

**Resistance to Neocolonialism in Nuruddin Farah's *Close Sesame***

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**Abstract**

*The present research article endeavours to explore neocolonialism and resistance to it in the post-independent Somali society as reflected in Nuruddin Farah's novel, Close Sesame. Most of the colonised nations achieved only political independence and not complete independence in all respects. The roots of neocolonialism are found in the process of decolonisation and globalisation. The former colonisers and richer countries try to dominate and oppress resources of weaker and poorer sovereign nations and territories. The resources of formerly colonised, developing and poor countries are still controlled and exploited by the former colonial powers and rich and powerful countries in the world. They use various subtle strategies to achieve their aims and justify their ill motives every time. They always make these sovereign countries depend on them for everything these nations need.*

**Key words:** neocolonialism, globalisation, domination, exploitation, resistance

The term neocolonialism is very closely connected with the terms like imperialism, colonialism, decolonisation and globalisation which are discussed in this chapter. The process of neocolonisation has its seeds in the process of political decolonisation and it started immediately after the independence of colonies. Like colonialism, neocolonialism is also an outcome of imperialism and growing capitalism in the form of globalisation. The practice of neocolonialism has more negative impacts on the developing and poor nations in the world

than positive ones. It creates serious threats to social, political and economic development of such nations and their citizens. Such nations are always forced to be dependent rich and developed nations especially either on countries in Europe or on the United States of America for financial support and political guidance. Both the internal as well external elements are considered responsible for it.

The policy and practice of neocolonialism includes various factors like imperial tendency of rich and powerful countries, dependence on foreign aid, interference of external elements, role of international organisations, military coups, puppet regimes, and corrupt native leaders, suppression of democratic values, growing capitalism and globalization. Several developing countries and territories are grappling with the negative effects of neocolonialism. Like colonialism, it hinders political, social and economic progress and development of the affected nations. It also affects other important areas of societies in these countries.

*Close Sesame* is the last novel in Nuruddin Farah's first trilogy, *Variation on the Theme of an African Dictatorship*. Like the first two novels in the trilogy, this novel also deals with resistance to neocolonialism in post-colonial Somalia. The story of the novel revolves around a revolutionary elderly man, Deeriye, who has been the leader of his clan. He was appointed as the leader of the clan in place of his father at the very young age of twenty two due to his father's death. The story moves back and forth in the colonial past and the neocolonial present of Somalia.

Insane people are also forced to praise the General. One day, the dictator speaks to the assembly of madmen and madwomen for two hours long. They listen to him very attentively and he was pleased with himself. When he finishes, the director of the institution orders them to sing the praise-names of their beloved General. Khalif, the madman rightly explains who are mad people: "Now who is mad? Down with those who kill, who humiliate and torture! Down with those who make use of unjustified methods of rule" (Farah 21)

Deeriye never uses any violent methods to counter the colonialism or dictatorship in the postcolonial period. He always believes in peaceful ways of resistance. Now his son, Mursal seems to be involved in use of violent to oppose the tyrannical regime of the dictator. Deeriye

asks Mursal about their hidden strategy of resistance to the brutal dictator. Mursal knows his father very well and rejects his own intention of use of violent means and says: “I am thinking . . . , intellectual thoughts. It is possible that Mahad, is thinking similar thoughts. But merely intellectual thoughts. No violence is being meditated. No at the moment’ (Farah 28).

Deeriye remembers that he has spent more than twelve years various political detention centres, eight of these in colonial prisons, four in post-independence jails. The first detention was when he was twenty-two and the year was 1934. The last detention was only a couple of years ago. He had been released just in time to bid farewell to his dying Nadifa. He remembers his twelve years in dark caves, in subhuman conditions, in humiliation, chained like a beast.

Farah depicts colonial consciousness in the novel through the character of Deeriye who is a strong-minded and principled leader of his clan. He shows how the Italian colonisers used violent and cruel methods against the native Somali people to maintain their control. Deeriye says to the senior Italian officer: “. . . I take it that the land has been pacified for years now, what with the massacres- human and cattle- what with the pacification methods employed by the Second Governor General, ten to fifteen years ago . . . you know his name- de Vecchi” (Farah 38).

