CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

"At the collective level, literature, as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming"

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in Writers in Politics

African literature began to gain prominence from the later half of the last century. Oral literature of the continent is as old as the existence of mankind in Africa. But literature written in English, French and other indigenous languages is, primarily, the outcome of a historical event, colonisation. The creative writers of Africa felt an urge to write about the trauma the people had undergone during the colonial rule. Hence African literature is charged with intense emotions and though young, it has already earned a universal acclaim. The political history of the continent influences the literature to a very great extent. History of the African continent is used by the writers for various purpose. They haul the African history to impress upon African mind the ruthless treatment meted out to them by the colonisers; they expose the ignoble attitude of the black traitors; they glorify the people who sacrificed their lives
in the freedom struggle; they also recall the cultural heritage of the continent in order to ward off the danger of being consumed by the western culture. The writers chosen for study - Ayi Kwei Armah of Ghana (West Africa) and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o of Kenya (East Africa) handle the above mentioned themes in their writings and the novels chosen for study exhibit these characteristics. They recapitulate history; they condemn the native traitors who deny the rights of their own fellow beings; they express the fear of social degeneration and cultural disintegration. Thus the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial life in Africa, is portrayed in their writings and hence a brief survey of the colonial history of Africa particularly East and West Africa becomes essential to understand them.

Africa is the second largest continent in the world, a land of natural resources for which it was sought after by many countries. The large population of the continent which resulted in the poor condition of living was advantageous to the usurpers who could easily use the Africans in slave-trade. These were the major reasons for the colonisers’ interest in Africa. The rich fertile soil of the continent was trodden not only by the Britishers but also by the Americans, the French, the Spanish, the Italians and the
Germans. The Portugese were the pioneers who settled in Africa and even the most uninhabitable region like the Congo forest was occupied by the Americans. By 1914, Britain had established its rule successfully over the continent and it could accomplish this through religion, education and trade and commerce. The Africans were religious and the concept of the Invincible Power was inherent in them. In strictly observing the religious rites and rituals, they exhibited their unshakable faith in their religion. They willingly followed all the rituals even though certain rituals could be fatal. But,

Missionary, the spiritual police man of the colonizer went to Africa and proclaimed that its people had no culture, no social organisation, no religion and virtually nothing to save their soul. The African was a bushman, a brute, who had to be taught christianity for the good of his soul and body

(Om. P Juneja, PC, 61)

Hence the colonisers introduced a new God, Jesus, to the Africans and persuaded them to believe in and follow their religion, Christianity. David Diop says, in his poem, 'Vultures',

3
In those days
When civilization kicked us in the face
When holy water slapped our cringing brows
The vultures built in the shadow of their talons
The blood stained monument of tutelage...

Secondly, the colonisers used the natives' ignorance to their advantage. They volunteered to eradicate their ignorance by educating them. The young minds were taken in and brain-washed only to forsake their people and their culture. African history and culture were not taught to them and instead they were made to learn about the British landscape and Queen Mother who ruled them sitting on a throne far, far away from their land. They were forced to learn factors which were quite alien and irrelevant to their life. Thirdly, the colonisers gained power through business transaction and became dominant. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his novel, *Petals of Blood* sums up the entry of the colonisers thus:

The missionary had traversed the seas, the forests, armed with the desire for profit that was his faith and light and the gun that was his protection. He carried the Bible; the soldier carried the gun; the administrator and the settler carried the coin; christianity, commerce, civilization; the Bible the coin, the Gun; Holy Trinity (88)
Though the colonial occupation took place more or less at the same period throughout the continent, the experience differs from region to region. In East Africa, which includes Kenya, Uganda, Tanganijika, Somali land, Madagaskar, the colonial occupation took place during the first world war. The infiltration was more in this region and one of Ngugi’s characters Mr. Howlands, a setter in Kenya in his *Weep Not, Child*, says, 'East Africa was a good place. Here was a big trace of wild country to conquer' (WN, 30). The gruesome practice of Kipande was introduced soon after the first world war according to which most of the natives became bonded labourers. During the second world war, the Africans went to the warfront, stood on the side of the Britishers and were loyal. But discrimination even in the warfront could not be tolerated by the natives and soon after the war, the resistance movement began which led to the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya in 1952. But to curtail the movement, Emergency was declared by the coloniser and within three years from the inception of the movement it was reported that 11,000 Africans were killed and 62,000 were confined to prisons and the concentration camps. Ngugi presents the sufferings the people had to undergo in such concentration camps, in his novel, *A Grain of Wheat*. Though the Movement was defeated, it paved the way for Kenya’s solidarity.
The natives continued to claim their right to own their land and the British Government was willing to grant it. But this was impeded by the Britishers who had already settled there. The Mau Mau, under the leadership of Jomo Kenyetta could not end the white domination. Jomo Kenyetta was accused as a terrorist and was imprisoned. Ngugi uses Jomo Kenyetta as an inspiration to certain characters in *Weep Not Child*. Ngugi says,

... in my novels - *Weep Not, Child, A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* - Kenyetta has appeared either directly as a historical figure or has been hinted at in the portrayal of some of the characters’ (De, 159)

Self Government was granted to Kenya by the British only in 1960 and even after the conferment of it, the most important representations were enjoyed only by the Britishers. The Kenyans were dissatisfied with this and they struggled under the banner of Kenya African National Union (KANU) In the next election held, all the seats were won by the KANU and Kenya was declared Independent in 1963 and Jomo Kenyetta became the first Prime Minister.
The colonial history of West Africa differs from that of East Africa. West Africa was occupied by the British, the French and the Germans since the nineteenth century. Togo and Cameroon, the two west African colonies became independent in 1960 and in the same year the French occupied regions, Senegal and Sudal also were freed. Ghana which is called the Gold Coast was occupied by the British even before the first world war. By 1920, the Ghanaians formed the National Congress of British West Africa hoping to have an amiable relationship with the settlers. It demanded the political rights, like due representation in the Legislative Assembly. Though the settler Government was indifferent to this demand, by 1925, Accra, Takoradi, Cape Coast, Secondi could send their elected representatives to the Assembly. During the second world war, the people in West Africa, especially the working class suffered due to hike in prices, low wages, taxes etc. Soon after the war, the resistance against the rulers became stronger and the British, to extinguish the fire of rebellion, appointed a committee consisting of Africans to review and revise the constitution. But this committee was partial towards the colonisers and so the natives formed a party, Convention People's Party in 1949 in order to ensure their rights with the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah's consistent outcry for a self
government persuaded the British and the Gold Coast became independent in 1957 and Nkrumah was the first President of independent Ghana. In 1966, a coup was formed against Nkrumah and the national liberation council deposed him. Armah incorporates the rise and fall of Nkrumah’s government in his first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to a vital effect.

It is a bitter fact that the continent still suffers the consequences of colonialism. African countries were divided into regions according to the convenience of the colonisers and when freed, the continent had to cope with the artificial boundaries which resulted in diversified languages and cultures. This helped the Western culture easily influence the native tradition and culture. The compromise between the old and the new way of life gradually makes them rootless. The western sophistication which the natives try to imitate makes them materialistic and thereby lose human values. The political atmosphere gradually yields itself to imperialism and there is a threat to the continent becoming a colony once again. As a result, now, there is cultural, social and political upheaval which threatens the economic condition. The tribal conflicts, civil wars, political revolts and apartheid make the continent vulnerable.
The above mentioned social and political instability influences the literature that comes from Africa. Though the continent has the history of very rich oral literature, written literature came into existence only after the second world war, and the number of writers increased rapidly only after 1950s. Colonialism and the impact of colonialism are the dominant themes of their writings.

