CHAPTER - 3

THE DYNAMICS AND DIMENSIONS OF RESISTANCE

3.1. Introduction

Resistance is the spontaneous expression of the inner feeling that arises in response to anything that one does not like or cannot tolerate for empirical as well as emotional reasons. You and I feel and experience it even though inhibitions, internal and/or external, often prevent us from expressing the concomitant responses of the urge to resist. Yet expressions are not always withheld as they may come out sometimes in the form of an emotional outburst, an uncontrollable sob, a word of helpless curse, all within the locus of the individual. At the collective level resistance efforts will take the form of a movement adopting a variety of means to struggle that may mitigate and defeat the oppressive mechanisms that had given rise to the resistance, or sometimes it is doomed to get defeated and will be forced to be withdrawn helplessly.

Generally, we can define resistance in its broader sense as the combined expression of the physical, mental, cultural and moral reactions to various types and forms of oppression and invasion. But when we analyze specific instances and cases, there arises the question, i.e., does oppression necessarily lead to resistance? To put it in other words, we have to look into the implications of the hypothetical correlation between oppression and
resistance. The question is relevant here because oppression has multiple, interconnected dimensions of much complexity such as economic, political, cultural, gender-based and so on over and above the physical and mental. This causal nexus of the phenomenon of resistance is to be marked out with reference to some remarkable oppression vs. resistance paradigms.

3.2. Colonialism as a Paradigm of Oppression

Colonialism in general can be defined as the domination of weaker countries by strong ones for economic, religious and cultural purposes. Colonialism is a manifest form of imperialism. It is ‘the practice by which a powerful country controls another country or countries’. In order to analyze the phenomenon of colonialism in detail we can take British colonialism in India as a proper paradigm. European invaders treated India as a potential market for their exports and as a rich source of industrial raw materials. Another impact of colonialism was the propagation of Christian beliefs as superior to those in colonized countries. Europeans declared themselves as the divinely chosen people with the mission to ensure the salvation of ‘inferior’ races and religions.

Even after independence, the erstwhile colonies could not repair their own economy because of the continued extraction of their principal primary products. Colonialism played a significant role in the manipulation of ethnic and racial groupings. It is true that in the pre-colonial period, India and
South Africa were infected with casteism and tribal feuds respectively. These groupings became the major hindrance to their freedom struggle, and such stereotypes provided the ideological justification for colonialist exploitation.

As Miles observed, the relationship between racial ideologies and exploitation is dialectical (Loomba 113). Postmodern sociologists describe race as a ‘social construct’. Racial discrimination is not based upon objective biological/genetic factors, but evolved within definite cultural and social contexts. Racism involves social, political and legal discrimination and oppression. A precise and single definition of racism will be problematic because it is a complex dynamic process. Racism has taken shape in specific political, social, cultural and linguistic contexts. Neil Macmaster observes, “All racisms are a cultural manifestation, a reflection or expression of tensions or problems within a society, rather than a phenomenon derived from an autonomous and somehow ‘objective’ sphere of scientific investigation and theory” (7).

The concept of racial difference within humankind is also incompatible with the theological perspective of the origin of man. If the theory of race is legitimized on the basis of biological factors, it contradicts the Biblical notion of the human species as a unique creation of God (Loomba 116). Hence the author concludes, “Ethnic, tribal and other
community groupings are social construction and identities that have served to both oppress people and radicalize them’’ (122).

In an *Encarta* article, it is observed that colonies of exploitation witnessed three types of resistance:

i) Primary resistance: - In the primary stage, indigenous states and people resist Europeans’ attempts to control them. But they were unable to organize resistance. Some native states made agreements with Europeans.

ii) Secondary resistance: - It occurred after the establishment of colonial power. New policies in the revenue systems and the interference of missionaries in indigenous customs paved the way for spontaneous uprisings and movements by the peasants and industrial workers. But there were many obstacles like tribal division and caste for them to resist the Europeans.

iii) Nationalism: - It is very difficult to define the term ‘Nationalism’; it is an idea of imagined communities (Cell n.pag.).

