
UNIT 4 FEMINISM, POST-MODERNISM AND POST-COLONIALISM

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Learning Objectives



After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand and define feminism;
- Comprehend how studying gender, forms an important part of our intellectual discourse and its deliverance;
- Understand and define post-modernism;
- Comprehend how the use of subjectivity in post-modernism provides a new perspective and how discourses should vie to be open for different views rather than being closed and definitive;
- Understand and define post-colonialism; and
- Comprehend how post-colonialism as a theory tries to bring out the angst felt by the colonies against the colonisers. Learn how It tries to built upon the experiences of the colonial past and how colonial influences had left an impact on the post-colonial world, be it in describing class, gender, migration etc from examples of post colonial thinkers.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Theoretical perspectives in anthropology have always basically tried to understand society and culture and how they reproduce themselves. In this context, we will deliberate upon three theories of anthropology which can be said to be contributive in deciphering the issues and concerns of the contemporary global scenario. These theories, feminism, post-modernism and post-colonialism have had their origin in the mid-to-later half of the twentieth century. By going into social complexities

they show us a path to understand issues like gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste and any other matter. In this unit we take the three one by one and try to place before the student knowledge about their development, necessity, critique and their usage in comprehending culture and society.

4.2 FEMINISM

In this portion we will look at feminist concerns and how anthropology as a social science includes the feminist perspective to comprehend issues of gender in society. Let us first have a brief knowledge about what Feminism is. Feminism is understood as a social and political movement which argues for equal rights and opportunities for women all over the world. It is from this movement, theorisation of the structure of society in terms of gender arose. Popularly called feminist theory, it concentrates on the understanding of how unequal gender statuses came into being and how gender is constructed in society particularly in the presence of patriarchy. This very movement when studied from a theoretical perspective is called feminist theory. Anthropology among other subjects uses this perspective to study and understand gender inequality and the discrimination that they face in society. It absorbs into its arena issues of difference, representation and critiques of power and knowledge in terms of gender. In this we look into the roles played by women in society and the experiences they go through. In anthropology, feminist theory also concentrates in learning how people accept and get used to oppression and also how in many cases oppressive structures are resisted and attempts are made to change them. Here it involves the study of gender and power and involves integrating theories of structure, agency and practice.

Feminism also takes a critical look at the way in which knowledge has been produced as knowledge not only from a male centric point of view but also from a dominant position in society (caste, medicine, science, etc.) have all been shown to be andocentric, widely found in the works of scholars such as Bernard Cohen, Donna Haraway and Annette Weiner.

4.2.1 Feminist Theory in Anthropology

In this part of the unit we will discuss feminist theory and its use in anthropology according to the stages that feminism has been categorised into. There are clearly three stages in feminism which are divided into first wave, second wave and third wave feminism. Before first wave feminism which is also known as the suffrage movement (because it fought for women's right to vote) anthropological work was conducted by men and the ethnographies collected was mainly based on the information provided by men respondents about their societies. The first wave feminist movement occurred visibly from the mid 19th century to the early 20th century. Feminist theory first came into use in anthropology when during first wave feminist movement anthropologists finally used views and perspectives of women respondents in their ethnographic studies. In this way they brought to the forefront experiences and social behaviour of women which along with the views of men gave anthropological study newer understanding of societies and their intricacies. Moreover such studies were started basically by women anthropologists that opened up a new avenue of accessibility and more complete data.

Among women ethnographers of that time women who helped in bringing this change were Elsie Clews Parsons, Alice Fletcher and Phyllis Kaberry. Elsie Clews Parsons had her training in Sociology. She ventured into anthropology after meeting stalwarts like Sapir, Lowie and Boas. Although she was not an academic, she

conducted many ethnographic studies and in the process so she tried to make the women respondents question and rethink their position in society. Another American anthropologist who did enough ethnographic work on American Indians, Alice Fletcher can also be termed as a feminist who wrote about women in her work but yet the issues of representation and interpretation remained. During this time in Britain, anthropologist Phyllis Kaberry concentrated on the social and political issues women faced in society, their relationship with men clubbed with the study of religion. Her book examining gender equations called *Women of the Grassfields* (1952) is considered a classic, which emphasised on women and development. Some male anthropologists of this time did study women in their research but it was not with an interest to represent them but more in the context of their presence in kinship and marriage studies.

