

On the Necessity and Inevitability of Violence and Nonviolence: Reading Frantz Fanon Today

Bini B.S

Abstract

This paper, divided into three parts, examines Frantz Fanon's diagnosis of actual and epistemic violence implicit in colonial domination in the first section. Taking into account that Fanon's insights partly derive from his work as a doctor and psychoanalyst, the second section of the paper evaluates his prescription of a cure for violence through resistance and insurgency. Fanon interprets collective violent uprising as an antidote to oppressive colonial violence. For him violence is necessary for decolonization of the mind and hence is therapeutic. This view may seem to be in sharp opposition to the ideas of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Hannah Arendt on violence, nonviolence and resistance. Reflecting on these diverse views and their historical viability, I explain why Fanon is skeptical about the uses of nonviolence. Fanon's doubts are associated with his lack of faith in the national elites who pose as the new ruling class after political decolonization. The paper, in the third and concluding section, presents an analysis of Fanon's idea of national consciousness and its connotations in the globalized world.

Keywords: Anti-Colonial Violence, Cathartic Violence, Colonialism, Decolonizing, Epistemic Violence, Frantz Fanon, Imperialism, National Consciousness, Neocolonialism, Nonviolence

In his article titled, "Frantz Fanon: a Poisonous Thinker who Refuses to Die," published in *The National Post*, Robert Fulford, a conservative Canadian Journalist and supporter of America's attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan, observes: "The book in which Fanon clearly articulated his theory, *The Wretched of the Earth*, went into six editions in Arabic. Today it's hardly necessary for revolutionaries to read him. His poison flows through the bloodstream of everyone who kills joyfully for an imaginary future." ¹ Fulford goes on to discuss the influence of Fanon, who had a 'real talent for hate' on Islamic extremists and Jihadists. Apparently, interpreting Fanon in this way to blame him for violence happening in certain parts of the globe is done with a manipulative agenda. There should be a reanalysis of Fanon's writings to understand the nuances and resonances of his much misinterpreted ideas on violence.

While Fanon spoke from the context of colonialism and discrimination against the blacks by Europeans, his intention was not to propose a universal theory of violence that can be used as a means for accomplishing any unjust and inhuman

end. Nor does he consider every function of power as violent. So, justifying all forms of violence using his writings and speeches and portraying his ideas as a motivation for violence including terrorist attacks are instances of misrepresentation of Fanon's thought. For Fanon, violence is a way out of blatant oppression, humiliation and brutality that had sustained colonial domination. Colonial violence is expressed palpably through forced labour, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights and banishing the culture and practices of the colonized. Violence of the colonialists is harmful in its subtler and clandestine manifestations such as epistemic violence. Fanon draws a vivid picture of colonial violence and how it could effectively be countered by anti-colonial violence:

The work of the colonist is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the colonized. The work of the colonized is to imagine every possible method for annihilating the colonist. On the logical plane, the Manichaeism of the colonist produces a Manichaeism of the colonized. The theory of the absolute evil of the colonist is in the response to the theory of the absolute evil of the native. The arrival of the colonist signified syncretically the death of the indigenous society, cultural lethargy, and petrification of the individual. For the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist. (*The Wretched of the Earth* 50).

According to Fanon, since colonialism is violent, only counter violence can wipe away its nightmarish impacts completely from the psyche of the oppressed. The violence of the colonized is a unifying factor that challenges the social conflicts and contentious rifts created by the colonial rule. The colonized should strive together to come out of their absolute subjection and humiliation. The plight of the colonized person "with his back to the wall, the knife at his throat, or the electrode on his genitals (*The Wretched of the Earth* 20)" itself is a justification for his violent retaliation. Fear of mortality is another menace that the colonized has to deal with on a daily basis. Fanon explains the connection between the fear of real and symbolic death and other forms of violence:

The colonized person, is like the men in underdeveloped countries or the disinherited in all parts of the world, perceives life not as a flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death. This ever-menacing death is experienced as endemic famine, unemployment, a high mortality rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future.²

