CHAPTER - IV

TO PREVENT...

"This is what Fanon explains to his brothers in Africa, Asia and Latin America; we must achieve revolutionary socialism all together everywhere, or else one by one we will be defeated by our former masters"

Preface by Sartre, Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*

The individual is the product of the social, cultural and political concerns of the country he lives in. If the political scene of the land is corrupt, that inevitably mangles the social and the personal life of the individual. Armah and Ngugi portray how the individuals struggle against the corrupt political and social conditions that exist in their native soil, Ghana and Kenya respectively in the post-independence period.

In Armah’s, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* the Ghanaian society stinks with corruption and the novel is filled with filth and dirtiness which is criticised by Achebe who calls the novel 'a sick book'. Yet, John Coates says,

'Ghana, as Armah presents it, is more than a dystopia, a cautionary picture of the effects of
Achebe also is irritated by the unnamed hero in the novel and states that what Armah presents in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is not Ghana. But, it is understood that only the anger that Armah cherishes against the society has resulted in the filthy picture. Armah’s, Marxian and Fanonian theory in particular are given adequate expression in this novel. Neil Lazarus observes, 

"For what Fanon had spoken of as ‘national consciousness’, the ideology of a small, if powerful elite within the wider society, seems to Armah in the years since independence to have imprinted itself upon the society at large'. In *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* Armah offers us a picture of this dominant ideology at work" (RAL, Vol 18, 148-49).

Ngugi, in his novel, *The Petals of Blood*, `dramatizes quite comprehensively the evils of gross materialism eating into the vitals of Kenyan civilization' (Juneja. PC, 114) and this can be applied
to his Matigari too. His experience at the personal level has made him involve himself in the political scenario of his country which he deliberately presents in his novels. The suppressed, exploited class has become his target through whom he aims at a social revolution rather social salvation. He believes, as John Chilshe says, 'the dismantling of capitalism and establishment of a social order in its place' (JCL, Vol XV, 134) is the ultimatum.

In Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, an individual fights alone with the society and saves himself from falling into the quagmire of corruption. The unnamed hero, called 'the man' is a controller for the Ghanaian railroad system, who fulfils his duties as a husband and as a father without crossing the limits of his income. Naturally, he is not able to afford the luxurious life desired by his wife, Oyo. She compares him with his classmate, Koomson, who is now a Minister and prompts 'the man' to learn the way of the world and also to receive bribe when it is offered. The Teacher is the only person to whom 'the man' confides in Koomson is thrown out of his position through the usurpation of NKrumah's government by the military coup and his life is at stake and 'the
man' helps him out of his problem. His wife feels happy that her husband did not become a Koomson. Though 'the man' does not attempt to revolutionize like Ngugi's Karega or Matigari, his determination to live through the hurdles earns him his distinction.

*Petals of Blood*, Ngugi’s masterpiece, is considered a political novel. It comprises a period of twelve years and opens with the murder of the three directors of Theng'eta Breweries in llmorog. Munira, Abdulla, Karega and Wanja are suspected to have done it. They are the four petals of the novel who have come to the village, llmorog for various reasons. They involve themselves in the struggle faced by the dying llmorog and succeed too. Circumstances force Karega to leave the village and when he returns after five years, the New llmorog disappoints him. Wanja runs a 'house' to avenge her exploiters; Abdulla has come to the roads; Joseph, Abdulla’s ward is educated through Wanja’s money. Karega joins the Theng'eta Breweries and organises a union amidst the workers. Finally it is confessed by Munira that he killed the directors to save Karega and thereby atones for his sin. Florence Stratton says,
First there is exploitation which is followed by resistance with its acts of heroism and betrayal. Next, if the cause is won, there is elation, visions of new beginnings, hope. Then a new set of oppressors step in and resistance begins again. This is the basic theme of the novel, the cyclical nature of human history (JCL Vol XV 120).

In Ngugi's *Matigari* the oral tradition and native language claim intimacy between the text and the society. The novel is punctuated with many songs to convey the message intended. Matigari returns from the forest to join his family and to enter into his house. The reality which is exposed to him through Guthera and Muriuki shocks him. He seeks Truth and Justice in the world of corruption and imperialism. Not being able to get his house back from John Boy and Settler Williams, the directors of Anglo-American Leather and Plastic Works, he sets the house on fire and disappears from the scene.

The conflict in the three novels analysed in this chapter is caused by the capitalistic attitude of the haves, which is rooted in
corruption and exploitation, which ruins the lives of the innocent and the have-nots. The protagonists take efforts to create a better society. The conflict gains momentum as the exploiters take the upper hand; the female characters only complicate the problem; the protagonists are either guided or inspired by certain male characters in the novels whose guidance turns out to be crucial in the development of the crisis; the narrative technique adopted by the novelists does contribute its own share towards the understanding of the problem; the protagonists confront the problem, attempt to resolve it and meet the consequences.

'The man' in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is a clerk who possesses the stoic strength to withstand the corrupt condition that prevails around him. He is quite convinced of his principle despite the needs of his family. To Karega in *Petals of Blood* and Matigari in *Matigari*, the conflict evolves through certain situations whereas 'the man' has to live through the conflict throughout and Leonard Kibera says that Armah’s 'the man' is like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o’s Mumbi, but lesser than her, he is the intelligent conscience of the novel. Through him we are better able to examine others' (JCL, Vol XIV, 68) •
Mumbi in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* does exercise her influence on other characters including the protagonist Mugo, through her eloquent silence as does by 'the man'. When the novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, begins, 'the man' is travelling by a bus to reach the Railway and Harbour Administration Block. There are instances to predict the moral decay of the society. Armah presents how the individuals and the politicians are corrupt. The conductor of the bus does not give back the exact change to a passenger and regrets that he is not able to do it with many other passengers since it is the Passion Week, (the end of the month) when the passengers would give only the exact fare. Ogede says,

> ... the bus represents the decadent nation. It's driver and conductor stand for its corrupt, opportunistic and thoughtless leaders who instead of ruling the country with honesty and consideration subjugate the citizens through bribes and intimidation. (RAL, Vol 27, 118)

'The man' sees the dust bins kept on the road and ruminates on the money the politicians would have swindled from the scheme.
A messenger who had won a lottery is afraid that he would not get the money unless he bribes some official.

