Chapter 4

LIVES OF THE DISPOSSESSED

(Confrontation against Neo-colonialism)
Neocolonialism is a form of colonialism where varied kinds of exploitation continued to occur. Like the earlier colonizers, a few big hands among the colonizers try to exploit the natives in the realms of economy, culture and language. Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* points out the need of reclaiming one’s own past and erasing the debunking of the past by the colonizers as part of the cultural resistance as in France’s African Empire. So in Post-colonialism one must aim at seeing the post-colonial era by shedding the ‘Amnesia’ that set in during the colonial period. It is very unfortunate that in the post-colonial era a few big hands overdominate in the realm of affairs and exploit the ‘natives’ in many areas. Critics like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha made advanced studies in post-colonial literature and discussed how a few big hands in the ‘redeemed country tried to exploit the natives markedly’. Ngugi doesn’t hesitate to record the feelings of the Africans who were exploited at the hands of a few fellow Africans. He expresses artistically the urges and aspirations of the people who were heroically involved in the struggle for equality and justice. In Ngugi’s work, besides a depiction of a deep sense of African depravation and of the desire to win back a lost heritage, one can see a realistic presentation of

*the lives of dispossessed little people that are all broken by an imported capitalist system.*
Ngugi attacks the Neo-colonial exploitation of ordinary Kenyans in various spheres of social life.

Ngugi’s powerful novel The River Between starts and ends with ridges. In the words of Robson

*they (ridges) symbolize the struggle, they represent land and they play a major part in Ngugi’s conscious creation of the texture of Gikuyu land.*

The novel interestingly records the traditions and customs of the people of Kenya. Kameno, Makuyu and Honia river form a pattern of ridge and valley that is still a major characteristic of the Gikuyu area of Kenya. This Gikuyu land is a land of great fertility and promise. Murunga says:

*This land I give to you, Oh, mannered woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity.* *(TRB, p.2)*

The people here maintain the tribe’s magic and rituals. The novelist makes the custom of circumcision the centre of the novel and describes how

*the early African converts into the new faith of Europeans, indulge in the cultural exploitation of their fellow Kenyans.*

It was a time when Europeans came with their religion and settled at Siriana, a place near Makuyu and Kameno ridges. Joshua and Kabonyi were converted to the new faith along with a few others on the ridges.
Joshua feared the revenge of his friends as they betrayed them by converting them into the new faith. But at Siriana he found a sanctuary and the white man’s power and magic. The new faith worked in him till it came to possess him wholly. He renounced his tribal magic power and ritual. He turned to and felt deep presence of the one God.

He preached them in sharp ringing tones the presence of that one God, the white man’s God. He believed like Livingstone of Siriana, that Gikuyu God is the ‘prince of darkness’ and African, the children of darkness. He thought that by getting baptized he has become a new creature who escaped the Hell. He no longer feared Chege, the tribal leader of the ridges. As an agent of Siriana mission, he preached with vehemence and spoke of white man’s power and knowledge and converted a few Africans to follow the new faith and to abandon the traditional customs. Joshua born in that land, began to condemn the lands’ ways more vehemently than the white man. Thus, he became a powerful exploiter of the Africans.

Joshua helps the white men to advance further into the land with their new ways and new practices. ‘The people of Kameno blamed Joshua who interfered in the matter of taxes levied on them by the white Government. To the people on the ridge, taxes were new. But Joshua who knew about them all felt that it was his duty to obey the orders of the
white Government. He wanted to force the people to follow the ways of the white man. He prayed God thus:

*Bring down fire and thunder*

*Bring down the Floor. (TRB, p.32)*

Joshua 'whose character is that of the over zealous convert to a new ideology', forced even the members of his family to follow his new ways strictly. He got circumcised Miriam, but after converting into the new faith, he felt that it was an unforgivable sin to follow the ritual of circumcision. Unable to follow his religion which has no relevance to the people living there, his two daughters broke away from him.

Joshua and Kabonyi became the leaders of Kameno and under their leadership Makuyu became the land of Christianity. But Kameno still followed the good old customs. Chege has seen more than anyone else that

*Kabonyi and Joshua....would not come to any good....These followers of Joshua would bring so many divisions to land that the tribe would die. (TRB, p.37)*

Joshua's preaching indeed divided the people into two viz., the followers of the new faith and those of the old faith. Slowly the differences between the two grew. The Christian people of Makuyu stopped to have terms with the traditional people of Kameno. Naturally, he incurred the
anger of the people who lit fire to the huts as an expression of that wide gulf.

