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Eman as Nietzsche's Superman in Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*

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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled "Eman as Nietzsche's Superman in Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*" Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Ranju Pandey has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The present paper analyzes an African drama entitled The Strong Breed authored by prominent African dramatist, Wole Soyinka. It argues that Soyinka's protagonist, Eman embodies Nietzschean concept of 'will to power' in order to challenge the contradictions and hypocrisy prevalent in the post-independent Nigerian society. It further explores how Soyinka frames his central character as a tragic optimist who fights constantly in the face of harsh circumstances and brings about a change in Nigerian cultural system. Soyinka has been widely celebrated as a postcolonial writer for his works deal with the issue of colonialism and the struggles of colonized for the preservation of their cultural identity. However, there has not been much inquiry between Nietzschean philosophy and its influence in Soyinka's progressive characterization. The drama presents the conflict between the new generation, as represented by Eman and the old generation as represented by Oroge and Jaguna. With modern values, knowledge and lifestyle, Eman displays passionate willingness and determination to claim his freedom and opposes anything imposed from outside. In doing so, he becomes an agent for change in the traditional fabric of Nigerian culture. In order to consolidate the argument, the researcher borrows the theoretical insights from Nietzsche's idea of 'will to power' followed by Michel Foucault's theory of resistance. In the philosophical language of Nietzsche, Soyinka frames Eman as a superman who has a will to influence the lives of other and stands able to affect others thoughts, minds and values of men. The research concludes with the findings that the African postcolonial literature has an influence from western aesthetics and philosophy.

Key Word: Will to power, tragic optimism, resistance, transformation

The paper attempts to analyze the African drama, *The Strong Breed* (1973) authored by one of the leading postcolonial African dramatists, Wole Soyinka (1934). The researcher argues that Soyinka's central protagonist in the text under study embodies Nietzschean concept of 'will to power' that portrays him as a superman. It further explores how Soyinka's progressive characterization displays the characteristics of what Nietzsche defines as a superman, a new form of humanity. The researcher particularly investigates the characterization of the central protagonist, Eman and establishes him as an African version of Nietzschean superman. Nietzschean superman fights the odds, defies any imposition of external values, commits to his/her individual liberation and subjectivity and influences the lives of others along the way. Eman's journey throughout the drama reflects similar pattern of thoughts, behaviors and actions.

Produced in the aftermath of post-colonial period, *The Strong Breed* slightly departs itself from the conventional theme of postcolonial literature. While the conventional character of the postcolonial literary works mostly focused on the conflict between the colonizers and colonized followed by the latter's struggle for the preservation of its pre-colonial cultural identity, the text under study tends to have a self-critical observation into the prevalent wrong aspect of Nigerian culture. Soyinka employs Eman as an agent of new generation whose modern thoughts, behaviors and lifestyle driven by will to power confronts the evil aspect of the culture and society. Eman's constant refusal to subscribe to the imposed practice of being a carrier at the cost of his individual freedom, his protest against the hypocrisy of the religious person and his efforts to defend the life of an orphan by confronting brutal practice of scapegoating corresponds to the character of Nietzschean superman. It further shows Soyinka's implication of western philosophy into his literary works in order to

strengthen his message for modernizing the native culture, lifestyle and wellbeing of Nigerian society.

The Strong Breed is the story of a young man, Eman, who is saddled with the ancestral and messianic responsibility of a carrier/savior in a spiritually distressed community on the brink of change. The ritual involves the willing or forceful submission of self to a macabre of ritual sacrifice as a carrier of the evils of the community on the eve of a new year: “The most important feature of the festival is the ritual act of a character called the carrier, a man who is made the purification sacrificial lamb” (Ogunba 103). The annual ritual is to guarantee good transition from the old year into a new one. Thus, the carrier serves as a receptacle of all the ills the community would like to do away with the out-going year. The community, traditionally, favours the use of strangers for the ritual sacrifice. The tragedy in the play emerges as a result of Eman’s refusal or unwillingness, as a stranger, to perform the role of a carrier for his host community and the failure of the community leadership to acknowledge the growing social contradictions precipitating change in its social functions and responsibilities.

In the text under consideration, Wole Soyinka presents cultural frames that show how power is legitimated in some traditional societies. The text portrays that religion and custom facilitate the curtailment and abuse of the rights of the weak, particularly the minority, referred to as ‘strangers’ in the text. Soyinka invents a character of young generation through whom he challenges inhuman and brutal aspect of the festival from the vantage point of modern values namely social law, individual freedom and justice as L.A Johnson reviews that the play “examines maladaptive responses that come in the urge to be well”(365). Here, Johnson reviews that the play under study shows Soyinka’s critique upon the ugly sides of Nigerian tradition and

culture. Likewise, he suggests for the due reformation for the refinement of the culture and tradition.