'You will be corrupting a public officer'.

'The man', smiled

'This is Ghana' the messenger said, turning to go. (BB.19)'

Ironically, this is followed by 'the man' being approached by Amankwa, a timber contractor who offers 'the man' ten cedis to book his timber in the wagons. 'The man' refuses the offer and comes back home only to be insulted by his wife Oyo, who asks, 'Why are you trying to cut yourself apart from what goes for all of us?' (42) His wife, and his mother-in-law misinterpret his principle and force him to fall a prey to the temptation, namely corruption. His conflict is best expressed when he says, 'I have my family. I am in the middle' (93). If political and social degeneration causes the conflict in the life of 'the man' the capitalistic attitude of the people who never hesitate to stamp on the lives of the weaker section of the society causes the conflict in Karega's life.

Karega, in Petals of Blood as a child, had experienced the inhuman treatment from the European landlords and later from the
black landlords who extracted only hard work from his mother Mariamu. With great difficulty, his mother had sent him to the school at Sirianna but he had involved himself in a strike against Fraudsham and had been dismissed from there. Studies interrupted, it is difficult for him to get a job and he comes to Ilmorog, seeking employment. There begins his conflict as well as the contact with the other three petals of the novel, Munira, Abdulla and Wanja. Munira had been once Karega’s teacher and his mother had worked in his father, Ezekieli’s farms. His brother Ndinguri was a Mau Mau and had cut off Munira’s father’s ear for having preached against the Mau mau in support of the whites. Karega’s first love, his love for Mukami, Munira’s sister, had been forbidden by her father Ezekieli and Mumbi had committed suicide. Though Karega realises that the past is of no use to the present struggle’, he does develop hatred towards the so called capitalists. The indifferent attitude of the politicians towards the people who starve makes him angry as Remi in Ngugi’s *Black Hermit* who asks, ‘...starve... while Ministers and their permanent secretaries fatten on bribes and inflated salaries (26 - 27).

The already hidden ideas on liberation in Karega gains strength when he finds the uncared condition of Ilmorog and
initiates the villagers to undertake the journey towards Nairobi to meet their M.P. which had never been thought of by the Ilmorogians. He prepares them, `to confront that which had been the cause of their empty granaries, that which had sapped their energies and caused their weakness' (PB, 116). The journey indirectly causes the conflict in Karega's life which makes Kimeria and Munira antagonise him. The problem of Karega is elaborated on, by Ngugi in *Matigari*.

Matigari, the very name means `the patriots who survived the bullets' (Ma, 20) He is one and many at the same time. Who is Matigari? a man, a spirit, the God Almighty resurrected? fictional or real - these unresolved questions finally make one conclude that he is the one who represents the collective consciousness in general and African consciousness in particular. He could be the stranger in Ngugi’s play, *This Time Tomorrow* revived with more vigour. Both of them represent the same ideology. `Let us, with one voice, tell the new Government: We want our homes, we love them' (TT, 199) says the stranger who anticipates Matigari who cries, 'The house is mine now, it belongs to me and my family....' (Ma, 38). Matigari buries his weapons under a huge Mugumo tree and says he is then wearing a belt of peace (Ma, 5) and walks
towards the town to join his family. He is shocked to find his people stand dispossessed of their lands and homes. He realises, `yesterday it was the whites. Today, they have been joined by some blacks' (Ma, 75)*He finds his people being thrashed, women being humiliated on the streets, children running for the left overs etc., He vows to confront the exploiters and to redeem what is due to his people.

The people, the politicians, the exploiters, the capitalists or on the whole the society with sinking values stands against the protagonists, the man, Karega and Matigari and the conflict is occasioned by the external socio-political climate of the land. They are basically afflicted by corruption and while Karega and Matigari extend the conflict to a greater level i.e. collective consciousness, `the man' bears and resolves it at the personal level.

The conflict, thus caused, gains strength as the exploiters assume all power. They either directly or indirectly make the protagonists' lives difficult. Koomson, in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, a corrupt Minister in NKrumah's Government is the temptation who tries on `the man'. Nderi, Chui, Kimeria in *Petals of Blood* who represent the corrupt imperialists, make Karega turn
against such bourgeoisie class of people. John Boy and Williams, the incarnation of the mighty capitalists make Matigari’s life miserable.

The material aspiration is referred to as 'gleam' (BB.52) by Armah, Except ‘the man’, everybody is after this gleam who willingly play ‘stealing’ meaning corruption which has become the national game. ‘The man’ not being able to play the game, suffers for being ‘the beautiful one’. The Teacher says, ‘It may be that you cannot lie very well, and you are afraid to steal. This is what is wrong with you’ (57) Koomson, the Minister happens to be once ‘the man’s classmate. He had been a stupid, but now he has `got a new brain’ (59) and has learnt how to thrive. ‘Koomson we all have known for a long time here. A railwayman, then a docker of the harbor. Pulling ropes. Blistered hands, toughened, callused hands’ (88) ruminates ‘the man’ and now he has become a ‘Bigman’ (36). With cars and bungalows he lives in the ‘Residential Area’ where only affluent people live. Ironically the places, where others live are not meant for residence! It is unfortunate that ‘the man’ is always being contrasted with Koomson by ‘the man’s wife, Oyo and his mother-in-law. It depresses him and he cries, ‘And then Koomson comes, and the
family sees Jesus Christ in him. How can I ever feel like a human being'? (93). 'The man's life is made difficult since he is all the time rebuked by his wife and even by his mother-in-law. Oyo is not bothered about the means and only the end matters to her and her mother. Emmanuel Obiechina says,

In *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah employs a gallery of flat, parabolic characters. The good man is clinging precariously to his moral integrity in a corrupting world, the disillusioned and bitterly cynical outsider, the corrupt politician, the disappointed and contemptuous wife, the hate-filled mother-in-law (CTS, 105).