Joshua in the novel, is identified as the enemy of the tribe. He was with Siriana and clinged to missionaries which promised future to him and became the exploiter of his own race.

Joshua though a native African, is involved in the direct cultural exploitation of the Kenyans. When the white began to pour into the interiors in greater number, he assisted the white Government in its political advancement and in its economical exploitation of the natives. Kabonyi another African leader, led a movement called Kiama movement which aimed to uphold the traditions and customs of the ridges. Though he did not believe in its principles, he exploited majority of the people living on the ridges. Kabonyi who wanted his son, Kamau, to become the most popular figure on the ridges, could not tolerate this and grew jealous. Kamau wanted to marry Joshua’s daughter Nyambura. But Nyambura and Waiyaki were in love with each other. Both father and son planned the doom of Waiyaki through ‘Kiama’ and led the people against them. According to Kiama principles, Waiyaki who took the oath of the Kiama, cannot marry uncircumcised Nyambura. Even Kamau could not marry her according to the Movements Principles. But he and his father made Waiyaki a prey to their jealousy. Death was the punishment for those who
violated the oath. Thus, Kabonyi hindered the growth of a leader on the ridges. He, as a convert, was a cultural exploiter of the Africans.

While Joshua and Kabonyi are involved in the exploitation of the Africans directly and knowingly, Chege and his son, Waiyaki, were also involved in the exploitation indirectly. Chege exposed his son to the white man’s education and religion by sending him to Siriana missionary school. His son, Waiyaki, became soft. The uneasiness in the mind of Waiyaki regarding the circumcision reveals his non-acceptance of the tribal customs. It was said, even Waiyaki was slightly embarrassed. This in a way, is an expression of the suppression of his native tribal belief.

Waiyaki, in an attempt to quench the growing thirst of education among the people of ridges, opens as many schools as possible. He even brought teachers from Siriana Mission.

Thus, he indulged in exploitation by lending a hand to the white man in establishing schools. According to Robson,

*Waiyaki helps in the penetration of the long arm of the white man by spreading his culture and by using teachers from outside the ridges.*

Schools grew like mushrooms on the ridges. Without his knowledge Waiyaki directed the people’s attention in the wrong route. At that time he
should have taught the people to drive away the whites from occupying their land.

Jomo Kenyatta in his *Facing Mount Kenya* comments on Waiyaki's operation thus:

*Apart from the system of schools, which has been introduced by the Europeans, there is no special school building in the Gikuyu sense of the word. The homestead is a school.*

Thus, in *The River Between*,

*Ngugi easily becomes a spokesman for a people whose sacred bond with soil caused them to undertake a bloody uprising against the colonial power.*

In a similar tone, one perceives Ngugi's voice of dissent in his another powerful novel *Weep Not, Child*. Here Jacobo who is nick named as 'Black European' indulges in ruthless exploitation of the African farmers. His political allegiance, his house and privileged positions set him apart from most of his countrymen. He blocked other farmers from growing rich like him. His land was as big as a settler's farm.

*He was lucky because he had for many years been the only African allowed to grow pyrethrum..... He had stood in the way of similar permits being given to other people. (WNC, p.45)*
In return to the permission given by the settlers to grow cash crops, Jacobo recruited labour and gave Howlands a piece of advice on how to get hard work from African workers for unfair wages. Ngotho, as one of the workers, suffered in the suppressive hands of Jacobo. Jacobo acts as an agent to the whites in pacifying the Africans to work for low wages. He was raised to a chief’s position on account of his suppressive power. He acted as an agent to Howlands, and tried in vain, to pacify the reunited Ngotho. Unsuccessful in his attempt, he came an opponent to Ngotho. He tells Howlands thus:

Now if we leave them alone, they will flare up big, big trouble in the village. Their detention would make it easier to keep an eye on this Ngotho because as I was telling you he may be the real leader of Mau Mau. (WNC, p.89)

These lines throw light on the exploitative nature of Jacobo. Even Howlands despised Jacobo because he was a savage. Thus, Weep Not, Child easily records Ngugi’s probe into the history of violence in a colonial situation.7

This theme of exploitation pervades A Grain of Wheat, another powerful novel by Ngugi.

