

INDEPENDENCE WITHOUT LIBERATION: NEO-COLONIAL CAPITALISM, CASTE, AND STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY IN NGŨGĨ WA THIONG'O'S *PETALS OF BLOOD* AND ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

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ABSTRACT

Post-colonial societies retain legacies of social, economic, and political domination. This research examines Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1977) and *Petals of Blood* (1997) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, respectively, in order to explore the impacts of neo-colonial capitalism, the caste system, and patriarchy upon social structures and systemic inequality in both post-colonial Kenya and India. This study employs comparative qualitative textual analysis in order to synthesize postcolonial materialism, neo-colonialism, subaltern studies, and intersectionality. The study finds that Roy's portrayal of the destruction of local businesses and the creation of New Ilmorog's roads, banks, and new industries and a new commercial system, creates a new dependence on both local and foreign capital while dispossessing local farmers. Furthermore, in Roy's work, the caste and patriarchal systems stratify the social world, and then in turn, regulate Velutha and Ammu's labor, property, and bodily autonomy, their sexuality and sexual relations, and their legal standing and choice of whom to associate with. Across both works, the systems of social stratification establish access to the highly valued resources of land, labor, dignity, love, agency, voice, and social recognition. While Kenya suffers from neo-colonial capitalism and dispossession, and India suffers from the caste and patriarchal systems, this study reimagines the post-colonial social liberation order by concentrating on the failure of economic liberation and social order of postcolonial societies, rather than the exclusive focus on cultural hybridity.

Keywords: Neo-colonial capitalism, caste, patriarchy, structural inequality, postcolonial materialism, substantive liberation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Independence Versus Liberation

Political independence is separate from social liberation, even if the two are perceived to be the same. Political independence often refers to the removal of colonial governance, the transfer of administrative control, and the establishment of national institutions, representation, and symbols. Social liberation is not that simple. Social liberation may include the redistribution of land and resources, the establishment of labor

and human rights protective frameworks, and the establishment of equitable access to social and economic resources. A society may become politically independent and socially liberated. A society may become politically independent and economically dependent and socially stratified. Postcolonial criticism shows that colonialism does not cease to exist after colonial officials depart. Colonialism may continue to exist through representation, state institutions, and economic dependency, which may be upheld by

Indigenous elites who inherit colonial systems of governance and control (Said, 1978; Fanon, 1963; Nkrumah, 1965). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) maintains that colonialism continues to exist through the cultural and institutional domains. Ahmad (1994) focuses on the persistence of class and the capitalist system during the postcolonial era. Examples that may be drawn from both Kenya and India may show that colonialism continues to exist, even after the formal departure of colonial officials. Colonialism may change colonial systems of governance and control, but colonialism continues to govern and control social and economic transactions. The original thesis may be used to situate postcolonial literature in the domain of societies which have obtained political independence and which continue to experience social, economic, and cultural colonialism.

1.2 Statement of The Problem

Postcolonial criticism typically showcases "third space," hybridity, mimicry, identity negotiation, and linguistic experimentation in order to capture the way cultures reorganize and challenge post-colonial authority (Bhabha, 1994). Though useful, none of these concepts capture the structural violence seen in *Petals of Blood* and *The God of Small Things*. The novels show how post-colonial societies are unable to equilibrate the distribution of land, property, wages, the socially perceived value of a form of labor, dignity, security, and the protection of one's rights. They show dispossession and capitalist exploitation alongside caste and gender discrimination and violence and the brutal enforcement of order as material systems that operate beyond culture. Although previous works on Ngũgĩ and Roy trace aspects of class, neo-colonial critique, caste, gender, trauma, and hybridity, there is little scholarship that addresses the intersectional and structural systems of capitalism, caste, patriarchy, and the marginalization of the subaltern.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o represent neo-colonial capitalism and the deceptive discourse of development through the transformation of Ilmorog?

2. How does Arundhati Roy portray caste hierarchy and patriarchy as continuing structures of domination in postcolonial India?

3. How do class, caste, gender, and economic position determine access to land, labour, dignity, love, and social recognition in the two novels?

4. What similarities and differences between the Kenyan and Indian contexts demonstrate the failure of political independence to produce genuine social liberation?