Whenever 'the man' attempts to do anything, to say anything, he is snubbed by his wife and mother-in-law. He is treated as a misfit in the society. Knowing well Koomson is a corrupt person, Oyo believes that he has learnt to drive which means he has learnt the art of living and people like 'the man' who are afraid of accidents will never learn to live. Chinua Achebe says,
Leaders are, in the language of psychologists, role models. People look up to them and copy their actions, behaviour and even mannerisms. Therefore, if a leader lacks discipline the effect is apt to spread automatically down to his followers’ (TWN, 31)

Hence, it is not a surprise that people like Oyo are after Koomson and follow the footsteps of such political leaders. It is interesting to note that Koomson never forces ‘the man’ to get bribes; he never disturbs him in anyway; he never directly hurts him; but his very name threatens his life at home. ‘The man’ desperately says, the people like Koomson ‘make me feel like a criminal’ (BB. 59) and Larson says,

`In his depiction of a society on the brink of suicide, Armah has created a deeply disturbing picture of the foibles of all decadent political systems - a decadence which has nothing to do with age - of all late bourgeois worlds where morals and values have been lost and even the man of good
intentions begins to doubt his sanity, begins
to feel that he is the guilty one for not being
corrupt. (EAF, 268)

It is believed by Oyo and her mother that Koomson is the one,
`who can do manly things and take the burdens of others too' (BB
139); Ironically Koomson becomes the source of burden to `the
man'. And such people like Koomson aggravate Karega's
sufferings in *Petals of Blood*.

Karega takes the initiative to take the innocent, ignorant
villagers to Nairobi to meet their M.P. His hatred towards the
capitalistic society deepens during the journey. Joseph is seriously
ill and they seek the help of many townsmen. They go to a priest
Rev. Jerrod Brown and are happy that he is a black and assume
that he will help them. Instead, he generously advises and sends
them away saying, `As for the child who is ill (and why indeed did
you not bring him in?) I have already offered prayers for him. Go
ye now in peace and trust in the Lord' (PB. 148) which only irritates
Karega. Kimeria, a member of KCO, a political party, exploits the
situation by asking Wanja to share his bed if he were to help
Joseph. Kimeria is the one who married and deserted Wanja.
Wanja yields to Kimeria to save Joseph and Karega never forgets this event. The M.P of Ilimorog himself, Nderi, inspite of witnessing the pathetic plight of the Ilimorogians, suggests, "Get yourselves together. Subscribe money. You can even sell some of the cows and goats instead of letting them die. Dive deep into your pockets" (182) forgetting that the journey was undertaken by them only when they lost every possibility of living. When Karega hears this, he loses his heart and "The mission has failed, Karega bitterly muttered. He felt hot tears pressing" (183) He, a stranger to the village, proves his empathy for it, whereas, Nderi, who won the election because of the Ilimorogians' votes does not feel the least about their plight. Karega seems to hold the views of J.M. Karuiki, a Mau Mau activist, who says,

"Our leaders must realize that we have put them where they are not to satisfy their ambitions not so that they can strut about in fine clothes and huge cadillacs as ambassadors and Ministers, but to create a new Kenya in which everyone will have an opportunity to educate himself to his fullest capabilities, in which no one will die or suffer
through lack of medical facilities, and in which each person will earn enough to eat for himself and his family' (TC, 96)

Karega, as a student in Sirianna school had great faith in Chui, an educationist as he too had been a student of the same school who resisted the authorities by participating in a strike. Hence the students of the school demanded Chui as their headmaster since he is a black and believed he would understand their feelings and they would be taught, 'African Literature, African history' (PB. 170). Chui came and in one moment disillusioned their hope by saying that he did not want to 'hear any more nonsense about African teachers, African history, African literature, African this and that...' (172). The students once again went on strike against Chui and Karega was dismissed. The power Chui had as a headmaster ruined Karega’s education as well as his future. It is also to know the mysterious behaviour of Chui, from Munira, Karega comes to Ilmorog since Chui was Munira’s classmate. Later he says to Munira, ‘... during the journey, I saw many more Chuis and I am not sure if I want to understand it any more’. (241) Karega’s righteous anger is directed against people like Kimerias and Chuis and decides,
"... we want a world, we must struggle for a world in which there are no Kimerias and Chuis, a world in which the wealth of our land shall belong to us all, in which there will not be parasites dictating our lives, in which we shall all be workers for one another's happiness and well-being" (327).

Karega’s conflict is to unite the working class whereas Matigari’s conflict is to redeem the land from the exploiters and the parasites.

Matigari, who returns from the forest finds the land and the house being occupied by Williams and John Boy. John Boy, a black had been educated by the people as Remi in Ngugi’s Black Hermit. Remi, ofcourse, returns to his own people to serve them relieving himself from the enticements of the Christian mission and the comfortable life offered by the city. But John Boy turns down the blacks and joins Williams and behaves like a typical white in all manners. Together they run a factory where the workers are not given proper wages. Matigari hopefully asks Ngaruro Wa Kiriro, the unionist to spread the message among the
people that Settler Williams and John Boy are dead, which means the settlers and the parasite blacks have been driven out of the land and the natives can have a peaceful life. Unfortunately, Matigari finds his house being occupied by John Boy and he claims his right to own it. John Boy along with Settler Williams mocks at, laughs at Matigari, flays him and then arrests him. Matigari escapes from the prison with the help of Guthera, but, once again, is charged by the Minister of Justice and is sent to the mental hospital. As Koranche in *Two Thousand Seasons* is obsessed with Isanusi's image, John Boy is obsessed with the presence of Matigari and is afraid that his life is at stake as long as Matigari is alive. But Matigari's life mission is to drive away Williams and Boy from the land and to redeem the house and the land which belong to him and his people. Williams and Boy have the power to have the Government under their thumb. They achieve whatever they desire by throwing money to the Government.

There was that imperialists and their retinue of messengers, overseers, police and military. The ruling party were these messengers and they had control over the Government, the laws and the gunmen in boots (Ma.)
When they want to stop the strike in their factory, Williams and Boy make the Minister for Truth and Justice a shareholder in the factory, which promptly makes the latter advice and even threaten the workers not to go on strike. Boy takes law and order in his hands and the Government safeguards his life against Matigari who vows to see the end of them.

