

## Use Of “Violence” For Decolonization: A Textual Analysis Of “Heart Of Darkness”

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### Abstract:

Decolonization is an act of liberation from colonial hegemony. The process is not simple and limited. It is a time taking process that is based on gradual multifaceted revelation on the part of the colonized. It is revealing and demolishing colonial power in all its form. The article deals with the use of violence for decolonization. In “Wretched of the Earth” Fanon explains the different reasons that are used to legitimize violence on the part of the colonizers and the colonized. The study applies Fanon’s (1961) theoretical framework to Conrad’s (1902). novel “Heart of Darkness”. In the novel the colonized undergo many types of violence then they turn the table by using violence on the colonizers.

**Keywords:** Decolonization, violence, Colonizer, colonized

### 1) Introduction:

Violence was a powerful tool that helped the colonizers to maintain their superiority over the colonized. Said explains the relation from the perspective of power relation as it helps the colonizers to maintain the power relation, dominance and hegemony (Said, 2003, p.5). Violence was also a powerful tool, used by the colonized, for decolonization. Decolonization, which had changed the order of the world, couldn’t be possible by a magic wand. Decolonization was a long process that started even with the start of colonization. The colonizers oppressed the colonized by using violence such as, “Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations . . . [all] make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nations.” (Fanon, 1961, p. xxxvii). At the

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same time, the colonizers were teaching the colonized the method by which the colonized could get their freedom and salvation. Said suggests that it is the colonizer who inculcates the seeds of violence in the mind of the colonized and the idea of violence came into the minds of colonized because of a lot of suffering in the form of physical and mental torture. The colonized wait for an appropriate time and when the colonizer, "... let down his guard and then (colonized) jumps on him" (Fanon, 1961, p. xxxviii). Catherine Belsey's method of text analysis is used, which is suggested in her essay "Textual Analysis", in the Postcolonial context that "interpretation always involves extra-textual knowledge... and some of it is derived from secondary sources." (Belsey, 2013, p. 161).<sup>4</sup> Frantz Fanon's theory of "Violence for Decolonization" is used as the conceptual framework which is prescribed in Frantz Fanon's book "Wretched of the Earth" (1961). "Heart of Darkness" (1902) by Conrad is the novel selected for the application of Fanon's theory.

## **2) Analysis:**

The colonizers have given many justifications for the use of violence and they have subjugated the colonized by using different strategies and one of them is the tool of violence. These reasons are enumerated and penned down to legitimize the use of violence as the colonizers want to justify their exploitations and tyranny. These reasons are given below:

### **Colonized are evil by nature:**

In "Heart of Darkness" the colonized are depicted as evil and savage by nature. Fanon depicts that the colonizers have made their minds on the fixed point by declaring the colonized "... absolute evil." (Fanon, 1961, p. 6). There are many instances of this inherent and instinctive savagery. Conrad depicts their oppressed, downtrodden and ill-treated condition but he uses the word "Unhappy savages" for them. Conrad feels sympathy for black people and he realizes the tyranny of the colonizers but he has internalized the idea of savagery in black colonized people as he says: "I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush." (Conrad, 1902, p. 78). Conrad's subjectivity intervenes in the description of the pathetic condition of the black people. Conrad contemplates the altered condition of Mr. Kurtz, he blames the black people and he considers them responsible for his bad and evil nature. Mr. Kurtz not only becomes native but also behaves like them. He becomes a god for natives and presides them in their rituals, moreover, his nerves are thwarted and he, "... presided at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites." (Conrad, 1902, p. 82). According to colonial authorities, Mr. Kurtz becomes an evil person because he has been living among those evil and savage colonized for a long time, "He had taken a high seat amongst the devils" (Conrad, 1902, p. 80). So, the colonizers are of the view that the black are savages, evil and devil by nature, they have the ability to turn the good people, like Mr. Kurtz, into savages and devil. The only tool to suppress the savages is violence.

### **The colonized subject is Criminal:**

The second justification for the use of violence on the part of the colonizers is that the colonized or the black are criminals by nature. Whenever disasters and crimes happen black are considered

responsible for the crime and disaster, in the novel, a black is punished without any investigation. He is considered responsible for the conflagration in the store that burns everything to ashes, “A nigger was being beaten nearby. They said he had caused the fire in some way” (Conrad, 1902, p. 36). So, the colonizers warn the colonized to be vigilant in the future. The beaten, accused and guilty person has become a living example and a symbol for all black people. Fanon presents the overgeneralization of the idea by saying, “The colonized subject is always presumed guilty....” (Fanon, 1961, p. xxxviii).

