The Study of Advanced Scientific Experiments in *Avatar* - A Postcolonial Perspective

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**Abstract:** Scientific advancement is used for the welfare of many people across the world. Even in the times of pandemic, the advancement of science has paved way for digital communication. But in this paper, an analysis is going to be made on how the humans had misused the scientific advancement to conquer a planet called Pandora in the movie *Avatar* to destroy the inhabitants of the planet who are referred to as Na’vi and to plunder a valuable natural mineral called unobtanium. This movie is an indirect adaptation of science versus nature, the argument to be made in this research paper is that nature is the base for everything, but people are deconstructing it with the scientific advancements, it is arguably like placing our own lives into misery. The question is that do we really need science for a happy life but the indigenous people in Pandora lived happily before the invasion of science in their planet, this is going to be further analysed in this research paper. The title emphasizes on the scientific advancement because this paper aims to discuss the impact of the advanced science that is depicted in the movie.

**Keywords:** science, colonization, postcolonialism, nature, environment.

1. **Introduction**

The scientific advancements in the DNA research, as well as in the field of hi-tech weapon system, also in the space research, all the advanced types of scientific experiments are portrayed in the movie, but the impact of these advancements are further going to be analysed in this paper. The impact of science can be seen in various fields, but colonization is a process which is done through various modes and for different motives. The scientific effect of colonization among the people in a new planet is expressed in the movie which can also be a sign of warning for human beings.

2. **Methodology**

This paper proposes to study the colonial effects on nature. The methods used to identify the problems in colonization are, firstly an analysis about the scientific advancements when it is used by the humans for colonization and the negative implication is discussed, the second thing is the conflict between nature and science because of the humans and the importance of nature for human beings for now and of course for the future generation. These aspects are going to be analysed effectively.
3. Science experiments by the RDA

In this movie *Avatar*, science is taken as a tool for colonization, this can be argued by various examples, in the beginning of the movie Jake Sully is taken to the planet of Pandora as a replacement for his brother who was dead. The RDA has implemented a human into a body of Avatar. This is one of the major scientific advancements because making a robot is different from creating an alike of a living being. A blue coloured, seven-feet tall ‘Avatar’ body is created for the sake of entering into the planet of Pandora, this is a new level in colonization, because so far people have invaded as reformers and traders but entering a new planet with the appearance of the native inhabitant Na’vi is a terrific scientific advancement which is portrayed in the movie. Though it can be considered as a positive technological improvement, as by providing a new body for a disabled person who can walk and run with the new ‘Avatar’ body, but the real motive of Quaritch is cruel, as he wants to destroy the native inhabitants to plunder the unobtainium. After accomplishing the mission, Colonel Quaritch promises Jake to bring back his walking ability which is also merely based on business motive.

Many questions can be raised that if science is mandatory for a happy life? And if so, the native inhabitants are quite happy without any scientific advancement. But Jake is accepted as a leader in Pandora, this is indifferent in their custom i.e., to accept an outsider as a leader. The indigenous people respected the rituals and customs of their ancestors. It can be certainly argued that they valued nature over science.

The RDA is an administration formed by the humans to conquer the planet Pandora, in fact they had all the technical equipment and a much developed technology eventhough they are in hunt for the wealth of the other planet. The important aspect which is to be taken into account is that the movie happens in future and this makes us to wonder that if this is the future of human beings. The movie makes a strong impact that we humans will deplete the natural resources and we would misuse the science. The colonial impact is based on capitalist motive, they invaded Pandora not to develop them but to capture their land and wealth, like what the whites did to the black people, in the words of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks* (2008), “The Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white (p. 157)” [2]. These are some of the colonial comparisons that can be made between the whites and the RDA but the RDA had gone to the extent of colonizing the other planet with the usage of hi-tech science and technology.