According to Ngugi's portrayal, there are only two types of people in the land-patriots and traitors' (RAL, Vol 22, 172)

says, Abdulrazak Gurnah. As Armah's healers attempt to save the country from the manipulators, Ngugi's Matigari who represents the patriots, lives to destroy the traitors.

The cause of the conflict in the lives of 'the man', Karega and Matigari remains the same i.e. social and political corruption. The characteristic common feature in them is that they are socially conscious people who do not tolerate injustice against humanity.

As in the novels analysed in the previous chapters, the female characters in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Petals of
Blood and Matigari do contribute their share towards the lives of the protagonists. Oyo in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Wanja in Petals of Blood, Guthera in Matigari exercise positive or negative influence on the protagonists. They either complicate their lives or help them achieve their mission of life.

The insults and the humiliation that ‘the man’ has to face especially from his wife, psychologically upsets him. For instance, he narrates to Oyo, his encounter with Amankwa, who offers him a bribe and the conversation follows thus:

'Somebody offered me a bribe today,' he says after a while

'Mmmmmmm!

'One of those timber contractors'

'Mmmmmmm. To do what?'

'To get him an allocation:

'And like an onward Christian soldier you refused?'

'But why should I take it?'

'And why not?..' (BB. 43-44)
and this why not? always hurts him; disturbs him. The ensuing argument makes Oyo angry and she calls `the man' a chichidodo and says, `... the chichidodo is a bird. The chichidodo hates excrement with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots, and you know the maggots grow best inside the lavatory' (45). `The man' does all possible things to his family. He walks to his office as he is run out of money towards the end of the month. Sometimes he even skips his meal and starves. Yet he would not touch any bribe. When his son hurts himself, his mother-in-law says to his son, `you must know you have nobody, you are an orphan, a complete orphan' (123) just to humiliate `the man'. The children are used by Oyo and her mother to pinpoint him. `The man' says, `This was done so very often, the tender heads of children serving as things on which adults could bounce their bullet words into the hearts of their enemies' (123). Oyo intends to enter into a contract with Koomson to buy a boat. Though `the man' does not incline his family to entangle itself with Koomson's activities, he finds himself helpless and simply allows his wife to do whatever she likes. She is after the `gleam' which she aspires to acquire by any means. `The man' could only regret,
'So how was a man ever going to be able to fight against all the things and all the loved ones who never ceased urging that nothing else mattered, that the way was not important, that the end of life was the getting of these comfortable things? (151)

to which he never gets an answer. While Oyo directly affects `the man' Wanja indirectly becomes the reason for Karega's struggle.

Wanja in *Petals of Blood* is the most complex character who is not understood by any of the other characters in the novel. Karega comes to know how Kimeria sexually exploited her when she was just thirteen years old. She was driven away from her house by her father and came to the street literally. The once intelligent student ends up as a prostitute because of Kimeria. Robson says, `To destroy the enemies she hates, she has to destroy herself' (98). Karega's socialistic outlook gets widened due to Wanja. He learns from her, `This world... this Kenya... this Africa knows only one law. You eat somebody or you are eaten. You sit on somebody or somebody sits on you' (PB. 291). Though Karega is not totally convinced of Wanja's philosophy of life, he does learn
that the world has place only for the capitalists and not for the poor who are the majority. He happens to be one of the witnesses to Kimeria's sexual abuse of Wanja, which he could only groan and bear. He starts disliking the capitalists from the bottom of his heart. He says:

'whenever any of us is degraded and humiliated even the smallest child, we are all humiliated and degraded because it has got to do with human beings (161).

Again, it is Wanja's love for Karega which drives him away from Ilmorog. Munira too loves Wanja and jealousy makes him mad and he dismisses Karega from his job. The best thing that happens to Karega because of Wanja is, his acquaintance with the lawyer who is almost his eye-opener. Finally the idea of how to go about, and what to do strikes him when he learns that Wanja has started a 'house'. 'And suddenly in that moment, remembering in a flash all the places he had been to, he was clear about the force for which he had been searching, the force that would change things and create the basis of a new order (294) and the concept of creating a new world, 'a new earth' (294) strikes him then. While Oyo and
Wanja, make the lives of the protagonists miserable, Guthera in *Matigari* assists Matigari in achieving his goal.

Guthera represents women in general. Matigari who comes from the forest is shocked to see women in the bars. He is only surprised at Guthera's hatred towards the caps who, he supposes are the guardians of law and order. But he does understand that the caps are cut-throat criminals when he witnesses two of them flay Guthera and almost strip her on the street, in front of many. Matigari comes to her rescue and shouts at the passivity of the onlookers thus:

> What is going on here? Are you going to let our children be made to eat shit while you stand around nodding in approval? How can you stand there watching the beauty of our land being trodden by these beasts?’ (Ma, 31)

Guthera is touched by this kindness and starts helping Matigari. She, who has taken up the life of a street woman for the sake of her family has vowed never to submit herself to a policeman, since
the police have ruined her family by hanging her father. When she
was offered an option by the police, between her father's life and
her virginity she firmly stuck to one of the ten commandments,
`Thou shalt not commit adultery' and her father was executed. She
decided, `... Even though it's my troubles which have led me away
from the paths of righteousness, and have turned me into a hunter
of men, I will never go to bed with a policeman' (Ma, 37) But when
Matigari is imprisoned, she renounces her vow, lures the guard
with her charm and releases Matigari. Matigari's urge to help such
women like Guthera is expressed thus:

as he recalled how Guthera had given herself
as a sacrificial lamb for his salvation, a sharp
pain stabbed his heart, and he felt tears sting
his eyelids... And who shall wipe away the
tears from the faces of all the women
dispossessed on this earth? (Ma, 88)

Matigari is sent to the mental hospital by the exploiters
and Guthera along with Muriuki helps him come out of it. Though
Matigari is believed to possess unimaginable superpower, in his

crisis, Guthera along with Muriuki helps him and also reveals to
Matigari the dark world to which he had not had any exposure till then and she decides to be with him in his pursuit, saying, `One can die only once, and it is better to die in pursuit of what is right' (139).

