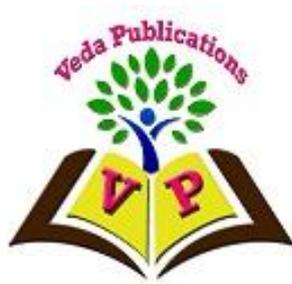


**THE VOICES OF DISSENT: FRANTZ FANON AND MOHAMMAD IQBAL**

Dr. Tanveer Hussain

*(Iqbal Institute of Culture and Philosophy, Kashmir University.)*Email: tm.tanveerhussain@yahoo.com**ABSTRACT**

This paper tries to explore the counter-discourse dimension in the works of Frantz Fanon and Muhammad Iqbal. Orientalism divides world into two halves, namely, the Orient and the Occident. This division is not done on equal footing, rather Orient is placed in opposition to Occident. If Orient is place of barbarism, ignorance and moral deprivation, then Occident is full of culture, knowledge and ethical values. This asymmetrical relationship makes Occident all what Orient is not. In this way, west projected itself as a place of human values and ethics where human evolution has reached to its apex, both culturally and biologically. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the role played by Fanon and Iqbal in deconstructing the myth of the superior Occident by exposing the anti-human and materialistic nature of the imperial west.

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Mohammad Iqbal and Frantz Fanon represent the two anti-colonial voices of the twentieth century. Although not contemporaries, both of them lived and died in an era when third world countries were reeling under the colonial darkness. The Indian sub-continent, Africa was under the control of imperial Britain. Most countries were under the control of either Imperial France or Imperial Britain. The exploitation of the native's mind and land was a common phenomenon. Thousands of innocent men, women and children were slaughtered across the world including Asia and Africa by European colonizers to fulfill their selfish vested interests. The sensitive souls of both Fanon and Iqbal were affected by the inhumane realities of colonialism. The bitter reality of European colonialism was the creation of a world order according to which people of the earth were divided into superior Europeans and inferior others. The former were men of knowledge, culture, civilization and latter were treated as men of ignorance, arrogance and barbarism. This historical fact is well-demonstrated by Jean Paul Sartre in his preface to the *'Wretched of the Earth'* when he says that in recent past, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants; five hundred million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives. (Fanon,1963:7)

From the Sartre's statement, it is not difficult to infer that out of two thousand million inhabitants fifteen hundred million were not treated as men. The question naturally arises that if only five hundred million inhabitants were men, then what were the natives? The answer to this question can be found in the following statement of Franz Fanon:

Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from or still never existed in colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negative of values. He is let us admit, the enemy of voters

and in this sense he is corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the maleficent power, the unconscious depository of and irretrievable instrument of blind forces (Fanon,1963:32).

What Fanon is trying to tell us is that in European colonialism natives are not treated as men, rather, they are treated as species devoid of any moral and aesthetic beauty. They are men only in appearance and as far as their behavior, traditions and lack of civilization is concerned they are very near to animals. This is the reason why the natives are often described in zoological terms. According to him, "when the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to bestiality". The settler tries to denigrate their identity and existence by speaking "of the yellow man's reptilian movements', 'native quarter's stink', of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawns, of gesticulations". (Fanon, 1963:33).

The division of the world into superior European and inferior natives was not the phenomenon restricted to any particular place on earth which was governed by colonial masters; rather it was the story of every colonized native's land. This compartmentalization of the world was used only as an excuse by colonial Europe to provide a justification for the exploitation of the native. Since the native was projected as uncivilized and barbaric with close resemblance to the animal world, the natural outcome of such an assumption was that the Europeans projected themselves as superior race and in this way tried to justify this subjugation of native's land. At home they highlighted themselves doing something good for humanity by bringing the so called civilization and knowledge to the native's land. The ugly side of their civilizing mission like cutting off the hands of Negroes in Angola or piercing malcontent lips in order to slant them with padlocks (14), is the dark side of their so-called civilizing mission.