Fanon's unique contribution in the conceptualization of violence lies in his analysis that takes into account the pathological nature and impacts of colonial oppression and this view comes from his practice as a psychotherapist who had to deal with the trauma of people suffering from colonial brutality and dehumanizing racism. The French colonizers interpreted the aggressiveness of Algerians as an innate characteristic that could be tamed with the civilizing mission of colonial rule. Fanon argues that violence is not something that the colonized is born with; they master the thoughts and acts of violence from the colonizers. The colonized depend on violence for asserting their individual

freedom and human dignity. Their agitation later gets expanded to collective violence for reclaiming their national independence. Successful accomplishment of national independence through collective uprising boosts individual self-respect by destroying the myths created by colonialism about the diffidence and barbarism of the colonized; a collective uprising offers an outlet for suppressed aggression and trauma and as a result the oppressed are more equipped to come to terms with themselves by taking charge of the situation. Fanon observes that "At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 51). This observation should be read in the context of colonialisms that wreck and incapacitate the colonized from within.

Active violence, for Fanon, becomes a mode of emotional healing for those who have endured the violence of the other. Fanon observes that a sense of self-inadequacy, schizoid identity and neurosis were endemic among the blacks due to the impacts of colonialism. A violent mutiny leading to the victory of the colonized, according to Fanon, detoxifies the mind and reinforces unity. Most importantly for the colonized, victory in the struggle for freedom brings faith in themselves as people. Fanon believed that violence is to be used by the colonized ethically and discreetly for liberating themselves. Violence, according to Fanon, is a means for decolonization and it should not be perpetuated after achieving the end. Fanon's idea of violence needs to be understood from the framework of dramatic tragedy and catharsis.³ He makes a case for violence as an effective means for political and cultural liberation from violent colonial rule. He does so by differentiating between political and cultural liberation.

In this paper, I first analyze Fanon's diagnosis of violence implicit in colonial domination. The second section deals with his prescription of a cure through resistance and insurgency. Fanon explains violent uprising as an antidote to oppressive violence. I conclude with an analysis of Fanon's idea of national consciousness and its connotations in the globalized world.

Inhuman/ Dehumanizing Violence: The Pathology Colonization

Fanon saw colonization primarily as a system that combines economic domination, discrimination against the colonized based on several parameters and exploitation which has far reaching impacts on the lives and culture of the colonized. This vicious strategy of domination, discrimination and exploitation is implemented through violent means. Colonization deprives the colonized of their local means of livelihood, and tears down their economies. The lamentation of Césaire, who is believed to be a great influence on Fanon, about "societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out"⁴ indicates how the tentacles of colonialism grab everything from the colonized. The clamor of the colonizers about bringing political stability, technological advancement or refinement of civilization cannot silence the collective lamentation of the colonized. The most potent

weapon that the colonizers use for establishing their authority, according to Ngugi wa Thiong'o is the cultural bomb. The cultural bomb is used to sabotage the collective defiance of the colonized. I quote at length a passage from *Decolonizing the Mind* in which Ngugi traces the effects of the cultural bomb:

The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland.... It even plants serious doubts about the moral rightness of the struggle. Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish. (3)

Addressing African writers in Paris in 1956, ⁵ Fanon opined that western colonialism switched from the policy of considering cultures hierarchically, a renaissance view, to a systematic suppression and banishment of cultures of certain communities. Macaulay's vision in his Minutes, "of a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect"⁶ shows how the banishment of a culture is devised and implemented. Works of colonial anthropologists that propounded theories of cultural inferiority of the vanquished, strategies for putting an end to the rituals and festivals of indigenous religions by the church and racism which is a systematic exclusion, victimization and oppression were all instances of tangible and epistemic colonial violence. Violence is exercised by the colonialists to carry out the project of obliterating the culture of the colonized, resulting in the alienation of the colonized who eventually aspire to imitate the colonizer. The *vulgar, barbaric, outmoded* and *superstitious* aspects of the *native* culture are highlighted and derided by the colonizer. It was not by offering alternative ways of life, but through strategies of banishment that the colonizer had tried to reform the native.

