INTRODUCTION

Mapping the Field

"Man wishes to be the sole subject of the universe, to absorb the world into himself, and never to be an object. But for other men he is inevitably an object."

- David Caute

: What is Literature?

Jean-paul Sartre
INTRODUCTION:

MAPPING THE FIELD

1. Literature and society

Literature is one of the powerful means to understand human society. It is a criticism of life and it also evaluates the existing society. It mirrors the life as it is and shows, as it ought to be. The relationship between literature and society is inseparable. There would be no literature without society and there would be no society without literature. It is the literature that gives the insight of human society. Even in highly imaginative literature, the element of reality forms the basis. The nexus among literature, ideology and society is also a well-known fact. Demeterio III great philosopher, says, ‘the social world is the creation of man, man is also a creation of his social world’.

The functional relationship between literature and society has been the matter of the main concern for the writers of the Third World countries. There has been a continuous demand for political and cultural independence from the colonialists by these writers. The proactive writers of these nations commit themselves to the people’s struggles through their fictional and non-fictional writings. They also intend to change consciousness of the common masses about the required social change. Only a few nineteenth century European writers talked in their writings about the relationship between literature and society. The writers of Kenya, Angola, Uganda and Nigeria and other African countries have been playing a significant role in mobilizing the masses for their freedom struggle. The same people after independence continuing their struggle in decolonizing themselves from the colonized mind set. A prominent literary critic comments:
(It), cannot be ignored, for art itself is a social phenomenon. First, because the artist, however unique his primary experience might be, is a social being; second, because his work, however deeply marked by his primary experience and however unique and unrepeatable its objectification or form might be, is always a bridge, a connecting link between the artist and other members of society; third, because a work of art affects people—it contributes to the reaffirmation or devolution of their ideas goals or values—and is a social force which has its emotional or ideological weight, shares or moves having been deeply moved by a true work of art.

(Narang 1995: 13)

If there is a society that does not come in the purview of art and ideology, it is nothing but an animalistic society. The literary theorists, all over the world time and again discussed the links between society, ideology and the literary practices. Florentino S. Alberto asserts

Literature is a social institution; the writer, who is a member of the society, creates it. Its medium is language, which is a social creation. It represents life, which is a social reality. It is addressed to men who form a social body. It is centrally conditioned by social and other forces and in turn exerts social influence.

(Demeterio III 2001: 1)

Change is the paramount feature of every society. No society is constantly static. Obviously, according to the changed situation of the society it would be the prerogative of a writer to respond to that situation. The relationship of art and life differs from society to society. Concerning African literatures, Dr Abiola Irele observes:
What we must look for, I think is the fine balance between art and life, their conjunction in the imaginative creation. I do not hesitate to say, therefore, that as far as the critic of African literature is concerned, he must take the view that literature has no autonomy outside of reality. The critic of African literature thus has a double responsibility to show the literary work as a significant statement with direct relevance to the African experience; and related to this is what I want to call the educative role of criticism in the present context of the literary situation in Africa (Heywood: 1971:23)\(^4\)

The fact is that African art or literature has a functional role. It has to interpret and evaluate the social situation and the relationship between art and society. It proves that art for art’s sake has no significant role to play in the African context. This aspect is clear in the writings of Ngugi.


I think it is simply true that an artist, a writer, is a man who lives in a particular society and takes his images and ideas from that society. He must write about what he sees around him and he must write truthfully about it, or he must come to terms with what is ugly in it, and pretend that it is not there or that is not bad

(Cosmo 1969:100)\(^5\)

R. K. Dhawan in his significant book, *African Literature Today* says that ‘African literature is the product of the social turmoil caused due to the dictatorial policies of the Europeans’. Cynically the same legacy is carried on by the bourgeoisie native African, even after winning the political freedom from
the Whites. This way they made the sacrifice of Kenyan patriots in getting freedom a meaningless exercise. He also observes:

Literature had often been used for emotional attitudes. It is therefore not surprising that most African literature is an expression of its country's social change. The writers are concerned about the past and present history of their country and this concern is reflected in their works. The social change that Africa had been subjected to since the colonization of the country—the cultural, political and missionary influences, and its present state of achieved independence with a growing awareness of both national identity and modern problems—finds expression in most African fiction

(Dhawan 1994: 57)

Writings of Mulk Raj Anand, Chinnappa Bharathi made their art to serve the society. They have seen their works as part of the society and used them to raise the consciousness of the people against the exploitation.

