Emancipatory Concepts for Newer Understanding – A View from the Periphery

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Abstract
The present that we dwell in gets constituted by varied institutional and ideological fixations that shape our views, rationalities, desires, and they also condition the way we perceive our realities. We live in a society where commercial wealth gets acclaimed, destructive power gets sought, markets become the priority, and experts rationalise. In the current global structure, we see the establishment of fixed regimes that, through various ways, perpetuate a myth that the existing state of global condition is but natural. Even if one is a firm believer in the current global neoliberal structure, the question arises; who decides what is ideal in the first place? The authors here discuss the need for emancipation from existing practices. We move forward by tinkering with the term emancipation and following a nomadic reflexive methodology. The article looks at the historical conditions that necessitated the desire for emancipation and the various concepts developed in the quest for emancipation. The concepts mentioned can be used as a stepping stone and function as threshold concepts for those from diverse educational backgrounds.

Keywords: Corona, Emancipation, Coloniality, Neoliberal, Concepts

Introduction

The corona crisis has caused turbulence all over the world. A crisis of any type requires experts from varied backgrounds to converge to understand and prevent it, reduce it, control it, and if possible, eradicate it. Lessons acquired from past disasters become helpful in dealing with if it befalls in the future. The continuing corona pandemic likewise provides vital lessons for experts from various disciplines. There is a principal lesson that we should learn from the corona pandemic. Which is, no matter how powerful or weak an individual occupies in the societal order, no matter how much the process of othering we get involved, the strength in the belief of being distinct and superior to others, nothing matters for we all exist in a singular global assemblage where complex rhizomatic interconnections lead to entangled realities [1]. Onwards 1950, the world has been experiencing considerable advances in all features concerning living yet, all this improvement has not altered the reality that yet, hundreds of millions subsist in perpetual poverty, hunger and is stripped from fundamentals in life like health care, drinking water, education and remain in poor dangerous circumstances.

Interventions to address poverty, health and hunger issues are based on the assumption that people are poor because of their behavioural habits besides hardly are structural conditions that preserve and maintain such inhuman situations given much attention [2]. Absolute scarcity and extravagant wealth exist alongside in any cosmopolitan city in South Asia where few are able to spend millions on some designer fashion goods and many are unable to pay a few hundred rupees for fundamentals like health or schooling. It is time we examine problematic social ill issues from new aspects and not confine ourselves to the 'rape model of research' and not be bounded by the 'relation of relation lessness' when working on individual and social ills that currently exist [3, 4]. The necessity for emancipation from systems, imparting particular forms of reasoning and emancipation hegemonic practices enduring in the contemporary global society continues around the world.

To write on emancipation and review all the writings onwards 15th-century colonialism is a colossal task and for which the author does not have access to resources except for those available through the internet and in the local library least developed nations like Nepal. Apprehending the enormity of literature on emancipation, we attempt to familiarize uninformed readers with historical conditions that gave rise to emancipatory aspirations. We also identify diverse concepts, theories and approaches that have elaborated in the pursuit of emancipation. Assuming that inquisitiveness will direct the readers to comprehend the different concepts that could be new and also be a 'threshold concept', no added discussion is done on these concepts. The motive for doing so are twofold - firstly, these have elaborately been discussed and secondly, to bring to the readers as many ideas and theories associated with emancipation and staying within the word limit.

Need for Emancipation

Emancipation entails getting liberated from chains. Emancipatory aspirations have been the call for populations disregarded, marginalised, vulnerable, oppressed and enslaved in the past. The longing for emancipation from diverse hegemonic entities begets conflicts and revolutions with mixed effects. The necessity for emancipation from existing ways of obtaining knowledge, validating knowledge, interpreting and perceiving events have been a recurring feature since the advent of colonialism. We require emancipation from what ties us down, be it tyrannical figures, oppressive religions, authoritarian governments or toxic understandings. The need for emancipation does not apply only to individuals, communities or nations oppressed. Appeals for emancipation concerning education practices, teaching methods, professional practices and research practices across diverse disciplines and curriculums have gotten raised [5-12].