Ngugi’s A Grain of Wheat exhibits the novelist’s commitment to the people of Kenya. It is about the Mau Mau independence war. It also
keeps flashing back to individual suffering during Mau Mau days. It
discusses the new African politicians who betray the ordinary Africans who
suffered markedly under colonialism. The epigraph from Corinthians
(1:15 East 36) throws light on the motto of the novel.

\[\text{Thou fool, that which thou so wish is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be but hear green it any chance of wheat or of some other grain.}\]

This acquires significance in the context of the commitment of the novelist
to the Africans. Here critics easily see

\[\text{this as a more or less valid metaphor for the disappointed hopes of those in Kenya who expected more from their leaders.}\]

In this novel one easily finds the feelings of the novelist for the exploited fellow Africans. Robson rightly observes,

\[\text{the novelist’s feelings for the soil and sense of community provided by the ridges is strongly conveyed.}\]

Ngugi is interested in the social circumstances of his characters especially in the background of the Mau Mau resistance. Mugo indulges in exploitation as he easily ignores his responsibility to his group. He is often taunted because he escapes from his responsibilities to the group and to
the nation. In the African context a selfish person is nicknamed ‘Mwenbongia’ who doesn’t have any name or reputation in society. He is looked down upon with suspicion and as one who is likely to end up his life as a wizard. The novelist does not hesitate to describe the clashes between one group and another. Mugo decides to betray Kihika a patriot, who participates actively in Mau Mau revolution. Mugo’s betrayal is a logical outcome of personal development. His betrayal is induced by his jealousy and partly he wants not to be drawn unnecessarily in connection with others. He says:

\[I \text{ wanted to have my life. I never wanted to be involved in any thing. Then he came into my life here, a night like this and pulled me into the stream. So I killed him.} \text{(AGW, p.161)}\]

Mugo easily betrays Kihika when he takes refuge in Mugo’s hut. He serves as a Judas figure. He walks to D.O.’s office and informs the whites about the movements of Kihika. He also remembers how Isaq and Moses were saved from death. He says:

\[I \text{ am important. I must not die. To keep myself alive, healthy, strong....to wait for mission in life... is a duty to myself to men and women of tomorrow.} \text{(AGW, p.223)}\]

Here the novelist projects Mugo as Judas who betrayed Jesus Christ.
Karanja, chief of the Homeguards, also indulges in ruthless exploitation. He represents the mentality of the colonized African just as Kihika represents the opposite. He becomes a loyal lieutenant of the white man, first as a homeguard and later as the chief during the emergency. The novelist vividly depicts his betrayal of the Africans. As one critic rightly observes Karanja easily becomes,

*a member of ever widening concentric circles of guilt and betrayal.*

Karanja makes it a point to promote his interest. So he aligns himself with the Europeans. With his sense of self preservation, he exhibits his feelings of contempt for Kihika. He is so immoral that he does not hesitate to betray his friend Gikonyo. He indulges in the mean act of seducing Mumbi, Gikonyo’s wife. Gikonyo who comes to know about the betrayal, comments on Karanja thus:

*I suppose there is nothing so painful as finding that a friend,

or a man you always trusted, has betrayed you.* (AGW, p.122)

Gikonyo also leads others astray. He observes that the people who did not take part in the freedom reaped richly the fruits of freedom. He tells Burton thus:

*It is people like you who ought to have been the first to taste the fruits of independence. But now, who do we see riding along in*
cars and changing them as if motor cars to shelter of schools, and Universities and administration. (AGW, p.80)

The lack of men of integrity characterizes the post-independent Gikuyu community. Gikonyo was an artisan prior to independence. After the independence, he indulges in economic exploitation by moving into the world of women's trading. According to W.J. Howard, Ngugi

transfers a previous cultural hero from his former position to that of the new cultural hero based on post emergency values. This activity is represented as being neither healthy nor necessarily admirable.¹¹

This passage reveals to us Gikonyo's exploitation of the native Africans.

