An Analytical Survey of Rethinking Postcolonialism in India and Thailand: Achievements and Failures in the Global South

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Abstract

This article is an analytic survey of a debate on the rethinking of postcolonialism and its critical method that has been developed by Indian and Thai scholars through academic texts. The article argues that postcolonialism has succeeded in the field of academics practically and ideally because it still stands as an alternative for understanding Indian and Thai societies and their complex phenomena culturally and historically. Some Indian and Thai scholars have played a crucial role in criticising national or ethnic culture and historical knowledge that are portrayed by the coloniser and local nationalists and elite within their own societies. However, postcolonialism has failed in India and Thailand in terms of politics, economics, and social fields because both Indian and Thai scholars lack operation of political and economic resistance, which has led them to solve the dilemma of academic literary and everyday life practice in the postcolonial phenomenon itself. To be fair, their operational sphere is based on the literary texts which present critical scholarly thought on culture and history. Hence, postcolonialism has not been completely achieved but is a liminal zone of contesting a meaning of culture and history that differs from the sense of national or ethnic culture and history composed by the group of essentialists in both the Indian and Thai contexts.

Keywords Postcolonialism, India, Thailand, Achieved, Failed

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1. Introduction

Since the colonial era, Westerner scholars have been overconfident about their race, culture, and nationalism. They represent and compose the East and the rest of the colony areas and their people as savage or primitive with a static, impure race and uncivilised culture as they were before postcolonialism era. Edward William Said (2003) calls this perspective Orientalism, which is cultural knowledge about the East geographically from the Western standpoint (Eurocentrism). Orientalism is a static viewpoint that portrays the East as inferior racially (ethnically) and culturally (nationally) to Western races, cultures, and civilisations.

Non-Western scholars who are Anglicised and educated have critiqued this kind of colonialist knowledge. They attempt to critique Western knowledge and its English literature in various genres such as academic writing, novels, and films politically, economically, historically, socially, and culturally. Academically, some of them propose that it is possible for non-Western scholars to generate non-Western theory to explain postcolonial phenomena sociologically. For example, Syed Farid Alatas and Vineeta Sinha (2017) have shown that non-Western scholars attempt to rethink and critique Eurocentrism and seek alternatives by proposing some non-Western ideas about non-Western society itself, but the non-Western scholars do not encourage "us" (non-Western) to abandon Western knowledge and theory. Hence, Eurocentrism is no longer popular among scholars from the Global South, but this does not mean that they reject European knowledge completely. Alternatively, postcolonialism shows that non-Western scholars have interacted with Western scholars in the academic field by insisting on their "location of culture" (Bhabha, 1994) through a moment of hybridising and mimicking both essential aspects of European knowledge and their own interpretation of culture and history. It is a space and time of intersubjectivity between the West and East, who have negotiated and shared their virtues academically.

Thus, this paper proposes that postcolonialism is one of the critical and analytical tools for comprehending a Global South phenomenon politically, economically, socially, and culturally. The Global South is not a new term and refers to a position of nation-states and their people in the world system or international relational contingents who have interacted with the Global North dialectically in the fields of practice and academics (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009; Connell, 2020; Doty, 1996; Thomas-Slayter, 2003). In this sense, scholars in Global South contexts such as India and Thailand have adopted postcolonialism as a theory for encounters with Eurocentrism and all essentialisms. These scholars are engaging and criticising the colonial and postcolonial predicaments. For example, these scholars have written about Indian diasporic people who migrated to live in Thai society and the rest of the British colonies since the colonialism era. The colonised and ex-colonised experiences play a crucial role in critiques of colonial legacy and knowledge rather than romanticised and exotic senses, as the Occidental, Coloniser,

and Westerner viewpoints. For postcolonialism scholars, the colonised have liberty and rights to speak for and of themselves via their culture as well as local knowledge, which is distinctive from the West.

Postcolonialism is gradually known as the theory of critical Eurocentrism since 1960, 1980, and 1990 (Go, 2013, pp. 3-31; McLeod, 2010). These periods show that postcolonialism developed from decade to decade as a critical tool for insisting on the positioning and existence of postcolonial society and its people. Additionally, the meaning of postcolonialism is not static in one dimension. As a result, postcolonialism can be deployed to understand the Global South phenomena, especially the predicament of the Indian diaspora, which reflects national and ethnic culture dialectically in Thailand and the rest of the ex-British colonies around the globe.

A discussion of postcolonialism and its criticism in the context of Dutch, Portuguese, and French colonialism is not emphasised in this paper. The paper does not jump to a potentially contentious limit. If readers wish to debate, they must find other papers and texts that focus on those issues instead.

Nonetheless, the article realises that postcolonialism has a limit for explaining the Thai context because Thailand and its scholars have claimed that Thailand is independent of colonialism and has never been directly colonised by Western powers. For example, some Thai and Western scholars have proposed that Siam (i.e., Thailand) acted as an intercolonialist that attempted to dominate northern, northeastern, and southern city-states. The alternative term is that Thailand has been a semicolonialist within the neighbouring areas culturally and historically (Brevik-Zender, 2020; Harrison & Jackson, 2009; Rajchagool, 1984; Samniang, 2021; Winichakul, 2011). However, postcolonialism has succeeded as a critical path in Thai literature. It attempts to address the meaning of Thainess culturally and historically, which is an iron cage for Thai people to understand themselves (i.e., the we-self) as fixed in culture and history nationally and ethnically. Postcolonialism has led Thai scholars to rethink their own culturalism and nationalism through literature and academic fields. These fields are the sphere of practice of Thai scholars, and it is an achievement space of postcolonial theory in Thailand, although they cannot use postcolonialism as a real operation politically and economically because there is no such postcolonial experience in Thailand.

To explain postcolonialism and its criticism in India and Thailand, the paper divides the explanation into three chapters: ‘Postcolonialism: A Critique of Colonialist and Nationalist Knowledge, which explains why postcolonialism is crucial; ‘Postcolonialism as an Ongoing Construction of Differences Politically, Economically, Socially, and Culturally’, which explains how postcolonialism fails and succeeds; and ‘Alternative or Outdated: Subaltern Studies and Postcolonialism in Thailand’.

2. Postcolonialism: A Critique of Colonialist and Nationalist Knowledge

This chapter represents the different epistemologies of social sciences and the humanities that deploy postcolonialism as their academic methodology. These disciplines have adopted postcolonialism as a theory of critique and analysis, but there are some distinctions in their perceptions of postcolonialism.

2.1 Postcolonialism and Social Sciences: The Emphasis on Postcolonial Economy

Postcolonialism is a theory that is accessible in the humanities rather than social sciences; in particular, sociology and anthropology overlooked applying postcolonialism as a theory. Nonetheless, they later shifted to applied postcolonialism as a method and theory. Historically, when social scientists narrated with the postcolonial economy and its capitalism, similarly, they adopted a classic concept—Marxism—as a theory for portraying social conflict and class struggle economically (Rice University, 2017). This means that there are encounters in various areas of the centre of Western nation-states through class struggle conception, but it had never been critiqued that a Western mode of production and its colonialism and capitalism are also problems of non-Western societies that reflect through Western colonial and capital discourses in term of government, development, and modernity politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Marxism seems like a trap that social scientists have emphasised rather than attending to postcolonialism and its encounter with the Eurocentric structure politically, economically, and culturally.