Jake, in the beginning of the movie watches a television footage and says that these are the cloned versions of Bengal tiger which was extinct over many years, it gives us a glimpse about the future, and the people in the future are portrayed in a scene with masks and we have to remember that the movie was released in 2009. Such a huge prediction is made by the director which shows us the importance of nature and our natural resources, it gives us a hint that humans are diluting everything, after the extinction of the species humans are creating it again with the immense science development, if a new hybrid can be produced with the usage of science then why we cannot save the same existing species with the use of science, this is a deep question which we need to find an answer before it is too late. In the words of Richard Gunderman in his article “H.G. Wells and Orwell on Whether Science Can Save Humanity”,

Wells’ enthusiasm for science had political implications. Having contemplated in his novels the self-destruction of mankind, Wells believed that humanity’s best hope lay in the creation of a single world government overseen by scientists and engineers. Human beings, he argued, need to set aside religion and nationalism and put their faith in the power of scientifically trained, rational experts [3].

H.G. Wells in his novels had portrayed the impact of science on modern man, he implied all kinds of scientific advancements in human lives and he insisted that science should be used productively. It can be connected with Avatar, because most of the scenes reflect the cruel reality that is man depleting all the natural resources with the help of science and trying to colonize another planet which may happen in future as depicted in the movie. The impact of science should be positive for all living creatures and that
is the respect that human can contribute towards nature. The warcrafts, nuclear weapons shown in the
movie are very advanced and such kinds of weapons are invented by the humans for the protection, but in
this movie, the RDA had used it for the negative purpose, they broke the customs and traditions of the
Na’vi without showing any mercy. The hometree of the Na’vi is destroyed as the RDA did not show any
sentimental value for the inhabitants. Meanwhile Jake is sent as an agent to spy on them. In the words of
Ania Loomba (2005) in Colonialism/Postcolonialism,

Colonisers differed in their modes of interacting with the local populations, thus producing
variable racial discourses and identities. For example, the Spanish in America and the
Portuguese in India settled down in the lands they colonised, adopted local manners and
intermarried in a way that the English derided. Eventually, inter-marriages and concubinage
blurred racial distinctions and created a population which acted as a strong base for colonial
rule (p. 96) [4].

As per the words of Ania Loomba the colonizers implemented various techniques to colonize the natives.
In Avatar, Jake Sully visits the land of Pandora as a ‘Na’vi’ in the artificially created body of Na’vi called
‘Avatar’, later he falls in love with one of the indigenous girls called Neytiri. Initially Jake was sent to
Pandora to know more about the Na’vi but later he turns against the RDA, moreover he is considered as a
leader of the Na’vi. The important difference between the Na’vi and RDA is that the power of the former
is nature and the later is science.

4. Nature vs Science

The climax of the movie is nothing but the indirect war between nature and science. The problem with the
RDA is that they did not value any culture of the Na’vi, one of the most important of customs of the
Na’vi is that they seek permission from their goddess Eywa, the god of nature, for any event from any
ritual to selecting the life partner the Na’vi had proceeded only after getting the blessing of goddess
Eywa. Another significant factor about the Na’vi is that they respected all the living beings of Pandora.
For instance, in a particular scene Neytiri saves Jake from the attack of an animal by killing it and later
she says that it was the fault of Jake and she repents for killing it, this is something hardly we can find
with human beings. They valued nature in each and every aspect that they only used the dragons for
flying, only after the acceptance of the dragons. They valued each and every living being of Pandora.

The indigenous people of Omaticaya tribe referred RDA as ‘Skypeople’ because of the ships they used to
enter into Pandora. The term ‘Skypeople’ denoted a kind of superiority but the bitter truth is that they did
not enter there for a better purpose. In the words of Lynn Jr. et.al.(1996), in the Ecocriticism Reader,
“What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things
around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by
religion” (p. 9) [5]. The concern for humans towards nature is very low when we compare it with that of
the Na’vi. Colonel Quaritch is merciless that he kills all the creatures with his advanced weapons with the
help of his military. But the basic difference is that the natives are very respectful towards nature unlike
humans who have exploited all the natural resources. Even with science the team of RDA could not make
a positive impact over the human mankind. The character of Jake Sully is well drafted by the director, this
is because eventhough Quaritch offered him to bring back is mobility, Jake refused and stood by the side
of the Na’vi, because he felt connected towards the naturalistic environment of Pandora. Moreover, in the
final scene of the movie Jake is permanently transformed as a Na’vi with the help of the goddess Eywa,
this could be taken as if the science could only provide the body but the souls are only connected by the
nature which is ever superior. In this movie, the negative impact of the science has depleted the natural
wealth of the earth and if they succeed in colonizing Pandora, the future of Pandora will be the same.
They will destroy all the natural wealth of it and they will conquer another planet and that too with the
help of science.
5. Colonial dominance

