CHAPTER VI

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A close study of the issue of discord in Africa gives rise to many questions. First, what part do differences in individual characters play in the process of social change? Can the ethos of a rural population undergo a total transformation by urbanization if the replacement of an indigenous way of life is possible by a foreign one? Does an individual have the ability to adjust his perception and understanding of the situation when his society is undergoing a complete transformation? Secondly, have the missionaries brought the aboriginal Africans to the Christian fold as per their strategy? Have the Africans bidden adieu to pagan rituals and beliefs? Thirdly, how far can the establishment of the Western models of educational and political institutions by replacing the original ones tantamount to a clash between the old and the new political systems, values and philosophies? Both the writers, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Alice Walker evince an in depth analysis of the dynamics of discord in African and Afro-American communities and dwell on some of the basic and core issues related to the discord and provide solutions to them.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Alice Walker stand out as gifted writers and revolutionary novelists who have taken a vow to confront the contradictions and the paradoxes of their time. They take a common colour line in their novels and deal with the external realities of poverty, exploitation and discrimination familiar to their fellow inhabitants. Probing deep into the psyche of their characters, they identify the various types of
discords, their origin, their causes and their effects on the traumatic lives of the Africans and the Afro-Americans and present a graphic portrayal through their fiction.

Africa bled in all sectors of human activities from the socio-cultural wounds inflicted on her people by the upholders of Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism. In the eyes of the Europeans, Africa remained a dark continent and its inhabitants were considered depraved cannibals who needed to be civilized by re-orientating them to the Western way of life, and by altering the traditional social and cultural environment. The settlers possessed with land-lust, occupied large areas of fertile land in the Republic of Kenya, the birth place of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and through a number of ordinances exclusively favouring the whites, declared the Africans as squatters with permission to cultivate only a small plot of land on the farm premises. They were provided with abysmally low wages and subjected to inhuman living conditions. They shared the same plight as their brethren who were sold as slaves in America by the Arabs and the Europeans. Thus land-grab and supply of cheap or free labour, brought about by the colonial policy of European settlement, may be termed as a substantial reason that led to discord in the lives of the Africans.

Secondly, the White missionaries lured the innocent Africans to Christianity through various ways. They condemned the tribal practice of female circumcision as savage and barbarous; a custom regarded by the Gikuyu as an essential element of their social structure and they also objected polygamy. Thirdly, the imposition of the Western mode of education, i.e., English medium, totally ignoring the mother tongue and local needs, also brought the Africans and the missionaries on a war path. Therefore, the Africans
felt humiliated and ignored on the kind of education imparted in the Siriana Missionary School in which undue emphasis was given to English language providing it the status of the official language. This gimmick made the Africans suspicious about the aims of the missionaries and prepared another ground of confrontation between the Africans and the missionaries. The Africans joined hands against the discrimination and oppression and launched the Mau Mau Movement, a militant body of Africans who operated from the forests and believed in inflicting damage on the Government machinery through violent means. Gaining momentum through its prolonged armed struggle, the Mau Mau Movement became broad-based and compelled the alien rulers to lift the Emergency promulgated by them and Kenya gained its much awaited Uhuru. (Independence). The out-lawing of the Mau Mau and the consecutive repression let loose on the Africans by the whites led to immense socio-political, cultural and psychological discords causing immense discomfort to the African men and women. Women especially were the worst victims who had to bear the brunt of racial and gender-based oppression, not only by the Europeans but also by their own race.

After gaining the Independence, Kenya did not give respite to the masses on economic, social and political fronts. The country experienced the emergence of a new class and a new leadership, a repressive machinery of the African profiteers firmly deriving their character, power and inspiration from their guardianship of imperialistic interests; and gradually isolated itself from the people. The new regime affected native character and corruption, inequality and oppression continued to cause discords in the life of the common African.
A careful scrutiny of the novels of Ngugi reveals that he is a product of his own times. He envisages in his work the whole history of the Colonial and the Post-Colonial Kenya. The themes can be classified under three heads. The first deals with the tradition-bound Pre-Colonial Kenya. The second deals with the inescapable impact of the new learning and lifestyle of the Europeans eroding the traditional and tribal way of life, customs, loyalties etc. The third part is the sad and pessimistic reflection of Ngugi on certain features of life in Post-Uhuru Kenya.