The course of the conflict in the lives of the protagonists takes its line of movement through these characters, Oyo, Wanja and Guithera. Oyo makes `the man's' life difficult and she happens to represent the constant temptation for `the man' to get corrupt which he has to overcome with great mental strength. Though Karega prefers his principles to the love he has developed towards Wanja, it is Wanja's plight which prompts him to make an attempt to create a new world by uniting the workers. Guthera assists Matigari in his endeavour to save the humanity from the hands of the exploiters. No doubt all these three women motivate the protagonists' mission of life.

The protagonists are either assisted or guided by certain male characters in the novels. This happens to be the Teacher in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, the lawyer in Petals of Blood, and Muriuki in Matigari.
Whenever 'the man' is depressed, he goes to the Teacher who is presented as a man in nakedness. He is 'the man's' young age acquaintance who continues to guide him. He is the last resort for 'the man' and this is why when the Teacher laughs at him, the man desperately asks, 'When the time comes that Teacher also just laughs at my pain, where will I be going next?' (BB, 35) Oyo calls 'the man' a chichidodo which humiliates him much and he comes to the Teacher and recollects the past - he, with the Teacher, Mannan and Kofi Billy. The Teacher shares 'the man's' burden and advises him to be practical. Palmer says,

... 'the man' is quite different from the Naked Man in the sense that he has not withdrawn from participation in social life even though he shares with the latter a deep pessimism about the present state of things (IAN, 107).

True, the Teacher does not entertain any positive attitude towards life. He does isolate himself from the society out of despair yet he does not impose his views on 'the man'. On the contrary, he views the problem from 'the man's' stand point and suggests what could
be best for him, for his family life. He himself admits that his life is empty and void unlike 'the man's' who has got a family, and reminds him that he cannot follow suit to him. 'The man' asks, 'But, Teacher, I cannot sit and watch Oyo and her mother getting fooled by this Koomson, Can I?' (57) and the Teacher asks 'Why not?' (57) echoing Oyo and continues 'I would advise you to do exactly that. Let them do what they want. May be they will get rich. You don't know how to make them rich, so let them try'(57). There is no sarcasm in his reply. These words are uttered by the Teacher not to belittle 'the man' but to make him understand the reality. The exchange of ideas and the heated argument between them make 'the man' forget his agony for the present. When he leaves, the Teacher says that he could not provide him any strength and 'the man' says, you know what you're about. And you understand. That's enough for me' (93) The Teacher justifiably suggests 'the man' to dissolve his 'self' to lead a peaceful family life. While the Teacher guides 'the man', the lawyer in Petals of Blood is the source of inspiration to Karega.

Karega's socialistic aspirations get strengthened by the lawyer. When Karega listens to the lawyer, he finds'... a curiosity,
an excitement, as if his mind was about to reach, grasp, grapple
with, an elusive idea, as if indeed a coherent structure of outlook
was forming in the bewildered universe and chaos of his own
experience and history' (PB.166) But for the lawyer, the journey
administered by Karega to Nairobi would have ended as a failure
and he would have been the cause of Ilmorog's ruin to which he
would never have forgiven himself. The lawyer comes to their
rescue, allows them to stay in his house, provides them with food,
argues in support of their case and draws the media's attention to
their journey which makes it an instant success. The words spoken
by the lawyer always haunt Karega and after coming back to
Ilmorog he writes to him asking him to send him books. The
lawyer's long letter which accompanies the books, enlightens him
and he decides his course of life. The letter says,

'... you serve the people who struggle; Or you
serve those who rob the people. In a situation
of the robber and the robbed, in a situation in
which the Old man of the sea is sitting on
Sindbad, there can be no neutral history and
politics. If you would learn look about you;
choose your side (200) .
Karega does look about and chooses his side. He decides to work for the people whose labour is robbed by a few. The lawyer, the selfless individual, who works for the poor and the deserted people pays heavily for his commitment - he is murdered by the unethical politicians who do not tolerate the lawyer becoming popular among the people. "... his brutal death had shocked Karega as it had shaken the whole land" (301) and Karega feels that the lawyer represented "the finest and most courageous in a line of courageous and selfless individuals from among the propertied men and women of Kenya; ..." (301) Karega is impelled to act against the exploiters because of the lawyer. While 'the man' and Karega require assistance or guidance, Matigari does not require any such aid as he is portrayed as a man with extraordinary abilities. Yet, Muriuki offers his assistance Matigari.

Matigari is presented as a man of incredible strength and power who is considered as a mysterious person and not as an ordinary human being. But, Guthera and Muriuki offers their assistance to him in order to achieve his goal. Matigari’s first contact, when he enters the country, is Muriuki, a young boy. He is an orphan who lives with the other boys who do not have homes.
They live in a scrapyard, where they have made old, damaged cars as their houses. Matigari who sees this, wants 'to embrace all the children and take them to his house that very moment'. (Ma. 16) But he is not received by the other boys in the scrapyard well. They pelt him with stones and he bleeds. Nobody cares to help him. Only Muriuki remains with him and Matigari asks the boy 'My child, you didn't forsake me?' (18) and adds, 'you will be remembered' (19) Muriuki's mother was burnt alive by their landlord since his mother could not pay the rent. Matigari decides to wipe away the tears of the orphans as he later decides to wipe away the tears of Guthera. Guthera and Muriuki enable Matigari escape from the prison and the mental hospital. Whenever he thinks of them, he feels more committed—he is reminded of his duty towards his people and his country. 'Most of all, he was inspired by the depth of Guthera's and Muriuki's commitment to him. He thought of Guthera He thought of Muriuki. Their agony had become his agony; their suffering, his suffering (88) Matigari realises how Guthera and Muruiiki had risked their lives to save him. He says, 'If it were not for the two of you, where would I be today? Still in prison, or in a mental hospital'
Though he pleads them not to take part in his crusade both of them willingly accompany him.