The nationalist spirit in the colonies was linked with the need for an organized network of resistance. The leaders of nationalist movements were educated people. It is true that anti-colonial nationalism was linked with European political and intellectual history. It was made possible by the
western education of native intelligentsia because they learnt the ideas like freedom and equality from the English books as they themselves had accepted this fact. Even though the concept of the freedom of nations had been adopted from the West, the anti-colonial nationalism is different from the western model as it involved radical socio-cultural changes at home. Nationalists utilized the language and political philosophy of colonizers through the education they received from the West, but they had to fight for eradicating the evils like casteism before initiating the struggle for national freedom.

It is clear that colonialism was primarily fostered by business interests necessitated by the increasing industrialization of European countries. This resulted in an unprecedented demand for raw materials for production and expansion of market for products. It is with this purpose that the English East India Company and its counterparts in other European countries had colonized Asian and African land. As this appropriation of indigenous wealth could not be continued without resistance, the colonialists wanted the support of a political machinery to govern the colonies. Hence a regime to support the economic interests of colonial bourgeoisie gradually took over the governmental power in colonized countries. It gradually took the form of imperialism that monopolized not only the natural resources of the colonies but also the political and cultural domains of life in the colonies.
The characteristic feature of colonialism is that it involves direct governmental and military control of less powerful countries by more powerful countries. Here we can notice a common element in the agenda of imperialism, that is, the attempt to ‘discover’ some justification for oppression and to (try to) convince the oppressed of its legitimacy and strength. In order to assert some justification and rationale for their power claims, colonialists constructed and projected schisms/binary opposites before the colonized people. This is the ideological weapon that was a necessary accompaniment of the political-military mechanism of government. Colonialists like any other imperialist group wanted to maintain the gap between the dominator and the dominated, oppressor and the oppressed. The dominators always tend to underestimate and devalue the culture and values of the dominated by projecting the superiority of their culture. Citing the view of Derrida, Johnson observes,

A properly relativistic approach to other cultures would hesitate to classify this or that cultural artifact or social activity as either ‘aesthetic’ or ‘utilitarian’, since such classification runs the risk of projecting onto those cultures categories and distinctions purely our own (27).
This cultural superiority complex does not remain an innocent faith of the dominators, but all on a sudden prompts the tendency to pressurize the oppressed groups for

i) giving up their cultural practices and conventions as out of place.

ii) adopting the high culture of the dominant group.

This is the starting point of cultural imperialism which ultimately leads to the ‘swallowing up of cultures’ other than the one that dominates the whole society.

It is a historical fact that colonialists were compelled to withdraw in due course their political power from colonized countries like India. In some cases at least their economic enterprises in colonial countries were also in trouble. There are various reasons that prompted decolonization. Some of them are the following:

i) Depletion of the natural resources of raw materials that had attracted colonial industrialists to countries like India.

ii) The growing political awareness of native bourgeoisie. In the colonial countries such an awakening gradually motivated mass movements to expel the invaders and to retrieve the political identity of the native people.
iii) In countries like India, the aforementioned political awareness had been created through the efforts of religious gurus to eradicate the reactionary ideals and customs that blocked the renaissance of masses. This led to reformation in religious beliefs and practices and to the elimination of detrimental social practices like caste discrimination.

At the first sight, colonialism is a form of political hegemony, but underlying it there was economic imperialism with its primary goal of economic exploitation for feeding the industries in the West. It is significant here to note that political hegemony had gradually taken the form of cultural hegemony. This transition from ‘political’ to ‘cultural’ is one of the characteristic phases of colonial invasion.

3.2.1. The Neo-colonial Paradigms

We all share today a sigh of relief for colonialism has come to an end. Yet the causes and sources of colonialism have not disappeared completely. Colonizers and their political military equipments are no more visible in the erstwhile colonies. But economic imperialism in the guise of globalization and neo-colonialism is more widespread than ever inviting resistance of the exploited peoples in various parts of the globe.