In his novel, The River Between, the theme of discord is first revealed in the colonial invasion of Africa and, subsequently, the dispossession of land. Next, Ngugi critically examines and evaluates the two most significant symbols of cultural clash between the natives and the foreign invaders, namely, education and religion. Duly subjugated under the influence of the missionary people and the white man’s education, the protagonist is torn by a conflict between the loss of cultural heritage and identity and a paradox is created wherein the reunification of Gikuyu communities is to be secured through conversion to Christianity and colonial education. The Western faith and the Western education promising better prospects lured the native African away from his roots and this alienation caused confusion and discord resulting in a complete loss of identity. Ngugi dramatizes this conflict between tradition and modernity as a collision between two opposed ideologies yielding disastrous results. Tribal rituals like circumcision become the focal point of debate between the two cultures.

Ngugi, in the novel, Weep Not, Child, highlights the dynamics of discord arising due to the historical event of the 1950s, the rise of the Mau Mau Revolution in Kenya. It
graphically exposes the involvement of men and women in the Mau Mau Movement, the ruthless suppression of their early revolts, the white settlers' materialistic outlook and the Africans' devotion to the ancestral lands. The novel focuses on this conflict central to the African psyche at the moment of the Transition in African history. Stressing on the alienation of Kenyan lands by the British colonialists, Ngugi exposes the events that aroused a socio-political and psychological discord eventually leading to the disintegration of the protagonist's family. Ngugi's political views also serve as a plea on behalf of the African peasantry and working class. His political ideas result from an effort to foster a connection between his past as the child of the peasants steeped in tradition and his present as a celebrated author of international repute.

The novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, portrays the discords arising out of the history of colonialism and the opposition of the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army (Mau Mau) to colonial rule, and also highlights the conflicts emerging due to the birth of the new national society. Weighed down under the oppressive colonial rule, Ngugi skillfully delineates the untold misery inflicted on the detainees and concentrates on the psychological consequences of the atrocities. Those who managed to survive these detention camps were often near-wrecks. On release, the protagonist realizes that he has lost his woman to another scheming fellow African. Heart-broken and pride of manhood shattered, his home coming thus becomes a frustrating experience. All his fight, all his patriotism, all his dreams were as much in vain as his return. The individual betrayals to oneself, the community and the nation are recorded and the new attitude to money and trade proves that new Kenya is no Utopia.
Being denied every right - political, social, economic and religious - the African's simmering discontent finds an expression in the revolt against the oppressive colonial masters, often leading to murders. In this phase of writing, Ngugi grew out of the euphoria of the Independence and felt the need to restore the African back to his native roots. This phase has included the re-writing of colonial history and sociology in Africa together with an attempt to answer such questions as: How and why was the continent overrun by foreign rulers and what were its consequences? Were Pre-Colonial African societies savage and lawless and, therefore, were in need of a civilizing guidance of colonial governments? Was the phenomenon like the Mau Mau uprising a primitive movement or a genuine nationalistic resistance movement?

Alarmed at the suddenness of the collapse of optimism and morale, Ngugi realized that satire had no effect on the insensitive politicians and their cohorts, the free-wheeling national bourgeoisie. On the contrary, he felt a rapid increase in corruption and political repression, and violence which was sporadic at the time of the Independence, became institutionalized in private armies recruited by political parties. Instability became pervasive and the African nations experienced the tremors of civil wars.

In the novel, *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi celebrates the heroism of Kenyan peasants, workers, youth and intellectuals through its multiple protagonists. He also confronts Africa's new colonial contradictions. He seems to take a pessimistic view of the life in Africa, especially after *Uhuru* and caricatures the post-uhuru Kenyan unprincipled, cut-throat and corrupt political scene. Ngugi points out two essential reasons of conflict in the novel. First, there is the antagonism between the forces of the Western imperialism
and the victims (peasants and workers). Secondly, there is the antagonism between the new colonial Kenyan State, symbolized in the socio-political, cultural, and religious institutions and the vast majority of the Kenyans. Ngugi's elaborate attack on neocolonialism identifies two levels of betrayals leading to political and psychological discord - the personal betrayal of the four protagonists who are victimized exiles within their own country and the political betrayal of the parasitical national bourgeoisie who abuse and exploit those they have sworn to protect.

