

The Wretched of the Earth

Book Author: Frantz Fanon.

Preface by: Jean-Paul Sartre;

Translated by: Constance Farrington

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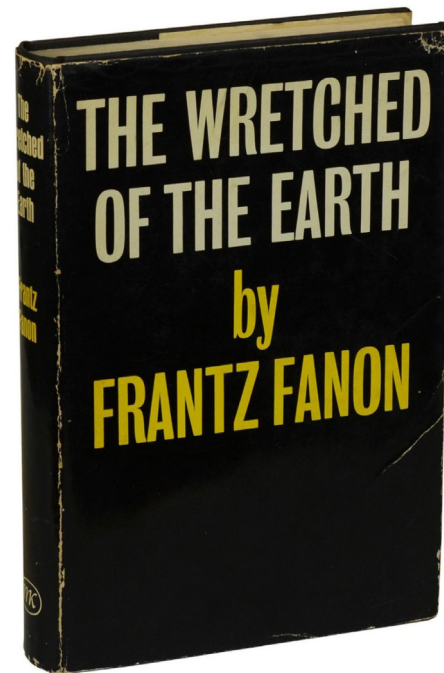
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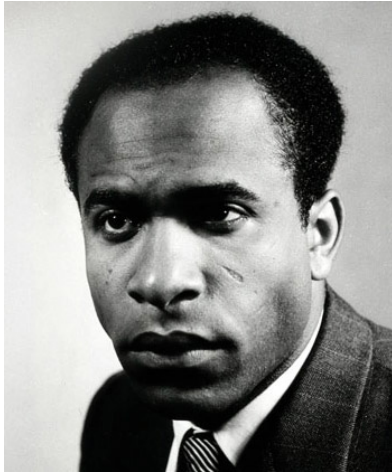
Introduction

Frantz Fanon's manifesto on de-colonization made him the leading anti-colonialist thinker of the twentieth century. Written at the peak of the Algerian war for independence from French colonial rule. It is based upon his observation and experience in Algeria. He analyses the role of class, race, national culture and violence in the struggle for freedom. Fanon, who himself was a psychiatrist, makes clear the socio-economic and psychological degradation inflicted by the imperialism. Showing how decolonization must be united with building a national culture, this passionate and blazing relation between the West and the Third World is still illuminating about the world today. Thus, Fanon put forth the guidelines that characterize the decolonization and revolution.

In the chapter "Concerning Violence" Fanon says that "for National Liberation decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" (Fanon, p. 33). Any resistance

against the colonizer must be violent in nature because it is the only "language" the colonizer speaks. Thus, violent resistance is a necessity imposed by the colonists upon the colonizer. Decolonization is also the process of replacing a 'species of men by another species of men' (Fanon, p. 33). Being a Marxist humanist he argues that decolonization sets out to change the world order completely not by a magical or natural shock but by the meeting of two forces opposed to each other by their very nature i.e. the oppressor and the oppressed (Fanon, p. 35).

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed; for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally it transforms spectators into privileged actors (Fanon, p. 35). In his understanding of decolonization, if the principle "The last shall be the first and the first last" is executed all decolonization will be successful (Fanon, p. 36). This can be accomplished by using all means including greater violence.



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The main argument found throughout the work revolves around the violence in the struggle for liberation. Fanon's idea of violence is that, it is the force only which can meet force, colonialism is held in place by the policemen and the soldiers, who are the official spokesperson of the settlers and their rule of oppression (Fanon, p. 37). Besides, the coup of nations by the European countries was a violent phenomenon that tried to destroy the ways of life of the indigenous people, their spirit and cultures. Hence, from its inception and in its maintenance colonialism is violent.

Fanon further argues that, the European humanism and values of enlightenment are nothing but a paradox, as the principle of equality of all men remained limited to white European men. While explaining the dehumanization of natives by the settlers, Fanon draws parallel between the capitalist societies and the native societies. "He says that the settlers' town was a strongly built town, made of stones and steel and was charming like the bride, the settlers' feet were never visible, they were protected by strong shoes though the streets of their town were clean and no holes or stones were found. It was a town of white people of foreigners". Whereas, the town that belonged to native was a place ill famed, inhabited by men of evil repute. It was world of little space, where men lived on top of each other and their huts were built one on top of the other. "The native town was a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. It was a town of niggers and dirty Arabs" (Fanon, p. 38).

