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MAPPING RESISTANCE IN AFRICAN LITERATURE: A STUDY OF THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Resistance literature basically means resisting colonial power, responding to it and developing a mentality of resistance by protesting against all the brutal atrocities that occurred during the colonial period. Most of the countries of the African continent were made their colonies by the European colonial power, where it has been seen that the colonizers forcibly and strategically spread their culture and civilization among the Africans. African writers have resisted all colonial powers in their literature, keeping in mind the subject matter of their literary works, where it has been seen that they have sometimes openly called for armed revolution. Africans had their own culture, which was a matter of pride for them. European colonial power tried to promote imperialist culture by forgetting the indigenous culture of Africans. In this case, it has been seen that Africans were subjugated in their own land. Not only the social life of Africans, but also their political and economic life was subjugated under the influence of European colonial power. The main topic of my research is to judge and analyse how African writers have resisted colonial and imperialist power. In addition, my research in African literature has shown that the influence of colonial power in various countries of the African continent in the post-independence period is still present in form of neo-colonial power, which also needs to be prevented and countered.

Keywords: Resistance literature, imperialist, colonial power, neo-colonial, Africa, indigenous



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Introduction: Resistance, a prominent term of post-colonial theory and literature, raises a lot of questions against colonization. The concept of resistance shows different models for the examination of colonial and post-colonial practices. The colonial ideology aims to highlight negative propaganda about those who believe in native culture and identity. Resistance deals with the rewriting colonial narrative to prevent the negative identity of colonized people and it also subverts false narrative of colonizers. Reconnecting the thoughts of resistance, the writers and critics optimise indigenous relevance of colonized culture. Resistance delves with the cultural negotiation which is getting popularised during the time of colonial subjugation where colonized people are forced to accept colonial culture and tradition leaving their own culture. Somehow the native culture has been negotiated by colonial cultural hegemony. Somewhere by the force of colonial culture, a hybrid culture has also been built up among the colonized people. The resistance power brings the question against the hybrid culture and it directs to the practice of native culture by unloosing the hybrid culture. Resistance forms the shape of radical status as its violent force is active during the time of decolonization. Here taking the figure of liberation, the colonized people beats the colonial force to resist domination further. The colonial power has broken the social relationship of colonized people by invading their land and society; sociability of colonized people has been transformed in this connection.

Methodology: A method of research helps to form a structure that ensures the design of research. Collecting data and its analysis for my research paper models analytical and experimental method. As the paper is made on a qualitative method, my aim is to constitute the exploration of contradictory ideas and its solution. The status of African literature in view of analysing African texts should identify new arenas of concepts in African literary framework. This paper highlights the idea of theorising African indigenous identity in arguing that African society has a traditional value which is subdued by European Colonial power. Besides, the manner and process of resistance in African literature is explored through qualitative methods of research.

Theoretical framework: Post-colonial theories relate to theories like resistance, anti-imperialism, decolonization, mimicry, hybridity, imperialism, subaltern, the other that emphasise the critical analysis of any text. Henceforth, this research is basically nurtured with two select theories –



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resistance and decolonization, having a study of other theories in evaluating the research problem. Additionally, imperialist power of European colonization draws the attention of cultural domination and marginalization of native people. Arising the power of resistance, African native people with collective consciousness develop the power of resistance that asserts anti-imperialism.

Literature Review: Literature review is an important and necessary part of a good research. My chosen title was based on a hypothesis at the initial stage of starting the research paper. Data collection is necessary to make a hypothesis properly structured and reliable. I selected some important and relevant books in the African literature for data collection. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his novels *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977) showed how European colonial power spread into the social, political and economic lives of Africans and how Africans were marginalized by being deprived of their homeland. In addition, Ngugi showed that Africans developed a collective will and resistance to expel colonial power. Chinua Achebe, in his books *Things Fall Apart* (1959), *No Longer at Ease* (1961), *Arrow of God* (1964), has exposed the horrors of European colonial power and has developed a spirit of protest against colonial power among Africans. Frantz Fanon, in his books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), has psychologically shown that Africans have developed a resistance mentality but have not yet been able to free themselves from the influence of colonial power in their current social life. Fanon has given a clear explanation of decolonization, where it is seen that Fanon's ideology unites Africans against colonial power. Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism* (1978), has expressed a constructive thought about the East and the West, where it is seen that for decades, the people of the East have been deprived and resisted by Western power.