1.4 Research Gap

Neo-colonial capitalism, class conflict, political betrayal, and spurious development have dominated scholarship on *Petals of Blood*. Caste, patriarchy, and trauma have dominated scholarship on *The God of Small Things*. Love (and forbidden love). Comparatively very little research has examined how the two novels expose the constituent parts of class, caste, gender, and economic status. The analysis seeks to demonstrate how each of these elements operates to build the material and social systems of inequality as they are found in the two postcolonial contexts. The elements of displacement, capitalist development, ecological disruption, caste, patriarchy, and subaltern resistance will be drawn into a single analytical framework, demonstrating that psychological conflict, paired with the elements of exploitation and institutional violence, will be inseparable from the analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section surveys existing studies on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. It identifies important discussions on the issues of colonialism and post-colonialism, social injustice and inequality, and class and caste oppression, gender and political injustices presented in both novels. It also examines the critical analysis and research approaches of previous studies and identifies the existing research gaps. This review provides a theoretical framework and an academic basis for presenting how both authors of the texts illustrate the oppression of the marginalized and the exclusion of the unjust social order.

Bose (1998) interprets the presence of erotic desire in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* not as a private or apolitical expression, but as an act of political defiance. Considering Ammu and Velutha and Rahel and Estha's encounters, Bose argues that all of the above break the caste-, class-, gender-, and sexuality-based "Love Laws" of the social order. Inspired by Deleuze, this study uses the death drive distinction to describe desire as a positive force within social order systems. The study also disputes the readings that deny Ammu's right to her female sexuality and privilege Velutha's communist politics. According to Bose, Roy's desire for the transgressive and the taboo recasts private moral choices in a public political context, for the characters of Roy's fiction break the social order to expose its constraints, and in doing so, defy and contest the tyranny of social oppression that threatens them with punishment and death.

Fox (2002) considers abjection, trauma, and literary testimony while analyzing *The God of Small Things*. He follows Kristeva, Caruth, and Felman. He states that Roy's use of disjointed narration, repetitive images, and traumas illustrate the memory of the event and compel readers to witness the pain. Velutha embodies the socially abject Untouchable and the physically occupied site of the intersection of caste and state violence. The author bridges individual traumas and the aforementioned personal and structural violence of colonialism, patriarchy, the police, communism, gender, and caste. He argues that the abjection of the characters becomes a fictional testimony of the traumas of the violent divisions of the purity-pollution binary of the novel, and conveys the potential of collective awareness of and reconciliation with the past.

In Krishnamurthy's study (2011), cognitive stylistics is the chosen methodology for examining the components of narrative consciousness and the "petit récit" in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Rahel's childhood and adulthood dualism is said to produce competing text worlds, which together build a theory that relies on schema theory, Text World Theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. As a result, the author's expectations of the narrative are disrupted. The presence of childhood trauma is made instantly available through the many fragmented narratives and details that

constantly alter the schema. The theory is said to be incomplete, and is analyzed in light of the fear and silence and loss and the "Big" vs. "Small" dichotomy. Domesticated and aspirant consciousnesses of Rahel, along with the protagonist Velutha, are said to reflect love and resistance to dominating systems, and in this, critique the caste and class systems and the systems of patriarchy and institutionalism.

Kunhi and Kunhi (2017) provide an ecofeminist analysis of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, claiming that the novel demonstrates how the exploitation of women is parallel to the exploitation of the environment. The authors analyze the Meenachal River as an Ammu metaphor, focusing on their parallel characteristics of life, fertility, and degradation and of being trapped. Due to muted group theory, backchannel communication, and metaphor and metonymy, Roy provides women, animals, and plants and other marginalized beings the symbolic voice. The authors study the imagery of nature and its metaphorical implications of resistance to the hierarchies of patriarchy, caste, colonialism, and development. The authors conclude that Roy's efforts to deconstruct the culture-nature dualism make ecology the language of life and of resistance, and the connection of environment, Ammu, and Velutha demonstrates this.

Addei, Osei, and Annin (2013) analyze Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Matigari* and *Petals of Blood* to show the decline of politics, morals, and economics in post-colonial Kenya. The study shows how post-colonial rule replaced European masters with a local elite class. Ngũgĩ shows the betrayal of national aspirations and exposes police and sexual violence, land dispossession, and the resultant poverty through peasants, workers, women, and children. The authors show how Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o uses satire, flashbacks, dialogue, and other forms of literary devices to show the linkage of history and oppression. In both novels, the authors show Ngũgĩ creates an urge in the oppressed people of Africa to resist all forms of oppression in the struggle for liberation and equality.