In A Grain of Wheat individual betrayals become the representative of the vast betrayals of the whole society. The leaders of Kenya at the time of 'Uhuru' indulged in exploiting

tribe of operator and manipulator who in their own narrow interest replaced colonialism with neo-colonialism.¹²

Thus, A Grain of Wheat exhibits the commitment of the novelist to the Africans. It is pertinent to recall the words of Mumbi to her husband towards the end of the novel:

People try to rub out things, but they cannot. Things are not so easy. What has passed between us is too much to be
passed over in a sentence. We need to talk, to open hearts to one another, examine them, and then together plan the future you want. (Last page of AGW).

These feelings of the novelist to his fellow countrymen are exhibited in his another powerful novel Petals of Blood.

The novelist in his Petals of Blood, presents artistically the betrayal of independence movement and its impact on others. He also makes an earnest plea for

*the creation of a cultural liberation struggle fostered by peasants and workers.*

This in a way, is a political novel in the wider sense. Here the novelist tells us about his purpose in writing this novel:

*My position here is very simple. As I said earlier, I believe that people have a right to know how much wealth is produced in their country, who controls it and who benefits...I also believe that no Kenyan should be able to sleep peacefully for as long as he knows that wealth of the country is still controlled by foreign countries...in other words, I believe in a national economy free from any foreign domination or free from imperialist control.*

This novel thus exhibits his commitment to the people of Africa.
Illmorog is a living place in the novel. It is in the grip of prolonged drought. Even the M.P. has conveniently ignored the village. So, the disillusioned villagers take an epic march to the capital to put forth their troubles before the authorities. Subsequently religious, political and economic exploiters swarm upon Illmorog and exploit it by using such devices as far-closed loans and discusses the local inhabitants. Thus, the novelist conveys, *A ruthless tripping of already deprived ordinary people.*

Ngugi is very unhappy for he feels that independent movement has been betrayed, as the peasants and the workers for whom the war was fought, have been further alienated from the land which is the source of life. He is of the opinion that the poor are suppressed at the hands of the entrepreneurs who are in league with international capitalists. The confiscation of Kenyan lands by the Europeans had a far-reaching effect on the Kenyan people even after Kenya attained independence.

The Kenyans lived as squatters in different Europeans’ farms providing free labour in return for some grazing and cultivation on the settler's land. They were given a particular piece of land in the bush to get it ready for the European landlord to cultivate it. After a year, they were driven off and were shown other virgin land to clear it. This process went on and on. They paid the taxes in the form of goats. Miriam continued to
live life as a squatter while her youngest educated son, tried to set things right in neo-colonial Kenya. Karega realized that all the women and men and children still weighed down by imperialism (PB, p.342). This passage throws light on the Africans who have been alienated from their land first by colonialists and later by a class of African landlords.

Even after Kenya attained independence, the field of business was dominated by the Europeans who provided the local directorships to the Kenyan Ministers and others in high positions. The case in point is Thengeta Breweries. Wanja and Abdulla were responsible for popularizing Thengeta Breweries as a drink in Illmorog. But they could not compete with larger concerns which controlled the economy there. The licence for brewing Thengeta by Abdulla and Wanja was cancelled by corrupt officials like Cheri. Mzigo and Kimero became the shareholders and directors of the new Thengeta Breweries. But the company was owned by an Anglo-American International Company. Thengeta drink brewed from Thengeta plant, which grew wild on the plains, was associated in pre-colonial times with vitality and vigour. In neo-colonial Kenya it was made into a spirit drink and it demoralized the Kenyans. It was consumed only on all festival occasions in the past. But now it is consumed as a hot drink. Thus, the transformation of Thengeta into a debased modern spirit by the capitalists
suggests the erosion of traditional values and the destruction of traditional innocence by the corrupt and the depraved agency of modernism.

Ngugi, as a committed artist, becomes critical of the politicians who easily exploited the Africans. After the independence, the Kenyans, repose trust and confidence in their representatives. When Illmorog is affected by drought, the people approach Nderi, their M.P. for help, but unfortunately MP the does not extend any help to the villagers. He (M.P.) replies mercilessly thus:

*Now, I want you to go back to Illmorog. Get yourselves together subscribe money. You can even sell some of the cows and goats instead of letting them die. Dive deep into your pockets.* (PB, p.182)

This passage reveals to us how the politicians could not rise above their petty nature in helping the Kenyans.

