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## POSTCOLONIAL PRAXES: NGUGI'S *WEEP, NOT CHILD*

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### ABSTRACT

Postcolonialism originates in the thoughts and theories of anti-colonial movements. Anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia generated ideas of political independence. It invokes ideas of social justice, emancipation and democracy to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination and exploitation. It aims at feeding into some of social activism for a more egalitarian society. The intention is to apply the theory to postcolonial literature and to explore alternative frames to the capitalist/ colonial ones so that new challenges are thrown up.

Ngugi novels are powerful indictments of the postcolonial condition which has ruined traditional tribal cultures in Africa. He argues that the study of Africa is inevitably treated as a study of its tribes and tribal conflicts. European colonialism ruined African cultures. Ngugi in *Weep, Not Child* explores the twin motives of education and politics. He describes the vital phase of Kenyan struggle for independence. Ngugi sheds a critical light on the issue of education as related to the colonial agenda of diverting the people from the path of struggle. Education, in so many ways, did play a crucial role in creating a collective amnesia as it made the exploited and oppressed masses willfully forget the necessity of struggle. It studies the ideological and political undercurrents of Kenyan society during the 1950s which was the emergence of the armed phase of anti-colonial resistance in Kenya. Ngugi incorporated the ideology of Louis Althusser: RSAs (repressive state apparatuses: the army and the police), ISAs (Ideological State Apparatuses): education, religion, bureaucracy, and civil society in the fiction. Ngugi is important to postcolonial literature because he negotiates his colonial past with his postcolonial privileged class position.

**Key words:** anti-colonial, racism, discrimination, exploitation, tribal culture, struggle, education,

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Ngugi relies on Walt Whitman's poem "On the Beach at Night" for his novel *Weep, Not Child*. Humanity pictures are the main source of the poem and novel. In the poem Whitman enthuses the child not to weep and not to have any worry and pain.

These are the ideas applied to the Gikuyu people who are always in constant fear. They worry about their land taken by the colonizers which is the main source of life for them. They consider the earth mother of the tribe and sacred place where they dwell on it. The

colonizers gradually alienate the holy place from the colonized and brutally exploited the indigenous. This is aesthetically projected in the novel . T.N. Dhar comments: “ In *Weep Not Child* the weeping child is at the centre of the novel for he has the fear of being exploited at the hands of the author for him.” (1998,vol.3 p235)

Ngugi's *Weep Not , Child* deals with the adolescence of a young boy Njoroge at the time of Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya. The main theme of Ngugi's fiction is the colonial experience of the Kenyans and in this crucial struggle between the colonizer and the colonized, land becomes a significant part of the colonial supremacy and power.Land is the biggest issue leading to the crisis in the novel.Ngugi focuses on the failure of the Mau Mau rebellion due to the treachery and infighting of the natives.He goes into great many details of tribal life and its custom which makes his novels look like ethnographic texts than the works of fiction.

He plunges into the contemporary Kenyan history, the Gikuyu past through myths and stories. He employs the theme of education through the character of Njoroge to fight against the Western colonialism.He mixes the theme of education with the political independence to get national independence The novel describes the hopes and aspirations of landless Kenyans in pre-independent Kenya It novel describes the different phases of colonial consciousness in the postcolonial literature.Ngugi emphasizes the need to make the readers look again at contemporary Kenya and posit the necessity of collective commitment. He employs history and myth for this purpose.

The novel challenges the Kenyan youth to identify the salient features of their heritage,*weep ,Not Child* examines the past in the light of present in an attempt “to assess the enduring legacy of Mau Mau to independent Kenya.”(Carol, 1989,p.350) Howland , the colonizer brutally confiscated the land of Ngotho, the son of the soil. The sage of Gikuyu, Mugo Wa Kibiro prophesized that the land will be handed over to its rightful owners. The colonizers deprive the colonized of their rights and livelihood .Ngugi

delineates vividly the exploitation of the colonizers in the fiction .Colonial power begins with occupation and retention of Gikuyu land possession of the Gikuyu land is a prime source of power within the community. “ A man who went with tattered clothes but had at least an acre of red earth was better off than the man with money” (p.19) In the above situation, encroachment of land is both cause and effect in the community .Boro, brother of Njoroge, questions :” How could these people have let the white man occupy the land without acting?” (p.27)