A racist system created by colonization has several strategies that lead the colonized to a blind faith in the rhetoric of the colonizer. The colonized believe that the negative image attributed to them by the colonizer is true and want to break free from that image. The practices of racial discrimination create an existential angst and a movement away from oneself. The colonizers are successful in instilling an incurable sense of lowliness, timidity, unexamined guilt and fear in the colonized. It is not their poverty and skin colour that make the colonized feel inferior. The notions of racial superiority of the colonizers are blindly accepted by the colonized. Those who are discriminated hence want to mimic the discriminators and identify with them. Emulating the colonizer and consequently being cut off from their own cultural moorings are inevitable consequences that the colonized people experience. Fanon quotes Professor D. Westermann to shed light on how the educated people, who should ideally

subvert the myth of the European colonizers' superiority, simulate the conquerors' life and culture to remedy the rampant inferiority complex:

The wearing of European cloths, whether rags or the most up to date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. (*Black Skin White Masks* 25)

The Wretched of the Earth comes from a space made wretched by colonial domination and the dehumanizing racial discrimination. Fanon was disillusioned by the hollowness of the French ideals about human equality during his service with the Free French army in the World War II and his medical education in France as these phases of life exposed him to the degrading experience of French racism. The alienation and depersonalization of the colonized are, according to Fanon, forms of violence inflicted on them resulting in psychological disorders.

The depersonalization of the colonized is comparable to wearing a mask, or putting on a false identity that acts as a camouflage. The colonized people hope to achieve social acceptability and protection against discrimination by donning the white mask. The white mask is a metaphor for a decadent 'oneness' between the colonizers and the colonized. Fanon suggests that in order to rip off the white mask, real and symbolic violence may become necessary. Race and skin colour are discriminating factors from which there is no escape. Fanon is aware that a person of his contemporary times is locked in the infernal circle of racial identity.

Counter to the practice of hiding behind the white mask, there is a way to deal with cultural domination through hybridity. Hybridity in practice is a counter-hegemonic resistance to colonial domination and appropriation of the colonized; it is a way of establishing connections in a non-assimilatory way. Hybridity subverts the narratives of colonial domination and superiority. Hybridity fulfils the double functions of being a critique and counter narrative as it deconstructs the dominant culture through a process of making inroads into it. The excluded subjects enter the mainstream discursive practices; from the peripheries they gain access to the home of the colonized. Homi Bhabha opines that "purpose in specifying the enunciative present in the articulation of culture is to provide a process by which the objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience" (*The Location of Culture* 178).

Liberation has emancipatory potential as it signifies the emergence of a new humanism that resists the tendency to put on the white mask. Fanon was doubtful about the effectiveness of the philosophy and practice of non-violence in making it happen. He believed that freedom is the most basic right and affirms in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

No attempt must be made to encase man, for it is his destiny to be set free. The body of history does not determine a single

one of my actions. I am my own foundation. And it is going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom (230-231).

Fanon also cautions that political freedom or sovereignty of the state does not necessarily ensure freedom to the human being. Violence for the colonized is not merely self-defensive; it is a means of self-conservation that leads to the decolonizing of consciousness and culture. Violence helps in decolonizing the mind by purging it off the sub-human conceptions about oneself. India's struggle for independence was a medley of methods. Along with Quit India Movement and Civil Disobedience that were more or less peaceful, revolutionary movements have also paved the way to Indian independence. Countries like India that have achieved political freedom primarily through non-violent means have not yet completed the project of decolonizing the mind and becoming free in a broader sense.

Cultural imperialism of the west is becoming stronger in the scenario of globalization. If it had been a violent uprising resulting in independence, the dream of cultural decolonization could have been fulfilled, according to Fanon's view. This view is in disagreement with Gandhian idea of nonviolence. Gandhi's strategy of non-violence, noncooperation and *satyagraha* against British colonialism does not spring from a practical fear that with armed revolution, India could not have challenged the strength of British forces deployed here. Gandhi thought of violence as a cruel method that does not leave any room for forgiveness and crisis resolution even after the bloodbath is over. The evil aftermaths of a violent struggle such as rivalries, hatred, bitterness, guilt and revenge linger, making peace a mirage. Non-violence according to Gandhi is not a passive and meek submission. It is an active soul force that has great transformative power. Gandhi says: "I must continue to argue till I convert opponents or I own defeat. For my mission is to convert every Indian, even Englishmen and finally the world, to non-violence (soul force) for regulating mutual relations whether political, economic, social or religious."⁷ Whether the transformative potential of nonviolence as a soul force addresses Fanon's anxieties about the transformation implemented by the colonialists requires examination in the light of history. The nations which were erstwhile colonies are not yet in a position to answer this question.