Liang (2023) employs Jeffrey C. Alexander's cultural trauma theory to analyze Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*. Through this lens, Liang focuses on how the colonial and neocolonial phases of suffering become one

through the process of collective memory. The essay further posits that the shift of Ilmorog from an undisturbed rural settlement to a capitalist city represents the post-independence continued exploitation of Kenya. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o relates the individual psychological trauma of Munira, Wanja, Karega, and Abdullah to the collective psychological trauma of the Kenyan community. Liang argues that, through the restoration of silenced historical narratives and the exposing of both class oppression and the dispossession of land, the novel maintains a revolutionary spirit. Therefore, through the cultural trauma of the oppressed, literature becomes a channel of resistance to the pervasive struggles of social injustice and neocolonialism.

Haruna (2026) presents a feminist lens on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*. It argues that the exposure of neo-colonial capitalism cannot be separated from the critique of patriarchy. Through Wanja, Nyakinyua, Mariamu, and other marginalized women, the study describes women's bodies and the cultural and economic sexual exploitation and dispossession and create resistant economies. Wanja is seen as having constrained agency, while the commodification of her body represents the 'failure of the economy'. Nyakinyua is seen as representing capitalist threaten women and children. Haruna's conclusion is that gender domination, class domination, and colonial domination are interwoven. Therefore, the dismantling of patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism are all postcolonial requirements.

Haq (2025) analyzes women's representation in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* using a third-wave feminist approach. It claims that women's status in the social, educational, and economic and political spheres improved virtually not at all after political independence in the postcolonial Nigeria and Kenya studied. It identifies in the characters of Edna, Elsie, Eunice, Wanja, Nyakinyua, Mukami and Mariamu the objectification, sexual exploitation, discrimination in the choice of husband, unequal opportunities in education, wage inequality, and restricted political participation. The agency and resilience of women through their labor and resistance is also acknowledged. It is concluded that the freedom of women was

constrained by the persistence of patriarchal systems in the wake of the modernization and independence of the nations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative methodology based on interpretive and comparative literary text analysis. This methodology is suitable as it looks into the construction of power, inequality, hegemony, marginalization, and resistance in the postcolonial society by literary narratives. This research examines, through literary close reading, characters, settings, institutions, conflicts, images, and major narrative events concerning land, labor, class and caste, patriarchy, women's marginalization, violence, and the struggle for social recognition. Among other things, this includes the changes that take place in Ilmorog, the dispossession of the peasantry, the victimization of Velutha, the exclusion of Ammu, and the "Love Laws." The methodology is comparative in that it looks into the Kenyan and Indian situations distinctly and in conjunction. The framework of the literary analysis is class and economic inequality in *Petals of Blood* and the framework of caste, patriarchy, and systemic inequality in *The God of Small Things*.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The study applies an integrated theory of Postcolonial Materialism and neo-colonialism, along with the subaltern, caste, and intersectional critiques. Here, hybridity is utilized as an ancillary contrastive term rather than the primary analytic framework.

3.3.1 Postcolonial Materialism and Neo-Colonial Theory

The primary theoretical framework will be drawn from the works of Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Aijaz Ahmad, Benita Parry, Arif Dirlik, Neil Lazarus, and Arturo Escobar. These theorists will help articulate the complexities of post-colonial political economy and assist the analysis of formal independence, capitalist development, native elites, foreign economic domination, class oppression, and material dispossession.

Fanon's interpretation of the national bourgeoisie assists in the interpretation of native elites, who assume colonial positions and modify

none of the racist structures (Fanon, 1963). According to Nkrumah's (1965) notion of neo-colonialism, formally independent states can still suffer from economic and political domination in an indirect manner. These ideas assist in the interpretation of Ngũgĩ's notion of Kenyan independence as a "change of batons," where the political and business elites continue to dominate and exploit the peasants and the workers.

Ahmad (1994), Parry (2004), Dirlik (1994), and Lazarus (2011) complement the materialist perspective of the study and critique positions that emphasize culture and identity and that neglect capitalism, underdevelopment, class struggle, and disparity in the distribution of resources. The critique of development by Escobar will be employed here to analyze the process of modernization, which could justify external intervention and produce progressive asymmetries and lags in the economy (Escobar, 2011).