Studies centering on women did start from the 1920s with Margaret Mead being one of pioneers in forwarding such studies. The period from 1920s to 1980s falls under second wave feminism where sex and gender were seen as clearly separate categories. While sex is used to describe a person biologically, gender is used to define a person culturally. Margaret Mead brought in her work a distinction which was earlier missing in anthropological studies where all women were seen to go through the same experiences all over the world. Mead pointed out that, women in different cultures had different experiences. She was the first to opine that behaviour in women is not natural but was culturally driven. Her works *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) showed the role of culture in people's development. In her opinion it was cultural factors that were primarily responsible in shaping notions of femininity and masculinity and not the biological and given fact of sex.

In the mid twentieth century works of philosophers, Simone de Beviour and Betty Friedan significantly contributed to the development of feminist theory in Anthropology. de Beviour's book *The Second Sex* (1952) is considered to be a cult piece which provides a radical understanding of the meaning of gender. She postulated that women are not born as women but acquires the definition of woman gradually by the role she plays in society. Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963) is notably the most influential book of the last century that peeped into the world of American housewives and brought out the fact that women even with their worldly material pleasures were not happy to just remain in their households as housewives. It was this book in fact which paved the way for second wave feminism, which among other things looks into inequality in the workplace family, reproductive rights and sexuality.

Anthropologist Eleanor Leacock's work on gender discrimination was noteworthy in influencing second wave feminism. Her studies pointed out that all forms of female subordination is due to the presence of the existing capitalist system. She argued on this with the help of Marx's and Engels' celebrated works *Das Kapital* (1867) and *The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

In the 1970s, anthropologists Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere questioned the male centric biases in anthropological studies. Rosaldo and Lamphere brought out the book *Woman, Culture and Society* (1974), the first book to completely look into gender and woman's status in society in lieu of the existence of the hierarchical structure allowing them to behave in manners which limit them.

Feminist Anthropology properly established itself as an important aspect of anthropological study in the 1970s. This was finally a reaction to be continuing

male bias in the subject. Noteworthy scholars are Rayna Reiter, Gayle Rubin and Sherry Ortner. Reiter came out with her book *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1975) where she pointed out that men and women have separate social behaviour and this provides ample reason for women being studied as part of anthropological investigation. Another anthropologist of her time, Gayle Rubin also supported the study of gender and introduced the sex/gender system in 1975. This system suggested that biological behaviour was separate from social behaviour, as differences in gender behaviour was constructed politically and socially rather than being designed by nature. Another pioneer of that time, Sherry Ortner in her *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?* (1974), equated men with culture and women with nature and put forward the hypothesis that since men dominate nature, they dominate women too. This equation was derived from the nineteenth century Baconian posulate that denied women any intellectual capacity and relegated them to the status of reproductive machines. Engels' submission that women worked hard in the domestic sphere but are nothing but unpaid labourers, gave rise to Marxists feminist theory that examined women's subordination, economically or otherwise that is contained in the division of labour. Some famous Marxists feminist philosophers of the 70s were Shirley Ardner, Pat Caplan and Janet Bujura. They all researched on the role of women in production and reproduction.