Fanon was convinced that it is futile to try to bring about a transformation in the attitude of the colonist. In Gandhi's view, a transformative power is exercised by the colonized on the colonizer by refusing to resort to violent means. Gandhi dreams of ushering the light of change into the dark mind of the colonizers through discourses and practices of non-violent resistance, love, forgiveness and compassion. Gandhi was convinced that the world is weary of violence and materialism and believed that the British should indeed learn from India. In *Hind Swaraj*, he observes:

They rather deserve our sympathy. They are a shrewd nation and I therefore believe that they will cast off the evil. They are enterprising and industrious, and their mode of thought is not

inherently immoral. Neither are they bad at heart. I therefore respect them. Civilization is not an incurable disease, but it should never be forgotten that the English are at present afflicted by it.⁸

In order to save India from the insensitive industrial culture which is the bane of modern civilizations, Gandhi suggested the idea of village republics which are self-reliant. Gandhi and Fanon agree on the point that the colonized should not follow the western models of modernization. Gandhi did not denounce modernization, nor did he have a utopian vision of resurrecting all aspects of Indian traditions from the graves of antiquity. He was critical about many aspects of Indian culture, especially discrimination based on caste. Gandhi also had problems with an noncritical worship of technology that came with modernity. Technology provides tools; but it should not be allowed to replace the human and his soul force, which according to Gandhi is divinely inspired. Fanon did not celebrate colonial modernity and modernization, nor did he see these as detrimental to national culture. Modernization goes hand in hand with liberation in his analysis. Rather than an externally imposed European or Eurocentric modernization, there could be modernization that emerges with and does not contradict the national culture. In "On National Culture," an essay in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon thinks through the dilemma surrounding national identity. National identity is a necessary fuel for the revolution for independence and social change. Yet, it often gets restricted to an essentialist, totalizing, obsessive, middle-class conception of *nation* as a homogeneous entity. Understanding national identity in a limited sense prevents nuanced expressions of a people's cultural heterogeneity across regions and class. The promise of solidarity and unity implicit in national identity may prove useful in the struggles for independence. Fanon envisages a progressive conceptualization of the nation that does not fetishize collective cultural traditions. He warns that attempts for recovering national essence and continuity throughout history are often artificial and do not serve any purpose. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon asserts that national identity is significant if it represents resolute collective labours of an oppressed people for liberation. The struggle for liberation is also a struggle for nationhood without which a culture cannot flush out. Fanon argues:

The nation is not only a precondition for culture, its ebullition, its perpetual renewal and maturation. It is a necessity. First of all it is the struggle for nationhood that unlocks culture and opens the doors for creation. Later on it is the nation that will provide culture with the conditions and framework for expression. The nation satisfies all those indispensable requirements for culture which alone can give it credibility, validity, dynamism and creativity. (*The Wretched of the Earth* 177)

Being the citizen of non-independent territory under the domination of a very different culture is gives rise to experiences of schizoid identity and alienation. Fanon became keenly aware of the decadence and brutality of European

civilization and how Euro centrism dehumanizes the 'other.' As a psychiatrist, he perceived that violence of colonization is instrumental barbarizing the colonized. This barbarism becomes then a justification for perpetuating colonial domination projected as a civilizing mission. Colonial domination vitiates the psyches of the oppressor and the oppressed in many different ways. Fanon diagnosed how estrangement from one's cultural mooring becomes so pathological in the colonized. The colonists use the violence of the colonized as a rationalization controlling them. Fanon's idea of decolonization does not exclude class struggle, but his conceptualization goes much beyond the Marxian view of class struggle. Colonists and colonized are engaged in a struggle wherein the intention of the colonist is to, "derive his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 2).

