

**Postcolonial Politics in Three African Novels: *A Man of the People*,
Petals of Blood and *A Bend in the River***



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Postcolonial Politics in Three African Novels: *A Man of the People*, *Petals of Blood* and *A Bend in the River*

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents who made me who I am today.

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Abstract

This dissertation will examine Achebe, N’gugi and Naipaul’s novel which are based on postcolonial Africa’s scenario to inquire about the political condition of African countries in their post-independence era. These novels focus on the lives of the African people who lived amid extreme corruption due to their own black oppressors who betrayed viciously. Predominantly, the purpose of this paper is to find out about the process and way of the political leaders’ oppression in African countries who subjugated their own men after their liberation. These novelists have portrayed the scenario of colonial period along with post-colonial time which help to compare the political condition of African countries. Freedom is supposed to bring all kinds of emancipation for the citizens of a country, whereas these novels show the situation was the same for the common people: corruption, poverty and inequality were the same. Achebe’s *A Man of the People* takes the readers to a fictional journey where they can see the corruption of the politicians of Nigeria and their brutal exploitation. On the other hand, in N’gugi’s *Petals of Blood*, the consequence of extreme coercion is portrayed along with a hope for the people of Kenya for a better future where there will be no conflicts between rich and poor, and where the politicians will think about their own men without hoping for their own interest. Finally, in *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul shows Mobutu’s dictatorship in Zaire and his fascism against his own people who gave their lives for their own land and helped him to have his power as a politician in a free state.

Chapter One

Introduction

Many African novelists have written about the sufferings and about British's rulers' oppression of Africans during the colonial period. In the meantime, Achebe, N'gugi and Naipaul have focused on postcolonial time and on the colonial hangover over people which was prevailing even after being suppressed for hundreds of years by them. These novels portray pre-independence time and mostly about post-independence situations in African countries and about new colonial masters who tagged them as democrats to subjugate their own men. The main ideas of these novels are to mimic the ways of those politicians who abused their power in postcolonial Africa and to show how foreign rulers maintained their rule using hegemony in their previous colonies. Colonial hangovers and hegemonic attitudes played a big role in shaping the minds of the politicians who blindly followed their previous oppressors to rule their independent countries. However, foreign powers kept taking properties of those previous colonies and used those pseudo politicians as their puppet to rob their assets. These masterpieces reflect the dysfunctional African countries politics especially in Nigeria, Kenya and Zaire. Achebe, N'gugi and Naipaul have penned these novels from their own experiences living in those times where there was nothing but anarchy and exploitation of power. This thesis will concentrate on the problems of postcolonial politics, their hegemony towards former rulers, the ways of abusing power to grab all the power and leave others to die in hunger and poverty in African countries.

Achebe, N'gugi and Naipaul living in between the bridge of colonial time and post-colonial time are successful to speak about the problems of post-colonial era and they have propitiously picturized despotism of new black politicians, who in the name of ethnic purity created turmoil. Those new elites became the comprador class of the society who used common people to get

independence and then abandoned them. All the three novels disclose disturbed politics of the politicians in post-independent Africa along with a zeal of their culture and tradition. The novelists focus both on the politics of the new elite politicians who were getting help from the foreign masters along with the hope of a new country where there will be equality for everyone, and everyone will get their liberty to lead a life that they deserve. As these novelists have experienced the transition from colonial period to independence, they have shrewdly described how previous colonial masters perpetuated their power over those countries by using those politicians who blindly followed their foreign masters' rules.

Achebe's *A Man of the People* gives a glimpse of barbaric politics of Nigerian politicians who abused their own people after getting independence. When a country gets its freedom after so many years of oppression, it is supposed to bring some opportunities for the people of that country, but the problem is few elites misuse that opportunity for their own benefits and leave others to die in hunger and poverty. Same picture is shown in this novel along with the description of a hope for the Nigerians that there will be a better future for them where they will get everything they need. It also portrays the tradition of Nigerian society about their attire and their customs that they maintain on their celebratory programs. However, through this novel Achebe has also pointed out the foreigner's intellectual invasion in Nigeria to rule it like before but in disguise. As there was a booming of agriculture, foreigners like Chinese and British knew it would be a great opportunity for them to plunder all the resources of those African countries. All these things are delineated through this novel to show the colonial hangover of people for their previous masters, as in the novel MP Nanga takes all the power to suppress his own people with the help of foreign power. On the other hand, Odili represents the common man who is also the hope of the nation and it

seems that Achebe is hoping for a better state for his people along with fair politics where there will be no binarism and hegemonic attitude.

Moreover, the novel *Petals of Blood* shows absolute corruption of the black oppressors in Kenya who promised to give the basic needs to their people before independence and turned their backs after achieving their political powers. N'gugi portrays how education and corruption goes hand in hand and how education can be used as a tool of oppression as well as a resistance against apartheid. In the novel, characters like Munira use the school's association to stand against the oppression of Headmaster Fraudsham who used colonial legacies in school. Again, when Munira takes the power, he himself becomes like the previous headmaster who abuses his power and that is how education was used in that time as a tool to abuse power. However, he represents those elites in Kenya who abandoned their people after gaining their power. N'gugi has used metaphoric characters as well as realistic examples with fictional touch, like Kimeria from his own experiences to show the world their mirror images.

The final novel of which is Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, examines King Mobutu's dictatorship and subjugation in Zaire by using foreign powers. Big Man symbolizes Mobutu who was a brutal ruler and, in his reign, people died of poverty and hunger. If anyone went against his order, he had to pay a lot of money or he had to be imprisoned and Naipaul has interpreted these kinds of scenarios in the final chapters where he has described those young men are caught without any reason and from them the government is taking money from them. Through this novel the readers can detect the gruesome post-colonial politics in Zaire at that time including Mobutu's treacherous plan that he made with their preceding colonial masters. Big Man's idea of west as an idol makes him do all the worst jobs and in the name of development, he spoils their nature and

natural resources. Nevertheless, Big Man runs his rule for over a decade and persecutes his own people and leaves them to die in injustice, disparity and starvation.

However, this research will help to inspect the pseudo democratic political scenario in African countries after getting independence from a long history of slavery system through Achebe, N’gugi and Naipaul’s novels. We can also analyze how foreigners maintained their suppression even being absent from their antecedent colonies and their politics of using hegemony on some African elites to abuse their power which ultimately led to destruction of their freedom. However, these novels also give a glimpse of hope for the Africans to actual freedom from all kinds of subjugation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Much scholarly research has been done on postcolonial literature of Africa but Achebe, N’gugi and Naipaul’s works give a better dimension to the readers to know about the actual condition of African countries along with a clear picture of the politics. Their selected works take the readers to a journey where they get to know about African culture, their behaviors, practices, and the aftermath condition independence; how a small part of the ruling class people, being hegemonized, oppressed their own people and led them towards destruction and poverty. The effects of postcolonialism on the lives of the African people are vast. They try celebrating their own culture and it is a matter of pride to them that they have got their independence after such a brutal past. The consequences of postcolonialism and the hegemonic attitude even after independence is huge. Independence and the filthy politics after independence brought corruption, poverty, inequality, violence, and moral ambiguity within the country.

Postcolonial Politics: Corruption, Poverty, and Inequality

Macheka focuses on the chain reaction of independence in African countries through his research. He shows the social and political lives of the people living there analyzing Achebe’s novel which depicts a fictional world, though it seems realistic. He shows the corruption of some blacks who misuse their powers and deprive the common people from their rights. In his article “An evaluation of post-colonial African leadership: A study of Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, and Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People*”, Mavis Thokozile Macheka writes, “After independence, some Africans thought that they were welcoming victory in its fullness, but their fellow blacks use their power improperly, replicating the colonial forms of

repression.” (14) Here, it can be seen that Achebe is portraying the actual condition of the consequences of Africa. It seems that everyone thought independence would bring peace, equality and it would make a state free from corruption, but it became an irony and happened exactly the opposite. The article also shows how some blacks blindly followed the British and the capitalism that the British left there after colonization in Africa. It also reflects how leaders betray the people and start ruling the country with autonomous power, where it should be a republic country. Macheka further argues, “A Man of the People ironically presents ‘a man of the people’ who detaches himself from the society and seeks to meet individual interests. The leaders had wielded power and had been misusing it by pursuing personal interests.” (15) Therefore, Macheka analyzes the corrupt condition of Nigeria, even after achieving independence. Though it seemed that people would finally get their freedom and they would be free from being enslaved, every dream became a mirage for them.