Box: A comparative example

It is imperative to the study of Anthropology and its feminist concerns that we discuss the contribution of Annete Weiner, in terms of her restudy of Branislow Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and his other works based on the lives of the Trobriand Islanders. The knowledge of this study is constructive in the study of feminist theory in anthropology as Malinowski, popular for his contribution to many new ideas, methods and innovations in anthropological study overlooked the importance of women and their roles in his study. This comparative study by Weiner hence can be cited to reestablish the fact that anthropologists were in the past not concerned with the roles played by women in societies and the identities they held. In her famous work *Women of Value: Men of Renown* (1976) she refuted Malinowski's explanation of women in the Trobriand Islands, that they were dominated by their men. She put forward a non-androcentric appraisal, where she suggested that not only were women at par with their male counterparts, in many areas, but it was the women who were the dominant ones in the society. While Malinowski was interested in learning about magic, religion, kinship and economy, Weiner along with these was also interested in the sexes and sexuality. Their main difference laid in the way they interpreted the Trobriand Islanders. While Malinowski did not clarify women's position in his descriptions, 50 years later Weiner did so through her elucidations. While Malinowski describe roles and statuses of women through conversations he had with the men folk, not considering the fact that women too might have a stance in the world they lived in. Weiner's perspective, that of understanding women by conversing to them directly brought out an alternate explanation of their lives, that women controlled the wealth and thus had authority on the Trobriand society. Her re-interpretation suggested that rather than just being equal, they were in fact dominant as the power of wealth and economy was in their hands. This example helps us to learn that study of gender in all their aspects is important, and what anthropology lacked in the past is now comfortably filled in by feminist perspective in anthropology in the study of society in which both gender accommodate various spaces.

With the 1980s came third wave feminism which is all about accepting differences and conflicts in gender. This theory embraces issues of gender and sexuality as cores, which includes questions of variation in gender, like queer theory, transgender, sex-positivity (people have social expectations out of the physical body), post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, more so by Edward Said's Orientalism(1979), anti-racism, women from third world countries including women

of colour etc. However main concerns in these remained oppression and empowerment.

Herietta Moore's book *Feminism and Anthropology* (1988), explored two main points: one that gender difference is connected to other social differences like power, class, ethnicity, race etc and second that anthropological research fundamentally is ruled by "sexist ideology" the main being the subject being called the study of man. Here even women anthropologists while conducting research, in most of the 20th century fell under the dictates of masculine models. It is only by countering these ideas and questioning oneself, can a woman scholar researching women and society could clearly decipher and stand for the experiences women of different colours, class, ethnicity all over the world face.

There are certain theories that influence feminist studies in Anthropology. They are practice theory, theory of positionality, performance theory and queer theory.

Practice theory emerges from Marx's notion that every social activity is praxis, that is, a practice. This theory emphasises about behaviours related to restrictions and equality. It views from a feminist perspective how people live their lives in reality and what is practiced. This view came as a reaction to Durkheim's idea of sacred and profane where he suggested that women did not have any symbolic role to play. It tries to understand how systems maintain their continuity even with their existing inequalities and differences. It moreover argues about ideas which exhibit all activities of society to be of contrasting natures.

A view of the essentialist scholars of second wave feminism faces much flak in the late 1980s. It had suggested that women should value their female essence and should make positive use of their feminine characteristics. This was called cultural feminism where women instead of taking part in "manly" activities should accentuate their own abilities. The propounders of this idea were Adrienne Rich and Mary Daly. This notion was denounced during the third wave by an intervention called the theory of positionality. The major denouncers were French post-structuralists. They pointed out that while celebrating female capacities of women the idea ignored the patriarchal oppressive bodies who are responsible for creating such feminine talents. The theory of positionality says that instead of uplifting women cultural feminism actually takes away concepts created to fight female oppression and it ends up doing nothing but create "negative feminism."

A recent theory in feminist anthropological studies is performance theory. It talks about how individuals perform their duties in everyday life. It shows that gender is created through discourse, while sex creates gender. Judith Butler, eminent feminist and author of *Gender Trouble* states that performance of individuals is the creation of discourses. Works of Bourdieu, Sahlins etc have influenced performance advocates.

