INTRODUCTION

Cultural Studies requires extensive exploration and integration of the data from various disciplines like social sciences and ethics, and this necessity of cross-field integration invites philosophical analysis and synthesis of the facts and findings scattered in and around them. The psycho-social fact of the formation of a culture for rationalizing and legitimizing the terms and conditions of ‘social contract’ is paralleled by the empirical fact of the co-existence of different cultures. This is the context in which CR becomes a relevant theme of study which we intend to carry out here with a view to expose its strength and weakness in the emerging political scenario. Things have been changing fast in the post-colonial era, and the changes are too complicated and strange to permit a systematic analysis. If we consider ‘globalization’ as the proper term to designate the whole dynamics of the ongoing changes, then we are far away from the true-life story because the process of cultural unification is not as spontaneous and voluntary as cultural formation. Amalgamation of cultures necessarily involves the dissolution and disappearance of small cultures under the domination of a super-culture. This is analogous to the extinction of small industries under the pressure of large industries and very often the two processes, both cultural and economic, take place simultaneously. Hence globalization is not always an index of the ascending course of human life as we can see along with it the emergence of resistance
movements fighting the invasive expansion of technocentric culture and industrial civilization.

Resistance becomes a core theme of this work as it is inseparable from the ongoing cultural changes around us. The scenario is clearly marked by the dialectical process of cultural assimilation/amalgamation producing its antithesis namely resistance to the power mechanisms of cultural imperialism. Globalism is the widely acknowledged academic term for explaining the changes, but localism, as the trend of resisting it, cannot be ignored. If cultural imperialism is the characteristic expression of technological development then the question of cultural autonomy becomes significant as an ethical reference point. Hence this work aims at the philosophical assessment of the potentials of CR within the cultural and political space being occupied by mrms in this fast changing world.

Both culture and resistance are perceived as the species distinction of Homo sapiens, of course without ignoring the role of the necessary natural environment that gives rise to and moulds human life. Theoretical analysis of the different ways of conceptualizing culture and resistance is indeed essential to this work. Anyway, this will be carried out by keeping in focus the philosophy-praxis correlation as both the concepts are analyzed in their operative contexts; that is by taking the political and ethical consequences of cultural pluralism into account on the one hand and the problems and
challenges that the resistance movements emerging at micro levels pose and face in the current globalizing scenario. To put it briefly, the thematic focus of this work is not culture but cultures with emphasis on a relativistic stance (CR) and resistance in its localized expressions (mrms). The prospective concern is to propound the points of linkage between the two.

Generally, relativism is defined as the viewpoint that recognizes all the different components of a set representing the outcomes and expressions of human interaction and interdependence as equally valid. This extensive scope of relativism permits its application in various areas like epistemology, ethics and Cultural Studies. In this work, the main concern is CR which in simple terms is the position that holds every culture to be valid in its own capacity. The truth and rationality of a culture is relative to/dependent upon that particular society which upholds it. There are positive and negative responses to this definition of CR, and attempt will be made in relevant contexts of this work to analyze the precise implications of such responses.

One important question that has been raised by skeptics and critics concerned with the validity of CR is - Doesn’t CR provide an opportunity to justify extremist violence and ‘religious’ terrorism? We hope that our study of relativism proper and CR will enable us to scan the various aspects of
such a justification in order to see if CR provides any rationale for the emerging forms of extremism and terrorism.

Resistance has been popularly and conventionally viewed as a political concept. The term has been associated with various types of struggles against the ruling machinery and/or the dominant class. Yet, a keener analysis is required to explore the different dimensions and aspects of resistance beyond and other than the political. As a part of this enquiry, it is also intended to examine what is essentially universal about the human urge to resist.

There is an observable paradigm shift that characterizes the evolution of resistance movements from colonial to postcolonial era. Today we can find all around us a flourish of localized resistance movements emerging in various parts of the world. They are replacing the Mrms that had dominated the political scene in the era of colonialism. This shift of resistance movements from macro to micro level indicates the dialectics of global vs. local in imposing and resisting power. The changes that cause such a shift as also the changes that are caused by it certainly form an underlying theme of this study.

**Methodology of the Work**

As already mentioned, the analyses in this work are carried out in the contexts of philosophy-praxis correlation. Hence, the methodology in this
work necessarily incorporates the theoretical and critical functions of philosophy. This is to be achieved by adopting various methods and techniques for eliciting, analyzing and synthesizing data from various sources.