As it has been customized in his community, the protagonist named Eman identifies to a selected category called 'strong breed'. As per the ritual narrative of his community, the members belonging to this category fulfill the role of carrier/savior to sacrifice themselves for the health and prosperity of the community. It is their deep faith that the community gets cleansed from the ills and evils of the old year and bestows the New Year with new spirit and goodness. It deeply dominates the religious significance in Yoruba community. They place faith upon the restoration of peace, prosperity and cosmic union among the living ones and dead ones through the ritual act of sacrificing human subject. The ritual is thoroughly followed and practiced for the successful restoration of the cosmic union. The custom compels that the generations of strong breed should be willing to become the carrier of the evils and make a selfless sacrifice for the common cause of the communities.

Wole Soyinka has been widely celebrated as the frontier of African postcolonial Literature. His works have been reviewed and critiqued from the ideological perspectives of Postcolonialism. However, there has hardly been any inquiry upon the influence of western aesthetics and philosophy in his postcolonial literary production. The researcher fills up the gap by analyzing Soyinka's central protagonist from the philosophical perspective of Nietzschean 'will to power'. After reading the drama, four questions strike my mind: why does Eman refuse his traditional role as a carrier who should sacrifice his life to carry the dead member of the community to the world of forefathers? Why does he oppose to comply with the cultural role assigned to him but run away from the society? Why does he become ready to sacrifice himself in order to save an orphan, Ifada? How does he resist the

cultural boundaries imposed upon him? A quest for answers to these questions merits a meticulous discussion in subsequent paragraphs.

Religion has remained the central part of African culture and social formation. Hence, African literature generally deals with the religious dimension of the African society. Like most of African creative writers, Soyinka meticulously paints his plays in the backdrop of African religious and cultural phenomenon. The text under study stands no exception. It reflects a literary representation of the Yoruba cultures, an African community from western Nigeria. Yorubas of the western Nigeria are very religious and cultural people because they worship different natural entities as their deities. Culture and religion are mutual entities in the Yoruba understanding of life.

Yorubas, like most West African societies, observe various cultural and religious ceremonies such as marriage, funerals, naming ceremony and community festivals followed by traditional music, songs, and dance. These festivals and ceremonies are deeply rooted in the religious domain as cultural critic, Oladele Taiwo observes, “Many Yoruba religious ceremonies are associated with an *Orisa*, an anthropomorphic deity, such as Sango the god of lightening, Ogun the god of iron, Obatala or any of the better-known gods” (36). In the light of this cultural observation, it is clear that Yorubas cultural and community festivals and ceremonies are tied to the essence of their religious life. The Yorubas believe that these gods influence the role and destiny of mortals and also perform certain roles and functions that ensure social cohesion. Soyinka draws extensively from the Yoruba cultural world view as well as from other sources like the Western philosophical and literary traditions. One of these community festivals deals with the practice of purifying the community from all the evils and ills through the means of human sacrifice.

After being independent from the colonial rule, post-colonial African writings

exclusively began to document the cultural trauma, sufferings and pains of cultural encroachment from the colonial culture. Many of postcolonial African literary figures represented the binary between the colonized and colonizer while defending and glorifying African cultural values, practices and traditions, which the colonial rulers always undermined as primitive, barbaric and uncivilized. In an aim to criticizing how colonial period assaulted African cultural fabric and the constant struggle of the native Africans for the preservation of their cultural identity, classical African writers became singularly obsessed in idealizing the history of traditional and communal rituals without any consideration into the possible drawbacks in those cultural customs. According to Robin Horton, the traditional African mode of thought was “closed” because it was typified by “the absence of vision of alternatives”, and Africans were “unreflective” in their thinking (154). As Soyinka himself criticized them saying that colonialist African writer has an unhealthy habit “to turn his eyes backwards in time and prospect in archaic fields for forgotten gems which would dazzle and distract the present. But never inwards, never truly into the present, never into the obvious symptoms of the niggling, warning, predictable present, from which alone lay the salvation of ideals” (Art 18). Unlike such an obsession with local problems, Soyinka marked a point of departure to expand the scope of Africa writing by bringing the universal issues.

Soyinka’s literary writings modernized the African literature by broadening its themes into the universal issues such as justice, humanity, social law and individual freedom and another architect of African literature history, Chinua Achebe observes that the critics praise Soyinka “for not writing about an African problem but a universal one... not writing a local but a universal audience” (qtd. in Laurence 12). As suggested by these lines, Soyinka’s literary writings apply political implication of the

literature in evoking and advocating for the social change.