Unlike in colonialism, in neo-colonialism there is no need of any machinery of control or conquest of the less powerful ‘third world
countries’. The Oxford Dictionary defines neo-colonialism as “the use of economic or political pressure by powerful countries to control or influence other countries”. Today, powerful countries do not use their political/military force for conquering other countries, but they control those countries by political or economic pressure. They can influence the political systems and leaders of poor countries by using international coercion and power.

We know that technology needs new and new raw materials and space for the installation of equipments. In order to achieve this goal, the economically and politically powerful countries like Britain and the US want to control the third world countries like India. As it happened in the colonial period, today it is not possible or even necessary for them to control these countries by military force. So the developed countries bring the developing under economic/political pressure in order to exercise indirect control over the political and economic system of ‘third world countries’. This tactic of indirect oppression is the characteristic of neo-colonial imperialism which in effect is a disguised form of colonialism. It assumes in due course new dimensions of cultural imperialism in the form of cultural homogenization that is assuming unprecedented pace and complexity with the ongoing communication revolution.


3.2.2. Cultural Imperialism

The term ‘cultural imperialism’ has been used in various areas of humanities and social sciences, especially in the fields of history and Cultural Studies. Here we intend to analyze the philosophical/ethical aspect of the term. The ethical study of cultural imperialism is more significant as it continues to plague the peoples and cultures of those countries which had suffered for long under colonialism. In general, it is the attitude and practice by which a social group tries to impose its culture upon another group within or beyond that society. Cultural imperialism necessarily implies the distinction between high culture and popular culture or between superior culture and inferior culture. In short, a deliberate manipulation by one cultural unit by means of persuasion/coercion exercised upon a culture/s to accept and adopt the dictates of the former leads to cultural imperialism. Hence the presence of imperialism in any form presupposes some kind of imposition of one culture upon another. The ethical question arises here because of this element of deliberate manipulation or forceful imposition.

The oppressors always tend to elevate the superiority of their cultural identity and try to establish their norms and practices as morally right and good. The dominant group asserts the right to define the moral status of all the members of a society including its own as well as the dominated groups. They want to apply their norms and principles to the whole society. This
tendency for the universalization of the culture of dominant group is termed as cultural imperialism. Oxford Dictionary defines imperialism as “the fact of a powerful country increasing its influence over other countries through business, culture etc”. The cultural aspects of imperialism make the phenomenon of cultural imperialism. There are many other synonymous terms for cultural imperialism such as cultural synchronization, ideological imperialism, structural imperialism etc¹.

Every culture has its own morals and value perspectives. Sometimes the value standard of one culture is acceptable and right for another culture even if it is not their value principle. This phenomenon of some elements of one culture as appealing to another does not imply imposition. Every culture looks at another culture through its own ‘lenses’. The culture of a certain community is signified by its practices, ideals and language. Every culture develops its own moral order and experiences things and makes judgments according to that order. The values and practices of a culture are taken for granted by the members within though they may not be acceptable to others. Each member of that society may believe that their way of doing is morally right and that of others is wrong and inferior. Thus the former group wants to universalize their moral values and cultural percepts and they want their culture to be accepted universally. This is the phenomenon that eventually develops into cultural imperialism.
We have already mentioned that imperialism is a manifestation of colonialism and that it implies not only direct economic exploitation but also cultural hegemony. Hence cultural imperialism leads to the extinction of cultural identities. We know that westernization is an aftereffect of colonization. Westernization is the process of making or becoming like the people of western countries in terms of their customs, practices and ways of life.

