

**Resistance and Celebration of Native Tradition: A Critical
Study of Ngugi wa Thiongo's *The River Between* and
*The Grain of Wheat***

By

A. Priyadharshini

(15PEN011)

A thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education

for Women, Coimbatore – 641 046

in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

April 2017

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Signature of the

Head of the Department (i/c)

Signature of the

Supervisor

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Table of Contents

Chapter No.	Content	Pg. No.
I	Introduction	1
II	Resistance and Empowerment in <i>The River Between</i>	20
III	A Tale of Suppression and Resistance in <i>The Grain of Wheat</i>	46
IV	Summation	69
V	Works Cited	82

Chapter 1

Introduction

African literature is considered as one of the important literature which introduces the African countries and their people to the world. There are many emerging African writers writing thought-provoking novels which portray the lives of the Africans.

The African literature is written in both African and non-African languages and it has served as one of the most important instrument to disseminate awareness about the social, political and economic problems in the African continent. This issue is more sensitive because many authors and scholars suggest that the novels will reach larger population if they are written in the native languages. Spivak supports this point as she says “we must take the languages of the Southern hemisphere as active cultural media” (Spivak 9). She insists on this point because most of the African novels are written in the colonial languages mainly English and French.

African literature consists of a body of work, written in different languages and has various genres ranging from oral literature to literature written in colonial languages. Oral literature, including stories, dramas, riddles, histories, myths, songs, proverbs, and other expressions, are frequently employed to educate and entertain the children. Oral histories, myths, and proverbs additionally serve to remind the communities of their ancestor’s heroic deeds, their past, and the precedents for their customs and traditions. Essential to oral literature is a concern for presentation and oratory.

The first African writings, to gain attention in the West, were the poignant slave narratives, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, written in 1789, describes vividly the

horrors of slavery and the slave trade. As Africans became literate in their own languages, they often reacted against colonial repression in their writings. The author Ngugi wa Thiong'o much concentrated primarily on the fact that they should create awareness among people about the colonial rule and the effect on the society.

The African writers have their own field of concentration. Some writers write about the suppression and depression caused by the colonial rule. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o states:

African writers raised their voice against slavery and colonialism and today they continue in that noble task, but this time against African-run postcolonial regimes. We as writers have nothing to be ashamed of in being the role of human decency in being the voice of silence. On the contrary, we must continue to take pride in being at the forefront of the struggle for human rights. This is part and parcel of our calling as writers . . . keeper of human dreams. (Ngugi 12)

Whereas, the other writers look behind their own past for subjects such as, Thomas Mofolo, wrote *Chaka* in 1931 which was about the famous Zulu military leader, in Susuto. Some writers, like Ngugi wa Thiong'o concentrate on the culture and tradition of African tribes and their identity crisis. These kinds of subjects enhance the literature because, the international community is always exposed to the African literature which seems to be tragic and revolting against the white people rule. Readers are widely influenced by the works that gives importance to the African culture, tradition and belief and is highly related to their current circumstances.

But most of the African writers are university wits and has had the benefits of the western education and training. Many of them are authors as well as critics. Despite one or two feeble dissenting voices, most of them reject the theory 'art for art

sake' which is a western conception with little or no relevance to their context. They emphasize the functional and communal values of art as handed down to them by their ancestors. Achebe says that, "art for art's sake is just another piece of deodorised dogshit . . . art is and was always in the service of man" (Achebe 62). He always respects the works that are published to be valuable not just as a piece of art but as awareness among the people about their own situation. He also states that, "there is no rigid barrier between the makers and the consumers of art in Africa . . . Art is the function of the society" (Achebe 47). The integral role of an artist in Africa is juxtaposed with the alienated image of his European counterpart. Ngugi's views on art echoes Achebe's when Ngugi says, "African art is oriented to the community and the Art in African societies was functional" (Ngugi 22). The views of the writers are almost same in relation to the role of the artist and the functional aspect of art.

Since modern literature in Africa, as Ngugi mentioned, "has grown against the gory background of European imperialism" (Ngugi xi), scattering Africans in America, West Indies and elsewhere, and Ngugi is concerned about building "a true communal home for all Africans then . . . we have come home" (Ngugi xix). This concern of building a new home on a totally new foundation for all the Africans to live together with a sense of pride, dignity and equality radiates the writing of the African writers. Ngugi never hesitates in correcting his interviewer by saying, "First of all, of course, we don't call them tribal languages; they are national languages" (Ngugi 19). Surely, Ngugi's experiences of colonialism, revolution, neo-colonialism, prison and exile have prepared him for such frustrations, but his willingness to engage continuously in such steep uphill battles is a testament to his passion and fortitude.

After World War II, as Africans began demanding their independence, more African writers started publishing their novels. Writers such as, in western Africa,

Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ousmane Sembene, Kofi Awoonor, Agostinho Neto, Camera Laye, Mongo Beti, Ben Okri, and Ferdinand Oyono and, in eastern Africa, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Jacques Rabemananjara produced poetry, short stories, novels, essays, and plays. All these writers wrote in European languages. The authors at first, started writing in European language to show the typical condition of Africa to the whole world. When Africans were in the verge of Independence, they became aware of the fact that, they are illiterate and did not know the European language. So, they started writing in their native language so that the people of their country could understand their situation and act accordingly.

African Literature not only focuses on one issue, which is meant to be the suffering of the citizens but also they focus on the celebration, their native tradition and culture. Much of contemporary African literature reveals one's disillusionment and they dissent with the current events. For example, V. Y. Mudimbe, in *Before the Birth of the Moon* (1989), explores a doomed love affair played out within a society, riddled by deceit and corruption. In Kenya, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was jailed shortly after he produced a play in Kikuyu. This play was considered as one of the critical play about the colonial government. Apparently, what seemed most offensive about his play was the use of songs to emphasize its messages. Since, the government was completely under the colonial power, people were unable to express their feelings directly, as it offended the colonial power. Some of the works were not published since it contained opinions against the government.

The African writers write on many themes that are associated with their own life, their country and also psychological impacts that are created in the minds of the people, who were suppressed under the colonial rule. But basically, every work of African writers has some valuable message directed for their people. Achebe believes

that, “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” (Achebe 8).

African writers, despite their education in European countries and its cultural influence, they always return to their homeland. Their writings cover issues related to Africa. Though there are many budding African writers, they still often share the same themes such as, the clash between indigenous and colonial cultures, condemnation of European subjugation, pride in the African past, and hope for the continent’s independent future, the clash between Africa’s past and present, between tradition and modernity, indigenous and foreign, individualism and community, socialism and capitalism, development and self-reliance and between Africanity and humanity. Other themes focused by the African writers are social problems such as corruption, the economic disparities in newly independent countries, and the rights and roles of women. Female writers today are far better represented in published African literature than they were prior to independence. This shows the liberty and the freedom given to women in the African society.

Many writers focus on the pessimistic side of Africa, on the basis of colonial power, and the unsophisticated lifestyle of the people and very few writers concentrate on the bright side of the African countries. They speak high of their unique culture and tradition, their belief in supernatural powers, their family system and their languages. They do limelight on the ethnicity of the African people. Ngugi wa Thiongo’s novels are mostly based on the pessimistic views of the Africans and on the political power of the white people. Some writers focus on the literacy of the tribal

people and they mainly concentrate on the importance of education and its major role in attaining independence.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a writer of Kenyan descent and one of the foremost living African novelists. He has also developed a reputation as a post-colonial theorist, and has taught at universities around the world. He was born James Thiong'o Ngugi in Limuru, Kenya in 1938. He studied at Makerere University in Uganda and published his first short stories. After graduating, he pursued a second bachelor's degree at Leeds University in England. He eventually became a professor of English, and has taught around the world. Later, he dropped his Western first name and adopted his current Bantu name James Ngugi to honour his culture. Due to his change of name, some editions of his early books – including *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between* were published under the name 'James Ngugi'.

In an interview with Reinhard Sander and Ian Munro, Ngugi has addressed the question of the extent of his awareness of the emergency:

As a child growing up during this period, it would be silly and not true to say one was aware of all implications of even the struggle itself. But one did get the impressions. You are so young. You see your uncles being killed . . . You see some of your friends being taken from their homes. These things stay with you. You see an old man you respected being emasculated as a condition of war. These things leave you with an impression. (Ngugi 4)

Ngugi is best known for his novel *Weep Not, Child*, which was written during pursuing Bachelor's degree at Leeds. However, he has a prolific career as a novelist and his style has changed over time. His initial works were more realistic, but in recent years he has dealt into an experimental, magical, realist and aesthetic. Some of

his other well-known novels include *Petals of Blood* in 1977, *The Grain of Wheat* in 1967, and *Wizard of the Crow* in 2006. In 2012, his memoir *In the House of the Interpreter* was published. Ngugi is currently a distinguished Professor in Comparative Literature and English at the University of California, Irvine. Despite his stylistic shifts, Ngugi's interest in the legacy of colonialism has remained consistent. In 1977, he publicly announced that he would no longer write in English, and campaigned requesting the other African writers to do the same. Since then, he has published most of his novels in Gikuyu, his native language, before translating them for English-speaking audiences abroad.

Ngugi's works are often highly political, which has caused many controversies in Kenya. He was imprisoned in 1977 for a year of solitary confinement after his politically provocative play *I Will Marry When I Want* was first performed. In his theatre, Ngugi attempts to involve the audience directly and his political message has offended authorities. After a decade-long exile from Kenya, Ngugi and his wife returned in 2004, and were assaulted in their home, and it is believed to have been a political attack. However, the couple recovered and continued to travel and promote Ngugi's books throughout Kenya. They had struggle hard to make people aware of the situation prevailing in Kenya. Ngugi says that, "unfulfilled ambitions and disappointed hopes, ideas that once seemed important but that did not actually result in outcomes that are still with us today" (Ngugi 3). In recent years, he has been considered a frontrunner to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Ngugi's physical separation from Kenya did not alter his spirituality. Ngugi is just physically separated from his Kenyan homeland but never spiritually distanced from it. Kenya continues to remain the subject of Ngugi's writing even in exile, and

the wide reading of Ngugi's writing by the international community shows that he can never be silenced. David Maughan-Brown says that,

Throwing off those shackles has brought Ngugi persecution and an enforced exile, but it has also led to the production of a body of fiction, drama, and essays so original, technically assured, politically committed, informative, and influential that many of Ngugi's admirers regard him as the most important African writer. (Maughan 12)

The language is one another major issue that concerns Ngugi. He has taken in what has now come to be widely known as the language debate in African literature. Whether or not the writings of Africans in the language of the former colonial masters can claim legitimacy and authenticity; many of the contributions concede that Ngugi's campaign for the use of indigenous language in writing African literature has won an appreciable number of followers. Ngugi has said that, "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceived ourselves and our place in the World" (Ngugi 16). Many writers support Ngugi's intention of using an African language (Gikuyu) as a mode of literary expression. In an interview, Ngugi was questioned about the language he uses; he asserted that

I don't know whether it is worth any longer writing in English . . . I am very suspicious about writing about universal values. If there are universal values, they are always contained in the framework of social realities. And one important social reality in Africa is that 90 percent of the people cannot read or speak English The problem is this--I know whom I write about, but whom do I write for? (Himmelman 4)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o was from a Kikuyu tribe in Kenya. During the Mau Mau Rebellion, he witnessed the black oppression by white settlers. Their influence is reflected in his novels and short stories. He was the first Anglophone African writer to bring into fiction, a Kikuyu view of the bitter colonial war that the British called the Mau Mau Emergency.

It is believed that Ngugi was way ahead in his time, when he began his writing career in 1960s. Ngugi's radicalism lies in the stress he placed on the primary of economic liberation at a time when most writers of his generation were hooked up on the clash-of-culture themes. By emphasising the human degradation and oppression by economic exploitation and disappointment, Ngugi, quite early saw the problem of Africa more clearly and more fully than any of those who used romanticised views of pre-colonial Africa. The economic collapse of Africa and the political repressions which is read in the novels *The River Between* and *The Grain of Wheat* are Ngugi's perception of reality.

Ngugi has focused on many issues that are commonly studied in African literature that are concerned with the problems associated with the Kenyan people. Ngugi's novels such as *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child*, *The Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood* and *Maitigari*, have the judicious use of Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Brooks and de Man. The obvious influence these novels shows includes Fanon's feminist views and forays into children's literature, the connection between Ngugi's art and politics, his use of oral literary material, his liberation aesthetics, the child figure and character typology in his adult works, his characterisation, his intertextual relations with both African and African-American writers. It also includes, the divergent reception of his works by both African and non-African readers. His novels concentrate on feminist interpretations, historical analyses, postcolonial discussions,

Marxist treatises and poems, and anthropological approaches. Ogede mentioned that “Ngugi has given great contribution to African literature” (Ogede 10).

Ngugi is one of the East Africa’s leading novelists, whose popular novel, *Weep Not, Child* published in 1964 is the first major novel in English by an East African. As he became sensitive to the effects of colonialism in Africa, he adopted his traditional name and wrote in the language of Kikuyu. Ngugi’s prize-winning *Weep Not, Child* is the story of a Kikuyu family drawn into the struggle for Kenyan independence. *The Grain of Wheat* published in 1967, generally held to be artistically more mature, focusing on the many social, moral, and racial issues of the struggle for independence and its aftermath. A third novel, *The River Between*, published in 1965, examines the conflict between christianity and traditional ways and beliefs. *Petals of Blood*, published in 1977, deals with social and economic problems in East Africa after independence. *Devil on the Cross* is the novel which is written in both Kikuyu and English. Ngugi in all these novels has presented his ideas in allegorical form.

The Black Hermit, published in 1968 (produced 1962), was the first of several plays, of which *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (produced 1974) co-written with Micere Githae Mugo, is considered by some critics to be his best. Ngugi has also co-authored, with Ngugi wa Mirii, in the work *I Will Marry When I Want*, a play first written in Kikuyu which was published in 1977 which had a good performance. His book *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary*, which was published in 1981, describes his ordeals. This play attacks capitalism, religious hypocrisy, and corruption among the economic elite. *Matigari* (Matigari ma Njiruungi) in 1986 is also one of the important novels by Ngugi which shows the significance of religion and traditional practices.