The reason for taking up these writers is that most of the Western critics accuse African writers for having too great a preoccupation with a social message at the expense of drawing convincing portraits of real human figures. African critics, in reply, argue that traditional African ways of life are so clearly different from European ways and that an African writer needs to domesticate the novel culturally so as to convey African concepts of man and the universe while exploring the thematic issues, which ignite his creative sensibility. The Indian situation is not an entirely different one. Many committed writers wrote on the themes of exploitation practiced by English on Indians in Pre-Independent era.
2. Writer and language:

In this context the issue of language has attained an enormous significance. There is consistent debate in literary circles regarding what language the writer has to choose to express his and his society's experiences in his texts. As the literature and society are inseparable beings, so Ngugi choose to write in Gikuyu language not only to reach his people but also to further the cause of his struggle against colonialism. He first wrote in Gikuyu language Devil on the Cross, Matigari and The Wizard of the Crow. Later, he himself translated them into English.

Chinnappa Bharathi, the writer under discussion in this thesis also wrote his novels in his mother tongue Tamil and later they were translated. In fact, there was a trend to write the works of fiction and non-fiction in regional languages in India by the writers of nationalistic period. Rabindranath Tagore caught the nuances of his ideas first in Bengali while creating the famous work Geethajali. Many of his plays, novels and short stories were written first in Bengali and then translated to English. Ones own mother tongue plays an important role in expressing the writers' experiences of his own and his society's. Language is the culture. It is part of the whole race and its development. Taking away the language from the race robs the culture, history and the way of life of that race. Precisely the same thing happened for all the colonial nations by the colonization of these countries by European nations. The writers who are aware of this phenomenon are trying to go back to their native culture through native language. Some of the Indian writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and Babhini Bhattachary tried to grapple the question of language in their own way. They tried to adopt English to their own needs. In this process they evolved Indian English to bear the burden of Indian ethos and culture. Raja Rao in his introduction to Kanthapura talks of use of English in Indian context.
One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language.

(Raja Rao 1996: Foreword)

Mulk Raj Anand used English to suit his needs. He made true translations of Indian idioms into English. Many techniques like this he used to Indianize English. But committed writers like Ngugi returned to his native language Gikiyu. The language issue is crux of the matter in countries where colonialism was highly exploitative and inhuman like African countries. Ngugi argues that language is not just a vehicle of communication but it reflects the culture. Growth of one is the growth of another. He says that English in African is a 'cultural bomb' because it destroys the native culture beyond recognition. In this connection he observes: "Literature as a process of thinking in images utilizes language and draws upon the collective experience-history-embodied in that language." (Ngugi: 1984, 60p)

The same idea expressed by one of African critics, Shannon Marie Ongaro:

If language is a carrier of history, then what happens to history when one's language is taken away? In British colonial Kenya, English was the official language for all governmental interactions and eventually became the language of education as well. Ngugi explains that there are two ways that imperial oppressors can hold language captive. The first is by attempting to erase any memory of a group's original language thereby evicting a group's stories and songs from collective memory.

(Shannon 2004: 24)
Samuel Omo Asein & Albert Olu Ashaolu well known critics of African literature define the same situation in these words:

probably the most critical approach would be a comparative critical strategy aimed at exploring the relationship between the English and African Novel in English

(Asein et al 1984: 6)

The positive sign is that both Ngugi and Chinnappa Bharathi sincerely maintain the qualities of good committed writers. Ngugi regrets writing in a foreign language for many years at the cost of his mother tongue and native culture. It should have been the responsibility of the writer to write about the oppressed native class, workers and peasants, which could be called the commitment and patriotic duty. His later literary production is not pleasant one. It is written with 'blood, sweat and toil on toilet paper'. He had to face the 'imperialist bourgeoisie'. He discusses the relationship between writer and society in his Writers in Politics: Thus:

Literature results from conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationship; one is writing about somebody for somebody. 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. It is a reflection on the aesthetic and imaginative planes of a community's wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life, food, clothing, shelter, and in the process creating and recreating itself in history

(Ngugi 1981: 5-6)
3. **Writer and commitment**

Time and again, the question arises about the definition of what does commitment mean for a writer. Ramakrishna Rao & C.R. Visweswara decode the meaning of commitment: “To write, to speak for and work for the lives of peasants and workers was the highest call of patriotic duty” (Ramakrishna et al 1993: 110).

