



Cultural Consciousness Amidst Colonial Period and Fierce Struggle of Reclaiming in the Selected Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O : An Inspection

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Abstract :-

This research proposal endeavours to investigate cultural disruption in the lives of common people during colonial period in a British colony known Kenya as a deliberate action of the European to uproot indigenous Gikuyu culture in the light of Ngugi's novels. Having initiated various modern facilities such as missionary academy, church, hospital and recently developed scientific machines, the white settler have made mindset of erasing domestic marks from the land in order to replace it by Christianity and Western culture. Since the public mood goes against colonial blueprints and in response to it the wave of national restlessness stands up. It leads a tremendous struggle for regaining the land and its related past things like ceremonial rituals, oral history, Gikuyu and Swahili languages, customs and so on. English education itself awakens them and the knowledge of the elderly men also motivate to know much more of the ancestor's old faith. It also talks on the vanishing manners and this awareness creates a ray of hope for reclaiming it. It scrutinizes the colonizer's conspiracy against the native tribesmen for the purpose of empowering European culture. A reaction in the form of harsh encounter is an attempt of restoring the wiped African customs, uprooting the growing prominence of the Britisher's ways of life. It briefly covers the related incidents sketched in the novels' characters to assimilate the findings that are interpreted, verified and validated in relation to the aftermath of colonialism. This consciousness ignites fire in the indigenous tribesmen for the lost identity and rituals.

Keywords :

Disruption of domestic manners, cultural assault, communal integrity, hybridization, revolutionary movement, use of colonial knowledge against the colonizer, conflict between Africans and the Englishman, between the traditionalist and the converts.

Introduction :-

Ngugi is one of the most prolific African authors, born on the 5th January 1935 in Kimiriithu near Limuru. He is the son of Thiong's Nduucu and Wanjika Wa Thiong's, completed primary education from missionary school. He has contributed every literary genres like short-story, novel, memoirs, drama etc just to bring realistic picture of African society in both colonial and post – colonial age before the world. His art of works mainly deals with old faith, cultural attack, marginalization, religious suppression and social exploitation.



For the purpose of interpretation and validation, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *Petals of Blood* (1977) have been taken into account to find a solid conclusion, digging out many facets that cause a local revolutionary movement to stop colonizer's cultural intervention. In fact, Ngugi plays as a representative of Africa, he has portrayed cultural consciousness as a part of African culture for its further development which is clutched under the pressure of European influence.

Weep Not, Child delineates colonial influence on old faith, mentioned by the forefather, and violent cultural clashes between the local people and the European alongwith colonial agents. Njoroge is the protagonist of the fiction who is brought up in a Gikuyu traditional society. His father named Ngotho is famous in the traditional community for his deep knowledge of past customs. His father wants Njoroge to release colonial bondage of past customs. His father wants Njoroge to release colonial pain by attending a missionary school. The English education implants awareness of culture in him and English knowledge has been employed for colonial removal in regaining the lost Gikuyu culture. Njoroge's brother, Boro, has already engaged in Mau Mau revolutionary movement, since colonial collaborator, Mr. Howlands, keeps eyes on his family. Even the protagonist has love for the daughter of a colonial agent, Jacobo.

At the outset, Njoroge simply thinks that the lost culture can be reclaimed by education only. Their farm has been confiscated by the white setter, even his father has to work at the colonizer at a meagre wages. Ngotho is aggressive upon the annihilation of Gikuyu manners, this destruction is carried out strategically by the Britisher. He slightly attacks on Jacobo on his attempt to disturb a public gathering, organized by Boro, for bringing consciousness of patriotic feelings in entire sects of various communities. Boro wants to bring all people under one flag to integrate them. Ngotho's sons are working hard to release cultural bondage from Kenya. Njoroge wants local customs by using knowledge he has learned from colonial academy whereas Boro wants a complete political liberty from the European by means of bloodshed and violence. Unfortunately the white setter begins to harass them, consequently Ngotho is brutally beaten, Boro is killed and Njoroge along with the two mothers are unbelievably stabbed by Mr. Howlands and Jacobo. Jacobo is working for the colonizer to destroy indigenous markings for promoting the Englishman's culture. Social exploitation and marginalization can not separate them from their unshakeable dedication to the ancestor's old path.