Power is the major cause of discord in his later writings and all the flawed characters in the novels are unswerving in their pursuit of power. Ngugi gives voice to the protest of the majority against the criminal perversities of the bourgeoisie class that unleash violence to render the oppressed pliable, to instill the culture of fear and go on reaping the crop of corruption without being challenged.

Ngugi views the oppression of women as one of the major indices of abuse of power in the corrupt regimes of Africa. They invoke African culture to support polygamy, but ignore the socio-economic circumstances that render the institution suicidal. Those who favour monogamy, use their new found wealth to influence and enslave young women. Ngugi laments the shift in attitude by African women who resorted to the Western way of life that dehumanized the communal structure. He blames foreign interests for destroying the African culture that held family and society as a close knit unit and sadly observed this solidarity dying a slow death.

Women characters are portrayed from two perspectives. One group of women remains victims till the end and are beaten into silence for demanding equal rights. Women in
the second group are strong, independent and self-supporting and hold their ground, often hardened by experience to become self-reliant and a determiner of their own destiny. Women’s education was subservient to the education of men. The preferential treatment of male children in education is addressed by Ngugi in his novels, although his women characters are mainly preoccupied with motherhood and family. Ngugi suggests that it is futile to criticize those in power and stressed the necessity to demand change. Highlighting the various discords that plagued the Africans, this phase of his writing embodies a revolutionary impulse that not only demands but also imputes action to save the people.

Like Ngugi, Alice Walker, a twentieth century Afro-American writer, experienced racist, sexist and class discrimination and oppression. She witnessed the history and culture of the Africans destroyed by institutions like slavery and apartheid. Her life was scarred by the violence both of slavery and its long aftermath and redeemed by the power of love. The political structures became more Eurocentric and the economic systems turned to capitalist trends. African cultures and moral codes became labelled as pagan, primitive and unacceptable to the civilized Christian world. Arriving in America in chains, the black man was systematically and legally robbed of his humanity. The enslaved male was stripped of his masculine rights and parental authority and was converted into a breeding animal. Displaced from their country and disengaged from their families and their cultures, social bonds and tribal distinction were seriously disrupted. The absence of powerful institutions for the protection of slaves and their families accounted for the continuing miseries of the blacks and the permeating of discords in all walks of life.
Like Ngugi, Walker's novels highlight many of her prevalent themes, vis-à-vis, race relations, alienation, search for identity, and psychic and physical oppression of women through marriage, motherhood and rape and the domination of the powerless women by the equally powerless men. Walker uses four major seminal themes in The Third Life of Grange Copeland, to point out the causes of discord in the lives of the Afro-Americans. She deals with the colour contrast between the whites and the blacks, slavery and its consequences, the white man's narrow minded prejudices against the blacks and the evil perpetrated by the blacks themselves causing misery in their lives, especially the black women.

In her second novel, Meridian, Walker exhibits her own disappointment with the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement. Being a fiery activist, she affirmed the value of the Movement as it led to knowledge, hope and possibility for the black American. Later, she modified her opinion as it had failed in its mission of human liberation, since it continued to oppress women and perpetuated counter-revolutionary values of a destructive society. Secondly, Walker deals with the discords that the protagonist, Meridian experiences in the journey from adolescent unawareness to mature self-knowledge. Looking at the myth of the "sacred calling" of motherhood and the discord between the myth and the reality of motherhood, she presents the conflict in women who break away from stereotype roles of 'obedient daughters, dutiful wives, adoring mothers and lovers'. In this novel, Walker also exposes the discord present within the individual and the community that generates violence exerted by the whites and the blacks on each other and also the role of blacks as collaborationists.
The end of the Civil War brought only a semblance of freedom for the black community. Racial prejudice which exercised political, social and economic control over the blacks, attempted to control their minds through programmed education system. As the economy rapidly moved from slavery to urbanization, the results were the worst race riots in the history of America and this relegated the blacks to the lowest dregs of society. Alice Walker, being at once, black and female, suffered discrimination at the basic myth that the whites are more intelligent, virtuous than and superior to the blacks and was a victim of the dual problem of open white racism and black male sexism.