Committed is a coded term in literature. It can be perceived but cannot be completely defined. The writings of committed writers always make the readers soul-searching. These writings demand avidity of the readers. The term ‘commitment’ is both ambitious and controversial. It is difficult to define it with one statement. Commitment stands for a particular direction and a particular vision. Commitment is not a gimmick in literature but it refers to life-situations; a way of life; a philosophy and a logical vision. Commitment is mass-culture oriented and it advocates multiple centers of cultural growth. A writer needs to have social and political consciousness to become committed. A committed writer also needs to have freedom for his creative work and social sensibility to produce valuable texts of social relevance. If these things are not found in a particular writer’s writings, what one can notice are only rootlessness, meaninglessness and mere combination of words into sentences. Commitment is a particular vision, a foresighted view of a writer. Commitment of a writer does not destroy the creative power of the writer. It never destroys the freedom of the creative writer. A committed writer questions his role to change the existing society and himself.

What it means in literary discourse is a common question. Without any exaggeration, the author of *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist clarifies the meaning of commitment in an interview:
I believe it is impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment, some kind of message, some kind of protest... because there were people who thought we didn’t have a past what we were doing was to say we did—here it is

(Reedy 1994: 17)

Ngugi too, agrees with what Achebe precisely talks of commitment and he goes one step further in his *Writers in Politics*: ‘Literature any literature is useless unless it is committed to the values of a people’.(p40)


The compromised writer is aware that many people do not like being told the truth and he is willing to write what he told people want to hear and to bend with prevailing mind. He is also a fearful writer. It should be evident that compromise in literature leads straight to the banalities of fiction

(Stewart)

The progressive writers believe that to write is to reveal an aspect of the world in order to change it. In that respect, writing is and has always been didactic.

Gaither Stewart also adds:

*One will note that commitment and involvement are closely linked: however, though involvement is inevitable for the writer, his commitment does not come about automatically. Not all writers are even conscious of their involvement; but the committed writers are even conscious of their involvement; but the committed is aware of the world around him and his literature is the result of his attitude toward it*

(Ibid: 3)
Thus, commitment involves the writer's trying to summarize and then reflect through his work a picture of the human condition. The writer of the article continues her argument: “the difficult issue facing committed literature is that of forgetting literature in the name of committed. Good writers are aware of the danger”. (Ibid: 3)

A committed writer represents the social realities and changes in social values. These committed writers not only rehabilitate the past but also awaken the present. Because of these reasons, the committed writers' pen does not whisper but keeps the banner of protest. The Third World writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi and Mulk Raj Anand and many others question 'hegemonic intentions' of Eurocentric literature. They try to liberate themselves from the ‘mesmerization’ of Eurocentric canons. Ms. P. Padma, in her recent research work The Novels of Ngugi : A Study in the Theme of Exploitation rightly points out that the Third World writers are committed and they explore the present day possibilities. She observes:

The fiction from the third world countries has certain common features in it. The first factor that binds the fiction in the third world is the native writers' awareness of present-day problems and the need to confront them. Colonialisation stretching over many years in the third world countries had affected the natives' sensibility. The novelists from Africa attempt to depict to the reading public, the historical fact of colonization and its far-reaching consequences on the present condition and status of his country.

(Padma 2007: 10)

Ngugi is always bold, emphatic and even, crystal clear in his arguments, which are realistic. His goal, dedication and commitment are found in Detained: Writer's prison Diary: where he says:
I am not a Kenyan ashamed of speaking and writing about the peasants and workers who have built Kenya and who through their blood and sweat have written a history of grandeur and dignity and fearless resistance to foreign economic political and cultural domination, a history of which we should be proud.

(Ngugi 1984: 98)

The writers of the third world countries believe that Euro-centrism is a sheer myth. In this challenging path, Ngugi creates a solid foundation not only for African countries but also for all the colonized nations. Ngugi and Chinnappa Bharathi have decolonized to some extent first by writing in their mother tongues. Their choice of topics for their creative writings about social tensions, which bother the respective societies and the common man, is commendable in their attempts at decolonization. The exploitation of people in the name of religion, language, caste, colour, gender, etc., is the gray area against which they struggle hard. In this struggle they had to suffer a lot and face incarceration.

A Kannada Marxist writer and social thinker, Baragooru Ramchandrappa opines that literature is not only meant for joy and pleasure but it has social responsibility and social commitment. The ways of looking at the social problems may differ from one writer to another, but they carry a common social responsibility.

The African critic Chinweizu comes to the following conclusion:

The issues usually argued out in the vocabulary of privatism and commitment are those concerning the responsibility of writers to their society.

(Chinweizu 1985: 248)
Those who have the social responsibilities and better attitude towards the public write about social change. Committed writers do have social and 'professional obligation' to produce literature which has social relevance.

Chinweizu and et.al: Comment:

A responsibility to art, whatever that is, cannot take precedence over his responsibility to his society to play his role in it as a citizen. And even his art has social value only insofar as it is a means for serving his society. In that sense, it is on a par with any other means of social service for which he has competence, be it soldiering or administering or doctoring.