Fanon provides us contrasting images of two non-complementary places: one inhabited by the native and other one by the colonizer. The place of colonizer is full of luxurious item and vast facilities where life seems to be in full bloom. On the other hand the places inhabited by natives are devoid of basic human facilities where life seems like the autumn leaves of poplar trees: although present on the branches of tree but with little hope of life and freshness. Although Fanon is describing the scene of a particular colonized places on earth, the fact of the matter is that the two contrasting images could be treated as the symbolic representation of whole of the colonizer's and colonized's world. According to him, "the settler's town is well fed town, an easy going town; its belly is full of good things. The settler's town is the town of white people or foreigners". In sharp contrast to settler's town, "the native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light ..." (Fanon, 1963:30). The exploitation of the natives took place only due to superior weapons and technology was at the back of the colonizer.

Not only was violence used to start the colonial rule of native's land, it was also used to perpetuate it. The violence done by colonists was both physical and mental. The purpose of this violence was to colonize the land and mind of native by sheer force. To demonstrate the two levels of violence we can firstly refer to the case-I, described by Fanon, involving the impotency in an Algerian man following the rape of his wife by colonial French soldiers. In this case, Fanon narrates a story of a 26 year old young Algerian man whose wife was raped by French soldiers for her husband's involvement in anti-colonial activities. Not only was she beaten ruthlessly in physical terms but she was also raped, which was an instance of greater psychological violence done to her. Consequently, her husband was very much shocked when he heard about the incident and was afterwards frequently suffering from insomnia, absence of mind and headache with somatic ramifications (Fanon, 1963:204-205).

The violence done by invaders has a detrimental effect on the native's psyche. He is in a situation of dilemma. From the colonial view point, the native has to bear the violence without uttering a

word of discontent and anger. His position is pathetic. He is not in a position to show active resentment because of colonial swords and guns which are constantly hovering over his head. Simultaneously, while keeping his mouth shut, there is a great emotional storm going on in his mind and heart constantly reminding him of his helplessness and frustration. As a result, his inner self is shattered by these inner gloomy emotions. In the words of Sartre:

"If he shows fight, the soldiers fire and he is a dead man; if he gives in he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall into pieces."

(Fanon, 1963:13).

The result of this physiological violence is either the native accepts the unacceptable social order and falls victim to many spiritual and mental disorders or he raises the flag of rebellion against the oppressor. In this way, the native is pushed to take up arms i.e., violence against oppression. But for Fanon there is nothing wrong in it. For him, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon (27). The whole concept of violence is meant to reverse the social order. Using Fanon's, phraseology, 'the last shall be first and the first last' (28).

In this reversal, a bloody battle takes place in which the native and colonizer try to kill each other. Killing of the colonizer by the native serves two purposes: firstly, by killing the oppressor, he would not only see the dead man without, i.e., the end of colonialism, rather, he would also feel the presence or rebirth of freeman within i.e., the era of freedom. The removal of oppressor would relieve him of the feeling of guilt and helplessness which had shattered his inner being into pieces.

In short, Frantz Fanon, sees the active resistance i.e., violence against colonial rule as the only viable option to free the enslaved people from the bondage of slavery and colonialism. Fanon is a vocal promulgator of violence theory against tyranny and oppression and has often been called The Prophet of Violence.

As is the case with Fanon, Iqbal is also an ardent supporter of active resistance against colonial



hegemony. However, the concept of active resistance is not an individualistic concept given by Iqbal, rather, it is the promulgation of a very fundamental principle of Islamic teachings called Jihad. The inspirational reservoir of Iqbal's philosophy of resistance is the teaching of Islam. The word Islam has come from the root word 'Salamah' which means peace and Islam has always been the religion of peace. But unlike other major world religions, there is a well defined concept of Jihad or resistance against tyranny, oppression and evil temptation in the theoretical framework of Islam.

The concept of Jihad or resistance in Islam is not restricted to the defence of Muslim life and property only, rather it encompasses within its fold humanity as a whole. The quranic term '*mustazafin*' is not only applicable to Muslims who are being oppressed rather it also applicable to those non-Muslims who are reeling under the yoke of colonialism. The Holy Quran Commands:

And what hath happened to you that ye fight not in the way of God and for the weak among men, women and children who (in helplessness) say "O" our lord! take us out of this town whose inhabitants are tyrants and appoint for us from thee a guardian and appoint for us from thee a helper (Surah Al Nisa, CH. 4, V. 75 Trans. Ahmad Ali).