Ngugi easily becomes critical of the cultural imperialism. This is illustrated from the episode of the love between Karega and Mukum. Mukum’s father drew his daughter to suicide because he thought that respectable families like his, could not countenance an alliance with a family like Karega. Karega’s brother Ndinga was believed to have deprived brother Ezekiel of his right ear as a punishment against preaching the Mau Mau movement in Church. Wanja’s father could not allow making
friendship with a boy whose family was poor and irreligious. Juliana in *Weep Not, Child* never allowed her children to mix with other primitive children. The cultural imperialism blinded these Africans and as a result their children became victims of their narrow, snobbish religious beliefs.

Even after independence, the Kenyans became a prey to the exploitation at the hands of fellow Kenyans. The whites continued to own big hotels, industries and factories in Nairobi. They gave petty jobs to the Kenyans. Illmorog was depopulated. Only the old people and children lived there. There was none to improve the conditions of Illmorog. The economic conditions of the young men did not permit them to take their folks to the cities where they worked. Such of those who were averse to work on the farms of whites had to sell away their lands and other property to keep going. Towards the end, they joined the very labouring class they were trying to avoid by the sale of their land property.

The novelist employs the use of imagery to make his point of exploitation. The road image is one such image in the novel. In the beginning when Munira arrives in Illmorog there is only a 'dirt road' which is described as 'being as a treacherous as those hags and brags and cripples'. *(PB, p.11)* Towards the end, it becomes the Trans-African road, heavy with tankers linking Nairobi to Illmorog. The destruction of the
pastoral street is very well indicated by the arrival of the new road. This is described by the novelist thus:

Every corner of the continent was now within the reach of international capitalist robbery and exploitation. This only shows that the plundering of Africa by the previous generations of profiteers is now to be followed by an exploitation of the continent by itself. (PB, p.262)

Ngugi gives the desolate conditions that prevail in Illmorog during the neo-colonial times. New constructions take place in Illmorog overnight. As Robson rightly observes:

It becomes famous well beyond the walls of ridge and plains. The feveish, growth of the city witnesses a church, a police station and a distillery. The peasants are reduced into easy bank loans and find their lands taken from them.¹⁶

Uta Maduni, a cultural tourist centre is created not only to attract the tourists and get dollars from them, but also to serve as a centre for smuggling gem stones and ivory plus animal and even human skins.

It was a centre for the plunder of the country and human assets. (PB, p.324)

The image of land is a powerful image that is used by the novelist. Ngugi feels that the Africans have been alienated from the land first by the
colonialist and next by the imperial colonialists. In fact, the imperial colonists helped themselves to the land paying into the pockets of a few whatever worth they consigned to it and subsequently by a class of landlords who because of their connections with the forces of world capitalism, are able to manage the purchase prize. The problems of the Kenyans are to reachieve the land. The struggle has a neo-colonial dimension. The references to this in the novel run thus:

*Within only ten years....Illmorog peasants have been displaced from the land. Some have joined the army of workers. Others were semi workers with one foot in a plot of land and one foot in a factory. (PB, p.302)*

Nyakinyua, Wanja's grandmother finds fault with the fellow Africans thus:

*I will go alone....My man fought the white man; he paid first with his blood...I will struggle against these black oppressions along.*

*(PB, p.276)*

Ngugi takes cudgels against the schools and the exploitative measures that were taken in the field of education during neo-colonialism. This is illustrated through Siriana. Chui and Munira have been school boys together at Siriana. Chui leads a strike against Fraudsham, the head master of the school and sees to it that the latter is sent to overseas to complete his education there. Karega in the succeeding generation, leads
a strike against Fraudsham. Naturally, the strike becomes fruitful with the deposition of Fraudsham and the succession of Chui as the headmaster.

The novelist is sore about the havoc caused in the field of education by the neo-colonialism. He earnestly feels that the content of imperialist education is in tune with the political reality of Kenya. It is obviously geared to perpetuate white man's domination and to instill into people a respect for British Institutions and attitudes. Fraudsham is an embodiment of the educational process in Kenya. His successors like Chui turn out to be more European in his attitude than Fraudsham himself. When Karega and his contemporaries organized strike, first against the white Fraudsham and later against the Black Chui, they demanded an African content to the education that Africans are being given. They demand that African literature and African history must be taught to know about themselves and also about their environment better. They become critical of an educational system that teaches them about white snow, spring flowers, fluttering by icy lakes. As the African ethos has not been incorporated into the system, the Kenyans feel that they are being exploited.

