

REVOLUTIONARY REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NGUGI'S DEVIL ON THE CROSS

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Abstract

In *Devil On the Cross* Ngugi Wa Thiong'o looks to the common masses for the redeeming freedom and creative potential for the Kenyan society. The novel is important in Ngugi's career as far as feminine principle is concerned. It is seen as active agent of self-transformation; with the emphasis on the regenerative power of the womb. Ngugi makes Wariinga's journey into her past and her journey to prove herself as feminine source. It represents an effort towards the liberalization of Kenyans from the claws and shackles of imperialism as they deal with neo-colonialism in all its virulent manifestations.

Keywords: freedom, Women, transformation, imperialism, neo-colonialism.

Devil On the Cross opens with a journey, in taxi from Nairobi to Ilmorog. In the journey the driver and five passengers are chatting and discussing on various social issues. It is relevant to the subject matter of the novel. Every passenger is sharing his experience with others. The passengers observe different invitation cards received for the Devil's Feast in Ilmorog.

The novel glorifies the struggle of the Kenyan masses against the corrupt forces. In the past, the natives were victimized by the imperialists. It is continued by the native rulers in neo-colonial days. The natives have determined to liberate themselves. In the neo-colonial period, Kenyan society is moving with a speed on the way of valueless system. No one is thinking about the new nation. In Kenya, corruption is at the peak in Kenya. Every section, even judiciary is also mired in corruption. In this process poor, peasants and women are exploited on a larger scale by the various authorities. Chivalry is crushed everywhere in Kenya. Every aspect in Kenyan society is repealed because of existing neo-colonial practices. He assures Wariinga the security of her job in his office. Robin Mwaura, a taxi owner cum driver in a protective manner says: "This money that has been brought here by Europeans is wholly evil. When you think it was money that caused the son of Mary to be crucified on the cross, even though he was the first -born of the God of the Jews, what else can you say? Ask for me, I would sell my own mother if I thought she would fetch a good price!" (Thiong'o, 128). It is common man's protest against Europeans in neo-colonial Kenya. During this period the society is losing social values.

Jacinta Wariinga, a principal character in *Devil on the Cross*, is born in the period of Emergency in 1953 in Kenya. This period is dominated by various oppressive laws laid by imperialists. To protest, this inhuman practice the patriots bonded with an oath of unity. All the patriots have accepted the truth that death is anyway a fact of life. They all determine to fight against all tortures, exploitation and oppression from the imperialists. Wariinga's father is also victim of imperialist's oppression. He was arrested in 1954 when Wariinga was two years old. Later, Wariinga was shifted to her aunt in Nakuru. There she was admitted in a school. In 1960, Wariinga's parents were released from detention camp. When they returned to their village they found that their small piece of land had been sold to the home guards. In fact, they became landless and homeless. Wariinga's uncle is a faithful servant of Whites. In her school days Wariinga's uncle has introduced her with his many wealthy friends. Among them one is The Rich Old Man. He offers her lift. He has started giving her pocket money and created a sense of love for himself and hate about education in her mind. He said, "Wariinga, My dear, how can you foolishly tie yourself to your books when sugary delicacies, and ripe, juicy fruits, and many other wonders calculated to stir the heart and to warm the body are to be found everywhere in Kenya" (Ibid. 144). The Rich Old Man is of Wariinga's father's age. He is seducing her and creating a sense of hate about education in her mind. He has forgotten all the relations and wants to destroy her character to satisfy his passion. One could imagine the social conditions in Kenya. Immorality became a common act everywhere in Kenya. Sexual exploitation becomes so simple that the old could seduce and exploit the school girls easily. Wariinga has remained a victim of The Rich Old Man's proposal and hence she began to hate school. The Rich Old Man has provided all pampers of Wariinga. This man played a game of the Hunter and the Hunted with her. In fact, Wariinga becomes pregnant. When she asks about marriage to The Rich Old Man denies. She feels alone in the world. She is feared because of the situation. She has no friend or relative to lighten the load of mind for her. Wariinga struggles alone her fight against fate. She decides to jump in a pool to end her miseries.

Wariinga after giving birth to a girl has joined school for certificate examination. Later, she has joined secretarial course in Nairobi. The Voice is narrating the present and future condition of educational system in Kenya. In past, this system has only introduced the flurry and heritage of their colonial masters in the schools.

