief moment, Kuttapen appears to be the mouth piece of Roy. We can also sense the rootlessness of the people who left their homeland for better future and career at cost of losing their connection with their heritage. They even don't realize what they have lost. Roy intentionally uses the term "Foreign Returnees" as for her the return is not as simple as it appears. This is why, she has attempted to defamiliarize it. It has built up their state of mind differently. They come back with the sense of abhorrence and find every fault in their homeland just because of their adoption of the Western ways. It indicates the imperialism of the colonizers that through attractive packages for the developing countries how they have enslaved the people of the third world to serve their interests. It is the concealed and secret way to maintain the hegemony.

The very aim of globalization is to help flourish the Western economies and deteriorate the local businesses and industry. In the wake of advanced technology, quality control, and attractive presentations of the local culture's fusion with the Western culture, they achieve their targets. We can see such a 'McDonaldization' of our culture around us. In the wake of the promotion of local culture, they easily achieve their aims. The local people or a layman is likely to think and get impression about the West that it is reviving their heritage and preserving it. But he does not know the inside story that how the western world is weakening their ideological cognitive immune system by injecting the homogenization as the very concept of 'global village.' We find the evidence in the novel when Roy hints that the river is not as strong as it had been because of the chain of some international hotels has opened along its banks and the history house has also turned into the dining room of the hotel. It has become a place for the tourists. The hotel is crowded with the outsiders and foreigners who have turned it into some remote world than Aymenem. The company, however, has introduced the local Kathakali performances by reducing their originality and making the performance of twenty minutes instead of the original six hours. So is the case with Coke Studio in Pakistan and the advertisements of other international brands and food chains are given a fusion of local culture to cater to the attention of the indigenous people.

We see that Pappachi's discovery of a new species of moth is renounced by the European group of Entomology who termed it a variation of already existing species. But later the same species is named after the name of a European instead, depriving the original discoverer (Pappachi) of his right to copyright. Roy, in this way, highlights the trickery of the Europeans who would try their best to get the credit of all the discoveries and inventions even though it is originally made by the indigenous people. In this way, they would also coin the justification that the natives do not have the ability to discover and invent and therefore must be in need of help, guidance and civilizing need of the 'superior' white Europeans.

Family bond weakens and disintegration starts with the foreign involvement in the lives of the indigenous people. Roy indicates towards this phenomenon when Baba (Rahel and Estha's father) tries to bargain his removal from his job (caused by his drunkenness) by condescending to his white English boss's

lust for his beautiful wife. But her refusal results in her expulsion from his house. Baby Kochamma's love for the Catholic Monk and her purported conversion to other religion becomes a stigma for the fame of her family; Chako marries Margaret and gets deprived of the bliss of matrimonial life. Pappachi is disappointed to see the hypocrisy of his English boss. History house which was once under the possession of an English man becomes the haunted house which takes the life of Velutha, and later becomes the center for the multinational company's dealings.

The role of media too is inevitable in bridging the gulf between the countries of the world. But the negative impact of this technology is visible less in globalization and more in its aloofness from the local issues and surroundings. TV and Satellite make Babay Kochamma ignorant of the garden close to her door which was once the center of attention for the visitors. But now it turns into an unweeded garden and a deserted place just because of a shift in the interests of Baby Kochamma towards the variety of satellite channels from all over the world. Kochu Maria enjoys WWF, and Baby Kochamma likes *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *Blondes*, wars, famines, sex, music. All day they sit in drawing room doing nothing. When Rahel returns she observes Baby Kochamma has started living backward. When she was young she denounced the material world and now as an old lady she embraced it which may be because of the impact of satellite. It not only results in her aloofness from her traditions (as we see her metamorphosed lifestyle and adoration) but is also an indication of the disturbance in ecological system around her.

7 CONCLUSION

To conclude it can be aptly said that Roy is very outspoken in uncovering the trickery of Western world in the form of sweet slogans of globalization. This paper would suggest the ways to understand how the powerful states maintain their hegemony through the concept of homogenizing local cultures but also suggests that our culture and environment must be conserved by creating awareness about it among the general public.

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