Soyinka belongs to a tradition which recognizes the third-world writer as a promoter of explicit social, political, and moral values crucial to the survival of his or her society. A champion of freedom, dignity, and justice for the majority of his people and yet, Soyinka has reanimated this tradition by resolutely marrying his political activism to the aspiration of his literary craft. He published an essay entitled “The Writer in a Modern African State” (1976), which sparked considerable controversy through its daring political commentary. On the eve of his own three-year prison sentence, Soyinka opened this essay by complaining of the lack of vital relevancy between the literary concerns of writers and the pattern of reality that has overwhelmed even the writers themselves in the majority of modern African states. He concluded the essay with condemning and revealing words:

When the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognize that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post-mortem surgeon... The artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time. It is time for him to respond to this essence of himself. (15-20)

In the light of these revealing lines, Soyinka has permanently disassociated himself from any camp that creates art that lacks direct relevance to the contemporary social realities. His literary motivation largely sounds to be political where he views literature as an instrument to not only record the values, practices and rituals but also responding to the ills and defects that are prevalent in changing atmosphere of post-independent Nigerian society as A. Graham White observes, “Soyinka grapples directly with the social conditions and political events of modern Africa. Soyinka’s

condemnation of cruel and narrow traditional life” (125-26). The play under study shows Soyinka’s commentary on the negative aspect of social life.

Soyinka’s literary motivation as political does not refer to any Nigerian policy-making institution. Rather, the researcher uses it in a broad sense to describe the motivations of men and women struggling to alter or improve the social relationships in their cultural surroundings; contesting the entrenchment of the status quo and asserting the need for appropriate and progressive change. Most of his plays show the treatments and discussions of the interactions between people fighting for radical change and those attempting to preserve the existing system. It is between silenced and disenfranchised majority and the manipulators who oppress these servitors because of their class, beliefs, gender, nationality, religion, or race. Such is the scenario of the post-colonial era when the new set of modern ideals and values increasingly came into clash with the old conventions.

Soyinka realizes the sentiment of post-colonial African society whereas the growing influence of modern thinking and lifestyle and values challenged the conduct of the old practices from the standpoint of human freedom, social law, justice, human rights. For the literary representation of such conflicting atmosphere of Nigerian society in the mid twentieth century, he creates characters dividing those two camps; those young generations defending modern values and those who are deeply rooted in the traditions as Basim Khudhair and Lajiman Bin Janoory identify:

Soyinka highlights the colonial and post-colonial sufferings in Nigerian society. He further portrays post-colonial Africa, where modernity and tradition are in constant. Soyinka creates his characters to challenge themselves in an atmosphere punctuated with the defenders of modernity in one camp and those who are deeply rooted in the traditions and customs on the

other side. (70)

Going by these critical lines, it is safe to claim that Soyinka intimately recognizes the emerging conflict and clash between the old and modernity in the Nigerian society.

As opposed to his predecessors, he rather presents the reality of the Nigerian traditions and customs facing a need for its reformation and social change. Hence, his protagonists are in constant struggle to challenge the status quo for which they adopt modern thinking, behaviors and lifestyle like that of Eman.

As illustrated by the critical reviews above, *The Strong Breed* has been discussed and reviews from the postcolonial perspective. However, it has hardly been studied and reviewed from the perspective of philosophical concept of will to power. No academic attention has been paid to the possibility that Soyinka's literary production embodies the character of Nietzschean character in order to challenge the negative aspect of Nigerian culture. The central protagonist, Eman represents as an agent of modern values as few critics argued above but the demonstration of will to power in his actions and thoughts has remained undiscovered. The researcher borrows philosophical insights from the western aesthetics in order to show Eman's resistance against the ills of the Nigerian society and culture.

However, as an educated intellect, Eman opposes the idea of being sacrificed without one's individual willingness. He demonstrates the character of what Nietzsche calls a superman. Nietzsche coined the concept of 'will to power' which suggests that one must be the master of oneself and seek the ways by which any individual achieves the highest form of satisfaction. The concept further asserts that every individual has an enormous strength to be what he/she wants to be. Nietzsche's concept paved the foundation for the advent of the modernism. His philosophy rose to challenge the established fundamental and traditional conception of morality. His

proclamation “God is dead” (qtd. in Ellmann and Feidelson 905) challenged the deeply rooted religious faith. He found that religion, his target is Christianity in particular, and authoritative governing exercises the rules and rituals as an instrument to satisfy their needs without hearing the individual’s desires and interests.

As an existentialist, he held the opinion that every man and woman is unique animal and isolated individual in the meaningless and hostile world and they are responsible for their own actions and activities. They are free to choose the future way of his life from various choices like Eman chooses to break the forceful tradition of being a carrier. His philosophy of ‘will to power’ shares similarity to the philosophy of existentialism: “Very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood” (Ellmann and Feidelson 803). According to these lines, every individual is, one way or another, strives to be more than himself/herself as Nietzsche opines, “Life is to me instinct for growth, for permanence, for the amassing of force, for power” (qtd. in William 377). The ‘will’ is nothing but our passion, desire and an instinct that seeks for more and more than we are.