In present times, the capitalistic tendencies by providing assistance taught the younger generation the ways of exploitation. It has started from the creation of the world and last until the destruction of the world. This system has never allowed the students to ask questions rising in their mind. It is hidden protest of every Kenyan fed up by the exploitation from various agencies. In capitalistic system entertainment halls, cinema theatres are used only to glorify the sublimity of the exploiters culture. The press prefers to sing a greatness of the capitalists. The churches also preach the greatness of the exploiters religion. The judicial system and bureaucracy are slaves of exploiters. The Voice focused on the contemporary condition of Kenya.

Wariinga is now living in the Maraaro House Ngara area of Nairobi. This Wariinga is different from the previous Wariinga in the novel. This Wariinga is self-reliant and determined that she will never allow herself to be a showy thing: "Wariinga's radical transformation turn her to be a tough person of society. She lives with professionals' self-respect, private humor with those who matter as workers. She rebels against her boss Kihara, the devils' feast, foreigners and finance houses. In being a rebel she affiliates with her class, with the workers, with their pain, and with their oppression" (Dhawan, 214). Wariinga turns herself into strong individual. She is ready for life's struggles in order to discover her real strength. Today's Wariinga is working as an engineer. She is able to change the engine of a car. She wears the dress like male. She keeps a comb, some cream, a hand mirror, a handkerchief and a spanner in her purse for self protection. Today Wariinga strides along with energy and purpose. She is now inner courageous and confident. She has broken the common misunderstanding about women that the only job a woman can do have to cook, to make beds and to spread their legs in the market of love. Wariinga uses her brain, hands according to her. Later, Wariinga learns the martial art to defend her and stands on her own in every way. In one incident, Wariinga has defeated the male mechanical to repair and start the car. The males consider that Wariinga cannot repair the problem in the car. In another incident of car checking, a car owner has to tease Wariinga and deliberately touches her breasts. Wariinga has warned him of his misconduct. When Wariinga bent over her work again, he fondles her buttocks. For this Wariinga has taught an unforgettable lesson to him by using martial art. Wariinga's fame spreads everywhere. Because of her efforts the fruit of each worker's labor is going in their own pocket.

Ngugi in the novel is providing a chronology of victimization of natives. Every character is a victimized. Their action is natural reaction. Wariinga suffers molestation of reality. Ngugi is a critic of historical reality. She becomes voice of oppressed sections. Jacinta Wariinga is most exploited character in *Devil on the cross*. Exploitation chased her from very school days. The Rich Old Man, friend of her uncle who frequently visits her home to exploit Wariinga sexually. He by offering gifts diverted her attention from school and attracted her to himself. He states, "How could you possibly have conceived as soon if I were the only man who went with you? Go away and look for the young man who has got you into trouble, and tell him to marry you or to take you to the forest or somewhere else for an abortion. I thought all along that I was going with a clean schoolgirl, a girl without too many problems, a girl I would have loved to marry, so that she could be balm for my old bones. But instead I picked on Kareendi Ready – to yield, did I?" (Thiong'o, 147). The man responsible for pregnancy of Wariinga is now running away from his responsibility. He blames Wariinga for keeping another boyfriend and considers him responsible for pregnancy. It is the degradation of social values in Kenya. Every speaker in the Devil's Feast belonging to Africa reveals that they are keeping number of wives and mistresses.

Jacinta Wariinga, a female protagonist in *Devil on the cross* fights against racial, gender, class exploitation in contemporary Kenya. Every Kenyan is the victimized by the pangs of capitalism, neo-colonialism and corruption. It is a document about ideas and thoughts of Kenyan masses. It exposes the selfish persons who sold their soul and the nation to the foreign devils of imperialism. Wariinga of all the central characters of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is balanced and more educated. She feels that education is the only option to get rid from it. Education has awakened sense of protest in her. It is a novel which highlights adverse effects of capitalism on Kenya.

The neo-liberalism has influenced every aspect of Kenya. Ngugi appeals the readers to end the imperialism in the form of capitalism: "*Devil on the Cross* presents a literary form which captures the nature of revolution in humanistic context by differentiating the psychological, sociological and un verbalized motives in the working class against the materialistic acquisition - land, property, belief and rituals born with materialistic attitude of the colonizers" (Dhawan, 206). Ngugi in the novel presents a combat between two opposite sections. The first is of peasants, workers and common masses. And second is of capitalist and its followers. The second generates fear, unrest and violence. His sympathy is with victims. To understand the natives he chooses his mother – tongue language Gikuyu instead of English. He presents a picture of how structure of capitalism destroys the workers and peasants class on global level. These capitalistic forces are once again trying to shift the liberated nations on the way of slavery.

In short, *Devil On the Cross* remains Ngugi's most positive statement about the creative potential of the Kenyan common people. Wanja stands for possibilities for the transforming and remaking life in the Kenyan society.

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