The exploitation of the capitalists is markedly described in the novel. As they move in with their lands, factories, distilleries, estate agencies, the old and traditional Illmorog is immensely destroyed. The novelist gives a
gripping account of the bewildered peasants who lose their lands and become helpless workers.

Nyakinyua fights against the forces that have deprived her of her heritage. Her determination constitutes the last flagging attempt at once dignified and secure society. She resists the encroachment of the new men, but unfortunately his fight ends in failure because of the reluctance of others to support her. So the African society is transformed into a capitalist society with all the attendant problems of prostitution and social inequality. In this context, Eustace Palmer comments thus:

*It has twice been exploited and destroyed, once by the white imperialists and now by their successors, the Black imperialists.*

In the political realm also corruption and exploitation have crept in. Every M.P. is incompetent, corrupt and indifferent to the sufferings of the people. Like other politicians, he converts the money he collected from his constituency for a water project, into shares in companies and in buying lands and houses. He easily becomes notorious because of his corruption, thuggery and indifference to the people's plight. The politicians in Kenya became rich, fat and lived in palatial buildings in the cities.

Ngugi takes pains to expose the traitors who prosper after independence. Kimeria, Mzigo, Chui and Nderi ride on Mercedes Benzes,
win thousands of acres of land and housing estates. They also win breweries, visit expensive night clubs and exploit women. The corruption of the system results in the under utilization of the resources in Kenya. Karega rightly comments:

> How now, how could the young, the bright and the helpful deteriorate so? What there is no way of using their energies and dreams to a higher purpose than the bottle, the jute box and sickness and a cement floor. (PB, p. 103)

The symbol of 'Petals of Blood' has also acquired some importance in enhancing the meaning of the novel. This symbol is taken from Derek Walcott's poem that suggests destruction, evil, corruption and death. Usually, the Petals here are connected with the potent ginger lily, one of the destructive plants which give natural and beautiful look but an eerie, unnatural and evil aura. The symbol suggests the destruction of things in society from the normal and natural to the abnormal and evil and the introduction of chaos and destruction where there should be beauty and order. In the novel itself, we see that the flower with the Petals of Blood belongs to a plant that grows wild in the plains. In fact, one child cries out thus:

>'Look a flower with the Petals of Blood'. It was a solitary red flower in a field dominated by blue, white and violent flower. No
matter how you looked at it, it gave you the impression of the
time of blood...this is a worm eaten flower...It cannot bear fruit.
That is why, we must kill worms....a flower can also become
this colour it is prevented reaching the light. (PB, pp.21-22)

The flower with the petals of blood is itself the victim of evil; the
agents of corruption have destroyed its innocence. The blood suggests
suffering. The flower becomes a symbol of the Kenyan society. Ngugi is
concerned with how its potential is destroyed by the agents of corruption
and death. Thus, Petals of Blood is a powerful novel exhibiting the
sincere commitment of the novelist.

*It is a statement of his social and political philosophy*

*and embodiment of his prophetic voice.*

The same gusto and anger prevail in his another powerful work Devil on
the Cross.

In this novel,

*he has entered into direct confrontation with the regime*

*and his art has become the vehicle for his political purpose.*

As has been pointed out earlier, Ngugi in his later part of his life made it a
point to convey his message to people in Gikuyu. So he wrote his novel

*Devil on the Cross* in Gikuyu. He says:
Free thoughts on toilet papers! I had deliberately given myself to difficult task....the Kenyan people's struggles against the neo-colonial form and stage of imperialism.\textsuperscript{20}

Ngugi is unhappy for corruption is rampant in the Kenyan society. He feels that capitalism is a systematic robbery of peasants and workers. He does not hesitate to exhibit his bolder strokes in this novel. By arousing their predicament, he propels them into combined action to set right the situation.