Scientific development along with technological revolution in transportation and communication has made possible the development of a ‘global village’. Thus, the process of westernization is assuming new forms in globalization. As a result of westernization, non-western people by craze imitate the customs and practices of western countries. In effect, it leads to the extinction of indigenous medical systems, architecture, and all other assets of numerous non-western cultures. If economic and political imperialism was the hallmark of colonization cultural imperialism is the aftereffect of neo-colonialism. The preceding analysis of colonialism and neo-colonialism has exposed the multi-dimensional phenomenon of oppression vs. resistance. It is now possible to show in what all ways resistance develops as the antithesis of oppression.
3.3. The Dynamics of Oppression and Resistance

There cannot be resistance uncaused, unmotivated or unprompted. Hence the study of resistance inevitably invites a study of oppression in terms of its forces and features. Oxford Dictionary defines the verbal form of ‘oppress’ as “to treat somebody in a cruel and unfair way, especially by not giving them the same freedom, rights, etc. as other people”. Hence oppression involves

i) unfair treatment of one group by another group, and

ii) the denial of freedom and rights of one group by another group.

It is, no doubt, a process of marginalizing and alienating a particular group of people by another group in the name of colour, creed, gender, culture, power, position and the like. Thus we can see various forms of oppression in any society. This process of marginalization leads to the creation of ‘the other’ as an inferiorized group. The postmodern technique of deconstruction aims at exposing the power bases underlying any system of thought, cultural construct, or literary work. There is a recurring disbelief about the ‘projects’ of modernity such as science, democracy, communism, humanism and so on that converges into what is referred to as the ‘incredulity toward metanarratives’. This construction of power bases has been a characteristic tendency of modernity that produced analytical and ethical paradigms in terms of rigid binary opposites like mind/body,
male/female, master/slave, modern/primitive and the like. Such bifurcations imply exclusive binaries which are analogous to logical contradictories like p and ~p. But there is a difference between logical contradictories and socially constructed binaries, i.e., one of the binaries will be projected as the dominant part and the other will be treated as inferior and irrational.

Johnson and co-authors opine that any effort to establish truth/falsity or superiority/inferiority is considered as a form of power. “Similarly, power works by producing systems of inclusion and exclusion in cultural representations of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.”(142). Cultural institutions and signs are very often used as the tools for establishing power. It is a fact that power mechanism in a society determines dominance by excluding particular groups and practices, and the excluded groups are treated as the ‘other’. Johnson and co-authors further define dominance as follows:

Dominance … is a set of relationships that are everywhere in cultural transactions, cutting across the social divides, hinging together cultural spaces. It is certainly not confined to official knowledge, political practices or economic relations. The dominant and the popular, like the economic and cultural, are often mixed up together, in the same texts, practices and institutional spaces…. (143).
The authors stress the fact that reductionism in social relations and practices is not a plausible stance as the status of one factor as economic, cultural, popular or high is very often shifting and has a sliding floor. Economic factors include cultural factors and vice versa. What is referred to as production forces cannot be isolated from the cultural life of a society.

Modernity invests its power in the self-asserted superiority of one half of the binary opposites such as the male, the mankind, the western, the rational etc. The recognition of this one component as the ‘privileged superior’ necessitates the construction of the ‘inferior other’ to be dominated and exploited for the benefit of the former. The justification of superiority may be religious, philosophical, racial, ideological or gender based. This is the core of the postmodern notion of ‘the other’, which is the key to the emerging relativistic attitude of postmodern critics which we have discussed in a previous section.

Postmodern relativism prompts the radical rejection of the abovementioned technique of creating the other to monopolize power. No power structure is justified absolutely, since no moral or political institution is free from the interests of those who create it. So, the creation of the other reflects the unilateral justification of a certain social or cultural section or segment and implies the dominator/dominated, exploiter/exploited and the oppressor/oppressed bifurcations. This is unethical and unwarranted even if
the interest group can justify the domination in terms of rationality, racial superiority or technological excellence. But it has been the custom throughout modernity that could construct and legitimize absolutistic bases of truth, culture and morality.