Sarafina Frans have done a postcolonial analysis of Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* and manifest how the new democratic government worked as an autocrat along with the resistance of common people against those pseudo democrats. She portrays the politics of the foreign invaders who were taking all the properties and were doing business keeping a benevolent face. In her article, “A Postcolonial Analysis of Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People*”, Frans asserts, “the self-centered acts of native politicians indicate that the common people of formerly colonised societies could not benefit from independence as their own native people become their new masters who barely mind doubt to fulfil the objectives of their former white masters in their own land.” (4) Therefore, her findings are verifying the dirty politics of the new black oppressors in post-independent African countries. She demonstrates that those sham democrats used their power and all the resources of the common people to enrich their properties and bank-balance. Moreover, she

argues, “the proximity to power... is an indication that the leadership was self-centered, and therefore, not everyone was able to benefit from the available services of the state despite the country’s attainment of independence.” (4) Nevertheless, her research interprets the poor condition of Nigerian people who suffered because of their nefarious politicians who subjugated their own men.

Chijioke Uwasomb inspects *Petals of Blood* and observes the struggle of the common people of Africa, specifically of Kenya, to get their independence and mostly the horrendous condition of the country after attaining freedom from British colonial rulers. His analysis proves this novel as a euphoric mirage of a free country which eventually turns into a hell. He justifies that Thiong’o creates a fictional world that reflects the crisis of Africa after independence. He portrays how a small part of higher-class people use the power to dominate their own people. Being a black, they know the history about being enslaved and the oppression that they faced, but still, they choose to dominate their own people with cruelty. Uwasomba in his article, “The Politics of Resistance and Liberation in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*”, gives definition about liberation and the consequences of dirty politics that took place in Africa after liberation. He argues,

“Liberation is attained when the people are said to be truly free; when they control all the tools, instruments the means of their physical, economic, political, cultural and psychological being. Put differently, when the people control the means and context of their integrated survival and development, they are considered liberated.” (96)

His argument is showing how the taste of freedom should be and how a democratic country should run; but in Kenya it happened exactly the opposite. Uwasomba furthermore adds, “there is a clear

demonstration that imperialism can never develop Kenya in particular and Africa in general.” (101) Therefore, he substantiates representation of the postcolonial politics of Africa and portrays the impacts of imperialism on a newly independent country.

James A Ogude justifies that *Petals of Blood* manifests not only the post-colonial politics of Kenya, but also reflects the consequences and new socio-political order. He portrays the awful condition of Kenya which was led by the newly born elites. In his article, “Ngugi’s Concept of History and the Post-colonial Discourses in Kenya”, Ogude argues,

“Ngugi foregrounds land as a recurring economic process in Kenya; he critiques the African elite that captured state power at independence as mere watchdogs of Western capitalism, and, indeed, he raises his pet theme of cultural imperialism and strategies for the African revolution.” (87)

Therefore, independence brought a scope for the cunning and greedy African to hold the power and abuse it to their heart’s content which eventually brought devastation in Kenya. Independence is supposed to be enjoyed by all, but it goes only in the hands of some few corrupted elites. Ngugi shows how the African elites became followers of their former colonizers. His writings show the glorious past of Kenya, portrays the problems that started with the arrival of the whites and the betrayal to the common people after the independence. (Ogude 89) Nevertheless, Ogude verifies the portrayal of postcolonial politics and the betrayal of the elites to the common people and the horrible condition of Kenya in their post-independence time which becomes an irony for the people of the country.

Josef Gugler in his study portrays how Ngugi’s own experiences gave him a clear concept about the lives of the African people which is reflected in his writings. As his own father was

forced to become a landowner and as he himself saw the condition of the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, it was easy for him to feel the dire condition of the Kenyan people. After being colonized for such a long time, the Kenyans thought finally they would feel the taste of independence. Irony was that their own people took their freedom and made their lives more devastating than before. He shows a new beginning after independence which portrays that the resistance fighters and the loyalists who supported their colonizers are not without guilt. He also emphasizes that everyone can make a new nation, but the new enemy is the newly born elites in Kenya. (Gugler 330) Gugler advocates Ngugi is apt in his representation of the newly independent country Kenya. His clear representation of the country, though in a fictional way, shows the effects of the rebellion of the country and the common people being the scapegoats suffer the most. Gugler, in his article “How Ngugi wa Thiong’o Shifted from Class Analysis to a Neo-Colonialist Perspective”, argues, “Kenya is shown...as a land of greed corruption, where the few ruthlessly impose their will on the many so as to exploit them.” (330) However, he demonstrates by analyzing the novel that N’gugi’s real life experiences have helped him to portray the horrible scenario of post-independent Kenya and the cruel politics of the elite which took the peace of the Kenyan people and made liberty a mirage for them.

Thomas J. Haslem dissects *A Bend in the River* and argues that this novel vigorously portrays the postcolonial politics of Congo, the cruel autonomic rules of King Mobutu and the consequences of it. He analyzes life under Mobutu in a detailed manner. The novel gives the readers subtle and elaborate pictures about Mobutu’s rule in Zaire along with the relationship with other events in the contemporary time. (Haslam 48) As Naipaul lived in that time, he had a clear idea about all the facts, problems, and politics of the king. The king made discrimination and took all the lands and properties of the people living there and handed over them to the local elites who

were faithful to him and who were indigenous Africans. Because of colonization, many people from around the world migrated to Africa and other colonies of the British and settled there for good. The problem occurred when Africa became independent and the king declared those migrants are not Africans, even if they were born there. So, Mobutu started his autonomy and followed his previous masters and deprived the citizens from their basic needs and took all the properties. In his article “The ‘Big Man’ in V. S. Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River*”, Thomas J. Haslem demonstrates, “Although Mobutu did not shy away from publicly executing, humiliating, or banishing those who opposed him, he preferred to manipulate rather than simply punish potential adversaries.” (48) However, Mobutu’s rule in Congo was beyond inhumanity and he destroyed all the dreams of the people living there about their freedom. Life under his rule was as awful as being a slave under British rulers.

Erica L. Johnson finds out the link between Naipaul’s childhood’s environment and the *A Bend in the River*’s characters’ situation for being Hindu and Muslim. As he was born in Trinidad, he had a Hindu upbringing and he had faced so many problems which are also portrayed in his novel. Johnson identifies that the migrant people facing alienation and racism are shown in this book. Colonization made it possible to migrate easily, but it had some bad effects which are visible in this book. African people thought they would finally get an independent country, but their own rulers betrayed them. Johnson, in her article “Provincializing Europe: The Postcolonial Urban Uncanny in V. S. Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River*”, quotes, “decolonization is an aberration in the orderly, progressive process of change.” (210) That is what Naipaul has shown in his novel. Some greedy elites of Africa, in the name of collective wellbeing for all the Africans, destroyed the peace of Africa. They took away all the peace of the people and created a chaotic situation which eventually led to division among the different tribes of Africa. Johnson also focuses on the tortures

of the King upon the common people and reflects how the innocent people were being trapped with false acquisition to give money to the government. The British went but they taught the idea of Capitalism to their colonies which is the root problem. Johnson also argues

“Naipaul mocks the notion that European colonialism should be accorded the singularly important role that it is given in Western historicism by folding into his novel the often-overlooked presence of tribal, Arab, and Indian power in central and eastern Africa. Even in his pessimism, then, Naipaul inscribes a spatio-temporal structure to *A Bend in the River* that anticipates recent work on the process of globalization.” (212)

Therefore, her evidence advocates the postcolonial problems of politics, the process of decolonization and the dire consequences of it.

Postcolonial Politics: Moral Ambiguity and Violence

Bruce King, in his book *V.S. Naipaul* gives an analysis about the writings of Naipaul. In this book, there is a chapter about *A Bend in the River* where he gives a short description about the contemporary time in Congo, Mobutu's politics and about the sufferings of Africans. He also shows that Naipaul himself has faced the problems and his own experiences are shown in this novel. However, Mobutu was a cruel dictator who killed so many innocent people including Arabs, Indians, and tall warriors so that they could not go against him. (King 119) Even in the ending part of the novel there can be seen that people are being caught and taken to prison without any reason and there are killings everywhere which leads to the rebellion against Mobutu. Mobutu's heinous acts are proof of immoral acts in the post-independence time. He also portrays the fact that that rebellion was also harmful for common people and mostly for people who were migrants. The uprisers also planned to kill all the people who were the supporters of the king and were migrants

as their motive was to make Congo like before. King also argues, “those Indians who live by old ways and fail to change are left at the mercy of the African desire to purify the land of others and avenge themselves for the humiliation of the past.” (124) King also gives clear information about the dictator’s way of ruling the country. He writes,

“The Big Man’s radicalization of businesses belonging to foreigners destroys property rights and introduces further disorder and injustice beyond the simple corruptions and violence...Africans are given businesses they do not own, and the owners become managers, and everyone becomes frantic to amass wealth before the coming chaos as the country slides quickly towards another rebellion.” (128)

This description is a clear indication about the horrible consequences of independence in Africa and about the dire situation of the migrants living there which are portrayed in Naipaul’s novel with subtlety.