When something desires liberation, it entails that it is being repressed and restricted by some other thing. The course to emancipation is fraught with obstacles, and based on what or who needs emancipation determines the strategies towards achieving the goal of emancipation. The call for emancipation has been a reaction to past and existing isms and hegemonic Eurocentric ontologies such as reductionism, Cartesianism, methodological individualism, apoliticalism, imperialism, 'one dimension man', colonialism, Eurocentrism, neoliberalism, neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism, monological, monotopic, patriarchal, heterosexual, epistemicide, genocide, androcentrism, extractivism, epistemic injustice, societal fascism, cognitive imperialism, anachronism, agnogenesis, obscurantism, internal colonialism, white saviour syndrome, abyssal thinking, masculinism, necropolitical, hyper objectivity, methodolatry, 'pedagogical myth', 'chrematistics', and coloniality. Capitalism, coloniality and globality are three adjoining historical occurrence that have shaped the existing world order and has led to embodiment of an 'ontological coloniality' (what counts as being, including human being) consisting of 'coloniality of being', 'coloniality of knowledge' and 'coloniality of power' [13].

Coloniality is the 'residual structural and cultural continuation of colonisation such as the intellectual, emotional agential temperament and states of being, long after colonisers left' [14]. 'Coloniality refers to the episteme and profound presuppositions about a global order that structured countries and communities into classes of human and subhuman, based upon race, gender, religion plus other categories, and enslaved indigenous communities towards the benefit of the colonizers who professed only for themselves the 'virtues' of knowledge and righteousness [15]. Coloniality gets manifested in three interconnected reciprocally dependent types, 'systems of hierarchy', (racial division and classification as the principle of White supremacy), 'systems of knowledge', (privileging Western or Eurocentric forms of knowledge as universal and objective) and 'societal systems' (reinforcing hierarchies through the creation of the state and specific institutions to regulate, segregate, and diminish decolonizing systems of healing and lived experiences) [16]. 'The control of history, knowledge, health, and justice are traits concerning the colonial matrix of power, or coloniality' [17].

One global experience of monstrous proportion that shaped the contemporary in many forms was the existence of colonialism which began from the 15th century onwards was colonialism. The colonising campaign continued up till the 1950s, after which many nations achieved independence. In this newfound independence, these nations now had to endeavour towards progress. The former colonial masters were much head in socioeconomic indicators such as; literacy rate, mortality rate, poverty rate, undernourishment and malnutrition rates.

The era from 1950 onwards labelled as postcolonialism (post-colonialism), has been named as neo-colonialism too. Postcolonialism implies the conclusion of colonialism, while neo-colonialism indicates that a new-fangled manner of colonialism endures. Spivak applied the phrase 'postcolonial neocolonized world' to represent existing circumstances in which the Western world occupied the zenith of global power hierarchy whereas the previous colonies or the developing world languished at the subaltern bottom [18, 19] .

The ideological basis of colonialism persist throughout the homology of modernity/rationality/coloniality which is profoundly ingrained into us and we are all within its control and no one escapes it [20, 21]. Although the practice of decoloniality began along with colonialism the expression was conceptualised only in the 1990's by Anibal Quijano. When seen decolonially an essential part of coloniality is modernity and they are intimately, intricately, explicitly and powerfully entwined [22]. Coloniality is the darker side of modernity and decoloniality is the call for a praxis which goes beyond Eurocentric Western understanding. Modernity/ coloniality are two sides of a coin and one cannot exist without the other, modernity is constitutive of coloniality [23]. Coloniality endures colonialism [24]. Modernity is persistently reproducing coloniality [25].

Onwards the 1950s, many countries under colonial rule attained liberation, which established a notion of decolonisation as the visible governing systems of colonialism had left, and a conceptual myth of post-colonialism was established [21]. From decolonial logic, the notion of postcolonialism seems restricted in influence and seen as a symptom of colonial imagination that originates from the account of history that establishes the colonial nations at the core of modern/colonial history and presumes post modernity [26, 27]. Postcolonialism and decoloniality emerged as a response to colonialism, but while postcolonialism mainly refers to the nineteenth and twentieth century, decoloniality began from the fifteenth century onwards with the European invasion of America headed by Columbus [28]. Decoloniality and decolonial understanding coalesced while the colonial matrix of power developed in the fifteenth century [25]. Modernity/coloniality and decoloniality are seen as one complex concept interconnected, but it is decoloniality, that makes visible coloniality as the dark side of modernity [29].

