

Jihad in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*

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Ali Shiriati, a member of the People's Mujahideen rendered Quranic terms "moskabirnie" for "the arrogant" and "mostadafine" for "the weakened or the disinherited" in his Persian translation of Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The "moskabirnie" and "mostadafine" are the colonized ones whose struggle for independence is jihadist in nature. The jihadist resistance offered by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* is reminiscent of this Quranic theory. The Holy Quran urges people to "...strive hard and fight in the cause with their wealth and their lives (*The Noble Quran* 4:495) and Fanon says, "For if the last shall be the first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists" (Fanon).

The "cause" for Fanon is decolonization. Jihad, not only physical but also psychological has been urged by him. He is the psychologist-politician whose armed resistance transcends physical violence "...to blow the colonial world to smithereens is henceforth a clear image within the grasp and imagination of every colonized subject" (Fanon 6). Fanon's attempt is to touch the psyche of the masses and foreground the brute realities of colonialism. He wants "to touch my reader effectively or in other words irrationally or sensually" ("Foreword", Bhaba, 25). Fanon's psychological resistance is against the equally psychological superiority complex of the colonialist who suffers from narcissism- "corrosive element... distorting everything which involves aesthetics and morals... and unconscious and incurable instrument of blind forces."

Such obliterations result in the natives' physical spasms resulting from the psychological retreats. The psycho-affective spheres in *The Wretched of the Earth* can be traced through Quranic afflictions which like Fanon, foregrounds the oppressor's Narcissism as falsified inferiority of the colonized. This needs to be fought against and resisted- "(and) if you do not do so (i.e., become united), there will be the *fitnah* (wars and battles) and oppression and a great mischief and corruption" (8:73). Similarly, Fanon's calls for a united fraternity of the Third World and anti-colonial struggle is delineated as, "The colonized man is an envious man and the colonized sector or at least the native quarters, the shanty town the Medina, the reservation is a disreputable place inhabited by the disreputable people"(Fanon, 4-5).

Colonized people are "the" men; the universally oppressed in need of common and unified resistance just like the call in Quran for the collective "you..." This is how the political parties stir the masses by declaring "we blacks, we Arabs" which

often create ambivalent meanings. The political leader does not directly want to subvert the colonial system. He demonstrates the pacification to the colonialist bourgeoisie by using religious discourses- “All saints who turned the other cheek, who forgave those who trespassed against them... are championed and shown as an examples” (Fanon). These political leaders who are mere politicians without psychological insights have been criticized by Fanon. They are the “emancipated slaves” who fail to actually mobilize the masses against the colonialist.

However, instead of creating an obstacle in the Liberation Movement, the bourgeoisie politicians’ speeches, the police and administration display a “show” of force which ultimately gets converted into stimulant for the *Fidayeen* to act. Homi K. Bhabha in his “Foreword” to Fanon traces how the preventive measures taken by the colonialist administration end up stimulating the *Fidayeen* and national freedom fighters. The psycho-affective struggle for survival and search for the identities amidst oppression is the crux of Fanonian idea of Jihad. It is not just the violence in its physical terms but a psychological violence. This comes out of the Manichean symbols of colonialism and anti-colonialism in Fanon’s text. In the Holy Quran, the Manichean principle is largely based on the oppressor and the oppressed; the free and the confined; and the surviving and the threats to survival, not only physical but the psychological- “O you who believe! Enter perfectly and follow not the footsteps of Shaitan (Satan). Verily, he is to you the plain enemy.” (2:208).

The image of Satan in Fanon’s work refers to the colonialist who deserves to be resisted against. This resistance draws clear comparison from Quranic impression of Satan who has to be fought against. Homi K. Bhabha quotes Richard Perle, former US Assistant Secretary of Defence (1981-87) “...and that “the wretched of the earth” (to use the title from Frantz Fanon’s famous anti-colonial tract) are so desperate that they would not fear honorable death at the hands of what they see as the Great Satan” The “Great Satan” is the colonialist in the concrete and abstract senses of the term. Similarly, it is the evil in religious terms. The Third World is the Non-Satan, resisting against the Satan.