Ngugi presented his ideas on literature, culture, and politics in numerous essays and lectures of which the most important were collected in *Homecoming*

published in 1972, *Writers in Politics* (1981), and *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-colonial Kenya* (1983). In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), Ngugi argued for African-language literature as the only authentic voice for Africans.

Ngugi's creative writing is analysed in terms of a progression of themes and the events portrayed in his novels which are written in English and is reflected in his collection of short stories *Secret Lives*. His conception of Kenyan society is shown through his reconstruction of events and situations portrayed in the novels. Meg Arenberg says that, "the analysis of the stories and novels in each phase is preceded by a brief outline of the period in which each novel is set in order to examine Ngugi's imaginative reconstruction of Kenyan history" (Arenberg 117).

Ngugi expresses his thoughts about the African heritage diminished by white colonialism in *Weep Not, Child*, through Ngotho's religious attachment to the land of his ancestors taken from him by the whiteman, Mr. Howlands, and through his older sons' determination to fight for their lands by joining the Mau Mau. Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child* is a self-centered youth with mission-school education and messianic ambitions, whose hopes are destroyed when his brothers' involvement in Mau Mau forces him out of school. Yet *Weep Not, Child* is an acclaimed novel, for Ngugi has developed complexities of structure. There are ironies that parallels between the African devotion to ancestral lands and the white settler's love for the soil he has acquired, with the opposed characters oblivious to their common human suffering. Such ironical treatment is a great advance in Ngugi's technique, as are the convincing portraits of subsidiary characters who betray the very values they strive to achieve, or who suffer constant frustration.

Ngugi argues that *Homecoming* is the vital social function of literature in Africa and the Third World generally. In *Petals of Blood*, he impressively puts this belief into practice. Convincing attacks, often Marxist in language, upon neo-colonialism in Independent Africa are achieved fictionally by indicating how powerfully and effectively are the lives of dispossessed little people, but broken by an imported capitalist system. The four major characters, each a misfit in Independent Kenyan society, goes to the distant village of Ilmorog to seek personal peace and modest new beginnings. It is mostly associated with heroic Kikuyu legends and Ilmorog becomes a living presence in the novel. In the grip of prolonged drought, and ignored by the M.P. who had begged for their votes, the desperate villagers undertake an epic march to the capital to lay their troubles before the authorities. Subsequently, religious, political, and economic exploiters swarm upon Ilmorog to develop the land, and using such devices as foreclosed loans eventually dispossess the local inhabitants and establish New Ilmorog.

The ample detail with which Ngugi conveys the ruthless stripping of already deprived ordinary people gains power using a sophisticated narrative technique that make possible the Kenya's history since 1963 to be felt through the consciousness of its social victims. *Petals of Blood* is a powerful novel but it does affirm the potentialities of native communality for a just, humane African polity.

With greater fervor of feeling and rhetoric, Ngugi renews in *Devil on the Cross* his attack upon neocolonial exploiters of the ordinary Kenyan people. The story of economically and sexually exploited young woman, Waringa, is given the fantasy touch by bringing in 'Gicaandi Player, Prophet of Justice', a figure drawn from the oral tradition, who uses language emotively and didactically in ways which shows the reminiscent of Armah's novel *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973). Ngugi, as a narrator,

uses not only songs, incantations and the idiom of oral tradition, but also echoes the parodies of Bible stories and biblical phrases, along with Marxist thoughts. Ngugi does not seem to have tried very hard to disguise his authorial voice, or perhaps it is the effect of translating from original, Kikuyu to English.

This thesis work focuses on two critically acclaimed novels of Ngugi which are *The Grain of Wheat* and *The River Between*. The novel *The Grain of Wheat* has a mature outlook and much subtler theme. It is about the Uhuru celebrations of Kenya's independence in 1963, which reminds about the individual sufferings in Mau Mau days. There are four major characters, each guilty of betraying themselves. They were tired of the Rebellions. Mugo, regarded by his people as a Mau Mau hero, has messianic visions before the Rebellion, but his jealousy on the real leader led his leader to betray him to the British. Ngugi is able to treat a messianic figure with detachment from the colonial power, but also with humane sympathy. The years of Mugo's lonely, conscience-ridden life are very well put across. Other characters, who committed acts of betrayal painfully, also learn, first, the depths of utter disillusion, and then, the harrowing experience of coming to terms with their own limitations. Mugo's public confession gives him the peace of mind, and helps him to face the future with some hope. A great depth of this finely written novel is Ngugi's skillful use of disrupted time sequence, which is associated with the character's behaviour in the Rebellion. Joyaux says that, "Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man" (Joyaux 17). It also focuses on the state of life of the characters during the battle for Independence. Ngugi in the author's note has said that, "the situation and the problems are real--sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who now see all that they fought for being

put on one side” (Ngugi 20). Though it’s a disturbing novel, it proclaims hope for the regenerative capabilities of ordinary human nature.

Ngugi’s attitudes towards larger political actions are revealed in his novel, *The River Between*. It shows a deep sense of African deprivation and their desire to gain back their lost heritage. The river is a symbol of sustenance and growth, but it also divides the half-Christianized half of the tribe, from the traditional tribal ways, soon after the advent of colonialism. Waiyaki, the hero, is an idealistic youth, who dreams with a messianic figure leading his people out of colonial disturbances, peacefully, by acquiring the white man’s education. He would also reconcile the two religiously divided villages, though he is associated with the traditionalists. He loves the daughter of a fanatical Christian Kikuyu pastor. But Waiyaki’s enthusiasm for Western education blinds him to political methods, and he is rejected by his people. The weak point of the novel is that Ngugi romanticizes and glamorizes Waiyaki. His tribal opponents are presented as personal enemies and their different political approach is not seriously considered.

Asked about his novel *The River Between* by an interviewer at Leeds in 1967, Ngugi’s has commented that:

I had come from a missionary school and I was deeply Christian
In school I was concerned with trying to remove the central Christian doctrine from the dress of Western culture, and seeing how this might be grafted onto the central beliefs of our people. *The River Between*, was concerned with this process. (Ngugi 2)

The two themes most critics have seen as dominant in the novel are the relationship between education and political activism, and the relationship between private commitment and public responsibility. Waiyaki’s preoccupation with

education leads him to lose contact with the people he wishes to serve and his messianic sense of his own destiny which helps him to guide and save his people. Only at the end of the novel he recognizes that “The Kiama was right. People wanted action now” (Ngugi 111). Waiyaki decides that, if he had the opportunity, he would preach “education for unity. Unity for political freedom” (Ngugi 98). He is repeatedly described as ‘confused’ and is often unaware of the implications, and sometimes even the origins of his actions.

The focus on Waiyaki’s public role as founder of the independent schools is, to some extent, overlapped in the second half of the novel by the attention given to his love for Nyambura. In this novel, the themes of private commitment are overlapped with the public responsibility. G. D. Killam points out that, “the theme that most interests Ngugi in this novel is the place of love as a means of achieving personal redemption and by extension as an agent for redemption in the community” (Killam 77). The novel is characterized by simplicity of the language. To sum up the novel in the manner of Killam’s opinion, he says that, “it is a modest beginning in a small novel” (Killam 56). David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe claim that, “Ngugi now finds *The River Between* embarrassing” (Cook and Okenimkpe 30). Ever since, he started writing the novel, he always feels that this is his first novel which created an impact on him.

The two novels *The River Between* and *The Grain of Wheat* are selected for the research. The researcher focuses on the struggles faced by the people of Kenya, and the weapon they used for the struggle to gain their independence is ‘Resistance’ and justifies how people’s resistance against the tortures of the colonial powers has paved way for assertion of their indigenous culture. Further, this research explores

how Ngugi advocates decolonising the native's perspective and mindset which would give his nation a glorious future.

Since, Ngugi was very advocating towards using their own language for writing the novels, this aspect of decolonising the mind is taken to show how their language is given importance. This brings to limelight the unique features of African culture and thereby asking the people of Africa to celebrate their tradition and identity. They remove the thought of colonialism from their mind, which is dealt in this research.

The major themes of the novel *The River Between* deals with the clash between the native people of Kenya and the struggles of colonialism. Commitment to one's culture and community is concentrated in this novel. Throughout the novel, the loss of culture due to outside forces and invasion as christian missionaries attempted to impose a new way of life on indigenous tribes. The rights of the indigenous culture to maintain a way of life socially, religiously, educationally and economically when invaded by others who attempt to impose a new way of life on them, is dealt with throughout the novel.

This research also discusses how loss of culture and commitment to culture can be encountered. The main character Waiyaki realizes that to maintain the culture even as it is changing due to colonial influences, the people must take action to preserve and protect it. That action is through resistance.

The novel *The Grain of Wheat* centers on the tumultuous times during Kenyan's struggle for independence. The main focus of the novel is Kihika who is the hero of the novel and how he helps in creating awareness among people of Kenya. Kihika is the first to really be known as a hero and stands as such in the novel.

“Kihika, a son of the land, was marked out as one of the heroes of deliverance”

(Ngugi 14).

As heroism has an importance in the novel, sacrifice has been shown to the readers with the help of Kihika's character and the courageous guerrilla leader full of messianic spirit. Thus, with the help of different perspective the narration gets different. Sometimes, the protagonist becomes antagonist for some other readers and antagonist becomes super hero for the readers.

Ngugi also tries to transmit betrayal as one of the important themes. He conveys the theme of betrayal in Gikonyo and Mumbi. Both of them feel guilty for their behavior. Gikonyo is full of loyalty to the Mau Mau movement, and Mumbi of the marital vow. Gikonyo goes to prison with a firm faith in the useful outcome of the emergency. In this novel too Ngugi shows how people show their resistance towards the colonial power. Even though, they have been taken to the concentration camps and have been tormented, they remain patient and work wonders with unity.

The fundamental value of resistance is the creation or expansion of space for making choices. Restructuring power relations limits their own identities of tradition and culture. Scott said that resistance is the “hidden transcripts of anger, aggression” and “disguised discourses of dignity” (Scott 36).

Resistance is always connected with the creative innovations of power and the social change. Through resistance, the power is structured, exercised and that changes the world. A society, thriving with resistance, does not necessarily lead to nihilism or anarchism which means ‘nothing matters’ or ‘anything goes’, but a limited pluralism. Resistance does not annihilate the social bonds of society, it simply, constructs new ones while deconstructing others and in many of the cases, it opens up the space for a freer choice.

Duncombe finds resistance “fairly easy” to define resistance as “simply to act against” (Duncombe 490). This piles some of the complexities associated with resistance. Raby asserts that, “understanding the concept of resistance requires more than simply defining the word. Resistance is an integral part of power relationships, of domination, subjugation and as such may be viewed from different ideological viewpoints” (Raby 123).

Raby says that modernism views resistance as an “oppositional force to a dominant power and is, depending on interpretation, the more empowering face of delinquency or deviance” (Raby 153).

Postmodernism also adds that resistance is “disruptions” (Raby 161). Raby also mentions that “postmodernists view power and resistance, not necessarily as oppositional, but rather as a complex of diverse, fragmented and transitory relationships between individuals” (Raby 154). Postmodern views of power seem to offer little hope for cultural resistance, if a movement can only be seen as the sum of its parts and if it’s very existence is tied to the existence of its dominator.

The next important aspect discussed in the research is ‘Decolonising the mind’. Ngugi finds this concept very important to create awareness among people, therefore he wrote a book in the name *Decolonising the Mind*. This concept always revolves around the fact that, one’s language, culture, tradition and their identity is most important for the African people. The thoughts about the colonizers and their tortures should be erased from their thought, and, the thought about the most precious and unique culture and their originality should be celebrated. He also makes note about the writers writing in English, and how important it is to writing in their own language because, the main purpose is to tell people about the happenings in the

country. Their books are not only intended for the international community but also for their own people.

This thesis work is structured to attain these objectives and to emphasize the importance of these concepts. The first chapter is the introduction. The second chapter entitled as “Resistance and Empowerment in *The River Between*,” focuses on the resistance of the people, particularly in the novel *The River Between*, and the importance given to their own culture and tradition, in spite of their struggle for independence. Independent Schools have been set by the protagonist of the novel to show the concept of decolonising the mind.

The third chapter which is entitled as “A Tale of Suppression and Resistance in *The Grain of Wheat*,” focuses on resistance and how people belonging to Kenya give importance to their own identity. They struggle against the colonial powers to safeguard their own culture and tradition.

The fourth chapter sums up the concepts that are taken in this thesis work. This proves how Ngugi wa Thiongo’s novels *The River Between* and *The Grain of Wheat* resist the colonial powers and protect their native culture by celebrating their indigenous tradition.

Chapter 2

Resistance and Empowerment in *The River Between*

At the time of Ngugi wa Thiongo's birth, Kenya was under the British rule and most of his novels including *The River Between*, reflected the colonial experience. *The River Between* is the story of an African village and their quest to survive an influx of western influence. *The River Between* is a good example of the third world texts. It is written in such a way that it can be classified as national allegory. The novel is read as the classic text of anticolonial Gikuyu nationalism. Gikandi contends that, "if one wanted to understand cultural nationalism in Central Kenya in the 1920s, one turned to Ngugi" (Gikandi 28). The nationalist mandate of the novel aims to articulate an appropriate anticolonial poetic. The novel tries to depict colonialism as a disruption of natural order of things and it creates serious rifts within the native community.