Based on his reading on Nietzsche, Fredrick Olafson defines, “To impose upon becoming the character of being-that is supreme will to power” (556). ‘Becoming’ does not refer to the fixity but that everyone is always in the process of becoming throughout the life as found in Soyinka’s leading protagonist, Eman. Here, Nietzsche’s idea of power is not related to political power but “the impulse to dominate one’s environment and extend one’s influence” (Ameen and Ahmed 427). It celebrates the free expansion of one’s impulse without any fear or concern for any morality or religion imposed from outside. Instead, it rather sets its morality by itself “it is will to power itself that sets the moral...there is no law over these forces restraining them” (qtd. in William 377). It is a philosophical doctrine for living an

independent and liberated life. Eman's struggle against the imposed tradition and break away from the established practice which underestimates the individual freedom and right proves his pursuit of selfhood and liberated life. His resistance, inspired by the drive 'will to power', takes on the imposed tradition of the society.

Soyinka represents an increasing influence of modernity in the face of the post-independent South African societies with Eman as its mouthpiece, who demonstrates several ideas and struggles throughout the course of the play: he defies the fundamentalist areas of Nigerian cultural customs but also chooses to sacrifice his own life in the process of his resistance to the wrong tradition. Hence, Soyinka employs Eman as an agent of modernity who promotes the ideology of the playwright himself. He questions some of Nigerian tradition along with social norms and values. He disapproves the ritual of forceful human sacrifice because he looks at it as a force which functions against individual freedom, social law, justice and whole humanity as a whole. Modern conscience as demonstrated by Eman firstly gets triggered when he discovers the hypocrisy and contradictions in the behaviors and attitude of the old generations of his society, which finally leads him on a mission and question the whole procedure in the ritual. Through Eman's questioning and refusal of few traditional practices, Soyinka presents Nigerian society making its way into the process of modernization.

Eman's rebellion against his society and fundamentalist customs originates from his discovery of the double standard in the behavior of the Tutor. At an early age of fourteen, Eman notices contradiction in the actions of the religious Tutor who performs social function of overseeing the circumcision of fourteen year old males as "requirement for initiation into adult life" (137). As per the tradition, the young males are isolated away from the outskirts of the village and are banned from any contacts

with the girls.

However, the most shocking learning for him has been the shady and hypocritical behavior of the Tutor. He and his friends discover that the Tutor harasses the girls by seducing and physically pinching them as Eman's girlfriend, Omae reveals that the old Tutor is busy "by the stream, pinching the girls' bottoms" (138). While Tutor always accuses Eman of breaking taboo by having relation with Omae during the period of isolation and purification, Eman gets shocked to learn Tutor's hypocrisy. It gives Eman a cultural shock. Consequently, he quits the traditional monastery where he is isolated to perform circumcision ritual and wanders away from home in search of new and different form of knowledge that will eventually bring him into the conflict with the traditional calling.

There is the vast difference in the attitude of young generation of people and the old generation of people. In one hand, Tutor's hypocrisy developed Eman's skepticism towards the tradition. On the other hand, it forced him to stay away from his society in the quest of new ideas and knowledge. Eman spent twelve years away from home in the western setting. He got educated under the western educational institution. As a result, his attitude towards his tradition and culture started to break down because he began to critically observe Yoruba tradition and rituals from the perspective of modern principles such as freedom, social justice and law as literary critic, Ifeyinwa Rita Obiengbu observes:

Eman's respect for and submission to traditional religion begins to wane with Eman's discovery of the double standard of the Tutor. Again, as noted above, Eman's exposure to western education and urban life further reduced his commitment to traditional religious practices. This explains the opposition between Old man and Eman, and the one between him and the host

community. (234)

In the light of this critical review, Eman's recognition of defective character in the system of tradition and the influence of modern education from western institution cements a brick of transformation inside Eman's treatment towards his tradition and culture. His new ideas and understandings, which will be discussed in detail in following paragraphs, declare an opposition to ills and evils of the Yoruba culture.

Eman, the representative of young generation dares to cut off the present from that of its past. Yet, his attempt doesn't intend to forget the entire tradition of ritual sacrifice fully but orients towards reforming few aspects that he finds to be extremely conservative and dehumanizing. He struggles to redress the present of the Yoruba society as the advocator of modernity and always longs for social order, social justice and the better life of every people in the society. He actively wants to implement his modern education in the practical life in order to lead the society towards modernity through the means of reformation and positive transformation.

The process of cutting off from the past can be seen in Eman's act of defying his father's instruction. The Old man, his father, represents those traditionalists of his society. As a member of mysterious strong breed, it has been an ancestral responsibility for his generations to fulfill messianic call by voluntarily sacrificing for the collective good of the society. The Old man warns Eman not to abdicate the role as a strong breed so that it doesn't disrupt the social cohesion. To Old man, to become a carrier is a privileged and noble leader who makes annual sacrifices to ensure the well-being of the community as he summarizes, "Other men would rot and die doing this task year after year. It is strong medicine which only we can take. Our blood is so strong like no other. Anything you do in life must be less than this, son"(134). Here, these lines reflect Old man's attachment and valorization of old tradition. However,