*The Color Purple* is primarily a novel that expounds the discords in the protagonist Celie's life of oppression in a patriarchal society, her sexual abuse by her father and her husband and her evolvement from a silent object to a speaking subject. Crushed under the entrapments of incest, rape, marriage and motherhood, Celie has her own experiences of exploitation – political, racial, sexual and emotional. Walker recounts the impact of patriarchal violence in her own family in the incident of losing her eye to her brother's carelessness. Her concept of the Christian God is clearly expressed in Celie's implicit belief in the white God and the subsequent shift to paganism. Thus, *The Color Purple*, through its black lesbian theme and sisterhood of black women, helps restore the woman to herself, her body, mind and soul that make her life more meaningful. Walker's spectacular resolutions with refreshingly new perspectives had shocked her readers across race, class, gender and cultural boundaries. She was proclaimed to be one of the best woman writers whose novel had surpassed all feminist discourses.
Walker's fourth novel, *The Temple of My Familiar*, deals with discord in a unique manner that provides new insights to restore such conflicts not only with America, but, the whole of mankind. First, the novel deals with the primacy of the female principle, where Africa, glorified as Mother Goddess, was plundered and raped by the whites. Walker believes that all barriers between men and women will resolve if a personal effort to recapture one's past as a significant element in present experience is attempted. Secondly, she elaborates on how men undermined the superior status of women, by depriving them of their liberation and sexual freedom, selling them like chattel, from one owner to another and tilting all religious and cultural rituals against women. Thirdly, she extols the oneness of all races and suggests that the innermost essence of each individual is in tune with the supreme, universal order.

Preoccupied with the reincarnation theme, her protagonist, Lissie is a goddess from primeval Africa and in every one of her lives, she had suffered racial oppression. The other characters suffer from mid-life crisis and are driven apart by bitterness and discord. They are engaged in secret liaisons, relinquish their jobs and languish in debilitating unhappiness. Walker strongly believes that discords amongst races can be dispensed with by not following the course of revenge, anger and hatred, but by adopting positive attributes and appreciation of one another. Her re-emphasis on community is also a means of positioning her protagonists in protective and creative environments in order to nourish individual growth, and ultimately suggests social and ecological cooperation.
Walker's, *By the Light of my Father's Smile* is an erotic fantasy, with an exposition on female sexuality that it is not one that deprives women of self-esteem but treats the subject as a celebration of pleasure and revelry. The novel is about hypocrisy, masquerade and deception, and the narrative unfolds an exciting storyline of love avenged, disembodied humans and sexual intimacy. Walker explores the issue of father-daughter relationship and illustrates through the character of Magdalena, the vulnerability of young girls whose fathers do not provide them with a strong support system, a sense of compassion and belonging. The lives of Susannah and Magdalena diverge sharply and the novel becomes a parable for the importance of a positive sexuality that is not oppressed by one's father, religion or culture.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Alice Walker have a key role to play in exposing the black experiences and black realities and to generate ideas to form political, cultural, economic, social and spiritual values to suit the Africans and the Afro-Americans. Their writings vividly convey not only the internal dynamics of discord in African communities, but also through their complex portrayals of individuals, they highlight the conflict in reconciling the rural values and traditions with the demands of urbanization and the need to negotiate intergenerational differences around these issues. The black man's protest against slavery, his feelings of alienation, and his extreme agony at being driven to death by capitalism, find expression in their writings. It portrays the ruthlessly selfish cruel white man as the cause of the unjust and oppressive social order. Both agree that slavery and colour contrast denied the black man authority of land and access to his children. The futility of working for a pittance as a 'ahoi' on his own farm or being trapped within the share cropping maze, developed tremendous frustration. This
created emotional and destructive discord in the black men, leading to aggression directed towards the whites, as well as, their own families, especially their wives.

Totally subjugated by racism and racial attitudes, a legacy of a white culture, Brownfield, in *The Third life of Grange Copeland*, observes: “when the truck came, his father’s face froze into an unnaturally bland mask... more impenetrable than his silence.”¹ Blackness is aligned with slavery that ceased the blacks to exist as human beings. Brownfield reproaches his educated wife, “He liked to sling the perfection of white women at her because colour was something she could not change”.² White supremacy was maintained at the cost of subjugation, colonization and categorical dehumanization. Brownfield realized that, “his own life was becoming a repetition of his father’s. He could not save his children from slavery; they did not belong to him...He was working on the same farm and in debt up to his hat-brim”.³