Resistance to Colonial Discourse: Resistance in colonized countries is very relevant from two aspects - on the one hand, the pre-independence period when the colonized people are resisting the Western colonial power after being oppressed in all social, political, economic and cultural aspects, on the other hand, they have to develop resistance within their own country during the post-independence period. Among them, the resistance during the post-independence period was more dangerous because a group of people in the colonized country tried to re-establish a colonial power



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in the manner of western colonial countries, which is called neocolonialism. The resistance shows a side as opposition, in which the liberation of the colonized people is the main topic of discussion through the resistance. Collective resistance is inherent in this resistance which speaks of decolonization completely. Here Franz Fanon's argument is very real that he supports violence to bring freedom and to defeat the colonial power. He thinks that only revolutionary violence will give a proper response against the violence of colonial power. He adds:

The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctured the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities. To blow the colonial world to smithereens is henceforth a clear image within the grasp and imagination of every colonized subject. To dislocate the colonial world does not mean that once the borders have been eliminated there will be a right of way between the two sectors. To destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist's sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory (Fanon 70).

The idea of building resistance through a binary conflict is appropriate for defeating colonial power. Here we see the struggle to establish identity through resistance. The idea of resistance, here, is mostly incorporated and connected with the term decolonization. Decolonization is an act of demolishing colonial power through struggle and armed revolution as this is the outcome of resistance. In African literature, the prolific writers and critics portray such armed struggle and revolution in their writings to constitute freedom. Here Fanon's words are justified:

Decolonization is the encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation. Their first confrontation was coloured by violence and their cohabitation -or rather the exploitation of the colonized by the colonizer -continued at the point of the



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bayonet and under canon fire. The colonist and the colonized are old acquaintances. And consequently, the colonist is right when he says he "knows" them. It is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject. The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system (Fanon 66).

Restoration of African Culture and Africanness; There is a long history of resistance in African literature where people from different African countries have been absorbed by Western and British culture. As a result of this exploitation, they became a marginal civilization. Gradually a sense of resistance developed among them where a history of struggle can be traced. The focus of my research is African resistance. Resistance is social, cultural and economic. I focus first on the cultural issue. Western colonial culture created a cultural platform where their main goal was to destroy the culture of Africans and perpetuate their culture. In some cases they were completely successful and in others the success was partial. As a result of such western cultural influence, a hybrid culture developed in African soil. Protests against hybrid culture are observed among African writers. They trust in the ancient beauty and culture of Africa by commenting that the ancient and fundamental culture of Africa keeps a nation alive and presents its identity to the world. Where colonial writing described African culture and civilization in a very crude manner, African writers have sweetly established their own culture by arguing that they have protected and maintained their identity despite years of oppression. Edward Said argues:

My argument is that history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated, so that "our" East, "our" Orient becomes "ours" to possess and direct (Said 29).

Here they have developed a resistance to language. They rejected the European colonized language as a medium of writing by commenting that the colonial language carried the legacy of colonialism among Africans even after independence. They gave more importance to the regional language as this language developed their mental strength more to resist the colonial power. They



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even advised other writers to write literature in native language because only native language accurately and fully portrays the revolutionary struggle of Africa against colonialism. They also added that the African language made African writers formidable against colonial power so that they could speak directly to their own people. Their main objective was to destroy the colonial language. Thiong'o states that language plays one of the main roles for imperialism and its continuation. He states:

But African languages refused to die. They would not simply go the way of Latin to become the fossils for linguistic archaeology to dig up, classify, and argue about the international conferences.

These languages, these national heritages of Africa, were kept alive by the peasantry. The peasantry saw no contradiction between speaking their own mother-tongues and belonging to a larger national or continental geography. They saw no necessary antagonistic contradiction between belonging to their immediate nationality, to their multinational state along the Berlin-drawn boundaries, and to Africa as a whole. These people happily spoke Wolof, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Arabic, Amharic, Kiswahili, Gikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Shona, Ndebele, Kimbundu, Zulu or Lingala without this fact tearing the multinational states apart. During the anti-colonial struggle they showed an unlimited capacity to unite around whatever leader or party best and most consistently articulated an anti-imperialist position (Thiong'o 23).

As can be seen in the literature of Africa, the issues of slavery, marginalization, placement, identity crisis, etc. arise due to the influence of establishing colonial power. The imperialist powers tried to erase the African entity. The issue of social resistance is very prominent here that when African writers contributed to migration literature, the main theme was the pain and desire of Africans who were cheated and expelled from Africa and the desire to return home. They tried to prevent this social disorder by building unity among themselves and by solving the existential crisis through social justice. Under the influence of the imperialist powers, the Western system was developed in African societies, in which the law enforcement and governance systems were shaped according to their principles. This system existed in post-independence African civilizations. Even a certain class of citizens used to patronize this system.