Jean Paul Sartre’s “Preface” to *The Wretched* drew flames to the already exciting heated text of Fanon. Students and peasantry swept into action by the combination of the anti-colonial ideas of these two philosophers- Fanon and Sartre. The universalism and humanitarian dialectics used by them called upon the entire Third World for resistance and fight. It was not to be at the tribal or the clan levels. The *Fidayeen* rose to National Integration. Homi K. Bhabha uses metaphors of “fanned”, “flames” and “whirlwind” to depict the psycho-effectiveness of Sartre’s “Preface”- “we have certainly sown the wind. They are the whirl wind. Sons of violence at every instant they draw their humanity from it. (Bhabha xxi).

The universal statuette of violence penetrates the national politics via anticolonial movements. The aggressive speeches and body languages of the Third World politicians symbolise the violent fervor that gets embedded in the atmosphere. Instead of disappearing in the post liberation era, the aggression continues in the forms of ethnic riots, communal tensions and exaggerated linguistics. Even though the anti-colonial issue has shifted to other issues like minority rights and welfare agenda, the tone of aggression prevails.

Also, the linguistic violence of the colonialists acts as stimulants for the linguistic aggression of the colonized as Bhaba cites in his “Foreword”. The bestial images and symbols used by the colonialist for the colonized have been deconstructed by Fanon- “... those shapeless, obese bodies, this headless, tailless cohort sprawling under the sun... His vegetative existence...” (xix). Such images are inherent in the colonial vocabulary. Fanon’s condemnation of the colonialist’s dehumanizing vocabulary can be compared with the Islamic criticism against the unlawful language. The colonialists’ language is unlawful because it dehumanizes the colonized subjects into nameless and no-man creatures on earth.

Consciously or unconsciously Fanon draws from the Islamic culture in executing his violence against the linguistic violence carried out by the colonialist, the Satanic figure- “let that not a group scoff at another group... nor defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. How bad it is to insult one's brother...” (*The Noble Quran* 49:11). Fanon’s condemnation of the colonialists’ insulting and dehumanizing vocabulary is clearly reminiscent of the Quran’s message against such linguistic violence. Therefore, oppression, in any sense of the term is destructive as Fanon acknowledges in *The Wretched*.

Physical violence is not the first but the last resort in the various stages of resistance. This is the crux of Fanon’s Jihads philosophy. It is only when the negotiations fail and the “negotiation table” is not placed that the masses take the matter in their hands. This turns violent only because nonviolence did not work. The Quranic version of nonviolence foregrounds the importance of negotiation “...there is no sin on them both if they make terms of peace between themselves and making peace is better (4:128) and also, “...permission to fight is given to those who are attacked because they have been wronged” (22:39)

Hence, if the elites fail in negotiations and table conference, they wash their hands off the freedom of the masses. It is then, at the last resort that takes a physically violent shape in forms of attacks, arsons and killings.

The psychologist- politician that Fanon is, he delineates the role of violence in anticolonial struggle. It is the role of violence, and not its importance that is the theme of *The Wretched of the Earth*. His letters in *EI Moujahid* appeal the youth to use education, skills and knowledge to liberate themselves. As he puts it, “I see future farmers, ranchers... physicians and professors in Africa...”

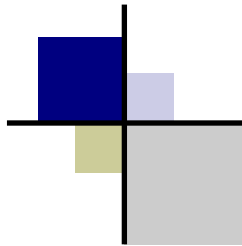
The resistance offered by the Third World is not just physical but also psychological, linguistic and historical process. These are borne out of the violence rendered by the colonialist bourgeoisie which act as stimulants for the natives to attack. The works by Fanon in *EI Moujahid* clearly signify the quest for freedom through Jihad- against all forms of oppressions. These oppressions range from the psychological, social and racial to linguistic. As a psychologist-politician, Fanon’s direct role in stabilizing the *fidayeen* (local militia) has been acknowledged. Bhaba has traced this in his “Foreword” and Sartre has flamed it in his “Preface” to *The Wretched of the Earth*.

However, a direct comparison between Fanon’s concept of violence in *The Wretched of*

the Earth and the Islamic philosophy of violent resistance is quite feasible. The Manichean images of the colonialist and the colonized used by Fanon can be juxtaposed with the images of Human and Satan and the oppressed and the oppressor in the Holy Quran- “And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the Cause...for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men and women and children” (4:75). Ali Shiriati’s translation therefore, has been able to foreground the philosophy of Jihad in Fanon’s book through the use of Quranic vocabulary- “moskabirnie” and “mostadafine” for the arrogant oppressor and the neglected oppressed, respectively.

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