1960 through 1980 were decades of debate on rethinking Marxism by both Indian and Western scholars because there were various social and academic movements in Europe and America. For example, the presence of a "new-left" (Butler, Guillory, & Thomas, 2000; Gosse, 2005; Morley, 2019) who reconstruct a meaning of identity through a cultural field reflects that they are no longer trapped in class struggle politically, practically, and scholastically. The boundary concept and its fixed entity and identity racially and culturally constructed by the old empire (British) and new empire (American) have been challenged by non-Western social scientists and White Marxists. In other words, the concept of entity and identity via conceptions of nationality and ethnicity is limited to understandings of the transnational and cross-cultural phenomenon.

Some Indian-Pakistani sociologists attempted to dialogue with Marxism by positing that India and its mode of production could be relevant and have a conversation with Marxism in the rest of the world. For example, Hamza Alavi (1975) demonstrates that the Indian mode of production shifted from feudalism to capitalism because of the colonial system even though India achieved independence in 1947. Feudalism and capitalism are colonial aspects that influenced the Indian independence government for decades. This perspective on economics is one lens that can be explained by capitalism, which is a colonialist legacy and influenced

by the colonisers of the Indian subcontinents and the rest of the Global South. This perspective pushed India to become peripherally capitalist, which served the structural Western capitalism and imperialism. As a result, the article concedes that Marxism is a set of explanations of India's mode of production through an encounter and resistance lens economically. Nonetheless, this explanation does not directly criticise colonialism and Eurocentrism as the genesis of non-Western economic disparity. It merely explains that colonialism impacted the Indian economy and its development.

Western scholars were more attracted to world system analysis (Wallerstein, 2004), which was the influential theory of the disparity of economic power between the Global North and Global South. Its emphasis on the world system is grounded in hierarchy, which is a reality of the worldly aspect after the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War. The Western powers such as the Group of Seven (including Japan) and international organisations have the real power of capitalism and technology, which is the dominant power in the world. For Wallerstein, there are core and peripheral states in the world system. World system analysis is a process of positioning the states as producers in capitalist world relations politically and economically. Although world system analysis explains that the world is not equal critically, it does not include an emphasis on people's relations in production as subjective. Indeed, world system analysis has instead focused on states as agency through the international division of labour. Thus, the distinction between West and East is still presumably trapped in critiqued economic development rather than criticism of colonialism as the genesis of the disparity in the world system. Analysing Immanuel Wallerstein is still inadequate to understand the postcolonial phenomenon. Julian Go (2010, p. 8) posits that

> *One is that dependency/world-systems, as indeed a form of Marxist thought, focused upon economic structures while postcolonial theory has been concerned with the cultural, psychological, discursive, epistemic, representational or textual dimensions of colonialism. Another difference is that while dependency/world-systems analyses tend to reduce colonialism and racialised processes to economic class—or even conflate them—postcolonial scholarship theorises racial, ethnic, gender or cultural relations and grants them analytic if not ontological autonomy.*

The other subfields in the social sciences such as sociology and anthropology are attempting to deploy postcolonialism as an analysis of their fields as well. Sociology and anthropology are also colonialist knowledge because the sociology and anthropology disciplines existed as colonial government tools for collecting indigenous data through the census. According to Srinivas and Panini (1973), an Indian sociologist and social anthropologist, Indian sociology and anthropology are disciplines because of both British colonialism and American new

world order processes, but Srinivas did not criticise these kinds of knowledge. In contrast, he encouraged these disciplines as an Indian government tool for academic survival. Even though the government of India has never seen these subjects as contributing to Indian society, nationalists in particular have seen anthropology as a subject of difference which can be a danger to the unity of independent India. As Srinivas (1997, p. 2) explains,

> *I had vague ideas of doing graduate studies in sociology in Bombay under G. S. Ghurye, who had been highly recommended to me by M. H. Krishna, a historian and archaeologist at Mysore. Sociology, however, was neither popular nor prestigious in India until the 1950s, and anthropology was under a cloud because nationalist Indians regarded the subject as an instrument of colonial rulers who wanted to keep the tribals distinct from the mainstream population.*

Sociologists and anthropologists progressively examine to be critical of the social predicament politically, economically, socially, and culturally. However, if sociologists and anthropologist's standpoint ground on colonialism and postcolonialism critique, we can see that sociologists and anthropologists lack critical ideas about colonialism and the indigenous independence system which encounter colonial legacy. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), this type of colonial legacy is a process of provincialising Europe, which is an aspect of the colonialist system and its modern governmentality of domination and hegemony among Indian elite and middle-class ideas and practices in their everyday lives. Indeed, the Indian elite have always romanticised colonialist knowledge and inhabitant culture through their perspectives of social relations as the Western Orientalists did (Mukherjee, 1963); for example, the caste system is still effective among Indian people (Dumont, 1999).

Gyan Prakash (1990, pp. 391-394) has criticised anthropology and area studies, saying that these studies conducted in India between 1950 and 1960 by Western scholars are a reproduction of colonialism and Westerner Orientalist knowledge. The Western scholar and the rest of the sociologists, anthropologists, social scientists, or area studies specialists trap on the seeking of an essentialism of Indian society or the authenticity of Indian society and its history and culture. They have not criticised the essentials of that social system; instead, the non-Western culture is romanticised and classified as exotic and different from their culture. Anthropology and area studies arose from the dichotomy or difference between East and West, and the distinction between West and non-West has persisted through these knowledge constructions. They are close to essentialism. They still formed a concept of difference that appears to have never progressed beyond Orientalist essential differences. They simply shifted from distinct East and West concepts to tradition and modern concepts by reintroducing Europe as a centric cultural criterion.

However, Prakash has observed some shifting of colonialist division between local and global through racially dichotomous conception. As Prakash (1994, p. 394) expresses,

> *The area studies programs united these social-scientific fields with Indological pursuits in creating knowledge that was no longer bounded by the old East-West definitions. Drawing regional rather than the old Orient-Occident boundaries, these area studies provided a distinct, yet subtler understanding of cultural relativity, although they could not provide post-colonial scholarship with the means to escape nationalist and Orientalist essentialism … These entities became represented as "traditional" belief structures, which were posed in opposition to modernisation and were useful both in formulating culturally sensitive development projects and in evolving the "appropriate" technology.*

The quotation conveys that the postcolonial world has shifted to a fragmented community, but the culture line is no longer adopted as a criterion of an inferior and superior dichotomy between the state and people domestically and internationally. For Prakash, although sociologists and anthropologists have explained that humans are different from each other culturally, their study aims to understand the differences rather than dominate them. Prakash shows that postcolonial societies are a dialectically complex phenomenon in terms of cultural relativism. Nonetheless, the Western or Eastern scholars have never moved beyond their nationalism and Oriental essentialism, which trap them in a modern mentality that dichotomises society and people via cultural lines instead of race measurement. Moreover, the quotation above led me to think about Bruno Latour's (1993) perspective that *We Have Never Been Modern* because global society is hybridising both traditional and modern styles politically, economically, socially, and culturally. In this sense, for Latour, the world is no longer separated through binary opposition—human/nonhuman as well as nature/culture and traditional/modern—politically, socially, and culturally, which is a legacy of Enlightenment and Modern ideas. It seems like we (both Westerner and non-Westerner) are living hybridisation moments ideally and practically. Thus, the dichotomising of social patterns or people's characters through a conception of traditional and modern racially and culturally must concern rethinking it. This led me to consider the limits of seeking and constructing "we." As Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992, p. 14) note,

