



The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism

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This study contends that modern colonialism is successful not only because the ruling country subjugates through superior technical and economic resources, but also because the rulers propagate cultural subservience of the subject people. Exploring the myths, fantasies and psychological defenses that went into the colonial culture, particularly the polarities that shaped the colonial theory of progress, Nandy describes the Indian experience and shows how the Indians broke with traditional norms of Western culture to protect their vision of an alternative future.

The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism Details

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Vaidya says

This is a set of two essays. Not sure I understood everything being said, but you do get an idea as you read further into it. The first essay(The Psychology of Colonialism) was pretty hard to get through as the language used was pretty academic. But you need to get through that to get into the second one(The Uncolonized Mind) which is a much easier read.

Once you get the idea, its easier to make up your mind and you can decide whether to agree with him or not. But the concepts and theories are good as to how we tend to think of the colonial rule in 'their' terms while the reason the Indian way survived was because we(Gandhi etc) were able to define the game in our terms. Interesting one to read and think about.

Harshvardhan says

This book shows whys Ashish Nandy is must for readers. He presents an entire different perspective on colonialism, how it was and how it continues to be. This book is must not only to understand the post colonial situation, but also to understand, what lies underneath the Hindutva Politics.

Tanay Bakshi says

An interesting glimpse into the minds of the colonizer and the colonized. It's up to us whether to agree with the author or not, but we can anyways interpret the content in our own way and that is the beauty of academic-centric books like this.

Language is academic and hence a little difficult to understand but once we get into it, we begin to unfold what the content is.

Bulubhai says

psychology of indian

Anurag says

Even though I don't agree with a lot of things Mr Nandy has said, this is an exceptional account of the Indian colonial experience. It has a lot to say about each one of us who lived in the Indian subcontinent and felt some repercussions, however faint or indirect, of the colonial past.

For me, the essays exposed some of doubts on the role of power in definition of ethics, which I had arrived to some convenient answers at. Mr Nandy has analyzed Indian personalities in great detail and offers insights

from their personal lives to explain how an individual deals under power, defeat; more importantly he exhibits how a colonial experience transforms perspectives fundamentally. This is an eye-opening book - well-researched and still accessible to the general public.

Where I don't agree with Mr Nandy are places where he seems to make the colonial rule and its policies sound very deliberate. In my opinion, the British Raj was bulky, non-uniform and quite disintegrated. A deliberation of the magnitude that sometimes seems to have been assumed as a priori in Mr Nandy's arguments was probably absent.

Mukesh Kumar says

Simply brilliant! Deconstructing the psychology of colonialism, through the eyes of gender definitions (negation of the androgynous or feminine), resistances to it within and without the framework of the west and how the colonizer and the colonized both become a victim of it! Also, the aftershocks after the colonizers have left and the co-option. So much to take in, great stuff.

Richard says

I didn't enjoy the book, though the subject matter fascinates me. It lacks accessibility, but once you power into it is rather fascinating.

Anne says

one of the best books I have EVER read.

Vikas Lather says

My new found love for psycho-anthropology.

Jessica says

Works as an interesting reference book with respect to the term of the 'bi-cultural' self referring to Rudyard Kipling and the influence of his twinned geo-location of England and India as they influenced his entire life and therefore, his writing.

Megan says

A little heavy on the psychoanalysis for me, but nonetheless useful if you're interested in colonial/postcolonial studies.

Adam says

I severely underestimated the amount of time I'd have to read in grad school, but this was one for class. Nandy writes explicitly about colonialism and post-colonialism in British India, but his analysis can tell us a great deal about power relations in the world today.

Sneha Yerra says

I didn't understand 2/3rds of it. It needs a second reading. But, true.. the book brought out an angle I never ever thought of. I always thought west as liberal ... but, I don't know.. true.. not just it , I don't say the west is masculine.. but, the values it upheld and the general thought of the society doesn't favor the not-ambitious , who likes to take things slow. The world became designed in such a way that the passive can't survive. One basic question I'd ask is .. is it so even in the natural state ? Nature doesn't favor the passive? Or the humans defined and made the world so? And I don't know why.. but, he seemed a little biased toward India . But, I need to confirm it after reading it again. But, I don't know if I'd. The book had opened so many things for me that I feel like I can't afford to read the book again. There's so much to do. Eventually, I might understand what he said through other sources and when I get back to some of the ideas in the books, I might understand them better or get them easily.

If he is right, I wonder what made India so passive ..

Steph says

I could probably read this book ten times and still find something new on the 11th try...yea this book is pretty awesome :)

Jerry Jose says

To most of the finest critical minds of West, Colonialism was a necessary evil, the first portal towards a more even homogenized world. But for the Colonized, the psychological after effects and the trauma of subjugation, in all its postulated merits, have not yet let them embrace the egalitarian world the apologists conveniently then envisioned. Author here argues that Colonialism has not only colonized the geographical material entity but also the mind; by compelling colonized societies to modify, if not alter, their cultural priorities towards the concepts of modern West. In this book, Nandy consciously connives to uncover what Western colonialism has done to its subjects unconsciously, and the alternative language of discourse colonized Indians might have created in the process.