The central opposition dramatized in *The River Between* is within the Gikuyu polity rather than between the Gikuyu and the white colonizers. The text helps to heal the internal rift between two Gikuyu communities—the christian Makuyu and the traditional Kameno, as a precondition for the articulation of an effective anticolonial nationalism. The novel is animated by the romance of Gikuyu community outside the culture of colonialism, but that romance is unintelligible without colonial culture. A paradox is apparent in the internal logic of *The River Between* as it expresses the need for communal unity using the rhetoric of organic restoration. But, the specific means and terms by which the reunification of Kameno and Makuyu can be achieved is through christian conversion and colonial education. The idea explores the problems of education that result in the establishment of Independent Schools in Ngugi wa

Thiongo's *The River Between*, considering the diverse factors related to the daily lives of people and in adopting the education systems.

The central ideas of poetry and fiction and so on, emerge from a concrete reality. Ngugi wa Thiong'o wants his people to understand and react against the colonizers in a brilliant manner. This novel, changes the mindset of the people of Africa and it enables a simplistic understanding of the forces of colonialism in Africa, which have been changing Africa into a complicated image, before and after colonialism. The novel portrays the people in Africa whose properties have been confiscated including their identity. It is considered as a connection within imperial powers and minor community.

Kenya was under British colonialism that steadily encroached into the interior parts of the country. The inner regions are dominated by two ridges, Makuyu and Kameno. In between the ridges flows the Honia River, which both separates and unites the people of the ridges. It separates them physically because they stay on either side of the river and it unites them because they fetch water from it. Waiyaki and Nyambura are the most important characters in this novel who sit beside the river everytime they experience restlessness. This river is known to have a calming effect on the human heart and the mind. The people go in search of this river to have a peaceful mind. It is also portrayed to emphasize the continuity of life, despite human squabbles and obstacles; it goes on flowing in the same pace. Every living being depends in this river, for instance, the animals drink water from it and circumcision ceremonies are held on one side of its banks.

With the advent of colonialism and its colonial institutions, such as Siriana Mission Administration, the people of the ridges are divided. Some residents of Makuyu embraced christianity rejecting their indigenous rituals and cultural practices,

such as female circumcision. This group is represented by Joshua and his family.

Kameno remains unchanged and becomes the stronghold of the 'traditionalists'. The 'traditionalist' group is represented by Chege and his family. There is thus a division within the tribe.

Chege reminds his son Waiyaki of an ancient prophesy. According to prophesy, a leader will rise and liberate the people of the ridges. Such a leader would be a descendent of his family, which makes Waiyaki the obvious candidate, as he is Chege's only son. No one except Kabonyi knows about this prophesy. Meanwhile, Chege sends Waiyaki to Siriana Mission to attain the wisdom of the colonialists. Such wisdom will help him to gain an insight into the ways of a white man and equip him to fight against them in future struggle. However, Waiyaki should ensure that he would not contaminate himself with colonialist's vices. His father Chege advises him to, "learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices" (Ngugi 116).

The division between Makuyu and Kameno becomes intense by the hostilities caused by the fact that some people embrace christianity while others remain true to their indigenous ways. This constitutes the focal point of the conflict. Tempers reach boiling point when Joshua's younger daughter, Muthoni, rebels against her father and submits herself to circumcision to attain womanhood. The circumcision becomes the cause of her death. The father's curse for disobeying him is taken as the cause of her death by the fellow people. Siriana launches a frontal attack on circumcision practice by expelling children whose parents still upholds it.

Waiyaki is one among those people who have been forced out of their family by Siriana as a custom. He takes up the challenge of building self-help schools for abandoned children. His exact leadership role has never been fully explained by his

father Chege who is now dead. He perceives that his duty is to educate the ridges which is said to be the white man's wisdom. Preoccupied with his mission to educate the ridges, he loses the concentration on his people who are also in need of other needs like, fighting to regain their lost land and identity. There is also a widening gap between the converted christian or Joshua's followers and the traditionalists. The latter have even formed a secret organization, the Kiama, whose goal is to ensure the purity of their tribe.

Kabonyi manipulates the division of the tribal community to destroy Waiyaki whom he intensely hates. His hatred is further fuelled by Waiyaki's growing popularity. Having earlier and rather thoughtlessly taken the oath of purity and loyalty to the tribe administered by the Kiama, Waiyaki finds himself vulnerable to Kabonyi's schemes due to many reasons. The first is that, Waiyaki does not really wish to see the division to part further; instead he wants to heal it. But the traditionalists did not want to ally with the christians. Likewise, the christians also hated the traditionalist and called them the people of darkness. Waiyaki blames himself for failing to address the issue of unity in time. He falls in love with Joshua's uncircumcised daughter, Nyambura. Since, he had taken an oath of purity that he will not get married but serve for the community, he feels guilty for violating the oath. The novel ends ominously with both Waiyaki and Nyambura in the hands of the Kiama who is to decide their fate.

Ngugi shows that colonialism has changed Kenya in various ways (and Africa at large). Before the influence of colonialism, the people of Kenya were one, united by a common culture and its rites. But with the influence of colonialism, conflicts aroused majority when some people accepted christianity as their new religion. It condemned their indigenous culture that claimed female circumcision as

barbaric. This caused a bitter strife among the people of the tribe. On the whole, these aspects influenced people to send their children to Siriana mission to attain education which was seen as the 'white man's wisdom'. Education is the instrument of enlightenment and advancement. When Siriana decides to ignore pupils from non-Christian families, the tribes were delighted to see Waiyaki establishing self-help schools.

The change from traditional customs to modernity was difficult. It went through tragic moments, characterized by resistance, acceptance and desire for reconciliation between the two cultures. The changes started with the education system. The Independent Schools are initiatives of nationalists who are aware of the positive influence of missionary on Kenyan children. The native people perceived that the foundation of their own schools would confront the oppressive and the alienating education system imposed by British colonist through missionary schools. The main objective of the Independent schools is to emphasize the education of African youth and to urge them to participate in nation building activities. They also played a vital role in striving against the cultural oppression. It also underscores the contribution of the Independent Schools in provoking the sense of identity consciousness and demonstrates how these schools paved way for liberation.

The Cultural Resistance to Missionary Schools in Kenya:

The River Between mainly concerns with the religious conflicts between the two different ridges Kameno and Makuyu, the traditionalists and the converted Christians during the colonial period. This novel evokes the importance of education in the lives of the natives. Indeed, education is still a major problem in many African nations, as the continent continues to confront difficulties in implementing efficient educative systems.

Despite several policies of successive governments and educative authorities, one can notice that many African nations face undercurrent situations, as far as education is concerned. Analyzing the education systems inherited from colonial powers, the people of the African country are not content with the colonial education. They are unsatisfied in learning colonial languages and their cultures. Instead, they appreciate learning their own tradition and culture.

In the globalizing world, it is necessary to analyze whether the implemented education system is adapted to the realities of people and what effect has the curricula had on African identity. The Independent Schools have influenced people to act according to the cultural oppression that the colonial power has imposed on them. It has helped them to overcome cultural alienation with the powerful tool called 'cultural resistance.' Christophe explains people that:

To better grasp the commitment of the Independent Schools, the theoretical framework will be guided by authors like Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko, who were at the forefront of the struggle against the cultural alienation of the African subjects is at the core of this cultural resistance. (Christophe 3)

And, furthermore, this thought also proposes to show the positive aspects of Independent Schools in the domain of education in relation to their importance in their struggle against psychological and cultural oppression. The Independent Schools conceptualize and represent a source of inspiration that alters education systems concerning the realities of African people. This becomes a strategy to exhibit resistance against cultural oppression and a way to advocate an ideology of nationalist commitment to nation building.

A Strategy of Resistance to Cultural Oppression:

In *The River Between*, Independent Schools are introduced to resist the brainwashing system of education in colonized spaces. Given that colonizers use education to alienate people, the determined citizens of Kenya have introduced a new form of school which has claimed their independence from the missionary schools.

In *The River Between*, Joshua, a convert and Livingstone, a missionary, refuses to welcome the people who are devoted to their native cultures. Their projects are based on a process of indoctrination and an open opposition to African culture. According to the missionaries, the initiation rites of the native culture are contradictory to the principles of their schools. The aim of the leaders of the colonial schools is to assimilate the natives to European civilization. This paves way for marginalizing the African culture, which confronts the threat of extinction in the era of globalization. In the Siriana School, teachings and learning focused on missionaries and converted people like Livingstone and Joshua who rejected their rituals initiation, a practice they regarded as paganism:

The children of those who defied the laws of the Church and continued with their tribal customs would have leave Siriana. And no child of a pagan would again be allowed into school unless the child was a refugee. Even then the child would have to renounce circumcision.

Waiyaki knew that to be the end of him. He had hoped he would finish his final year, for he loved learning. (Ngugi 69)

Being aware of the power of the Siriana School, Waiyaki and his people have understood that “the most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” (Biko 92). According to Steve Biko, who is a south-African activist, the oppressors succeed in imposing their powers on the colonized by exploring them

psychologically. In other words, Biko explains how the White dominators have managed to control the psyche of the Black community during the era of Apartheid in South Africa. Beyond this, he appeals the oppressed to bear in mind the necessity to decolonize their consciousness. Similarly, in Kenya, a new school is opened within this framework just as Marioshoni is built in Kameno, which is an attempt to challenge colonialism and restore the lost values of Kenya. This is the reason why people of Marioshoni re-thinks about the education of their children, because it does not concentrate in restoring their tradition, culture and language, and most importantly their identity.

The main concern of Ngugi is to illustrate the response of the native people against their cultural violence that “inflicted on the consciousness of the colonized” (Chidi 161). And in response to the dominators’ plan to compel the natives to give up their customs, Waiyaki and his followers call for “the starting of the people’s own schools” (Ngugi 106). As a result, Waiyaki becomes the cornerstone of the rupture of Siriana, and for this young teacher, it is necessary to face alienation, “to unite and build more schools” (Ngugi 108).

In the same order of analysis, regarding colonial education and the colonized, Frantz Fanon states that, “the power of dominators resides first in their capacities to reduce the people into obedience, and that it is through a process of alienation that education paves the way to colonialism” (Potholm 3). Fanon describes that Independent School was used as a medium to subjugate native people. Potholm opines that “Fanon’s work demonstrate that even more terrible than the colonization of a country is the colonization of the mind” (Potholm 4).

Education helps people to retain their original values and their identities as the origin of the foundation of the famous Marioshoni School in *The River Between*. This

Independent School proclaims its autonomy from Siriana (the missionary school) and sets up a new system of education that efficiently changes perspectives of the people towards learning. Meanwhile, they are also keen in withholding their own identity. It strives for the development of an education with accordance to the social, economic and religious realities of the Gikuyu. In spite of the fact that colonial administration would continue to implement its policies of assimilation, the Independent Schools would always react in favor of the masses.

The native people choose to redefine the educative system in order to satisfy the needs of the people. As Christophe states that, “this perspective can be considered as a step towards new forms of education that were adapted to local contexts” (Christophe 26). Such a measure is within the framework of the consolidation of the community which was destroyed by the colonial rule. In Mariosioni, Waiyaki works on the mission of rehabilitating the rights of boys and girls who have been alienated from Siriana. He finds it as a way to offer them an education that is appropriate to their lives. As African people are rooted in their culture and customs which altogether function as a strategy for cultural liberation, the Independent Schools are the warehouse of power to retrieve and restore the lost African identity. The founders of the Independent Schools do not reject all the objectives of European education but the deconstruction of the stereotypes that are attributed to their traditions. In Ngugi’s case, his primary education was in Gikuyu Independent School between 1948 and 1955 which made him aware “of colonialism as an oppressive force” (Sicherman 12).

The education in the Independent Schools also let him to feel proud about the peasant culture that educated him the “songs, stories, proverbs, riddles” (Sicherman 12). Those who attend these schools like Ngugi are literate in their cultural values. Therefore, pupils in Independent Schools have the opportunity to learn the language

of the colonizer without being uprooted or alienated from their culture. Meanwhile, the founding peers of the school make sure that the children could “get the white man’s education” (Ngugi 94).

- 1) They find that the white man’s education is necessary for the native people because it is a step forward in order to liberate them from the colonial dominance.
- 2) Curriculum of their rehabilitation programs constitutes their culture and customs to create a strong organization that combines the positive aspects of education.
- 3) The founders improved the Independent Schools in all terms and therefore, the school was neat. Ngugi says that:

People saw everything in it, the outcome of their own efforts, the symbol of their defiance of foreign ways. The parents saw this as the fruits of their labor, their patience and sweat. Their children could speak a foreign language, could actually read and write. And this had been done in spite of Siriana’s stern action in refusing to admit the children of those who would not abandon the ancient rites. (Ngugi 105)

The establishment of Independent Schools like Marioshoni has initiated the native’s struggle against assimilation that promoted the respect of cultures and customs, which have no place for departing from missionary education. This is to consolidate the unity of the social groups to unsure environments where educated young boys and girls can freely celebrate their cultural values. In contrast, the indoctrination of the European schools or the missionary schools reached a point where the European authorities began forbidding circumcised girls and boys to continue their education: “Siriana’s stern action in refusing to admit the children of

those who would not abandon the ancient rites” (Ngugi 105). Consequently, it leads to the development of Independent Schools across the country in order to put an end to the psychological domination of the colonizers.

Education rendered by those Independent Schools in the country has a great influence on Ngugi’s literary productions. He started to inquire the relationship between education and the lives of the natives. He concentrates on the lives of the working class people, especially peasants. According to him, an important feature of the Independent Schools is to help the young Kenyan people be in conformity with the traditional ways of living of the natives.

A country, which is politically sovereign without cultural liberation, cannot emerge as a developed nation. The cultural base is of great importance to implement the development of cultural policies. In this perspective, cultural resistance appears through the Independent Schools, which enable the people to express their feelings without any fear or constraint. Mariosioni is very determined to educate the natives in spite of the opposition of colonial authorities. To support this point, Ngugi states that:

Mariosioni, as Waiyaki’s school was called, was a well-known in the country. Already it had a history. It was the first people’s own school to be built since the break with Siriana. It had been Waiyaki’s idea and even now he could not understand fully how his idea had borne fruit so quickly. (Ngugi 78)

In collaboration with the guardians of the traditions, the Kiama (is the Council of the Ancients), Waiyaki recommends starting Independent Schools across Kenya. Thus, the resistance to alienation occurs through the involvement of parents who have joined hands with the Kiama and sent their children to the Independent Schools. It is certain that fathers would expect “their children to come home full of learning and

wisdom. Parents would feel proud, very proud, when a son came in the evening with a tear-washed face” (Ngugi 79).