The Teacher, though, does not cast any influence over 'the man', does make him understand the reality. Although he makes comments like, 'Allow me to foretell your future, friend. With a wife like that, you will not only be rich. You will be great soon' (BB. 59) and points out the difference between him and 'the man'. The lawyer, inspires Karega, motivates him, yet Karega himself feels that the lawyer was not practical enough. Palmer says,

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while the lawyer, like Armah's teacher in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, is an idealized symbol of perfection and purity, a mere voice who gives his views in lengthy speeches rather than a character playing a part in the drama, Karega is convincingly portrayed. (GAN, 301)
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Muriuki, who personifies the youth of tomorrow, indicates a positive sign of life to the exploited class. He is Matigari, re-presented to the society.
The narrative technique adopted by the novelists, the expression and the images used by them explain the severity of the problem faced by the protagonists. In *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the unnamed hero stands for Armah’s absolute disappointment with the society. The omniscient narrative is switched over to the first person narrative by ‘the man’ in chapter six which is rhetorical and ‘the man’ narrates his past which includes Kofi Billy’s suicide Mannau’s madness and rise of Nkrumah as a leader. wherein the answer to his present attitude to life is evident. Kofi Billy who loses his leg because of the careless attitude of a white, hangs himself and this makes ‘the man’ detest the people who abuse power. Mannan who worships Nkruniah, who believes that Nkrumah has come as a saviour of the people, is disillusioned when Nkrumah turns out to be a corrupt. Like Baako in *Fragments*, Mannan goes mad like Baako and her madness makes ‘the man’ turn against the political hypocrites. The political history of Ghana has been made to blend with the life of the protagonist. When Nkrumah emerges as a leader, ‘the man’ says, ‘Yet out of the decay and the dung there is always a new flowering’ (BB.85) only rephrase later, out of disappointment, thus; ‘It must be power. I say this because he is not the only one whom power has lost’ (88). Kofi Billy’s suicide symbolises the
exploitation of the whites; Mannan's madness stands for the exploitation of the politicians. If he is as sensitive as Kofi Billy he must choose to die; if he is totally depressed over what happens as Mannan he may become mad if he is indifferent as the Teacher, he has to extricate himself from his family, the social life. 'The man' does not want to be swayed by any of these characters and chooses to live adjusting with the existing society, retaining his principles. The reader is tossed between the political life of Ghana and the social life of 'the man' and the outcome is the disastrous personal life of the latter. The spectacular portrayal of the past and the present makes one understand why 'the man' is advised by the Teacher himself to follow what others are doing. The cinematographic technique enhances the texture of the problem faced by 'the man'.

For instance, the spot light brings out the contrast between 'the man' as an official and as a husband. His mental strength is proved at his office and the light moves over to his life at home where he admits that he feels impotent. His official and personal life are juxtaposed to present the circumstances that tempt 'the man' to get corrupt. Amankwa offers him a bribe in the office; at home, his wife persuades him to get it; he is torn between his
conscience and the reality he has to face. Again the poor condition of 'the man's' life is contrasted with the luxurious life afforded by Koomson's family. The honest man's son walks without even shoes whereas at Koomson's house there are things 'for a human being to spend a life time desiring'. (BB, 144) The entire novel is the social version of Plato's cave story. In Plato's story the people spend many years in fetters and in a cave in darkness. One of them breaks the chain and finds out the light at last and reports to the others hoping that they would snap off the chains and follow him to see the light. But his words are taken for a mad man's. He is dissuaded, they continue to live in eternal darkness. 'The man' in the novel too, is a loner fighting his best not to fall a victim to corruption. His conflict is best expressed when he says',

'I see a long, long way'... and it is full of people, so many people going so far into the distance that I see them all like little bubbles joined together. They are going, just going, and I am going with them. I know I would like to be able to come out and see where we are going, but in the very long lines of people I am only one', (74)
like the loner who finds the light yet joins others in eternal darkness in Plato's cave story. `The man’ is referred to as a `watcher' when the novel opens and truly, he only watches what is happening around him and never reacts. He is also referred to as the `invisible man of the shadows' (37) may be because his existence is uncared for. `The man' says `I will be like a cork’ (63) which means he may not pour out his emotions. The whole novel stinks, stinks with filth - starting with saliva and ending with `the man' and Koomson crawling through the latrine, full of garbage, blob, excrement, vomit etc., which makes one agree with Achebe's statement that it is a sick book. The novel begins with the description of `the man', - `running down from the left corner of the watcher's mouth, a stream of the man's spittle (5) and ending with `the man' crawling through the latrine. The image presented is sickening like the condition of `the man's' life and phrases like, `man's spittle', blob collected and spit', `patch of slime', `shit pan' are much frequented. Palmer says,

Armah insists on the realistic details of urine, faeces, and snot, to shock us into a realization of the repulsiveness of corruption (IAN, 134).
'The man' is not after 'gleam' and hence 'light' which normally indicates 'hope' signifies the negative concepts. Phrases like 'blind lights shine and cut into the night with their sudden power' (100) indicate the negative aspect of light. The Teacher can be taken as the man's conscience and his nakedness symbolises the already destroyed soul. The novel begins and ends with a bus ride - 'the man' is a passenger in the beginning and an on looker at the end. The bus symbolically presents the corrupt condition of the country. In the beginning the conductor takes people's money and at the end the driver bribes the policeman. Of course, the backdrop of the scenes has been changed - Nkrumah's rule has been taken over by the military coup. Yet the condition of corruption remains the same. Mannan's madness indicates there is no end for victimization, which makes 'the man' lose his hope and assume that *The Beautyfull Ones Are Not Yet Born*, and in such a society people like 'the man' do not have any identity. The future is bleak and blurred.