(Chinweizu 1985: 250)²¹

In this respect both Ngugi and Chinnappa Bharathi are committed writers. Chinnappa Bharathi not only produced many novels in support of tribal people, labourers and industrial workers but also actively participated and lead many movements in Tamil Nadu against exploitation of these groups. In this process, he was imprisoned many a times. Ngugi is by far the most creative of the major Kenyan novelists. He is a multifarious and versatile genius and possess a many sided personality. He is a prolific and committed writer. In his ever inspiring and encouraging statement, Ngugi makes it clear that he represents the common people of Kenya and he is committed to make their life worth living through his strong determination. In his Detained: Writer's prison Diary: he makes this observation on his commitment:
Fear not those who kill the flesh, but fear who kill the spirit. They cannot kill my spirit even if they kill me as they killed the others. They will not kill the determination of this country to remain free.

(Ngugi 1984: 1)²²

4. Exploitation

In a colonized country, struggle is a part of survival. The reactionary and revolutionary attitudes are natural in every country, which was ruled by the Europeans. The writers of these countries observe that the people of colonized nations do not expect a UTOPIAN society. Rather they want a society, which is free from wretched exploitation, either by the outsider or by the insider. This is their real concern. They attempt in their novels to portray many heinous crimes practised by the exploiters. But exploiting the oppressed and subjugating the mass is the most dangerous and inhuman crime. As they are committed, they expose many underlying conflicts in their writings. Ngugi raises various issues, which are, no doubt, very pertinent to the colonized people, who pretend that they are living in an ‘independent and post colonial free society’. His concern is pertinent to the Afro-Asian nationals. Major issues are the use of mother tongue versus English, identity crises and protecting indigenous culture and tradition. But the prominent theme of his writings is “exploitation” of all types. It might be due to mental slavery created by the exploiter or physical subjugation by the colonizer. He disagrees with discriminatory use of English language as a symbol of high educational standard. He talks of the gap between people who are educated in English and who are educated through their native tongue. The English educated people garner the privileges and naturally join the class of exploiters.
Ngugi says that Africans have traumatically undergone double exploitation: one in the name of colonialism and the other for their black colour. These two are undoubtedly false in nature and inhuman in spirit. It is evident that the persistent natures of exploitation of the majority of natives by the elite outsiders lead to the tragedy of the colonized nations.

In the same manner, Chinnappa Bharathi sees that the tribals, peasants, and laborers in India have been continuously and mercilessly exploited by the so called bourgeoisie and the elite bureaucrats. This is the process that continued after independence also. Chinnappa Bharathi champions the cause of tribals and downtrodden in post independence situations of Tamil Nadu. His novels highlight the inequality in cultural and economic front. His works have been translated into English and other regional languages. His writings primarily aim at showing struggles between the masters and farmers and workers and industrialists.

Both Ngugi and Chinnappa Bharathi are great social realists who are committed to their societies. Ngugi's depth of thought and degree of commitment is yet to be attained by many writers of the colonized nations.

Carl Wood, vehemently supports the above view. He says:

Cut the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o and he bleeds politics. Ngugi is passionately committed to the egalitarian ideas of the 1950s Kenyan revolution against Great Britain, a dedication well illustrated in his books and essays on cultural politics. Ngugi's revolutionary fervor has not diluted his literary achievement. The main target of his political ire always remains corruption in Africa among Westernized rulers and business leaders.

(Ngugi 1981: 2)\textsuperscript{23}
In his *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi says:

> Over the years I have come to realize more and more that work any work, even literary creative work, is not the result of an individual genius but the result of a collective effort. There are so many inputs in the actual formation of an image, and idea a line of argument and even the formal argument. The very words we use are a product of collective history. So, too, is the rest works.

*(Ngugi 1981: x)*

The form of novel writing has no doubt become the strong weapon for the writers like Ngugi over the years. The scope and the theme of the novel have been modified, beautified, sensitized to examine, to re-examine the shortcomings, and draw backs of the present world. It is modestly needed to scrutinize the framework of a novel. Donald, Professor of Creative writing, whose remarks in this regard are apt:

> At the beginning of the 21st century, the novel, one of the most flexible of literary forms, remains a powerful way for authors to represent the human experience both on the individual level and on the societal level. In countries all over the world, writers use the novel to give insight into people's actions, ideas, and aspirations. Novelists keep the form fresh by continuing to explore subject matter of vital interest to readers and by constantly innovating in form and technique. For five centuries the novel has been one of the *most important ways for writers to comment on the human condition, and it shows no signs of weakening*.