### **Colonized subjects are not human:**

The colonizers do not consider the black colonized as human beings. According to the colonizer, the black colonized are animals and beasts of burden and the use of violence is the only tool and way to control these beasts and animals as Conrad uses the word dog for the person who controls the boiler on the steamboat, “to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog... walking on his hind-legs” (Conrad, 1902, p. 59). Fanon is of the view that the colonizers consider themselves human and for the colonized they used base titles to highlight their superiority and the degraded situation of the colonized, “when the colonist speaks of the colonized, he uses zoological terms” (Fanon, 1961, p. 7).

### **Fatalism:**

Fanon says, “Fatalism relieves the oppressor of all responsibility” (Fanon, 1961, p. 18) as the colonizers consider it inevitable to colonize for the sake of their redemption and salvation. So, fatalism is another reason for the colonizers that is used for the justification of violence as Conrad says that Congo is like the ancient, prehistoric places where pagans live. The job of colonizers is to play the role of a god in order to redeem the colonized as he says: “Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world” (Conrad, 1902, p. 54) and the colonizers are here for a so-called noble cause which is to enlighten them and violence is necessary to teach them as he says: “Transgression—punishment—bang! Pitiless, pitiless. That’s the only way” (Conrad, 1902, p. 40). The areas where the colonizers are not present to teach them is considered a “God-forsaken wilderness” (Conrad, 1902, p. 19) and it is the sacred duty of the colonizers to take the responsibility of the area for refinement.

### **Tools of violence used by colonizers:**

The colonizers used different types of violence to subjugate the colonized and they gave different reasons to justify the use of violence. The reasons are mentioned below:

#### **Physical violence:**

The colonizers use physical violence as a tool to suppress the colonized, “All he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved.” (Fanon, 1961, p. 9). They beat the black colonized people in order to make them obedient servants to achieve their goals i. e, free or cheap labor. When Conrad sets foot on the outer station, he immediately witnesses the traces of physical

violence. He sees that the black is chained, there are iron collars on their necks and they are busy building something for the colonizers as he says: "... each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain" (Conrad, 1902, p. 23).

### **Linguistic violence:**

The second tool used by the colonizers is rude and offensive language for the colonized, "Colonizer uses a language of pure violence and brings violence into the homes and minds of the colonized subject." (Fanon, 1961, p. 4). The linguistic violence is very much obvious in the novel. The colonized are called savages and many derogative adjectives are used for them. The weeping of the colonized is called "howling" as the writer says: "They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces." (Conrad, 1902, p. 58). In another place, the adjective "grunt" is used for them. Conrad is an indifferent person as he is not in the favor of the colonizers but unconsciously, he has internalized the idea that the colonizers are inferior to white men. Conrad says, "I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush" (Conrad, 1902, p. 78).

### **Security concerns of Colonizers:**

The colonizers are fewer in number in the colonies where they rule like gods. Their safety is always weak to protect them. They use violence for their own safety as Fanon says, "His safety concerns lead him to remind the colonized out loud, "Here I am the master" (Fanon, 1961, p.17). The use of violence creates terror in the minds and hearts of colonized. Mr. Kurtz kills people and the skulls are placed on spears outside of his hut as Conrad says: "... these heads were the heads of rebels" (Conrad, 1902, p. 98). The colonized are beaten publicly as a warning and to highlight the authority of the colonizers for their own security.

### **The reasons for colonization:**

The process of colonization is not simple as it seems. The reason for the obscurity and ambiguity is the betrayal nature of the colonizers. Marlow contemplates the colonization of Romans and English. He infers that Romans came just for looting and plundering. The English loot and plunder under the guise of civilization. They claim that they are here to civilize the uncivilized. Marlow says that Romans were not hypocrites as they did not pretend to be torchbearers while on the other hand, the British colonialism pretends to be the well-wisher but they secretly they pursue their hidden motives, "They were no colonists.... They were conquerors...They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got" (Conrad, 1902, p. 8). Marlow highlights the cunning nature of the English colonizers when he says that the colonizers keep swords in one hand for plundering and there is a torch in the other hand to pretend that they want to enlighten the world. The cunning nature of the colonizers is clear when Marlow says that the colonized keep both "the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires" (Conrad, 1902, p. 5).

### **The wealth of the colonized:**

The sheer reason for colonization is mercenary and money-oriented, “The colonist derives his validity, i .e., his wealth, from the colonial system” (Fanon, 1902, p.2). The colonizers are usurpers of land, natural resources and cheap labor. The only tool for these exploitations is violence. Mr. Kurtz and Eldorado Exploring Expedition are in Congo for ivory and natural resources of the earth, “To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose.” (Conrad, 1902, p. 48).