Eman, as an intellect educated under western education, rejects Old man's traditional belief by announcing himself as "Totally unfit for your call" (134) for the role. In order to avoid father's imposition of the role, Eman runs away from the society and reaches another community as Ifeyinwa further observes:

Eman's twelve years in self-exile has changed his orientation and attitude to the cultural beliefs of his people. Eman, having acquired Western education, now lacks the spiritual stamina to reconcile the contradictions posed by his society so he escapes again, against the better judgment of his father, to another community where he lives as a reclusive teacher in a western educational setting. (230)

As these lines illustrate, Eman's sense of modernity shows an intense desire for the massive change and newness in the traditional institutions of the society. His departure from the role as a strong breed and denial to participate in forceful ritual sacrifice manifests his desire for reformation that endorses the value of individual freedom and social justice. Eman's strong willingness leads him into the path of resistance. He can notice the brutality of the custom and determines himself to resist against it. The resistance explores new scope of his being, which in the language of Nietzsche, is becoming more than oneself. Here, Nietzsche's will to power drives the superman into the mode of resistance which Michel Foucault describes as a process of rebelling against the unequal and unfair distribution of power relations in the society.

The theoretical concept of resistance emerges as an essential movement for the change by challenging the established values, system, practices and thoughts. The theoretical discussion of the phenomenon of resistance took the form of debate in the social science primarily from post-colonial theory and Foucault. James Scott is credited with the conception of resistance which was further extended in the

theoretical approach by post-colonial theorist and thinkers like Foucault. Establishing the nature of resistance as an act against the domination of high class, Scott characterizes resistance as the subordinate members' denial of the domination of the super class: "resistance is any act(s) by members of a subordinate class that is or are intended either to mitigate or deny claims (for example, rents, taxes, prestige) made on that class by super-ordinate classes (for example, landlords, large farmers, the state) or to advance its own claims (for example, work, land, charity, respect) vis-à-vis those super-ordinate classes" (qtd. in Marta, 56). Here, Scott presents the resistance as the acts of refusal and denial by the subordinate classes for the assertion of their voice, privileges, claims and rights.

Further Analyzing the main argument of James Scott regarding the nature of resistance, Marta Heredia in his review observes:

Resistance is rooted in the daily individual and collective covert acts of opposition and self-help against domination: it does not need recourse to political or labour organization but, rather, to actions like foot-dragging, mockery and fake compliance. Several other propositions follow from these: that subordinates have their own political agendas which may differ or not from elites' agendas; that, on those bases, they make political choices about their lives and about the daily experience of different forms of power; that relations of domination have material and ideological bases; and that consent is limited. (53)

In the given review, the critic highlights that the resistance is found in daily individual and even in collective forms. This act of resistance is formed against any form of domination. The manifestation of resistance doesn't necessarily have to be the political or labour organization but it is noticed even in the smaller form such as foot-

dragging, mockery etc. His notion of resistance is divided into two types: one is formally organized and other is everyday forms of resistance which is prosaic, covert, unstructured and informal.

Resistance is primarily concerned with the transformations, reformations and recorrections over what has been followed as the normativity. Whenever the norms in place are questionable and discriminative, it tends to provoke for the movement of resistance for the establishment of the new norms. Michele Foucault in his theoretical essay "The Subject and Power" elaborates the notion of resistance in relation to the power. He associates the intricate relationship between the power and resistance. Any social and political norms and values that are structured in the unequal distributions of power relations suffer the rise of the resistance. The dominant groups in the community are privileged with the more powers and authorities whereas the minority groups are manipulated by the systematic production of the discourse. The groups holding the authority and power build the discourse and control the powerless ones: "Discourse is controlled, limited, defined and exercised by power and draws to the way boundaries between the true and false are erected within the context" (Foucault 42). The old generation in the play represent dominant group that exercises their social position and forcefully scapegoat the disabled orphan boy in the name of the tradition. Eman objects it and demonstrates will to subvert it.

Eman's denial to fulfill the traditionally imposed role as an heir of strong breed family against his willingness reflects the creative adaptations because his denial isn't against the ritual practice itself but against the very idea of violating an individual's freedom and independence. It is proven when he eventually but willingly becomes the carrier for sacrifice towards the end.

As an educated person, the idea of making sacrifice without any regard to his

right to freedom of choice provokes him to question the tradition itself. Thus, he escapes from the society to break from the past tradition and rebels for its reformation. However, he faces another onslaught of social injustice and unlawfulness, authoritarian traditional practices in the name of ritual sacrifice in the host community. His struggle for dismantling these ills and evils of the Nigerian traditions reaches new level of conflict that eventually introduces a social change at the cost of his own death.