Both the novelists contend that political, ethnic and regional divisions have generated violence. Women and girls become the prime target of this violence which include rape, prostitution, forced marriages, sexual slavery, economic vulnerability and complete societal breakdowns. Incest and sexual violence is glaringly manifest in the relationship between Celie and her father, in *The Color Purple*, “He never had a kine word to say to me. Just say you gonna do what your mammy wouldn’t...”⁴ The black women’s efforts to enhance their standard of living are thwarted by the black men and they are brought

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² Ibid. p. 84
³ Ibid. p.78
back to "lowness" by the "weakness of the womb". Pregnancy can be a disqualification for power. The Gikuyu myth about the destruction of the matriarchy recounts how men staged a coup against female power by causing widespread impregnation and this made it possible for men to disarm the matriarchy. Women have paid a high price for war and the sacrifice for patriotism.

Both, Ngugi and Walker portray the same defence mechanisms adopted by the characters to immunize themselves against the White oppression. The women characters don masks to hide their feelings in order to escape the brutality of their own males as well as the lust of the white masters. The black man turns insensitive and adopts a state of invisibility in response to white violence and subjugation.

Both the novelists respect the voice of the ancestors and implicitly believe in the prophecies thus obtained. As Chege, in *The River Between*, informs, "there shall come a people with clothes like butterflies...Salvation shall come from the hills...a son shall rise", and Waiyaki, thus, assumes the role of a saviour of his tribe. In *The Temple of my Familiar*, the characters realize that in order to achieve spiritual freedom, they have to return to the "life styles of their ancestors, a lifestyle in which neither sex seeks dominion over the other nor must surrender its spirituality to the other... in order to live in harmony".

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They display their awareness of the predicament of man caused by the discord. However, they do not express a pessimistic outlook on account of it. On the other hand, they seem to prescribe a positive approach to resolve issues pertaining to the African and the Afro-American peoples.

Since Alice Walker, is a woman it is but natural for her to be more aware of the problems related to women. Besides, the dissimilarities between them arise due to their different mindsets, personalities and different socio-political milieus and backgrounds they belong to. They also differ in their approaches towards portraying discord prevalent in their characters and in perceiving resolutions for the discords.

Ngugi's protagonists belong to the educated minority in the new states of Kenya and play a mediating role between the Western cities and the African villages, between the scientific, rationalistic, technological, materialistic culture of the industrial world and the traditional agrarian culture. Secondly, another striking feature of the intellectual elite is its sense of its own importance and representativeness. They see themselves as the future shapers of the country, though they still hold attachments to ethnic groups, regional identity, religious customs and traditional family life. Thirdly, a notable feature of these intellectuals is that they are likely by virtue of their educational backgrounds, outlooks and positions, formulate intellectual and abstract solutions to socio-political issues and also dislike the politics of the various vested groups. Fourthly, they are unable to enter into matrimonial alliances, as their relationships with the daughters of the Christians, fail, either through death or through alienation of the two families in the situation of a civil war. Fifthly, another structural feature of the lives of these heroes is
that they lose their fathers and their family ties are reduced to their mothers who re-emerge at the end of the novel to remind them of the family relationship that they should have maintained. Ngugi's protagonists envisage change through the medium of education, which will empower the African male with suitable political and economic power, to make Africa belong to the Africans. The efforts of restoring unity amongst the tribes receiving colonial education result in conflicting loyalties, leading to tremendous psychological conflict in the minds of the characters.

The resolutions that Ngugi advocates for the discord experienced by his characters are solutions suggested externally rather than in the internal psyche of his characters. The novels discussed at length come to an identical conclusion. Since the Post-Independence regimes have failed in bringing about hope, it has rather brought about disasters and chaos in the new states. Therefore, Ngugi feels that it is essential to dislodge the national bourgeoisie, civil or military, by governments of workers and peasants, women and students and professionals in the forefront. Ngugi agrees to the view that a violent discord designates a variety of political phenomena, such as revolutions, rebellions, coups, genocide and wars which involve various social, cultural, political and economic factors. He supports the revolutionary activities of a minority group (Mau Mau) as a manifestation of their conflict to wrest from the dominant group, political and legal authorities. Ngugi advocates the course of protest and struggle to restore Kenya to its African roots.