I know the intro sounds like the first snooze button in a long boring lecture, but I find myself ill equipped to articulate the things that I enjoyed and found enlightening during this read. Even a reproduction in Nandy's own language, which is academically *tharoorized* like *Khilnani's*, isn't enough to vocalise my thoughts and disagreements, or even appreciation towards the things I couldn't repudiate even though I wanted to.

“Even in opposition, the dissent remains predictable and controlled. It is possible today to opt for a non-West which in itself is a construction of the West. One can then choose between being the Orientalist’s despot, to combine *Karl Wittfogel* with *Edward Said*, and the revolutionary’s loving subject, to combine *Camus* with *George Orwell*. And for those who do not like the choice, there is, of course, *Cecil Rhodes*’ and *Rudyard Kiplings*’ noble, half-savage half-child, compared to whom the much-hated Brown Sahib seems more Brown than sahib.”

The book is comprised of two long essays, first one of psychology of colonialism where Author examines the nature of sex, age and ideology in British India, and latter about post-colonial view of West and India. And they both speak of victims than victors, and when victors are addressed they are considered as camouflaged victims in their earlier stage of psychological decay. According to Nandy, one must choose the non-modern slave over the modern master coz slave represents a higher cognition for regarding his master ‘human’, whereas master’s cognition perforce reduces the slave to a ‘thing’. Modern oppression, he argues, as opposed to traditional oppression is not a battle between the self and the enemy, or the oppressor and the revolutionaries, or the god and the demons. Though I think a detailed look into the traditional oppression, can render them less monochromatic, I found his take very appealing and well in line with book’s title.

Side lining economic and political borders, Nandy tries to show the state of mind as the primary differentia between colonizers and the colonized, where a shared culture might not find its commencement with alien rule or closure in its departure. Towards later years, British began to ascribe salvatory meanings to Colonial domination and Indians began to see their progress in becoming more like the British, in friendship or enmity. In this ‘identification with the aggressor’, western view of hyper masculinity began to permeate into the socio-religious-literature-art movements of India, with ‘*Kshatriyahood*’ (the martial portion of Indian caste system) becoming the indicator of authentic indianhood. Indian concepts of *purusatva*(masculinity), *naritva*(femininity) and *klibatva*(hermaphroditism) were polarized against one another and the existence of later two or any forms of androgyny were now perceived as negation of man’s unalloyed political identity. This reader was able to identify, to some extent, the suggested transition in depiction of Gods, who are getting increasingly martial, or masculine or feminine, every day against earlier androgynous ‘*ardhanarishwaran*’ (half man half woman God).

In the second essay, author takes his psychoanalysis to the post-colonial view, of both India and the West. It gets into the nitty gritty details of *Kipling*’s life in relation with his literary view, and the materialistic obfuscations of internal critiques like *Nirad C Chaudhuri* and *V.S.Naipaul*, who in their loss, wanted to identify India as a martial opponent to the West. Nandy’s polar opposite is *Aurobindo Ghose*, who denounced his western middle name and western education to embrace India as India, not the non-West. To the former Orient should defeat the Occident in its own game by embracing ‘this-worldiness’ of ‘*Kshatriyahood*’, and to the latter the already superior ‘*Spiritual India*’ was the real India. Though pluralities of ideologies are always accommodated, this split is in present continuous tense and when everything material fails people retracts to the spiritual self for answers. The major western worldview separates both philosophies, with conspicuous hierarchy and exclusivity. And this is where Gandhi stands as an original critique to modernity. He attacked the moral statement and civilizing mission of colonialism based on cultural superiority in their home ground-by declaring it evil through judgement via Christian values. And he further disproved the historical conception of colonisation as an instrument of progress using western conception of ‘history’ itself.

“there are many kinds of failures, some of which succeed.”

A Passage to India, EM Foster

Idea of India has always been compromising, fluidic and in a way ahistoric, with tolerance and willingness to learn the ways of outsider or civilized, provided it's profitable. It would be more correct to put this aspect as something out of necessity than intrinsic trait, a survival strategy that keeps somewhat dynamic boundary conditions, to preserve one's self-image. Here the 'Spiritual India' maintains pragmatism even with its weak grasp on reality and provides ductility over brittleness of egoistic identity. I can't say I have grokked this unfathomable unheroic Indian response, and to the occident in me and you, these questions may offer more clarity than the answers author provides for them.

“But the question remains why every imperial observer of the Indian society has loved India's martial races and hated and felt threatened by the rest of the India's 'effeminate' men willing to compromise with the victors?

What is it in the latter that has aroused such antipathy?

Why should they matter so much to the conquerors of India if they were so trivial?

Why could they so effortlessly become the antonymous of their rulers?

Why have many modern Indians shared this imperialist estimation?

Why have they felt proud of those who fought out and lost, and not of those who lost out and fought?”
