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## THE EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION, CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND WOMEN IN NGUGI WA THIANG'O'S "WEEP NOT CHILD"

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### ABSTRACT

Ngugi Thiango's "Weep not Child" focuses on the post colonial effects, which has caused great damage to the native African tribal culture, and stresses the need for education to revamp the society. The novel prioritizes children's education, and emphasizes that education alone can bring a new dawn to the society, and the country. The women folk in this novel are portrayed as strong willed who worked hard for the betterment of their tribe. The present paper proposes to analyze Ngugi's diverse views on the effects of colonization, children's education and role of women in African society through his novel "Weep Not Child".

**Key Words:** Education, Colonization, Women and Mau Mau Rebellion.

### I INTRODUCTION

Ngugi Wa Thiang'o is an eminent writer from East Africa. He has written many novels, plays, short stories, and he mainly concentrated on children's literature and criticism. Through his writings, he has portrayed the supremacy of the British colonist in Kenya. Ngugi was the first East African writer to publish his novel "Weep Not Child" in 1964. He wrote two other critically acclaimed novels "The River Between" and "Devil on the Cross". He was arrested without any enquiry for his first play "Ngaahika Ndeenda" which was performed by farmhands and workers. His Gikuyu novel "Caिताani Muthuraba- ini" (Devil on the Cross) was written during his imprisonment in Kenya (1965). He used the toilet paper to write the novel in the prison. He had a great love for the native African tongue for he thinks that English has ruined the cultures that existed in Africa before colonization.

His novels were critically acclaimed in western nations and in Africa as well.

Ngugi was a student Uganda at Makerere University when he wrote this novel. The novel has two parts, the first part in concerned with the protagonist, Njoroge's education and the second part deals with the Mau Mau uprising and anti-colonial strife in Kenya.

### II EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION

"Weep Not Child" precisely sketches the history of the Kikuyu tribe during the period of Kenyan independence. It speaks about the history of East African nations under colonial rule and the period of decolonization of his country and other African countries. Even today Kenya suffers inequalities in land ownership, inter-tribal conflicts due to history and legacy of colonization.

Ngugi's novel "Weep Not Child" gives a vivid picture of Mau Mau uprising in Kenya and the

sufferings of the natives under the clutches of colonists. Ancestral farmlands of the natives were grabbed, and they had to struggle for their daily bread. Jomo Kenyatta writes:

“When the Europeans comes to the Gikuyu country and robs the people of their land, he taking not only their livelihood, but the material symbol that holds family and tribe together.” (317)

### III EDUCATION

Ngugi in this novel speaks about kikuyu boy Njoroge whose life begins to deteriorate towards the days of Kenyan independence. Njoroge was a shrewd boy who gets an opportunity to go to school and he was successful. He aspired that his education would bring prosperity to his family and his tribe. “When the time for Njoroge to leave [for secondary school] came near”, Ngugi writes “many people contributed money so that he could go. He was no longer the son of Ngotho but the son of the land.” (115)

“[Njoroge] always thought that schooling was very best that a boy could have. It was the end of all living. And he wanted everyone to go to school” (40)

Soon, his life becomes miserable and troublesome when his brothers join hands with Mau Mau rebels. He never liked his father doing menial jobs for a British. The narrator says:

“Njoroge did not like his father working for a white man, or, worse, for an Indian.” (46)

Even, when Njoroge’s family was coiled with threats and insecurity, he desired to continue his studies, because he thought that education alone could help him to reclaim the ancestral tracts and serve his country.

Njoroge’s life becomes more wretched due to his father’s untimely death and brothers joining Mau Mau rebellion compelled him to discontinue his school. He then takes up a job in a shop, where the shopkeeper abuses him and throws him out of the job. Ngugi says:

“colour bar was everywhere. Rich Africans could also practice colour bar on the poorer Africans...” (68)

His dream of studying abroad and coming back to help his family and country was shattered. Njoroge’s last hope to elope with his bosom friend to Uganda was a failure as she refused to go with him.

“Her world and Njoroge’s world stood somewhere outside petty prejudices, hatreds and class differences.” (97) says Ngugi.

After losing all hopes he attempts to commit suicide by hanging himself, but fortunately his two mothers save him from doing so.

Ngugi gives a fair history of Kenya, right from World War II to Mau Mau Rebellion, racial and communal segregation and civil strife. The narrator here introduces the inter-racial conflicts and ethnic unity and says:

“A aa! You could never tell what these people would do. In spite of the fact that they were all white, they killed one another with poison, fire and big bombs that destroy the land.” (5)

The novel picturizes the dawn of liberated Kenya with all its complexities. Throughout the novel we witness Njoroge’s struggle for his education, family and society, but the novel gradually infuses serenity and positivism in spite of the harsh reality.

### IV WOMEN

In Njoroge’s culture, polygamy was common; he had two mothers who always cared for him. Having multiple wives was often scorned by the westerners for it favours bias between men and women. Recognizing diverse cultures and traditions will enable people to be very diligent civilians by allowing them to develop compassion in another perspective.

The novel has a significant part that deals with women folk in Njoroge’s family and in his society. The events and actions that take place in a period where women are looked upon as inferiors, but the novel portray women folk in a very optimistic way. Nyokabi and Njeri, the mothers of

Njoroge are the symbols of traditional women in the society. They are portrayed as strong women because they play a prominent role in improving their clan as men do. Njeri's strong intellect and boldness could be felt when was arrested and Nyokabi takes great effort for her son's education. It is evident from the opening lines of the novel when one of Njoroge's mothers asks him whether he would like to go to school and towards the conclusion the mothers saving him from committing suicide. So Njoroge's mothers were the backbone of his growth throughout the life. After his father's death and imprisonment of his brothers, they were no men folk to help Njoroge in every bit of his adolescence, but his mothers stood by him in everything.

#### V CONCLUSION

"Weep Not Child" has a great impact throughout the world; it does not limit itself within its country, but breaks the barrier that separates the experiences of the children around the globe. The language used in novel is simple and lucid that could be understood by any one. Njoroge's thirst for knowledge and sufferings within his family proves that people around the world share similar pains and pangs. Finally, we accept Njoroge's strong belief that education is the only way that would remove him and his family and country from the constraints tangling it. Jomo Kenyatta puts it rightly as: "Education is the light of Kenya"

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