### **The superiority of the Colonizers:**

The colonizers claim that it is the sacred duty of the colonizers to educate the pagans and savages because they consider themselves superior and enlightened (Fanon, 1961, p. 6). For this purpose, they went to explore the other regions. The superiority of the colonizers is intellectual and academic as “... intellectual authority over the Orient with in Western culture.” (Said, 2003, p. 19). They have created binaries to highlight their superiority. Marlow says that the areas which were not explored by white were considered dark and after the arrival of white men the light had spread on them i. e, the light of civilization, “It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery— a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over” (Conrad, 1902, p. 10)..

### **Realization of the colonized:**

The colonized subjects came to know the reasons for their subjugation in their own country after a long process of suffering and exploitation. After long-suffering, they became able to understand the situation and they reacted by using the tools and tactics which were used on them, “master’s tools being transformed and used to dismantle the master’s house” (Godiwala, 2007, p. 65).<sup>5</sup>. There are many factors that lead them to struggle for liberty.

### **Compartmentalized World:**

The oppressed and suppressed colonized live in a categorized world of hierarchy. “The colonial world is a compartmentalized world: the exploited mood of submission and inhibition.” (Fanon, 1961, p. 3). In this world, they are at the bottom of the chain of being. At the start of the colonial process, they are not able to understand the hierarchies. Marlow describes the living style of the manager who is well dressed in the dusty and muddled situation. He wears a white dress with a high starched collar, a clean necktie, and polished boots (Conrad, 1902, p. 26).. On the other hand, he describes the soiled and muddy condition of the black: “Everything else in the station was in a muddle” (Conrad, 1902, p.27).. Suffering brings courage and they take the bold step of violence for their redemption and freedom. When the chief of the village is killed by the captain, the son of the chief takes revenge by killing the captain as Marlow says that the son of the chief “... made a tentative jab with a spear at the white man— and of course it went quite easy between the shoulder-blades” (Conrad, 1902, p. 12).

### **Covetousness:**

Covetousness and envy are the passions that compel the colonized to use violence. The things that are in the custody of the colonizers are the commodity of the colonized and they are deprived of their basic needs. The colonized suffer a lot but with the passage of time, their frustration and depravity stimulate them to use violence, “The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist's sector is a look of lust” (Fanon, 1961, p. 5). They want to get those things and unconsciously they develop the tendency to seize the things by using violence as Marlow describes there is covetousness in their eyes: “You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening” (Conrad, 1902, p. 19).

### **Colonized subjects discover their humanity:**

With the passage of time the colonized discovers that he is like the colonizer as his life, breathing, heartbeats the skin are the same as that of the colonizers. The only difference is the difference in color which is not a very striking difference, “...at the very moment when they discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure victory” (Fanon, 1902, p. 10).. With the passage of time, the colonized come to know that they are living human beings like the colonizers. There is the only difference in the color of skin. They are not animals and they should not be treated like animals. The overfed boy does not accept the slavery of the colonizers and he treats them as he is their master “...an overfed young negro from the coast—to treat the white men, under his very eyes, with provoking insolence” (Conrad, 1902, p. 34).

### **Dream of Liberty:**

The dream of liberty unintentionally creeps into the minds of the colonized after sustaining too much violence, “During colonization the colonized subject frees himself night after night between nine in the evening and six in the morning” (Fanon, 1961, p. 15). The beaten nigger gets comfort in the dream and sighs for liberty, “...the beaten nigger groaned somewhere....The hurt nigger moaned feebly somewhere nearby, and then fetched a deep sigh” (Conrad, 1902, p. 41).

### **3) Conclusion:**

The colonizers hanker after wealth and natural resources as there is the devil of greed, hot desires in the form of the colonizers. The Colonizers are lusty and red-eyed devils who want the wealth of the East. They exploit the colonized by using different tools of violence. They use violence in order to subjugate and suppress them. The reason for suppression is to avoid or slow down rebellion and resistance. During the process of colonization, the colonizers' use of violence also teaches the colonized a way of liberation that is violence. “Mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility: signs of spectacular resistance” (Bhabh, 1994, p. 121).<sup>6</sup> With the passage of time the confrontation between the colonizers and the colonized starts. In the novel, the colonized don't achieve freedom. The novel shows the initial steps of realization and awareness. As Fanon says the last shall be first by the murderous and resolute fight between the colonizers and the colonized. The colonized can only get success by adopting the means which are applied to them including violence.

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