3.3.2 Subaltern Studies

Subaltern studies allow the examination of characters through the prisms of class and ignored or invalidated voices. One of Spivak's illustrations of subalternity shows how the marginalized can speak, but never gets a hearing, because the dominant order does not recognize their subordination and, therefore, their right to speak and their humanity (Spivak, 1988). Guha and Spivak (1988) also help analyze the position of the peasant, the worker, the woman, the lower-caste person, and, in fact, any other subordinated group who has no access to the dominant political and historical scene. The approach applies to Abdulla, Karega, Wanja, Ammu, and Velutha.

3.3.3 Caste Criticism

Ambedkar's criticism of caste is important for understanding Velutha's position socially and economically. Ambedkar does not treat caste merely as a cultural description. He discusses the material construction of caste in terms of employment, wages, physical contact, mobility, dignity, and even the relationships one can have (Ambedkar, 1945). Hence, if we take this view, Velutha's caste position will always determine how society values his skills, education, and

political awareness, and consequently, he will continue to suffer discrimination.

3.3.4 Intersectionality and Postcolonial Feminism

The analysis draws from Crenshaw on intersectionality and Mohanty on postcolonial feminism to illustrate the relationship between multiple interlocking systems of subordination. The combined effects of gender, marital status, class, patriarchy, family, and caste dominate the bonds of Ammu's social position. It would therefore be inadequate to define the problem primarily as gender discrimination. It must be seen as the domination of the interplay of the social, economic, familial, and caste structures (Crenshaw, 2013; Mohanty, 2023).

3.3.5 Bhabha's Hybridity

Bhabha's notion of hybridity is employed restrictively and comparatively. It aids in the understanding of cultural mixing, linguistic creativity, ambivalence, mimicry and the balancing of identities (Bhabha, 1994). Nevertheless, it cannot be applied as the dominant theory due to its inability to explain landlessness, wage gaps, exclusion from property ownership, violence and discrimination of the caste system, policing and capitalist dispossession. Therefore, the study adjusts Bhabha's cultural theory through a materially informed methodology. As asserted in the dissertation, a fused methodology of materialist, subaltern, decolonial, and intersectional theorising offers an understanding of structural power that is more comprehensive than hybridity.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Ilmorog and The Deceptive Discourse of Development

4.1.1 Old Ilmorog: Neglect before Development

Old Ilmorog is a community abandoned by the government and ravaged by drought. Schools and roads fall into disrepair, and the community must rely on erratic rainfall. Conditions deteriorate to the point where Karega states, "the drought might swallow us all" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 141), and suggests sending a delegation to Nairobi, assuming Ilmorog's elected official would advocate for them, even in

the furthest reaches of his constituency. The need for the journey highlights the disparity between formal and material citizenship. The villagers have an MP and the right to vote, but live without aid from the government and without food and water. Nyakinyua makes the political failure more explicit. Nderi wa Riera has not come back and has not sent the villagers "Harambee water." (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 144) Ilmorog decides to come and tackle the city that "only takes but never gives back." Their arduous and dry journey to Nairobi illustrates the need of the rural poor to travel to the center of authority to show their plight and their need. Upon arrival, they are met with an unresponsive MP, an overabundance of police and traffic, and a stark contrast between urban wealth and rural poverty (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, pp. 187-188).

4.1.2 The Transformation into New Ilmorog

While the Trans-Africa Road links Ilmorog to the continent and the nation, the construction relies on foreign aid and expertise. Ngũgĩ has noted that rather than connecting every corner of the nation, the road makes every corner accessible for "international capitalist robbery and exploitation" (2005, p. 300). The road does not make every corner of the nation accessible for the sake of accessibility, but rather for the sake of organizing space for foreign capital and commercial exploitation.

Ngũgĩ illustrates how Ilmorog comes to be characterized by urbanization, modernity, and commercialization, yet at the same time, the road divides the ridge and the construction sites obliterate the already existing spatial and social order. The façade of modernity and the New Ilmorog conceal the processes of reorganization of ownership and control over land and labor, and the new economic order (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, pp. 222, 302, 311). The African Economic Bank transforms control over land into titles, fences, loans, and bank credits demanded on a regular basis. The almost jubilant claim that "development did come to Ilmorog" is immediately followed by the arrival of bank credit and the division of new plots from old agricultural fields (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 306). Development therefore entailed the transformation of communal land into private

proprietary, financial, and social relations characterized by dependency and indebtedness.