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Resistance to Neo-colonial effect in Africa: The resistance of the Africans is that they will remove this system from society and undermine the system of governance that existed in ancient Africa. African writers have put forward this view. The entry of modernity into Africa in the post-independence period is a notable one where it appears that Africa has liberated itself but has been subjugated by western modernity. The issue caused frustration among African writers. They advocated the rebuilding of Africa by stating that Africans should experience Africa with their hearts where Africa would be free of any foreign imprint. In some cases the position of neocolonialism in African civilization can be traced to the idea that Africans are forgetting their traditions and basic customs. Here is the challenge of collective resistance and bringing Africa back to its former state. But the writers called for resistance, taking Africans along, saying that to resist colonialism and imperialism, Africa's indigenous dignity must be established. Kwame Nkrumah speaks out:

The passage from the ancestral line of slavery via feudalism and capitalism to socialism can only lie through revolution: it cannot lie through reform. For in reform, fundamental principles are held constant, and the details of their expression are modified. In the words of Marx, it leaves the pillars of the building intact. Indeed sometimes, reform itself may be initiated by the necessities of preserving identical fundamental principles. Reform is a tactic of self-preservation (Nkrumah 142).

Along with social and cultural resistance, economic and political resistance is a front-line issue in post-colonial discourse, which mainly refers to the economic deprivation and marginalization of Africans by taking away their political power by colonial power. African thinkers spoke of resistance in this context where they realized that even after independence, the economic systems of various African countries were managed by Western colonial powers and Africans have to remain dependent on their economic infrastructure and influence. Although various African countries gained sovereignty after independence, but in the post-colonial period, it is the practice of colonial powers to assert the sovereignty of a free state. In order to prevent this type of



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behaviour, African writers and analysts have advised to build their own economic and political infrastructure on their own and abandon dependence on others. G. D. Killam aptly argues:

My position here is very simple. As I said in your earlier question, I believe that people have the right to know how wealth is produced in their country, who controls it and who benefits. I believe that every Kenyan has a right to decent housing, decent food, and decent clothing. I believe that no Kenyan should be able to sleep with any peace of mind for as long as he knows that what he is feeding upon has been taken from the mouths of the thirsty and hungry in Kenya. I also believe that no Kenyan should be able to sleep for as long as he knows that the wealth of the country is still controlled by foreign merchants. In other words, I believe in a national economy free from any foreign dominance of Imperialist control. These are my fairly simple beliefs and what labels are put on them is really the business of whoever is fixing the labels on these simple beliefs. In a nutshell, I would say that I believe that our national economy reflected in our national culture should be able to develop freely but that Kenyan wealth should feed, clothe, and shelter Kenyans (Killam 97).

In the treatment of resistance literature in African continent, the scholars assert that African writers should build a linguistic resistance in their writings. The relevance of African regional language in compliance with African pronunciation is the viewpoint of African traditional faith that incorporates their indigenous culture. After independence, somehow, African society is modelled after European imperialist substitutes. Here, the idea of Africa is embarked with national identity which constitutes Africanness.

Underlying the suggestions is a basic assumption that the English tradition and the emergence of the modern West is the central root of our consciousness and cultural heritage. Africa becomes an extension of the west, an attitude which, until a radical reassessment, used to dictate the teaching and organization of History in our University. Hence, in fact, the assumed centrality of the English Department, into which other cultures



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can be admitted from time to time, as fit subjects for study, or from which other satellite departments can spring as time and money allow. A small example is the current, rather apologetic attempt to struggle African writing into an English syllabus in our three colleges.

Here then, is our main question: If there is a need for a 'study of the historic continuity of a single culture', why can't this be African? Why can't African literature be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it?

This is not mere rhetoric: already African writing, with the sister connections in the Caribbean and Afro-American literatures, has played an important (part) with time and pressure of events. Just because for reasons of political expediency we have kept English as our official language, there is no need to substitute a study of English culture for our own. We reject the primacy of English literature and culture (Ashcroft 439).

In some cases, it can be observed that the colonial corporate system has taken the form of a neocolonialism in such a way that a class of wealthy Africans will guide their economic direction in the way of the western colonial system. They maintained this colonial tradition to stay at the top of political power. In other words, following the western hegemony, it is a feature of independent Africa that there is economic exploitation of the working class in the post-independent society. On these issues, African thinkers have spoken of building resistance against this injustice with the hope that another neo-colonial Africa is not created. However, after reviewing all aspects, we can conclude that Africans must first develop a sense of value towards their own country and build a constructive society by showing loyalty to their diversity.

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