*(Donald:website) (Emphasis added)*

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In the similar ideological basis, Ngugi is of opinion that literature as a process of thinking in images, utilizes language and draws upon the collective experience-history, embodied in that language. In writing, one should hear all the whisperings and the shootings and crying of the living voices in the past and those voices will never speak to a writer in a foreign language.

Ngugi's activity as a thinker, novelist, playwright, literary critic and polemical writer is interlocked. The present day tendency is not to see the genuine concern of committed writers, but to segregate them, label them and fix names on them by saying he/she is a Marxist, Feminist, etc,. Actually, this division spoils the original concern and contribution of the writers. When Ngugi was invited to deliver a public speech at Delhi in 1996, he made a point:

One of the inherited traditions of Western education in the last four hundred years is of putting things in compartments, resulting in incapacity to see the links, which bind various categories. We are trained not to see connections between phenomena, and we become locked in Aristotelian categories. And so the East becomes East, and the West becomes West, and never the twain shall meet!.

(Sinha 2004: 69)

Ngugi's argument is that neither had he private differences nor individual with others but ideological. He says, 'the others' represent certain social forces and he represents another side of the thought. As a post-colonial thinker and theorist, he observes, "A writer 'needs live struggles of active life contrary to popular mythology. A novel is not a product of imaginative feats of a single individual but the work of many hands and tongues" (Ngugi 1981:8).27

Ngugi promptly and critically analyses the real plague of Kenya today. He is critical about the education system brought by the Britishers. He describes in his *Home Coming*
But the actual educational system, which aimed at producing subservient minds, which at the same time looked down upon the rural peasantry and the urban workers, has not been radically altered. In our schools, in our universities, Europe tends to be at the center.

(Ngugi 1972: 15)\textsuperscript{28}

Ngugi talks of the ill effects of four hundred years of colonial rule on African nations. The Kenyan society has tasted the awful fruits of capitalist and colonialist policy of divide and rule and those of the colonial legacy of an uneven development. It has disrupted tradition, culture and way of life of the tribals of Africa. What is left is nothing but linguistic, cultural super structure. Ngugi hardly exonerates any one for creating the chaotic situation in Kenya. He blames his own people because of their lack of foresightedness. He enthralls the reader to see the hard reality of Kenya under European control. In _Home Coming_ his statement proves this point

I grew up in a small village. My father with four wives had no land. They lived, as tenants—at will on somebody else’s land. Harvests were often poor. Sweetened tea with milk at anytime of day was a luxury. We had one meal a day—late in the evening.

(Ngugi 1972: 48)\textsuperscript{29}

All relationships in Ngugi’s Kenya are subject to exploitation; the strong and the weak are identified, potential gains and losses are made explicit and winners and losers emerge from the conflict through interaction. His writing against neo-colonialism reveals the political, economic and social circumstances that formed the sensibility of most African mentalities or ideologies, which inform that African literature exists in a historical continuum. Ngugi’s strong observation is that the
European exploiters, oppressors and grabbers use Christianity as a tool to explain the manifest contradictions portrayed in African literature because of the working out of broader historical forces.

Colonialists had tried to justify their oppression and exploitation by resorting to the claims of racial superiority. The new African writers who show that the African had his own history, culture and civilization are equal if not superior, to that of the imperialists. For them history is a text. It is a text not of what has happened but what is seen as having happened.

Even today, globalization is a strategy to extract surpluses without physical colonialism. It is not a system to share wealth or to remove poverty. He says in unambiguous terms: “I am the product of the community and I would like to contribute something to that community”. His criticism of colonial rule, Christianity and postcolonial abuses earned as much admiration from the public as trouble from Kenya’s authorities. For his assertion, he had to pay in the form of self-imposed exile in 1982. On 11th August 2004, Ngugi ended his 22-year self-imposed exile and returned to Kenya where a crowd of thousands greeted him, but he and his wife were brutally attacked for which he had to cut short his visit.

The mystery for the reader is, whether it is mandatory for the writers to raise a voice for the voiceless as Somasekhara Sarma writes in *Indian: Response to African Writing* thus:

> Most writers of the third world countries who propose solutions to the problems of the society in putting an end to exploitative social relationship invariably found themselves in prison.