4.1.3 Development as Dispossession

The negative impacts of development unveil the greater economic injustices at play. Demarcation of land and the advent of barbed wire deny farmers and pastoralists of their rightful land and forces them to sell their labor for a wage. Wambui, formerly an agrarian, is depicted at the stone quarry after being lured into Ilmorog's new "market for sweat and labour" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 311).

Development schemes displace pastoralists, push farmers to the more arid lands, destroy small scale production and compel former farmers to become factory workers, precarious traders, prostitutes or live in shanties which they do not own (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 343). The Trans-Africa Road and the African Economic Bank are monuments of the dispossession and proletarianization of the formerly self-sustaining people of Africa. New Ilmorog is divided along the lines of "Cape Town" where government officials, farm managers, and bank staff reside, and "New Jerusalem" where migrant laborers, the unemployed, prostitutes, and small traders reside (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, pp. 319-320). Even the houses built for workers and kiosks become a source of speculation and rent by the councilors and landlords. Development schemes thus paradoxically promote urban growth at the expense of social equity.

4.1.4 The Alliance of Political and Economic Elites

Nderi and Associates form a comprador class connecting state power, local businesses, banks, and foreign businesses. Nderi sees KCO as a way of enhancing the interests of "wealthy locals and their foreign partners" and plans to utilize Ilmorog's public resources, bank loans, tourism, and holding companies to monopolize control over Ilmorog's economy (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 219). This setup corresponds to Fanon's national bourgeoisie and Nkrumah's neo-colonial elite: formally African rulers control a colonial economy and externally directed trade with no distribution of power and resources (Fanon, 1963; Nkrumah, 1965). The Theng'eta factory completes this setup. Though

it is owned by an Anglo-American combine, it is made to run by Africans, Mzigo, Chui, and Kimeria. Because of the African presence, foreign ownership is disguised, and instead of foreign exploitation, it is seen as progress for Africans (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 320).

4.1.5 Wanja, Abdulla, and the Destruction of Small Enterprise

Wanja and Abdulla first adapt Theng'eta around local knowledge and community demand to make it a successful local enterprise, but the County Council takes away their brewing license and hands it to stronger rivals. Wanja complains they have taken away "our right to brew" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 318). This logic of capitalism invading the body and the most intimate parts of life can be seen in Wanja's later commercialization of sexuality: "This is New Kenya. You want it, you pay for it" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 318). Abdulla's situation is just as bad. The former freedom fighter waits for land reforms and jobs. Instead, he realizes he cannot get credit without land, and later finds himself left with large scale competitions to sell oranges and sheepskin while he drinks to drown his misery (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, pp. 293-294, 354). Ngũgĩ does not oppose banking, roads, and industry or what is termed 'development.' He opposes development that is without dignity, local control, redistribution, ecological concern, and democratic participation.

4.2 Caste and Patriarchy as Continuing Structures of Domination

Roy reflects on postcolonial India's society to suggest that formal independence has failed to eradicate caste and patriarchal systems. These systems function within the world of work, property, respectability of the family, sexuality, religion, politics, and the police.

4.2.1 Caste as A System of Material Classification

In *The God of Small Things*, caste surpasses the concept of a cultural identity. Rather, caste determines where people can walk, work, pray, talk, or make love. The novel refers to the Crawling Backwards Days (which would later be referred to as the Walking Backwards Days). During this time, Paravans would crawl along

the ground, broom in hand, to erase their footprints so that Brahmins and Syrian Christians would not be "defiled" (they were as a rule not allowed to use public roadways, were not allowed to cover their upper bodies, were not allowed to carry umbrellas, and were not allowed to talk unless covering their mouths) (Roy, 1997, p. 65). Religious conversion has not granted them freedom. Converted to Christianity, Paravans are placed in separate churches and services with their own clergy and a "Pariah Bishop." Post-Independence, they were denied both caste equality and government privilege as they were categorized as casteless Christians. Roy describes this paradox as the situation of being "not allowed to leave footprints at all" (Roy, 1997, p. 65). Caste thus regulates bodily contact, religious participation, mobility, employment, political recognition, and legal validity.

