Preface

Postcolonial literature is a fascinating area to do research work. Basically, it is the literature coming from the ‘Third World’ nations. On the mental maps of people, the myth of ‘White’ as superior and ‘Black’ as inferior is created. The ‘First World’ nations are the rulers and the ‘Third World’ nations are ruled. The difference between Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism is created. Logocentrism, phallocentrism, and imperialism stand for Eurocentrism, and Afrocentrism is labeled with feminine identity.

The concept of ‘postcolonial’ refers to the colonized ‘Third World’ nations. These colonized nations gained independence politically but economically and culturally they are still dependent upon the ‘First World’ nations. The landscape of postcolonial literature advocates the voiceless and silenced. The postcolonial writers write back to the Empire. The postcolonial writers look at the Empire from the margin. Postcolonial literature reflect the power coming from the below. The postcolonial writers construct a discourse of subaltern and by self-relegating they resist the colonial power. One must understand the contextual use of language to understand the pattern of discourse. Generally, it is believed that use of language depends upon the experiences so language is used differently by a male and female writer due to gender difference. The research intends to examine the construction discourse by Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Buchi Emecheta.

The plan of the research is based upon the comparative study of the select works of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Buchi Emecheta. The comparative study is not a fresh angel for the research work as works have been done in this field. There are varieties in the selection of writers for the comparative study. Writers of the same cultural background, writers of the same genders, writers belonging to different cultural background, writers from different nations, etc. are selected for research works. Behind the selection of writers, works the creative idea of the researcher. In this research work also there is a rationale in the selection of the writers. Perhaps in the field of comparative study the comparison between the writers belonging to the same continent but from different nations, is something new and creative as such studies can help see the culture as a whole. Both of them are coming from the ‘Third World’ nations and their fight is
against the colonial power. But the main point is the writers differ biologically. Perhaps the comparison of the works of biologically different writers is also a new dimension and provides a huge space for the research work. It is possible that the comparison between male writers or female writers may provide a biased view of the culture because they share the experiences. But because of the biological difference the psychology of the writers differ and they also face different problems in the same society and culture.

In the title, the phrase ‘Speaking Subaltern’ refers to the voice of the subaltern. Both the writers belong to the category of subaltern and they have also fixed their characters in the category of subaltern. Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Buchi Emecheta come from Black culture and they equally contributed to the Black literary tradition. But the equilibrium between a male and a female writer is an ideal concept. In African literary tradition, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o is a hailed writer but being a woman writer Buchi Emecheta had to struggle a lot to get her works published. To understand the difference the first step is to pay attention to the publishers of both the writers. Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s works were published by Heinemann, a renowned publisher and Buchi Emecheta’s works were originally published by Allison and Busby, a very normal publisher. This is the first example of marginalization of women in a patriarchal society though they are intellectual. Buchi Emecheta struggles against patriarchal power. Her language wears a phallic veil and creates a phallocratic image of women. The criteria of women’s happiness are to be with her male counterparts. By remaining in phallocratic structure of society Emecheta writes about the injustice done to women. Her stories are the painful stories of girls and women. In her works women were expected to prove their purity for their husbands and they have to be good wives and mothers. Emecheta see child bearing and motherhood as mutilation of a female body. For Emecheta motherhood is not a boon rather she views that the continuation of motherhood is to continue the notion of fatherhood. Apart from this Emecheta talks about the tradition which becomes a yoke for young Nigerians, especially for girls and women. Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s tales are the stories written against the colonial power. Ngugi is disappointed to see the change in a newly freed nation, Kenya. He feels the emotional and spiritual loss in neo-colonial Kenya. As colonized nations are made feminine by the colonizers Ngugi has connected nation and land with feminine figure. Ngugi also focuses upon the exploitation of women in Kenya. In Ngugi’s works he has shown rapes and exploitation of female body and has connected with the rape of nation and land by the colonizers. Ngugi’s novels reflect his frustration to see the failure of the concept
of freedom. The way Emecheta deals with the issue of child bearing and motherhood Ngugi deals with the dangerous problem of female circumcision. Child bearing, motherhood and female circumcision are the traditions and rituals which are used to maim female body. Emecheta has tackled with the issue of bride price. In the novels of both the writers, prostitution is a common thing they have dealt with. Both have talked about objectification and commodification of female body. Emecheta has developed the concept of wifeism and motherhood as her women characters are wives and mothers whereas Ngugi’s women characters are out in the street to get jobs in a newly freed nations and they are frequently raped by men. Whether it is degree or job but women were forced to give their body. So Ngugi’s women characters are nobody’s wife they are alone. They are treated as a thing to decorate the beds of men. Ngugi and Emecheta have created an image of a ‘woman’: a woman who is living dead.

Apart from this though Ngugi holds a powerful position in Black literary tradition, he is also treated as an ‘Other’ by the colonizers. His men characters are not strong. They are weak, nervous and traitors. In postcolonialism, patriarchy and imperialism operate in a similar manner. So there is no difference in Emecheta’s struggle against patriarchy and Ngugi’s struggle against imperialism. Women are subject to race and gender-based oppression and men are subject to racial discrimination. From the perspective of imperialism there is no difference between Emecheta and Ngugi as he is made feminine by the oppressors. None of them present an ideal image of their respective culture. This idea is carried further in the research work.

Earlier the title of the research was: ‘Discourse Analysis in the Select Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Buchi Emecheta’ and now it is changed to ‘Speaking Subaltern: A Study of Select Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Buchi Emecheta’. The researcher found that the term Discourse Analysis is very broad in meaning as there are six schools of discourse analysis. It was necessary to narrow it down. The researcher found the current title more suitable as it gives a particular dimension to study the works of Ngugi and Emecheta. The research is mainly based on Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak’s theory of Subaltern and Foucaudian Discourse Analysis.

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