The emergence of the novel in India, Africa, African America and the Caribbeans is a direct consequence of the development of colonialism / slavery / racism (PC, 110)

Says, Om. P. Juneja Hence, initially the common themes the writers chose to write on were, the impact of colonialism on native culture, how the natives suffered to compromise the old with the newly developed thought pattern and above all the need for identity. Soon after independence the task of the writers was to bring forth the rich cultural heritage to the people so as to create a culturally unified society. Now, the natives who turned to be the capitalists and imperialists exploit the ignorant, weaker section of the society. Hence the writers of today, expose the corrupt and valueless
society of Africa. Whatever may be the period - whether it was colonial or post independence - exploitation has become the prominent theme of the writings. The whites exploited the blacks yesterday; the blacks exploit the blacks today. The condition of the exploited class remains the same and the writers’ aim is to create an awareness in them and thereby bring about a change in the scenario. The transition from protest against the settlers to protest against the social conditions is noteworthy. Social consciousness is one of the foremost concerns of creative writers in African literature because of its history. Ngugi feels,

"the very act of writing implies a social relationship; one is writing about somebody for somebody." (WP. 5)

Literature is the outcome of the conscious effort of a writer’s interaction with the society. This very often may be his own society or sometimes an objective analysis of an alien society and in the case of African writers, often, it is their own society they interact with. Hence African writers, in general, are the champions of social reformation, social re-organisation and at times even social revolution. Consequently, the writings are closer to reality and
there is less scope for imaginative and romantic fervour. Since their objective is to reform the existing society, the need to reach a larger audience becomes essential and some of the writers especially the West African writers used the media to accomplish it. Chinua Achebe was in the broadcasting for more than ten years. Cyprian Ekwensi was in the Information Service and then moved to broadcasting; Armah had worked as a script writer on Ghana Vision and his experience had helped him in creating the protagonist Baako who works in Ghana Television in his novel, *Fragment*. Emmanuel says,

"In West Africa, the mass media have disrupted the old social order and accelerated social change" (CTS, 7)

The writers' social commitment, naturally, impel them to involve themselves in politics, since the politicians are all-powerful in the post independent era, and they organise the society according to their requirements and exploit the innocent people. The writers' political concern not only endangers their writings but also their lives. Some of their writings are banned. Cyprian Ekwensi completed his novel, *Divided We Stand* in '69 but could
publish it only in '80, since the publishers did not like to offend the then Nigerian Government. Ngugi's *Matigari* was banned for sometime. The political atmosphere curtails the writers' literary aspirations and outspokenness and most of the writers are in exile. Yet, they have not given up their mission and write on themes related to their native continent and its problems.

In African literature, in general, the thematic variation has moved from creating an awareness to preventing the existence of inequality in the society. The urbanisation that has taken place moves towards neo-colonialism and it is a dangerous threat to independence. It indicates the deprivation and exploitation of the sources available in Africa. Chidi Amuta says,

> 'The primary measure of all creativity in Africa becomes an unconditional commitment to the eradication of imperialism' (*WLWE*, Vol. 21, 475)

The thematic evolution indicates a move from the attack on the colonisers to the attack on the powermongers of the free land. The need to curb the imperial attitude of the capitalists becomes
essential which results in the adoption of certain social theories like Marxism. Some writers express their debt to the radical, revolutionary ideology of Frantz Fanon, a French psychiatrist, who has said that violence is the only means of ending colonial repression and cultural trauma in the Third World. According to him, justice to the 'Wretched of the Earth' could be executed by any means and especially by the revolutionary thinking of the oppressed.

African writers convey their social, cultural and political perceptions in various literary forms like Poetry, Drama, Novel and Short Story. Yet, it is in the genre 'Novel' they are more successful. Charles R. Larson says,

"The novel is very much alive in Africa today;
African novelists are creating, exciting new patterns in the traditional literary form."

(EAF, 26)

Cultural diversity which naturally existed, cultural chaos owing to the aping of the west, social inequalities owing to economic conditions, political upheavals owing to corruption and exploitation
are the dominant themes of African novel, whatever may be the geographical distinction. The indigenous culture of East Africa was shattered by the settler’s occupation. Yet, Bernth Lindfors says,

Diversity, instead of leading to fragmentation, has contributed a measure of coherent articulation to this young literature.