The supposedly affable character of globalisation loses its credibility when the past is viewed from a subaltern or the 'others' perspective. Bifurcations such as conquerors and conquered 'us/them, whites/non-whites, Orientals/Occident, savages/civilized, believers/non-believers have been the principal way of cate-

gorising who are/were dissimilar. Such dual categorization and the certainty in supremacy over one's own civilization, and the necessity to bring the others and amalgamate them have been the origins of the program of modernity. The era commencing with renaissance, Cartesianism, positivism, empiricism, discovery of the new world and the industrial age has been essential in forming the contemporary. Since the 1500's with the discovery of America began an age of colonialism by European nations and whose consequences remain.

The supposedly friendly aspect of globalization loses its credibility when the past gets viewed from a subaltern or the populace considered as 'others' perceptions. Bifurcations such as conquerors and conquered 'us/them, whites/non-whites, Oriental/Occidental, savages/civilized, believers/non-believers have been the way of classifying who are/were dissimilar. Such dual categorization and their certainty in supremacy over one's civilization and the obligation to bring the others and amalgamate them have been the foundations of the program of modernity. The period originating with the renaissance, Cartesianism, positivism, empiricism, discovery of the new world and the industrial age has been indispensable in establishing the contemporary. Since the 1500s, with the discovery of America began colonialism by European nations and whose consequences remain.

Onwards the 1950s, the global power configuration and uneven symmetry of power favoured the past colonial masters, and in this power dealing, developing countries had to uncover and discuss ways for the wellbeing of their nations. Hundreds of years of exploitation of its land and people ruined the conventional systems under which these populations had flourished, and neither there were sufficient up to date infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, factories, communication and transportation. Although, poorly available the infrastructures got mainly built to ease colonial business interests. With freedom from colonial masters, developing countries could embark on a course towards advancement was the conviction of citizens of these recently sovereign countries. But, a meeting held in Bretton Woods in 1944 saw the formation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), later named World Bank for the reconstruction of war-devastated Europe, transpired to have significant effects for developing countries in their quest for human advancement.

Emancipation of places as in nations being independent from colonial ruling and the consequent modification in flags, state emblems, constitutions are easily perceptible but the need for emancipation in ways of thinking, perceiving, and understanding is not evident so easily. There has been much effort towards emancipating different entities all through history, and in the present epoch too there have been various attempts to break free of shackles that bind them. Onwards 1950 we observe that there exists a concept that a fresh era has arrived and this belief led to coining of stipulations attaching prefixes such as post and neo. Application of prefix post as in postcolonialism, postmodernism, post-Occidentalism, post humanism and postorientalism involve conditions following the past system. The use of prefix neo like neo-colonialism, neoimperialism and neoliberalism means that a new order exists from what was in earlier eras. Use of post

supposes the end of a condition, whereas use of neo means the continuation of the past conditions through new processes and structures.

Discussions about emancipation get viewed as loaded with subjectivity reeking of ideologies and arraigned for not heeding to evidence-based methods. The objective of emancipatory praxis signifies the liberation of an entity while it also implies the end of the power and control of another entity, so allegations are but expected. In the course of emancipation, various theories emerged. Appeals for emancipations from 'white heteronormative male domination', from Eurocentrism, from white mythology (the myth of the white men technological superiority), from "point-zero" epistemology (epistemology of the zero point, universal epistemic principles, the hubris of the zero point), from 'white saviour syndrome' and from 'parochial blinders of mono-disciplinary approaches', have been sought in different disciplines in universities/ poliversities/multiversities [26, 30-35]. According to Jürgen Habermas, any protest campaign emerges from the colonization of the lifeworld ruptured or imperilled by outside systemic forces. All protest assemblies continue, as resistance to the colonization of the lifeworld, and emancipatory potentials get manifested in those seeking distinctive forms of social life in collaboration and community' [36].

