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ASPECT OF RACE, ETHNICITY AND MIGRATION IN AFRICAN NOVELS: A THOROUGH STUDY OF THE WORKS OF CHINUA ACHEBE, SEFI ATTA, AYI KWEI ARMAH AND TONI MORRISON.

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Abstract-

Postcolonial literature is an amalgamation of practices followed by poststructuralism, Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque and dialogism, Derrida's Deconstruction approach and Foucauldian notion of power, knowledge and discourse. So it deals with showcasing the impact colonizers had on the colonized people and also it envisages the literature that were written to represent the natives by non-natives and the literature by the natives which were written to rejuvenate their own culture, tradition and the tarnished image of the colonized territory. It also grabs our attention towards the problem of identity crisis, racism, evolution of new culture, immigration and certain other challenges faced by the natives who have been exploited in the past and even after getting freedom the condition has not improved significantly. Recent killing of George Floyd, who was of African descent by caucasian police which triggered Black Lives Matter movement, attracts our attention to the plight of African people around the world. Mentality of people has not changed, there is a lack of acceptance by Britishers that all men are equal. So in my paper I have taken such incidents where Africans are subjected to discrimination or violence because of their identity, race or color from the different works of several African writers. Major reference to Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah and Toni Morrison. There is always a certain degree of discrimination with the black people because of the ideology constructed in the mind of humans that

white complexion is superior to black. I have also taken into account the theories of postcolonial writers such as Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and Edward Said whose contribution has enriched post colonial literature.

Keywords- Postcolonial literature, Racial discrimination, Plight of African Migrant, Ethnicity, Hybridity.

Colonialism in the modern sense bloomed during the age of Discovery by Portuguese followed by the Spanish exploration of the Americas. Colonialism can be traced back during the ancient and medieval times when it was practiced by Greece, Turks and Arabs. As Bill Ashcroft states in *The Empire Writes Back* that “ more than three- quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism'. Colonizers used certain ways to take the land which belonged to other people through domination, spreading their religion, culture, language and literature. So they not only controlled power but also controlled culture. They enforced their culture considering it superior and ignoring the culture practiced by the Orientals. Europeans thought of themselves as a group of civilized masters who have come to teach discipline and ways of living to the people of the occupied continent. So basically these colonists had the audacity to teach manners and practices to the people living in a continent of their own. This was done in the pretense of education through which white's ideology was inculcated in the mind of Orientals. After experiencing years of slavery, injustice and discrimination revolution took place and these colonies got freedom but the colonised groups have memories of colonialism implanted in their minds. My attempt in this paper is to revisit the definition of certain words which will take us back to the question of identity and how far the problems related to migration or colonialism have been solved. Is there any progress in stabilizing the status of Africans? What does post colonial literature do and how far has this literature helped people to reach out to reconstruct the lost identity of Africans and to the sensible readers who can take stand for such injustice done to black people. For the purpose of my research I have done intensive reading of several books and listened to the interviews of Black authors and the people who have been a victim of racism or people who had faced rejection because of being unable to fit among the whites. Almost all the African novels have themes like injustices, incompetence, rejection, alienation, economical and political corruption or a call to reunite and revive the lost tradition and culture of Africa. Most of them are written by writers who have experienced such inequalities or felt troubled to get along with western culture where it is part and parcel of life to demean people on certain basis.

The word Postcolonialism means the wide range of discourses, ideologies and intellectual formations which have emerged from cultures that experienced Imperial encounters. Therefore post colonialism include events that occurred prior to the end of formal political rule By Europe over its colonial territories. Its about intellectual and cultural responses to the colonial encounter alongside political transformation. In recent time postcolonialism with hyphen is used to refer the period after colonialism and terms like Savage, indisciplined, animal-like, slavery, migration race, ethnicity are included in its remit. It also encompasses binaries like theirs-ours, inferior -superior, uncivilized -civilized, Orient -western and a better term servant - master. Post colonial

literature envisages Literature that depicts the experiences of the colonized people during the period of colonization and thereafter is termed as postcolonial literature.