> *There are a number of problems with this way of conceptualizing the anthropological project. Perhaps the most obvious is the question of the identity of the "we" that keeps coming up in phrases such as "ourselves" and "our own society." Who is this "we"! If the answer is, as we fear, "the West," then we must ask precisely who is to be included and excluded from this club. Nor is the problem solved simply by*

> *substituting for "our own society," "the ethnographer's own society." For ethnographers, as for other natives, the postcolonial world is an interconnected social space; for many anthropologists—and perhaps especially for displaced Third World scholars—the identity of "one's own society" is an open question.*

Meanwhile, in the Indian social context, sociology, and anthropology in India after independence have been dominated by the elite (who are English educated) academically. As Sujata Patel (2016) states,

> *Post-independence, nationhood and the project of knowledge creation were closely related. The Indian elite governed the country, and sociologists in India—largely upper-caste, elite males—supported the idea of setting up higher education as a nationalist project. Upper-caste practices became the norm for the state's rulers, and within the first few decades after independence, the need for recognition of the marginalised had virtually disappeared.*

In contrast to the Indian nationalist or elite narrative, the writing of Akhil Gupta (1998) entitled *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* is the best example in which the author deploys postcolonialism as a theory for explaining Indian development, which originated from the colonialism legacy, and local of development discourse in capitalism and neoliberalism world that affected to a rural area and its people who encounter local elite and global capitalists. As Gupta (1998, pp. 10-11) expresses,

> *My emphasis on the postcolonial condition is intended to draw attention to a specific conjuncture that shaped the lives and experiences of people in rural India. Thus, I am interested in the institutions and discourses which position subjects and which configure their experience in particular ways, and not just with a body of theory that may be labelled "postcolonial." I use postcolonial theory because it enables me to describe and analyse compellingly the condition of subaltern, rural people in India, their agriculture and ecological practice, and their forms of political organisation, and not just because I find it a creative and innovative new theory (although that would have been a sufficient reason for using it).*

For Gupta, hence, postcolonialism is a theory that could be criticised because of its colonialism legacy, especially the discourse of development that India has previously derived from the Western conception of economic development. The discourse of development has led India to backwardness; that is, India has never become developed from a Western perspective because neocolonialism is always relevant to build new images of colonised or, in their words, developing and

underdeveloped nations that are different from developed countries such as the Western nations. In a sense, Gupta attempts to express that indigenous Indians have their knowledge of agriculture and the peasant has the power to engage and negotiates with the domestic power and international corporations in their areas. Postcolonialism has exhibited that there is a sophisticated world system of capitalism and resistance from below. In short, postcolonialism can illuminate the complexity of concealing economic issues behind the development discourse.

Moreover, when social scientists are concerned about development discourse (Escobar, 1995), it is an avatar of colonialism that evolved as an "empire" or neocolonialism in the postcolonial and globalisation eras. International Relations have been dominated by the Western style of international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and their specialists and scholars in various fields of finance, agriculture, and technobiology. These international organisations aim to civilise third world nation-states politically, economically, and culturally. This kind of new world order has been operated by international monetary and financial capital. It determines the relationship between the Global North and Global South through a conception of developed and undeveloped nation-states since 1949 (Escobar, 1995). This has led the non-Western people and non-Western scholars to resist and encounter development discourse through hybridising culture in the field of resistance politically, economically, and culturally.

Therefore, social scientists have shifted from a trap of Marxism and its class struggle as well as area studies and its entity nationally and ethnically to the complexity of postcolonialism encounters culturally and identically in terms of politics and economy instead. Postcolonialism is the analytical tool for understanding and criticising colonialist knowledge and its development discourse as well as all essentialism and nationalism culturally and historically. For example, social sciences adopted postcolonialism as a theory for explaining the economic complexity within the third world and their encounter with colonialism as well as their interaction with global capitalism. Some scholars realise that there is still a disparity in the interaction and economic cooperation between the Global North and South in contemporary era (Doty, 1996).

2.2 Postcolonialism and the Humanities: The Rise of Non-Westerners' Critical Turn

This section outlines the development of subaltern studies and their merging with postcolonialist theory as a critical tool for understanding non-Western culture and its history. The concepts of non-Western scholars such as Edward Said (Orientalism), Ranajit Guha (subaltern studies), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (literary criticism about gender, culture, and colonial issues) convey that the dominant knowledge such as literature, history, and gender is constructed by the coloniser and local nationalists and elite who are always trapped in dichotomising

society and people through uniformity and universal concepts of nationality and ethnicity in terms of race and culture unchangeably and who treat colonised or subaltern and local people as objects of historical and cultural study. Furthermore, these three critical scholars have shown that the history and culture of the colonised or subaltern are subjective. They are not objects of study from the perspective of Western colonisers and local nationalists and elite. Additionally, history and culture change from time to time. The bottom-up encounter or subaltern voice must narrate and memorise as a subject academically, although scholars have avoided representing or speaking of or for the subaltern themselves. This kind of critique of the uniformity of national or ethnic history and culture encapsulates that colonialist and nationalist discourses—Orientalism, colonialist and nationalist history, and gender—could be problematised and challenged by critique through the literary field. Thus, this section divides the explanation into three parts.

First, Edward Said's text entitled Orientalism (2003) is the starting point of the criticism of colonialist discourse on race, knowledge of Orientalism, and the Western ideology of culture and identity. For Said (2003, p. 2), "[o]rientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'" In a sense, the Orient is a conception of the voiceless or silent which was the translator or interpreter of local knowledge to the Occident. The Orient is the vital actor and subject, but the West was concealing it from history and literature and formed it as inferior to their Occident races instead. Nonetheless, both Orient and Occident are human made (Said, 2003, p. 5). Orientalism is colonial knowledge that the West constructed through language and literature. As Ania Loomba (1998, p. 85) highlights, "[l]iterary studies were to play a key role in attempting to impart Western values to the natives, constructing European culture as superior and as a measure of human values, and thereby in maintaining the colonial rule." Meanwhile, Gauri Viswanathan (1998, pp. 166-169) states that the emergence of the discipline of English or British literature and its curriculum was a product of British colonialism and its Eurocentric literature and curriculum, meaning that it is a formation of the superiority of the coloniser's culture as a strategy of controlling Indian people politically, academically, ideally, and practically. Hence, the perception of the East did not emerge in the air. The West had a data collection and selection of representing the Orient through the scientific and rationalistic, especially the formation of biological and demographic texts for political, economic, social, and cultural domination purposes.

Thus, Orientalism is a discourse that it was a colonial product. This kind of knowledge was derived from the West's interpretation of the East. They have received the information through the Oriental informant and their interpreter or translator rather than interpreting the East themselves. This interpretation is a one-sided perspective from the West without the consent of the East. As a result, there is a power relation between Occident and Orient via the translation process of that

literally. In short, Said's writing demonstrates that the Orient is an agent and subject. He has attempted to abolish the criterion between "us" and "them" (i.e., dichotomy), which structurally speaking is a colonial discourse.