The critical method adopted in this work targets mainly the popular notions of relativism in general and CR in particular. It further leads to the constructive task of postulating the precise implications and connotations of CR. In the critical analysis, I have tried to use the postmodernist tools like the deconstruction of binaries and schisms that support the power structure behind the operations of modernity and consequently provoke many of the localized protests.

Analytic method has been of much use in this study especially in the case of the conceptualization of ideology in political philosophy. This has been carried out with the purpose of delineating the ideological bases of mrms. I have adopted the method of comparative analysis for the study of cultural pluralism, multiculturalism and CR proper.

It has already been acknowledged that integration of the facts and findings in various disciplines comprising Cultural Studies is essential to this work, and hence the synthetic potential of philosophical method has been utilized as and when required by taking into account the relevant data from biology, psychology and social sciences. I have tried to take advantage
of this in the analysis of the phenomena of morality, culture and resistance as they become manifest on the collective level.

It is true that hypothetico-deductive method is not essential to the treatment of philosophical theories. But in this work, it has become quite necessary to consider actual instances especially in the study of mrms. Hence I have tried to take expeditiously the benefit of the complementary use of inductive and deductive methods. This has given an added advantage in the assessment of the rationale of mrms that forms a crucial component of this work.

With the intention of applying the aforementioned methods effectively, I have sought relevant data from books, journals and electronic sources. In addition to this, I had the opportunity to interact with some resource persons in the field of environmental studies and some activists associated with alternative resistance movements. I have also sought the valuable advice of experts as and when required in the contexts of delineating the scientific explanation of philosophical concepts. These face to face discussions have helped me to get some doubts clarified and some of my findings authenticated. A list of these resourceful personalities is given separately.
In preparing and formatting the text and bibliography of this work, I have adopted the MLA style prescribed in the seventh edition of MLA Handbook as far as possible.

**Structure of the Work**

In this dissertation, I have tried to maintain the order of transition as far as possible from section to section and from chapter to chapter. Each chapter begins with an introduction to the studies to follow and ends with a summary of the observations followed by the endnotes to the chapter.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, there are five chapters. In the first chapter, the main purpose is to demonstrate the exact meaning of the term ‘Relativism’. In order to analyze this, we have to study the correlation of relativism with absolutism and subjectivism. The key question raised in this chapter is whether any philosophical position/system is absolutely absolutistic or absolutely relativistic? For analyzing this question, we have taken into consideration the concept of Absolute in Sankara and Hegel and the prominent relativistic positions in western and Indian systems.

The second chapter, in continuation with the findings in the first, deals with the philosophical dimension of CR. The intention is to treat CR as a philosophical/ethical position rather than as a sociological or anthropological phenomenon. So the study involves an attempt to
distinguish CR from cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. In order to explicate the proper implications and significance of CR, it will be studied in relation to ER by exposing the points of correlation between the cultural and moral domains of human group life.

The third chapter gives a conceptual clarification of the term resistance and analyzes different dimensions of it. This chapter also presents a detailed account of how resistance manifests as the antithesis of oppression. The study is continued into the fourth chapter with special focus on resistance movements both at macro and micro levels. The inductive study of various mrms emerging in different parts of the world will help us to summarize the common characteristics of mrms and will give us a better access to the dynamics of resistance at the micro levels of culture. In this chapter, it is intended to analyze a few instances of mrms in order to bring out the conflict between identity politics and development politics.

The fifth chapter examines the nature and limits of ideology in the case of mrms. For this, we intend to take the Marxian concept of ideology as a paradigm. Another important concern of this chapter is the correlation between ideology and hegemony as propounded by prominent New Left thinkers. It is expected that the outcome of this study will enable us to discover the ideological dimensions of mrms.
In setting the direction and orientation of this work, the central issues to be considered are -

i) What is the nature of the semantic confusion in understanding relativism as viewed differently in different contexts and systems of thought in the long history of philosophy?

ii) What is the range and scope of contrasting relativism with absolutism and subjectivism as philosophical positions?

iii) What is precisely universal and relative in the spheres of culture and morality in terms of their analytic complementarity?

iv) What are the interconnected factors that give rise to resistance as a reaction to oppression on the collective levels of human life?

v) Why does a paradigm shift occur in resistance movements from macro to micro level? and

vi) Does this paradigm shift imply any ideological shift that determines a change in political behaviour?

These questions together with their contextual supplementaries, we hope, will enable us to delineate the axiological potentials of CR which generate the philosophical arguments and ethical mindset for recognizing the natural autonomy of each one of the cultures that forms human civilization. This will help us further to work out the modalities of CR-mrms correlation.