The last recent theory used in feminist anthropology is Queer theory. This theory voices that what is socially considered normal, advocating heterosexuality may not really be correct. It challenges this "accepted sexual preference". It also emphasises how enculturation has a huge role to play in the identification of conventional sexuality. Main contributions in queer theory has been influence by Foucault and has been advocated by current day feminist philosophers like Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, Diane Mayne, Nancy Scheper Hughes, Lila Abu-Lughod etc.

4.3 POST-MODERNISM

We now come to the description of another contemporary theory, i.e. post-modernism. This is a theory which is highly debated amongst scholars. It is very difficult to define postmodernism as there is no single unifying definition of it. Post-modernism was a dramatic break from modernism (described in the first paragraph of sub-section 4.3.1) and it is of course a continuation of it. Post-modernism is associated with modernism. The term Post means later. Hence what came after modernism may be seen as post-modernism. It arose as a movement which contradicted the modernist idea. It started with the arts and architecture where outlooks which were based on modernism were rejected. It tried to break conventions and look for ideas beyond ordinary explanation, where self and the other, the subject and the object gets combined or dissolved. From arts and architecture, post-modernism as a theoretical deliberation entered into other spheres of study where it questioned constructed social realities. As in the arts, postmodernism in anthropology too interrogates into definite ordering of life, for example, the employers and the employed, men and women, patriarchy and matriarchy and many more other such examples which we usually find to be placed normatively. Post-modernism suggests that instead of studying these either in isolation or specific realities, it is necessary to view them as combined, plural and comparable.

In anthropology, post-modernism has been provided with many explanations by many philosophers. Here we note Melford Spiro's reflections on postmodernism which is rather detailed than the unclear description of the theory. He says "The postmodernist critique of science consists of two interrelated arguments, epistemological and ideological. Both are based on subjectivity. First, because of the subjectivity of the human object, anthropology, according to the epistemological argument cannot be a science; and in any event the subjectivity of the human subject precludes the possibility of science discovering objective truth. Second, since objectivity is an illusion, science according to the ideological argument, subverts oppressed groups, females, ethnics, third-world peoples" (1996).

Before we go describe and talk about the different concerns related to postmodernism in Anthropology, we need to learn a little about the different movements which led to its origin and development.

4.3.1 Modernity, Modernism and Modernisation

These terms are interlinked. They came into being during the renaissance. Madan Sarup in *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism*, defines Modernity as "the progressive economic and administrative rationalisation and differentiation of the social world" (1993). Modernism was defined as "an aesthetic development which brought about a radical shift in consciousness and a violent transformation of social conditions in the late 19th and 20th centuries." ('Postmodernism' by Chris Snipp-Walmsley in Patricia Waugh's ed. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2006). It was illustrated by two concerns: Self-consciousness and reflexiveness. The period when modernity and modernism were studied was started with new changes in society. The transition was seen in political and economic spheres where the change was from feudalism to industrialism. Religion got a back seat with the rise of the enlightenment movement. Urbanisation also took place. All these realities and more led scholars to theorise. This is the period which is termed as modernisation that also marks the advent of positivism

and scientific thinking. The designation of anthropology as a science was because of modernist thinking that prioritised rationality.

4.3.2 Post-modernity and Post-modernism

While modernism as a theory in modernity associated itself with ideas like identity, authority, unanimity, inevitability etc, post-modernism looks into difference, multiplicity, cynicism, documentation etc. Post-modernism deliberates that an objective and impartial view of a culture, which is not one's own is unattainable.

Post-modernist anthropological investigation started in the 1960s, which noted that earlier anthropological documentation was based on social and political frameworks which were validated by objective explanation. This, post-modernism depicts as irrational as culture and the world, usually is perceived on the basis of one's own personal experiences and one's own cultural life. As much as one may want to be objective in one's interpretation of other cultures, one is unable to let go of the ingrained biases. Post-modern anthropologists try to correct this situation by trying to be sensitive and subjective as much as possible. In other words the postmodern anthropologists attempt to scrutinise, interpret and appraise existing guidelines of anthropology and at the same time try to survey its codes, regularity and procedures of study.