There is a complete poem on Jihad in *Zarb-i-Kalim* in which Iqbal is ardently supporting the concept of Jihad. This poem was Iqbal's response to the edict of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani in which he had proclaimed the abolition of *Jihad-bi-Saif* or Jihad with sword in favour of *Jihad-bil-Qalam* or Jihad with Pen. Strongly reacting to the *fatwa* or edict of *Mirza Qadiyani*, Iqbal raises a very logical point that if *Jihad-bi-saif* is no more relevant to the world of Islam, then how come the same is not true for the European military adventurism which had equipped herself from top to toe with sophisticated weaponry. Iqbal knew that renunciation of *Jihad-bis-saif* is only beneficial to colonial establishment to advance its selfish colonial goals, therefore, Iqbal puts his strong emphasis on the *Jihad-bis-saif*. He says:

HOLY WAR

It is the verdict of the sheikh
That Pen is stranger than sword
"The sword has lost its might & force
The pen has gained a firmer hold".
But does not the august sheikh
Take cognizance of this better fact
That this lecturing in the mosque
Can never make the least affect?

In hands of Muslims of the world
Where can gun and sword be seen
If equipped with such deadly arms
To suffer death they won't be keen.
At sight of heathen's natural death.
If one with fear and fright is filled:
No one directs a man like that
To get in Holy war be Killed.

A man whose bloody claws for world
With risk and danger much are fraught,
Must avoid the Holy Wars,
To give up wars he must be taught,

The west is bent to mount a guard
On false, untrue pretentious show:
It is armed with weapons dread
Is clad in mail from top to toe.

We like to ask the holy Sheikh, Who
holds the shrine in high esteem,
If war for west is heinous crime,
How far in east can harmless seen.

A man concerned with truth alone
Can never much proper deem
That east for sins must reckoning face,
But crimes by west may light seen.
(Iqbal, *Zarb-i-Kaleem*, trans. Akbar Ali, 1983: 7)

As was the case with fanon, Iqbal has also reached the same conclusion that European civilization with its anti-human and imperial practices will reach its dead end. In 1905, Iqbal left The Indian sub-continent and went to Europe for higher studies. It was during this phase that Iqbal got the chance to have a first-hand look at the European civilization.



After thorough analysis and observation, he became well aware about the moral hollowness and spiritual bankruptcy of Europe. Iqbal saw in Europe, how the various European nations were competing with one another for materialistic gains without caring an iota for the general humanitarian values. Iqbal became aware about the corrupt nature of European civilization where divine teachings were kept at bay and a clear line of demarcation was drawn between state and church or earthly and divine. Once divine element was thrown out of the political fabric of the state, divine fear was no longer a hurdle in the fulfillment of imperialistic goals that too with anti-human and anti-divine policies. At multiple places in his poetry, Iqbal has revealed the corrupt nature of European civilization. Iqbal says:

The culture that prevails in the west,
Corrupts the heart and gaze of man:
Its soul is full of stains and spots
That at leisure one can scan.

If soul of man becomes defiled,
Of conscience clean it gets bereft:
It soon forgets high aims and ends,
No taste refined in it is left.

(Iqbal, Zarb-i-Kaleem, trans. Akbar Ali, 1983:71)

Long before Frantz Fanon, Iqbal had reached the same conclusion about the moral bankruptcy of European civilization and its downfall. Iqbal was proclaiming such a judgment at time when European colonialism in general and British colonialism in particular was at its Zenith. Iqbal says:

O Western world's inhabitants, God's
world is not a shop
What you are considering genuine, will
be regarded counterfeit
Your civilization will commit suicide
with its own dagger
The nest built on the frail branch will
not be durable.

(Iqbal, *Bang-i-Dara*, trans. Khalil, 1991:223)

Despite having their different ideological inclinations, Iqbal and Fanon share one thing in common, i.e., their uncompromising call for resistance against the forces of tyranny and oppression. Both Frantz Fanon and Mohammad Iqbal are against the imperial west for its anti-human and materialistic nature. Both of them are quite

convinced that the evil activities and policies of it will cause the downfall of the western civilization.

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