**The Global Impact of Western Ideological Superstructures upon Marginalized Communities in COVID 19 Regime: An Althusserian Perspective**

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**Abstract**

*The present research is an endeavor to analyze the notion of ideological superstructure, in the current scenario of COVID 19. The concept was presented by Louis Althusser in his essay "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus" (1970). This qualitative research aims at analyzing the condition of non-white communities/nations in the COVID 19 regime. Louis Althusser's insights on 'Ideology' with an underpinning of Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony will provide a theoretical framework to the research. Althusser in his book "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus" (1970) discusses the concept of ideology at length and maintains that how ideology is instrumental in operating people through two types of mechanisms that is RSA (Repressive State Apparatus) and ISA (Ideological State Apparatus). ISA is somehow reminiscent of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and soft power. It has been observed that in the current situation, the Covid-19 pandemic has been used as a discriminatory tool by the western white supremacy to subjugate the non-whites linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. The article aims at exploring how COVID - 19 has become a global phenomenon, is manipulated by white supremacy to subjugate and undermine non-whites. The findings show that in present age the colonial strategy to subjugate the people of color is still persistent, although it has changed its form of implication.*

***Keywords:*** superstructure, ideology, COVID 19, marginalized, ISA, RSA

**Introduction**

Ideologies are our attitudes towards gender, class, race, cultural, religious and social norms, and they are taken as 'socialprocesses'. These are referred to accepting or rejecting a culture's given attitudes which places someone in a specific relationship with power. According to Martin Sliger (1979), ideology can be defined as a set of ideas which men use to justify ends. It also involves the justification of their social actions, particularly political actions. He further writes that people are hardly concerned about the real aim behind these actions. That whether they want to preserve, or want to make some amendments or are interested in the reconstruction of social order.

In his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" Althusser goes for a materialist understanding of the concept of ideology. He proposed a very practical version of ideology. For him "ideology does not exist in the 'world of ideas' conceived as spiritual but exists in institutions and specific practices" (Althusser 2020). It exists in apparatuses and "practices specific to them". For Althusser, the ideology consists of a specific order of social practices which is helpful in constituting human beings as social subjects. Ideology helps them produce a lived experience by which "subjects are connected to the dominant relation of production in the society". (Althusser 2020). Ideology, for Althusser, is not only a set of beliefs but it is also related to the question of power. It can be referred to as a 'social process'. (Althusser, 2020). Further, he introduces the concept of interpellation. That, according to him is a process of internalizing and adopting those beliefs. Interpellation makes people accept these ideas which are actually presented by the power groups hence they adopt them under the illusion of their independent ideas. (Larrain, 1991). He believes that interpellation is at its best when it is invisible. Althusser introduces two strategies used by the state to assimilate. They are repressive means and ideological means. Repressive State Apparatus involves the army, police, prison, and threats of violence to implement its rules. Whereas the Ideological State Apparatus work through social institutions. (Gallas,2017). ISA is similar to Antonio's Gramsci concept of soft power or hegemony. Where masses are controlled by manufacturing consent among them. With the help of schools, family institutions, religious institutions, television, fashion, games, and technology, certain behaviors and perceptions are developed. Gramsci argues that a large number of people cannot be controlled effectively therefore, hegemony is the best device to control them peacefully. According to him, hegemony is "manufactured consent." Created through the articulation of intellectuals in a public sphere in which contending articulations are also voiced." (Gramsci,2011)

The global phenomenon of Covid-19 has left its indelible marks on almost all sections of societies. It has been established as a powerful tool of hegemony all over the world. (Brands,2020) In accordance with Althusser's concept of ISA, the disease has exhibited its effects in all the social institutions. As it has taken the status of an ideology that is directing masses in its own right. Where COVID-19 has left its marks on social, political, economic, and religious institutions; it has also exhibited its racial, ethnic, and cultural effects on the world. Althusser's contention that "ideology has material existence", can be viewed in the present disease-oriented world where the ideology of racial and ethnic disparities is actively involved in disturbing the daily life experiences of a common non-white man. Roberta Timothy (2020) in her article 'Coronavirus is not the Great Equalizer\_\_ Race Matters', published in daily 'Conversation' writes that the phenomenon of the disease has given rise to racial and ethnic disparity once again. It also aims to see how the disease works as a tool of hegemony to maintain and perpetuate the traditional power structure once initiated by colonial/imperial powers.

The present paper, in the light of observations quoted by journalists and analysts, posits that even in the postmodern world, race does matter, even if it is the case of a disease (outbreak of pandemic). Moreover, the COVID -19 will be analyzed as one of the catalysts in the formation of a belief system and of social and cultural values. The treatment which nonwhites and Asians are receiving from white communities is alarming that how they are still being discriminated against on racial and ethnic grounds. Discrimination leads them to a sense of insecurity and helplessness in the current situation.