Simply putting Anthropologists, if they provide their own interpretations it might be boggled by issues of power and wealth which postmodernism tries to defy. This means that they have consider the views of the culture studied and put them forth. Post modernism does not recognise any objective truth or facts; reducing everything to a subjectivity that cannot be evaluated by any rational principle. This for others who do not follow the post modern theoretical path, is threatening and therefore they tend to criticise the postmodern perspective by pointing that postmodernism follows a moral model route. Moral model they insist, decry empirical and scientific data. In fact they feel that a postmodern anthropological approach does not allow a common ground of understanding. Thus the debate today is one of whether representation of knowledge should be based on scientific or subjective and reflexive hence more humanist approach. The post modern author involves the subjects of her study into her analysis.

4.3.3 Influencing Figures of Postmodernism

In social sciences, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, German philosophers, were the first who inspired postmodern philosophy. However it was the French philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault etc. who actually developed the theory. Anthropologists who were encouraged to forward this thought are Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, Goerge Marcus, Nancy Hughes etc.

We now provide a brief introduction of these scholars to get a better grasp of the ideas that they postulated.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007): Baudrillard was a sociologist by training who used the post modern perspective to explain the world as a set of models. He does so by dividing modernity and postmodernity into two parts. For him every incident in life has already taken place and the world has nothing new to offer. This got him the name of a skeptical postmodernist, based on Rosenau's (1992) division of postmodernists into skeptical postmodernists or affirmative postmodernists. For Baudrillard the postmodern era started with the introduction of mass media, more

specifically cinema and photography. He defined the world to be nothing but images and images are replications. For him truth and science do not hold their real meaning. Truth according to Baudrillard in society is what is agreed upon and science is any mode of explanation.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004): Derrida too is a skeptical postmodernist. He was known as a poststructuralist. He popularised the concept of deconstruction in post-structuralism and postmodernism. Deconstruction suggests that whatever is documented is to be critiqued or analytically reviewed, to reveal the relationship of meaning between texts. He also questions the western viewpoint on reason. He asserts that it is dominated by “metaphysics of presence”. He argued that anything that was viewed with reason should not be seen as a stable and immortal paradigm. His basic interest was to challenge concepts of truth, knowledge and truth. He proposes that there should be reasoning on reasoning itself. In other words rationality can be contextual and there can be more than one way of reasoning or gaining knowledge.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984): Foucault was a French philosopher of repute and his tenets on postmodernism still hold much weight. For him the truths which are considered by society as permanent, in reality changes with time. Foucault study was basically about the politics of power and how it changes. This was in fact one of the basis of postmodernism. He questioned the facts which were placed in chronological order to describe historical events. He believed that there are hidden parts, parts which are not accounted for, in history which contain concealed knowledge. These however do play a role in giving societies identities. It is due to developing such ideas about truth and knowledge, Foucault is considered to be one of the prime postmodernists. His theory of discourse tells us that there is no absolute truth but truth is constructed out of people talking about it and in this talk there is the entire theory of power that plays itself out. Thus powerful voices are heard more than subordinated ones or many are not heard at all. Thus a discourse is how people negotiate their points of view and how marginal voices make attempts to make themselves heard.

The main adherents of postmodernism in anthropology are discussed below.

Clifford Geertz (1926-2006): Clifford Geertz though prominently known for his work on postmodernism in Anthropology had himself conflicting views about the theory. However his thoughts on post-modernism in anthropology can be divided into two parts. The first half of post-modernism was controlled by literature mostly with concentration on text, genre, style of writing, narration, fiction, dialogue, allegory, representation, symbols etc while the second half of post-modernism dealt with the political aspect of societies. He delved into issues of authority, power and power structure. Issues studied in post-colonialism related to power equations was also deliberated by Geertz, for example, colonialism and power, racism, exoticism. He also questioned the use of narratives about colonies by the Western colonisers and their own understanding of them which differs with the post-modern arena. This connects his views with post-colonialism.