(Rao et al. 1993: 105)
5. Racial discrimination:

In Kenya and other African countries, the blacks were brainwashed into believing that they were inferior to the white and white are superior. This made them imitate ways of white man in their language and culture. In this process they proceeded even to the extent of mutilating their bodies to look pretty. In trying to ape the white man, they disregarded their Gods, left their religion and embraced the white man's God. Ngugi advocates that today, Kenyans are haunted with the fierce struggle between the cultural forces representing foreign interests and those representing patriotic national interests. Africa and India have to be cautious in claiming cultural independence. Because, colonization is not a dead history. It is still active in one form or the other. \[\text{Globalization is nothing but a brainchild of post-colonialism.}\]

Terry Eagleton places the above concerns in more frightening global perspectives when he writes:

\[
\text{It is estimated that the world contains over 60,000 nuclear warheads, many with capacity a thousand times greater than the bomb, which destroyed Hiroshima. The possibility that these weapons will be used in our lifetime is steadily growing. The approximate cost of these weapons is 500 billion dollars a year, or 1.3 billion dollars a day. Five per cent of this sum—25 billion dollars—could drastically, fundamentally alleviate the problems of poverty-stricken Third World. Anyone who believed that literary theory was more important than such matters could no doubt be considered eccentric.}
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(Amuto 1989: 7)
In a Hindi movie titled *Veer Bhagath Singh*, a notice is put up in the cinema hall, which catches every moviegoer, **DOGS ARE NOT ALLOWED.** It refers to non-white Indians that they should not go beyond that point. Ngugi also encounters the same situation in Kenya, which is known for its tourism. It was a paradise, a tourist paradise, but Ngugi regrets to say that 'the settlers' dogs ranked infinitely higher than Kenyans—thus, to hit an attacking dog was a crime rather than killing a Kenyan'. The settlers introduced the culture of 'legalized brutality, minority desperately trying to impose total silence on a restive oppressed majority'.

But, no western country has genuine interest to alleviate the poverty of African nations. The exploitation of these nations and their interference in these countries is unabated. The writers of these African nations continue to voice their concern in these matters.

It has been generally accepted fact that the foregrounding feature of good literature is to have universal message and social commitment. Through these two elements literature liberates itself from too much of subjectivity and it contributes to the growth of human society. A good writer is one who escapes from the subjective level and travel towards the universal message. In fact, the conflict between the percentage of subjectivity and objectivity is always a matter of concern. As a matter of example, Shakespeare's plays are relevant even today because of their objectivity resulting in universality.

6. **Comparative study:**

In view of all these ideas discussed, the works of Ngugi of Kenya and KChinnappa Bharathi of India need an indepth study. They can also be compared because of colonial background of Africa and India. The question of necessitating the validity of a comparative study of the
fiction of Ngugi and Chinnappa Bharathi needs to be answered as convincingly as possible. Perhaps what T.S. Eliot expresses in *Tradition and Individual Talent* is a holistic approach, 'No writer can be studied in isolation, no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone'.

The works of an author should be judged in comparison with the works of similar writers. It is true that most of us often tend to relate one thing to other. This is a human instinct. Undoubtedly, everything or being has his individual identity and uniqueness. Still it shows a lot common ground with many other texts.

Dr. Chellappan, renowned Tamil scholar, who works on the comparative studies extensively, observes: ‘Comparative literature liberates literature even from national boundaries and helps us see the unity of man and the human consciousness’ (Chellappan 1987:9)

When we consider the situation in our country, a few writers always voiced their concern regarding exploitation of poor people by capitalistic bourgeoisie. Chinnappa Bharathi of Tamil Nadu is in forefront to raise his voice through his writings in Tamil. It is the relevant place to give cursory glance on the history of Tamil literature.

7. **Weaknesses:**

Sometimes, Ngugi becomes ambivalent and creates dilemma in readers’ mind. Here is one such example. He is of the opinion that African children were the children of ‘Sisyphus fated for-ever to roll the heavy stone of tyranny up the steep hill of struggle, only to see it roll back to the bottom’ (Ngugi 1981:64)

It clearly reflects that Ngugi intends to raise questions and problems faced by the colonized man. He shows how social structure has been demolished in the name of modernization of Kenya.
thesis, Ngugi is considered as an Organic Intellectual because his concept has a holistic concern. Ngugi's writings are rebellious against the existing establishment and non-aesthetic and corrosive disillusionment, but in real sense it is not so. In the sense, he does not describe emotional sentiments or infant lullabies of white settlers or the African bourgeoisie.

8. A Bird's Eye View on Tamil Literature.

While discussing the historical background of African literature, it is necessary to find the historical reasons and development of Tamil literature. The gradual growth of Tamil writers is one of the positive signs of Tamil literature.

Tamil literature can broadly be divided into two as the following:

a) Ancient literature and

b) Modern literature.