The landless colonized fight a regular battle for their survival as it is prime resource for their livelihood. Ngotho is victimized due to dispossession of land like the colonized who are prepared to fulfill the needs of the colonizers. Ngotho's retelling of the Gikuyu creation myth reinforce the theme of land .Ngotho narrates the story of Gikuyu and Mumbi to his sons. As the first man and woman created by god, Murungu, they were given the land to rule and till .He grew up on the land working that belonged to their ancestor. It is noteworthy to signify his recollection and retelling of the creation of myth. A painful sense of loss imprinted on the minds of the people is internalized by the children as they listen to the story.

Ngugi poses many thought-provoking questions relating to the loss of land and the logic of imperialist wars. Ngugi introduces the Kenyan struggle for freedom through Boro who has no faith in western system of education. Boro plunges into the militant struggle The colonized disillusioned with the world wars and conscripted African youths fought and died in alien countries. “We fought for them, we fought to save them from the hands of their white brothers” (p.25) Njoroge's brother , Boro, realized and revealed the helplessness of the colonized how the colonizers played the power game in the process of imperialism.Boro was forcefully conscripted by the colonizer to fight against the axis power . After miraculous escape from death, he was totally disillusioned with the existing state of affairs .After end of war , Boro came home with a man of experience and ideas. The fiction took the shape of political turn when Boro entered into Mau Mau

movement .He leads the ignited minds of younger generation, swear the Mau Mau oath and rebels against the colonizers from the woods to get back their occupied lands.

He participated in the Great War on the behalf of the colonizers and realized their deceitful ways. He killed the colonizer, Howlands and the African chief Jacobo. Boro rebels against the conservative, exploitative, and selfish custodians of the Kenyan society. He attacks the corridors of power. In spite of being Mau Mau angle, the fiction is simple in narration as well as with inclusive closure .Ngugi operated the powerful aesthetic conventions .Boro is the typical example of complete unrest among Kenyan youth. The colonized are in a state of disillusionment and frustration. They are sowed the seeds for the most decisive phase of the anti- colonial struggle in Mau Mau rebellion.

Admst this grim situation, Ngugi projected the crucial theme of education to resolve all the problems inflicting the African society. Kenyan people receive their education two sources- formal missionary schools and traditional Gikuyu means. Ngugi used the weapon of education through the character of Njoroge, which is the counterpoising to the militant actions. He put much faith in education as weapon in his struggle where as Boro strongly believes in armed struggled. Njoroge has the faith in Christianity and the goodness of man as preached by the missionaries as part of colonial education. Ngotho advised his son Njoroge to enroll in missionary school of Siriana. Education is everything, Ngotho, said Yet he doubted this because he knew deep inside his heart that land was everything. Education was good only because it would lead to the recovery of the lands.(p.43)

This education exposes him to Christianity and gradually detaches him from his own religion and culture. The sway of this alien religion underlines deep implications as Njoroge grows up with a sense of acceptance and belief in Christian values of justice. Like many boys indoctrinated on Christian principles, the Bible soon became his favourite book and its stories the staple diet on which his young fervent

mind. Njoroge grows up placing his entire destiny in the hands of this Christian god who would ultimately offer the kingdom of Heaven as reward for good deeds . Like millions of other Africans, Njoroge also fails to see the real objective of the Christian missionaries and becomes trapped in ideological conflicts. Colonial education and religions are drawn in the course of civilizing mission.

