

Walter rodney ctiticism



Rodney is a neo-Marxist and non-imperialist writer, meaning he views oppression of Africans rooted in the hands of the colonial capitalist activities in Africa and the suffering of Africans premised in the imperialistic activities of Europeans in Africa. His critical work helps in the debate on the definition of African literature, for he brings out the historical connection that makes it possible to analyse African literature dealing with the pre-colonial and post-colonial phases of African history. He reveals political, economic and social circumstances that informed the sensibility of most African writers.

Rodney is a writer who is guided by the ideology from the dependency/underdevelopment theory. The dependency theory believes that capitalism's modernization has interrupted the nature and tempo of development in the third world, exploited the technologically less developed societies for its benefit, made them dependent on the capitalist, modern countries and caused to lag back further and further back behind in economic terms. The underdevelopment school is optimistic about Africans development from the point of view of the Africans and the third world countries.

It believes that these societies have an inherent ability to develop. Their development was actually interrupted by western imperialism. Rodney's criticism in his book, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* was inspired by the ideas of this theory that developed during this time, 1960s when he wrote his book. Rodney also writes against the idealists of the modernization school. It is of the opinion that African underdevelopment is due to certain inherent weaknesses and they developed considerably during the colonial times as a result of colonial policies.

He also criticizes the literature that over celebrates and view development of Africans premised in the hands of European colonial activities. Rodney defines development in human society as a many sided process. He says development is not a comparable phenomenon. He believes that development can be defined differently from one region to another. Rodney is of the opinion that development takes a natural way. He argues that Africa's development was interrupted by its encounter with Europeans in the fifteenth century. He is of the view that Africa like any other countries was developing through in a more naturally different manner.

He believes that all the European countries view themselves better than Africa had already was in. All the countries passed through the primitive stage in development, went through the feudal stage and into the capitalist stage. Rodney views Africans to have been developed prior the encounter with Europeans in the fifteenth century. He reveals the development in the social structure, political structure, and the economic means of production and religious structure of Africa before the fifteenth century. He points out the developmental features with according to him indicate natural evolutionary process in these communities.

Rodney (1981, pp 2) postulates that underdevelopment makes sense as a means of comparing levels of development. It is much tied to the fact that human social development has an uneven and from a very strictly economic view point, some human groups have advanced further by producing more and becoming wealthier. The moment one group appears to be wealthier than others; some inquiry is bound to take place as to the reason of the difference. Rodney defines underdevelopment as an exploitation one country

by another. All the countries named as underdeveloped in the world are exploited by others.

Underdevelopment with which the world is now pre-occupied with is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. He observes that many underdeveloped countries in Africa and elsewhere are becoming more underdeveloped compared with the world's great powers, because their exploitation is being intensified in new ways. For example, Zimbabwe's underdevelopment is still blamed on the Western countries colonization and till today economic sanctions are said to have been imposed to it.

Developments in infrastructure, Rodney views it as not development but as exploitative means.

Building of roads and railway lines linked Africa to Europe. They were exploitative in the sense that they were created to make it easy to transport the materials from Africa to Europe. He says: All the roads and railway lines were heading to the sea coasts Africans who benefited, it was by coincidence it was not designed for them. He also argues that clinics and hospitals built were not development meant to benefit Africans. They were built because the Europeans had seen that people who provided labour were dying at a faster rate, so they were bound to run short of labour in future.

A case of South Africa at Kimberley, most miners suffered from TB (tuberculosis) they could not work any more and some of them died. Rodney also believes that building of infrastructure in Africa was done by Africans out of African resources and out of African labour under the supervision of the Europeans. It is evident that Rodney does not view any imperialistic

works of Europeans to have brought development in Africa. All infrastructures built in Africa view it as for exploiting Africa.

Rodney strongly believes that Africa's economic system was underdeveloped by the coming of Europeans. He still cherishes the development of Africans prior its encounter with Europeans. He believes that Africa was going to develop better than Europe because of the rich resources that she's got that Europe does not have. He believes that Africa, given time was going to develop naturally utilizing her natural resources. Rodney observes that already Africa had developed to a stage whereby mining was conducted. Her tools had developed from stone to iron tools without European intervention.

Africa's technology was coming up because already there were works of the blacksmith that were discovered dating before the Africans came into contact with Europeans. He argues that Europeans hindered African development with their exploitative activities. Colonialism induced the African worker to abandon the process of extracting iron for his development for Europeans. Africa's socio- economic structure system was laid backwards by coming of Europeans. Men and women's gender roles, hunting and gathering were destroyed. Traditionally men did heavy labour of felling trees, clearing trees and building houses.