In *The River Between*, education is rendered through the Independent Schools with the notion of commitment towards a national cause, in addition to the resistance to alienation. The people are convinced that the schools can promote commitment for the development of the nation and the nation building ideology. This has given priority to the principles of nationalism.

The revolutionary ideas like gaining knowledge about restoring their identity also integrated the education system of the Independent Schools. The conception of the nationalists to infuse people with pride and a sense of patriotism was put in motion. The citizens kept on defending their nation with courage. The Independent Schools sought a strong education rooted in the visions of the freedom fighters. Eventually, there were conflicts between the leaders of the Independent Schools and the colonial powers that imposed force to close down the schools. However, the dominated mass strove to protect their interests through education. Ngugi emphasizes on the history of Kenya to show the basic role played by the Independent Schools. In Kenya, nationalists had found their own schools to teach programs aimed at educating competent African managers who are aware of the interests of their societies and are capable of defending them. And in short, “the schools contributed significantly to the sensitization of young people who attended them by constructing a counter-discourse of colonialist intentions” (Christophe 201). In the light of this quotation, it can be said that in Kenya, the Independent Schools have developed during the rise of nationalism which have led the country towards independence. Exploring the system of these Independent Schools, it is transparent that the beginning and the end of the revolution is evoked through the teachings of these Independent Schools.

In this analysis, Ngugi's *The River Between*, emphasizes the importance of Independent Schools which act as a form of resistance to cultural oppression, assimilation and alienation. This work reveals that these schools have strengthened the struggle for liberation through nationalist ideas and teaching, which guided the masses to restore African culture, identity and justice within Kenyan society.

The novel *The River Between* shows that the Independent Schools culturally and politically plays a considerable role in the people's fight against all the mental shackles of subjugation, domination and exploitation. Independent Schools are the key mission to educate the youth which would enable them to understand their responsibilities towards their country. And in Africa, today, one can propose an education opened to international standards, but with a curriculum that considers the social, economic, religious and political ideals of each nation.

In a nut shell, the education plays as a bridge which unites people. Despite their knowledge, they also attain a state of realization on which is true or not true. Education renders them a proper vision, making them realize that they have been living in the darkness and it is the time for them to walk towards the light. Education, after all, had helped them to strengthen their beliefs in Christianity and thus, they would not be easily influenced by everything Waiyaki conveys.

Uzodinma Iweala says, "Ngugi describes African existence as a struggle between two competing forces as an Imperialist tradition and a Resistance tradition" (Ngugi x). Resistance is one of the important factors which plays a prominent role in attaining independence.

The cultural resistance and receptivity towards colonialist change:

The cultural resistance is found when people of Kenya oppose the education that is attained from the Independent School. Not only in education but also in many

arenas, resistance has become an important expression to safe guard people from the colonial rule because they refuse something they are not ready to accept.

Resistance theory, an aspect of political thought, constitutes authority to resist by the individuals or groups. Resistance has been an important phenomenon through which the people of Kenya have been leading their life. Cultural Resistance is also based on the effect of the colonial power on the colonized country that withstands the opposing actions of the oppressed group. They have been treated like slaves whose land, religion, tradition, language, culture were seized, which altogether frames their identity.

Currently, the people no more struggle against the colonial powers at the cost of their lives. They have become receptive to the changes that take place in their own land. The African literature shows the impact of the imperial leadership which reflects the conventional wisdom, the most common response to this impact is resistance. In this novel, Ngugi wa Thiong'o portrays the lives of individuals who belong to the tribe named Makuyu and Kameno and their reaction towards the cultural, political and religious changes that takes place in the country.

Joshua is considered as an important character who is peculiar among others in the community. When Christianity was introduced in their region, he understood that the future of the country depends on the British people. This made him to quit his religion, and convert into a Christian.

This instance unveils the fact that whenever people tend to depend on someone who is powerful, they have to believe, accept their way of life and religion practices. The attitude towards learning new things has been changing gradually because they are getting educated and would attain the wisdom and the knowledge of the white man. This makes them stronger to fight against the white society and to

regain all the treasures that they have lost. Waiyaki obeys his father's command to go to the Siriana Mission to learn their situation, to establish and maintain a good relationship with the people. The major reason is that he would safe guard people by knowing all the strategies the white people has used to conquer the natives.

Citizens of Kenya are in a situation that they could not accept the policies and the rules that are imposed by the white people. They could not fight against the white people because they are more powerful. So, they started to obey the rules and later acted against it. This affected the people sociologically and psychologically. Waiyaki, when he was among the whites, has been treated very differently by the people of his race. Since, he went to the school and was educated by those white men; he became aware of the importance of the education and has also been trying a lot to improve the educational system of the Independent Schools. He attempted to employ many teachers in the school. This shows his psychological and social transformation because he has forgotten that. He considers, "the education was the light of the country" (Ngugi 98).

The usage of the tribal language has been decreased because of the influence of Colonizer's language and the native religion gradually diminished since many had converted to christianity. Their land is seized because the whites started cultivating and build buildings on their destroyed land. Like the loss of land, the natives lost their tradition. The tribal people thought that circumcision is essential to be carried out. According to the tribal people, the circumcision is an important ritual that is to be carried out forever.

Waiyaki, who embraces his Gikuyu tradition, wanted to marry a lady named Nyambura but on the other hand, he wanted to serve his people. He declares, "that was now a lost opportunity and he had not betrayed the tribe; the tribe he had meant

to unite; the tribe he had wanted to save; the people he had wanted to educate, giving them all the benefits of the white man's coming" (Ngugi 137). Contoh Tugasan says, "education is served as a set of preparation for Waiyaki towards his role as a leader of the tribe in the future" (Tugasan 4). They learn everything and they train their mind stronger to achieve what they want. But the real scenario is very different as "the White man was slowly encroaching on people" (Ngugi 137).

Resistance to change:

Resistance to change has been characterized as 'a catch-all phrase' that is broad enough to include almost any unfavorable reaction, opposition, or force that prevents or inhibits change. Gail Latta asserts that resistance is "anything and everything that workers do which managers do not want them to do, and that workers do not do that managers wish them to do" (Gail 94). Although, there does not appear to be an universal or even widely accepted operational definition for resistance, researchers agree that it is a socially constructed phenomenon.

Piderit also mentions that "resistance is constituted with behavioral, interpersonal, emotional and cognitive components" (Piderit 784). It is also mentioned by Arkowitz that "it is determined by intrapersonal and interpersonal factors and can occur with or without conscious awareness" (Arkowitz 219).

Cook mentions that, "the determinants of resistance had been studied at the individual, group and organizational levels of analyze and its roots have been variously located in psychological, sociological and cultural dynamics" (Cook 29). The white people intended to transform, alter the natives and wanted them to obey the rules but never talk back.

Psychological roots of resistance:

The roots of resistance have both cognitive and affective dimensions and have resulted in either “self-protective” or “reactive” resistance (Arkowitz 219). Prasad says, “cognitive sources of resistance stem from the meaning people attach to the perceived consequences of change” (Prasad 387). Orge states that, “negative evaluations of the consequences of change such as loss of status, comfort or identity will precipitate affective responses involving generalized feelings of anxiety, apprehension, anger and fear” (Orge 680).

These cognitive and affective responses result in self-protective resistance characterized by a lack of commitment intended to preserve the status quo, or ‘reactive resistance’ marked by an active opposition and aimed at preserving a sense of personal freedom and control. The available evidence does not permit accurate predictions regarding whether or how cognitive or affective factors may be translated into behavioral acts of resistance therefore, researchers are cautioned to resist the urge to “automatically infer that resistance is taking place on the basis of a specific type of action occurring in the place” (Arkowitz 227).

Waiyaki can be considered as a person of resistance because he is working for the people. He speaks in another language and lives a life which is entirely different and alien to his community. The resistance has instilled in his mind and has extremely influences him to be liberated.

Muthoni is another important female character who stands as an exemplar for the true spirit of Gikuyu culture. In spite of his father’s conversion to a christianity, Muthoni has a determination to become a lady by accepting the circumcision. The activities or rituals imposed by Gikuyu culture are extremely painful. One such ritual is the circumcision which is followed by the people belonging to that particular

community and Muthoni is determined to follow it. She sacrifices her life to preserve the community and its tradition. This is because this tradition has a deep root in her heart and affected her psychologically, but finally she loses her life due to circumcision.

Sociological roots of resistance:

Sociological perspectives on resistance focus on the dynamics of social response and power differentials in organizations that bring higher responses to change. People adopting this perspective that the imperial power is actually suppressing them, emphasize the importance of both the complex interplay between individual and collective action. The action of resisting turns powerful when people work together than the individual efforts. Waiyaki believes that unity among people will make things better. He says, “it is because of the hills were united that such great victories were possible. People stood together in the hour of need, giving one another the warmth of their contact, the strength of their blood” (Ngugi 144).

Resistance plays a prominent role in the lives of native people. They encounter issues in everything ranging from the language they speak to the religion they follow. Resistance has been a difficult task for the people who have been trying to restore their tradition all throughout their life to come out from the colonial rule. They have tolerated the tortures of the White people in the name of resistance, hoping that one day or the other they would be relieved from the hands of the colonial rule and could enjoy their freedom. They believed that fine leaders like Waiyaki would make their dream come true and would give a meaning for their resistance.

Politics of space in Ngugi wa Thiongo’s novel:

In Ngugi wa Thiongo’s *The River Between*, the spatial perspective is as important as the history of resistance to all forms of imperialism in Kenya, the home

from which he has been exiled for nearly two decades. The cultural identity is emphasized throughout his other works. His first story “Mugumo” and his most recent novel *Matigari (Matigari ma Njiruungi)* conclude with acts of dedication towards the sacred Mugumo tree. All of his novels refer to the genesis myth of Gikuyu, Mumbi and the revered Mount Kenya. *The River Between*, his first written and secondly published novel, excavates the spatial and ideological rift within the community in the early colonial period during the circumcision controversy of 1929-32. The novel’s geographical specificity and attention to landscape, which is an influence of D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, and George Lamming, are the sacred values associated with the particular soil of Kenya. Ngugi’s Kenya is abandoned and condemned by geography and history. He also mentions the natives’ struggle for survival against imperialism.

Kenyan region was to be transformed in the European’s perspective from no man’s land into white man’s land. The “fluid and kaleidoscopic nature of the traditional cultural and political geography of Kenya was homogenized under a single administration, and the traditional pattern of Islands of dense agriculture settlement in a sea of pastoralism was rearranged into clusters of Islands” (Soja 23). In *The River Between*, Ngugi addresses the rivalry, between Gikuyu community on each ridges of the river that was exploited by the colonists to justify land appropriation and forestall opposition.

Soja says that, “the perception of cultural and ethnic nationalist identity, such as that of the Gikuyu in Ngugi’s novels, was largely a reaction to the threat of colonial consolidation of land” (Soja 378). This was not a unique phenomenon in Kenya. If the sovereign nation-state is itself a Eurocentric idea that was internationalized in the late

nineteenth century, then the notion of a nationalist culture may be contingent on the experience of colonialism.

Ngugi's conception of national cultural integrity is embodied through the significance of language of which he speaks in his works. He famously regards the language as the basis for people's material and cultural life and the repository of historical memory as it allows its speakers to possess individual perception towards world and addresses the ancestors and unborn generations. Ngugi relates the promotion of English language and the repression of Kenya's languages to the colonial fostering of an elite class, alienated from its cultural roots, which would suppress the language of the native people through the neocolonial power. He sees neocolonial paranoia about Kenya's languages behind his own detention. Ngugi's brand of linguistic nationalism is predicated on the notion that the colonial nation and its neocolonial successor are reproduced in schools and all state apparatuses are inseparable from the colonial language. Ngugi believes that language is an undiluted cultural essence and a tool for solidarity and resistance. Although Ngugi's advocacy of linguistic decolonization intensified in the late 1970s, he championed the cause much earlier. While demanding all African writers to imitate his linguistic practice, Ngugi has been candid in acknowledging the difficulties encountered by younger writers. The obstacles in general are lacking international stature and access to publication and translation. Moreover, rumors about Ngugi's own abandonment of English are exaggerated to an extent.

Decolonizing the Mind in *The River Between*:

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is an important African writer, who has gained education from different parts of the world and aware of the imperial languages and their effects. Apart from Ngugi, other African writers also complain about imperialism and

its domination. Meanwhile, the people of Africa are dependent on the imperial power for economical and political benefits. Therefore, they still continue to write in the foreign languages, paying homage to them. They continue the cultural level neo-colonial slavish and cringing spirit. These consequences make African writers to question on the nature of a politician and a writer who states that Africa cannot survive without European influences, be it on the political or linguistic terms.