Depiction of colonial consciousness is one of the main features of this trilogy. It is clearly visible in the first novels as well as in this last part of the trilogy. Farah shows the inhuman nature of the colonisers and brutal methods of used by them ironically to establish peace in the colonised territories, through the conversation between Deeriye and an Italian officer.

The local neocolonial government uses and also exploits tribal allegiances in the country for dividing the people and maintain their dominance over people to continue ruling them. Farah shows that the elders like Sheikh Ibrahim giving preference to tribal allegiances whereas youths like Mursal and Mukhtaar show commitment only to national cause. All the major characters, representing the younger generation, want to forget such small differences among themselves and want to fight for the nation. Rooble tells Deeriye about the fight between Mukhtaar his father: “We tied Sheikh Ibrahim with a rope as though he were mad which he

was, if you ask me. It is my feeling that the father may kill the son, if the son chooses to humiliate his authority in public” (Farah 49).

Cigaal’s grandson’s hitting Deeriye on his forehead with a stone is very symbolic. Use of violence for political reasons is against the sacred doctrines of Islam religion and Deeriye, being a very devoted follower of religious doctrines and an active activist of anti-colonial movement, always used non-violent means to protest against the oppressive colonial administration and neocolonial government. However, now at an old age, the thoughts of using violence to remove the tyrannical president of the country come to his mind which is devilish and he is afraid of such thoughts.

Neocolonisers always try to maintain their control and dominance on the mass media content of a weak and developing nation. Farah unravels how foreign media, especially western media maintains domination in collaboration with the local elites in Somalia. The media content is designed as per the motives of the foreign powers and instructions of local elites to make it convenient for them. Deeriye explains his son Mursal the functioning of neocolonial media. The intellectuals like Deeriye and Mursal immediately identify that misinformation are communicated to the people of Somalia through the media. They wisely choose right source of information, however common people fall prey to it, because they do not have choice and access to any other trustworthy source of information.

Farah shows that common masses do not get access to authentic information. They are always provided with wrong information and rumours are spread deliberately to confuse the people. The masses are intentionally kept away from the appropriate and accurate information so that to make it easy to rule them. Deeriye reveals that the government manipulates the information. He depicts that people who participate in revolutionary movement should be devoted to the principles of the movement to succeed in the task. It is seen through the characters like Mursal and friends strictly following rules of the revolutionary group. He points out that the young, educated, dynamic and brave revolutionary citizens like Mursal and others are the hope of the miserable nation.

The aged character of Deeriye reveals various aspects of colonialism in Somalia and in Africa and how colonialism gave birth to neocolonialism. The colonisers impose various methods to pacify the resistance of the natives to the colonial exploitation. They use different tactics to maintain their dominance over the natives. They use non-violent methods like seeking collaboration of the local leaders or local administrators. They use violent methods if the locals do not surrender to them or do not cooperate with them in their own exploitation. In Africa, the colonisers used these methods to exploit natural and human resource for their own benefit. Initially, they sought cooperation from tribal chieftains by bribing them with stipends and later on, they created an elite class and ruled through them. They justified their rule and exploitation of the foreign territories by giving inappropriate justifications to the locals. Deeriye's meditation on the policies and methods of the colonisers and neocolonisers reveals hypocrisy of the so called civilised European imperial nations.

Common masses and different kinds of minority people are always voiceless. Their voice is never heard. The intellectuals of all types in society especially like scholars, thinkers, journalists and literary writers should always empower the voiceless to raise voice about their own issues. They should take cognizance of suffering, misery and problems of common masses and should become agents of suppressed voices of excluded and oppressed citizens in the society. The intellectuals should become grass root level activists to fully understand the problems and suffering of common masses. They must fight at local, national as well as international level against all types of injustices and oppression.

The novel deals with opposition to the tyrannical head of the nation in Somalia. The story moves back and forth in the colonial past and the post-colonial present in the political history of Somalia. Farah directly accuses the local political leaders and the colonisers as well as the neocolonial powers for the miserable condition of the nation and the people in Africa both in the colonial as well as in the neocolonial period. He points out the failure of underground movements of resistance run by only a few elites. It is suggested that there should be mass movements of resistance wherein people should forget their narrow regional

identities and should participate in such movements to save their nation and then only there can be pressure on the government and change can be brought about.

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