The epic length novel, *Petals of Blood* shows Ngugi as a skilful writer. Like a detective fiction the novel opens with the murder of the three V.I.Ps and the mystery is unravelled only at the end. Ngugi expresses his social ideology through Karega.
journey motif which is predominant in the post-colonial writings, is skilfully used by Ngugi and it is the journey which makes Karega entangle himself with the problem. The journey is undertaken by Karega and by the village, Ilmorog collectively. The four sections of the novel indicate the journey - WALKING - TOWARDS BETHLEHEM - TO BE BORN - AGAIN. The journey initiated by Karega from Ilmorog to Nairobi is symbolic and it is 'the exodus toward the kingdom of knowledge' (118). The collective journey of Ilmorog serves as a turning point not only to the village but also to Karega. He comes to Ilmorog to know about Chui, but the journey exposes him to many more Chuis and Kimerias. Later, leaving Ilmorog, Karega once again begins his journey which is the journey of 'search and exploration' (237) undertaken by every sufferer. Karega's brother, Ndinguri, in Karega's dream says, 'I know of your journey. I know the journey of search and exploration undertaken by all my brothers and sisters' (237). Karega, symbolically, is the saviour of the village. Karega and Abdulla's donkey stand for the salvation of the village and the death of the donkey and the departure of Karega from the village coincides with each other. This means the end of the spiritual happiness in Ilmorog. Now, the hyenas of the novel - Chui, Kimeria and Mzigo enter the village and it loses its chastity irrevocably. Karega's
struggle for life continues and yet he starts living for others. He says, 'A worker has no particular home... every where and nowhere'. (291) The conflict makes him realise that he belongs to everyone and Abdulla rightly says, 'A bean fell to the ground and we split it amongst ourselves' (136) referring to Karega. The country brewed drink Theng'etta itself is used symbolically. The 'oneness' experienced by the Ilmorogians by drinking Theng'eta 'the drink of peace (240) turns out to be 'a drink of strife' (240). It changes the lives of many - Karega is dismissed from his job and leaves Ilmorog; animosity between Wanja and Munira develops. The resistance ideology which Karega represents is revealed at several instances and what is accomplished by Matigari at a later period in Ngugi's literary career is anticipated by Karega when he says, 'If I had a light, I would burn up the whole place' (157). Karega, the name itself means 'he who refuses' in Gikuyu. As in A Grain of Wheat the flash - back technique used by the novelist helps one view the protagonists' conflict in a better perspective and interestingly Karega's struggle, his conflict and confrontation and even his resolution - everything is exposed to the readers through the moments of introspection attributed to Munira, who ironically happens to be one of the sources of Karega's conflict.
The whole novel Matigari can be taken as an allegory. It is based on an oral story about a man looking for a cure for an illness' (Ma. vii) and Matigari is looking for Truth and Justice. As the 'bus' indicates the decayed condition of the society in, 'The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born' the 'garbage Yard' where the children run to, where they ferret about to get something, indicates the decadent condition of the society. Journey motif is used as a technique by Ngugi in this novel too. Life on earth is a journey and 'What trials one had to endure on this earthly journey! (5). The journey undertaken by Matigari to find out the answer to where he could find Truth and Justice in the country is arduous. Matigari, who appears to be an ordinary human being in the first part, becomes an all pervasive personality in Part II to seek Truth and Justice. To his disappointment, even a lawyer, a teacher, a student and a priest - the people who build up the society are unable to give a satisfactory answer. On the contrary, the Radio which is called ironically the Voice of Truth expresses the imperialistic attitude of the people who are vested with power and the narration moves convincingly along the decision taken by Matigari. Abdulrazak Gurnah says,
In order to destroy evil, he plunges into the fire set by him and of course, there is no death for Matigari and Muriuki may be taken as Matigari resurrected. The narration gradually builds up the tension and when Matigari wears the belt of arms it is quite convincing. To the question, is violence the only way for redemption, Ngugi has replied, 'it is not just arms but armed justice' (appendix) he has advocated. The names mean certain concepts and the title and the chapter divisions are named after them. Matigari means 'the patriots who survived the bullets; Ngaruro wa Kiriro means Wiping your tears away; Guthera means 'the pure' and Muriuki means 'the resurrected'. The characters, the words used by them especially by Matigari, the theme - everything can be treated symbolically. For example, the 'riderless horse' which appears in the beginning and at the end of the novel symbolises the country. Matigari watches, 'a white man and a black
man’, sitting on ‘horse back’ (43). The events that are narrated one after the other necessitates Matigari’s action to redeem what is due to the people. Indifference to life and values is shown at several occasions and the negligence of religions and sociological ideas is indicated when an old couple finds the pictures of Jesus and Karl Marx in the dust bin and they mistake them for Matigari and Ngaruro wa Kiriro—perhaps Ngugi had them in his mind when he created Matigari and Ngaruro. This has made certain critics assume Matigari as Jesus resurrected. Matigari achieves the purpose of the novel aimed at by Ngugi through the narrative technique and the device he uses is repetition - words are repeated; ideas are reiterated; characters harp on, talk on only one topic, Matigari. The theme of the novel,

The builder sleeps in the open

The worker is left empty handed,

The tailor goes naked,

And the tiller goes to sleep on an empty stomach?’ (98)

is often repeated. The conflict of the protagonist is made universal in the following lines:
- may the story take place in the country of your choice!
- may the action take place in the time of your choice!
- may you place the action in the space of your choice! (IX)

The protagonists as disappointed souls resolve the conflict in their own distinctive way. The resolutions are not taken by them on an impulse. 'The man' is psychologically dismissed from the society. He feels like a stranger, an alien in his own house. He feels depressed and desolate.

How could he, when all around him the whole world never tired of saying there were only two types of men who took refuge in honesty - the cowards and the fools? Very often these days he was burdened with the hopeless, important feeling that he was not just one of these, but a combination of the two (BB. 51)
The teacher from whom, 'the man' always seeks solace advises him to swim along the stream and says, 'just close your mouth and watch', (57) and the man decides to do this. Oyo enters into a contract to run a boat with Koomson and the man does not prevent her from doing it. The only way he shows his protest is by not eating the fish that come from Koomson's boat and asks his wife not to cook any more fish for him. Despite the pressure from all corners, 'the man' sustains his principle and leads taintless life. Neil Lazarus says,

>'The man' learns that it is only by continuing his struggle, by resolutely opposing the pull of the degraded reality all around him, and by holding fast to a vision of future social transformation that he is able to invest his life with a constructive purpose' (RAL Vol. 18, 173).