The host community has its own traditional system and institutional values which tend to be more authoritarian in nature. Eman confronts authoritarian cultural practices as followed by the members of the host community. One of the principles of modernism is its advocacy for the system of anti-authoritarian values. Rather, it places importance upon the individual autonomy and fulfillment. In modernist system of life, everyone owns an individual right to choose their own way of living disciplined by the principle of equality and humanity. Exploring the nature of human life under the anti-authoritarian system of modernism, the critics of modernism Gruenberg and Schwisguth identify, "Modernism is the system of anti-authoritarian values, valuing individual autonomy and fulfillment, acknowledging the right for everyone to choose one's own way of living, and based on the principle of equality of all human beings, regardless of race, religion sex or social rank. (43) In these lines, these two critics shed insightful light on the idea of modern life as well as the concept of people in modern age. Going by their words, modernism does not subscribe to the notion of authoritarian values of the traditional society, rather people like to live freely and people recognize and identify the rights and freedom of every person living as the member of the society, irrespective of their castes, race, religion, sex, class or the social rank and try to create an egalitarian society. In the play, Eman's resistance to the

selection of Ifada, a homeless and helpless boy taking refuge in the community as a stranger, challenges the authoritarian position of Jaguna and Oroge who are assigned the social and religious responsibility of performing the ritual as community leaders. Eman's stand resonates with what two critics call the principle of equality and humanity.

After Eman escaped the ritual of his own community, he ends up living in another community. He works there as a teacher and a healer. He has acquired a good knowledge on western medicine. He is, however, an outsider or a stranger. His teaching job puts him in a good position. The villagers of the host community are fascinated by his skills of healing, knowledge of medicine as well as his teaching service. They are, nonetheless, unaware of how his modern way of thinking and doing things is about to dismantle the long-held authoritarian tendency of imposing the ritual of sacrifice upon the stranger.

Jaguna and Oroge are projected by Soyinka as the old generation traditionalists. They hold their traditions so dear to heart. The religious system of the traditional society always produce the personalities like Jaguna and Oroge who are assigned the role to carry out the purification rituals and festivals of the society. The purification can't be performed without the sacred role of Oroge like he tells "Eman I am the one who prepares them all, and I have seen worse"(The Strong Breed 129). So another level of opposition and conflict is occasioned by the authoritarian inclination of traditional culture which imposes unpleasant and brutal conditions upon the adherents or devotees. According to the traditional system of host community, the carrier to bear the evils and ills of the community should be someone outside the community. It is informed to Eman when Oroge warns, "You ought to know that no carrier may return to the village. If he does, the people will stone him to death. It has

happened before" (129). They call them a stranger or outsider. Eman and Ifada are the strangers to the community.

However, Eman is armed with the agency to act according to his will. Despite the traditional practice of the host community to sacrifice an outsider, Eman follows his own will and determines not to surrender and subscribe to the idea of scapegoating the innocent in the name of purifying the community. Eman is an emblem of what Nietzsche calls 'Nihilism' - "It is the condition of strong spirits and wills" (18). In the philosophical understanding of Nietzsche, nihilists are those greatly willed humans who only listen to their own passion and desires while they fear no social standard of morality and values.

Instead, they strive further for more fulfillment of their passion regardless of any danger or risks. To them, only morality they practice is 'Will to Power': "there is a striving for power, for an increase of power...that all driving force is will to power" (Kaufmann 366). Soyinka empowers Eman with his agency as an instrument to help her satisfy what he desires. He privileges him an independent power to persist in his advocacy of justice, equality and fairness. His agency enables him to question the negative aspect of the custom. He possesses an internal power and capacity which dismantles the inhuman system of sacrificing the innocent. In doing so, he reforms the tradition of sacrifice from modern viewpoint as Barnes opines, "It is generally thought that for an individual to possess agency, she must possess internal powers and capacities, which, through their exercise, make her an active entity who is constantly intervening in the events around" (25). Eman demonstrates the same capacity and internal power because of his strong defense of Ifada. In the host community, Ifada has been targeted to be a carrier for the ritual of sacrifice. He defiantly deals with the religious leaders and saves Ifada from being insanely sacrificed. He controls the

events around him.

Being a man of young generation influenced by the modern way of thinking and educated by western knowledge, Eman consciously rebels against the traditional taboo like he rebelled in initiation camp against the Tutor's breach of moral standards. Sunma, despite being Jaguna's daughter and the member of the host community, changes her view of the tradition under the influence of Eman's modern philosophy of life. Instead of assisting her community to arrest the stranger, she rather appeals Eman to run away because she knows Jaguna and Oroge target him for the ritual after Ifada. Her resistance to the brutal aspect of ritual is reflected in her act of chasing Eman away for his survival as the following dialogue shows:

Sunma: ...why do you continue to stay where nobody wants you?

Eman: That is not true.

Sunma: It is. You are wasting your life on people who really want you out of their way.

Eman: You don't know what you are saying.

Sunma: You think they love you? Do you think they care at all for what you--- or---I do for them?...By yourself you can do nothing here. Have you noticed how tightly we shut out strangers? Even if you lived here for lifetime, you would remain a stranger.

Eman: Perhaps that is what I like. There is peace in being a stranger.