Although women characters have a significant role to play in Ngugi's novels yet in the first two novels, the male characters occupy the central position. In Weep Not, Child,
Ngotho has two wives, a fact which reveals that if love, respect and care are present, then harmony is possible in a polygamous family too. Being depressed, Njoroge tries to commit suicide and his mother Nyokabi consoles him and restores strength and hope in him. Yet, the man sometimes tortures her with physical and sexual violence to diffuse his tensions. Ngotho’s wife has a sense of discord on the issue of the strike and fears that failure of it would mean starvation for the family. She says, “What if the strike fails, tell me that! Ngotho could not bear it no longer. She was driving him mad. He slapped her on the face and raised his hand again.” 7 In The River Between, Muthoni and Nyambura have been presented as embodiments of courage and fearlessness, when Muthoni could defy her father and get circumcised and Nyambura could declare her love openly for Waiyaki.

In A Grain of Wheat, Ngugi depicts Mumbi as suffering in a patriarchal setup. Gikonyo tells his mother, “Go and cook. These things are beyond women”. Mumbi is not given a chance to explain her stand on conceiving a child. Gikonyo “instead... hurried to vent his anger on Mumbi... He would thrash Mumbi until she cried for mercy”. 8 She could not take help from her parents as they did not welcome her back. In Petals of Blood, Wanja is a representative of a traditional woman who becomes a victim of male exploitation and turns into a prostitute - a clear understanding of urbanization as part of an ongoing process of cultural change and controversy. Ngugi developed a strong love for national languages of Kenya and the traditional structure of African culture that held family and society as a close knit unit. With the entry of the colonial powers, he sadly observed

7 Ngugi wa Thion’o. Weep Not, Child, London: Heinemann, 1964, p.53
8 Ngugi wa Thion’o, A Grain of Wheat, London: Heinemann, 1967, p.146
this solidarity die a slow death. Ngugi exhorts the educational institutions to produce literature in their mother tongue, to help connect the Kenyan child to his environment.

Unlike Ngugi, Alice Walker’s solutions to socio-political and psychological conflicts do not depend on an outward form of social action or vision of a new social order. Torn by conflicting loyalties, the Afro-American ideally attains a measure of peace and fulfillment by first turning inward – drawing what strength he could from himself, his ethnic group, and his usable past.

Unlike Ngugi’s protagonists, the powerlessness that Walker’s protagonists experience, is often affirmed by the physical abuse they endure in their marriages, through rape and forced motherhood, an entrapment of their own sexuality. From her second novel, *Meridian*, her protagonists break free from the stereotype roles of ‘obedient daughter, dutiful wife, adoring mother and lover’. In order to restore the woman to herself, her body, mind and soul, Walker, displaces motherhood as the central signifier for a female being, and emphases on sisterhood. It is the recognition of the self in the other, of unity and not self in relationship to the production of children that enables women to connect with one another. The conflict between different generational perceptions of the meaning of marriage and family is evident.

Differing from Ngugi’s vision for change, Walker creates a fiction where an oppressed black woman can experience self-recovery without a dialectical process, without collective political effort, without radical change in society. In her novel, *The Color Purple*, she introduces the black lesbian theme, the sexual experiences being nothing shameful or abnormal but an essential bond for the black women in life. Her characters
absorb the psychic pain involved in such a relationship and shatter the iron bars of
gender which hamper the course of self-empowerment. Love, in her writings, refuses
confinement to narrow limitations of conventional terms. Having rejected the traditional
barriers of race, religion and sex, they progress towards their own moral centres which
ultimately hold the promise of a new and total understanding of themselves.

Walker does face the criticism from male writers on the plea whether lesbianism is a
form of decolonization from male dominance. The militant notion of the Western
Feminism rejects the condescending attitude of the female sex. They believe in the
three inter-related tasks concerning the destiny of womanhood, i.e., ‘Liberating women’,
‘Centering women’ and ‘Empowering women’. Rural African women are less liberated
than Afro-American ones. Though the principle of motherhood continues to give the
goddess image of being life-giving, she is not empowered and is denied basic economic
stability. Walker believes that the strategy of redemption needs to go beyond liberation,
beyond centering and more towards genuine power-sharing between the two halves of
the black world, i.e., male and female.