When people are busy haranguing the ruling circles and much concentrated about the issues related to them, this situation automatically excluded the participation of the peasantry and the working class in the debate. The christian bible is available in unlimited quantities almost in every languages of Africa. The comprador ruling cliques are also happy for the distortion of the peasantry and the working class. The dictatorial directives, decrees, museum-type fossils paraded as African culture, feudalistic ideologies, superstitions and lies, all these elements are communicated to the African masses in their own languages. These are done without any challenges from those with alternative visions of tomorrow who have deliberately cocooned themselves in English French, and Portuguese. It is ironic that the most reactionary African politician, the one who believes in selling Africa to Europe, is often a master of African languages. The most zealous of European missionaries who believed in rescuing Africa from colonial power, even from the paganism of its languages, were nevertheless the masters of African languages. The European missionary believed too much in the mission of conquest not to communicate in the languages most readily available to the people. The African writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o believes too much in African literature to write it in those ethnic, divisive and underdeveloped languages of the peasantry. But some are coming round to the inescapable conclusion articulated by many of the African writers that, African literature can only be written in African

languages, which is, the language of the African peasantry and working class. The major alliance of classes in each of their nationalities breaks with neo-colonialism.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has the same belief that the first way to show their opposition to Imperialism is to write in their own language which becomes a weapon against them. They can express their feelings with the help of their own language. They would feel the sense of belonging and the people understand it better and stand together in their struggle against the slavish rule. Ngugi wa Thiong'o started writing in Gikuyu language in 1977, after seventeen years of involvement in Afro-European literature. Later, it was collaborated with Ngugi wa Mirii in drafting the play script. The writers notice the very fact that common sense dictates in the literary practice of other culture that is being questioned in an African writer. It is a measure to illustrate how far imperialism has distorted the views of African realities. It has turned reality upside down, the abnormal is viewed as normal and vice versa. Africa actually has enriched Europe with its wealth and slaves, but Africa is made to believe that it needs Europe to rescue them from poverty. Africa's natural and human resources continue to assist Europe and America in development. But Africa is made to feel grateful to the colonial rule for providing aids like education and hospital facilities to the people of Makuyu and Kameno. Africa even produces intellectuals who now rationalise this improper way of viewing Africa.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o believes that his writing in Gikuyu, a Kenyan language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples. In schools and universities, they use their own language in spite of the existence of various nationalities. This confinement makes Kenya associated with negative features like backwardness and underdevelopment which justify humiliation and punishment imposed by the imperialist. The people who went through Independent

School system were meant to graduate with a hatred of the white people. They did not want to see Kenyan children growing up by imbibing the imperialist-imposed tradition. They want them to surpass the colonial alienation. This can be seen in *The River Between*, where Waiyaki, who gained education from the colonizers and started Independent Schools in his own place because the children should know the values and importance of their own language and culture so that they can fight against the imperial government with unity.

Colonial alienation takes two interlinked forms, an active or passive form which distances oneself from the reality. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body that they are influencing two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. In social terms, this condition of the community is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies.

Ngugi said that he would like to contribute towards the restoration of the harmony between all the aspects and divisions of language so as to restore the Kenyan children to their environment, understand it fully so as to be in a position to change it for their collective goodness. He wanted to see Kenyan mother-tongues, which is their national language, to carry a literature reflecting not only the rhythms of a child's spoken expression but also their struggle with nature and the social nature. With harmony between himself and language of the writers, one can learn other languages and even enjoy the positive humanistic, democratic and revolutionary elements in other people's literatures and cultures without any complexities about their own language, their own self and environment. The all-Kenya national languages (i.e. Kiswahili); the languages of the nationalities (i.e. Luo, Gikuyu, Maasai, Luhya,

Kallenjin, Kamba, Mijikenda, Somali, Galla, Turkaha, Arabic-speaking people, etc.) other African languages like Hausa, Wolof, Yoruba, Ibo, Zulu, Nyanja, Lingala, Kimbundu; and foreign languages like English, French, German, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish will fall into their proper perspective in the lives of Kenyan children. This is also the motive of Wiayaki, who struggled a lot to enhance people with knowledge about many aspects.

The writers had faced biggest challenges when they wrote in their own language to portray the struggle of the peasants. The awakened peasantry and working class is the real enemy of the comprador ruling regimes. A writer, who tries to communicate the message of revolutionary unity with their own language to spread the awareness among people, becomes the subversive character. A democratic participation of the people in shaping their own lives or in discussing their own lives in languages that allow for mutual comprehension is seen as dangerous to the imperial government of a country and its institutions. African languages which helps people of Kenya to address their lives, seems to be the real enemy of a neo-colonial state.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has expressed this same thought in the novel *The River Between* in which, the Colonial Missionary controls the African people. Chege has foreseen the future of people belonging to Makuyu and Kameno and mentions in the novel as:

He was a seer . . . he saw things . . . the future unfold before his eyes. Mugo was born and grew up in Kameno before he went to tell people what he saw. For he saw many butterflies, of many colors, flying about over the land, disrupting the peace and the ordered life of the country. Then he cried aloud and said 'there shall come a people with cloths like butterflies. (Ngugi 19)

The people in the country are not ready to believe that because they feel that they are very strong with their administration and their culture. But Waiyaki was sent to Christian Missionary to attain education in order to safeguard his fellow people from Westerners' rule or colonial aspects. He is very sure about the happenings in the country and he wants his people to understand the slow process alien invasions and their plans to overpower the natives in every aspect. So, he takes an initiative to render education to children and he believes that his people will make a big difference because they would be conscious about the Siriana Mission. Native languages unite the people and therefore are used as weapons against the imperialists. So, Ngugi rightly points out that, "language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds" (Ngugi 10). When people like Joshua, who are ready to follow the other language and are ready to serve the other world, are not meant to be in their own land and contaminate it with other religion and culture.

They are taken for granted to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the imperial government. Ngugi is different from other writers since he portrays the characters and the tradition of his own country in a powerful and majestic manner. He emphasizes on the identity of the people belonging to Africa and has a great respect towards the tradition. Other African works like *Things Fall Apart*, *Tar Baby*, etc, would make the readers think only about the struggles and the slavish attitude of the colonizers. And in these works, the imperial government is portrayed as the majestic one and the people are always under their control. But Ngugi gives importance to people's self-respect and he shows how a Kenyan lives his life with lots of resources and wealth. This approach is very defining and encouraging to other writers in the country. Even though they show their threat towards their colonizers through the

words “there is something unexplainable in the coming of the white man. He has found no resistance in the hills” (Ngugi 114). He also warns the people of his country in the following manner: “Now he had penetrated into the heart of the country, spreading his influence” (Ngugi 118).

This novel gives a positive approach to the people that they would come across and face all the struggles with their united lot. The writer has also come across all the struggles, with a patient approach towards the imperial government to retain their own tradition and culture. Maintaining resistance to the foreign culture, tradition, language and religion without losing their originality is considered as an intelligent move than the other struggles that people follow to keep up their own standard.

Chapter 3

A Tale of Suppression and Resistance in *The Grain of Wheat*

One of the most important debates in African literature focuses on the nature of the relationship between African literature and African society. An analysis of this debate reveals that while there is agreement, the literature is a response to the legacy of European colonial domination and there are divergent views expressed by the critics on the aims of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the African writer in the evocation of his social reality. As an observer of the impact of the non productive and destructive effects of colonialism upon his society, Ngugi has been instrumental in depicting the struggle in the former colonies against the barbarism and inhumanity of imperialism and the contradictions that are by-products of the colonial legacy. Ngugi, who is a socially conscious writer, is a part of a group of aestheticians who share a belief in the democratic, humanist intents of literature. He also mirrors the ideological, social and political conflicts that take place in Africa. In essence, the African writer translates reality into a fictional, artistic portrayal of his social milieu that reveals an outlook, an imagination and an aesthetic that both influences and is influenced by the social reality from which his craft emerges. So, Ngugi states that:

Modern African literature was conditioned sociologically by the colonial milieu. The artists were fully aware of this fact. From the very beginning the literature could not but be reactive! It was a literature using the 'weapons of words' for the legitimate defense of the African heritage. The consciousness which dominated this reaction was one of African affirmation. (Onoge 388)

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, depicts the reality of his society in his works. He is likely to encounter this emphasis on the presentation of society which is filled with people,

who are true-to-life characters and are involved in genuine social relations. He is also likely to see the African writer's rebellion against the values, norms, institutions and ideologies derived from the inherited neo-colonial system. Consequently, he not only examines social change, but also interprets it as a valid response to his social, psychological and physical environments. This seems to be resistance towards the hardships that people face in their own native land. These are the principal aspects of the dynamic of the African writers who use realism to communicate authenticity in their fictional worlds. It is because Ngugi wa Thiong'o is able to skillfully manipulate this dynamic.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his novel *The Grain of Wheat*, focuses on people who have operated upon the principle that change is a constantly nourished feature of society that reflects its diverse complexities and contradictions. In his works, Ngugi wa Thiong'o articulates, aesthetic reaction to the struggle for economic status and political power between the competing groups within Kenyan society, the elite and the dispossessed.

The themes of resistance and decolonizing the minds of the people are given importance. Since, it has been considered as the best way to get rid of the colonial rule. His works have influenced the people of Kenya to take their own step towards the suppression and oppression that is created by the white people and to build up their mind in order to support the community for the struggle against the colonial rule.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o faced many struggles in colonial Kenya that persuaded him to explore history of his people. So, history becomes one of the major influences on Ngugi's fiction. His novels tend to draw on documented facts as a background. That is the reason that, Killam accounts for the influence of Marx and Fanon on Ngugi's writings, *The Grain of Wheat* in particular. Killam observes that, "It is Mark

who articulates a political and economic philosophy which will suit Ngugi's conviction about post-independent Kenyan development" (Killam 11). The writer Abdulrazak Gurnah states that "Ngugi revised *The Grain of Wheat* in 1987, to make the 'world outlook' of his peasants more in line with his ideas of the historical triumph of the oppressed" (Ngugi x).

Killam's assessment of *The Grain of Wheat* is very thought provoking. He says: *The Grain of Wheat* is not a political novel in the fullest sense. The political theme is balanced against the exploration of human fallibility the novel offers. Ngugi's humanism, revealed by his care for his people and his understanding of what prompts them to action, dominates the novel. (Killam 72)

In the novel *The Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi has a maturing vision in which his attention and focus is upon such a large ideas and events as Mau-Mau, capitalism, socialism and nationalism. Among all this higher thoughts, resistance is an important aspect that people had been developing in their mind in order to get a great result for their struggle.

Ngugi's third novel *The Grain of Wheat* is published in the year 1967. It is essentially a story of Thabai, a Gikuyu village, at the moment of Kenyan decolonization. In terms of content, the controversies concerning the roles of colonial education and Christianity raised in *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* are less emphasized in this novel as it focuses more on the socio-political domain, depicting the long-standing struggle of the peasants against British rule.

What makes *The Grain of Wheat* especially different from *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* is its formal structure which perfectly corresponds to its thematic concern. Even though the three novels are narrated by a narrator with an omniscient point of view, *The Grain of Wheat* involves a more complicated narrative technique

and deployment of time. It displays multiple narratives of different characters in a chronological manner. Even though, the actual time in the novel lasts for only four days, with the techniques of flashback and retrospection, the novel covers the period of Kenyan decolonization between the 1950s and 1963, the year when Kenya officially gained independence.

With a sophisticated handling of narrative structure, Ngugi allows the reader to delve more deeply into the complicated psychology of the main characters both as individual subjects and community members, who are profoundly affected by colonialism in different ways. By presenting their diverse conflicts, Ngugi's novel leads to an understanding of the complexities of the colonial situation in Kenya as it witnesses how different ideologies, namely, nationalist and colonialist, are contrasted, conflicted and even compromised in a very specific socio-political context, especially during the years of the State of Emergency (1952-1960), which saw the birth of the Mau Mau movement. Even though, the Mau Mau rebellion has been known in Africa and worldwide as an anti-colonial movement, it has been recorded in the British memory and history as fanatic movement which resisted Western modernity and civilization.

The novel focuses on how Ngugi attempts to contest the Eurocentric representations of the freedom movement. He also focuses on how he does problematize and deconstruct the grand narratives of nationalism in Kenya during the wake of independence. The double tasks enable the reader to see the dilemma confronting Ngugi as he tries to write a nationalist history of Kenya as a homogenous nation based on consensus in the face of internal divisions within the Kenyan population itself.

Ngugi writes from the viewpoint of the particular perception of African reality and African people in the context of the colonial and neo-colonial encounter. He has been well received by the people of Africa. The novel has been written in the context of African values against the fast declining moral standards in public life because of the interruption of the colonial people. Ngugi states this situation as, “Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal, and diminishes man” (Ngugi 28).

The Representations of the Mau Mau Movement:

The Grain of Wheat can be called a transitional novel for Ngugi as its thematic focus moves toward militant nationalism, while *The River Between* and *Weep Not, Child* are concerned chiefly with cultural nationalism. It is the Mau Mau movement which the novel is all about. Mau Mau has long been a controversial historical topic not only among the Europeans but the Kenyans themselves as they argue over whether or not it was a primitive and irrational movement led by the religiously fanatic Gikuyu and how it should be remembered in national history.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer says, “The Negro is a child, and with children, nothing can be done without the use of authority. Every whiteman is continually in danger of gradual moral ruin in this daily and hourly with the African” (Ngugi 55).

In a nationalist reading, *The Grain of Wheat* can be said to be Ngugi’s project to speak for the Mau Mau movement as he tries to contest the history of the Mau Mau as written by the British. The contestation is significant in a sense that it aims at reconsolidating the collective identity of Kenyans in the post-independence era.

In *The Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi shows that the Mau Mau movement is a revolution with a noble cause that needs to be carried out in a culturally-specific way.

To represent the Mau Mau as a just resistance movement, Ngugi has created two characters who stand in opposition to one another. While Kihika is a voice of the freedom movement, Thompson represents the British occupying power. In his diary which he intends to be a philosophical text called *Prospero in Africa*, Thompson mentions the murder of Colonel Robson by the Mau Mau:

Colonel Robson, a Senior District Officer in Rung'ei, Kiambu, was savagely murdered. I am replacing him at Rung'ei. One must use a stick No government can tolerate anarchy, no civilization can be built on this violence and savagery. Mau Mau is evil: a movement which if not checked will mean complete destruction of all the values on which our civilization has thriven. (Ngugi 55)

It is no surprise for the reader to understand why Thompson perceives the Mau Mau as an evil whose destructive force would deprive humankind of values. Apparently, Thompson epitomizes colonial authority. He is greatly influenced by the nineteenth century colonial discourse which operates mainly on principles of negation and the myth of progress. Africans are essentially inferior to the Europeans because they live in a state of nature which is opposed to civilization which only the Europeans are capable of creating. While colonial rhetoric empties out the history of the Africans, it naturalizes the process of Western domination by reinforcing the notion of what Johannes Fabian calls “‘evolutionary Time’ in which the West and the Rest ‘were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time, some upstream, others downstream’” (Fabian 17). Placing themselves upstream, the Europeans turn back and see the Africans living in “the earliest beginnings of the world” (Russell 167) as Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* calls it when he is going up the Congo River.