V.S. Naipaul, in his book *The Writer and the World: Essays*, analyzes the history of King Mobutu and the history of post-independent Congo. He portrays how a local sergeant seized the power of Congo and tried an attempt to change all the cultures, rules, and laws to make it more African; through which he brought destruction there. Naipaul, in the chapter “A New King for the Congo: Mobutu and the Nihilism of Africa”, also gives a description about the symbolism about Mobutu’s dress up saying, “the cap and the stick—are the emblems of his African chieftaincy. Only the chief can kill the leopard.” (255) Mobutu took control over Congo to make the country like before with all its glory and tried to take all the powers of the common migrants who were also African by birth. He was a terrible dictator who tried to make Africa a modern state, ruined everything and took many lives. Naipaul comments, “when the chief speaks, when the chief sets

his carved stick on the ground, the modern dialogue stops; and Africa of the ancestors takes over.” (255) Therefore, Mobutu’s only concern was to follow the ancestors and the irony lies here. He was following his previous colonial masters and was thinking about his own interest only. His adamant behavior ruined thousands of lives. Naipaul furthermore argues,

“In November 1973 Mobutu had nationalized all businesses and plantations belonging to foreigners—mainly Greeks, Portuguese, and Indians—and had given them to Zairois. Now, a year later, he had decided to take back these enterprises, many of them pillaged and bankrupt, and entrust them to the state.” (257)

This description gives a crystal-clear idea about the autonomy of King Mobutu in Congo. His double-faced selfish attitude made Africans suffer the worst. His selfish motif shows his hegemonic attitude towards his former masters. All these are also portrayed in Naipaul’s novel though in a fictional way.

Martin Meredith in his book *The State of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, describes the post-independence status of Africa along with the foreign politics to destroy the continent with their power. Meredith shows that independence came with euphoria there and there was an economic boom as well. Agriculture was booming and helping a lot to make money. People had scopes to become rich with less effort as there was dynamic corruption. He comments, “Between 1945 and 1960 the economies of colonial Africa expanded by between 4 and 6 per cent per annum. West African groundnut production doubled between 1947 and 1957; cotton production trebled.” (129) So, foreigners were also lured by this and started creating plans to rule them from staying in their own place. However, Meredith also portrays that the colonizers left their idea of capitalism which was hugely accepted by the elites of Africa and as they were still

dependent upon the West, they followed their masters. These elites brought all the destruction in Africa and their trying to make Africa developed was all bogus. Meredith argues, “Africa had achieved only a ‘false decolonisation’, leaving real power in the hands of foreigners and their ‘agents’ among the ruling elites. What was needed was a violent overthrow of the entire system.” (134) His arguments make it clear that post-independence freedom was nothing but a mirage for the African people and the foreigners were still holding the power at that time. He also shows that China also took the chance to divide the continent and targeted different groups like Swaba, Tutsi and Burundi. (Meredith 134) Nevertheless, his book gives an explicit analysis of the politics of Postcolonial Africa, about the consequences of African people and about the so-called benevolent foreign invaders' politics.

It is evident that many critics have also had the same views on the status of post-colonial Africa which is shown in Achebe, Ngugi and Naipaul's novels. These three writers are meticulous in their portrayal because of their own observation in the contemporary time. The articles display the inhuman acts of the postcolonial period in Africa and about the sufferings of the people living there. These reflect the dirty games of the elite who were the traitors and betrayers. They, for their own interest, gamble their own countries with their former masters. Nevertheless, the three novels give a transparent picture of three African countries which reflect the whole scenario of African continent at that time.

Chapter Three

A Man of the People

Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* describes the consequences of independence and the political situation in Africa. The title is sarcastic which reflects the horrendous political abuse in Africa even after getting independence. Independence is supposed to bring freedom, equality, justice, and a safe environment for the citizens of a particular country but throughout this novel the readers get to see the opposite side of gaining independence. This novel reflects the lives of the people in Nigeria and their way of living under the cruel so-called democratic leaders. Odili Samalu is the protagonist of the novel and the narrator as well. He represents the common people of Nigeria who fight against Chief Nanga, who is the antagonist and cruel dictator. Nanga is the symbol of all those political leaders who abuse their power for their own benefits. He uses his power to build houses and marry various girls. This portrays the typical consequences of independence from British colonization in Africa's different countries. Though Africans mostly blame their rulers for misuse of their power, their own people did the same things after getting independence. Nevertheless, Achebe also shows the changing condition in politics through Nanga's fall from his position and Odili's achievement in gaining that political position.

Postcolonial Politics: Corruption, Poverty, and Inequality

The word independence brings with it the hope of a corruption-free country with equalities for everyone. Irony is the situation may not be the same and remains as a mirage for many countries who were once under the rule of British Colonization. Chinua Achebe in his novel *A Man of the People*, mainly shows the living condition of Nigerian people amid corruption, poverty, and inequality even after being freed from the abominable British rulers. It turns out that the freedom

of Nigerian people was nothing but a mirage and a euphoric unattainable right. People thinking of getting their rights and the taste of freedom, got in return inexplicable oppression from their own people. Throughout the novel, Achebe has described the pathetic condition of the people living in Nigeria and he has given subtle descriptions about how the people in power were full of corruption along with their misuse of power to oppress common people. As in the novel, Chief Nanga is the Minister of Culture in the country who uses his power against his own people for his own benefits. He builds mansions with the money taken from the common people. In the novel, Achebe sarcastically describes the cunningness of Nanga saying, “as long as men are swayed by their hearts and stomachs and not their heads the Chief Nangas of this world will continue to get away with anything.” (39) Here, his use of diction reveals his intention that he is conveying the image of all those politicians who oppress their own people after getting independence. In Nigeria, people were so disturbed with their previous ruler’s oppression that they started dreaming of getting out of the box, but the irony is that their own fellow brothers cheated them and used the power against them. Those new African elites started following their previous ruler’s style of ruling their country and it worked as a colonial hangover over them. They thought the British were apt in their acts of gaining their own profit which was preceded by those few elites that brought all the disasters. As Macheke comments, “the coming of independence to Africa was marked by euphoria and great expectations... However, the celebratory mood of independence in Africa evaporated because of the problems of cynical leadership, mass apathy and despair.” (14) Therefore, independence brought with it more corruption, destruction, and repression.

It seems like Africans were colonized by their own men even after getting independence. New African elites, who became the leaders, started exploiting their power and betraying their nation. As in the novel, characters like Nanga who used to be a teacher started misusing his power

after getting the political power. At the beginning of the novel, the development of the character is shown meticulously. Chief Nanga seems to be a benign character who works for his country. Odili, being a narrator and a former student of Nanga, gives a clear description of how Nanga is working for his country. As the narrator describes him in the very beginning of the novel saying, “M.A. Nanga, M.P., was the most approachable politician in the country. Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people.” (Achebe 1)

This comment is sarcasm, and the reason is revealed later in the novel. Nanga is an apt man who symbolizes corrupt politicians in post-independent Africa. He keeps in touch with the British traders and keeps deflating the money from the government. His act of misusing power gets published on a paper that says, “Chief Nanga...had been guilty of the same practice and had built out of his gains three blocks of seven-storey luxury flats at three hundred thousand pounds each in the name of his wife.” (Achebe 60)

This revelation gives a goosebump to the readers as it is very much relevant to today’s world as well. Even Odili's father Hezekiah Samalu, who is just a normal political leader in his village, has a tremendous sum of wealth and people in his locality know all these things for which he along with his family gain the hatred of people. Odili himself talks about his childhood where he was driven away by his friend’s father. While Odili was in school, he went to his friend’s house for a night to stay as his house was far away, but after getting to know about his identity, his friend’s father directly said, “Then you cannot stay in my house...know it from today that no son of Hezekiah Samalu's shelters under my roof.” (Achebe 19)

Hezekiah is only a retired district controller but people’s hatred towards him implies his corruption level. Odili even gives us a glimpse of their eating habits which certainly reveals the inequality among people. The Hezekiah family is enormously big but still they manage to eat meat every once in a week, as he states, “my father used to slaughter a goat every Saturday, which was more than most families did

in two years, and this sign of wealth.” (Achebe 18) This description leaves a question that this is something implausible and clearly a sign of inequity and discrimination among people.