Furthermore, Frantz Fanon's (1986) Black Skin, White Masks and Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) The Location of Culture are academic texts that attempt to represent postcolonial people through the methodology of psychoanalysis. Both of them show that the colonised (Black or Indian) hybridised Western knowledge and characters and transformed them to represent the alternative of culture and resistance against the coloniser. For Fanon and Bhabha, there is no bounded line between colonised and coloniser because the coloniser and their colonialist knowledge always represent the difference between "them" and "us". Both Fanon's (Negritude) and Bhabha's (hybridity/mimicry) ideas show that the colonised mimicked the coloniser's taste and intellect via languages, especially French and English homogeneously. As a result, it is difficult to draw a clear-cut line between "them" and "us". The resistance of the colonised is an indirect path through language and literature which is a mirror of coloniser knowledge itself. There is no such essentialism or universalism in terms of identity. Both collective and individual identities are culturally hybrid. Thus, this stage of the coloniser and colonised interaction in the literature field is a practice of "relocation of culture, translations, migrations, borders" (Bertacco & Vallorani, 2021) through a moment of hybridising identities culturally.

Second, the British colonisers and their Orientalist knowledge ethnographically uniformed history, civilisation, and culture through exotism and romanticism of the Indian colonised or subaltern (Inden, 2000). At the same time, local nationalists or elite and their national ideology have standardised Indian society and people in a trap of a national entity. These colonisers and local elite were overlooked to see the subaltern group as active agents who encounter colonialism and nationalism historically and culturally.

Since 1982, the presence of Indian historians has been the forerunner of the group of non-Western scholars who attempt to rethink colonialist, Orientalist, and nationalist history and historiography in Indian society. In a sense, the subaltern studies illuminate historical criticism that critiqued colonialism, Orientalism, and nationalism historically and culturally. As Ranajit Guha (1982, pp. 1-8; 1988, pp. 37-44) states, this group aims to rewrite and rethink Indian historiography because the Indian elite and the coloniser have influenced it. Guha sees Indian historiography as a discourse. The elite Indian institution (Ministry of Education) has supported it through high school textbooks. Modern or contemporary Indian history is merely the narrative of an Indian nationalist who always claimed the contribution to India politically. As Guha (1982, p. 1; 1988, p. 37) highlights,

> *The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism—colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist*

> *elitism. Both originated as the ideological product of British rule in India, but have survived the transfer of power and been assimilated to neo-colonialist and neo-nationalist forms of discourse in Britain and India respectively. Elitist historiography of the colonialist or neo-colonialist type counts British writers and institutions among its principal protagonists, but has its imitators in India and other countries too. Elitist historiography of the nationalist or neo-nationalist type is primarily an Indian practice but not without imitators in the ranks of liberal historians in Britain and elsewhere.*

The quotation conveys that colonial discourse about Orientalism in India and Indian nationalism is problematised by Guha and the rest of the subaltern studies. Meanwhile, A. Rambabu (2006) indicates that after its independence era, India emerged as a nation-state. Indian elite constructed the nationalist ideology for dominating their people like the British colonisers. They would like to prepare the people for work and to obey the new kind of ideology. Indian modernisation and fundamental Indian culturalisation have formed a socialisation process through education and schooling. Rambabu notes that "[e]ducation was used as a mode of creating the sentiment of national integration and a common Identity, i.e., 'Indianness'" (Rambabu, 2006, p. 17). On the one hand, Nehruvian ideology is seemingly based on the modernisation agenda which aims to position India as an independent state that hybridises both socialism and capitalism economically. On the other hand, the fundamental Indian pseudosecularists have preserved their Hindu nationalism for political purposes. Thus, Indian elite do not differ from British colonisers because they have also conceived something to dominate their citizens.

Furthermore, Rambabu has shown that the Indian government had subsidised an educational organisation for controlling a standard of research and teaching through the National Council of Educational Research and Training for revising and rechecking the content of academic texts. This organisation's director and president has encouraged the policy as a significant Hindu organisation. As Rambabu (2006, p. 187) writes, "[D]r. J. S. Rajput, who was appointed as its director, had been openly advocating the RSS's emphasis on 'Indianisation, Spiritualisation, Nationalisation' of school syllabuses and 'Value' education." Thus, Indian Hindu nationalism overlooks social sciences and humanities knowledge by devaluing these as useless subjects.

Moreover, Guha (1983) has shown that the story of a peasant can also be discussed and studied in the academic sphere even though this kind of history was overlooked by colonialists, Western Orientalists, and Indian nationalists and elite. For Guha, the story of the subaltern cannot be found directly via colonial or national archives, but it exists in the official record, which the historian must read against the grain or reading from a distorting mirror (Suwannakij, 2015, p. 157). Guha

conveys that the people did not obey the British coloniser and Indian elite smoothly; indeed, people resist the authorities throughout their everyday life activities. In a sense, Guha has contributed to Indian history and historiography as reconstruction and rethinking of history from below, as Gyan Prakash (1992, p. 9) highlights:

> *Ranajit Guha's Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency In Colonial India (1983) is a powerful example of this scholarship which seeks to recover the peasant from elite projects and positivist historiography. In this wide-ranging study full of brilliant insights and methodological innovation, Guha provides a fascinating account of the peasant's insurgent consciousness, rumors, mythic visions, religiosity, and bonds of community. From Guha's account, the subaltern emerges with forms of sociality and political community at odds with nation and class, and they defy the models of rationality and social action that conventional historiography uses.*

As a result, the article assumed that Guha's idea on the subaltern aims to rethink Indian history and historiography. Guha wishes to narrate the overlooked story from the national history, which is always avoided by the Indian elite and the academic spheres. Thus, the starting point of subaltern studies aims to narrate an alternative story of people politically, economically, socially, and culturally as Antonio Gramsci defined (subaltern means class, caste, gender, race, language, culture, etc.). This perspective of interpretation of people's stories is different from the Cambridge School interpretation from 1970 based on elite and coloniser narratives (Prakash, 1994, pp. 1476-1477).

In short, Guha was entirely against the formal communism of India, which was constructed by the elite. This is why subaltern studies did not enter the debate as Hamza Alavi and Indian sociologists, anthropologists, and economists did before. Although the subaltern identified themselves as Marxists in terms of scholarship, they are not relevant to any communist parties in India politically. As Guha (2011, p. 289) notes,

> *Our project, Subaltern Studies, kept itself at a distance from both CPI and CPI(M). To us, both represented a left-liberal extension of the Indian power elite itself. It was not that we were non-political or anti-communist. On the contrary, we considered ourselves as Marxists in our attempt to develop a radical critique of colonialism and colonialist knowledge in the study of South Asian History and society. We, therefore, opposed both the official communist parties for their opportunistic and dogmatic use of Marxism. Our sympathies were with the militant peasant movement that drew its inspiration from the Chinese revolution and the ideas of Mao Zedong. Known as the Naxal movement (Naxalbari being*

> *the rural district where it had originated), it was crushed by the combined efforts of the Congress and the two communist parties in vicious counter-insurgency operations during 1968–71.*

As a result, for Guha, both British colonisers and Indian elite are evils that dominated the ordinary Indian for generations. Guha (2011, p. 292) explains, "[i]n South Asian history of the colonial period, power stands for a series of inequalities not only between the British conquerors and their Indian subjects, but also between the dominant and the dominated in terms of class, caste, gender, age, and so forth in the hierarchies of the indigenous society."