During the Imperial period writing in the language of the colonial power was inevitable and this literature were biased as it was produced by the representative of the Imperial power. These texts were devoid of indigenous culture and in no way can be integrated with the culture that already existed before the invasion took place. Later on when literatures were published, it was done under the Imperial license; it was supposed to be written in the language of the dominant culture classifying the writers as a privileged class endowed with the language education and leisure. It was through some of the major writers that postcolonial literature came into limelight as there was a sense of detachment from the literature written by british writers who have never shared the agony of loss and suffering, they started writing by themselves giving voice to the marginalized and hence first hand experience of colonialism started to be written. It was Said's impressive survey of western representations of the orient linking up the politics of institution and discursive formations with the cultural use of power and knowledge, which grabbed attention of several critics and theorists across many fields and this is how Post colonial literature was recognised in the western academy in the 1980s.

A major feature of Postcolonial literature is the concern with place and displacement that is the relationship between self and place or in other words looking for an identity for those who have been displaced. This sense of alienation comes from migration experience or because of cultural denigration, Conscious or unconscious suppression of the indigenous personality and culture, or a sense of racial inferiority. There has always been a gap between experience of a place and the language that can be used so that it can be reached to the maximum audiences and the only way out was/is to write in the English language. So indigenous writers learned how to write in English and incorporate it in that indigenous language. For instance, Chinua Achebe needed to transform the language to use it in a different way, quotes James Baldwin to make it 'bear the burden 'of their experience. Another topic that is generally discussed in postcolonial literature is considering the political,imagination and social control involved in the relationship between colonizers and colonized.. There are four major model that have been emerged to classify a post colonial text and these are national or regional models about the distinct feature of the particular Nation or regional culture;second one is race based models which talks about certain shared characteristics across various national literatures(black writing model);Third one is comparative model of wearing complexity that takes into account linguistic, historical and cultural features and the last one more comprehensive comparative models which argue for features such as hybrid, mimicry (etc) as Correlating elements of all postcolonial literature. Theories proposed by Homi Bhabha considers the nature of post colonial societies and the type of hybridization their various cultures have produced. Race and ethnicity are interdependent although race can be seen as biological differences like visible physical traits, such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, and eye formation. Race is relevant to post-colonial literature because it is central to the growing power of imperial discourse and also because it remains an unavoidable fact of modern society that race is used as the dominant category of daily discrimination and prejudice. whereas ethnicity refers to shared cultural practices, perspectives, and distinctions that set apart one

group of people from another. Ethnicity is a shared cultural heritage. The general characteristics that mark various ethnic groups are ancestry, dressing sense, a sense of history, language, and religion. Ethnic differences are not hereditament; they are learned.

Edward Said's 'imaginative geography' shows that perception of ethnicity is based upon notions of location and place. He defines it as-

"A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between there land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call "the land of the barbarians"...This Universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is ours and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" Which is "theirs" is a way of making Geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary."(p.162)

Two things to which he diverts our attention are that there is a distinct connection between who comes from where, follows what culture and to which community he/she relates himself/herself to and to his selection of the word 'Barbarians'. How the European people have perceived a certain place in their mind and decided to name the people living on the land as barbarians. They hold the opinion that since they are imagining something they have the right to objectify it.

Race and ethnicity raises the issue of representation which have always been central to post colonial studies. European discourses about Africa, makes it clear that even before the actual placement of colonial plunder of Africans began, the racist stereotypes of being obsessed with color and nakedness were all in place.