Even after the colonization period gets to an end, it again gets started in a different way not by some intruder but with the people of their own. In the name of nationalism, those new elites in Africa started talking about the welfare of their own people with which they were gaining their wealth. In the name of benevolent deeds to their tribal indigenous people and bringing back Africa’s previous state of wealth, prosperity, and enrichment, they oppressed their own people. Post-colonial Africa suffered as much as during the time of colonization. Inequality and injustices were everywhere. Politicians were maintaining a good relationship with the foreigners as there was an economic boom after the independence from the agriculture sector. They knew their business well and “Africa had achieved only a ‘false decolonisation’, leaving real power in the hands of foreigners and their ‘agents’ among the ruling elites...foreign players actively sought out revolutionary opportunities in independent Africa.” (Meredith 134) However, even after getting freedom, the main power was in the hands of the foreigners and those newly elites in Africa were nothing but pawns to them. All these things are visible in Achebe’s novel where Achebe in disguise of the narrator gives the readers a complete zeal of post-independent Africa. Nanga’s luxurious and ostentatious lifestyle gives a clear indication about the common people’s miserable condition. While people were starving and were dealing with the war against themselves, politicians like Nanga were living in great comfort. Those politicians’ self-centered attitude certainly reflects that common people in Africa will never get the advantage of freedom as their own native people again become their second masters and start re-colonizing their native land. (Frans 4) Those African leaders were supposed to be democratic, but they became dictators against their own native people. While there was an election, they used to misuse their power to regain their political seat. Their

hegemonic attitude towards their previous rulers leads them to learn to exploit powers rather than using it to develop their own country. Political leaders like Nanga, by using nationalism as a sentiment gain the power while he himself was not nationalistic and he did not bother about his people or about the development of the country. Nanga's hegemonic attitude reflects through his use of language. He mostly uses English language while speaking as it works as an economic force to him that helps him to gain honor and fame. His children also use English, go to English school, and follow western culture that manifest the colonial hangover over people in previously colonized countries. Again, making their own people slave to them. The purpose of independence is to give people their rights and treat them as human beings rather than slaves. In this novel, Achebe has tactfully shown how the elites treat the poor indigenous and natives as their slaves. This portrayal indicates the postcolonial politics of the few rich Africans. Slavery is something heinous and the practice of the British rulers to degrade their culture, people, and nation as well. However, it is visible that people worship Nanga which eventually reveals the fact that there is a master slave relation; where Nanga is the master, and all the common people are his slave. When Odili and Nanga go to visit Chief Koko, the readers can see that his servants call him as master. This particular scene reflects the idea of post-colonialism in that novel. Chief Koko symbolizes all those elites in African countries who abuse their power to create the same situation as it was in the time of colonization. Koko falsely accuses his servants about mixing poison in his coffee and creates chaos about that. As the narrator describes, "the steward, hearing his master's cry, had rushed in." (Achebe 21) Achebe has aptly chosen diction to deliver the message to his readers about the reprehensible abuse of political power by the political leaders against their own people, even after their terrible past of slavery system. Thus, it shows the postcolonial dictatorship in Nigeria.

Postcolonial Politics: Violence, and Moral Ambiguity

Postcolonial politics brings with itself violence and moral ambiguity. Violence is one of the main baits that was used in postcolonial countries by the people in power to remain in power. Their only motive was to load their own stomach and leave others to die who fought for them to bring independence. So, the political leaders or the elites of the countries used to use violence while it was the time of election to remain in their position. If someone is common or who does not belong to the elite class, they would attack them not to fight with them and to regain their position. However, because of colonial hangover and hegemonic attitude towards their previous colonial masters, there was still moral ambiguity among people to choose what was good for their people. Achebe has shown these types of violence and moral ambiguity among the new leaders, who were certainly fighting for their people. As in the novel, Odili describes his situation and being compelled to keep guns with him and illustrates, "I only agreed to this most reluctantly after many acts of violence were staged against us, like the unprovoked attack by some hoodlums and thugs calling themselves Nanga's Youth Vanguard or Nangavanga, for short." (Achebe 67) Odili is the former student of Nanga and he is adored by him even in the beginning of the novel, but when Nanga's dirty politics and corrupt acts gradually get revealed to Odili, he decides to fight against him fairly and to work for his people. Odili makes it clear to his bodyguards, "We wan help poor people like you. How Government go give us money...?" (Achebe 68) The ongoing governments will never help them for campaigning as they want to do something for the people. Nanga knows that if the election is done fairly, he will certainly lose his power and that is why he keeps attacking Odili to kill him or at least to make him step back. This whole situation is the emblem of so-called pseudo democracy in the post-independence time in Africa. Politicians like Nanga want to make sure that nobody stands against them in the election and take away their

powers. "Corruption has come to dominate Nigerian life and his text reflects the horrors of the status quo in African independent countries. The repressive machinery was not only retained in Africa but was adopted and perfected." (Macheka 15) Therefore, the condition of Nigeria was nothing less than a colony and the place of absolute corruption which was practiced by the Nigerian elites themselves. It seems like whoever takes in the power will exploit it. In the novel, Nanga uses his every power to stop Odili from doing an election. He attacks him on different political events with the help of his goons and even offers him money to step back. Odili refuses to take the money and Nanga then asserts, "I am only giving you this money because I feel that after all my years of service to my people, I deserve to be elected unopposed so that my detractors in Bori will know that I have my people solidly behind me." (Achebe 71) Nanga's firm belief that money will buy Odili and he is the only one to get elected is the proof of dictatorship and violence that was ongoing at that time. Violence is a common tool to use against the common people to mortify them and continue the process of autocracy. It was a very common scenario in most of the African countries that politicians wanted a life-long ruling status in their respective countries. Macheka gives a list of the dictators explaining, "Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. African dictators as Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Kamuzu Banda of Malawi etc created one party state and advocated for a one country, one leader and one-party doctrine." (15) It shows the critical condition of the African countries after independence. It can be assumed how powerful they were to declare something like this and what was the real scenario of the common people in those countries.

Achebe has also portrayed the moral ambiguity even on those people, like Odili, who thinks of the wellbeing of their nation. It seems that Odili wants the best for his people and that is why he wants to win the election, but at some point, he himself questions whether this is important for

his love for Edna. He is confused which eventually leads the readers to a puzzle that is he really wants the freedom of his people or is he only concerned about his love life? He is trapped between his feelings to work for his people and for Edna. There is an aura that all the good work that he does is to impress Edna and to win her love. He even tries to help her when Edna's mother gets admitted to hospital. However, Nanga's attempt to lure Odili with money gives a scope to brag in front of Edna. Odili considers unravelling the acts of Chief Nanga and says, "she would certainly like to hear how her famous suitor came to me in the dark like Nicodemus and offered me two-fifty pounds." (Achebe 77) There is a kind of jealous tone in Odili's voice which perhaps Achebe has intentionally used to portray Odili's moral ambiguity. The readers can be puzzled here that he is supposed to work without proving himself and it is unnecessary to prove his good deeds to Edna but all he is trying is to impress Edna. Maybe it is his vengeful nature, and his acts are determined to win one thing which is Edna. He has a love and hate relationship with Nanga. It can be seen that he does not refuse to take the scholarship that is offered by Nanga and even goes to meet with him in the capital. These incidents make it somehow unclear about Odili's feelings towards Nanga. However, Odili along with Max and Makinde form a group to fight against Nanga. They represent the oppressed people of Nigeria who are willing to fight for their freedom; at the same time Max's accepting Nanga's money throws a question towards their politics that will they really not become like Nanga in future! Max advises Odili to take the money from Nanga and he also says that he has accepted the money. "Chief Koko offered me one thousand pounds,' he continued placidly. 'I consulted the other boys and we decided to accept. It paid for that minibus.'" (Achebe 75) Here, Max seems to have no guilty feelings for accepting the money. It shows their immoral acts and the dirty game that they are also going to play in future. Though Max is working for the people, still some acts show that he is nothing less than Nanga and certainly he will also play the politics that

are already shown by the previous British rulers. The colonial hangover was still prevailing there, and those Nigerian people were betrayed by their own one's and seems like no matter who comes in power, will exploit their power which will eventually lead to the sufferings of the mass people. "Achebe portrays a post-colonial African society that has come to accept institutionalized corruption and nepotism. The society realizes the hypocrisy of its leadership, but it is silent about it." (Macheka 15) The silence of the Africans is another proof that whoever will come to power, will abuse it and they are never going to feel the true happiness of independence. Though there are people like Odili who wants to help his fellow people, his character also portrays having hegemony and pride. Odili's thinking that he is superior to Nanga, shows his pride. If he truly wants to help his people, there would never be such kind of ambivalence and confusion. Presumably, Achebe has designed his character willingly like this to show the reality in Nigeria. In other sectors like job, business, and any other things there was a tendency of nepotism. "Decisions were often taken as a result of personal ties and obligations or for reasons of personal profit." (Meredith 152) Nevertheless, they were only thinking about their own profits, their relatives, and their own business, whereas common people were dying of hunger, facing inequalities, violence, false acquisitions, and not enough scope to get jobs.