As far as ancient Tamil literature is concerned, what Nilakanta Sastri says would make sum and substance of the era:

In his age the inflow of northern Sanskritic influences became even more marked than before; numerous words and concepts in the domain of ethics, religion and philosophy were freely borrowed and incorporated in Tamil; the Sanskrit codes and law books were accepted as the basis of a considerable volume a didactic literature which forms a striking feature of the time; sometimes whole works in Sanskrit or allied dialects were translated or adapted in Tamil.

(Sastri1999: 331)35

The modern era of Tamil literature finds its present status through three different phases of growth such as:

a) Initial era or Introductory period

b) Era of C. Subramnain Bharathi

c) Era of Mahatma Gandhi.

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a) The common influential and foregrounding theme of all the three era is a thread of politics. The critics have identified initial phase of Tamil literature up to 1916. In this era, there was scanty outcome of creative writing though whatever written reflects only religious themes and caste coated writings.

The simple narratives of the Ramayana and the Mahabharath were made available through number of books. A great scholar Sri Meenakshi Sundarm Pillai, made a strong foundation for modern Tamil literature. He was the first man to make William Shakespeare's dramas very popular in Tamil literature.

b) The era of Subramnia Bharathi moulded people by taking the stories of gory past. Bharathi highlighted, spirituality, morality and values of life in his writings. The great Subramnia Bharathi also started igniting regional feelings in the following words:

"When I hear the name of Senthamilnadu
My ears are pierced by a current of sweet honey.
When we talk of the land of our forefathers
Our very breath vibrates a new born strength".

(Shivagnanam 1980:107)

He wanted the people of Tamilnadu to sing: “Never have I seen a language sweeter than Tamil among all the languages I have known”. (p107) “Subramnia Bharathi is like Bhakthi Bandari Basavanna in Kannada literature. He not only became the household name of Tamil Nadu but also he was worshiped as incarnation of God. His books Kullu Samyar and Navathanthra Kathaigal are very popular even today. His slogan ‘as long as one fears one will not achieve anything’, is like a blessing for people.

c) Mahatma Gandhi’s arrival into Indian politics brought a revolutionary change in the whole of India. Tamil thinkers and writers
were equally influenced by this and this made them devote their life to make Gandhian philosophy a big success. In the early years of the Thilagar era, Tamilnadu leaders like Subramania Siva, V.V.S.Iyer, Thiru V. Kalyanasudaranar and Rajaji went about serving Tamil by speaking and writing in such a way as to infuse enthusiasm and love for their mother tongue Tamil, among the Tamil people and patriotism towards the country.

The people of Tamilnadu started a number of reforms as preached by Gandhi, including eradication of untouchability, uplifting of the poor and down trodden and spreading patriotism. The writers too shared their sense of commitment in devoting their writings to spread the Gandhian movement. This literary tradition continued up to the recent times.

In recent years, reading novels and short stories by people either in book form or in serialized magazines is on raise in Tamil Nadu. This is the reason why the storywriters and novelists have started looking for new areas of writing. The choice for them is to go for translation or taking epic stories and giving them modern twist to suit the modern sensibility.

This dissertation **Writer and Commitment: A study of the fiction of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and K. Chinnappa Bharathi**, aims to study the two writers who have been chosen not only for the differences between them but also for the similarities in the matter of commitment and exploitation. The novels of Ngugi wa Thiong'o: *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Matigari* (1987), *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Murogi wa Kagagoo* (*The Wizard of Crow* 2006) have been taken up for a comprehensive study. The research focuses on Ngugi's commitment to protest against exploitation. The findings will give an idea of how he deals with exploitation.

**Chapter one** outlines the conceptual framework for the study of the novels of Ngugi, which discusses the pre-colonial Kenya. It explores the life of Gikuyu tribals, their great culture and the arrival of European-missionaries, in the name of 'seeking pleasure through tourism, animal hunting and business etc'. *The River Between* was written first but *Weep Not, Child* was published prior to that. Both the novels depict the native Kenyans' dilemma. *The River Between* deals with the conflict between the native culture and the alien culture of the new white settlers. Waiyaki is the protagonist of the novel, who is caught between the two opposite culture-systems or the ways of life. *Weep Not, Child*, narrates the situation in which the English educated protagonist tries to live like the British and fails to do so, and finally fights against the white. The two novels show how the sacred tradition, culture, and the way of life have been systematically shaken. This is because colonialism is a system in which a set of one or more countries, cultures, races, religions, languages, dominates and exploits another. The entire productive capacity, cultural, and spiritual resources of the latter are subordinated to the interests of the former. In this huge system of exploitation and domination, culture plays a very important role. Ngugi is perhaps the most persistent literary voice in Africa condemning the depredations of imperialism, which is the highest form of capitalism. His novels also depict the conflict of cultures and the role of Christianity, English education, and the increasingly oppressive treatment of the Kikuyu and other Africans, whose land had been taken by the colonialists.