In the above dialogues, Eman clearly rebels the whole idea of being forced into being a carrier. Although Eman is not a westerner, but clearly an African, the rejection of his ideas against the illness of the ritual shares similarity as the rejection of outside ideas or alien knowledge by the host community as Laurence argues:

Although Eman is clearly an African and not a westerner, the ethnic

protectionism of tribalism, which is suspicious of all alien influence, applies equally to him. This rejection of stranger is tied to the rejection of all outside ideas and innovations which pose a threat to existing orders and a people's cultural identity. (120-123)

Here, Laurence's review backs the argument that Eman's new set of ideas and modern values function as an outside influence into the tribal values, which creates an environment of disparity between the two. Such an outside influence by the modern thoughts and beliefs ultimately bring a social change as Eman defends Ifada from the inhuman authoritarianism of Jaguna and Oroge. In his philosophical discussion of Nietzsche's notion of power, Ciano Aydin clarifies, "Power must be understood as a necessary striving for more power. Power is only power insofar as it can maintain itself against other powers and strives to predominate over them" (26). Eman gets confronted by another oppressive power, the leaders of the host community who are all prepared to sacrifice Ifada. He fought them with greater resistance.

Ifada is a homeless and helpless young boy taking refuge in the host community. AS per the history of traditional system, Jaguna and Oroge follow the leadership and declare him as a carrier for the well-being of the community. But, the ritual process is disturbed by Eman who rescues and employs Ifada by opening the farm. Eman rebels the ritual for choosing a person of minority and a weak disabled person. He looks at it from the vantage point of humanity and justice as Soyinka himself acknowledges his philosophy of life as "For me, justice is the first condition of humanity" (115). Eman's view of community's treatment towards poor and weak Ifada is in defense of Soyinka's worship of modern value of justice and humanity. To him, Ifada's individual freedom and right to choice has been trampled by the authoritarian cultural force as shown by Jaguna and Oroge. His sense of humanity and

justice echoes loud when he reasons his act of hiding Ifada from sacrifice to Sunma, “He is not madman, he is just a little more unlucky than other children...It was cruel of you. And to Ifada who is so helpless and alone. We are the only friends he has” (83-84). This dialogue discloses that Eman’s moral superiority is over everyone in the village, to the extent that even the tradition itself lacks the modern appreciation of freedom and humanity as Booth points out, “the custom seems more cowardly and less morally respectable than that of Eman’s people” (15). Booth’s review aligns with the researcher’s argument that Soyinka employs Eman as an agent of modernity with great will to expose the brutal, immoral and inhuman aspect of the Yoruba tradition and rituals so that it paves the path for further reformation and innovations. It marks his transition from nothing to something as Jacob Boehme, based on his reading of Nietzsche’s will, defines, “The will is a magical force, a desire that leads the bottomless to foundation and the nothing into something” (qtd. in Stoeber 29). Eman’s constant struggle for the protection of Ifada’s human rights elevates him as a savior of the helpless. He applies his knowledge in order to challenge the evil side of the tradition that chooses an unethical means to victimize a helpless orphan in the name of ritual. Eman’s actions, on broader level, become a source of reformation upon the negative sides of the Nigerian culture.

The climax of the tussle between old generation and new generation arises when Eman boldly confronts the traditional forces Jaguna and Oroge. They appear to carry Ifada for the scene of ritual sacrifice. Determined to implement his knowledge of social justice, freedom and humanity, Eman disrupts the ritual by questioning the nature of tradition which cruelly wants to slaughter a poor, weak and disabled child, Ifada. This is where Sardar’s idea of rediscovering and renovating selfhood through one’s own criteria and concepts step in.

As broadly discussed earlier, Sardar favors the need to reframe western postmodernism to fit non-western terms and conditions. While suggesting so, he promotes the idea of continuing the good tradition and disengaging from the traditionalism. By traditionalism, he refers to those traditional and cultural entities and practices which are against the health and prosperity of the community. By tradition, he refers to those decent and healthy practices and customs that benefit the community and its development. Talking about the significance of continuing the tradition, Sardar claims: “Tradition is the summation of the absolute frame of reference provided by the values and axioms of a civilization that remain enduringly relevant and the conventions that have been developed in his history into its own distinctive ‘gaze’: patterns of organization, ideas, life ways, technique and products” (225). Here, Sardar suggests that traditions repository of history, civilizational ideas, values and norms. In his alternative modernity, society does not break away from locality, rusticity and domesticity. Eman’s decision to replace Ifada, who is poor, helpless and powerless, shows his inclination towards the ritual as his communal identity while, at the same time, he discontinues the system of forcing poor and helpless as a scapegoat. As Nietzsche remarks, “We have a goal for which one does not hesitate to offer human sacrifices, to risk every danger, to take upon oneself whatever is bad and worst: *the great passion*” (Nietzsche 19). Eman’s goal revolves around confronting the negative aspect of the Nigerian cultural practice. He does not hesitate to fight against the oppressive forces such as the old generations of his community. In the following dialogue, Eman’s war against the tradition comes on full display “But why did you pick a helpless boy. Obviously he is not willing. In my home, we believe that a man should be willing” (128). The lines show the rebellion of Eman against the injustice and inhumanity in the tradition. At the same time, it

exposes Eman's realization of his role as a strong breed to become the carrier. He suddenly likes the tradition of his original community where a man's willingness is respected.