Fanon observes that the colonizers are outsiders from elsewhere and hence they are different from the indigenous population. In Marx's framework the dividing aspect between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is primarily economic and not cultural in a major way. The mode of production is responsible for the exploitation of the proletariat more than the deliberate acts of the bourgeoisie. In Fanon's reading, the separating factor between the colonist and colonized is more closely woven to the differences in their cultural identity than difference of class even though colonialism is fundamentally a form of economic exploitation. He explains: "You are rich because you are white; you are white because you are rich" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 5). Fanon argues that the colonists' exploitation of the colonized is a well planned political strategy.

Fanon was a historical materialist and aligned with the dialectical view of historical change. For him alienation was a major concern while comprehending the colonized individual and society. The colonized individual is alienated from his traditional community and his very identity as a black person in the processes of colonialism. This alienation of the Black man has other dimensions as well which Fanon elaborates in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "I marry white culture, white beauty, and white whiteness. When my restless hands grasp those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (63). Disalienation is indispensable and necessary as a therapeutic procedure. Fanon writes from the perspective of a doctor: "As a psychoanalyst, I should help my patient become conscious of his unconscious and abandon his attempts at hallucinatory whitening, but also to act in the direction of a change in the social structure. In other words, the black man should no longer be confronted by the dilemma, *turn white or disappear*, but he should be able to take cognizance of a possibility of existence (*Ibid* 100, emphasis in the original).

After realizing the hypocrisy of many European ideals and rhetoric, Fanon eventually joined the movement of Algerian National Front for the country's independence from France. While trying to formulate the impacts of colonialism and imperialism in Third World countries, Fanon uses the terms, 'containment' and 'negation' to describe the epistemic and psychological violence of colonial hegemony. He analyzes the relevance of Gramscian evaluation of the strategy of containment and domination to interpret the situation in the Third World and

reflected on the dynamics of violence in colonial hegemony. Fanon's idea of colonial violence incorporates his anxieties about cultural appropriation. While the blacks get contained in the colonial culture, they negate their identity which leads to a traumatizing estrangement. This amounts to, for the colonized, a negation of individual and collective identity. Such a negation triggers the process of absencing the colonized from history. Fanon was intensely conscious of such psycho-social aspects of violence. He believed that for the alienation from oneself and depersonalization resulting from the epistemic and psychological violence of colonization, the antidote would be revolutionary violence.

In her *On Violence*, Hanna Arendt does not recommend violence as a resolution to any kind of conflict. She makes a distinction between power and violence and suggests that the former involves concerted endeavour and the latter implies the use of strength by an individual or random group. In her view, "Violence appears when power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance" (*On Violence* 56). In her view, it is not impossible to legitimize power though it cannot always be justified. Violence can occasionally be justified but cannot ever be legitimate. Fanon argues that there could be justifiable and legitimate forms of violence. Arendt's theorization of violence hovers around the physical domain whereas Fanon expands his analysis to include the psychological and epistemic domains of violence. Arendt, while discussing the shrinking power of European imperialism that becomes manifest in the alternative between decolonization and massacre, reminds:

To substitute violence for power can bring victory, but the price is very high; for it is not only paid by the vanquished, it is also paid by the victor in terms of his own power. This is especially true if the victor happens to enjoy domestically the blessings of constitutional government. (*On Violence* 53-54)

Hannah Arendt's apprehension is somewhat similar to Martin Luther King's view that one kind of violence does not remedy another kind of violence; violence only breeds more hatred and conflict. King believed that violence leads to bitterness; in an atmosphere of negative feelings, one cannot breathe the pure air of peace and love. He cautions:

Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction.⁹

Martin Luther King Jr., like Fanon, did understand the violence implicit in colonialism and in his view, colonial violence manifests as poverty created by economic discrimination, social inequality and unemployment; racism and militarism. Poverty, racism and militarism are interrelated; they operate together to push the colonized and subjugated people further and further into inescapable misery and subservience. According to King, these triple evils can be eradicated permanently only through non-violent means. Like Gandhi, Martin Luther King

also gave a spiritual foundation to the idea of non-violence. In his sermons, King constantly reminded that the spirit of non-violence is divinely inspired and the universe supports justice and non-violence. He repeated in his writings and speeches that non-violence is a way of life that only courageous people can follow and all manifestations of violence, such as hatred, anger, and use of physical force, should be avoided. He exhorted his followers to oppose forces of evil and not people who do evil acts. He envisaged the creation of a beloved community wherein life is regulated by love, compassion, harmony, forgiveness and fraternity. The ideas of Martin Luther King are firmly rooted in the teachings of the *Bible* about love and compassion. The resolution of any struggle should be aimed at the creation of a beloved community which cannot be accomplished without the cement of love and cooperation. Violence nips the dream of forming beloved community in the bud.

Fanon is skeptical about the power of non-violence and one may agree that his skepticism is justified, looking at history of erstwhile colonies and subjugated races. For him, non-violence is a concept introduced by the colonial bourgeoisie and is a creation of colonial situation. Fanon's skepticism about a non-violent resolution of unjust domination and subsequent formation of a community based on love is not unsubstantiated. For a community, not liberated and containing glaring inequalities, the dream of transforming itself into a beloved community cannot be translated into reality. As *The Wretched of the Earth* was being written, colonialist powers were withdrawing, making many colonies independent. The economy was controlled by an elite middle class group whom Fanon describes as national bourgeoisie who had the white masks firmly on. In a chapter, "Pitfalls of National Consciousness," he points out how the urban proletariat and the national bourgeoisie identify themselves more with the colonizers. In India, the British Raj was replaced by the rule of an elite group moulded by the British.

Violence is the most effective way by which the colonized can communicate with the colonist. The latter may then propose a non-violent settlement for sustaining their authority. Some intellectuals among the colonized people, who according to Fanon are thoroughly indoctrinated, manage to position themselves at this stage of development as the class of nationalist bourgeoisie. They play along the demands of the colonist for non-violence and as a reward ensure their authority. The agenda of the nationalist bourgeois is not fundamentally different from that of the colonists. Fanon cautions that the nationalist bourgeois may not do anything to transform the nation. This elite class would act as a channel for capitalism to enter and provide a fertile soil for the colonist legacy to flourish even after decolonization. The people must be in control, not this nationalist bourgeois who would adhere to the colonial values and modes of domination. Fanon's analysis accommodates the Marxian theorizations based on economic status and extended the scope to race, culture and imperialism. The compromise arrived at through non-violence often involves two parties: the representatives of the colonial system and the national bourgeoisie who are afraid of being wiped off once the people take charge of the uprising for national sovereignty. The national elites or colonized intellectuals share common interests with the

colonial bourgeoisie and want to find solutions that are beneficial for them. Non-violence does not challenge the status quo and hence fails to bring in a structural change.

Violence for Self-Defence, Cure and Self-Preservation

Fanon thought that violence is necessary for the liberation of Algeria. He saw violence as a historically proven tool capable of bringing about structural transformation in unequal societies. Structural transformation results from a subversion of hierarchies. Movements for implementing a structural transformation challenge the supremacy of the national elites who have internalized the colonizers' ideas, culture and strategies. In Fanon's opinion, violence is both unavoidable and necessary to confront colonialism, because colonialism, being drunk with power, is not capable of thought or reason. Colonialism's sheer violence relents only when confronted with greater violence. Fanon affirmed that the use of violence is necessary in decolonization movements and revolutionary struggles to overthrow oppressive regimes because anti-colonial violence has a positive function in constructing a national consciousness in a post-colonial state. In other words, violence is a revitalizing, curative and liberatory procedure to a people who had lived in constant fear and resentment of their oppressors; memory of a violent struggle that helped them overcome an equally violent domination can act as a binding force that transcends all boundaries. The antidote that Fanon prescribes to the damaging violence of colonialism is violence that manifests individually and collectively so that sanity, strength and solidarity required for nation-building can be restored. He was also aware of the unifying impact of collective violence against oppression and its constructive role in nation-building. He observes that the unification and mobilization of the masses for national liberation result in more concerted actions leading to a better national future and collective history in which common people, not merely the national elite, have a decisive role. The collective anger aimed at the colonizer and blood of people shed in the struggle for independence will act as a cementing factor among disparate population. Fanon had a conviction that for all those who get involved in violence leading to decolonization - peasants, radical bourgeoisie, and the proletariat occupied in industrial production - the uprising would amount to a process of reconciliation of disputes among themselves.