4.2.2 Velutha as Skilled but Structurally Devalued Labour

Velutha illustrates the relationship between social exclusion and economic utility. Velutha becomes a master carpenter and mechanic, even though "he wasn't supposed to be a carpenter" (Roy, 1997, pp. 65-66). Velutha repairs and constructs furniture and plumbing equipment. Velutha even builds and repairs tools and machines used in the factory. He builds and services the factory's machines used for canning and other pieces of equipment used for sealing containers. Mammachi denies Velutha a carpenter's wage and only lets him into her home to do repairs. Velutha's job, pay, and freedom of movement are all determined by his caste rather than his skills (Roy, 1997, p. 68). Velutha is also the only factory worker who is a card-carrying member of the Communist Party. Touchable factory workers also hold "ancient" (Roy, 1997, p. 104) grievances against Velutha. Even though he is required to do the work, he is socially unacceptable.

4.2.3 Patriarchy in the Ayemenem Household

Patriarchal structures are apparent in Pappachi's treatment of Mammachi. He belittles her success and her potential as a musician and therefore, stifles Mammachi's growing independence by limiting her development both personally and

professionally. He stops her lessons after her teacher encourages her to pursue a career as a concert musician and responds adversely to her independence (Roy, 1997, pp. 44-46). These examples show how female members of the family are bound creatively, personally, and professionally as a result of Mammachi's patriarchal influences. Chacko expresses his own brand of male privilege by taking control of the family business. Although Chacko's mother, Mammachi, starts the business with her pickle-making enterprise and Ammu contributes significant work, Chacko assumes power, and refers to Mammachi as the "Sleeping Partner," before determining that the business is "my Factory, my pineapples, my pickles" (Roy, 1997, p. 62). Ammu's and Mammachi's reputations dictate the choices that Ammu makes, however, Chacko's business-related relationships with women are "Man's Needs" (Roy, 2008, pp. 140-141) and are seen as acceptable. Patriarchy defines family life, economy, and social life in differing ways for men and women.

4.2.4 Ammu's Property and Social Exclusion

Ammu, as both an ex-wife and mother, has the least amount of social respect in her community. Baby Kochamma argues that divorced women have "no position anywhere at all" (Roy, 1997, p. 42). As Ammu is employed at Paradise Pickles, Baby Kochamma's idea of economic exclusion rings true since Ammu has no legal claim over the property. Chacko's statement—"What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine"—summarizes her economic exclusion (Roy, 2008, p. 62). Ammu is expected to follow the "morality of motherhood and divorcehood," which also expects women to remain sexually silent and dependent (Roy, 1997, p. 41). Chacko's command, "Get out of my house," confirms her living arrangements and economic standing is at the mercy of men (Roy, 1997, p. 189).

4.2.5 The "Love Laws" and Institutional Violence

The relationship between Ammu and Velutha combines the elements of a Touchable woman and a Paravan man and defies existing caste and gender constructs while also illustrating Ammu's ownership over her life. While their relationship momentarily defies the social constructs of their

society, the 'Love Laws' serve to reestablish the boundaries of the social order and dictate 'who should be loved, and how, and how much' (Roy, 1997, p. 149).

Baby Kochamma protects social values and norms by repressively construing their consensual relationship to be a crime. Inspector Thomas Mathew entertains the 'construction' of Baby Kochamma, while Comrade Pillai withdraws all political patronage to Velutha (Roy, 1997, pp. 216-218). As a result, Velutha becomes the victim of a brutal police beating, and later, he is left in a critical state (Roy, 1997, p. 255). Ammu's attempt to set the record straight is equally unconstructive, since the Inspector uses Ammu's social status to defend the position that he is not obliged to entertain her statement. She is subjected to intimidating and disrespectful behavior (Roy, 1997, p. 12). Her statement is not untrue, but Ammu is socially and morally bracketed as untrustworthy by prevailing patriarchal standards.

4.3 Access to Land, Labour, Dignity, Love, And Recognition

Both novels illustrate that social inequality manifests due to the disparity of both tangible and social resources. For example, disparity of access to land and property, employment, the safeguarding of one's body, one's freedom to be intimate, and one's reputation in the public domain, occurs due to differences in class, caste, gender, and economic status.

