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Colonialism as a Progenitor of the Capitalism and Christianity: Unveiling the Unheard Tales of Sufferings and Protests of the Kenyan People in the Neo-Colonial State from the Select Novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Abstract

Colonialism is a malignant system designed by the Europeans to plunder the wealth and possessions of the other nations vigorously. Europeans trespassed into the other nations through their brutal imperialistic structure that cold-bloodedly overpowered and subjugated the government, customs, values, tradition and culture of the other nations, especially the third world nations. Colonialism constituted to Capitalism and Christianity that literally stripped the people of third world nations from their culture, tradition, values and norms. The remains of Colonialism- the Capitalism and Christianity survived in the colonies even after the independence. Through the system of Capitalism, the European nations burglarized the wealth through the leaders of the newly formed government who acted as puppets to the European capitalists in the Neo-colonial state. Many third world writers exposed this brutal nature of the European nations through their writings. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, one of the eminent East African writer who boldly and persistently exposed the cruelty of the colonial rule and the plundering of the newly formed government from their own people through his novels, urged the people to protest against the oppressors. This paper focuses on Ngugi's portrayal of the atrocities of the capitalist system and Christianity in the neo-colonial Kenya and the unheard protest of the Kenyan people against capitalism and subjugation through his novels.

Keywords: Colonialism, Capitalism, Christianity, Neo-colonial State, Unheard protest of the Kenyan people.

Literature not only characterizes the accomplishments and defeats of an age but also leads and motivates the society in a right path to rise for their rights and resist the treachery

against them. Colonialism divulged a great impact on Literature. Many of the writers from different countries especially from the colonised countries during the imperialistic era stirred people to voice against oppression of the White people. Literature influences society and paves way for the progress of the society and at the same time emboldens the society to resist and revolt against the oppression. In the contemporary literature, the works that encourages the society to revolt and resist is termed as “Protest Literature”, “Revolutionary Literature” and so on. Protest Literature, Revolutionary Literature and the like emphasis the cruelties against society and the abnegation of people’s basic rights. As David Cook puts up rightly that, “the socially conscious writer does not set to work in a vacuum but urges his society from what it is towards what it might be” (3).

Literature aftermath the colonialism constantly depicted the suffering tales of the “third-world nations” during colonialism, the lost identity, culture and traditional values of those nations and their shattered dreams masked under the veil of Western authority that uninterruptedly continued even after the independence in the name of financial aid and social security. The Westerners has assessed “Third World nations” especially Africans as inferior to them and judged them to be capable of nothing. Harish Narang in his work *Politics of Protest* exposes the opinions of the White writers on black people by quoting David Hume who asserts “The Negro is naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences” (Narang 259).

To the contrary, of Westerner’s depiction about Africans, African Literature is rich in its culture, tradition and variedness. Either the Europeans failed to assess it or they do not have the mind-set to accept the equines of Africans to them in terms of creative productions. Achebe noted that,

African people did not hear of the culture for the first time from the Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of greater depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this they must regain now (Gikandi 56).

Ngugi wa Thiong’o, a prominent east African writer is well-known for his interpretation of the skirmishes of Kenyan people under colonialism. All his seven novels paint the life of Kenyan people under European power. He is regarded as the chronicler of Kenyan history.

Ngugi's protagonists are the victims of the colonialism and later exhibit themselves as the opposing force to the settlers. Ngugi exhibits the cruelty of the colonial government and the Neo-colonial state of Kenya through his novels. In the novel, *The River Between* Waiyaki, the protagonist was portrayed as a victim of the colonial oppression. Colonial people prohibited the students from undergoing rituals and forms to dominate them culturally and linguistically there by suppressing the natives forever. Waiyaki was forced out of the colonial school because he underwent circumcision according to the rituals and forms of the natives. However, later he started his own school for people of his community against the colonial oppression and taught the children of native people.

Marioshoni, as Waiyaki's school was called, was well known in the country. Already it had a history. It was the first people's own school to be built since the break with Siriana. It had been Waiyaki's idea and even now he could not understand fully how his idea had borne fruit so quickly. He saw it as something beyond himself, something ordained by fate (TRB 65).