Finally, the merging between subaltern studies and postcolonial theory is not apparent. No one knows when these concepts are mixed, but presumably the merging was initiated by the participation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the subaltern studies collection in 1985. Spivak's participate in the subaltern studies demonstrates that gender issues, especially those relating to women, had been concealed by colonialism, Western Orientalism, the national history and historiography of India, and subaltern studies. This led subaltern studies to rethink their own epistemology by including and emphasising more interest in gender studies and literary criticism within the subaltern scholar themselves.

Spivak (1985, pp. 330-363) conveys that she had realised the subaltern as a group of historians who challenged the plot of Indian history and historiography, meaning that they are resistant to the grand narrative of a mode of production dominated by both coloniser and Indian elite. They had shifted the sight Indian history and historiography from the elite to workers and so on. However, Spivak (1985, p. 356) criticises the subaltern, saying,

> *The group is scrupulous in its consideration towards women. They record moments when men and women are joined in struggle (1.178, EAP 130), when their condition of work or education suffer from gender or class discrimination (2.71, 2.241, 243, 257, 275). But I think they overlook how important the concept-metaphor woman is to the functioning of their discourse. This consideration will bring to an end the body of my argument.*

Although the subaltern has narrated the life of the peasant and others, the peasant has been overlooked in the inequality in power relations between men and women. The narrative proposed by the subaltern is still primarily trapped in the story of the men. The resistance of the peasant and peasant council is a story of men from below rather than expanding the space for gender culturally. As a result, Spivak (2013) is leading subaltern scholars to expand their academic interest in gender studies that are less emphasised by the male historians in subaltern studies. Spivak's well-known paper "Can the Subaltern Speak?" narrates a precolonialism era in which Indian women suffered from double levels of patriarchy

(Western/Indian male domination), and there was a myth of gender discourse that was generated by the Western men to represent themselves as liberating the Indian women. According to Spivak (2013, p. 104), "[t]he subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish." This means that Indian women have always been trapped by double discrimination, colonisers, Indian male and female elite, and ordinary men in their families.

Later, Spivak (1987, pp. 91-134) said that the story of women can be narrated as parallel to the peasant movement and other groups of male elite's heroes as well. Spivak translated stories composed by Bangali writers (Mahasweta Devi)—Imaginary Maps (1995)—that disclose the women's stories from Bangali to English. This translation changes the subaltern in that they must be concerned about gender, especially in Indian women's stories that are hidden from mainstream Indian literature.

Meanwhile, Ran Greenstein (1995, p. 231) states, "Gayatri Spivak has criticised the notion that subaltern voices can be heard from within Western discourse including its critical variants inspired by Marx and Foucault. To the extent that she problematises our ability to reclaim subaltern voices from their origins, her critique is pertinent." In a sense, Greenstein agrees with Spivak that subaltern voices should be spoken by the subaltern themselves. It is not a duty of scholars or elite to speak for or of them. For Greenstein (as cited in Loomba, 1998, pp. 257-258), hence, "history from below is usually 'written from above'—a reminder of the enormous distance between subalterns and intellectuals. But he also reminds us that in recent years the 'insurrection of subjugated voices in the fields of feminism, black, gay, and postcolonial studies have been led by members of marginalised groups … and creation of new scholarly fields was implicated in fierce struggles over control of academic boundaries."

Spivak should be fair to Guha and the subaltern, and she says that the subaltern was an overlooked gender issue. Indeed, Guha's (1987, pp. 135-165) essay entitled "Chandra's Death" shows that it "tried to explore general connections—of caste, patriarchy, class, colonial rule—through 'the small drama and fine details of social existence' and sought to avoid the appearance of impersonality and abstraction often conveyed by pure macro-history" (Sarkar, 2002, p. 410). Guha never forgot to include women as a subaltern and see them as historical agency or subjectivity. However, Spivak has seen that the subaltern scholar represents subordinated people; instead, the subaltern must represent themselves so that the academic world cannot speak of and for them.

Meanwhile, Vivek Chibber (2013, pp. 5-6), an Indian sociologist who teaches sociology at American universities, explains,

> *When the annual series was launched in 1982, it was received in the scholarly world as the local avatar of "history from below" as developed by the New Left. It was conceived by Ranajit Guha, a historian of modern India then based at the University of Sussex, together with a small group of younger scholars. At the time they began meeting, in the late 1970s, most members of this group would have regarded themselves as Marxists.*

In a sense, Chibber sees subaltern studies and postcolonial studies as incarnations of New Left scholars, which the project of the subaltern is not essential enough to be explained as theory or concept in the academic world because there is much misunderstanding of capitalism among the subaltern; thus, for Chibber, subaltern studies are ideology rather than theory (Chibber, 2013, Chap. 7). Chibber (Chibber, 2013, p. 8) is seemingly not satisfied with subaltern studies and postcolonialism as a theory, but he realises that subaltern studies were succeeded before they later declined (Sarkar, 2002, pp. 400-429) because Chibber notes,

> *The marriage of Subaltern Studies to post-Marxian cultural theory was a dramatic success. It was from a reading of the early volumes that a leading American scholar of South Asia claimed, with no hint of irony or embarrassment, that "Indians are, for perhaps the first time since colonisation, showing sustained signs of reappropriating the capacity to represent themselves."*

Nonetheless, these essays (Spivak's articles) have shown that subaltern studies had expanded to gender, literature, et cetera that expand subaltern studies to different disciplines. Subaltern studies are not merely a set of explanations of peasant politics or politics from below. They cover more than one predicament through the postcolonial moment and postcolonial theory. As Chibber (2002, p. 7) notes,

> *The more portentous departures came some years into the project, perhaps most famously with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography in the fourth volume. This was the first sign that the project might be making a transition from cultural Marxism to a more decidedly poststructuralist agenda. This was, of course, a familiar turn. From the start, Subaltern Studies had been closely aligned with intellectual trends in the New Left.*

Furthermore, Sing Suwannakij (2015, pp. 169-170) alludes to Gurminder K. Bhrambra, saying that the criticism of Spivak's subaltern concept has impacted other members of subaltern studies in that they have expanded and changed epistemology. Finally, subaltern studies have presumably homogenously merged with the postcolonialism concept, which we cannot differentiate these approaches.

Therefore, these non-Western critical turn ideas about colonial discourses (Orientalism, colonialist/nationalist history, and gender studies) convey that postcolonialism is a literary critical instrument for rethinking Western conceptions academically, although the non-Western epistemology and ontology still depend on the Western legacy. Nonetheless, the critique of colonial discourses has fulfilled the academic field as an alternative understanding of India and its postcolonial phenomenon historically and culturally.