Fanon envisages a national culture that continuously evolves without rotting in its own subservient past and prejudices; a national culture which would accommodate an international consciousness that recognizes diversity non-hierarchically. His views have to be analyzed in the context of globalization which echoes a clearly pronounced menace of neocolonialism. Fanon's critique of colonialism contains a critique of capitalist elitism which is detrimental to the process of decolonization. He was doubtful about the effectiveness of elitist political parties and their attempts for peaceful settlement with the colonizer in the struggle for decolonization. In Fanon's view, the intellectual and economic

elitism of political parties intensifies the alienation of colonized people who are already alienated due to colonial domination. Besides, in the anti-colonial struggles, the focal point is not economic status but national sovereignty.

The Creation of a New Humanity: Decolonizing the Mind

Decolonization is not mere national liberation or political independence; it is successful only if it effects a social change that deconstructs the cultural vestiges of colonialism. Imperialism is not about political power; it is a cultural domination. Hence anti-colonial struggle addresses the need for a change which exists in a "raw, repressed and reckless state in the lives and consciousness of colonized men and women" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 1). Fanon's theory is not a simplistic endorsement of violence. He believed that the process of colonization and colonial rule which implicates uses of violence and discrimination against the colonized inevitably breeds hatred and anger leading to violent uprising. Violence is a fundamental means of psychological and social deliverance and political freedom for Fanon which is necessary for creating a new humanism and a sensible nationalism. Fanon criticizes the prevalent transcendent mystifications of the nation. He warns in *The Wretched of the Earth* that being stuck in a regressive national consciousness should not be the end of decolonization. The new humanism, for Fanon, also means decolonizing the mind.

Fanon could perceive that the impact of the violence of colonialism is multilayered. Ngugi points out that the most significant domain of colonial control was the "mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world" (*Decolonizing the Mind* 16). Colonialism is not confined to an invasion into space of the political power; it intrudes in the economic, social, cultural, familial, religious and educational domains of the colonized, unleashing epistemic, psychological and physical violence. Said's argument in *Culture and Imperialism* about the nature of the struggles for real and symbolic independence is akin to Fanon's view:

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings. (7)

Decolonization has to take place on every level, especially at the level of ideas and deep rooted convictions and worldviews. It is a violent, yet rewarding process. Decolonization for Fanon amounts to the creation of a new human being who is not based on the models from Europe and the United States. Fanon's critique of the US is decisive and clear. "Two centuries ago, a former European colony took it into its head to catch up with Europe. It has been so successful that the United States of America has become a monster, where the flaws, sickness and inhumanity of Europe have reached frightening proportions" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 236). The protection against these damning cultural invasions is the

cultivation of a decolonized mind that does not look up to Europe and America as role models. Yet, a decolonized mind is not in support of rabidly resisting all cultural influences; nor does it uncritically uphold the 'native' traditions and become jingoistic. In this context, one may remember Ngugi's views about cultural imperialism.

I have pointed out that how we view ourselves, our environment even, is very much dependent on where we stand in relationship to imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial stages;... Certainly the quest for relevance and for a correct perspective can only be understood and be meaningfully resolved within the context of the general struggle against imperialism. (*Decolonizing the Mind* 88)

Liberation allows a person to recreate oneself and that is how one assesses if the colonized has fully decolonized the mind. The native's pent up feelings may manifest after decolonization in more violent forms civil violence after independence. For example, India's non-violent struggle for independence was followed by partition and violent communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. The struggle for independence could not handle the divisions created by the colonizers among the regions, religions and classes in India. Freedom movement, in short, could not act as a unifying force in India.