The global phenomenon of the pandemic outbreak of Covid-19 has decentered the monopoly of the political power of the State. It has revealed the weaknesses of the nations, debunked the falsity of the claims of white supremacy regarding democracy, and equal treatment among its citizens comprising people of different races and ethnic groups. Those who form the minority are also facing problems by the ruling class in this hour of a universal health crisis.

Covid-19 may be termed as the most consequential event of the 21st century. It has revealed the weaknesses of nations. It has not only hit the economic, social, and medical health of nations, it has posited questions relating to the moral and cultural health of the white man's supreme government. An insidious racial discriminative treatment has backlashed the local and global yellow, Africans, and Asian and Asian American communities and minority groups. Minority groups have an outburst of expression like 'We are not COVID-19: Asian Americans speak out on racism', or 'Chinese virus' a term used by President Trump, 'Kung Flu', 'Asia virus' etc. These expressions have given rise to feelings of gloom and frustration in the nonwhite people. The situation is reminiscent of Fanon's stance on it in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he has described the African writer's observations concerned with the racist treatment of the white powers, "You are making us into monstrosities; your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart. (Fanon,1963) In the Wretched of the Earth, Franz Fanon wrote, "Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them." (118)

**Analysis**

'The Charlotte Observer' a renowned American newspaper was among the first to highlight the health risks of Black people during the pandemic of COVID-19 under the impact of racial prejudice on 30th March. According to the research, in Mecklenburg County, in Charlotte, N.C., Blacks are 32.9 percent of the total population in the county, and 43.9 percent of cases of COVID-19 consist of Black residents.

A non- beneficial research website 'Pro Publica' has investigated that Black Americans have become the victim of a recent pandemic and died to a frightening extent. Aboriginal societies have drawn the attention of the world towards their miserable plights under this pandemic COVID-19. In fact, the anxiety and distrust of Black Americans, aboriginals, and racial communities came from the past malpractices of governments and the behavior of doctors. These racial groups have been enduring various kinds of aggression for centuries. Momentarily, they are suffering from a segregated treatment during the world health crisis.

Timothy (2020) writes that he has 25-year experience to work with racial communities to deal with various kinds of health issues. He has also witnessed and worked with many survivors of colonial trauma. Being a scholar, he is worried about the future of these racial and aboriginal groups under these segregated practices at the time of the world crisis. On behalf of his past experience, he claims that at the end of the day, the various steps taken by the authorities to deal with COVID-19 would prove that the racialized, colonial and marginalized inhabitants face a larger extent of inequality.

The most significant question in this regard is how to maneuver the system of health which consistently spoils the indigenous communities in different ways? The question is not just about Black people, it also comprises minorities, disabled persons, gender discrimination, identity issues, religious status, and class system. Would these components make health workers biased while treating their patients? Althusser's concept of interpellation is functional in this situation that refers to a process in which beliefs are internalized and adopted by masses. It is the mental, cultural, and political hegemony of the White intellectuals which has inculcated the racial and ethnic disparity among masses due to which health workers are unknowingly treating people of color and other marginalized groups with a biased attitude toward them. Interpellation makes people accept these ideas which are actually presented by the power groups hence they adopt them under the illusion of their independent ideas. He believes that interpellation is at its best when it is invisible

Blacks and other radicalized communities suffer from economic, spiritual, and mental health problems under the effect of racism. (Jackonson,2002). Althusser argues that the economy is structured by exploiting the subjects and such exploitation gives birth to conflict. Blacks and the marginalized are victims of this conflict. It is evident that marginalized groups with poor financial conditions have to face a lot of troubles to fulfill their daily needs such as electricity bills, utility, and medical expenses in order to maintain social distance under the time of this deadly pandemic COVID-19. There are many examples in history which demonstrate that troubles get worse for aboriginal inhabitants in such challenging times.

A vast number of deaths by COVID-19 in China could not awake the western world to take some significant steps to avoid the possible loss of lives and health. Many governments came into action after the attack of this pandemic on the U.S.A and the U.K. It shows the biased view of the Western World for marginalized communities. The death of the Chinese failed to make them alert for the health crisis. There are many examples of world inaction and lack of support towards the marginalized communities like Ebola, Venezuela, and Iran.

Race influences our opinion regarding diseases. The various response of multiple countries towards the recent pandemic (COVID-19) has affected the marginalized and aboriginal groups. (Berger 2020). The racist response towards the Asian world has been stirred by the violent reaction of Donald Trump by calling this deadly virus as "China Virus". Apart from this, such type of harsh reaction reminds us about the HIV and Ebola virus which were considered as Black or African Virus. Similarly, several other diseases e.g., malaria, zika, and chikungunya were named "infections of the south". There are many Black, Asian and Latin-American leaders who denounce racism and brutal victimization of indigenous communities. (Kim, 1999)