2.3 Postcolonialism as Theory and Analysis of Non-Westerners for Critiques of Colonialism and Its Legacy of Modernity

Postcolonialism in the social sciences and in the humanities have different viewpoints on spaces and disciplines of the study; namely, the social sciences tend to focus on macrolevels of disparity between the north and the south, while the humanities emphasise microlevels and the encounter of the subaltern via literary field. To be fair, the social sciences have a connection point in that they want to criticise colonialism and modernity through the postcolonialism viewpoint that the rural people, urban poor, peasants, women, et cetera are the group of an oppressor who has the power of negotiation, hermeneutics, and resistance to the authorities at various levels.

Scholars of postcolonialism in the social sciences and humanities have critiqued the postcolonial moment through discourse analysis rather than criticising colonialism historically and culturally via class conception as other Marxists did. For postcolonial scholars, there are disciplines such as culture, literature, history, and development which are constructed by both the elite and state authority. As a result, postcolonialism is a critique and discourse analysis, which is a well-known scholarly method throughout the ex-colonies and the rest of the third world. As a result, the postcolonialists have found their academic sphere by deploying postcolonialism as a critical tool for agitating the authorities (Eurocentrism/Orientalism, nationalism/ethnocentrism) and an analysing tool for understanding the indigenous (i.e., subaltern agency and the rise of a redistribution space for them).

Nonetheless, because they are scholars with different experiences than the group of their informants, they must recognise that there are limits to understanding and obtaining the true voice of the subaltern. Alternatively, the scholar of postcolonialism wants to destroy the bounded entities between them and us, which is a colonialist discourse. Although postcolonialism is an important concept, it also has limits in deployment. As the Indian sociologist has satirically expressed, "Postcolonial studies have enjoyed this inflated popularity more than most others—hence the spread of terms such as 'subaltern,' 'hybridity,' 'the fragment,' and 'diaspora' across the scholarly landscape" (Chibber, 2013, pp. 3-4), that seems like strict the approach to analysis other issues.

3. Postcolonialism as an Ongoing Construction of Differences Politically, Economically, Socially, and Culturally: How It Becomes Failure and Success

This paper assumes that postcolonialism has simultaneously succeeded and failed. The paper realises that postcolonialism had been succeeding in the academic sphere for decades. However, there is some critique of postcolonialism, but postcolonialism is naturally a predicament in the scholarly world. Nonetheless, postcolonialism has to led the academic society to rethink the colonialist discourse of pure entity and identity (Bhabha, 1994) that represents people culturally through hybridising and mimicry by the third world. Non-Western scholars have deployed colonialist knowledge as their own opposed weapon to the disparity and discrimination within the world system after colonialism for generations. This weapon has succeeded academically and culturally. The contribution of postcolonialism to development studies, history, and literature demonstrates that postcolonialism has impacted debate in the academic world. As Ankie Hoogvelt (1997, p. 154) notes,

> *Postcolonial studies opens up three windows, or angles of vision. First, such studies dispute that one can infer "identity" by looking at material relations alone. The politics of cultural identity and recognition have become as important as the politics of redistribution; and, as Nancy Fraser argues, they can support the politics of redistribution. Second, postcolonial studies puts a referent emphasis on the cultural complexity of identity formation. Today, cross-border migrations have resulted in fragmentation and heterogenous mixes of belonging and loyalties and political allegiances in which class and nation have become "decentred" as a source of identity. Third, postcolonialism is suggestive and reflexive of a world no longer structured along binary axes, be they First World/Third World; north/south, east/West or socialist/capitalist.*

Undoubtedly, postcolonialism is in a sense a scholarly success. It renews the controversial identity and culture that were once dominant and monopolised by the colonisers and indigenous elite. It has contributed to the academic world as a critical tool for opposition and abolition of colonialist knowledge and development discourse that was encouraged by the coloniser and the local elite of those societies. It is a concept of challenging the superstructure and the elite's knowledge (neocolonialism) from time to time. It required the authority to listen to their desires via academic texts. As a result, some critiques of abused postcolonialism have a political agenda. In a sense, the people who are critical of postcolonialism are not fair to postcolonialists and postcolonialism. Indeed, how can postcolonialism achieve the political and economic goals without participating in politics and economics? The everyday lives and resistance of ex-colonised or third world people

can be used as a "weapon of the weak" (Scott, 1985), but if the people are trapped in their desire without transforming it into a political movement, that desire is a merely individual issue, and it cannot succeed in reality. In short, postcolonialism is not merely ideology or theory. It is a way of liberating practice through literature filed.

Culturally, postcolonialism has raised controversy about the representation of the self within the world system and capitalist milieu (Doty, 1996). For postcolonialists, languages are essential for meaning and an iron cage of people's perspectives. As Stuart Hall (1997, p. 1) demonstrates,

> *Language is able to do this because it operates as a representational system. In language, we use signs and symbols—whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects—to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings. Language is one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture. Representation through language is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced.*

In a sense, languages are essential for cultures and ideas. In reality, it is somewhat difficult to go beyond the language when one has to think or rethink something. The agenda of postcolonialists and third world scholars and people has succeeded. For example, Western media companies have opened and included the story of the third world in Western media, and they warmly welcome third world actors into their production of media such as TV soap operas, movies, and music videos. However, this media production is not a complete success story of postcolonialism critiqued by the West, which is always speaking for and about the representation of the third world people's inferiority (McEwan, 2019, p. 84). Nevertheless, the media (on behalf of the cultural identity) are alternative spaces where the world hears some voices and perspectives from the indigenous, local, and third world people themselves.

Slumdog Millionaire (2008) is a movie representing the everyday life of slum dwellers in the most significant slum area of Asia, namely Dharavi, Mumbai, India. This movie includes Indian actors and actresses who play the main characters of the slum inhabitants. The movie uses English as the main language to represent the characters' emotions and ideas. Based on this movie, Celador, a British entertainment entrepreneur, still dominated power who representing the story of slum dwellers in India, even language should be used English as a main language of the movie, because it can be promoted, sold, and engaged by the various target groups around the world more quickly than indigenous languages can. As a result, some Indians are offended by the film's title, which uses the suffix "dog" as a metaphor for slum dwellers. The rise of dramas existed from this sceptic: "[i]f you are wondering why 'Slumdog' and why not 'Slumboy,' there's a story behind how

Danny Boyle's Golden Globe-winning film got its unusual name". The film title caused some Indians to question the movie title for a while.

Another movie entitled The Man Who Knew Infinity (2015) narrativises the life of Indian scholars at Trinity College, Cambridge University. The plot is based on a true story of Srinivasa Ramanujan, the Tamil man who pursued his pure mathematics theory at the coloniser university. I feel that the whole movie represents the disparity between the White scholars and Indian scholars. One example is the early scene in which Ramanujan presents his theory book to G. H. Hardy and J. E. Littlewood. Hardy has expected that Ramanujan must communicate with them via English, and the entire plot has shown that Ramanujan's and White men's conceptions of theory are different. In particular, the White man (character of G. H. Hardy) required Ramanujan to join the class as another student and attempt to write his proof on his mathematic theory because Ramanujan had never passed any degree or Western style of education.