As a result the colonizer leaves no stone unturned in making the conditions of the natives more wretched. The colonizer dehumanizes the native to such an extent that whenever they mention the natives, they decry them with the zoological terms like bestiality, spawn swarm etc.

According to Fanon, the violence which had ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, had ceaselessly caused the rhythm for the destruction of the native social forms and structures and had broken up without reserving the system of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life. But once the natives become conscious enough and decide to write their history according to their own will, they would adopt the same method of violence to overthrow the colonizers.

In the chapter "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" Fanon gives a series of cases related to mental disorder, resulted from the colonial occupation and war for liberation. The level of violence experienced by the Algerian—militants and civilians resulted in the psychosomatic disorders like insomnia, schizophrenia, insecurity, anxiety, phantasm, chimera etc. (Fanon, p. 253). The considerable number of people complained of sleepless nights, those who slept dreamt of bloodbath. Fanon further writes that "when a native is tortured, when his wife is murdered or raped he complains to none. The oppressor's government can set up commissions of inquiry but in the eyes of native, these commissions do not exist" (Fanon, p. 255). As the world had never witnessed a case where the native had been treated according to the justifiable principles, in this context the native never expects justice from the ruthless colonizer.

According to Fanon, the way forward for post-colonial independent states in Africa and elsewhere is for the native intellectuals and native population to evolve a model of development suited to their socio-cultural and economic realities. In which, there exists the respect for their local language, race, culture and territory. He also warned that an imitation of the European model was bound to be disastrous and urged Algerian people to accept and be assertive in their originality (Fanon, p. 312). The emulation of the European model would further put the native population into deep slumber where it will be impossible for them to come out of it. So better is to evolve a model which fits their needs and aspirations.

Conclusion

As De-Colonization is simply the substitution of one "species" of mankind by another. The substitution is unconditional, absolute, total and seamless. In this context, Fanon's work becomes a must read for those communities who wish to gain a better understanding of neo-colonial and bourgeois nature of contemporary politics, as it explains and gives great insights about, how the colonizer benefits by colonization of the native and thereby makes colonizer responsible for the oppression of the colonized.

The circumstances that are currently prevalent in Afghanistan, Palestine, Jammu and Kashmir are somewhat identical to that of Algeria, though these are two different paradigms in different regions of the world. But the distress, human rights violation, the psychic disorders, the dehumanization of the natives clearly reveal the similarity between the two phenomenon. The Abrogation of article 370 (which according to Indian constitution gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir) and 35A once again disclosed the real identity of the colonizer where it used the institutional mechanism to not only disrupt the democratic process, but also made the natives to depend heavily on colonizer, so it becomes almost impossible to stand up on its own. Therefore, the circumstances have been made more miserable than ever.

The natives are not only tortured physically or mentally, but also financially, politically and socially. Further,

the natives have also been betrayed by their own blood in whatever form it appeared. The only thing that the natives could afford is just to wait for their armada of hope to come. And that is the way which will give some respite to the oppressed people of the oppressed nation. Whether, the oppressed takes recourse to *Gandhian* means or *Marxian*, what remains same is the color of blood which flows like a small stream in this part of world. Where young kids are snatched from their mother's, where half widows are still searching for their partners to come, where unknown killers are never recognized. In this context, it becomes imperative to understand the importance of revolutionary instincts which according to Fanon is the way forward for the emancipation of humanity.

About the Reviewer

Waseem Ahmad Bhat is a research fellow with the Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir. He received a master's degree in political science from the same department.



His areas of specialisation are state politics with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir, and Communist Movement. He has qualified Jammu and Kashmir State Eligibility Test [JKSET] and University Grants Commission (National Eligibility test) [UGC NET] in 2016 and 2018 respectively.

He is a recipient of Mualana Azad National Fellowship awarded by University Grants Commission, New Delhi. Waseem has also contributed research papers and articles of National and International repute in several journals. In addition, he has presented papers at various National and International conferences.

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