Growing dissent and resentment against the colonial oppressors indicate a move towards the inevitable struggle as the rising political consciousness transformed the social landscape. Exposed to Christianity with colonial educational background Njorege believes that colonial education was the only potent weapon against the colonizers ,thereby associating education with the struggle for freedom .Only education could make something out of this wreckage. He became more faithful to his colonial education .Kenyans use all their learning to fight against the colonizer.The contradictions between the idyllic world of Western education and and the world of struggles with terrifying experiences affect the lives of all the people.(Killam, 1980,p.49)

The central issue of land and freedom seems deluded in the light of such obscurantist penchant for Western education .Ngugi sheds a critical light on the issue of education as related to the colonial agenda of diverting the people from the path of struggle. Education, in so many ways, did play a crucial role in creating a collective amnesia the exploited and oppressed masses willfully forget the necessity of struggle. Western education made you see the world the way the colonizers saw it.The colonial education exposes Ngoroge to christianity and gradually detaches him from his own religion and culture.

But Njoroge did not want to be like his father working for a white man , or worst for an Indian. He does not want to be a slave to the western values that alienates him from his native roots. But the Bible is the source of inspiration for him which brought out the change in his line of thought. He found some similar conditions in Kenya and the Bible. He compares the oppressed children of Kenyan with Israel. Colonial education enlightens him treating the colonizer as his

brother, though they confiscated their land. Njoroge compromised himself with the colonizer not to fight for the land.

He became slave to the colonial education. He was deceived in the clutches of colonial enlighten process. His colonial education did not help him when his father was dead and his three brothers were behind the bars. Ngugi through the character of Njoroge disillusioned himself from the colonial education and how the young minds of Kenyans effected. At last he realized that colonial education for the oppressed is myth. Njoroge felt that Western education might be instrumental to free from colonial rule. He strongly believed that the colonial education as the sole means to national independence.

Gradually notions were strengthened for Kenyan freedom struggle. It became reality because of significance attached to colonial enlightenment by the Africans. Such beliefs eventually generated and widely accepted myth. Colonial education is the light of Kenya which brings salvation to the desolate millions was indeed a meticulously devised agenda. Njoroge's world is ultimately shattered by these tumultuous events and circumstances beyond his control. His final attempt to commit suicide also fails as he is stopped by Nyokabi and Njeri. Agony, pain and remorse fill him as everything before his vision collapse. Ngugi once again reinforces the bitter truth that education alone is not key to end colonialism in Africa.

Ngugi's use of Gikuyu words and phrases in the novel is process of decolonization and aggression against the Western writings .Ngugi believes that literature politics are closely interrelated with each other because they deals with human beings. He strongly asserts that the primary aim if literature is not merely to entertain but also to persuade. Church and colonial education is the subservient to the interest of colonialism. Nuggi strongly believes that accepting the Christianity means rejecting the old customs and beliefs. Christianity was used to disintegrate the Kenyan tribe and preached to be obedient to the powers .Ngugi portrays not only the socio- political cultural situation in kenya but also the national struggle for independence .Ngugi describes the

contemporary Kenyan history which has myths and stories.

Ngugi intentionally chooses the theme of education which is very controversial. There had been struggle for freedom and right to education in Kenya. Ngugi asserts that colonial education leads many to detach and distance themselves from actual realities. Colonialism is responsible for immense changes in Kenya. Conflicts between the colonizer and the colonized are ruptured, destroyed and strained the traditional structures in society .Ngugi penetrates deeply into the traumatic effects of colonialism. The imperative need of struggles to democratize society is stressed by Ngugi. He places the contemporary Kenyan struggle in a historical context and resurrects revolutionary heroes in the fiction so that masses are inspired .

Ngugi made the history of Kenya during colonialism and post- Independence as the themes of his writings. He has become the most significant interpreter of his country's socio-political events, providing a picture of Kenya in transition. He is the most prominent figure to create political activism. He was also the General of Kenyan land. Like the subaltern historians, Ngugi felt that colonial and elite historians marginalized the peasants and the working class of Kenya .Ngugi saw the narrative as an agent of history. It provides the space for challenging our notions of national identities. The development of African culture and history had an impact on his works. So Ngugi is important to postcolonial studies because his negotiation of his colonial past with his postcolonial privileged class position .

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