In brief, independence in African countries, as it is portrayed by Achebe in Nigerian context, brings no change in the life of those suppressed people. They were the subject of slavery, violence, and inequality in the colonial time, and it remained the same even in post-colonial period. The native Africans were nothing but slaves to those new elites and politicians in their countries. Colonial master's left their teachings of oppressing people which they learned without any doubt and bluffed their own men. Lack of morality, empathy and repressing their own horrible past helped them to do such heinous acts. Common people were striving to feel

their independence and to get their equal rights; whereas the privileged used all the facilities and deprived their own men from justice. Politicians used power and violence to quench the newly rising young politicians who really thought about their people. Achebe has pertinently interpreted the political condition of Nigeria as well as the effects of colonial hangover in the postcolonial time which ultimately reflects about other African countries as well.

Chapter Four

Petals of Blood

Petals of Blood is a well acclaimed novel of N’gugi wa Thiong’o which explores through the post-independent Kenya’s nasty politics and shows the terrible condition of Kenyan people whose sufferings remain the same even after getting freedom. N’gugi aptly has created a fictitious world to illustrate the unjust and dire situation of the people living there. The title itself is a symbol of their sufferings and about the brutal colonization by the British rulers and after independence again by their own men. They had to shed their blood, sacrifice their lives and live amid extreme terror to regain their freedom from their own men who had exploited their powers against their fellow countrymen. In this novel N’gugi has used characters like Kimeria, Chui and Munira to show how the newly elites had used their power against their men. In contrast, people like Abdullah, Nding’uri and Karega are the emblems of those who fought for their countrymen and for their rights. In the Mau Mau rebellion Nding’uri has given his life and Abdullah somehow has managed to escape and returned to his town, but the irony is that his sacrifices are not acknowledged there. N’gugi has portrayed that the freedom fighters were not given the proper rights after independence, rather their lands, money and houses were seized by the newly elites and politicians. However, N’gugi has also described the hopes for the people through Wanja, who symbolizes hope and Kenya itself that will gain its prosperity one day.

Postcolonial Politics: Corruption, Poverty, and Inequality

The novel starts with a mysterious murder case and the setting is right after the Mau Mau rebellion. N’gugi has shown the aftermath of Kenya by using an imaginary world, Illmorog, which aptly reflects the corruption of the society along with the sufferings of the people. N’gugi portrays

the cruelty of the new elites who took away all the property of the poor indigenous African after independence. In this novel, Abdullah is a freedom fighter and risked his life during Mau Mau rebellion but when he returns to his village, he finds out that their sacrifices are not acknowledged. He leaves his village and comes to Illmorog to start a new life. However, his business is taken over by the politicians there and he has to start vending on roadsides. This scenario can alone give a zest of the corruption, inequality and poverty prevailing in Africa at that time. Abdullah with grief expresses his feeling about these injustices saying, “is it right that which had been bought by the collective blood of a people should go to a few hands just because they had money and bank loans?” (N’gugi 199) Abdullah is just a symbol who stands for all the other freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives but did not get proper treatment from their countrymen. There were thousands of people like him who were deprived of their rights which N’gugi has picturized through his novel with meticulous description that helps the readers to feel the reality back then. Josef Gugler comments, “N’gugi presents independence as a new beginning. Both the resistance fighters and the loyalists who supported the British...they face a common enemy in the new urban elite.” (330) Those elites were the new colonial masters in disguise of democratic leaders. Kenya is shown as the epitome of corruption and the death of the three elites is the result of the rage of the common people. N’gugi has created a murder mystery to weave the post-colonial political condition in Kenya. However, elites were using power to fulfill their own demands, whereas people were starving and leading an unhygienic and poor life. Liberation tends to give political, economic, physical freedom along with freedom of speech but in Kenya the situation was absolutely opposite. When his shop is taken by the politicians for a new law, in which is indigenous elites will take over the property of the migrants, Abdullah cannot not say anything and must find a new way to survive. The villagers along with Karega go to the lawyer for help as their properties are being

seized by the elites. As he asserts, “they need advice on everything as their lands threatened by banks to how they can acquire this or that or about money taken from them by a big fellow after promising to buy them a farm in the Highlands.” (N’gugi 191) This is how inequality and corruption prevailed at that time and those new elites and politicians were the new colonial masters who terrified their own people using the power that was given to them by the mass people of the country. The lawyer’s speech on the political situation of Illmorog gives a translucent picture of the African’s countries’ back then. He says, “black zombies, black animated cartoons dancing the master’s dance to the master’s voice. That they will do to perfection” (N’gugi 195) Therefore, N’gugi is indicating the new master’s as the copycats of their previous masters. These new urban elites became the enemy of their own men and they started imitating their cruel previous masters by creating havoc in their own country.

People who promised to give every facility to their countrymen after independence, turned their back to their own men. Common people went on wars to get their freedom from the British colonizers and wanted a free state which will be run by their own African man and the irony lies here. People were brutally deceived, and those politicians became the new masters for their own men. In the novel, Chui is a great example of those elites, who promised to give facilities to their men after independence, but they changed after having their power. From other characters like Munira and Karega, the readers can learn that Chui was an educator before and led the students against the policies of headmaster Fraudsham. Lawyer’s comment on the uprising post-colonial power and its power play advocates Chui’s metamorphosis. As he asserts, “the god grows big and fat and shines even brighter and whets the appetites of his priests, for the monster has, through the priesthood, decreed only one ethical code: Greed and accumulation” (N’gugi 196) However, when Chui gets the power, he starts to exploit it by implementing

foreign colonial values which are against their rules. The new African elites became the puppet of the Western colonial masters who were using them as pawns to have control over Africa. (Ogude 87) Their previous colonial masters know that they can use those corrupted politicians to continue their colonial legacy in post-colonial time. By using the mass people's power with a benevolent image, they looted their people's dream of independence.

When the British rulers were gone from Africa and finally Africans thought of living a peaceful life, but it was nothing but an illusion for them. N'gugi has reflected the disturbed political condition of Kenya from his hatred towards the exploitation of power, corruption in society, poor living conditions of his people and about the poverty that people faced for the dominating injustice of the politicians. He has shown through his novel the aftermath of Africa and how foreigners keep their invade active in Africa by using their pawns. In the novel Karega represents the common man who bravely fought against black oppressors. He is thoughtful about his countrymen and about their poor status. Presumably, Karega signifies the values and ethics of N'gugi. However, he goes to the city to get lawyer's advice to help the people of Illmorog. Through his voice, N'gugi explains the naked political condition by using the metaphor of Kenya's rural village's images. He describes, "he changed his mind and simply looked out at the slums, the naked children playing in the narrow streets and he wondered: the peasant in a forgotten village or the city dwellers." (N'gugi 191) Here the picturization of Kenyan slums give the readers a luminous picture of contemporary post-colonial Kenya. The word "naked" is signifying the poor and unhealthy condition of Kenya and it also depicts the open corruption of the political leaders who brutally robbed their citizens. With the implementation of colonial rules, there came the new masters with their own magic and supremacy. This helps those people in power to take all the property and power of the common people and use them for their own

profit. (Gugler 331) With independence there came new opportunities for making money and those who were the followers of their previous masters and because of hegemonic attitude towards their masters, they adopted those laws and used them even in more oppressive ways. The condition of African countries is visible in Martin Meredith's book where he writes, "Africa was the poorest, least developed region on earth. Its climate was often harsh and variable. Drought was a constant hazard, sometimes lasting several years...some 80 percent – were engaged in subsistence agriculture, without access either to basic education or health services. Disease proliferated among humans, animals and plantlife." (136) Therefore, people were living in unhealthy condition, dying of diseases and nutrition and the elites were eating with their heart's content which portrays inequality, corruption, and poverty of the African countries that are also visible in N'gugi's novel.

