



Unmasking the Facade: A Critique of Disguise as a Colonial and Patriarchal Tool

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Abstract:

Disguise, when used with an agenda, yields itself to a multi-layered interpretation. This can range from the psychology of vigilante superheroes donning a mask to the historical institution of colonialism which disguised itself as civilizational mission. Postcolonial critics, on the other hand, has unmasked the nefarious agenda of the colonizers. Critics like Fanon, Nandy, Viswanathan have critiqued the use of disguise to show its debilitating effect on the colonizers. Nandy and Viswanathan have analysed how colonial education was deployed as a masking device to hide the hidden aim of exercising control on the natives. Fanon has shown how the natives have psychologically internalized the mask to negotiate with the politico-cultural pressure created by the colonizers. The tool of disguise is also relevant in multiracial America wherein the Blacks, as is shown by Du Bois, have had to hide behind a split-self using it as a mask to cover up their damaged identity. Relatedly, women reeling under imposing patriarchal regime have taken recourse to using masks/veils as a coping up device. Feminist thinkers have exposed the hypocrisy encoded in patriarchal narrative.

This paper proposes to look at disguise as a tool and also as a literary trope. Beginning with the construction of heroes of comics it aims to traverse a multifarious critical domain to analyse how in the hands of postcolonial and feminist critics disguise or mask has been decoded to expose the prevalent discursive construct and how it can also be used as a strategic defence to survive in a society which refuses to understand.

Keywords: Disguise, Colonialism, Veil, Split-Self.