



## Depiction of Womanhood in ‘‘A Grain of Wheat’’

Mr. Ningappa

Research Scholar

Department of English VSKU PG Centre Koppal

&

Dr. Chand Basha M

Research Supervisor

Department of English, VSKU PG Centre Koppal

Ngugi wa Thiong’O’s historical fiction *A Grain of Wheat* contains myriad polemical voices of the African women who become the subject of the English colonisation and the continuing legacy of the colonial consciousness in the independent Kenya. The Kenyan women played a significant role in mobilizing the African freedom movement which is often overlooked by the existing scholarship. Women condition was pathetic; they were not only harassed by the white people but also the black men with the colonial consciousness. Women supplied the sufficient strength to the Kenyan freedom national movement especially when the black men were detained by the colonial forces. African women are very strong and brave even though they face the malnutrition in the independent Kenya.

The Kenyan Postcolonial writer depicted the means of resistance chosen by the African women against the colonial rule in Africa in this novel. The historical novel contains many facts such as they built a strong army called Mau Mau to fight for Kenya’s freedom from the colonial forces. The novel presents a strong social cultural reality of Kenya and the patriarchal social order prevalent among black people. Women do not have

any right to choose her husband; she should accept her father's decision. Mumbi, a female character in the novel, wanted to depart from her husband's home and returned to her parent's home, but her parents were not ready to accept her decision and forced her to accept her husband's order. The case of Mumbi becomes a testimonial image of the continuing legacy of male supremacy which stands parallel to the white supremacy over the black people. Women are exposed to the doubled edge sword of imperialism attitude and colonial minds. Women were sexually abused and raped by the black men with imperialist attitude; the white men resisted their participation in national freedom movement. Women character tolerated the phallogocentric oppression in Ngugi's earlier works but in this novel the novel presents a rebellious image of women and they are empowered with their knowledge of equality and gender justice. I would like to explore the darker side of colonization, its hierarchical subjugation of black woman and its imprints on the psychology of black men in the postcolonial era.

Nobel Laureate Abdulzarak Gurnah says: "Ngugi's writing is never far from the subject and this is perfectly applicable for his description of African women. However, being rather objective he also points a picture of the white women though being secondary characters play a certain role in the novel." It shows that how the society looked after women and they were degraded in the society. We learn through this white men have superior position and dominating over women and the black people in Africa.

The Kenyan writer depicts African women as a patriotic people when they are in the darker side of Africa. Inner strength of women could have made Africa free from the clutches of colonial power; otherwise it would take more time if women did not take part in freedom movement and another side he also analyses middle class woman life condition like Mrs. Dickinson works in office but rarely in the office who separated from her husband Thompson, district officer in many parts of Kenya and leading her desired life with her boyfriend and Thing'o' also shows us how the men and women in office talk about her life, it also poses picture of morality of woman being have less social power, she finds ways to exert power and agency within her own life, how she utilizes her sexual allure and position as a white woman to make Karanja's squirm.

We also have seen the character Mumbi, Gikonyo's wife of as a strongest female character in the novel and Ngugi shows us her role in rebuilding Thabi village and her resistance of Karanja's advances for the six years of Gikonyo's detention but failed to maintain Karanja's attempt and became a mother of his child. She also discussed about how the revolution should take against the colonial authority with other women and she tried to fill the spirit of independence among women of her native. Wanjiku, Mumbi's mother says Mumbi, "The women of today surprise me. They cannot take a slap, soft as a feather, or the slightest breath, from a man. In our time, a woman could take a blow and blow from her husband without a thought of running back to her parents", it shows us the patriarchal dominance in the African society. Polygamy practice of marrying more than two wives is also prevalent in the society we have seen Gikonyo's mother Wangari also suffered from patriarchy and she experienced harassment by her husband and he forced her to leave his home and she also took his son side when Gikonyo's beats Mumbi and supported his motive on his wife.

In this work he writes about his own Gikuyu people. We also come across his words. 'I am a writer some even called me a religious writer. I write about my people. I am interested in their hidden lives and hates and how the very tension in their hearts affects their daily contact with other crucial life conditions of women belonged to his Gikuyu people. Gikuyu or Kikuyu is a major ethnic group in Kenya; they identify their land by the surrounding mountain ranges in Central Kenya. Ngugi gave up writing in English because of his interest in his native Gikuyu language.

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