The novel opens with a journey of a few passengers in a taxi from Nairobi to Illmorog during which the driver and five passengers discuss social institutions in Kenya. Their narration of their experiences is punctuated by the flashes of satanical absurdity. The various invitation cards to the Devils Feast in Illmorog are scrutinized. After we have been informed of the intentions of the travellers in the taxi to attend the gathering in Illmorog, the scene in the mini bus simply melts into the voice of the meetings of the masters of ceremonies thus:

\textit{And now, before I sit down, I shall call upon the leaders of foreign delegation from the international organization thieves and robbers whose headquarters are now in New York, U.S.A. to talk to you. I think you all know that we have already applied to become full Members of IOTR. (DC, p.87)}
The seven representatives are the neo-colonial powers indulging in the most heinous practices of exploitation. Each one wears shirts made of proper money of their respective home lands and reveals his grabbing of the Kenyan economy. They take away the natural resources of the Kenyans and indulge in the exploitation of the toil and moil of the workers and peasants. Gikuyu is a big-bellied person who battens on land. He proudly relates how he has taken over vast estates from white settlers, subdivided them into plots and sold them at high prices to citizens. He frankly confesses thus:

_The land wasn’t mine and the money with which I have paid for wasn’t mine and I have not added any thing to the land. Who so did I get to loathe shrilling? From pockets of the people, yes, because the land really belonged to people and the money with which I bought it came from the people._ (DC, p.106)

This passage shows the grabbing of the lands of the poor peasants by the black imperialists like Gitutu Kihaahu. The practices of exploitation were done in three areas viz. Education, local government and housing.

In education Gituku doesn’t approve of any indigenous syllabus in his school curriculum.

_Modern day Nursery school experienced European principal formerly for Europeans only now open to a few Kenyans._
Foreign standards as before national languages, national songs, national names, foreign languages, foreign songs, foreign toilets etc., English Medium of instruction in limited places. *(DC, p.114)*

In the local elections Kinaaku indulges in corrupt practices. He gives a bribe to the voter, indulges in rigging and wins the elections. He easily becomes the Chairman of local housing committee. He doesn’t hesitate to get percentages by foreign speculators in exchange for building contracts. The community ensures debased local administration while publicly subsidized housing is hawked on a black market.

The novelist depicts markedly how the fat persons indulge in unscrupulous commercialism. He does not spare the business tycoons, and business magnets. One of the exploiters openly comments on his unscrupulous activity:

*I hadn’t shed a drop of sweat. All my money came... I never stopped plucking it. I picked one fruit after another. The sweet juice spill out the corners of my mouth before I learned to eat more decrepitly.* *(DC, p.116)*

Nditika takes up another form of exploitation namely the practice of smuggling, black marketing of goods and raising up of prices of essential commodities. The whole narration runs like a treatise on exploitation of the Africans by the African imperialists. Mwireri reveals how the multinationals
force the local enterprise out of the market by underselling cooking oil, skin lightens or contraceptives. He is killed for crushing the neo-colonial practice of exploitation.

Kimeenderi outlines his plan to head all workers into barbed wire compounds where their blood split will be thumped, squeezed and dripped from them daily and sent out packaged by pipe lines to the home or kept for export while the donors are kept quiescent. The novel artistically renders how the Kenyan bourgeoisie elite exploited an army of workers, peasants, petty traders and students. The Kenyans who are capitalists are described as thieves, hypocrites, robbers and criminals.

The novelist exhibits his commitment by giving us a true picture of the African multi millionaires who made money by indulging in the exploitation of the Africans. The bulging belly, the limitless arrogance of power, the uncurbed ambition and cynicism characterizing African imperialist stooges in their pursuit of the weak are all described realistically. Religious hypocrisy, political corruption, the brutal sexual and material exploitation suffered by the Kenyans at the hands of their Bourgeoisie are all very well depicted in the novel. The novelist would like to show that the exploiters would go to any extent to promote their interest. It is due to their materialistic interest that they 'sold' their motherland to the
colonizers. The novelist describes realistically his commitment to his people in his another powerful novel Matigari.

The word ‘Matigari’ refers to the left overs of food or dregs in drinks. Here it becomes a signifier of Mau Mau and also of troops mediating the colonial past and the post-colonial movement. Matigari attempts to celebrate the once unmentioned Mau Mau and also to introduce the word into the political vocabulary of Kenya. Kenyatta was the Prime Minister, but

Mau Mau could not be incorporated fully into the post-colonial power knowledge consideration because their men who had inherited colonial power had been some of its staunch opponents.21

The novel was originally written in Gikuyu and later got translated by Goro. This is dedicated to all those committed to the development of literature in languages of African people. This exhibits Ngugi’s commitment to African culture, ethos, language and heroism. On one hand, he would like to preserve African brethren their vision of socialist world. K.L. Goodwin says thus:

There is a latent theory in Ngugi that cultural expression is bound by the quality of social and political life.22
Matigari is a warrior who participates in the Mau Mau movement and wins freedom for Kenya. Soon, he comes to know about the corrupt world in the post-colonial Kenyan society. So he would wage a war against the present Government that continues the colonial practice of using the army and police to hunt down the recalcitrant Mau Mau journals. The group of journals and writers who waged a war against the neo-colonial Government were known as the Matigari.