(BAEA, 75)

The `Novel’ in East Africa developed much later than in West Africa because of the limited educational opportunities. Okillo Oculi, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Robert Serumuga are a few of the well known writers from East Africa.

The experience of South Africa is gruesome because the population of the whites is comparatively greater. South Africa was exposed to a multi cultural impact for a longer period than the other regions. Apartheid is still practised and the cultural variations and political discrimination influence the writings produced by the South African writers like, Andre’ Brink, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, Peter Abrahms, Ezekiel Mphalele, Bessie Head, Alex La Guma and a few others.
West Africa has drawn the universal attention despite its multi-cultural differences. Infact, Nigeria is the melting pot of innumerable ethnic groups which uses more than two hundred dialects. Most of the Nigerian writers belong to the major ethnic groups - yorubas, Igbos and Hausas and are strongly influenced by their ethnicity. Yet, the education system and the contact with the West made the West Africans advanced considerably and West African writers are the pioneers to write 'Novel' in Africa. The stalwarts of West African literature - Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Mongo Beti, Cyprian Ekwensi, Ayi Kwei Armah and Kofi Awooner - have already achieved universal recognition. Though Amos Tutuola is much criticised for his first novel *Palmwine Drinkard* which was written in incorrect English, he needs to be applauded for having written the first 'African' novel and not in any way 'English' in essence.

The writers chosen for study make use of both the post-colonial and post-independence themes in their writings and hence a brief note on the post-colonial/post-independence characteristics in literary context becomes essential. The post-colonial writers primarily discuss the colonial impact; they recapitulate history of
their land to inspire or motivate the people; they very often deal with the theme of betrayal in their writings.

'Betrayal, quite evidently, is an important characteristic of the post colonial situation in Africa'. (RAL, Vol 28, 41)

says, Josaphat Kubayanda. Armah vividly brings forth the colonial suppression and the history of Ghana in his novels, *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. Betrayal of the natives is also significant in these two novels. Both the novels exhibit Armah’s sense of history and explicitly present the cultural heritage of the land. Ngugi’s *The River Between* portrays the colonial impact on the lives of the innocent tribals and specifically shows the cultural disintegration because of the alien religion. His *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat* are the study on Kenyan history and also the betrayal of the natives. The focus of the post-colonial writings is more on the history and the culture of the land. The post-independence writers turn to the political arena of the land and they concentrate on the corruption and exploitation by the politicians, since,
The most striking and frightening characteristic of independent African governments is this; that, without exception all of them are dictatorships and practise ruthless discrimination such as makes South African apartheid look tame. (O Kot P' Bitek, ACR, 7)

The writers have done away with the colonial themes like, racial discrimination, struggle between the blacks and the whites and as typical post - independence writers Armah and Ngugi handle corruption in politics of the day in their novels. Armah condemns the politicians and bourgeoisie in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments.* Political corruption, giving way to social disintegration and social inequality, is the striking note in Armah's novels. Ngugi, in his *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari* illustrates how the individuals are deprived of the life due to them by the so called politicians and also by a few of the capitalists who feed the politicians well. The post-independence writers' involvement in politics is the outcome of their social commitment. Social justice is the pervasive concern of the day and Kofi Awooner, a West African writer says that an African writer should understand the society he lives in and also the way he wants the society to move.
Achebe suggests that an African writer has to help the society in regaining its strength it has lost because of the conditions that prevail. Armah and Ngugi exhibit their interest and involvement in the society and suffer the consequence of it. Their criticism of the Government has made them exiles. In order to make the social thoughts more effective and concrete, the post-independence writers adhere to certain social theories. Both Armah and Ngugi display the influence of Marx and Fanon, the sociologists. Ngugi feels that the exploitation of the continent continues even after independence, and this can be brought to an end only by ideologies like, Marxist socialism – the conflict between the have and the have nots; mighty and the weak; rich and the poor; capitalists and the labourers – naturally, calls for the Marxian ideology. G.D. Killam says that it is Marx who articulates a political and economic philosophy which will suit Ngugi’s conviction about post-independent Kenyan development. He also says that critics of Ngugi have noted Fanon’s influence on Ngugi’s fiction. The post independence writers make use of autobiographical elements which make their writings genuine and authentic. Armah was shocked to see the condition of Ghana on his return to Ghana from the West and was thoroughly disillusioned. He presents this experience in his *Fragments*. Ngugi and his family were
personally affected by Mau Mau emergency which he presents in *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*. His acquaintance with the Marxists at Leeds university has made him rebel against the capitalists and he expresses it in *Petals of Blood*. The question of language disturbs the post-independence writers much and Fanon also insists on giving up the colonial tongue. Ngugi loves his tribal language Gikuyu and writes in it inorder to reach his people. Armah insists on the need for Kiswahili. But Africa is one of the largest continent in the world where innumerable tribal languages are spoken. A writing in Kiswahili may not reach the Gikuyu tribe though there is close resemblance between these two languages; Yoruba may not create an appeal in Igbo. Hence, for two reasons the novelists choose either English or French as the medium of their expression. Firstly, the novelists feel, they need to gain universal attention by writing in universally acknowledged languages. Secondly, they wish to reach as large number of their own people as possible and write in English or French which are the common official languages in the continent, thanks to colonialism. Yet, some writers turn to their own ethnic group and insist on writing in the language of the people for whom the writings are meant. Ngugi insists on the need for regionalism not only in the subject matter but also in the language. It is true that the writers
may not be able to transfer the desired African native sensibilities in a foreign language. Anne Tibble says,