The myth of evolutionary time is accompanied by the rhetoric of the white man's burden which justifies imperialist intervention in Africa made in the names of civilization, modernization and development. Thompson, as a District Officer who fully embraces British Imperialism, sees himself as a man with a clear mission who sees Africa as a 'dark' continent and the Africans as always-dependent children. Implicit in this myth is the idea that England is the centre of the natural order of things. As Thompson's diary reads:

In a flash I was convinced that the growth of the British Empire was the development of a great moral idea, it means, it must surely lead to the creation of one British nation, embracing peoples of all colours and creeds, based on the just proposition that all men were created equal.
(Ngugi 54)

Influenced by a desire to hegemonize other nations, Thompson, who sees the British Empire as the only thing capable of creating "the just ordering of human" (Ngugi 54), totally rejects the freedom movement of the Mau Mau. Believing this, before his departure from Kenya he says, "Africa cannot, cannot do without Europe" (Ngugi 166). For him, therefore, the freedom movement is merely a black force. While the movement is seen as a primitive and irrational rebellion, in the same fashion, its adherents are regarded as criminals and their actions terrorist.

In the novel, when Colonel Robson is murdered by a Mau Mau, the newspaper headline reads: "a District Officer had been senselessly murdered by Mau Mau thugs" (Ngugi 187). This is how Mau Mau is represented in the official version in the form of newspaper reporting.

In addition, the Mau Mau is seen as criminals not only in terms of representation, but also in a material sense. The Mau Mau-related suspects, who are

put into the detention camps, complain that they are treated more like criminals than political prisoners: “Among other things they wanted to be treated as political prisoners not criminals. Food rations should be raised. Unless these things were done, they would go on hunger-strike” (Ngugi 134).

It can be said that the British treated them that way because of the extreme violence they used as a means to achieve their goals. The violence is described, for example, when Rev. Jackson Kigundu is killed “his body was one morning found hacked with pangas into small pieces, his house and property were burnt to charcoal and ashes. His wife and children were not touched. But they were left without a home” (Ngugi 85).

The incident may appear violent and irrational if considered as an isolated incident unrelated to its surrounding context, however, the terrorist act by the Mau Mau is more revolutionary than irrational and criminal because it is a well-organized plan in pursuit of a particular political ideology.

The description of the murder of Rev. Jackson allows us to see that despite its violence, the terrorist act is directed only at the loyalists who support British power and their use of state terrorism. And in this case, it does not harm the innocents, his wife and children, physically, even though it does psychologically. Burning down the house is not a matter of irrational arson, rather, it functions more like a sign or a public spectacle aimed at provoking fear and terror among the viewers. It is apparent that in the novel that Ngugi uses Kihika to defend the terrorist strategy of the Mau Mau. Persuading Mugo to join the movement, Kihika reasons why they kill, “We are not murderers. We are not hanging men, like Robson killing men and women without cause or purpose” (Ngugi 190).

Kihika is here implicitly drawing a distinction between murderers and political terrorists. A difference between these two groups rests on the fact that while criminals commit a crime out of personal malice, political prisoners carry out their action, no matter how violent, with a clear political end. As Kihika further explains to Mugo:

We only hit back. You are struck on the left cheek. You turn the right cheek. One, two, three, sixty years. Then suddenly, it is always sudden, you say, I am not turning the other cheek any more. Your back to the wall, you strike back. . . . We must kill. Put to sleep the enemies of black man's freedom. . . . Strike tenor in the heart of the oppressor.

(Ngugi 191)

Kihika's explanation leads us to an understanding that there are at least two kinds of violence. While the first kind is carried out to control the subaltern group, the other kind is made in the name of social justice. Ngugi seem to suggest that looking at the surface of the violence, is insufficient to determine what kind of violence it is, since what distinguishes these two types of violence lies in the intention of the agents: "Violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery; it purifies man. Violence to protect and preserve an unjust, oppressive social order is criminal, and diminishes man" (Ngugi 28).

An act of violence will be valid only when the context in which it is made is taken into consideration. By having Kihika talk about violence, Ngugi makes it clear that it is colonial suppression that has caused political violence in Kenya in the first place. The violence of the British authority and that of the Mau Mau are not comparable, because while the first is made to take an advantage of a people, the latter is made to protect their own rights and liberties.

It is noteworthy that while Ngugi uses Kihika as a collective voice of the Mau Mau, he describes the violent acts of Robson in opposition to those of Kihika. Ngugi draws this comparison to render the Mau Mau a more just political movement and critiques British justification of their power in Kenya. The image of Robson as seen by the natives is that of the savage. Generally known as Tom, the Terror, he is the epitome of those dark days in our history that witnessed his birth as a District Officer in Rung'ei, that is, when the Emergency raged in unabated fury. People said he was mad. They spoke of him with awe, called him Tom or simply 'he' as if to mention his full name would conjure him up in their presence.

Some village men saw his jeep in their dreams and screamed. He was a man-eater, walking in the night and day. They say, "He was death. He was especially brutal to squatters who were repatriated from the Rift Valley back to Gikuyu-Ini" (Ngugi 186). If the Mau Mau are "brutes" (Ngugi 187) as Robson's deathbed outcry suggests, his reputation as 'death' and 'man-eater' indicates that his violence on the colonial subjects is not unlike that of cannibals, which is a typical metaphor for the Africans in the colonial rhetoric. Such a portrayal of Robson enables us to see that Ngugi is beating colonial authority at its own game. He reminds us that far from being a reality, the image of the primitive Africans is merely a social construct, whose meaning is ideologically interested. The issue of violence is not the only factor contributing to the barbaric image of the Mau Mau in the British colonial narrative.

Oath taking is another issue that renders the freedom movement most despicable. Carl G. Rosberg, Jr. and John Nottingham, for example, have pointed out that in the 1950s "the use of an oath by the Kikuyu nationalists was used by the Europeans as the most important element in the thesis that Kikuyu politics at this time had reverted to primitive atavism" (Rosberg 261). It is also believed that "in

employing secret oaths, the African was rejecting modernity and reverting to primitive behavior patterns” (Rosberg 321). One cannot fail to acknowledge that these claims, like that on violence by the Mau Mau, are apparently aimed at depoliticizing the meaning of the movement. The colonizers do not or pretend not to conceive of the oath as an instrument used to unite the Kenyans politically.

In *The Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi clearly demonstrates that oath-taking is very significant for the Mau Mau as a movement and individuals as its members during the years of Emergency; for it unites people together for a political cause and creates a sense of identity for its takers who have completely committed themselves to the new community. Disputing the apolitical explanation of oath taking, Ngugi shows that the oath is essentially what consolidates the political movement of the Mau Mau. It is a symbol with which the oath-takers identify and thus uphold. When Mugo refuses to acknowledge to the British prison officials that he has taken an oath, other detainees see his refusal as an act of rebellion against colonial authority even though he just does not want to talk because of the pain from punishment, he says, “But the other detainees saw his resignation to pain in a different light, it gave them courage, they came together and wrote a collective letter listing complaints” (Ngugi 134).

Ngugi explicitly suggests that one’s self-sacrifice to the movement is more important than participating in the secret oath-taking ceremony. It is the action that matters. One need not take the oath to get involved in the freedom struggle as long as he commits himself to the movement, transcending his personal obligations and fighting alongside his fellow people.

It can be said that anti-colonial nationalism is the dominant discourse among the Kenyans during colonial and decolonization periods. Central to the meta-narrative of nationalism is the recounting of a shared heroic history of resistance.

Resistance in *The Grain of Wheat*:

Ngugi wa Thiongo's inspiration for resistance came from a number of primary sources. The most obvious is the independence movement of the land and Freedom Army called as Mau Mau. The roots of the Mau Mau movement come from the alienation of land from a largely Gikuyu peasantry as well as from the exploitation of surplus labour. Ngugi has begun to look at a wider range of nationalist resistance through his novels.

Repression of the Kenyan people by the British colonial administration was far out stripped reported as 'Mau Mau' atrocities. This is explained in the novel where people, who support Mau Mau are tortured and killed by the colonial rulers. This in turn increases the rage of the people and their determination to attain freedom becomes higher. Abdulrazak Gurnah states this incident:

Kihika understands the need to resist colonial violence, and when the time comes, he runs away to the forest to join the Mau Mau. He becomes renowned for daring and courage, a myth in the making. In time he is captured by the colonial authorities, perhaps betrayed, and he is publicly hanged from a tree in Rung'ei market as a demonstration of what Kipling calls holding the intransigent colonial 'to strict account'. (Ngugi xii)

Ngugi has written this novel in order to show the colonial oppression implemented through missionary schools and the terrible effects of prison camp detention during the Mau Mau Revolution. Whether, it is the alienation of communal land through settler colonialism or the rise of a parasitical national bourgeoisie, capable of betraying and willing to betray the nation in order to build a neo-colonial state that has favored international business interests. Ngugi's novel *The Grain of*

Wheat has chronicled both the destructive capacity of colonialism and neo-colonialism as well as the collective and individual resistance to these forces.

People of Kenya are determined and brave enough to face the white people even if they are under their control. Two or more people with same positive thought can change the whole scenario and this is predominant in this novel. The people are taken to detention camps to work for the benefit of the white people, but that situation makes them to realize the value of unity and the power of their collective resistance. The white people actually think that, they have kept the brave warriors under their control, but actually they pave the way for the smart move of the people. This resistance to the torture brings them Independence which can never be imagined by white rulers. Gatu who is a detainee from Nyeri, always instills the other people with strength and hope and informs that, "I will tell you something, believe it or not, but the whiteman just wants to break us with lies" (Ngugi 103).

The people in detention camps were tortured so that they will quit thinking about their independence and stop encouraging people and give them hope. Ngugi has explained the situation in his novel:

They were abandoned in a desert where not even a straying voice from the world of men would reach them. This frightened Gikonyo, for who, then would come to rescue them? The sun would scorch them dead and they would be buried in the hot sand where the traces of their graves would be lost forever. This thought brought more despair to Gikonyo, remembering Mumbi and Wangari: that his identity even in death would be wiped from the surface of the earth was a recurring thought that often brought him into a cold sweat on cold nights. At such times,

words formed in prayers would not leave his throat. In spite of this, the detainees of Yala held on to their vows. (Ngugi 105)

In the novel, The Camp Commandant becomes alert about the changes that have been taking place in their camp. He guesses the pulse of people and decides to take steps regarding that. The growing resistance seems to be an indirect signal which shows the growing strength of people to attain independence. So he warns that “we shall get you! Gatu had become the symbol of their collective resistance” (Ngugi 106).

In spite of facing all the problems and living away from the family, they are stubborn in their decision. The white people kept the native people in camp so that they will not think about freedom; instead they will abscond from the place in order to save their life. But Gatu shouts loudly, “Freedom! Yes, Freedom, in a subdued voice that sounded like a suppressed cry” (Ngugi 107).

The white people tried to torture people so that they will be broken down and never think about independence. But that did not work out. Then they started convincing people with good facilities in camp. They spoke to people about the happiness in family so that they would obey them. Thompson, one of the higher officers came in to put an end to these kinds of approaches, instead he lectured about the families. Ngugi states:

Thompson put an end to this means of extorting confession. Instead he lectured the detainees in group about the joys of home, they could go home to their wives and children as soon as they confessed the oath. This method had weakened resistance in other camps. Thompson hoped it would work the same magic. In his first month of reign,

sanitation was improved. Previously detainees suffering from typhoid were left to die. Now they were rushed to hospital. (Ngugi 128)

Adults are sent to detention camps, while their children are sent to Independent Schools to have a strong base for the struggle for independence. Education builds up their mind and equips them in all possible ways to gain their own freedom.

Whether it is a collective resistance or a weakened resistance, people are strong in their thoughts and they are courageous enough to face any kind of struggles for attaining independence. Unity is the most important weapon that people of Kenya use for removing the white people's rule.

The colonial rule has oppressed and suppressed people to a larger extent. These are controlled through the educational system which is implemented by the people who belong to that particular place. They realized that the power of education and the main motive of those schools is to give awareness to people and to prepare them to fight against those oppressive people through resistance which is considered as a powerful tool.

In *The Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi underscores the coming of independence, the revolutionary struggle for liberation of Kenyan people through Independent Schools. Independent Schools are set up to resist the brainwashing system of education in the colonized lands. Given that colonizers use education to alienate natives, the people who attained their education from the missionary schools install new forms of schools which claim their independences from the missionaries' ones. The latter set up rules according to people who obey the customs of missionary schools, being boys or girls or whose parents are deeply rooted in such practices are prohibited to attend the Independent Schools. In *The Grain of Wheat*, Manguo is perceived as an appropriate

Independent School that helps the children of Thabai be reconciled with their traditions. Through Kihika's brother, Kariuki, the narrator points out the starting point of the birth of Independent schools in Thabai.

A basic element to mention is that the strategy of resistance to cultural oppression in Manguo School is to use the mother tongue as a means of literacy. The language is a key tool to fight against assimilation in the relationships between oppressors and oppressed. Nationalists recover the cultural legacy through the practice of the mother tongue. This is the role assigned to Manguo Independent School. This is among the first Independent Schools with a Gikuyu's perspective: "Kariuki attended school at Manguo, one of the earliest Gikuyu Independent Schools in the country. He loved books and in the evening read by the light from the wood fire" (Ngugi 75).