The colonial dominance of the humans can be seen via the character of Colonel Quaritch. This is because of the desire for wealth. Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, expressed the impact of colonizers over the colonizers, he wrote about the sufferings of the negro people who were under such bad circumstances because of the white invaders, this happened because of the power [6]. The whites called themselves as superior and imposed their culture, in the same way the team of RDA with their advanced technology claimed that they are superior to the Na’vi and they had a plan to construct many buildings over their land. They are not really there to help the Na’vi but only to take away all the unobtanium from them. There are several countries around the world where people are living with hunger and famine and this could turn out to be the fate of the whole world without any resource in the future as it is portrayed in the movie. From man colonizing the man to humans colonizing the alien may happen in the near future if we are unaware about our future. Our future is uncertain that we should apply the knowledge and science for the welfare of the people. The important aspect of the movie is that the difference shown by the director, the colonial mindset of human beings, he did not portray humans as glorious or noble rather he showed the wicked attitude of the humans who are ready to destroy another planet to safeguard themselves. Colonialism can be done through various modes, it may be through business, language or any other aspect but this movie has taught us that how science can have an impact on another planet. We have seen several movies on how the science has turned up against the human beings for instance we can give the example of the movie *Hollow man* (2000), which depicted the misusage of science. But *Avatar* shows us that how the impact of science can put the people of another planet into misery. Saving the other planet is a different story but in this movie they have failed to save the earth itself. There is no means of attacking the other planet after depleting our own planet. This will lead to a war between two worlds as depicted in the climax of the movie. The argument that can be raised here is rather than using the science to conquer another planet we may use the science to save our home earth. In the words of Richard Gunderman about Wells, “While championing science, Wells recognized that scientific progress could also lead to human misery” [3]. Science can be used for the welfare of the people but if we misuse it, this will lead us into misery.

Modern day colonialism has changed the attitude of human minds. The countries are finding advanced nuclear weapons for the protection of their countries, it is pretty good thing from protection perspective but what will the fate of the innocent lives, in this movie, a Na’vi says that if a war happens they will lose lot of people, this is the mindset of an ordinary man. Colonel Quaritch is ruthless about the lives of the Na’vi, with the usage of giant robots and hi-tech warships he is in a rage to destroy the planet of Pandora which is a kind of colonialism not even to colonize but to kill them and plunder their wealth. This is a fascistic approach of human beings which is expressed by John Marmysz in his “Rooting for the Fascists in James Cameron’s Avatar” states that the fascistic mindset of the human beings is expressed in this movie, he lauds about the making of the movie but he expresses his concern that many people are fascinated about this fascistic mindset which is a negative attitude [8]. To put it in general, the world has changed now, people are involved in theft because of hunger and unemployment, this movie has shown our future, if this situation prevails we would be robbing and begging another planet for our survival, this is a saddest truth in our contemporary world.

6. Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to analyse the pros and cons of science through the movie *Avatar*, and to indicate that how science has been used as a tool to colonize Pandora. To analyse this movie from a postcolonial perspective is not only the major theme of this paper, but also the aftermath of the postcolonial effect is deeply analysed, moreover the harm after colonizing the natural environment is exposed in the movie. The impact of the movie is vast, because the movie itself 3-D animated and they have spent crores to achieve such a kind of movie. It shows us the importance of science in our modern day world. Regarding the theme of the movie, it is a sign of our future, how humans will be in future. It maybe a science fiction
‘movie’, but the content expressed in this movie is highly connected with our modern lifestyle. The argument is that the Na’vi (natives) are quite happy without science but desperately they struggled in the final scene to protect their planet. As it is a movie we can accept the victory of Na’vi over the advanced RDA, but in reality it would be very difficult to fight against such powerful weapons. We have to accept the fact that science has made our lives easier but it should be redirected in the right path, a clear vision is needed for science and that should be meant only for productive needs. The movie itself has shown many positive factors of science, for instance blessing the disabled Jake Sully with the walking ability is a gift of science but the negatives are also clearly indicated in the movie, the Na’vi is a representation of other living creatures in the world, the duty of the human beings is to protect nature with the helping hand of science and not to fight against it.

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