There is naturally a mental 'block' over writing in a second language.... folk stories, legends, idiom, customs, 'won't translate' even in the writing down; some of their essence escapes'. (AEL, 33)

The writers should also bear in mind that they cannot carry the messages to a wider audience. When Ngugi writes for his tribe, Gikuyu in particular, he is likely to overlook the other tribes and Africans in general. The writers writing in English need not be condemned because,

..... any literary work must have an appeal beyond the culture in which it is rooted. This probably partially accounts for the choice of English as the medium of expression by many Nigerian writers; (Abiodum Adetugbo, INL, 173)
like Achebe and Soyinka. Whatever may be the language used by the writers, the prevailing condition of the continent in the post-independence period sets certain demands for their writing so as to make the country, as Oket P'Bitek says, in the Preface to Africa's cultural Revolution introduced by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o,

`... discover her true self, and rid herself of all `apemanship'. For only then can she begin to develop a culture of her own. Africa must redefine all cultural terms according to her own interests. As she has broken the political bondage of colonialism, she must continue the economic and cultural revolution until she refuses to be led by the nose by the foreigners .... we must interpret and present Africa in our own way, in our own interests` (VII).

Hence, the writers attempt to interpret the social and the political situation of the continent for the sake of the people. They retrieve history of the continent to make the present a better one. They arouse African consciousness in the individuals. They enlighten the people through their writings. As they are displeased with the present social set up they desire to impart their radical, revolutionary ideas to the people.
No one can deny that the literature of commitment is necessary. How can a writer just look on placidly while the struggle for sheer survival rages around him?, (Kuna, Vol V, 36)

asks, Elechi Amadi. The writers aim at a homogeneous society devoid of corruption which requires the untiring, indefatigable energy from them. Their obligation is to help people eradicate social evils and to reconstruct the present day so that the tomorrow will be a better one. According to James Trevor,

The issue of commitment is inescapable in a literature where freedom, social justice and racial equality are pervasive concerns.

(ELTW, 37)

Social commitment is inevitable in African literature and Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o whose novels are analysed for this study, can be called committed writers with firm conviction. Their characters display the writers' anxiety, apprehension and ideologies. Richard Peck says,
Ngugi Wa Thiong'o of Kenya and Ayi Kwei Armah of Ghana have shown in their works over the years a major preoccupation with their role in society; as members of the educated elite, as committed individuals and as artists and intellectuals exhibiting in their early works the classic symptoms of alienation, both have come to new convictions in more recent works. Their convictions differ, but each represents a way of integrating oneself in a community, thus reducing the anguish of alienation. (RAL, Vol. 20, 26)

The narrative technique adopted by the writers demonstrates the historical, mythical and cultural background of the continent. The narrative strategies used by them effectively explicate the social conflict that exists.