4.3.1 Land and Property

In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*, land is the basis of subsistence, shared history, and social existence. The capitalist remodeling of Ilmorog by converts land from a shared system of subsistence to individualized private property through banking, titling, loans, and investment. With this remodeling, peasants are uprooted, pastoralists are shoved to the inner dry confines of the country, and former subsistence farmers turn into wage laborers, petty trade and shanty dwelling, which are of course not theirs. The Trans-Africa Road enhances Ilmorog's trade potential. However, the potential is of now rich banks, business persons, government officials, and cronies of the government rather than the original inhabitants of Ilmorog (Thiong'o, 1977, p. 343). The degradation of Abdulla illustrates

the divisive nature of the property regimes that were instituted after independence. Even with his contribution to the anti-colonial movement, Abdulla learns that land and credit are for the moneyed and landed class. Abdulla is forced to sell his last property and trade from a roadside after his shop is demolished (Thiong'o, 1977, pp. 293-294, 338).

The God of Small Things organizes spatial and property inequity along the lines of gender and caste. Ammu is a daughter and therefore has no legal standing in Paradise Pickles. Chacko claims masculine ownership of family labor by stating, "my Factory, my pineapples, my pickles" (Roy, 1997, p. 62). Velutha may enter the factory, but his labor, like Ammu's, has no value or recognition. Ayemenem House, like the factory, provides shelter to Ammu and the twins while reminding them that they may stay only at the House's discretion. Although property takes on different forms in the two novels, in each case, ownership equates to control, assurance, and dominance in the social hierarchy.

4.3.2 Labour and Economic Position

In Ngũgĩ's works, labor creates wealth for the nation, but it is also the basis for the greatest exploitation. Karega notes that the agricultural laborer is paid a mere "one hundred shillings a month" for work that is done by the whole family. Men, women, and children are locked up in the plantation huts and made to labor to produce sisal, tea, coffee, and sugar, without receiving their due (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, pp. 328-329). As his labor consciousness rises, he rejects businessman-controlled unions, and demands "unity in labor" as the only viable answer to the challenge of capitalism. Politically backed companies take over the markets and products of local businesses, and so Wanja and Abdulla's Theng'eta business also faces the same fate.

In Roy's work, labor is caste based. Paradise Pickles' Velutha, the most skilled worker, is paid less than a Touchable carpenter by Mammachi. Velutha's occupation is dependent on his acceptance of the caste-based discrimination (Roy, 1997, p. 68). Chacko, a Touchable, a self-proclaimed Marxist, and factory owner, exploits the female factory workers' poverty by using them for his sexual pleasure. He has no comradeship, factory ownership and monopoly

of the pickle business. Caste structure also frustrates Velutha's attempts at solidifying labor unity by the extension of the factories and markets and while they are all economically oppressed, the Touchable factory workers also resent Velutha.

4.3.3 Dignity and Bodily Integrity

Both authors show how fragmented equality determines whose dignity is recognized. Abdulla highlights the inadequate reward and recognition of independence contributors over time. Abdulla illustrates the freedom fighter who after independence is transformed from a small businessman to a socially marginalized trader. Abdulla's declining status reveals that the postcolonial nation is more inclined to reward the privilege of the economically and politically powerful over that of the physically sacrificed. As for Wanja, her choice of economically independent (self-generated) over dependent (exploited) is complicated by the prevailing conditions of an exploitative economy. Wanja's expression "No free things in Kenya" reflexively internalizes the capitalist orientation of the economy, whereby she utilizes a seemingly intimate relationship as a survival mechanism (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1977, p. 318). Velutha, like Abdulla and Wanja, is not recognized as a skilled worker and a citizen, but is treated by society through the prism of his caste identity. Velutha is subjected to extreme and unwarranted mistreatment by the police, proving that the dominant institution of law and order can also be an agency of caste injustice rather than of justice (Roy, 1997, p. 255). Ammu is also subjected to indignities when Inspector Thomas Mathew dismisses her testimony and in turn, behaves in an inappropriate manner toward Ammu. It is evident that inequality extends beyond the economic sphere to encompass the recognition of suffering and dignity by society.