As one of the first Independent Schools set up in Thabai, Manguo oriented the basic teachings to the values of initiation. Educators try to restore the image of their customs stereotyped by some missionaries. This strategy of resistance is a step towards liberation. To ensure the survival of the inherited customs and traditions, the people of Thabai reinforce their allegiances to the Independent Schools. According to them, it is essential to uphold the creation of such schools in order to teach the young generation faithfulness and respect to their social and cultural realities.

Religion in *The Grain of Wheat*:

Ngugi chooses a Christian myth and a religious framework to depict the violent freedom movement in Kenya. The title of the novel is itself from the Bible: "Thou fool, that which Thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare again it may chance of wheat, of some other grain" (1 Corinthians 15:36).

This epigraph is about the Christian faith is explained by St. Paul who answers the queries regarding the possibility of the resurrection of the mortal body of Christ. St. Paul hints the potentiality of the mortal frame to get itself renewed in life for a second coming. But like a sown seed, it has to die first before it can be born again. The image of dying to be born again runs recurrently and is central to the novel. The alchemy of “rebirth and regeneration” (Govind Sharma 167) always lies embedded in a dying seed as a strong potential only waiting to be born again “through the will of God” (Leslie Monkman 11).

Ngugi applies this Christian epigraph to the nationalist struggle against colonialism. Referring to the martyrdom of Waiyaki during the early phase of the struggle, the novelist observes that, “Waiyaki’s blood contained within it a seed, a grain, which gave birth to a movement whose main strength thereafter sprang from a bond with the soil” (Ngugi 12).

Waiyaki sacrifice his life but he rises again like a Phoenix in the form of a potential and formidable movement. This movement is linked to the soil of the people so as to provide strength and inspiration to them in designing and building a new nation corresponding to their aspirations. Emphasizing the need for sacrifice by one and all for a national cause Kihika to say:

I die for you, you die for me, we become a sacrifice for one another. So I can say that you, Karanja, are Christ. I am Christ, Everybody who takes the Oath of Unity to change things in Kenya is a Christ. Christ then is not one person. All those who takes up the cross of liberating Kenya are the true Christs for us Kenyan people. (Ngugi 95)

According to Govind Naraiian Sharma, “Kihika is a true Christ who thought sacrifices, not only justifies himself but also brings about a revolution in the lives of

his friends and followers by showing them the way to the spiritual regeneration” (Govind Sharma 170).

Such a spirited defense of Kihika seeks to transcend the limitations of a religious principle so as to cover and embrace a secular pursuit, a social ethic, a national aspiration and a sense of commitment. Obviously, Kihika’s sense of religion is not confined to its meaning in an abstraction but it is sought to be applied to a people engaged in a grim battle against colonial forces. Kihika feels stung by a remark made by his friends, Karanja, who reminds Kihika of his own saying that “Jesus had failed” (Ngugi 94). Karanja even wonders whether Kihika is trying to resort to religious revivalism. But he does not give in to the sarcasm or the logistics of Karanja. He forcefully argues:

I said Christ had failed because his death did not change any-thing, it did not make his people find a centre in the cross. All oppressed people have a cross to bear. The Jews refused to carry it and were scattered like dust all over the earth. . . . In Kenya we want deaths which change things, that is to say, we want true sacrifice. But first we have to be ready to carry the cross. (Ngugi 95)

This passage has several layers of meanings and inferences. This shows the common phenomenon in a colonial situation where the alien religion of christianity always tend to support an oppressive regime causing hardship to the colonized. Ngugi is of the view that christianity as an organized institution, paved the way for the colonizer and unhesitatingly supported him in consolidating his position in the colonies. Africans were also taken away from their places as slaves and scattered all over the earth. Hence, the novelist appeals to the suffering masses of the world over to carry the cross and bear the burden and take the fire right into the midst of the

enemy's camp using the tools of the religion and the sword or the gun which had been used so far by the colonial masters.

Ngugi's adaptation of the Christian epigraph has social implications and political overtones in the context of the novel. Apart from the religious outfit, the novel hinges on a vital irony which runs as an undercurrent throughout. This element of irony is used to delineate yet another important motif of betrayal. This motif of betrayal, a vital issue in the novel, serves as a lesson to be learned to be learnt from the past experiences.

Betrayal in *The Grain of Wheat*:

The element of betrayal in the context of the novel arises out of harassment and torture to which the prisoners are subjected in various detention camps. Gatu is a lively detainee, who keeps entertaining the fellow detainees with his sense of humor and his ability to narrate tales and crack jokes bordering on ribaldry. Like most other detainees, he had been demoralized by the cold-blooded murder of Gatu. Gikonyo's betrayal is also influenced by his desire to join his Mumbi, "who appeared so pure, an incorruptible reality in a world of changing shadows. Her purity crushed him" (Ngugi 122). Gikonyo returns home only to be disillusioned. Mumbi has a child by Karanja during his absence. Karanja also admits his oath and betrays his friend's wife. It is extremely painful to Gikonyo. He says, "there is nothing so painful as finding that a friend, or a man you always trusted, has betrayed you" (Ngugi 122).

Gikonyo seeks to find his identity and fulfillment through his in love with Mumbi. He feels disgusted as he finds everywhere nothing but betrayal. He shifts the image of purity to Mugo, little realizing that Mugo is no angel. According to him, "Mugo's purity, Mumbi's unfaithfulness, everything had conspired to undermine his

manhood” (Ngugi 123). But the fact is no one is pure in the world of adulterated relationships delineated in the novel.

Feminine principle in *The Grain of Wheat*:

This is another significant motif in the novel. Gikonyo finds his fulfillment only through his love for Mumbi. This image of Mumbi is that of a benevolent mother, an understanding companion and a lovable personality. She is a source of inspiration and encouragement to Gikonyo and others. According to N. Sharma, she is “an angelic figure . . . generous, forgiving and compassionate, an embodiment of Ngugi’s humane vision” (Sharma 173).

It is through his communion with her that Gikonyo begins to taste and register success in life. His involvement with her shows him the way, gives a sense of clarity to his otherwise mundane existence and provides a meaning to his life. Gikonyo recollects how the magic touch of her has transformed him from an ordinary, commonplace position to a man of worth and eminence. Looking back at his brief married life, Gikonyo feels how it is important, “it (the magic touch of Mumbi) was all important . . . I discovered . . . I had made a covenant with God to be happy . . . I felt whole, renewed” (Ngugi 99). This magic touch and the sacred communion between the two have a creative force that it “was like being born again” (Ngugi 99). During the period of his detention, he held on to the image of Mumbi beckoning him, “awakening in him emotions almost cracked by physical hardships and pains of waiting” (Ngugi 105).

Decolonizing the Mind in *The Grain of Wheat*:

The main characters all have their own wounds caused by decolonization. Gikonyo is the first one to confess the oath in the detention camp; Mumbi is unfaithful to Gikonyo by having a child with Karanja. Karanja is considered as a

traitor as he becomes a Chief serving the colonizers, and Mugo feels guilty after killing Kihika. The question of who is guiltier is unanswerable since everyone has engaged in different kinds of wrongdoings. Opening oneself to the past seems to occupy the novel. This is clearly suggested at the end of the novel where Mumbi talks with Gikonyo in a determined manner and he says, “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 our hearts to one another, examine them, and then together plan the future we want” (Ngugi 247).

While Gikonyo, speaking in the name of the village, attempts to evoke Mugo’s past, ironically he wants to forget about his own past which affects his personal life. As illustrated earlier, Gikonyo is one of the main characters, who is profoundly affected by the politics of decolonization of the Mau Mau. For the sacrifice he makes for the movement, his reward is that his wife Mumbi has a child with Karanja. What Ngugi is suggesting by having his characters open their hearts to one another is that to regenerate itself, the community must acknowledge its painful past. So must the individuals. As much as the characters have to come to terms with their own past, the community has to remember the past which can be forgiven but not forgotten. The rhetoric of forgiveness, which is one of the dominant nationalist discourses in this novel, renders a more inclusive picture of the community, which eventually overcomes the divisions and conflicts within it.

Doubt and Uncertainty in Post-Colonial Kenya shown in this novel:

Despite the optimistic ending suggested by the reconciliation between Gikonyo and Mumbi, *The Grain of Wheat* is permeated by a narrative of doubt and uncertainty, reminding one that the struggle for independence is far from being over

since neocolonialism, where colonialism's offspring, becomes a new obstacle for the Kenyans.

As General R, who belongs to missionary, says in his independence celebration speech, "We get Uhuru today. But what's the meaning of 'Uhuru'?" (Ngugi 221). Ironically, the effects of neocolonialism are most profound on those who actually fought in the Mau Mau war. Regarding to the politics of memory in the process of national formation, Ngugi contends that to remember Mau Mau as a national freedom movement as a means to acknowledge those who participated in it. In this novel, Ngugi raises into question the meaning of independence which is manipulated by the nation-state controlled by the elite and the indigenous bourgeois. The fruits of Uhuru are not eaten by the working-class people and the peasants; the two classes which Ngugi thinks form the majority of the freedom fighters. Mau Mau in this case serves another function as it is used by Ngugi to show the people who are not legitimate for forming the nation-state and who does not keep its promise in the postcolonial Kenya. *The Grain of Wheat* is indeed Ngugi's attempt to make the voice of the subaltern in the postcolonial era heard. The meaning of Uhuru is changed after independence which is captured in the ambivalent meanings of rain in the novel. It is apparent that rain is used as a central metaphor to convey the theme of uncertainty and fear in the postcolonial era. It has two totally different meanings. Culturally, as an agriculture-based society, Gikuyu see rain as a divine blessing or a collective symbol of fertility.

During colonial period, rain is associated with anti-colonial victory. "People said the falling water was a blessing for our hard-won freedom" (Ngugi 178). Such a belief is confirmed even more by the fact that "it had rained the day Kenyatta returned home from England: it had also rained the day Kenyatta returned to Gatunda (his

hometown) from Maralal (the last town where he was imprisoned)” (Ngugi 178).

These events soaked with rain strongly suggest a sense of successfulness or a momentous return to the normal. However, Ngugi undermines the belief by assigning rain another more destructive meaning. In the morning of the independence celebration day, it rains so hard that the crops are badly damaged and they said “the morning was so dull we feared the day would not break into life” (Ngugi 205). The negative image of rain foreshadows difficulties the Kenyans are to encounter in the near postcolonial future.

But in spite of all these struggles and sacrifices, it is clear to the people that they cannot take off the white man’s rule completely from the country. Ngugi states his grief through the words, “But the situation and the problems are real, sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet who now see all that they fought for being put on one side” (Ngugi 1).

Karanja expresses the thoughts of the people as, “the coming of black rule would not mean, could never mean the end of white power” (Ngugi 38). This informs the result of the resistance and the other struggles that people have undergone.

Chapter 4

Summation

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is an important writer in Africa. He has gained popularity through his works since all his works have political and social message for the people of Africa. Ngugi is a rebel and he is not a revolutionary. He has no political agenda even though he urges all students of African and Third World literature to read Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

As a literary person, he seeks to influence the way his readers think and feel. He seeks to shake up their assumptions and bring them to the real life. But his primary motive is to show the real figure of the corrupt government, as seen from the level of the peasant deprived of his land from the Colonial people and of the common man robbed of the fruits of the independence struggle. They have struggled hard but they could not taste the fruit of Independence.

Professor Sicherman referred African society as "an assemblage of fragments" (Sicherman 23). But in reality, it is finely arranged piece of the emerging structure and events of Kenya history from the year 1870 to 1988, since it was experienced through the minds of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and other observers. The major experience which is portrayed through his works is Mau Mau rebellion, during the event and aftermath of that is also explained.

Ngugi has written his works on the bases of his real life experiences. He was the son of the tenant farmer in rural, British occupied Kenya in the year 1938. He grew up working in farms that were once the property of his ancestors. He lived during the age of Mau Mau rebellion, and struggled a lot with his people of Kenya. This includes the detention of 150,000 Gikuyu people in concentration camps. There

the people were electrocuted, whipped and mutilated. He describes this period in his novel *The Grain of Wheat* and other novels like *Weep, Not Child* and *Petals of Blood*.

Later, when he turned his attention was totally towards the treachery caused to the Kenyan people by the ruling elite, he was jailed without trial, and wrote the first modern African novel in Gikuyu, *Devil on the Cross*, on prison-issued toilet paper. He followed this with *Decolonising the Mind*, in which he argued that Africans should write in their native languages as part of the struggle for liberation from colonialism.

Ngugi's decision to move away from English was a brave one for writers from Africa, a continent frequently treated as irrelevant by the rest of the world. In fact, this decision has led to his disappearance from the global stage, but it showed the solidarity of his reputation as a writer of supreme political control. His achievement was when few contemporaries and juniors took up the call to write in their native languages. Ngugi's attitude towards this, however, is self-aware and flexible. Ngugi says that:

We of the elder generation, the New African three years ago, are so bound up by our anti-colonial nationalism, which is important for us but the younger generation are free. You find they don't confine their characters necessarily to Africa. They are quite happy to bring in characters from other races, and so on . . . that's good because they are growing up in a multicultural world. (Ngugi 52)

It is this ability of Ngugi to free him from fixed positions that has enabled him to remain politically relevant and active. *Wizard of the Crow* is set in the fictional Free Republic of Aburyria. The novel is written with a radiant, comic hand, compassionate towards ordinary folk whereas he is satirical towards the colonial power. As Rajeev states that, it is "remarkably free from bitterness" (Rajeev 2).

All his works create awe in the mind of readers because of his rich body of work. His works have the potential of making people understand of how the African world has become such a free world without any domination. He writes about every incident that happens in his country. He writes about the violence of colonialism and the corruption of government.

Since the publication of *Wizard of the Crow* in 2006, Ngugi has written three volumes of memoir, returning to the periods he has covered in his novels. The first, *Dreams in a Time of War*, begins with his grandparents during the time of the Berlin Conference of 1885 when the European countries divided Africa up between them, then tells of his own childhood as a landless laborer. The second, in the *House of the Interpreter*, tells of his years at a British-run boarding school near Nairobi when, during the Mau Mau rebellion, his family home was razed to the ground and his brother imprisoned in a British concentration camp. The third volume, *Birth of a Dream*, recounts his four years at Makerere University in Uganda as Kenya approached independence and Ngugi began to write his first works of literature.