Do note: Clifford Geertz is also known for his work on religion and interpretive theory which is not discussed here.

James Clifford: Like all core post-modernists, James Clifford also advocated the idea that an objective viewpoint in studying and writing ethnography is not possible. For him ethnography makes the author describe it with persuasion where her/his preferences unconsciously come forward. Hence for Clifford, to deconstruct or

critique the way ethnographies are written is the main essence of post-modernism. To do away with the rhetoric by which ethnographers assert power, ethnographies should be more descriptive than being completely interpretive. His views therefore are in total contrast with Clifford Geertz who has been interpretive to a large extent in his ethnographic explanations. James Clifford, states that the balance between the ethnographers' understanding of a group and the group themselves can be maintained through a holistic perspective.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1944- –) Nancy Scheper-Hughes is a professor in Medical Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. She believes that cultures and societies cannot be studied or valued without morally or ethically understanding them. Only by taking ethics into consideration while studying a society can anthropologists reflect analytically. These views of hers are noticed in her works *Primacy of the Ethical* (2006) and *Death without Weeping* (1993). This postmodern perspective of hers thus suggests that Anthropologists should be made responsible for depicting or failing to depict the discipline as a crucial instrument while describing significant historical periods.

4.4 POST-COLONIALISM

To describe post-colonial theory broadly, it is concerned with the production of knowledge and the representations made of the colonies by the scholars who were part of the colonisers. It thus has to do with happenings of exclusions, disparagement and struggle under colonial rule. So we may say that the word Post-colonialism addresses the historical, political, cultural and textual consequences of the colonial experience between the West (colonisers) and the non-West (colonised). The period examined in this theory dates back from the 16th century to the present day. To specify, Postcolonial cultures, texts and politics are interested in reactions to colonial subjugation which can be said to be adverse and disputable. In fact it is not the critical analysis of what was visibly oppositional but what was actually subtle, sly, oblique and seemingly crafty in their demonstration of dissent. Thus Post-colonialism is an analytical “theoretical approach in cultural and literary studies. However it also designates a politics of transformational resistance to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority which extends back across the twentieth century and beyond.” (*Postcolonialism* by E.Boehmer in Patricia Waugh's ed. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2006).

Like feminism and post-modern movements, post-colonialism came to be used in anthropological studies as a theory used to exhibit a sort of disciplinary amendment to conjunctural exigencies. The main issues handled in postcolonial theory are alterity, diaspora, eurocentrism, hybridity and imperialism. Alterity in post-colonialism is a lack of identification with some part of one's personality or one's group. It specifically refers to the attempts by the colonisers to understand themselves, that is Europeans, by posting an alter, the non-European societies. The evolutionary theory for example tried to put forward the so called non-Europeans as 'primitives' or representing the past of Europe. Diaspora indicates people who are either forced or tempted to leave their own homelands and settle in some other part of the world and in the process also adapt another culture. Eurocentrism is the way by which consciously or otherwise European or western ideas, culture, norms etc. are stressed at the expense of other cultures. It is effectively seen in the terms modernisation and development, both of which means in reality to be Westernised. Hybridity is a pertinent notion in post-colonialism. It talks about the mingling or mixing of cultural symbols and customs between the colonising and the colonised

cultures. This mingling can be enriching or it may turn out to be oppressive, depending on how it has been added to the culture. Finally Imperialism refers to having control or authoritative power either through direct state domination or indirectly through economic or political control. The main challenge for postcolonial writers is to reinvent and bring to life their own cultures and also fight prejudices about them.