In the new Kenyan society, the Matigaris would observe the turn of events in Kenya and wait for an appropriate time to return and restore the reign of justice and truth and so every year

*With the goading of songs and popular discourse and even the magazines such as the last African edition of Drum. We waited the inevitable return of the Matigari who would complete the project of the independence.*

The novelist throws light on the rights of the growers to enjoy the fruits but not the masters. When the workers come to know that they are being exploited they do not hesitate to wage a war against the oppressors. They assert the rights of those who sow to enjoy the full use of their labour and to put an end to the oppression that prevents them from doing so. The enemy here is not a white settler alone but the African who represents Western capitalism. The novel ultimately repudiates any route to liberation
that falls as short of an armed uprising. The enemy can never be driven by words alone no matter how sound the argument may be. The novelist takes an increasingly uncompromising stance with regard to the oppressed-ones. Justice for the oppressed comes from a sharp spear. This statement is echoed by

*Justice for the oppressed springs up from the armed might of the united dispossessed. This is the protagonist's quest for Truth and Justice.*

Matigari concerns himself with the oppression faced by the Gikuyu community. He earnestly feels that those who sow seeds are alone eligible to enjoy the full use of the fruits of their labour. Unfortunately, the Kenyan independence has not brought any good to the workers and peasants.

The labour laws run like nectar in sieve. The neo-colonial Kenyan men and women exploit them. Having fought against the colonial rule, Matigari returns to discover the injustice still exists all through in different forms in the realms of business, education and religion. So, he goes back to the forest and decides to fight back for the justice to fellow Africans. The primary exploiters are Mariuki wa Ngaruro, an absurd Minister of Truth and Justice.
Matigari feels that most of the people in the Kenyan society fail him. During the meeting, the minister of Truth and Justice exemplifies the deeply authoritarian nature of the Government. The Minister goes to the extent of proposing a ban on sexual life of people. The workers face indescribable indignities. Look at the Matigari's description of the Kenyan society.

*The country has a good international image in the West because of its rule of Truth and Justice.*

The meeting has therefore drawn observers from the ruling political parties of the Western countries.

*They sat in the front row seats so that they could properly see how the workers in the third world country could be silenced with their instance truth and justice.* \((\text{Matigari, p.100})\)

This passage reveals to us that there is not any need on the part of Kenyan administrators to invite the Western countries.

The agony of Matigari is such that he, besides commenting on the exploitative nature of the whites, discusses the cruel nature of the Blacks. He easily assails the testament of covenant they entered with one another. After winning independence, they break the covenant by behaving like the whites. Matigari is a well built middle-aged leader. Chege expressed his agony through his song. She sings thus:
Great love I saw there among the women and children we
shared even the single bean that fell upon the ground.

(Matigari, p.6)

Matigari observed the people who were put to many traps and temptations. Thus, he represents a hero who waged a war against the whites and won independence for Kenya. Soon, he went around the society and observed the people being exploited by the neo-colonialists. So he expressed his commitment and confrontation.

Ngugi shows how the early black pro-Christians in an attempt to prove how good Christians they are, have tried to suppress mercilessly their own native customs than even the British have done. In The River Between a group of people on the pretext of upholding the native traditions, exploit the innocent public for their personal ends. In Weep Not, Child Jacobo tries to suppress Ngotho cruelly and checks the early attempts of the Blacks to get back their occupied lands. The cruel ways of home guards during the Mau Mau emergency to suppress the natives, are portrayed vividly in Weep Not, Child, and A Grain of Wheat. Petals of Blood, Devil on the Cross, and Matigari deal with the African elite who have adopted the European ways of exploiting the Africans. Ngugi's protagonists suffer, struggle and then revolt against the whites and also their fellow neo-colonialists. This sense of commitment is dealt with in the next chapter.
References


3. G.D. Killam, p.22.


15. Scroft, p.695.