The values expressed in woman-bonding, namely, mutuality, respect, unconditional
love, and forgiveness, become the guiding principles in shaping the new community that
enables individuals estranged and alienated to nurture mutual growth. Embracing a
mindset of universality, her new community consists of women and men, family and kin
and especially, reconstructed black men, who forego their phallic superiority and
become active participants, expanding the circle of care and compassion. The novels of
Walker convey a strong message that the restoration of even the seriously impaired
relationships is compelling, as it paves the way for the recognition of conflict and pain and the possibility of reconciliation.

Walker substitutes the concept of revolution with the ideal of transformation. She withdrew her support from the Civil Rights Movement as it propagated revolutionary values and did not profess hope and change for the black American’s liberation. Ngugi supported the ideologies and justified the Mau Mau Revolution despite the criticism about the violent acts perpetrated by it. Unlike Ngugi’s protagonists who do not move out of Kenya, Walker allows her characters to journey away from their homelands in search of stability and respectability, only to make them realize that the ability to transcend their discords is possible when they learn to love and take responsibilities for their actions.

Ngugi also receives a lot of criticism from female writers on his support of circumcision. He feels that the colonists misunderstand the significance of circumcision to the Gikuyu. "Circumcision was an important ritual to the tribe...End the custom and the spiritual basis of the tribe’s cohesion and integration would be no more".9 Summing up its perceived social significance, Kenyatta states:

The real argument lies not in the defence of the surgical operation or its details, but in the understanding of a very important fact in the tribal psychology of the Gikuyus, namely that this operation is regarded as the very essence of the

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9 Ngugi wa Thiong’o. *The River Between*, London; Heinemann, 1965, p.68
institution which has enormous educative, social, moral and religious implications.\textsuperscript{10}

The practice of female circumcision in Africa is debated by the Western Agencies. They consider “the practice as intrusive, ignorant, aggressive and contemptuous, revealing a latent racism and ignoring the right to dignity of the women whose cause it supposedly addresses”. \textsuperscript{11}

Walker condemns the practice and has argued that, ‘when it comes into the realm of torture, it is beyond the realm of culture’. Criticizing the Kenyan Government which had forbidden well qualified doctors from performing the operation, she contends that, this law only drives the woman to unqualified and pseudo-surgeons. As a result, a number of women die from infection, fatal bleeding or neglect – a ‘form of malignant sexism that is immersed in tradition and ritual, and saturated with blood. They are inhumane.’

In the African society, it is improper to refer to sex-designating terms in public and these terms are replaced with a metaphorical and figurative language as found in the novels of Ngugi. Whereas, Walker’s characters do not have any inhibitions in referring to sexual acts and are candid in their usage of expletives with sexual connotations.

Walker and Ngugi agree that their characters cannot find peace and solutions to their discords in Christianity. They do not derive any solace as they consider the White God synonymous with the white oppressor. While, Ngugi believes that, the African religion is


\textsuperscript{11} A statement by AAWORD (Association of African Women for Research and Development), on Genital Mutilation, 1983. p.217
in its adherence to tribal rituals and traditions, Walker transcends the concept of Ecofeminism, bringing in the question of race and proposing a post-Christian 'ecospiritual womanist' attitude as a way of solving tensions of gender and race. She clearly illustrates the close link between colour, gender and nature. In *The Color Purple*, Shug fundamentally changes Celie's belief of God in terms of gender, race and nature. First, in terms of gender, Shug explains to Celie, that for her, "God ain't a he or a she, but a it." 12 As far as the race is concerned, Celie realizes that she has been blinded by the (patriarchic) notion that God is, "big, old, tall and gray bearded and white" 13 Thirdly, Shug believes that, "God is Everything. Everything that is or ever was or ever will be". 14 In *The Color Purple*, the sexual oppressions of the black female characters, and in particular Celie, and Nettie's confrontations with the white missionaries, the ethical principle of the Olinka Tribe and the white man's imperialist drive, confirm that women's exploitation by men is set in a larger context of the exploitative relationship between races and nations.

Thus, the writings of Walker and Ngugi are employed as a veritable weapon for depicting the Colonial and Post-Colonial disillusionment in the African nations and its diaspora. Reflected in their fiction is the plight of the masses premised on the awareness that there is always a close relationship between the African literature and its historical context. The novels have been explored with a view to highlight how they have contributed to the discourse of the motif of discord in its varied dimensions.

13 Ibid. p.165
14 Ibid. p.167