Many Africans were moved from their native place to European and Arab countries because of slave trades. This dispersal was the largest forced migrations in human history and it had devastating effect on the economy of Africa and left the societies disrupted. Since these slaves were sold to other countries gradually these people started making their colonies and managed to survive and live by their ancestral cultures where as others native Africans intermarried with non-native Africans, and their descendants blended into the local population. Migration continued from that time to till date and has been a case of major concern. These African people who migrated to other places for quality jobs and lives have had to face severe challenges and didn't have a peaceful life. This diaspora also refers to the questions of identity, memory and home which are the result of migration. In many African novels there are characters who have witnessed alienation and are trapped between a traditional and a progressive world.

Hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. According to Bhabha there is no pure culture and is always hybrid but colonization introduces new things into the native culture and in return native also contribute to their culture. Hybridity was offered to natives since they were learning to be Europeans but they can never be equal to Europeans.. The ideology set

in the mind of all the oriental people that they are inferior in each and every aspect has led the colonized people to still ape Europeans.

In layman terms migration is the movement of people from one country to another for economic, colonial, political or any other social reasons. The colonized people generally moved out of their country either for better job opportunities or education. It can be forcefully done or voluntarily.

African writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka's worlds deals with social injustice, identity crisis and disillusionment as at some part of their life they had been displaced from their native land and faced the same alienation and discrimination. Chinua Achebe, known as the father of African Novel, in his novel 'No longer at Ease' portrays Obi Okonkwo, the main protagonist, who has to go Lagos for his studies bounded with many family expectations. There he finds himself alienated and also in a compromising situation with his values. For instance, initially denied but later he was ready to sleep with a student, a bribe offered from that girl, who came to him seeking approval for scholarship. Later not being able to meet his family's requirements his desires for wealth increases and he starts taking bribes. A culture that was not of Umuofia. Apart from some of these compromises he was also given a different treatment from people of Lagos who were whites. Later in the novel when he becomes an officer and he has to give a speech he comes informally dressed and his speech was full of fault. This is an example that he couldn't learn or mimic the complete ways and style of Europeans. It questions the authority of custom and spaces that sustain it, given the challenge posed by the forces of colonialism, which is seeking the society's space with the autochthonous culture. As a result of this contest between the forces of colonialism and the authority of the indigenous custom, Obi constantly struggles to define himself in the two contending spaces, the delusionary inherited space in Umuofia and "his transplanted locale", Lagos, which is fully under the colonial dominance.

One Of the recent works by Sefi Atta "The Bad Immigrant" shows how the family dismantled when they migrated to the U.S in search of a better life. Lukmon is a professor and failed writer who moves his family from Nigeria to the U.S., hoping to establish better prospects for his children. Where his children adopt new accents to fit in, and Moriam gets a job as a nurse but Lukmon despite holding a PhD degree in Literature, works as a security guard. Before getting a job as a security guard he stayed home as a house husband and this was very disturbing for him as he was unable to cope with this system of the U.S where women can shred off household responsibility. It took him a while to get himself acquainted with the American custom of sharing domestic responsibilities. Lukmon calls himself the bad migrant since he is unable to digest and get warm up with the customs of the Americans and also he is not willing to wade his eyes away from the racial practices of Americans. His children Taslim and Bashira succeed by making their own choices and by adjusting with the differences. Here she puts up the central question

"What makes a "Bad" immigrant? Is it someone who resists assimilation, someone who rejects the idea of conforming to their new home country, choosing instead to hold fast to their own culture and traditions? Or is

it someone who abandons their roots, forgets their past, and sheds any trace of the place they used to call home once they've settled in a new land, in a new life?" (Brittle Paper,09.08.2021)