Colonization acquires multiple contours and transpires at various levels with differing outcomes. The European colonial conquest stemmed from a process of othering. Being distinct from them was deemed as primordial, inhuman and retrogressive. Hence Europeans regarded themselves as the enlightened benefactors tasked by heavenly bodies to humanise the conquered people, and to achieve the first task was to dehumanise the conquered people. "Onwards 15th century, a 'zone of being' and a "zone of non-being" were devised. Those living in the "zone of being" were depicted as reformists, and their governance were based on, principles of 'social regulation and emancipation'. Those in the zone of non-being were administered through processes of 'appropriation and violence" [37]. Systems of regimes such as – 'regimes of rule or hegemony', 'regime of violence', 'regimes of value extraction', 'political-economic regimes of oppression', regime of truth', 'regime of morality', 'regime of calculability' 'regime of violence', 'regime of power', 'regime of monocultures of knowledge', , 'regimes of imperceptibility', 'regime of raciology', 'regimes of intelligibility', 'regimes of accumulation' and 'and 'regimes of rule or hegemony' continue to govern [38-50]. These regimes that link three axes of domination, capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, function to structure perceptions, world views and realities and sustain practices advantageous to the hegemons. Sousa Santos (2005) asserts that, by enlightenment rationalising, the West actively creates the non-existence of alternative logic. Through a 'sociology of absences', scientific knowledge renders a particular model of truth that advances the benefits of the West by the principles of objective truth and efficacy.

Pursuits for Emancipation

Pursuits towards emancipation by different philosophies, theories and various conceptualisations, paradigms have emerged. These philosophies and conceptualisations cropped up a reaction to the

prevailing colonial Eurocentric, white supremacist hegemonic monoculturalism. The plurality of discourses on emancipation shows that the notion of emancipation is 'nebulous, subjective, contextual, dynamic and reflexive but regardless of variances, the fundamental ideas of the core of what emancipatory stands for and its aims such as liberty, autonomy, self-fulfilment, free-will and social satisfaction [51-53]. The contemporary emancipatory practices are generally absorbed in freeing conservative traditions from injustice, customary, custom, power games, obscured ideology and an unreflected, expendable and impediment to emancipation. There is no outline for emancipatory ways. It comes alive with a critical deliberation of the influence and significances of unreflected assumptions, dominance and dogmas in practice [11].

For emancipation, there have been voices raising the need for a turn in varied disciplines and contexts. With much talk regarding the necessity for turns, we should understand that such turns are not fixed but are a perpetual process and context-specific. With new turns, new conditions, new contexts, and newer realities emerge, giving rise to unforeseen risks and newer issues. Becoming attached and complacent that arises through the turns specified earlier can traverse to the circumstances which transpired in the necessity for a turn to subdue 'wicked problems' that endure. Getting restricted to successful philosophies regarding emancipation, as per the reasoning of its beholders and making it canonical and concluding 'there is no alternative' such as neo-liberalism's call for autonomy from the State; the emancipatory purpose of free markets and individual autonomy traverses to hegemonic notions maintained by guile and power even in the appearance of various social deprivations and social miseries.

Whichever philosophy, research, approach, methodology or even thinking when depicted as emancipatory involves not restricted to any particular standard, philosophy or principle. It means not being intimidated by power, voracity, self-interests, vested interests and not being subject to any hegemons. When taking an emancipatory approach, 'objectivity is about limited location', and within its sphere the 'specific intellectual' must try comprehending whatever they seek to understand [54, 55]. The emancipatory approach breaks away from power, privilege and oppression, and it strives towards critically understanding the processes of knowledge production and understanding knowledge as situated. An emancipatory approach adopts inclusion and replaces the 'monoculture of scientific knowledge by 'ecology of knowledge', where a researcher is not an 'individual, anonymous, disembodied voice of authority but a 'genuine, historical, individual with concrete specific interests' and in which 'knowledge as emancipation' rather than 'knowledge as regulation' holds [54, 56, 57]. Methodological approaches conducive for an emancipatory praxis are bricolage (bricoleurs), participatory action research, 'action research, partnership/engaged/collaborative/activist research and everyday life research [58-64].

Emancipatory approaches in understanding every day realities do not get translated into praxis, by merely doing a course or attending a workshop or by reading extensively on topics concerning emancipatory approaches. Adopting emancipatory attitudes is a lifelong process and having an open mind is a quint-

essential necessity and not being cowed by power and greed. From the late 18th century, the concept of emancipation gained prominence in politics and became a political term as a result of the works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg W.F.Hegel (1770–1831), and Karl Marx (1818–83)[65]. Some of the most influential conceptions of emancipation are the thinking subject (Descartes), the rational subject (Kant), the sociohistorical subject (Hegel), the working subject (Marx), the unconscious subject (Freud), the linguistic subject (Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur), the experiencing subject (Husserl), the bodily subject (Merleau-Ponty and Foucault), the desiring subject (Lacan and Deleuze), and the communicative subject (Habermas)[65].