Karega in Petals of Blood, is victimized by Munira's father. His failure in love for Mukami makes him detest the imperialistic attitude of people like Ezekieli. Wanja's failure in life impels Karega .
to fight against the capitalists like Kimerias. His failure to complete his education at Sirianna makes him antagonise the hypocritical educationists, like Chui. Not being able to cope with the imperialists, Karega decides to prepare the younger generation of his country. He attempts to create African consciousness in them and the Ilmorogians appreciate this act of Karega. Matigari who is shocked to notice the corrupt condition that prevails in his country, seeks Truth and Justice. He goes to a teacher, a student, a priest and a politician who of course greatly shape the society. He learns that Truth and Justice have become abstractions and they are no more observed in the society and whatever is said by the people who have power is considered Truth and Justice!

The confrontation of the problem further creates either positive or negative impact on the problem faced already. The man understands, according to Neil Lazarus,

> Respect, admiration, and love seem to have been voided out of the society and replaced by sycophancy, covetousness and callous manipulation (RAL, Vol 18, 152)
The man' leaves everything to take its own course of action retaining his principle. 'Everyone alone with his troubles better' (103) becomes his stand. A coup is formed; Nkrumah is dismissed and Koomson is thrown out of his position and his life is at stake. He comes to 'the man's house seeking his help and the man does help him. Life changes and Oyo says, 'I am glad you never became like him' (191). This, of course, is the reward he gets for his honesty!

Karega is forced to leave Ilmorog and unable to continue as a teacher, leaves the place against his will. He decides to work for the unity amidst the workers. He declares, 'It's the system that needs to be changed... and only the workers of Kenya and the peasants can do that' (BB.308) He assumes, only if the workers stand united, they can fight against the capitalists like Chuis and Kimerias. Gicaamba in Ngugi's play, I will Marry When I want while referring to the owners of a factory says,

The owners of these companies are real scorpions
They know three things only:
To oppress workers,
To take away their rights
And to suck their blood (33)

and this describes the owners of Thengetta Breweries, Chui, Kimeria and Mzigo. Hence Karega, wherever he goes, talks about the need for a union and as a result is dismissed from the job. He resists the authorities and educates the working class to join hands.

The spark of revolution in Karega gains greater dimension in Matigari. The society forces him to do what he does at the end. As a seeker of Truth and Justice he confronts the answers like, `go get a rope and hang yourself immediately... for your kind of questions will lead you to the grave' (Ma. 82) He decides to lead the exploiters to the grave. He wants to get back his house from the black parasites. If not, he decides to build a new house, altogether different with firm foundation for his people, destroying the old one where only the affluent can afford to live in.

All the three novels, discussed in this chapter evidently express the writers’ `social consciousness and their commitment.
Both Armah and Ngugi deal with corruption in these novels. Armah stops with presenting what happens in the country and does not seem to indicate any sign of hope. Even Oyo’s appreciation of 'the man's' principle, does not make him happy since he feels that it may not hold strong.

But suddenly all his mind was consumed with thoughts of everything he was going to - Oyo, the eyes of the children after six o'clock, the office and everyday, and above all the never-ending knowledge that this aching emptiness would be all that the remainder of his own life could offer him (BB. 183),

and he believes that his life is not going to change just because, Oyo appreciates him.

Armah is desperate that *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and in such a society, people like 'the man' do not have any identity of their own. This explains the protagonist not having any name. 'The man', though painfully is aware of the condition
of the society, stops with being honest and never attempts to reform the people, even his wife. John coates accuses Armah by saying, `the man'

is not despite Armah's noted interest in Frantz Fanon, part of a revolutionary situation of which he becomes conscious or in which he reaches a position of commitment' (WLWE, Vol.28, 159).

Not only to the protagonist, to Armah himself, the future of Ghana is unpredictable.

Ngugi's protagonists are far sighted and firmly take up decisions which would certainly bring about transformations in the society. It is Fanon who has said that the poor - `the wretched of the Earth' - should rebel against oppression and should revolutionize and if there is a need even violence can be administered.

When asked about Ngugi's adherence to Fanonian principle, Ngugi has replied that he does not describe himself as a Fanonist.
but likes Fanonian thoughts. Yet many critics have identified him as a Fanonist. This is evident in Karega's attempt to unite the workers against the capitalists. Though imprisoned, Karega has already set the movement going. He envisages,

> Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its preying blood thirsty gods and gnomic angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh (PB 344).

The resistance ideology in Karega is developed into revolutionary appeal in Matigari. Matigari is shot; he plunges into the river and his body is not found; the mysterious disappearance only suggests that Matigari will reappear whenever and wherever there is injustice done to the poor. The very name means, 'the patriots who survived the bullets' meaning to say, the patriots never die. Ngugi shows his protest in these two novels. Elleke Bochmer observes,
Beginning with the writing of his epic length *Petals of Blood*, a project that extended over the early mid-seventies, Ngugi has come unequivocally to identify with the plight of the betrayed Kenyan peasantry. His nationalism of the sixties has thus turned revolutionary; whereas in the early novels the concept of the nation was identified with a leader figure, a Kenyetta type of patriarch; it is now seen in terms of `the people' bound together by their shared history and cultural traditions (JCL Vol XXVI, 188-89).

Ngugi, in the later phase of his literary career has become a sort of protest writer against his own people who have become betrayers. Oket P' Bitek' asks, `will you stand idly by while your educated colleagues carry out such ruthless exploitation among your weaker subjects? Please do not talk to me about the difficulties involved' (9) and Ngugi is not able to `stand idly' and this is evident in the resolutions taken up by Karega and Matigari. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* being his first novel, Armah expresses just the depressed soul of the writer over the condition of his country.
‘The man’, Karega and Matigari stand to prevent the disease called corruption and exploitation. The confrontation of the same problem by them reveal – be firm and create an impact on others; resist; revolutionize. The novelists convincingly put across their ideologies through the portrayal of the protagonists.