The projects of dominance always involve acts of oppression. Morton Deutsch defines, “oppression is the experience of repeated, widespread, systemic injustice” (n.pag). When we take oppression as the antithesis of resistance it is clear that all the expressions of resistance are necessarily linked with the characteristics of oppression. There is no doubt that any act of oppression involves injustice. But the question is what kind of injustice is it? The lexical definition of the term ‘oppression’ exposes the denial of rights, justice and freedom to a particular group/individual by another group/individual. This denial manifests in an unfair attitude towards and treatment of the former by the latter. This creates what postmodern analysts have marked as the schism between the oppressor and the oppressed. In the following sections we shall analyze the different dimensions of this split that characterizes the dynamics of social evolution in colonial and post colonial era.

3.3.1. The Dynamics of Social Conflict

It is clear that any phenomenon of oppression occurs in a situation in which at least two opposite groups are in conflict. For this, we have to look
back into the origin of the division of society into groups or classes. In pre-
agriculture societies naturally people lived in co-operation and mutual
support. Their livelihood depended on direct accumulation of food materials
from nature, and there had not been much active production. The formation
of social hierarchies became visible as human communities got engaged in
active production of food materials and other basic necessities. Agriculture
is the archetype of culture, and it had played a significant role in the
formation of social classes or groups. Though not intended, the
development of agriculture in effect necessitated the formation of a labour
force. This gradually paved the way to the formation of owner/working
classes that in due course entered into conflict in terms of interests. This
development led to intra-social differentiation and its allied conflicts.
Deutsch observes, “Small inequalities in luck or skills among the peasants
within an agricultural society, or between societies, could lead to social
inequalities and power differences that, in turn, could lead to increased
power, social inequalities and oppression of the weak by the strong”
(n.pag).

Here it is stated that power differences, to a certain extent, cause and
lead to oppression. Those who claim to possess the might to rule others
assert their own rules and rights forming an interest group in order to
dominate other groups. The dominant group imposes the unwritten laws
justified in terms of self-interest over the dominated group which in the
postmodern parlance is termed ‘the other’. This is the phenomenon of social exclusion in terms of economic and political interests, and it operates by creating power devices for exploiting labour to the benefit of the dominator group.

3.3.2. The Dynamics of Moral Exclusion

The dominant group eventually develops into a limited moral community to exclude the other group/s. This moral exclusion prompts inhuman ostracism on the part of the oppressor towards the oppressed. Within that particular moral community, the dominators justify their cruel deeds as their natural/divine right. Thus there occur different moral communities inside a vast human community. The definition of moral community is based on the inclusion or exclusion between different groups/communities. Inclusion or exclusion is determined by the question - Whom we treat good and whom we treat bad? We give fair treatment to those included in our moral community. We exclude those to whom we do not want to give good treatment. Thus the limit of moral community varies and this moral inclusion/exclusion depends upon the factors like colour, caste, power, money and the like. Either any one of these factors or more than one of them in combination plays a determining role in defining a moral community.
The danger of moral inclusion/exclusion is that individuals/groups outside the moral community will be marked as the immoral and uncivilized other. Rival groups tend to treat each other as less than human or unfit to be humans. The dominant group believes that the other does not deserve any moral consideration. They are not ready to recognize the members of the excluded segment as part of human community. This leads to hatred and alienation between rival groups. The dominant group excludes the other and treats them as inferior.

Every human being has some basic natural rights. But if a person is excluded from the moral community then this basic principle is forgotten and fundamental human rights are denied just in terms of exclusion. Inhuman behavior towards the oppressed group will be justified morally by the dominant/oppressor group. There are different criteria of this moral exclusion, but the consequences of exclusion, to a great extent, are the same all over the world. This study of the dynamics of oppression vs. resistance will be clearer as we proceed to analyze the various dimensions of resistance.