In the novel, N'gugi has aptly shown the corruption of the politicians who misused their power for their own good and led common people to starve. He shows the discrimination by weaving tremendous characters who symbolizes the class struggle and power relation in the society. Wanjia, Abdullah, Karega are the symbols of lower-class people who are deprived of their rights, whereas Munira, Chui and Karega are the epitome of elites, who once promised to give all the facilities to the people but went against their words after gaining power. Those few elites knew that they were dependent on foreign rulers and they remained a friendship status with the foreign status with them which includes their hegemonic attitude that resulted in such disruptive conditions in society. "Africa's economies were largely owned or controlled by foreign corporations...Africans had little experience of representative democracy – representative institutions were introduced by the British and the French too late to alter the established character of the colonial state." (Meredith 139) Nevertheless, all those elites used to

follow their master's rule which eventually led to a corrupted country and people living in poverty along with the cruel injustice. N'gugi has also portrayed the past condition of Illmorog so that the readers can compare it to the present state that everything is the same, just the faces of the masters' have changed. In the colonization period, the British used to oppress them and now their own men have started it with more cruelty. "After colonialism, we now witness the emergence of a political regime that is authoritarian and corrupt, the rise of the robber barons and the proletarianization of the masses...After the struggle against the imposition of colonial rule, after the struggle for independence Ngugi envisions a struggle against the capitalist system." (Gugler 332) N'gugi has a clear concept about the struggle of the Kenyan people, and he closely has seen those sufferings which are reflected in his novel. Women like Wanja has to engage in prostitution business as there is no other way for her to income. She has gone through many traumatic experiences because of the abusive power of the elites. She knows that she can never have a peaceful life when there are hyaenas like Kimeria out there which results in her engagement in prostitution business.

Postcolonial Politics: Violence, and Moral Ambiguity

The novel starts with violence that is the death of three elites in a fictitious village Illmorog and Inspector Godfrey is in charge of these murders to whom it seems like a jigsaw puzzle. However, violence is prevalent in this novel which gives the hint of moral ambiguity as well. Kimeria, who is one of the victims, had done some vicious acts which led to his death. He raped Wanja when she was only a teenager and he again forced her to sleep with him. He depicts those corrupted men who used their power for unethical acts. His death reveals the anger and frustration of people towards men like him. Kimera's cruelty was limitless as the speaker describes in the novel an incident saying, "They knew how cruel their boss, whom they only

knew as Mr. Hawkins could be: he had once locked up a man who had called to simply ask directions for a whole week with only water for food.” (N’gugi 192) So, he was not less than a beast who was implacable to his people just because of having the power and money. There was unimaginable corruption, oppression, and immoral acts of the leaders. “The African continent is racked by afflictions, disasters, macroeconomic crisis and dysfunctions, debt over-hang, corruption, high level illiteracy, squalor, disease, hunger, and other negative and destabilizing conditions thrown up by imperialism in cahoots with a greedy and unpatriotic ruling class.” (Uwasomba 95) However, dictators in disguise of democrats and a few elites wearing a benevolent mask robbed and suppressed the lower-class people of Africa by using violence. There is also a hint that those elites used violence to remain in power and the ongoing strikes against the fraud headmaster, who is nothing but a pet dog of the colonial masters, portrays the violence in society. People were forced to leave their lands and there were some laws against drinking a brew that was made from Thenget’a plant. There were rules and regulations that were against their will and they had to follow those as they were captured and enslaved by their black masters. The most radiant example of violence is Mau Mau rebellion where common men joined to free their country where innocent people also lost their lives as the opposite party had also attacked them and the readers get to know these descriptions from Abdullah who is a freedom fighter. In the name of development, Illmorog became a place of prostitution, social inequalities, immorality and violence.

Now, in the post-colonial period in Africa, there was moral ambiguity among people as they had seen lots of bloodshed, they lost their near ones, and they experienced the cruel colonization of their previous master and survived it. There was a consequence of all these facts for which not only the elites but also the lower-class also engaged in immoral acts whenever they

got the chance. Munira and Wanja's characters are appropriate to learn about this status. Munira seems a loyal citizen who works for the betterment of his village and his mission is to educate the children of Illmorog by letting them know about the oppression of their masters. He brags a lot about his knowledge but actually he is not that educated which can be guessed while in the lawyer's house "Munira was almost ashamed of his empty shelves" (N'gugi 194) watching lawyer's shelves full of books. However, he had to sacrifice a lot for the school at first as there were no facilities for study and the condition of school was horrible. He also leads a protest against the previous headmaster who imposes colonial legacy in the school. Somehow, his character takes a turn, and he also starts acting like an immoral man who has no guilt of abusing his people as "under our own care and tutelage, we shall tame the monster-god and make it do our will" (N'gugi 195) and by this process people start losing their own moral values. Perhaps, he gets to know that there is no other way to live in such a state where everyone is corrupted and his jealousy towards Karega also works as a catalyst to become the evil character. Munira, being a lower-middle class, wants to have a sense of ownership and as Ogude comments on this context, "the single most important virtue in traditional African society was common ownership of land which was worked by all, for the common good. When the white colonialist appropriated the land, conflict and general sufferings ensued." (89) Therefore, it is clear that his change in behavior and acts have come from the scope that capitalism has given to him to gain wealth and money to change his poor condition. People having no other condition started being corrupted like their black masters.

Kimeria's act of raping Wanja in her teenage and again forcing her to sleep with him in her adulthood advocates the power play in that society. People having money can use any women for their sexual needs without any guilt and even they would not hesitate to rape a kid as

they know, no one can punish them, and the power is in their hands. This novel depicts “the emergence of a bourgeoisie based on unfettered political control and privileged access to the resources controlled by the newly independent state.” (Gugler 336) That’s the reason those privileged never thought of getting caught by law. However, Wanjia is an attractive girl who migrates to Illmorog and she was raped by Kimeria in her teenage and got pregnant. As she was a kid, she had to abort that child who eventually reflects contemporary Kenya’s condition of unethical acts and the inequalities that women faced. N’gugi has thrown some questions in the novel with the help of the narrator to all these acts and laws saying, “who makes these laws? For whom? To help whom?” (196) His rage is visible in his use of words. The ongoing class conflict and degrading women that led to immoral acts and exploitation of power were the things that made it possible for the elites to remain in power. Therefore, those few elites’ hegemonic attitude gave the power to the foreign invaders to rule over Africa in an indirect way for which N’gugi alerts his readers and the people of Africa as well by claiming, “We are as civilized as you, we shall not be the ones to dismantle the monster god, and we shall prove it to you. You’ll be ashamed that you once had all these doubts about us.” (197) These attitudes of the elites of being superior to their own people and lesser than those whites created inequalities in society between rich and poor again in men and women. Nevertheless, the consequences of horrible slavery system and oppression by the colonial masters along with the oppression of new black masters created violence and immorality in contemporary Kenya.

In brief, the departure of the colonial master did not bring total independence in Kenya rather it was shown as a euphoria. People were deceived and oppressed by the new masters who were crueler to their men. Independence is supposed to bring happiness, equality and make a country livable but in Kenya the situation was the same. New black masters imposed the

previous colonial rules to gain their power and to remain in power which indirectly helped the foreigners to rule African countries even after getting freedom. There was corruption, poverty, and inequalities everywhere and few enjoyed the freedom with the help of their foreign masters in a new-colonial state. Their willingness to cheat their own men and greedy attitude of having all the powers to abuse it led their country to devastation. Therefore, in the postcolonial period there was autocracy in the name of democracy which N'gugi has portrayed through this novel.

Chapter Five

A Bend in the River

A Bend in the River captures the post-colonial status of Congo, the horrific injustice towards people and about the dirty politics that was ongoing by the new-colonial masters. V.S. Naipaul has written this novel from his own experience, being an Indian African citizen, he has faced many problems which he has picturized in this novel. In this novel, Salim is an Indian African who comes to a village in central Africa to make some fortune. The story revolves around that village and perhaps Naipaul has willingly chosen this title to show that Africans had suffered a lot even after getting independence and rural small villages were not out of those oppressions. However, Salim has to face racism because of not being fully African and he is in a trauma of not having any particular identity. He represents all those Africans who were migrants or whose ancestors migrated in Africa in the colonial period. Naipaul portrays how Big Man, who is actually a dictator, passes new laws against people like Salim to seize their properties and give them to indigenous new elites. Because of Big Man's new laws and rules, Salim has to hand over his shop to an African who gradually starts treating him like a slave. Presumably, Naipaul wants to show that Africans could not get out of their previous condition of slavery system and in post-colonial time their masters were their own black fellows. It was like a new colony which was run by the new black masters.