It is considered that Black people have a strong immune system than others. This myth comes from the past experiences of a different pandemic like the Spanish flu of 1918, during these pandemic blacks were less in numbers of its victims. On the other hand, Blacks have been suffering from poverty, unemployment, and slavery. According to the World Health Organization where many countries are victims of the COVID - 19, Africans are the least infected from it. (Franklin, 2020) WHO finds fewer cases in African countries as compared to European countries or America. It is taken as a blessing for them as they were not prepared to combat this disease. People have been dying from it all over the world but the disease has no cure as yet. Two Morocco doctors in France suggested that the solution lies in Africa, rather in African people. It was suggested by these doctors that the Coronavirus vaccine must be tested on African people. Many black people already have been feeling that the white population takes them as animals. These two doctors have turned the claim into fact. Before the treatment is approved, it is tested on animals just to make sure that it would not harm human beings. Usually, it has been observed that doctors use mammals like dogs, rabbits, monkeys, and rats to test some vaccines.

It is ironic that today they want to use poor Africans to serve the purpose. They believe that why one should harm animals when Africans are available for this act. Apparently, Africans are not human in the eyes of these doctors. Historically, the Western world has been taking Africa as nothing more than their property, a hub of resources, and a source of experimentation. History informs us that it is not for the first time that Western doctors and scientists are using African people as their "Lab Rats Christine Ro (2020) in the article published by BBC Future raises the question that why it is so that some racial groups are more vulnerable to disease than others. Then the author presented different reasons behind it. For example, economic instability, occupational factors, health care disparities, and cultural factors.There is no denying the fact that people of color living in majority-white communities do not have equal access to economic resources. Unstable economic conditions often lead to poor health conditions and the already vulnerable black community suffers the most. Most of them have never had the privilege of high earning jobs or a full pantry. It has been observed that pandemics have worsened the overall system of governance but even before the outbreak of this deadly disease 91.1. % of south African families considered vulnerable to hunger were headed by black people. Canada and America to present a no different picture. A 2018 study indicates that black families living in America were twice as likely to be food insecure. In Canada, almost 48% of households faced food insecurity. COVID - 19 brings even more difficulties for people of color. (Jacoby, 2020)

Economic instability makes it harder for African Americans to have access to consistent nutrition and the result of malnutrition is an increased risk of underlying health conditions. The obvious result of hypertension, heart-related problems, and diabetes is a weakened immune system and lung diseases. To make matters worse COVID - 19 is more likely to fatally attack the people with preexisting health conditions. (Tu et.al, 2020) Along with economic instability, the author has given some more reasons behind it. For example, occupational factors, health care disparities, and cultural factors, etc. Blacks, Asians, and minority groups are victims of environmental injustice. A large number of ethnic minorities are living in the US near landfills and the schools for these people are located near industrial sites. It leads them to lung infection and COVID -19. Health care disparity can be observed in the case that US health insurance is less offered to blacks than whites. Surveys have explored that racial biases are to be seen in medical staff who are less courteous and less communicative towards nonwhite patients.

Around the world, people of color do not get better job opportunities. A high number of farmworkers in the US are more likely to suffer from diabetes and are exposed to pesticides. In the same way, the present crisis is boosting rumors and biases against a specific group. It has given rise to islamophobia known as "Corona Jihad" ironically. It has been propagating on social media that Muslims are intentionally sneezing on others to spread the virus.

How ideological structures are maintained, a living example can be found in Donald Trump's abrupt response in a press conference when an Asian American who had Chinese origin asked him a question about America's performance on testing Coronavirus suspected patients that how it can be called a global competition when 80,000 Americans have already died. Mr. Trump shunned her down by saying that she must "ask China". What we need is to generate counter-discourses to liberate the world from the white hegemonic ideological apparatus. To raise a voice of resistance is highly desirable in the present situation.

Conclusion

In the light of the comprehensive analysis of the global COVID-19 scenario and the attempts of the western intelligentsia to use the production of discursive knowledge about Covid-19 as an ideological tool to discursively recollect the non- white subjects (within and without the white societies) with the symptomatic causes of the disease demonstrate how in the neo-colonial era, which is characterized by the discursive manipulation of knowledge by the white ideological apparatuses in subtle but close collaboration with the forces of the new capitalist world have racialized the disease. In a perfectly typical neo-colonial, neo capitalistic, mode of operation the flow of ideologies information, directives, financial as well as logistics and medical assistance, is from the west to the rest. Because the developing and underdeveloped countries look to the American European world for modern knowledge and assistance in all fields of life, they (the white) create. They interpret and administer their ideologies through the institutionalization of knowledge and thus maintain and perpetuate their hegemony over the nonwhite world to keep them dominated and dependent.

With deconstructive interpreting of the available data accessed from various reliable sources, this article has attempted to deracialized the racialization of COVID-19 by white discourses. This study has deconstructed the racial and ethnic bias of the white discourses to illustrate that any attempt on the part of the prejudiced white discourses to align the race with the increased vulnerability to COVID-19 is likely to be racially prejudiced and contains no reliable anthropological and/ or medical validity.

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