African writers including Ngugi expressed the depressed state of the colonised people by the forced labour on them and the alienation created by the depressive state of the people within their own family. In Ngugi's *Weep Not Child*, the conversation between Kamau and Njoroge voices the alienation that had drawn upon the family by the interruption of Colonisation.

"Do you see those distant lights?" Njoroge peered through the darkness and looked beyond. Far away a multitude of lights could be seen. Above the host of lights was the grey haze of the sky. Njoroge let his eyes dwell on the scene. Nairobi, the big city, was a place of mystery that had at last called away his brothers from the family circle. The attraction of this strange city that was near and yet far weakened him. He sighed. He could not yet understand why his brothers had just decided to go. Like that (WNC 44).

Kamau and Njoroge's conversation expresses the voice of Ngugi who conveys the reality of family in the colonised nations that have been estranged by the strangeness of western influences.

Though the protest writers are exiled or imprisoned by the neo-colonial government for representing the neo-colonial leaders as autocratic, they represented the real situation of the Third World Nations through their writings. Ngugi and few other writers of Africa represent Christianity as the source of rivalry between the tribes and culture, linguistic domination. Ngugi's novels *Weep Not Child*, *The River Between* and *Devil on the Cross*, and writings of so many authors illustrate 'Christianity' introduced by the Missionaries of the

colonial power as the real source behind the cultural, linguistic domination. The writers have also depicted Christianity as a tool used by the colonial power to dominate and abolish the tribal values and norms. Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*, places devil instead of Jesus on the cross, thus the title itself is satirical in its tone and is sarcastic in its theme. In the most popular work, *Devil on the Cross* Ngugi had portrayed the looting of the wealth that belongs to the peasants and small traders by the capitalists with the support of the government. Ngugi represents the corruption and betrayal prevailing in the society through his novels in a sarcastic way. The capitalists, who according to Ngugi are thieves, are gathered in a place for meeting where they discuss the best method to extract the hard work and sweat of the labourers for the profit of few. Everyone in the meeting proposes an idea to multiply their wealth at the cost of the hard work of the peasants and workers. Ngugi gives a picture of neo-colonial Kenya through the speech of every thief present in the scene. He also instigates the people to resist and revolt through the words of his characters. Kihaahu waGatheeca's words represent the resentment of Ngugi over the people which at the same stretch prompts people by stimulating them in a sarcastic manner. Kihaahu says "That's why I'm very grateful to the masses of the Kenyan people. For their blindness, their ignorance, their inability to demand their rights are what enable us, the clan of man-eaters, to feed on their sweat without their asking us too many awkward questions" (DOC 117). These words of Kihaahu makes the readers to think of their own state and in turn that would provoke them against the capitalist who uses the hard work of the workers to multiply their wealth. At the same time, Ngugi in the next line itself cautions the capitalists saying "But we shouldn't be complacent or imagine that the masses will always be foolish. It's the possibility that things may change . . ." (DOC 117). Though these lines of Ngugi appear to be sarcastic, there is a great message to people in it. He advocates the people that there is a chance to regain the wealth and assets that belongs to the peasants and workers by fighting against the oppressive capitalists.

The chief cause for the underdevelopment in Africa is the same factors that led to the development of Europe and other western nations. One of the factors that hinder the growth of Africa is rivalry between the same communities. Black people plundered their own black people for the profit of the few. Black people served as the watchdogs to the White settlers' wealth after independence. Ngugi in his work *Matigari* represents this state clearly. He represents how the house built by Matigari was taken over by the white settler Williams and later it was handed over to Junior John Boy whose father remained loyal to the settler. While Matigari who built the house out of his hard work and sacrificed everything for the freedom was left to roam in streets searching for his family whom he lost during his freedom struggle

with William's. When Matigari demanded his house from the John Boy Junior he was beaten "Matigari felt as though his body had been cleaved into two. His muscles gave way. He sank to the ground. None of those present expected to see such a thing take place" (Matigari 47). The portrayal of the realistic situation prevailing in Kenya by the writer made the people aware of their glorious past and their miserable condition in the present. The protest writers of Africa have used different strategies to elude the people from the psychological and sociological trauma created by the domineering and oppressive capitalist run neo-colonial government.

