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## ERASURE OF SPACE: EFFECTS OF COLONIALISM AND GLOBALISATION ON INDIGENOUS AMAXHOSA PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT IN THE NOVEL *THE HEART OF REDNESS*

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**Abstract:** The present study tries to find out the effects of colonialism and globalisation on the indigenous amaXhosa people of South Africa in the novel *The Heart of Redness*. The study also tries to examine how the space of these people are erased and how these people resist out of the fear of the erasure of their space.

Indigenous people have a unique culture, tradition, language, belief systems and social practices and are deeply connected to their land and environment. Their relationship with the environment is deep-rooted, and much traditional knowledge is passed down through generations. Indigenous people are displaced from their traditional land and culture due to colonial global policies like land seizure, forced relocation, resource extraction, assimilation policies, development projects, legal and political exclusions etc. This results in the erosion of indigenous cultures and practices, livelihood and language. Assimilation and marginalisation lead to the loss of their cultural identity and knowledge. Globalisation and certain modern state policies are seen as a continuation of colonialism, where the indigenous land, environment and culture are disrupted.

Zakes Mda is a postcolonial South African writer whose works delve into the distinctions that existed in South Africa on the basis of class and colour. Historical events and contemporary realities are intermingled in his writings, through which he tries to present how the political and economic forces affected the lives of the marginalised communities. He often criticizes the colonial and development policies of globalisation that reshape the indigenous communities and threaten their traditional local existence. He presents land and environment as a living entity, which is a part of their cultural memory and identity. He is deeply influenced by African mythology, oral tradition, folklore and communal voices. His novels examine the disruptions, divisions and changes that happened in the African society because of colonialism and development policies.

Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* presents the life of the indigenous amaXhosa people of South Africa, their connection with the environment, and the division among the people due to colonialism and globalisation. Before the advent of colonialism, the indigenous people in the village of Qolorha-By-Sea were one. The novel moves between the 19<sup>th</sup> century and post-apartheid South Africa. It shows that colonialism is a continuous process and how the lives of indigenous people are marginalised and exploited. The amaXhosa people are deeply connected to their environment, and land is not just a physical territory for them. It is a cultural space that is linked to their community, ancestry, identity and memory. They fear the erasure of their space- physical, cultural, social, economic, political and psychological. But the indigenous amaXhosa people resisted the colonial global interventions, trying to preserve their environment, culture and identity.

The Xhosa Cattle- Killing Movement that happened in 1856-57 formed the historical background to the novel *The Heart of Redness*. Nongqawuse, a 15-year-old prophetess, predicted that if the Xhosa people killed their cattle and destroyed their crops, the dead ancestors would come back and drive away the British colonizers from their land. The prophecy of Nongqawuse is a way to expel the British colonizers from their ancestral land. Colonialism divided the people; many believed in the prophecy, but many others opposed it as absurd. Thus, two groups emerged in the amaXhosa community- Believers and Unbelievers. The families disintegrated, children separated from parents, wives from husbands and siblings from siblings. Twin and Twin-Twin, the brothers in the novel, are separated due to colonialism and the development policies of the government. Mda shows how the disastrous effects of colonialism continue under the new independent African National government.

Colonialism grabbed the sacred land of the indigenous amaXhosa people and forced them to live under Western culture and civilization. They became consumers of Western goods and their religious beliefs and practices were sidelined and considered savage. The natives were persecuted and suppressed using white laws imposed on their land. Internal conflicts occurred among the people as the community got separated between those who supported tradition and those who embraced modernism. This weakened their unity, harmony and solidarity. Colonialism disrupted their social structure and created uncertainty among the people. Their sacred spiritual land was reorganised, and their economic systems were taken over by colonial policies. The indigenous amaXhosa knowledge and their protected customs and values were destroyed. Believers fear the erasure and destruction of their environment and cultural identity.

The belongingness, rootedness and existence of the amaXhosa people are challenged by colonialism. Power relations reshape the space of the indigenous communities. John Dalton said that whites have given them civilization even if they acquired their land. Then Twin- Twin said, "What is land compared to civilization?" asked Dalton impatiently. "Land is a small price to pay for a gift that will last you a lifetime . . . that will be enjoyed by your future generations. The gift of British civilization!" (Mda 123). Mda presents how the indigenous people are controlled and manipulated by the chieftains during the pre-colonial period, Europeans during the colonial period and the modern independent democratic government during the apartheid period. He criticizes the system of governance and power that sidelined and exploited the indigenous people and their land.