In 2018, the well-known movie entitled Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald had got a drama from the South Korean actress who performs as Nagini (the snake/beast who is the good fellow of Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter series). There was criticism of the writer, J. K. Rowling, regarding whether "it played into the representation of Asian people as 'peripheral in a white-centric world' and 'Asian women exist to mainly serve white men's interests'" (James, 2013). However, Rowling, Warner Bros. Pictures, and the producer made a defence that the Nagini is a snake in Southeast Asian legend, especially the story of the Naga in Bali, Indonesia. Nagini character does not mean that the writer and producer see Asian women as subordinates who are inferior to White men or women (BBC, 2018).

These examples from movies show how White media have realised that it is important to include third world people (e.g., Asians) in their sphere and represent them through these movie characters. Romantically, the emergence of Asian characters in Western films demonstrates that third-world people now have a stronger presence in Western media than ever before. If one conceived of these movies as a success of difference representation within the capitalist and globalised world, these movies could say that they succeeded. However, if one think that this is not enough for the third world people, then it is necessary to go beyond the plot of romanticising the third world through media.

In contrast, economically and politically, the third world (developing and underdeveloped countries/Group of Seventy-Seven/Non-Aligned Movement) attempts to promote their economic and political agendas on their own path. In reality, Third-world nation-states have deployed and engaged with globalisation and the capitalist world through international investment and companies with local elite networks, and postcolonialism has been concerned about the shifting of a postcolonial phenomenon through the neocolonialist conception economically. For example, after Indian independence in 1947, the first wave of the Indian and

Nehruvian socialist economic planning of the Indian economy occurred. Moreover, the second wave began in 1990/1991 when the privatisation of the Indian economy (License Raj) under Rajiv Gandhi's government was a turning point in the Indian economy and politics (Majumdar, 2004; McDowell, 1995; Weede, 2010). In the past two decades, Indian elite have played a crucial role in the control and management of the Indian economy. They have shown that India has engaged itself through modern industrial and capitalist economies, which they are still trapping in development discourse. Thus, economically, and politically, the third world phenomenon is not going beyond Western domination as the postcolonialists have critiqued. Postcolonialism is historically and culturally successful in scholarship, but it cannot solve the limit of going beyond the development discourse in real circumstances politically and economically.

4. Alternative or Outdated: Subaltern Studies and Postcolonialism in Thailand

Generally, in the discipline of Thai history, Thai scholars have not preferred to adopt the term "postcolonialism" as their academic epistemology because they always claim that Thai society has never been directly colonised by Westerners (Portuguese, Dutch, British, or French), and as a result, postcolonialism does not fit the Thai milieu. Some Thai and foreign scholars (who are interested in Thai studies) have created a concept of semicolonialism, cryptocolonialism, or intercolonialism (Brevik-Zender, 2020; Harrison & Jackson, 2009; Rajchagool, 1984; Samniang, 2021; Winichakul, 2011), which is a more appropriate concept for understanding the Thai context.

Semicolonialism, cryptocolonialism, and intercolonialism seem like epistemologies that shed light on Thai academics, and they attempt to link the status of exceptional of colonisation which is similar to China, Japan, and Turkey, which have never been directly colonised by Western colonisers. Furthermore, Thailand's image as a country that has not been colonised and has maintained its neutral status appears to be the main image that the outside world has of Thailand. As Rajeev S. Patke and Philip Holden (2010, pp. 11-12) highlight, "[s]tates of the mainland either suffered colonisation by European powers, or—in the case of Thailand—maintained strategic neutrality as buffer areas."

Siam's status as an independent state during colonialism appears reasonable and understandable from the perspective of Thai academia that Thailand is not directly relevant to colonialism, and thus postcolonialism cannot be academically suitable for the Thai context. This is why the discipline of history or Thai history is not interested in adopting postcolonialism and its criticism as a juxtaposition in terms of epistemology and methodology for understanding Thai history, although Siam interacted with colonialism and postcolonialism internationally. However, Thailand has no collective experience of trauma comparable to those of the rest of the ex-colonised nation-states in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Thailand has never

isolated itself from the colonial system economically, although Siam was never colonised by Western powers directly. As Thongchai Winichakul (2014, p. xviii) states, "I would argue that Siam went straight into postcolonial conditions without a colonial stage." As a result, when Siamese elite and Thai authorities desire to construct "Thainess" as a uniform national entity, it excludes the rest of people in Thai society as "the other-within" (Winichakul, 2000, 2017).

The conception of "Thainess" is a discourse (Winichakul, 1994) that is interpreted by Siamese elite and Thai authorities as "Orientalism discourse" (Said, 2003) within the Orient itself. This led Thai national history, literature, art, and culture to be trapped in heroism and its narrative of nationalism rather than play emphasising social history and everyday life narratives within Thai society. This phenomenon seems like a phenomenon of Indian history and historiography that traps Indianness and its virtues in colonial and nationalist stories. Thai National history and historiography are no longer popular. These traditions of national history and historiography have been challenged by the concept of the subaltern (Guha, 1982) and postcolonial theory as criticism tools and the scholarly juxtaposition of Thai history and historiography.

As a result, some groups of Thai scholars have adopted postcolonialism as their epistemology for understanding the phenomena of Thai literature and art, development studies, marginalisation (people, society, culture), and Thai history. It is too early to conclude that postcolonialism has completely failed academically in Thailand. When discussing postcolonial criticism, one Thai scholar's name may come to mind: Nopphon Prachakul (2003), who composed some academic texts on poststructuralism and postcolonialism as a mythology of literary criticism, such as A Critical Insight into French Literature. Similarly, there are some unpublished and published works on postcolonialism in Thai society. For example, Pornthada Suwatthanavanich's (2004) Postcolonial Concept and a Critique of Thai Literature. Chayawat Panyaphet's (2014) master's thesis entitled Thai Contemporary Art Under Postcolonialism in the 1990s. Preedee Hongsaton (2020) translated a well-known academic work by the forefather of subaltern studies, Ranajit Guha (1983), titled Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India. Wirachai Chunjandang's (2020) master's thesis entitled Postcolonialism in The Artworks of Maria Thereza Alves.

Both the published and unpublished academic works mentioned above demonstrate that postcolonialism and its method of criticism are vital for explaining Thai and international contexts, especially in Thai literature and Thai art that has always deployed postcolonialism and its critical method as a lens for understanding and challenging Thai virtue. It seems popular in Thailand as one alternative epistemology for critiques of Thai literature and art rather than as a mainstream lens for understanding the Thai context historically and culturally. Thus, postcolonialism and its criticism have succeeded in the Thai literary context because they critique

Eurocentrism and the local Thai elite discourse of Thainess racially and culturally (Harrison, 2014).

Nonetheless, when Thai scholar mention postcolonialism, it also overlaps with subaltern studies, social history, history from below, and mainstream criticism of Thai culture, which emphasise ethnic studies, hill-tribe studies, rural studies, development discourse studies, and grassroots uprising in Thailand. These research topics are always a mainstream academic issue among foreigners and Thai anthropologists (Ganjanapan, 1984; Haberkorn, 2011; Pitackwong, 1996; Sharp & Hanks, 1978; Tanabe, 1981; Vaddhanaphuti, 1984) who are the forerunners of Thai studies and have been under American domination since the Cold War era (Kitirianglarp, 2019). This also leads postcolonialism to overlap with the various topics and theories in the discipline of anthropology. This demonstrates that the story of people from below or social history is not new epistemology for the Thai academic world. This will be a limit of postcolonialism and its criticism when Thai scholar would like to adopt it to explain various research topics in the Thai context sociologically and anthropologically. If a young scholar wants to adopt postcolonialism to describe the Thai context, they must know about this limit before they begin to deploy it as their main lens for doing research.