The Post-colonial movement originated as an anti-colonial political resistance enunciated as part of the dialogue on national liberation. It made its shift to accommodate itself in the cosmopolitan world of academics with much vivacity with the introduction of the text *Orientalism* by Edward Said. This piece of work itself became a postcolonial theory which was conveniently used by settler intellectuals of the Third world countries to discuss the social and political identities and their constructions which is specific to that setting. Interestingly it was the Bandung conference held in 1955 which incepted postcolonial thought as a ‘political grammar’ and introduced the ‘eruption of the native’. The native here are the people who came to be seen as a symbolic representation of the other by the imperial domain as understood by the metropolitan academic. Finally Post-colonialism gave birth to counter-narratives, as cited by Edward Said, “to challenge and resist settled metropolitan histories, forms and modes of thought”. (in *Representing the Colonised: Anthropology’s Interlocutors*, *Critical Enquiry*, 15: 205-225, 1989).

In Anthropology Post-colonialism had to make its foray as the beginnings of the subject was attached to the colonies and the description of their inhabitants provided by the administrators, missionaries, western travelers etc, who kept their superiority intact while recounting narratives about the other.

We now talk about some of the main advocates of this theory who have contributed tremendously to its development.

4.4.1 Leading Post-colonial Thinkers

The main figures of post-colonialism are Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Arjun Appadurai, Akbar Ahmed, Homi Bhaba and of course many others. However in this unit we provide a brief description of the work of these three thinkers and their post colonial interventions.

Edward Said: The political text “Orientalism” written by Edward Said, brought ideas of Post-colonialism in the forefront where the main tenant was about how the way western people measured up people of the East. Said analysed the European dominating power and their ways of understanding and controlling other peoples and that they were shown as weak, inferior, secondary, effeminate and unable to rule themselves. In his own words it was “a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.” (1979, *Orientalism*). Therefore the Orientalist discussion made a clear demarcation between the rulers and the ruled. Anyone who did not conform to the value based image of the dominant European identity was an Oriental. However later on, Said’s idea of Orientalism did receive some fierce contestation, especially in the 1980s. The notion he had generalised that all empires rule their colonies in the same way was the main point of dispute. He was also criticised for his apparent assertion for alternative humanism. His assumption that the colonised were completely being subdued and made into the object of Western systems of knowledge also came under attack. Edward Said however cleared the protestations in his later work, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) where along with the western dialectics, also discusses the anti or postcolonial response.

Gayatri Spivak: Gayatri Spivak is an Indian theorist based in the United States. She is most famous for her essay on *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, which is considered to be one of the main defining texts of post-colonialism. Her main argument in post-colonialism has been about the heterogeneity of colonial oppression. She has been prominent since the beginning of postcolonial studies, i.e. the 1980s where she pointed out the differences both understated and noticeable which separate and demarcate the people called natives or the colonised. These natives or others in her comprehension also include migrants and asylum seekers. For her colonial oppression is not monolithic and oppressions in one area or among one people can be of different kinds and so is the kinds of *othering*. She tries to investigate the contradictions within colonial oppression and consciousness and for this she adapts her mentor's (Jacques Derrida, who has been described above) technique of deconstruction. Specifically she questions the particular gendered forms which certainly offers opportunities for differentiation and hence brings forth the heterogeneous colonial experiences. The term subaltern which Spivak uses in her pivotal book has been derived from the work of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci. For him Subaltern denotes the non-elite social classes and the proletariat. When Spivak used the term subaltern while studying such states under colonialism, she tried to use it for groups even lower than as used by Gramsci. For example she tries to include tribals, unscheduled castes, untouchables and of course the women within such groups. For Spivak it is also concerning for her that mostly postcolonial studies on women are done by women of the first world nations who while talking about the women who are or have lived colonial lives, displace their thoughts or replace them with their own voices.