Colonialism creates in the colonized a perpetual affinity toward violence and they hence harm their own kind. But his argument is not a mere justification of the use of violence by the colonized in anti-colonial struggles following 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' strategy. Nor should we read his take on the idea of violence as a romanticization of murder. As I mentioned in an earlier section of the paper, Fanon, being psychiatrist, could see the impact of colonial violence on the psyche of a people. In his opinion, accumulation of negative emotions and repressed wrath result in violent behavior, criminal tendencies and complex behaviours in the colonized people, especially those who are victims of racial discrimination and exploitation. These pent up feelings also lead to psychosomatic illness. He recommends violence to the colonized masses of the Third World, not merely as a means to accomplish independence and liberty but, as a healing method that would cure them of their low self-esteem, criminal tendencies and violent behavior in the family. He was not in favour of perpetual violence; he emphasized that once liberated, the revolutionaries could resort to peace and socialism. Fanon insists that anger and hatred cannot prolong a political movement; nor can negative emotions sustain a healthy political environment. His emphasis on the force of intellect that gives rise to political agency is noteworthy.

After the dream of political decolonization is fulfilled, education can be imparted to transform the violent anti-colonial revolutionary into a citizen. Fanon concludes *The Wretched of the Earth*, with a call for individual and collective transformation: "For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavour to create a new man." (239). Apparently his dream of creating a new human being is yet to

get fulfilled. The warning Fanon made about the new ruling class or the national elites in the erstwhile colonies is turning into a historical reality. The national elites let the colonial venom circulate in the system of culture and did more harm by uncritically ushering global capitalism into their countries. The annihilation of indigenous practices and cultures and the subtle invasion of neocolonial mechanisms of the IMF and the World Bank are suggested in the visionary nightmare of Fanon discussed in the chapter, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness." Fanon's fears about the parasitic native rulers and the powerful oppression of neocolonialism were proven true in the history of postcolonial Algeria and many other erstwhile colonies. That makes his ideas all the more significant in a globalized world with hierarchically operating economic and cultural dominations.

Notes

- ¹ The article of Fulford can be read from <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/621488/posts> (accessed on February 1, 2014)
- ² Cited by Adolfo Gilly in the Introduction to *A Dying Colonialism*, p 12.
- ³ See Gordon, Lewis. *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, pp 80-84.
- ⁴ This view is expressed in Cesaire, Aime. *Discourse on Colonialism*. (4th ed.) New York: Monthly Review Press. 1972, p. 43.
- ⁵ See <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/fanon/national-culture.htm> accessed on 1 February 2014.
- ⁶ Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Speech in Parliament on the Government of India Bill, 10 July 1833," in *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*. G.M. Young (ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957, pp. 716-18.
- ⁷ Quoted in *All Men are Brothers* by Krishna Kripalai, p 138.
- ⁸ See the excerpt from *Hind Swaraj* in *Mahatma Gandhi: Essential Writings*, p 73.
- ⁹ Quoted by Wolfgang Mieder in *Making a Way out of No Way: Martin Luther King's Sermonic Proverbial Rhetoric*, p 338.

References

- Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. San Diego: Harvest, 1970. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Brown, Judith. *Mahatma Gandhi: Essential Writings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- Cesaire, Aime. *Discourse on Colonialism*. (4th ed.) New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. Print.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963. Print.
- Fanon, Frantz. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press, 1965. Print.

- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). New York: Grove Press, 2008. Print.
- Gilly, Adolfo. 'Introduction' (12). *A Dying Colonialism* by Frantz Fanon. New York: Grove Press, 1965. Print.
- Gordon, Lewis. *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Kripalani, Krishna. *All Men are Brothers*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1971. Print.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. *Making a Way out of No Way: Martin Luther King's Sermonic Proverbial Rhetoric*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2010. Print.
- Ngugi, wa Thiong'o. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1981). Oxford: James Currey, 2011. Print.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994. Print.
- Young, G.M. (ed.). *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957. Print.