Ayi Kwei Armah was born in 1939 to Fante-speaking parents in the twin harbour city of Secondi, Takoradi in Western Ghana. His father belonged to a royal family of Ga tribe. He completed his education at Harvard University and was employed as a translator for the magazine `Revolution Africane`. He worked as a Radio Ghana script writer, producer and announcer for sometime. He has
worked as a teacher at the college of National Education, Tanzania and at National University of Lesotho and also at the university of Wisconsin at Madison. He left for America in 1959 and returned in '64, only to face the dehumanized society. Hence Armah’s writings include themes like capitalism, corruption and exploitation.

Armah became internationally famous in 1968 by his first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the novel with a difference, which expresses his discomfort with the society that is devoid of values. 'The man' without a name recalls perhaps T.S. Eliot’s 'living and partly living' concept of modern life. His first novel was followed by *Fragments* (1970), which presents the psychological fragmentation of an individual as a result of living in a thoroughly materialistic world. His *Why Are We So Blast* (1974) stresses that the influence of the West makes the Africans forget their roots. His short story, *Contact* published in 1965 anticipated *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) which recapitulates the history of colonial occupation in Ghana specifically the events that took place from sixteenth to nineteenth century in order to enlighten the present; and *The Healers* (1978) which brings about the ways of healing the spiritually, culturally and socially
deteriorating society. Both these novels demonstrate Armah’s attack on feudalism and social inequality. He published the novels through the East African Publishing House so as to reach a wider audience. In the later part of his literary career, Armah turned to history with an intention of bringing about a social revolution.

Armah is essentially a social writer who envisages the society of the future even when he deals with the history of the land. He may be understood better, through his later novels *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* where history is recaptured to evaluate the present experience. His protagonists are visionaries. There is no nostalgic yearning in the first three novels which is obviously present in *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. As in many other countries, in Ghana too committed writers are rebuked, condemned and sometimes even punished and Armah is in exile. Armah has lived in all parts of the continent and hence does not like to identify himself only as a West African. He is keenly conscious of the degenerating society which strides towards materialism and not towards spiritualism and he fears that it may lead to the loss of cultural and human values. Kirsten Holst Petersen says,
Armah is concerned with retrieving lost African values which could bring back to modern Ghana some of the spirituality it lacks.

(Kuna, Vol, No 1, 1958)

Though he writes about the experience of the Ghanaians in his novels, he transcends it in spirit.

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o was born to Wanjiku and Thiong’o Wa Nducu, in Kamiriuthu Village near Limuru in Kiambu district of Kenya, twelve miles north east of Nairobi. His father Thiong’o Wa Nducu was a squatter on the estate of a well to do landowner. Ngugi had his higher education in Makerere university college in Kampala, Uganda. He married Nyambura in 1961 and has two sons and three daughters. He was named James Ngugi by his parents. But he felt strongly about his commitment towards his people and changed his name from James Ngugi to Ngugi Wa Thiong’o which is a tribal name in Gikuyu. He joined Makerere University college in 1959, and began his literary career in 1960 with a short story, ‘The Fig Tree’, in the university literary magazine, ‘Pin Point’. Then onwards, he contributes regularly to ‘Kenya Weekly News’, ‘Sunday Post’, ‘Sunday Nation’ and he is

Ngugi's works have been translated into more than thirty languages and he has also received many awards. The East Africa Novel Prize (62), the UNESCO first prize for the novel, *weep not child* (63), the Lotus prize for Afro-Asian Literature (73), Paul
Robeson award for Artistic Excellence, Political conscience and Integrity (92), the Gwendolyne Brooks Centre contributors award for significant contribution to the Black Literary arts (94) the foulon - Nichol prize (96), the Zora Neale Hurston-Paul Robeson Award (93) by the New York African Studies Association (96) are a few to mention.