Postcolonial Politics: Corruption, Poverty, and Inequality

In the novel *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul introduces the autonomic ruler of Big Man, who is King Mobutu, and the condition of the people of Congo in post-colonial time. Mobutu in the

name of maintaining the indigenous culture and to bring their golden past, tortures his own people and people had to face corruption, injustice and lived amid extreme poverty. By using Salim's character and giving him a psychological conflict about his identity, Naipaul questions about those ongoing politics which made the lives of common people pathetic. The word "politics" itself brings with it violence and corruption, and these two again bring with them injustices and immorality in society. However, Naipaul starts his novel with a quote, "The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it." (Naipaul 3) It depicts the idea that when people get power, he tends to misuse it for his own benefits and those who do not use unethical ways to gain power they tend to live a horrible life being the slave of their master, whether colonial masters or the autocratic government who claim themselves as democrats. In the name of development of the country, Big Man starts doing business and destroying the natural beauty of their country as the narrator describes, "you could imagine the land being made part of the present: that is how the Big Man put it later, offering us the vision of two-hundred-mile 'industrial park' along the river." (Naipaul 9) Naipaul creates an imaginary world which symbolizes Congo, and he has drawn his characters and story in such a way that gives the real experiences of people of that time. However, through this novel Naipaul has portrayed Big Man's inhumane acts, his oppression towards poor people and severe corruption of the society. "*A Bend in the River* offers us numerous vignettes of neopatrimonialism in practice, many of which have a clear historical basis in Mobutu's rule of Zaire as well as affinities with contemporaneous events in other African nations." (Haslam 48) Therefore, this novel offers a journey to the post-independence era in Congo that signifies history in the form of fiction. Salim's narration gives information about the colonial time and about those Indians who came to settle in Africa and Salim's own experience being an Indian descendant makes the history clearer to the readers. He

used to live in a coastal area and in his home, there were slaves. He asserts, “I remember hearing from my grandfather that he had once shipped a boatful of slaves as a cargo rubber...he just told it as something unusual that he had done-not shipping the slaves but describing them as rubber.” (Naipaul 13) Though this novel’s setting is post-colonial Congo, Naipaul has described the condition of the colonial time to give a comparison about these two eras which are the same, having different rulers. People having dreams of their independence are deceived by Big Man. “The Big Man has brought a kind of peace...demand for cultural authenticity with the taking over of property belonging to such powerless foreigners as Indians, Greeks and Syrians.” (King 118) Therefore, people were judged by their ancestors and they had to face the torture of their master. In his ruling time, people have faced corruption and injustice by the elites of the society. They are tortured, oppressed and they have no voice to go against those elites and their ruler as he is an autocrat. He belongs to a pure African tribe and he wants to make everything pure African which is why he wants to abolish all half-blood Africans from his country. “Mobutu, stayed in power for over two decades—but at the price of destabilizing and nearly destroying their nations, as the uncertainty created by neopatrimonialism prevents social institutions from functioning properly.” (Haslam 49) His dominance over his own people made their life chaotic and hellish. People were fed up with poverty and injustices everywhere. Their dream of breathing in a free nation where they would get their basic human rights was nothing but illusion.

In the novel, when Salim comes to know about the uprising of a local war, he feels terribly trapped being not fully African. He feels himself as an outsider and his sense of belonging gives him shock as migrants like him “struggle for their independence and individuality...their lives are partly determined by their circumstances and the society in which they exist.” (King 119) However, people started to move in the city at the time of war. However, to prevent war, Big Man

sends an army, and many innocents are killed in this process. Metty describes one incident that he has witnessed when he returns to the shop and illustrates, “The first thing they did at the barracks was to shoot Colonel Yenyi. It was what the President asked them to do. He doesn’t play, this new President... They didn’t let him talk. They shot him in front of the woman and everyone.” (Naipaul 86) Therefore, people were being shot if they went against the government and they were not given any chance to speak. There was a visible class conflict between rich and poor. Those who were in power could do anything as they could control laws as well and they were abusing those powers against mass people. Elites were enjoying those powers and getting all those things that they needed, whereas commons were starving and having the worst of treatment living in their own land. The President’s command is enough and that was how autocracy was ongoing in Congo. Naipaul criticizes Mobutu’s autonomy and comments, “he has occupied every ideological position and the basis of his kingship cannot be questioned. He rules; he is grand; and, like a medieval king, he is at once loved and feared. He controls the armed forces; they are his creation.” (Naipaul 256) Mobutu seized every single place in Congo, and he was a fraud who wore a mask of humanity. He was saying all around that he would bring back Africa’s golden era, but he was also a watchdog of previous colonial masters. “Decolonization is an aberration in the orderly, progressive process of change.” (Johnson 210) So, he wanted to build buildings like Europeans and designed his plan imposing their structure and by harming their natural resources which advocates his hegemonic attitude towards foreign masters. Nevertheless, people were helpless, and they had to rebel against him which cost many people’s lives.

Big Man started taking control over people’s property using local elites. He passes a new law of taking away the properties of the unpurified Africans’ and making those locals slaves of those new elites. During the colonial time everyone was slaves of the colonial masters, but in post-

colonial time in Africa poor people have to become the victims and slaves of their new black monster-like masters who sucked the blood of their own people. In the novel, Salim's business is taken over by a local African elite and he has to work as a slave for that elite. Suddenly a man comes to him and let him know about new laws and says, "you will suffer in no way. Adequate compensation will be paid...You will continue as manager...the President insists on that." (Naipaul 301) That was the situation in Congo back then and people were being looted by their own men. The idea of freedom that they would enjoy their work and would have their equality in rights was nothing but mirage. Bruce King in his book gives a crystal-clear idea about those rules, which clinches Naipaul's portrayal of those situations, saying, "Africans are given businesses they do not own and the owners become managers and everyone becomes frantic to amass wealth before the coming chaos as the country slides quickly towards another rebellion." (King 129) Owner became a slave just for not having power and for being helpless against such a dictator. Africa's condition after independence was worse than the colonial period which is indirectly portrayed by Naipaul through his character father Huisman. Perhaps, it is Naipaul's rage against those new political leaders who used common men to get their independence and using those power against those innocent men to remain in their respective seats.

People were fed up with the ongoing disturbed political condition and their rage resulted in the war against Mobutu and this scenario is also visible in this novel where people of a tiny rural village stick together to speak against those severe oppression. While Salim is in a fix to decide about his departure to city, he gives an illustration about common men's rabidity saying, "the Africans had called up this war; they would suffer dreadfully more than anybody else; but they could cope...even if terrible things happened to them, they would die with the comfort." (Naipaul 80) From this description, the readers can get to know about the horrendous condition of those

people and can feel their mental condition as well. Living in this post-modern age, getting all the basic human rights, having all the facilities of freedom of speech, the readers can feel the urge of independence of those innocent people who were mercilessly deceived by their own community's people. However, it was possible for Mobutu to rule for such a long time because of his international allies. They helped Mobutu to remain in power in exchange they wanted their share of resources from Africa and wanted to do business there. Naipaul skillfully gives hints about the involvement of the foreign allies by using the voice of Salim in the novel. Big Man's reaction of the rebellion results in gun fire everywhere by his white armies which signifies his connection with foreign confederates. Salim describes, "the sound of a steady grinding machine made me think of guns; and then I thought of the crazed and half-starved village people against whom the guns were going to be used." (Naipaul 78) Big Man has used those armies and intimidated his citizens not only to stop the war but also to show his power and his connection with international allies. However, this indirectly indicates his weakness that Big Man is nothing without their help and he considers himself as inferior to those westerns. Perhaps, Africa's long history of slavery system has a deep impact on Africans' psychology; no matter what they say, they can never forget their past and those traumas have made their intellectual faculty paralyzed for which they think of themselves as inferior to those westerns.