Ayi Kwei Armah explores the postcolonial African condition in terms of the failure of nationalism and it takes on the intimate self and its longing for wholeness and authenticity. His novels search for an authentic self as to witness the tragedies of postcolonial Africa. In the novel *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Armah presents the culture of corruption and the destructive pursuit of richness in terms of rapidly acquired wealth. There is a sense of disillusionment which is raw and expressive. There is a nameless protagonist who is referred to as "The Man" who tries to befriend the temptation of joining his fellow countrymen who are enslaved by the desire of being more wealthy. This desire of being rich and powerful corrupts the complete Ghanaian society whereas the main protagonist who is referred to as 'the Man' looks for a livelihood without compromising his integrity and resists the culture of materialism set by elites. His Greedy wife puts him down since he is unable to match her expectations and she rebukes him for not putting his family demands and needs before his ethical integrity. The whole essence of the novel can be summed up in these two dialogues of the main protagonist. The first one where he condemns and ponders over the stagnation of society as of now the youth have command still they prefer Britishers ways and put a veil over corruption. The line follows-

"True, I used to see a lot of hope. I saw men tear down the veils behind which the truth had been hidden. But then the same men, when they have power in their hands at last, began to find the veils useful. They made many more. Life has not changed. Only some people have been growing, becoming different, that is all. After a youth spent fighting the white man, why should not the president discover as he grows older that his real desire has been to be like the white governor himself, to live above all the blackness in the big old slave castle?" (p-92-93).

Oyo, protagonist's wife, on witnessing the terrible end of Koomsons, a corrupt minister and greedy person, who had to flee through the latrine, is now full of respect for her husband's integrity.

Similar to this novel, another work of Armah; *Fragments* (1970) details the shattering of the migrant intellectual's sense of self when faced with the insanity of postcolonial Ghana. Baako is a Ghanaian who has just completed his university studies in the United States, and returns to his own country. He has suffered a nervous breakdown during his stay in America because of the injustice and cruel treatments that he has to face. Apart from this he witnessed a merchant sink in the harbor with his truck which was full of perishable food and no one came to help him. The bystanders were unmoved and this was horrific. When he returns he is overburdened with the family's expectations. They think he will bring money, influence and prestige to the family. He finds himself alienated from his society by its open and cynical corruption, and from his family by their inability to understand that his ambitions are not primarily material ones. The complexity of hybridity is distinct in this novel where Baako, the narrator, is an American educated artist who returns home in the years following independence. His family is both a source of alienation and his most important anchor. Naana is his old grandmother who defends traditional values where her mother and sister belong to the new generation of people who have been corrupted by the postcolonial pursuit of wealth. This novel also shows that despite

engaging oneself into the cultural practices of others one is not completely true towards it as Baako's sister Juana decides to have the baptism early so that she can collect more money from guests by having the ceremony right after payday.

Toni Morrison says in an interview that race is a human construct which has devastating effects that scars generation to generation. Her words are as follows-

“There is no such thing as Race. None. There is just the human race; scientifically and logically. It is social construct and it has benefits, money can be made out of it, one who doesn't feel good about himself can feel better because of it and It can define certain kinds of behavior that are wrong or misleading so it has a social function but a race can only be defined as a human being.” (Toni Morrison interview; The Guardian).

Toni Morrison in her novels highlights the issues of black Americans and their struggle to refashion their way of living to adjust in a new world. In her novel we get an unbiased presentation of the struggle of the blacks as she was also a victim of racial discrimination and her ancestors were slaves to Britishers. The novel 'The Bluest eye', is based on color with the assumption that whites are superior with the notion that blacks came to America as slaves. Blue eyes and blonde hair revolves around the novel and is synonymous with beauty. The white standards of beauty was symbolized by blue eyes and blonde hair. The idea of this novel came from Morrison's own life experience. The character Pecola is based on a helpless girl who faced racial discrimination and gradually developed the white culture that is considered to be elite. The book discusses about the black Americans versus white Americans and their femininity and beauty. Culture affected Pecola's perception of physical beauty. Pecola is purely a victim of brutality and is seen as an image of grotesqueness.