Against the will of the community, Eman carries Ifada away from Jaguna and Oroge. He expresses will to replace Ifada and become the carrier. Jaguna and Oroge become furious and they chase after Eman who ran away at the time of ritual sacrifice. In the end of the play, they set a trap and sacrifices Eman by hanging him. However, the villagers don't appreciate the sacrifice of Eman, who was a teacher and healer for the community:

Jaguna: We did it for them. It was all for their own common good. What did it benefit me whether the man lived or died. But did you see them? One and all they looked up at the man and words died in their throats. Women could not have behaved so shamefully. One by one they crept off like sick dogs. Not one could raise a curse.

Oroge: It was not only him they fled. Do you see how unattended we are? Including Jaguna and Oroge, all the villagers somehow felt guilty "subdued and guilty" (146) at the sacrifice of a good and moral person. It raises in them a sense of fault on the part of tradition itself, which proves an ultimate victory of young generation over the tradition of old generations as Majahana John ChonsiLunga concludes his review of the ending of the play as:

The reaction of the villagers shows that Jaguna and Oroge have lost the following and loyalty of the people. A pall of sadness and confusion hangs over the community. The people are not convinced their sins have been carried away. If anything, they feel the killing of Eman is wicked. But the sacrifice changes the people. The village will not be the same again. (70)

As these lines review, Eman's death finally enlightens the villagers about the ills of the tradition. It makes them reflect upon the ritual and question it from the modern perspectives such as individual freedom, justice, social law and humanity. Sacrificing a person with high moral and human character like Eman against their willingness appeared as an irrational part of the ritual before the eyes of the villagers. Soyinka succeeds in delivering the message for the identification and reformation of the decadent past traditions from the vantage of modern understanding. Eman's demonstration as a superman faces the complexities willingly and resolves to reform the evil aspect of the Nigerian culture. His will to power, as theorized by Nietzsche, brings a host of changes in the lives of the villagers.

In this way, the research concludes that Soyinka's drama *The Strong Breed* evidently frames its central hero, Eman in the progressive characterization. Eman's characterization reflects the characteristic of Nietzsche's notion of superman. As an emblem of Superman, Eman demonstrates the willingness to change the events around him. Like Nietzsche's tragic optimist who relentlessly fights for more power regardless of the danger and risks along the way, Soyinka employs Eman with the agency by which he shows his strong will to listen to his own morality and values instead of surrendering before the negative force. Eman's refusal to become the carrier as a part of the tradition and his defiance to protect Ifada from the inhuman practice of sacrificing the innocent disabled orphan resonates Nietzsche's characterization of tragic optimist.

Soyinka's characterization of Eman in the frame of Nietzsche's philosophical notion of will to power enables his efforts to question and reform some aspect of Nigerian culture and tradition. Set in the background of the ritual of sacrifice, Soyinka makes a self-critical reflection upon the evil side of his tradition. He does not negate

the Nigerian tradition totally but becomes suggestive for the reformation of certain traditional practices such as the ritual of sacrifice. In order to achieve it, he arms Eman with the agency of modern thoughts and attitude whose strong will commits to challenging the hypocrisy and contradiction within the culture and tradition. The tutor's hypocrisy, his father's moral pressure on him to become the carrier despite his objection and the host community's preparedness to victimize the orphan disabled boy triggers Eman's sense of injustice and he makes it his mission to dismantle such hypocrisy and contradiction. Soyinka brings two generations of characters to show the clash between them so that the young generation, as represented by Eman questions the old generation and bring about a social change.

Eman's progressive actions reflect his independence and self-willed agency as Nietzsche theorized by his philosophical discussion of superman. The nihilists are those greatly willed humans who listen to their own impulse and passion instead of imposed moral values. Instead of being encouraged by his father not any fear from the radical leaders in the host community, Eman stays committed to his modern idea of individual freedom, independence, quality and human rights. His will to power orients towards the process of reformation in the whole tradition of ritual sacrifice. His will leads him to the path of resistance and struggles to resist against the oppressive forces such as the old generations and their imposition of morality. Despite being celebrated as the postcolonial writer, Soyinka's representation of Nigerian society and culture with self-critical reflection shows his modern approach to African literature. His progressive characterization of Eman further shows the western philosophical influence in his works. Nietzschean characterization of Eman as tragic optimist and nihilists enable Soyinka to counter and question the negative and malpractices within his own culture while also implying the message for its reformation as Eman becomes

the agent for the correction of evil sides of the Nigerian culture and tradition.

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