3.4. The Biological Dimension of Resistance

The term ‘resistance’ is used in different disciplines in different senses. The original concept it refers to is the function of the immune system in human body. The immune system, i.e., the body’s defence system
refers to a set of molecules, cells and organs concerted to protect an individual from both external invaders and its own infected internal cells. For example, skin resists infections in our body. Tears and other mucus secretions act to wash away many potential invaders and contain elements which kill microbes. Another important immunity system of the body can be seen in type 2 diabetes patients. In them, especially kids, the pancreas is still producing insulin, but the body does not allow insulin to do its job and hence it becomes difficult for glucose to get into the cells. This is called insulin resistance. In this case, the immunity is negative as it prevents the function of a component namely insulin that is vital for body. Thus, in biological terms, resistance is the power of body exercised against microbes and other disease causing germs. Apart from this physiological meaning of the term, ‘resistance’ assumes broader and more complex dimensions in terms of man’s collective coexistence in a given geo-cultural environment.

It is a truism that various modes and mechanisms of survival equip both human and non-human beings alike, and naturally the fittest will survive. But the defence mechanism of animals against adverse conditions is different from that of human beings. In animals, resistance is only a spontaneous mechanical reaction to physical torture of any kind. It is largely a part of their unconscious instinctive behaviour. This can be shown with reference to the example of animal domestication. We are used to tying up or caging animals like cattle, sheep and dogs, but they never show any
visible concerted effort to challenge the human ways of torturing designed to effect domestication. In the beginning, they express a kind of physical resistance but gradually get used to the taming through oppression and coercion. Even when they get freed they do not show any visible desire to go back to their natural/native environment. It is clear that the surrender is not because of their physical limitations, as in many cases they are stronger than human beings, but because of a lack of awareness about the need to resist oppression. Hence on the non-human level, mostly any conscious and collective effort to resist oppression is found lacking.

Higher rationality like other cognitive faculties is limited to the human species. So it is not a matter of surprise that the resistance of non-human animals is nothing more than a sudden physical reaction due to the reluctance to adapt to a new environment. Hence, instances of existential resistance, both individual and collective, are unique to human history because resistance assumes a measurable and visible range only in the conscious feeling of an individual, and only human beings are seemingly capable of being conscious of such a range and intensity of oppression. So it is pertinent to consider resistance in its clearly designed and directed form as a human prerogative and trait. Unlike non-human species, humans are capable of redirecting the conscious urge to resist with the aid of collective formations widely termed movements. Such resistance movements enable
human protestors to carry out resistance in a planned manner towards final victory or defeat.

3.5. The Psychological Dimension of Resistance

The unique expression of resistance motive in the human species makes it necessary to analyze the psychological basis of resistance and to see what reaction an oppressive machinery/system/act produces upon those who are on the receiving end? Psychological factors of resistance motivation act both positively and negatively. Positively human beings share the conscious urge to protest and resist acts and situations of oppression. Hence it is quite natural for humans to dissent a life of imposed despondency and further to move against the forces that create the miseries. Psychologists argue that attitudes play a central role in the interpersonal and intrapersonal relations. It is true that the attitude of an individual influences the behaviour of that person, and these attitudes are acquired mainly through social life.

There is a negative psychological dimension of this urge to resist. For Richard T. Lapiere, a prominent social psychologist, people’s attitudes are not always reflected in their overt behaviour (Baron and Byrne 26). ‘Situational constraints’ prevent them from expressing their attitudes in a natural way. Hence, behavioural reactions are sometimes inconsistent with the inherent basic attitude of a person. Psychologists also point out that the
intensity, importance, knowledge and accessibility of attitudes make their impact on behaviour (Baron et al. 129). For instance, if the individual’s attitude to the object/issue is not strong, the behavioural impact will also be the same. If he/she does not give importance to the object/issue or if the individual has less or no knowledge of the issue, then it will reflect in the behaviour of the person concerned. So the greater the interest the stronger is the impact of the attitude towards the issue and consequently the chances of resisting will become more pronounced.