Postcolonial Politics: Violence, and Moral Ambiguity

Naipaul has clearly given evidence of violence and moral ambiguity immediately after independence in Congo. Big Man has used forces to vanquish common people and to frighten them. People are imprisoned without any reason and they are asked to give a huge sum of money to get released from jail. "Young men were being kidnapped here and there by the police and the army; it was the new government tactic." (Naipaul 261) He knows that to stop rebellion he has to

threaten them and if some people lose their lives, war will automatically stop and everything will be under control. Mobutu's evil laws made Congo a place of destruction and a slaughterhouse. He was a cruel dictator who killed so many innocent people including Arabs, Indians, and tall warriors so that they could not go against him. (King 119) He knew that if all went against him, he would not be able to rule the country; consequently, he used local elites and his armed force to stop those warriors. He was hungry for power and attention and even at a point his connection with the west became weak because of his attitude. He wanted to be the biggest for whom everyone will bow down. He controlled everything and he was everywhere. Zabeth gives an idea about him and about the ongoing political condition there to Salim saying, "he will allow nobody to get big in this place. It is only his photo everywhere. And look at the papers. His photo is bigger than everybody else's every day." (Naipaul 262) His willingness to take over all the power and all the attention is portrayed through his actions. He is such a man who is hungry for all the attention which can be clearly understood through the above description. However, his dress-up and dressing sense is also evidence of his tyranny. Bruce King has analyzed his dresses and has given a precise description asserting, "Always, in public, he wears a leopard-skin cap and carries an elaborately carved stick. These—the cap and the stick—are the emblems of his African chieftaincy. Only the chief can kill the leopard. The stick is carved with symbolic figures: two birds, what looks like a snake, a human figure with a distended body." (255) Here, his leopard skinned cap symbolizes his power over everyone that he can kill anyone according to his wish if they go against him. Meanwhile, his stick depicts his poisonous attitude towards his people who have the power to destroy everyone. It may also epitomize that he is that venom who has annihilated a country's freedom and has poisoned their lives in such a way that it will be difficult for them to stand again. His clothes are also proof of his using violence to remain in

power and about the miserable condition of the people living in his territory. Mobutu's cruelty gives hints about the immoral acts that were being practiced back then.

Naipaul has sketched in his novel the postcolonial condition of Congo as well as how their previous colonial masters continued to rule their country even after the end of the colonization period. British had a great bond with the new rulers of African countries as they influenced them with the idea of giving power to control their respective countries and to have a lavish life. African elites thought those colonial masters knew all about power and politics and they would help them to remain in power. In the novel, Salim gives a clear description of Europeans who sustain their rule over African countries. "Europe no longer ruled. But it still fed us in a hundred ways with its language and sent us it's increasingly wonderful goods, things which, in the bush of Africa, added year by year to our idea of who we were." (Naipaul 269) This idea of being inferior and making people civilized with the help of their previous colonial masters brought all the problems back then. However, from this attitude that "the colonial city, more extensive than ours" (Naipaul 293), Big Man continues to torture his own people brutally. He has used his manpower to its best to stop the protests against him. People become sick of his injustices and corruption. They get to know that to survive there, they must change and use the wrong path to earn money and power. It becomes easy to make money if one becomes corrupted. Naipaul in disguise of the narrator in the novel comments, "In the old days five dollars was considered pretty good; and even during the boom you could get many things done for twenty-five dollars...Everyone had become more greedy and desperate...and some people could behave as though money had already lost its value." (312) As there is war ongoing, many innocents are also being captured and people in power start demanding high sums of money to leave them. Big Man gives power to his local elites and they also start abusing that power against innocents. Salim is also caught by the police without any

specific reason, and he finds out that the jail is full and learns about kidnapping operations in the village to prevent the protestors. Salim comes to know that the commissioner is Ferdinand and from his speech the readers can get an explicit idea about the dirty politics of Big Man. He warns Salim to leave this place saying, “you must go right away. There’s nothing here for you. They’ve taken you into jail now. They haven’t done that before. Do you know what it means? It means they will take you again.” (Naipaul 319) Ferdinand’s tone and his concerns for Salim reflects the dire situation of Congo. His comment indicates that if someone is once targeted by the authorities, he will be again trapped if he stays there. Nevertheless, Big Man is the representation of Mobutu who made Africans’ lives hellish and oppressed them in unimaginable ways. There was no moral sense among people because of seeing much bloodshed and violence. Common men were also helpless in front of such dictators who used such violence to remain in power.

The above discussion proclaims independence did not bring real freedom to the people of African countries rather they were again in shackles and they were used as puppets by their new masters. They were supposed to have liberty but all they got was violence, oppression, injustice and inequalities. Naipaul has also emphasized on the fact that it was not that only those dictators were ruling those common Africans but after independence their previous colonial masters also governed them in an indirect manner. The effects of colonial hegemony were huge and visible on the lives of African politicians who misused their power just like their masters against their own men to gain profit. They could not get it that they were actually mimicking their masters and they decided to make their country developed and civilized like Europe. Therefore, those new elites and politicians took Europeans as their role models and thought of them as superior which brought all the problems and consequently people had to face injustices in their own native land.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Chinua Achebe, N'gugi wa Thiong'o and V.S. Naipaul in their novels *A Man of the People*, *Petals of Blood* and *A Bend in the River* have adroitly seized the techniques of the newly bogus republicans along with the foreigners ongoing oppression in disguise of benevolence of postcolonial politics in Africa. By using the technique of psychic complexities among the protagonists about their identity crisis, belonging and migration, these novelists have tried to unveil the hustle of African people to have their freedom even though they already had achieved it by giving their blood. Being African novelists, these authors examine the culture of African people and reveal their condition in colonial period along with the predicament of mass African people who were subjected to despotism by their own pseudo democrats after getting independence from their former colonial masters. These are the demonstrations about defects of democratic rulers and their constitutions in African countries which were without any doubt autocracy.

However, the purpose of those newly democrats were to bring peace, freedom of speech for common men, equality, a corruption free state and a place where those common men can have their all-basic needs as a citizen of a free country, we can see the opposite picture where people had to live under tyranny, oppression, fear and amid dire poverty. In these novels, the authors have demonstrated plentiful scenarios of people being maltreated, arrested illegally and being left in intense poverty by their government in every sector. People are seen giving their lives for their freedom and some elites, who are hegemonic and take westerners as superior, abuse their power to control mass poor people. Many characters are portrayed as deceivers who promise to give all the facilities to their countrymen but abandon them after taking over political power. However, many

are also seen as truly representatives of future democrats who are staunchly willing to work for the betterment of their country which depicts the authors' aspiration for just countries.

Nonetheless, N'gugi's *Petals of Blood* offers the picture of acute corruption and Kenyan freedom fighters who gave their lives in the Mau Mau rebellion, but the irony was that they were deprived of their rights and didn't get their recognition. In this novel, Abdullah is such a character who fought for his country, but he left his hometown out of grief and anger for not getting his rights. On the other hand, Karega works for the betterment of his country and knows that the only way to save his people from those worshipers of westerns is to destroy all the elites. His character depicts hope for Kenya that someday someone will truly free them from those oppressors. Abdullah describes his experience of Mau Mau rebellion to the village people which gives an illustration of that war to the readers and their condition depicts the brutality of those newly elite politicians who gained their power by using common men and then abandoned them to die. Therefore, this novel shows the elites' misuse of power, poor condition of the freedom fighters, injustice and the consequence of corruption in their lives.

Moreover, Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* certainly captures King Mobutu's dictatorship in Zaire by using a fictional touch and it also illustrates how he uses foreign power to remain in power. Big Man aka King Mobutu in the name of advancement destroys the beauty of their country and forces many people to become homeless and seize their properties giving them to newly indigenous elites. People like Salim become homeless and feel an identity crisis and they become marginalized for being migrants even though they are Africans by birth. Salim feels alienated and he is arrested unjustly because of being a migrant. Big Man's new laws of ethnic cleansing by torturing people is also portrayed here along with his coercion on common people, mass killing, and unabridged corruption can be thoroughly witnessed throughout the novel. Failure of Big Man's

democratic politics, innumerable murders of innocents and Salim's being helpless finding no way out makes it crystal clear that Mobutu ruined the freedom of people and sucked their blood in every way.

In conclusion, postcolonial politics of Africa in Achebe's *A Man of the People*, N'gugi's *Petals of Blood* and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* manifest utmost corruption of the politicians, poor condition of the common people, hegemonic attitude of them which results in destruction of freedom and poverty in African countries by their newly colonial masters who disguised themselves as democrats. These three novels have prudently shown the problems of having a colonial hangover and the chain reaction of getting freedom which was controlled by corrupt politicians. These three novelists have precisely depicted Africa's horrendous situation after getting independence and having new masters to oppress them along with so many scars from their past colonial time which remained the same.

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