The River Between focuses on cultural separation of the same community, some remain loyal to past life whereas others have baptized to Christianity. Waiyaki, a protagonist of the novel, is a young educated leader who has received knowledge of Kenya's past history by his father, Chege. His father sees in him the qualities of a leader and expects him to be a future leader of the community. He has been displayed physically each and every proof of Gikuyu culture by Chege.



In doing so, Chege indirectly motivates and intensifies his peaceful feelings more aggressive. As the community is separated by the river, Honia, residing the traditionalist in Kameno ridge and the converts in Makayu ridge. They have no communal oneness, as they separately believe in different religions, more than half community members are already switched to Christianity. But the converts always attempt to intervene in conventional rituals, they call them as uncivilized.

Joshua's conversion work is in full swing, his alluring strategy attracts the fundamentalist to convert into Christianity, as he is a colonial chief backed up by a collaborator, Reverend Livingstone. It is a cultural attack on Gikuyu manners by the European. However the teaching and promotion of old faith, speeded up Waiyaki and Chege, also compel the converts to come back to domestic religion. Joshua's daughter, Muthoni, is circumcised to get dual identities. During colonial period, there is a tug of war between Kameno and Makayu. Everyone try to disturb and interfere in culture to uplift their own faiths. Communal integrity is also disappeared and the society is undergoing in the process of hybridization.

A Grain of Wheat celebrates independence day publicly with some confession and deeply – rooted colonial effects. Mugo, the hero of the novel, inhabits alone and not so close to the society but his status is higher comparatively among the hearts of the people. His silence and avoidance of mixing up with the community is a note – worthy. He is a man of foresight who always ponders beneficial things for the new multicultural community. He is really a patriotic man when he openly confesses to be a murderer of Kihika. As Kihika was killing innocent people who had been converted to Christianity and dedicated to promote it among the people. He had created upheaval and a sense of terror, the society didn't feel safe because of his attacks on the missionary people. The conversion was opposed by Kihika and it is now approved by Mugo for a better society Kihika's actions are anti-colonial activities which are declared political freedom to Kenya. Till independence Kenya's society has completely transformed but some reactions remain alive like Kihika. He is for cultural awareness to give up the adopted religion.

Petals of Blood is a post – colonial novel that witnesses social and cultural transformation where domestic culture have become less significant than surviving in the altered modern Illmorog. In post – colonial period, conventional social atmosphere has replaced by modernity. Past things never die and it applies to the past memories of the characters like Munira, Abdulla, Karega, Wanja and so on. It narrates treachery of the elite class in giving justice to indigenously developed things such as communal qualities, integrity and honour for the elderly men. Communal things like Theng'eta really exist but not in its past original form. As Theng'eta has been commodified just to earn money. Bodily exhibition has become a common thing and is used as a source of income in harlotry. Wanja, known for love for indigenous culture, gets involved in this profession, she uses her body for the purpose of survival



in the changed social scenario. The transformation of Illmorog is the outcome of continuous colonialism in Kenya.

Revolutionary men like Abdulla still exist but he is not respected now for his contribution in freedom fighting movement, though he lost a left leg. Communal values have been thrown away after independence. All characters live on the past memories of the ancestor's ways of life but they have to both transform and reconcile with the changing time. There is a contrast between cultural consciousness and practical life in modern Illmorog.

The novels delineate cultural awareness, it accelerates a sense patriotism in reclaiming the lost land and land has everything connected with rituals, language, communal oneness, culture. This feeling gathers a lot of people to raise a revolt against colonial cultural assault and exploitative strategies against the colonized.

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