Thus conditions may occur in which material factors motivate the affected people to resist the oppressors, but the non-material factors like attitudes and tendencies do not always permit the actualization of resistance. The fear of authority, cultural inhibitions, gender inequality and such other non-material factors may repress the urge to resist and prompt the affected from expressing the spontaneous attitude. In some cases, the affected people are forced to migrate from their native land. Migration is a kind of the redirection of resistance. They want to escape from the situation of oppression in order to evade the actual demonstration of their attitudes.

3.6. The Cultural Dimension of Resistance

There is always a natural environment which primarily moulds and determines the character and culture of a person in a community. In the case of human communities, culture is a determining factor in shaping the nature
and dynamics of resistance. So natural environment and cultural factors are linked inseparably in defining the nature and scope of resistance. Cultural traits such as ritualistic practices, mores, rules of marriage and family and other related customs develop under the influence of ecological factors including the geographical, climatic and the like. For instance, cultural practices of people in a seashore area are different from that of people in a desert area. The beliefs and myths of the people in the seashore areas are normally related to the sea. The seashore communities by and large develop customs of worship treating the sea as the goddess while a forest tribe may worship trees and hills as deities. The nature and scope of resistance is determined not only by the material conditions of life but also by the cultural elements as noted here.

We shall come to an elaborate discussion on the resistance phenomena among such indigenous communities later in this work. Here it will be sufficient to state that the worship patterns adopted by ‘ecological ethnicities’ are indeed linked with their means of livelihood. Hence when the primary object of worship, may it be the sea or a totem tree/animal, is insulted or injured there will be spontaneous efforts to resist the oppression. Though this is seemingly the resistance to the violence towards their object of worship it is also (ultimately) the struggle to protect their means of subsistence and livelihood. This substantiates our conclusion that ecological
and cultural factors are inseparably related in determining the resistance efforts of a community.

We have mentioned that the conscious sense of resistance is a unique phenomenon of humankind. The cultural factors may encourage/discourage the manifestations of resistance. Cultural inhibitions in many cases repress the manifestation of resistance. But there are also cultural factors that may add fuel to the fire of resistance. So it is necessary here to analyze how cultural factors determine the natural possibilities of resistance efforts to be repressed or expressed.

Religious beliefs and practices generally play a significant role as repressive factors of resistance. We know that religious beliefs and systems are the constituents of a culture, and in many cases culture is explained in terms of religion. Bikhu Parekh writes, “Culture and religion influence each other at various levels. Religion shapes a culture’s system of beliefs and practices… Although no culture can be exclusively based on religion, it can be shaped by it in different ways and degrees. Some cultures are primarily derived from and heavily dependent on religion, in others religion is only one source of influence” (147).

How does religion become the demotivating factor in resistance efforts? In Indian religious tradition, for example, fatalism is an important doctrine which states that all events are controlled by fate and humans have
no role in it. Fatalists believe that human beings cannot control whatever events occur, nor their good or bad and right or wrong. Thus the acts of oppression and exploitation are also left to the will of God and the causes of resistance are therefore divinely ordered; so humans have nothing to do with that nor there is the choice to resist.

Like other ideologies such as communism and nationalism, religion is also an ideology that confers identity upon each individual. So, religious beliefs and practices have positive and negative impact on group life. Individual identity may lead to inter group conflicts. A group/community is moulded with a social psyche or social consciousness which decides and defines the expression or repression of individual feelings. Religion is indeed, a powerful component of this social psyche and hence it is very often conceived as synonymous with culture or at least as a crucial part of it.

The inertia of some or many individuals in a group that prevents them from resisting oppression is very often a product of ‘religionisation of culture’. Not only the fear of God but also the faith in immutable fate has been a remarkable repressive force that prevents the empirical expressions of the psychological drive to resist. In many communities, fear of oppression that represses the urge to resist is very often strengthened with the sense of helplessness emerging from a fatalist outlook. In many
traditional kingdoms and empires, the ruler has been depicted as the Ambassador of God on Earth, and this induced fear in the oppressed masses that could not imagine resisting royal power that they thought would be tantamount to opposing God. In spite of the miseries of oppression, a church-goer may fear the divine wrath and hence abstain from resisting the evils of royal power.