Europeans pierced into the non-western countries in the name of civilising the native people. The colonisers persistently justified their actions by claiming to bring civilization to the natives. Their conquest was justified by alleging the reality of the natives. They alleged that the only way to civilize the natives is to colonise them and teach them the ways of life and Christianity. Ngugi wa Thiongo oppose this concept of civilising mission by arguing that the African nations were civilized by themselves through their rich, glorious past and their religious, cultural and traditional values. His novels express the greatness of the native's culture and tradition. His work, *The River Between* represents the glorious tradition of the natives and their connection with the rituals of the tribe. The writer represents that the people gave more importance to their rituals and tradition than their dream thus portraying that the Africans had glorious culture and proving that the Europeans declaration of civilizing the nation is not the real reason for the colonialism. Ngugi proves that the ways of the tribe are superior to Christianity that was introduced by colonial power. Muthoni's words "However, I know it is beautiful, oh so beautiful to be initiated into womanhood. You learn the ways of the tribe. Yes, the white man's God does not quite satisfy me. I want, I need something more. My life and your life are here, in the hills, that you and I know" (TRB 25) represents Ngugi's notion over the superiority of the tribal culture and tradition.

The reality of the post colonialism in the African country is exceedingly miserable. The European masters after independence had a grip on the colonised nations through the security and financial aid. They do have the local masters who were appointed by the westerners as their puppet leaders in the native country who worked for the profit of the westerners. They alleged the reality of the independence as the freedom of the colonised countries. Ngugi wa Thiongo's novels vividly illustrates this alleged reality in the neo-colonial Kenya and its masked leaders. White people selected few of their loyalists and handed over the power to them while providing freedom to the colonies. These masked leaders remained loyal to their western masters and acted according to their commands

without bearing in mind the welfare of their country. Ngugi has expressed this state of society in the neo-colonial period in his later novels like *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and *Wizard of the Crow*. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the Ruler is represented as autocratic who characterize the leaders of the third world nations. The Leaders of the neo-colonial Kenya boasted themselves as the protector of peace among the people. The ministers too act accordingly to impress the ruler and acquire a powerful position to make themselves rich through bribing and corruption. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the Ruler appointed Titus Tajirika as the chairperson of the Marching to heaven project. Titus Tajirika considers it as an opportunity to enhance his wealth through corruption. He was overwhelmed with joy as he was to welcome the delegates of the World Bank who had come to enquire about the Marching to Heaven project for which the Ministers of Aburiria had applied for loan in the World Bank. The ministers and the Businessmen like Tajirika were joyful for the Project of Marching to Heaven as it will help them in multiplying their mammon capital through contracts that yield them bribes. On the other hand, another group of people who too were happy because of the arrival of delegates from the World Bank are the beggars. They gathered in front of the hotel in which the meeting between the delegates and ministers is to happen. Ngugi sarcastically states this difference through his work to make the people understand the reality of the neo-colonial government that aids the capitalists to grow richer and makes the poor, poorer.

There were always beggars loitering around those kinds of hotels at all hours of day and night. But that night they were there in unusually large numbers, looking for all the world to see like wretchedness itself. The blind seemed blinder than usual, the hunchbacked hunched lower, and those missing legs or hands acted as if deprived of other limbs. The way they carried themselves was as if they thought the Global Bank had come to appreciate and even honour their plight (WOC 73-4).

All the novels of Ngugi unveils the malicious nature of the Colonialism and represents the Colonialism as the progenitor of the Christianity and Capitalism that pervades in Africa even after the independence and exploits the wealth of the nation even after the independence of the Africa and other colonies in the name of Security and Governance aid. However, Ngugi also urges the people to resist the neo-colonial capitalist and power mongers from exploiting the wealth of their own people through his characters presenting them to be rebellious and protestors against the suppression of people.

Abbreviations

WNC - Weep Not, Child

TRB - The River Between

DOC - Devil on the Cross

WOC - Wizard of the Crow

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