Geraldine calls her a “a nasty black bitch” (93)

Geraldine has instructed her son how to get respect despite being coloured. She always kept him neat and clean dressed and combed him in a proper manner. Since it was indispensable to Geraldine to not be a “nigger” she was afraid that her son might risk both of their positions as respectable coloured folk:

She has taught him to only play with white children because his mother did not like him to play with niggers. She had explained the difference between colored people and niggers. They were easily identifiable. Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. He belonged to the former group: he wore white shirts and blue trousers; his hair was cut as close to his scalp as possible to avoid any suggestion of wool, the part was etched into his hair by the barber. In winter his mother put Jergens lotion on his skin to keep his face from becoming ashen. Even though he was light-skinned it was still possible to ash. The line between colored and nigger was not always clear: subtle and tell tale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant (The Bluest Eyes, P-67-68)

The impact of racial discrimination that roots in the family itself has effected the most vulnerable member of the family, a 11 yrs old child, who has been victim of hatred not only in the society but also she is rejected by her own parents. She has been give such a treatment that she turns insane. The concept of relating white with beauty and black with ugliness is rooted in ways children are taught the difference between them with a picture

where a white person with blue or brown eyes is captioned beautiful and a person with dark complexion with black eye is captioned as ugly. The incident that took place in Pecola's schools reminds of the same where Maureen calls herself beautiful and Pecola ugly. When the children get into an argument Maureen yells from across the street "I *am* cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I *am* cute!"

It seems as if "black e mo" is the worst name you could be called. It is an insult based on the children's degree of blackness. One disturbing incident that takes place when Pauline was downstairs collecting the laundry, Pecola accidentally knocks over a blueberry cobbler. Instead of comforting Pecola Mrs. Breedlove scolds her. She hits Pecola and rebukes her as a crazy fool. The fact that the white girl can call her Polly while Pecola has to call her Mrs. Breedlove signals the mother's preference for the white girl. Furthermore Pauline does not seem to want to acknowledge that Pecola is her daughter.

"Pick up that wash and get on out of here, so I can get this mess cleaned up"

... As Pecola put the laundry bag in the wagon we could hear Mrs Breedlove hushing and soothing the tears of the little pink-and-yellow girl.... "Who were they, Polly?" "Don't worry, baby." She whispered, and the honey in her words complemented the sundown spilling on the lake. (p-85).

Pecola is already troubled and she has no place to go, not even to her Parents who are the sole comforter of their children in every condition as they hate her for her complexion.

Rejection is common among all the characters mentioned above. The characters live their lives in the perception of the rejection and racism they have been subjected to. Whether people have migrated to a place for better livelihood and somehow managed to acquaint themselves with the new culture the question of belongingness, identity, racism and being inferior remains the same. *The Bluest Eye* is a novel that shows how the African-American community has been denied the "American dream". They have been closed out and rejected by the very country into which they were born. Coming to terms with other cultures and values doesn't always work. Baako is unable to digest the harsh reality of the world, he is unable to be okay with the malpractices that have ruined his country and greed that has corrupted the soul of his people. Lukmon also took a long time to get familiar with the American custom. Through Lukmon, Armah also points out that no matter what degree you hold or how much of a learned man you are, it's just your color that determines your value.

Pecola one of the finest and delicate creation of Toni Morrison, succumbs to such discrimination, hatred and rejection and turns insane. The virus of color is so dangerous that it ruins the lives of several people from an early age. It's difficult for people to understand that color doesn't determine one's value; it doesn't make any one superior over others. Both historical persecution and present day rejection and racism limits the lives of the characters. The scars of historical racism are still alive not only among whites but also among blacks who reject someone darker than their color and cherishes light color. Its been a century since Lincoln had

abolished slavery, African Americans are still living in poverty and they are still subjected to institutionalised racism. Even the present century, which is glorified as developed and modern, is reluctant to welcome hybridity and changes. The ideology of 'superiority of whites' is inscribed in the head of all the people be it colonized or colonizers. The situation in the present day remains same, movements like 'Black is beautiful', Black lives matter and many such slogans comes in lime light from time to time is because some one some where is facing racial discrimination, or rejection or injustice.

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