Arjun Appadurai: Arjun Appadurai is an anthropologist who is interested in post-colonialism, modernity and globalisation. Appadurai's involvement in post-colonial studies is noticed in his work called *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation (1996)*. Appadurai falls under the immigrant intellectual who writes about the south Asians and the effect of modernity on them, from a post-colonial perspective, of course guided by the main premises of Edward Said. For him, the postcolonial construction of relations in a transnational world is not based on how global capital plays in creating multiple types of communities (as has been theorised by other postcolonialists). But he asserts that it is not possible singly for a centre/periphery engagement to create a post-colonial moment. For him it is the movement of people, migration, diaspora who create new types of relations in today's world. For him the emergent global communities are creations of mass migration movements which have changed the way the world exists. It is no more a world based on European value-laden ways and this for him is the post-colonial moment. For him there may be five kinds of imagined landscapes: ethnoscapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, mediascapas and ideoscapas. He makes a postcolonial intervention to describe his imagined scapes to describe the economic and political domination that is faced by today's postcolonial states. He postulates that such imagined spaces are there in contemporary world spaces and that they are hidden by the networks of diaspora, technologies, electronic media etc. His postcolonial thoughts are of importance as he tries to look into the uneven flows of global capital, peoples and communities and their diverse experiences and cultural processes in or from former colonised spaces. His argument of the imagined spaces for people in movement and to see the cultural rather than culture, he establishes a new route in postcolonial studies which tries to understand the links between nationalism, diaspora, cultural processes and globalisation in a postcolonial world.

4.5 SUMMARY

Thus we end our discussion on Feminist theory, Post-modernism and Post-colonialism in Anthropology by noting that these theories explore many perspectives. The contribution of the first theory, i.e., feminism in anthropology has been to provide a gendered methodology where it has been shown that the truth is subjective and that the male point of view is usually biased. Also since women are marginal to all societies, their point of view encompasses other marginal categories also. The intersectionality of gender with other forms of oppression like caste, class, race and ethnicity has also been a major contribution of the gendered approach. It not only includes the representation of women, voicing their concerns and rights in diverse societies but also includes the voice of the researchers, women or men, engaging themselves in such feminist studies. It is the job of the feminist anthropologist to provide ways and means by which women in different parts of the world, having different cultures can empower themselves to lead a freer existence.

In the second theory, i.e. Post-modernism, we can note that it was the postmodern perspective in Anthropology that provided an opportunity for anthropologists to reassess the way they critically appraise culture. This perspective makes the anthropologists to be sensitive and include a holistic approach, by adding different interpretations of any culture rather than just delivering their own viewpoint. However followers of postmodern anthropology do find criticism at the hands of anthropologists who consider empirical findings to be the truth and thus denounce this moral code used by the postmodernists. Postmodernism with its many dimensions remains a movement of existing debate and it is up to the anthropologists to follow the path which enriches the subject in the study of culture.

Lastly in Post-colonialism, we can see that in today's globalised world, Anthropology has a significant link with this theory as within the study of society and culture, it is interested in learning about the self and the other, how the other identifies oneself, about the ravages of the western world upon their colonies etc. Today's post colonial arenas offer much interventions as the creation of mass movements, immigrations, migrations, diaspora allow ample opportunities for anthropology to barge in and critically view the reasons behind such upheavals. Moreover Post-colonialism also allows deliberation on gender, race, ethnic identities etc from an anthropological perspective. These points clearly suggest that in today's contemporary anthropological scenario, post colonialism remains a pertinent outlook to the world that we live in.

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Anthropological Theories-II **Suggested Reading**

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Sample Questions

- 1) Define Feminism, Post-modernism and Post-colonialism.
- 2) Why is the study of gender important?
- 3) How does a post-modernist perspective help in anthropological study?
- 4) Can a post-colonial study be done in India? Elaborate.
- 5) Explain the relevance of these theories in present day Anthropology.
- 6) Write about at least two exponents from each of these three theories and also explain how their work can be used in studying society and culture.