The amaXhosa people live under the fear of erasure of space during the post apartheid South Africa. The government did not make any attempts to meet the basic needs and infrastructure for the people. The candidates for the election are selected from the headquarters, and so the people don't know the candidates and are forced to participate in the election process. But Dalton justifies this by saying that leadership must be imposed from above. The people did not have the basic needs of proper water supply and electricity in their land. Banks are not providing loans to blacks, even to begin a business initiative, without security, which is freely given to others. Mda criticizes the Black Empowerment boom which stands with the elite blacks, trade union leaders and politicians and not with the poor blacks and indigenous communities.

The novel *The Heart of Redness* also presents how globalisation and capitalism tried to transform the village Qolorha-By-Sea into a tourist destination. A development project is proposed to be done in the land of amaXhosa people with casinos, tourist spots, resorts and commercial buildings. The Unbelievers support the project as they believe it as a way towards progress and growth. It gives many job opportunities and enhances the living conditions of the people. But the Believers consider it as a threat to their environment and cultural identity. The lived space of the indigenous people becomes an abstract, contested space. The land and environment of the amaXhosa people are transformed into a resource that amasses economic profit for the corporate companies. Modern developers prioritize the global capitalist values over indigenous existence and well-being.

Zakes Mda shows how the indigenous communities are oppressed during colonial and postcolonial periods in the novel, though the mode of oppression is different. The people, as well as the environment, are affected during both periods, physically and spiritually. People face fear and fragmentation as they are exploited and displaced. Their space has been reduced into a site of oppression and resource by the developers and progress seekers. The harmony, respect and continuity the amaXhosa people had with the environment is disrupted and threatened. In Xhosa, the word *umhlaba* means both land and earth, and it gives physical, spiritual and moral strength to the people. The land and environment connect the people with the ancestors and the cosmos. The people maintain respect for the environment, and many of their rituals and ceremonies

are connected with the land. They believe in the sacredness of the environment and the role of ancestors in maintaining moral, cultural and ecological identity.

Zim is the Believer, who opposed the modern development policies in the amaXhosa land, and Bhonco is the Unbeliever who supported the multibillion-dollar companies who are planning to construct a tourist complex in the novel. Dalton represents colonialism in the modern era because of his support for a cultural tourist complex representing the indigenous people and their environment as artefacts. Bhonco supports the construction of the gambling city that he believes will wipe away the 'redness'(backwardness) of his community. The novel ends with the victory of the Believers as the tourist complex project was dropped and a village-owned heritage camp will be started in its place. The climax of the novel shows the continuation of the ancestral traditions and customs, but it also hints at the possibility of the traditional customs and beliefs being wiped away, and a gambling city will be set up in the near future, destroying the environment and identity of the amaXhosa people.

For the Xhosa people, the environment is a part of their social, cultural and spiritual space. It connects them with their ancestors, tradition and identity. The prophecy leads to the destruction of the crops and the large-scale killing of cattle in the amaXhosa land that ultimately resulted in famine, starvation, poverty and death. This shows how the environment becomes a source of survival and faith. Environment becomes an agency that witnesses the past and is a guardian to protect the identity and culture for the future. Mda connects the land with identity, myth, prophecy, and faith, thus stressing the inseparability of land and identity of the people. The ecological balance and the sacredness of the land are ruptured due to colonialism and globalisation. The disrupted environment shows a disrupted society but amaXhosa people show their resistance and resilience, opposing any attempts that destroy their environment, culture and identity.

Space is a site of memory, and the indigenous identity is rooted in the myths, stories and rituals of the land. When the indigenous space disappears, their memory and identity become threatened. The indigenous environment is reshaped by colonial global forces for their economic interests. However, through their remembrance and cultural identity, the indigenous people resist the erasure of their space. Space becomes political when one powerful force dominates the powerless communities' land. Also, control over the land is control over history and identity.

The novel *The Heart of Redness* portrays the effects of colonialism and globalisation on the amaXhosa people of South Africa and their environment, and how they resisted the erasure of their space by protecting their culture, identity, beliefs and traditions. Colonialism displaces and reorganises the indigenous land and people through acquisition, disruption of culture and creating divisions among the people. Globalisation continues the legacy of colonialism by considering the land of the amaXhosa as a resource. It starts tourism, development projects and capitalist expansion in their land. Both colonialism and globalisation commodify the indigenous land and weaken the harmony and relationship with the environment and among themselves. Yet, the indigenous communities preserve their space, memories and identity. Colonialism and globalisation prioritize profit and wealth over the indigenous identity and well-being. Injustice and exploitation of indigenous people are happening everywhere across the globe, and it is high time to protect their space, which is the custodian of their culture and identity. The protection of indigenous knowledge, culture and environment is essential for mankind at large because they have a unique belief system and structures.

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