In 1982, he was not permitted to stage his play, ‘Mother sing for me’ and he learnt that he would be arrested and detained once again as in 1977. He moved to Britain in the same year and lived there till 88. Since 1989 he has been living in the U.S.

Ngugi's tribal, communal and social consciousness have made him suffer since 1977. Yet this has not deterred his social involvement and pursuit of literary career. Ngugi says,

My writing is really an attempt to understand myself and my situation in society and in history, (Pagination not given)

in the preface to Secret Lives. His Weep Not Child, is a pathetic document on war of liberation. The River Between portrays the
impact of an alien religion and colonial intervention. *A Grain of Wheat* portrays how Mau Mau emergency, a historical event in Kenya made the individuals suffer, David Rubadiri says,

James Ngugi, in his three novels, *Weep Not Child. The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat*, though on the surface concerned with the emergence of Kenya as an independent country, is basically concerned with the social problems of man in his human relationship with other. *(NI, 55)*

*Secret Lives* consists of stories that depict either the writer's earlier perception of life or anticipate the forthcoming themes and characterisation in his writings. *Petals of Blood* is a journey taken by the writer towards his ideologies which were, hitherto, not given adequate expression. The play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* written by Ngugi and Ngugi Wa Mari, exposes the autocratic rule of the capitalists against the poor peasants. This was written in Gikuyu since Ngugi felt,

"In writing one should hear all the whispering, and the shouting and crying and the loving"
and the hating of the many voices in the past
and those voices will never speak to a writer
in a foreign language' (WP, 40)

This play stamped him as a social activist. His *Devil on the Cross*
illustrates 'the Kenyan people's struggle against neo-colonial
form and stage of imperialism' (De.8). His non-fiction works
reiterate his ideologies. His revolt against the existing political
conditions in Kenya could be perceived in *Detained*. *Decolonising the Mind* stresses the need for the use of native
languages.

The novel *Matigari* translated into English by Wangui Wa
Goro, presents Ngugi almost as an activist. It is the outcry of a
poor African peasant who symbolises the collective consciousness
of Africa. Ngugi foresees independence at three levels - political,
economic and psychological. The formation of the government
should be made and also be run in such a way that everyone is
the same before law. The government should also plan schemes
to uplift the poor of the country, so that the economic condition
improves. The psychological aspect is the satisfaction/
dissatisfaction of the individuals who form the society. If
independence is achieved at these three levels, the African will be, as David Cook says that free from fear and destructive anxiety, free to move towards the heights he can reach, in spite of the struggles he faces and this happens to be Ngugi’s vision of the future.

This study includes Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *Two Thousand Seasons*, *Healers* and Ngugi’s *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari*. The analysis brings out the social consciousness of the protagonists.

The present study aims at bringing out the conflict faced by the individuals in select novels of Armah and Ngugi. The analysis is followed by the confrontation and its outcome in the lives of the individuals. M.H. Abrams says, that the plot of a novel deals with a conflict and "...there may be the conflict of a protagonist against fate or against the circumstances that stand between him and a goal he has set himself..." (GLT, 159). The conflict is caused because of the ethical ideals cherished by the protagonists against the circumstances that prevent them from reaching their goal. Most often the conflict faced by them in the novels studied, is caused
by the fact that the society does not act as per their expectations. The word 'confrontation' is used in the analysis to mean 'the act of confronting' i.e., to face or to oppose. The confrontation with the social vices is certainly not pleasant to the protagonists and as a result, they suffer to the maximum extent possible and even meet their end in the course of the confrontation.

The analysis brings out the cause of the conflict, how it gains momentum through the antagonising forces, how the protagonists suffer while they confront the problem and how they resolve the problem and bring an end to their sufferings. Though the writers belong to West and East Africa, the focus of the thesis is not to bring out their regional distinction. Again, the historical, political and social denomination is used only for the convenience of classification and the fact that these three factors cannot be treated in isolation is not overruled.

The analysis is restricted to the conflict and the confrontation of the protagonists in the novels chosen for close study. The themes and character delineation enable the understanding of the novelists' perspectives of the African milieu.