**Chapter two** takes up colonial phase of Kenya, with reference to two novels of Ngugi: *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*. This era is
central in the growth of his creative writings. *A Grain of Wheat* marked Ngugi's break with cultural nationalism and embracing of Fanonist Marxism. Ngugi refers in the title to the biblical theme of self-sacrifice, a part of the new birth, 'unless a grain of wheat die.' The author's family was involved in Mau Mau uprising.

*Petals of Blood* portrays an adversarial world of power vs impotence. Ngugi describes a nation tortured by the exploitation of the many by the violent, corrupt and selfish few. All relationships in Ngugi's Kenya are subject to exploitation; the strong and the weak are identified, potential gains and losses are made explicit and winners and losers emerge from the conflict of interaction. Even the role of the author may be interpreted in this way. The theng'eta flower is a metaphor for the Kenyan people. The whole, healthy flower is almost lost in a sea of other flowers, as Kenya is enveloped by other nations. *Petals of Blood* is the fourth novel written by Ngugi, which describes the inequality, hypocrisy, and betrayal of peasants and workers in Kenya of post-independence era.

*Chapter three* is an attempt to study the novels *Devil on the Cross, Matigari* and (*Murogi wa kagoogo*) *The Wizard of the Crow*. These novels deal with tragic situations of post-colonial Kenya. References from his non-fictional and polemical essays/interviews/speeches would be looked into.

This period is a significant point to Ngugi for two reasons: the first, he abandoned writing creative works in English and decided to write in his mother tongue Gikuyu; the second, he started using myths, songs, proverbs, riddles and images extensively in his works *Devil on the Cross* is based on a series of journey. *Matigari*, one of the important works, is a novel based on a Kikuyu folktale: it tells the story of a rebel fighter, in the newly independent Kenya, who finds that nothing has really changed and so he decides to continue to fight for liberation in its true sense. That an arrest warrant rumored to have been issued to this fictional character is a testament to the
success of this novel. The Kenyan authorities continued to be afraid of Ngugi’s influence. *The Wizard of the Crow* is the last pedigree of Ngugi’s novels.

All these novels are more explicit and outspoken about the atrocities of the Kenyatta and Moi regimes. Through these works he calls for the continuation of resistance. Like many other African writers, Ngugi considers literature to be a weapon that brings about social and political changes and not merely a work of art.

*Chapter four* has been planned to study and make a critical evaluation of Chinnappa Bharathi’s two early novels, *The Awakening* and *Thirst*. The theme of these two novels is ‘exploitation’ in different methods, through different strategies. But the unfortunate people who have undergone the oppression and social injustice do not seem to find an answer. The poor-tribals, factory laborers are victims. Since India like Kenya, is an independent country, where after 60 years of independence, exploitation is rampant in every nook and corner in one form or the other. Chinnappa Bharathi tries hard to see the hidden reasons behind it as to how best the writers would help the ‘exploited’ people to come out of shackles of exploitation and live with dignity.

*Chapter five* focuses on the three novels of K. Chinnappa Bharathi, *Sugar, Pavalayai*, and *The Generations*. The two novels—*Sugar* and *The Generations*—portray, as in his earlier novels, exploitation. How the values have been constantly changing according to the generations is the major theme of these novels. *Pavalayi* is the only theme—breaking novel, which reflects sentimental and broken marriage, etc., Chinnappa Bharathi is a pioneer writer of progressive movement, which brought Gandhian and Marxist ideas together. He has paid special attention to depicting the evils of exploitation the dominant trend in Tamil writings in various ways.
The conclusion makes the comparative study of the two writers, drawing together the threads of discussion in the earlier chapters. It also notices the views of various critics with regard to the commitment dealing with exploitation in the novels of Ngugi and Chinnappa Bharathi. It concludes by pointing out the western and post-colonial perspectives, on exploitation. Do they have any common bearing on their approach? Ngugi fights against foreign—outsider's influence which destroys the Kenyan culture, whereas Chinnappa Bharathi admits that his own people who are the insiders are responsible for the wretched conditions of the majority. The two novelists agree that exploitation is a sin. Whether outsiders or insiders commit it, a sin is a sin. Exploitation is exploitation. There must be no double standards.
NOTES


15. Gaither Stewart: *Literature: Compromise and Commitment: Available at: http://www.southerncrossrivew.org/20stewastessay.htm p1*

16. Ibid: p3

17. Ibid: p3


21. Ibid. p 250


29. Ibid: p48


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