This paper supports the idea of Bill Ashcroft et al. (2002, pp. 217-219) on rethinking postcolonialism (the debate of meaning of post (-) colonialism; for more, Mishra and Hodge (2013, pp. 276-290) in the 21st century, especially postcolonialism and the diaspora, to understand the phenomenon of the Thai-Indian diaspora. The concepts of postcolonialism and diaspora are not very popular in Thai studies, especially in the urban setting and among its members. The focus on a group of diasporas will make Thai studies cross-disciplinary rather than merely a fixed Thainess discourse. As Thongchai Winichakul (2014, p. xix) notes, in the contemporary milieu, it is necessary to know more about societies of Southeast Asia and the globe, and it is necessary to avoid the Thai centrism that traps Thai scholars in their own narcissistic mentality that imagines Thai society is superior to the rest of societies and people; thus, Thai scholars must be critical of their own knowledge of Thai studies or view it critically.

The Thai-Indian diaspora is a phenomenon that Thai scholars have studied academically for a decade (Ayuttacorn et al., 2020; Kamwang, 2016; Kanato, 1993; Sashe, 1991, 2003; Srichampa, 2016), but these Thai scholars are still trapped in a conception of area studies and a concept of single/double nationalism through Indianness/Thainess nationally and ethnically. Thai-Indians are a group of people who migrated to Thai society before and after colonialism. As a result, they live in a complexity of societies that shifted from the colonial to the postcolonial era. Since they settled down in Thai society, they have led Thai society to become a "superdiversity" (Vertovec, 2007) politically, economically, historically, socially, and culturally. As a result, the adoption of postcolonial theory to understand the

phenomenon of Thai-Indian diasporas is a vital lens for understanding a Thai society that is not static in Thainess from a Thai perspective only.

In a sense, postcolonial theory will fulfil the understanding of Thai history in other dimensions because "postcolonialism can be best thought of as a critique of history" (Robert Young as cited in Gandhi, 2019, p. 170). To critique Thai history or Thai studies, it is necessary to seek and show a complexity of Thai history and Thai studies that is grounded in superdiversity which merges with Indianisation or Sinicisation culturally. The diaspora is a vital group of people who are involved in the construction of Thailand (Bangkok and Chiang Mai) as a superdiverse city. As a result, the understanding of Thainess culturally and historically is dialectical rather than static in one perspective that is always imagined by the Thai people or elite lens only.

5. Conclusion

For Indian scholars and the Indian context, postcolonialism is both critical analysis and juxtaposing instruments ideally and practically in the academic field. The success of postcolonialist theory and its criticism is "recovering the subject of the subaltern (subordinate people/third world people)" (O'Hanlon, 2002, pp. 135-186) through criticism of the colonialist legacy that led the people to be trapped in dichotomies such as traditional/modern, east/west, Occidental/Oriental, colonised/coloniser, and developed/undeveloped. Postcolonialism has fulfilled humanities and social sciences through critical theory, but they cannot transform these criticisms to political and economic spheres, which are still a space of elite and capitalist domination. They enable encouraging the people and themselves to resist indirectly via everyday lived activity such as writing.

Nonetheless, postcolonialism is hybridising with subaltern studies, development studies, gender studies, and literature, creating a quandary and debate among non-Western scholars (Indian/Thai) and the rest of Western scholars in a moment of history and cultural criticism. This implies that postcolonialism is a contesting space that locates non-Western (Indian/Thai contexts) and Western scholars' relations dialectically. It challenges the concept of the imperialist or colonialist pure race as well as area studies. This urges Indian and Thai scholar to understand that postcolonialism is a critical term for a complex moment through "crossing borders" (Basu & Shahnaa, 2017; Singh & Schmidt, 2000; Spivak, 2003) scholastically. Area studies, cultural boundaries, and their entities are no longer influenced in terms of the academic field because the postcolonial world is hybridising cultures, entities, and identities in terms of academics and real life (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994). Colonialist, Orientalist, and nationalist knowledge are also problematised in the academic field because for postcolonialism and its scholars, there is no concrete line of discipline; indeed, disciplines have been declining (Albrecht, 2020; Spivak, 2003) scholastically and geographically.

This connotes that area studies, meaning the studies of the pattern of sovereign states around the world through a specific geography, are challenging Western culture through the phenomena of "a clash of civilisations" (Huntington, 1996), "crossing borders" (Basu & Shahnaaz, 2017; Singh & Schmidt, 2000; Spivak, 2003), and "beyond a boundary" (James, 2013) culturally.

In the Thai context, postcolonialism appears to be a scholarly accomplishment. It has prompted Thai academics to address the concept of nationality and ethnicity both racially and culturally through their academic texts. Specifically, the fields of Thai, English, and French works of literature and art have become strongholds of negotiating and contesting space. Postcolonialism has been adopted as a juxtaposition and criticism of Thainess among Thai scholars. It gradually led to a rethinking of national culture, which had always focused on Thai virtue as a high culture rather than respecting and recognising the rest of the minor cultures in Thai societies such as Chinese, Laos, Indian, and Western.

Nevertheless, looking at Thai scholars, although postcolonialism seems like a critique and juxtaposition of conceptions of Thai national history, culture, and literature, it may be inadequate to critique Thainess and Thai society politically and economically (in the operational field) because the Thai context is still relevant to postcolonialism indirectly through these fields, although an external factor has been challenging and adapted by Thai elite and scholars all the time dialectically. However, there are various postcolonial phenomena, especially the diasporic Chinese, Laos, Indian, and Vietnamese people in Thai society. Thai scholar insists that Thainess is not pure and uniform through postcolonial theory. Thainess is merely discourse as juxtaposition of Western Orientalism, colonialism, and nationalism and is a dominant ideology of Thai people. It needs to be addressed and critiqued academically. Even postcolonialism maybe not be fit to make an explanation, but it cannot overlook that it is useless for understanding the Thai context.

In both the Indian and Thai contexts, postcolonialism appears to be accomplished academically, culturally, and historically. Still, there are some limitations to postcolonialism's political and economic adaptation in these contexts. A group of Thai and Indian scholars has never taken the initiative to achieve the goal in the political and economic fields. They simply critique and intend the possible way of thinking about culture as contesting and negotiating spaces of hybridising identities and cultures through postcolonial theory. To be fair, their writings are practised in the field of literature that scholars are enabled to critique Indianness/Thainess in their own everyday life.

Still, the article hopes that shifting focus from the text to the context of the Indian diaspora in Thai society will fulfil the theoretical limit of postcolonialism. Because the diaspora is a contemporary phenomenon, they are still finding and insisting on their culture and history through their moment of hybridisation which there is no root of origin. Thus, postcolonialism is an unfinished project that still

focuses on postcolonial phenomena as spaces of encountering and negotiating uniformity, nationality, ethnicity, and identity through a hybridising moment in histories and cultures.

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