Since the works of Ngugi have been written in order to create awareness to the people, the White people started attacking the writers who intimidated them. They attacked on Ngugi as well. He was very angry about the fact that the government had banned his work from bookstores and schools.

Ngugi was imprisoned for his writings, so behind bars, he used toilet papers to keep putting down words in language of Gikuyu, not English, which is the tongue of the colonialists. When he finally won freedom, the government barred him from returning to his teaching job at the University of Nairobi or from teaching at other educational institutions. But it could not stop his writing.

Ngugi contributed a lot to his country as a writer. He always encouraged African leaders to be closer to their people. To support this he said “as long as there is a divorce between the leadership and the people, we are weak. And as long as there are divisions within Africa, African peoples and nations we are weak” (Ngugi 12).

He was sent to exile because of his writing. After coming from the exile he said “I harbor no bitterness or desire for vengeance. In culture and politics, the only worthwhile vengeance is to strive for positive change against the negative forces of yesterday” (Ngugi 14). He has much love towards his country and he never mind about his exile. When returning he said “this is my country, for better or worse, and it’s for me and everybody else to make it a Kenya that it can be” (Ngugi 17).

Ngugi has faced many bitter situations which influenced him to write his works, to create awareness for the people about the situation they are living. He said that, “violence in order to change an intolerable, unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man” (Ngugi 34). He wrote this in defense of Kenya’s violent struggle that led to independence from Britain in 1963. Regarding the life of Ngugi associated with Kenya, John Updike rightly points out that “in his crowded and eventful life, Ngugi has enacted for all to see the paradigmatic trials and quandaries of the contemporary African writer, caught in sometimes implacable political, social, racial and linguistic currents” (Updik 18).

Ngugi wants his people to fight against the colonial rule not through the violent struggle because most of these struggles often end in failure. So, he wrote his works to show the importance of ‘resistance’ which is one of the most important themes of his works. He emphasizes the importance of education, so that people will understand the silent struggle. Another important theme that he focuses is

‘decolonising the mind’, this shows people how to get rid of the colonial thought and celebrate their own tradition and their own culture.

Ngugi’s contribution to resistance writing and postcolonial writing has generated a considerable body of response in his country. He used his own creativity and intellectual output, that his works create an original insight at every instance people read that.

The River Between and *The Grain of Wheat*, both his works have the contribution in gaining independence because they tell mostly about the way the resistance have been important to people of Kenya. *The River Between*, ought to be viewed as the socio-political- religious context.

In an interview with Reinhard Sander and Ian Munro, Ngugi declares that, “the socialist system is the only system which stresses interdependence and the only system which encourages cooperation. The more I think about it, the more I believe this is the only salvation for Africa” (Ngugi 2).

Through the work *The River Between*, Ngugi has given a brief account of colonialism introduced to Kenya through imperial expansion of capitalized Western powers, the political and economic factors, and it was fostered and propagated by religion and education which are the socio-cultural factors. It is with religion and education that Ngugi begins his expository analysis of Kenya’s socio-political problems. Here, Ngugi draws the attention of the readers and shows them where the problem lies in the society and suggests some ways to avert the danger. In his works, Ngugi said that “Waiyaki could not tell his own feelings concerning the open challenge” (Ngugi 23). This means that he could not tell his people about the situation of Kenya because he himself was a benefactor of the colonial rule. In his next novel *The Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi tries to make people understand about the situation and

alert them, but the colonizers were so crafty that they undertook their work before Kenyans could realize their intention. He said that, “Mubia . . . opened the Bible. He said . . . let us shut the eyes. . . his remained open so that he can read the word. When we opened our eyes, our land was gone and the sword of flames stood on ground” (Ngugi 18).

Ngugi has used resistance and decolonizing the mind as the main motif of his works. The works that are chosen for research are: *The River Between* and *The Grain of Wheat*. In the previous two chapters one can summate that how resistance and decolonizing the mind have played a very important role in mending the minds of the Kenyan people. Chapter two which is entitled “Resistance and Empowerment in *The River Between*,” shows the ability of the writer who handled the novel as a tool for social change. Waiyaki is the protagonist who is the reflection of the writer himself says “was fighting against forces that he himself did not understand, forces that he had felt in the air all over the country” (Ngugi 140).

The resistance is the form of struggle of the people of Kenya because their religion was slowly changing from their own language to christianity. *The River Between* shows christianity as the guiltiest institution of capitalism during colonialism. The white people easily exploited the land and the other wealth through this religion. Ngugi accuses christianity a part of colonialism. Ngugi had an opinion that if christianity and the African culture have a common ground and if their principles did not have any contradictions then he promises that the land will be better and people will be comfortable. But. this opinion is distorted when the character Muthoni in the novel *The River Between* died because of an unsuccessful circumcision. It is assumed that, her death is because of her father’s hatred towards the culture. Her father is a christian. So, the promise of Ngugi is shattered.

The other character Joshua was practicing christianity but he is dismembered from his own family. Second in command Kabonyi, to the hard core traditionalist is Chege. In this novel, Waiyaki sees christianity as an instrument of destruction of peace of their land.

Education is another factor which supports and energizes the struggle for independence through resistance. People became more calm and composed and they are aware of the fact that they can attain independence only through knowing the colonial language and their opinions. It is portrayed as a means of getting closer to the whites and ensuring the path to wealth and the power rather than the agent of capitalism. Waiyaki felt a deep sense of loss when he was expelled from school. He considered the western education to enlighten the country as: it is the key to success and wealth and the means to regain the stolen land. But he fails to realize that “education for an oppressed people needs to be expressed on the political plane” (Ngugi 138).

Waiyaki then realizes that, expressing it on the political plane means more than using the education as a weapon or means to achieving the political goals. It also means that meaningful education is found in the self-knowledge, wisdom through experience and understanding one’s own environment, history and culture. They understand that the unlimited consumption of books written by foreigners acts as an agent of imperialism. The turning point in the novel was when people start to celebrate their own language and culture rather than eulogizing the imperial language and their power. This celebration of their language and culture enables them to resist the foreign influence and fight for independence.

Chapter three entitled as “A Tale of Suppression and Resistance in *The Grain of Wheat*,” discusses how resistance empower and give freedom of the country. It

serves as a weapon for gaining back their land and other wealth. In this novel, the major aspect lies in the torture of the Kenyan people in concentration camps. The citizens of Kenya were sent to camps and they are made to work for the benefits of the imperial government.

Religion plays a major role in this novel as well. Ngugi says that the church accuses the people who indulge in the Mau Mau rebellion. The people who are converted to Christianity have a bad opinion about the people fighting in Mau Mau. They are always against it, because they support the colonial power since their religion is same. They are also ready to take up their education and culture. They always have a thought; the country will develop if they follow the rules and regulations imposed by the colonial people. They often oppose the struggle of the people who belong to the Mau Mau rebellion.

Kihika, who is the protagonist of the novel *The Grain of Wheat*, sees a Christ, in David, Moses or anybody and says, “who takes the oath of unity to change the things in Kenya” (Ngugi 110). In this novel, Kihika himself embodies the idea of Christ, his torture and the manner of execution is reminiscent of those of Christ on the cross. He imagines himself as the Christ of the Kenyan masses. He re-conceptualizes the teachings of Bible, making them relevant to the situation of Kenya. He also tells that, “a death in Kenya which will change things, that is to say, we want a true sacrifice” (Ngugi 110).

In this novel, Ngugi is more interested in the psychological development of his characters; there is inward growth and presenting the individuals who face the problems of national freedom. He also generates the idea that, unity of tribal community is very important to attain national freedom rather than working as the single Kihika. There is no singular heroism in *The Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi takes up

multi-heroism-leadership. The Mau Mau victory, which the novel celebrates, is the victory of the people under the leadership of many Kihikas. It is Kihikas who stand strong throughout the Mau Mau struggle at the end. From him the real military actions begin. Ngugi contemplates that, “the example of India is there before our noses, the British were there for hundred and hundred of years . . . Gandhi knows his white man well. He goes round and organise the Indian masses into a weapon stronger than the bomb” (Ngugi 102). Ngugi has stated that Resistance and Decolonizing the mind has played a very important role in the struggle for independence.

In the final analysis, of Ngugi’s *The River Between* and *The Grain of Wheat* many aspects like education, culture and religion have played an important role in the life of the natives. In the novel *The River Between*, the stress is on the Independent schools as a form of resistance to cultural oppression, assimilation and alienation. These schools have strengthened the struggle for liberation through the nationalist ideas they introduce in the teachings. The educational system of the ‘Independent schools’ is guided by the framework of the restoration of African cultures, important aspects of the African identity and justice within the Kenyan society. The Independent schools have assigned a key mission: educate the youth so that they understand their responsibilities towards the country. Finally, the solution is education opened to international standards but taking into consideration social, economic, religious and political fields of each country. This helped immensely in empowering the native people to fight against colonial power.

The characters of the novel are chosen in such a way that they are concerned about the native culture and tradition. Waiyaki chose to take up his education in missionary schools and have been brought up in a sophisticated environment. He is aware of the facilities available in those missionaries, but he used his knowledge

gained to educate his own native people rather than being attached to those colonial missionaries.

Chege was hurt to see many Africans converted. He was also disappointed as he is unable to do anything to save his culture. He feared that even his son Waiyaki might begin to dislike the ways of the ridge and its rituals. We find clearly the impact of missionary education on him.

Joshua as a converted Christian began to hate his African culture. He repented all his life for having married circumcised Miriamu. He also did not want his children to have any inclination for their African culture. Joshua began preaching to the people to believe in the Bible and give up the traditions. Thus, by condemning the native tradition in favor of the new faith and by becoming a preacher himself, he was at once the exploited as well as the exploiter.

Ngugi makes circumcision the central point around which he revolves his novel. He makes it explicitly clear that the act of circumcision is the most central in the Gikuyu way of life. Ngugi says, "circumcision was an important ritual to the tribe. It kept the people together, bound the tribe. It was the core of the social structure and something that gave meaning to man's life, end the custom and spiritual bias of the tribe's cohesion and integration would be no more" (Ngugi 79).

Ngugi as a devoted Kenyan wants to emphasize that the colonial rule in Kenya destroyed the entire culture and social peace. It not only divided the society but also the inner beings of the Africans. As a sensitive artist, *The River Between* is Ngugi's cry for the loss of African Culture and glory of the rich heritage. But it is appreciative that he attempts to take up the concept of resistance that helps people to celebrate their native tradition and culture.

In *The Grain of Wheat*, the character of Gatu embodies idea of the commitment to nationalism and mainly the recovering of lost lands. As such, he is well-known for his militant actions for the sake of his people's lands. In the locality of Nyeri, he determinately takes part in the movement that calls for a revolution whose consequences will be the accession to national sovereignty and the return of lands to the natives. This is called as the Mau Mau revolution. The people who struggled for the liberation of the people were taken to the concentration camps.

Ngugi wanted to make his readers see the dangers of betrayal and disillusionment within the Kenyan society. History plays an important role in this novel. It makes people aware of the pathetic situation of the native people. *The Grain of Wheat* suggests that a truly postcolonial Kenyan nation necessitates the collective culture and consciousness through the evolving history. Through those histories said by Mumbi and Gikongo; the miseries of the villagers during emergencies, the horrors of the prison camp, and the effects of the death of Kihika has come to the limelight.

In this discussion, Mugo's role as a hero suggests, *The Grain of Wheat* is rooted in a revolutionary sense of communal consciousness that enables the members of the community to break free from the concentration camps of isolating individualism and self-interest. Such hope is bound to a constantly evolving culture which develops from that communal consciousness. This enables them to resist the tortures that the colonial power imposes on the people in concentration camps.

In this novel, Kihika reinterprets Christianity in order to encourage Kenyans to unite and fight, and if necessary to die for the good cause so that all the Kenyans can be free. He does so, by insisting that Christ should be understood in Kenya not as an individual, but as a united community. Ngugi assumes that, "there is no way we can survive as a nation in the world without finding unity" (Ngugi 20).

While drawing on and reconfiguring the symbolism of Christ as a figure who suffers and struggles for others, Kihika magnifies the collectivity suggested in that symbolism. In doing this, Kihika is able to take colonial religion and transform it into an inspiration for the struggle for a free Kenya. It is also noticed that, in this novel Ngugi suggests that the culture of the ‘third world’ has the strength to utilize and transform the culture of the ‘first world.’

This novel has an impact on people since it shows the real struggles of the people belonging to Kenyan society. The characters are very powerful. Ngugi made a good attempt to raise the enthusiasm of the people of Kenya to break through suppression and oppression by the colonial power, instead to concentrate on unity and struggle against them.

Language plays an important role in both the novels. Ngugi emphasizes in the usage of their native language in the educational system, and decolonize the mind of the people to celebrate their own language and culture. The main aim of Ngugi is to show the native people of Kenya the importance of their language and encourage them to celebrate their identity. This empowers them to fight against the colonial powers. Ngugi says that, “the call for the rediscovery and the resumption of our language is a call for a regenerative reconnection with the million of revolutionary tongues in Africa and the world over demanding liberation” (Ngugi 108).

Finally, from these two novels *The River Between* and *The Grain of Wheat* of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, one can empathize that “Struggle, struggle makes history. Struggle makes us. In struggle is our history, our language and our being. That struggle begins wherever we are, in whatever we do, then we become part of those million whom Martin Carter saw sleeping not to dream but dreaming to change the world” (Ngugi 108).

Thus, struggle defines the society of the African natives as reflected in the novels and the characters of Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Hence, we can rightly justify, how through resistance and celebration of native tradition, Ngugi wa Thiong'o advocates a better future for his beloved country.

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