When they were required to leave their farms to seek employment, women remained behind burdened with every task necessary for survival of themselves, even children and even men as food stuffs were concerned. This idea inspired the colonial and feminist writers like Barbra Makhalisa in her

novel uMendo. Rodney finds in colonialism double oppression of women in the African society. Women were oppressed by the African traditional customs and laws. Colonialism has intensified the oppression of women, as men entered the money sector easily and greater numbers than women.

Women's work became greatly inferior to that of men within the new value system colonialism. Men's work was 'modern' and women's was 'traditional' and 'backward'. Barbra's literal work on feminism is inspired by works similar to Rodney's, In UMendo (1977), Barbra Makhalisa writes about the double oppression of women brought by colonialism. Women were left behind to look after the family while men are in the urban areas working. Gugu , Makhalisa's female character suffers from this kind of oppression. Rodney observes that in many parts of the African continent, vital aspects of culture were adversely affected.

He says nothing better was substituted and lifeless shell was left. In extracting labour colonialists tempered with the factor that was very buttress of the society, for the African traditional life. (Amilcar Cabral, 1980) in 'national liberation and culture' in support of Rodney 's ideas argues that imperialist domination ' for its own security requires cultural oppression and attempt at direct and indirect destruction of the essential elements of culture of the dominated people'. Colonization however denied Africa the right to cultural development and self expression.

Colonial education did more than corrupt the thinking and sensibilities of the African. it filled him with abnormal complexes which de-Africanized and alienated him/her from the needs of his/her environment (Wa thiongo ,

1988)in Writing against colonialism . Rodney also argues that the main purpose of colonial education was to train Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole. This is evident Sigogo's Ndebele novel ngenziwa Ngumumo welizwe (1986) when he shows that colonial education changed Africans mind against African development.

Lisho his male character views the freedom fighter as not educated that's why they were pursuing their agenda to free the nation. This was because he was gaining a lit from the Rhodesian government and decided to be a traitor and was forced to join the Rhodesian army later. This shows that educated Africans were the most alienated Africans on the continent. At each further stage they were buttered and succumbed the white capitalist system and after being given salaries they could sustain a life style of life imported from outside, that further transformed their mentality.

Colonial education has thus disposed and put out the control of the African intellectual and the necessary forces for directing the life and development of society. Rodney also analyzes the intellectual inter -relationship between Christianity, colonial education and colonial administrative systems. Ngugi in Home coming says that to gain " acceptability and perpetuation the colonialists enlists the services of Christianity and Christian oriented education...to capture the soul and the mind (1982). Achebe : things fall apart , says that the newly converted Christians renounce their traditional lifestyle, thus advancing the cause of colonialism.

In uSethi ebukweni bakhe by Sigogo (1962) Sethi, Sigogo's female character renounces the traditional lifestyle for Christianity, she views traditional

religion as religion of the witches. *Inhlamvu zasengodlweni* by E. M. Ndlovu, his male character Nkanyiso renounces the traditional religion for Christianity. Colonial Christian education changed African people's attitude towards their traditional religion this then inspired the writers to write lamenting on this change and underdevelopment of the African religion.

Rodney reveals the negative impact of colonialism in political terms was quite dramatic. Overnight African political states lost their power, independence and meaning- irrespective of whether they were big or small. Ndebele novel like *Umvukela wamaNdebele* by N. Sithole, shows the political system affected by colonialism. A strong military state like the Ndebele was destroyed by colonialism. Colonial rule meant the effective eradication of African political power throughout the continent.

Rodney's criticism inspired many colonial writers on economic change, culture change and culture conflicts, political change and feminism. He is credited of bringing a sense of nationalism amongst the Africans to fight against one cause. Rodney's kinder regard for African tradition must have contributed to the contemporary romanticizing, by so called socialists of African traditions for the purpose of formulating development strategies for example (Babu , 1981) was inspired by ideas similar to Rodney's.

On the other hand Rodney is criticized of largely concentrating on analyzing the cause of underdevelopment and was one sided. He over romanticized the development centred on African hands only. This makes his criticism to be unreal. Africans have transformed a lot and they have been heavily displaced such that they will never be a possibility for them to go back and

start living in a more communalized manner. Africa is very rich in mineral and a lot of natural resources but it cannot process these raw materials own it has to rely on the metro poles.