Emancipatory processes are identical to liberating practices and have been signified in the usage of concepts such as- communicative rationality, communicative action, gestalt switch, conscientization, deconstruction, intersectionality, transgression, flat ontology, hetero-referentiality, global cognitive justice, multispecies theory of justice, emancipatory praxis, ecology of knowledge, equality of opportunity, rehumanization, critical consciousness, 'equality of intelligence', 'moments of equality', non-hierarchical relations', epistemic openness, epistemology of the concrete, authentic insight, anti-authoritarianism, border crossings, border gnosis, colonial semiosis, anti-foundationalism, rexistence, denaturalization, diatopical hermeneutics, double transgressive sociology of absences and emergences, transculturation, heteroglossia, rhizomatic thinking, rear-guard , three ecologies, bisociation, organic intellectuals, 'ethico-asthetic paradigm, decentering, inversion, tacit knowledge, deterritorialization and re-territorialization, disidentification, jumping scales, epistemic delinking, nihilistic hermeneutics, emancipatory nihilism, stultification, catalytic validity, construct validity, Jacotot's method of 'universal teaching, epistemology of exteriority, transcendental empiricism, neurodiversity, horizontal communication, relational agency, Epistemic Disobedience, Schizoanalysis, and homework [3, 9, 32, 36, 46, 57, 66-111].

The concepts mentioned above can function as 'threshold concepts, which may lead researchers from diverse areas to incorporate new ways of looking at events. The range and diversity of terms associated with emancipatory practices mentioned in the above paragraph miss many other concepts, such as - self-realization, transformation, revolution, empowerment are just a few examples.

Conclusion

Emancipatory strategies in research based on what gets studied will lead to variations that emerge due to particular contexts. Attempting to describe and conceptualise emancipation, classify its characteristics and applications rigidly can vitiate its essence. However, having stated so, we require to, establish associations that identify with emancipatory values and praxis. The first step towards emancipatory praxis would be 'to recognise that an understanding of the society by far surpasses the Western comprehension of the globe, to understand that there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice and to follow grammars and scripts other than those generated by Western-centric critical theory [57]. Not being restricted to the linkages formed by

rationality/modernity/coloniality and not being cowed by those power not devised by free decisions made by free people is necessary for incorporating emancipatory praxis [112].

Understanding a phenomenon by embodying emancipatory values and the fundamental practices and attributes has not changed much from the past. Basics like questioning the status quo, confronting oppressive hegemonic doctrines, endeavouring towards non-hierarchical associations and intellectual integrity have to be embodied in our quotidian survival. 'Freedom to act, freedom to express, freedom to belong and freedom to think - are the four elements in the typology of emancipation. The notion of emancipation is complicated and incorporates 'truth disclosure, democratization, community enhancement, inclusion, creative expression, economic facilities, political liberties and facilitation of social change' [113]. By emancipatory learning, 'natural' givens, 'obvious' truths and generally held values that endure are understood as part of predominant cultural values, and its objective is to maintain oppressive social structures [114]. But, Horkheimer's 'Dialectic of enlightenment' admonishes us to the process that what commenced with emancipatory intentions can become restricted by its shackles when contexts and realities change. For underdeveloped countries, the need for emancipation from starvation, poverty, illiteracy is prominent, and for women, emancipation from violence and emancipation from toxic patriarchal and masculine cultures has been endeavoured for by many with limited or no progress.

The world we inhabit established by various institutional and ideological fixations mould our beliefs, rationalities, passions, and they also shape the way we comprehend our realities. Our existence and understanding of realities get influenced by a belief system in which financial wealth gets admired. Destructive power desired. Competition gets perceived as self-evident. In the existing neoliberal system, the market receives precedence and gaining pecuniary profit precedes other matters, and in which experts rationalise and validate knowledge from nonknowledge. In the contemporary global structure, we see the establishment of fixed regimes that by multiple means perpetuates a myth that the existing state of global condition is essential. Even if one is a staunch supporter of the current global configuration, the issue arises; who determines what gets regarded as legitimate in the first place? Challenging our ontological assumptions, axiological commitments, epistemological beliefs, and not being intimidated by onto power or overcome by wealth and covetousness can be the first move towards incorporating emancipatory praxis.

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