Before concluding this chapter it is necessary to specify certain conditions which often cause the non-manifestation of resistance even in situations of blatant oppression.

3.7. Non-manifestation of Resistance

Oppression/exploitation always and in all cases does not lead to resistance on the part of the oppressed. It is human to feel and realize a spirit of resistance, but this psychological condition is not always translated into actual expressions of resistance. We have seen that resistance is circumscribed in space and time, and sometimes in particular places and situations people are unable/reluctant to resist oppression. The political, economic, or cultural factors independently or jointly become barriers to resistance. There are many hindrances which prevent or drive away the affected people from resistance efforts. It may be the fear of political authority or divine punishment.
The power structure of oppressive system is, in many cases, so rigid and strong that its presence in culture is most often taken for granted, most/some of the partakers of the culture by habit internalizes what the dominant part of the power schism declares to be right. This can be explained with respect to the feminist problematic of ‘unvalued and unpaid domestic labour’ performed by ‘housewives’. In traditional communities, as those existing in Indian condition, this is a very common term that refers to a wife not doing any paid job outside but attending the domestic chores like cooking and washing not only for oneself but for others in the family also. Normally a housewife is supposed to be a jobless woman, but in fact she is devoted to a full time job, i.e. the household ‘duties’. The job of a housewife is taken as ignorable and/or obligatory. Whatever it is, she earns nothing for this job except the enduring strain and fatigue from this work. So she is the ‘wife’ not only to her husband - which involves a biological and psychological bond - but also a wife to the whole family.

The term ‘housewife’ is derogatory because on the one hand it equates the term ‘wife’ with ‘servant’ and on the other hand it implies that the domestic labour of a woman is as obligatory as that of the wife. Anyway, a majority of unfortunate wives in a country like India remains the silent victims of this customary practice being internalized by habit. Such women in effect fail or forget to resist their plight just because they are unaware of the fact that the concepts like the ‘dharma of a housewife’ are in
fact constructed and created in an androcentric cultural milieu, that serves
the interests of the dominant male. There are Śāstrās that prescribe the
codes of justification, and every act of domination is supported with such
codes constructed and construed in favour of the dominators.

3.8. Summary of the Study

Resistance is ubiquitous in human group life, yet its
multidimensional nature has not been studied in toto because different
disciplines took different aspects of the phenomenon without integrating
them. Scientists, economists, politicians and sociologists conceptualize
resistance from different angles, but the integrating function is not fulfilled.
In order to carry out this integration function we need to make use of
philosophical analysis.

When we analyze the various dimensions of resistance like the
biological, psychological and cultural, it is clear that the basic urge to resist
is a biological trait rather than a mere human prerogative. The immediate
motive of resistance is the instinctive feeling of dislike and disapproval
caused by factors that hinder and threaten the life of both human and non-
human beings. But the transition of resistance motive from the individual to
collective level is uniquely evolved in human species. Human beings design
systems and devices with definite purpose to carry out resistance which on
the collective level takes the form of a movement. Hence on the human
level, resistance becomes organized and teleological. This is the background in which we consider the causes, nature and characteristics of various resistance movements on various levels emerging in the neo-colonial context in order to delineate the changing ideological perspectives and political practices that define resistance efforts in the present day world.

NOTES

1. Speculation of cultural imperialism emerged in the post-World War II period under various names like ‘neo-colonialism,’ ‘soft imperialism,’ and ‘economic imperialism’. Over the years, it has gained numerous other labels such as ‘media imperialism,’ ‘structural imperialism,’ ‘cultural dependency and synchronization,’ ‘electronic colonialism,’ ‘ideological imperialism,’ and ‘communication imperialism’.