4.3.4 Love and Intimate Freedom

Ammu and Velutha's relationship has a uniquely liberating effect on the traditional caste system. As it legitimizes the desirability of an Untouchable as an equal human being, it also subverts the requirements of patriarchy. Feminism is inherently part of Ammu's relationship because of her exercise of choice over her sexuality and emotions outside of

marriage and the control of men. Velutha and Ammu's relationship also breaks the Love Laws, which defines "who should be loved. And how. And how much" (Roy, 1997, p. 149). Chacko's relationship with women as subordinates is 'justified' by 'Man's Needs.' Ammu's desire is then labeled as 'moral pollution' and 'criminality' (Roy, 1997, pp. 142-143). The same can be said of *Petals of Blood* and the character of Wanjia; her emotional and sexual being is then controlled and dominated by the same patriarchal and capitalistic structures of poverty and violence, as is Kimeria, with the addition of the patriarchal and capitalistic structures of commoditization. In both of the cited novels, the privatization of love and the structures of caste, class, patriarchy, and capitalistic violence dictate the extent of dignity a person has to be loved.

4.3.5 Voice and Social Recognition

To politicians in Kenya, villagers are primarily voters, donation givers, or legitimate supporters of their activities. Among them, Nderi wa Riera ignores the water situation in Ilmorog and further position himself by taking advantage of self-funded public donations and public offices. Freedom fighters like Abdulla are ignored, but Collaborators and businessmen are appreciated. Workers can only be appreciated by Karega when he unifies the individual, isolated workers and organizes them into a political movement. In India, Velutha is primarily recognized as a Paravan, rather than as a worker, lover or political being. Ammu tries to correct the accusation, but her caste and gender privilege deny her attempt at self-defense. Estha is sadly putting himself in a position to be emotionally manipulated into confirming the police version of events, "Estha's mouth said Yes," after which "Silence slid in like a bolt" (Roy, 1997, pp. 263-264). While Roy illustrates that subaltern subjects may speak, the governing laws of the land provide no personal freedom but legally enforceable statements.

4.4 Kenya and India: Different Structures, Shared Failure of Liberation

4.4.1 Major Similarities

4.4.1.1 Continuation of Domination after Independence

Kenyan and Indian sociocultural contexts demonstrate in *Petals of Blood* and *The God of*

Small Things that political independence does not ensure social liberation. Kenya exemplifies colonial economic relations, described as a "change of batons," in which African politicians, businessmen, and managers become the new rulers of Kenya while colonial systems of ownership and exploitation remain intact. The thesis contends that Nderi wa Riera, Chui, Kimeria, and Mzigo embody the new "black masters" of Kenya, and while they maintain colonial systems of inequality, they frame their rule as national development.

In the context of India, colonial modernity occupies the same space with caste and patriarchy systems. Independence does not abolish social and economic inequalities including untouchability and gender inequalities. Roy illustrates the situation of converted Paravans of Christianity, who remain socially segregated through the existence of separate churches and services, and deny of the state benefits as they are classified as casteless Christians, through her phrase "not allowed to leave footprints at all" (Roy, 1997, p. 65). Similarly, both of the analyzed novels present relations of domination as reorganized rather than abolished.

4.4.1.2 Elite Control and Unequal Distribution

Kenyan elites manipulate the intersecting dimensions of development, land, credit, trade, and political representation. The change occurring in Ilmorog elevates the land's value, yet benefits neither the small trader nor the peasant. They are rendered landless, becoming workers and sellers along roads and slum dwellers, whilst profit and land are accumulated by banks and business affiliates of the political elite. It is thus the argument of the thesis that development processes leave the subaltern "penniless and landless" and serve the elite minority.

Within Roy's narrative of India, similar powers are practically indistinguishable in the family, factory, community, and state, among the upper-caste, male, and property-holding groups. Ammu is employed at Paradise Pickles. However, Chacko, with Ammu's paternal lineage in mind, says "my Factory, my pineapples, my pickles." (Roy, 1997, p. 62). Velutha's expertise does not translate to earning,

ownership, space, or respect. In both of the societies then, worth of labor, political voice, bodily security, and social recognition are dispensed in accordance with rank.

4.4.1.3 Institutional Enforcement and Criminalization of Resistance

Inequality in both novels is enforced through interlinked systems. In Kenya, banks, roads, businesses, parliament, local councils, and political appointees transform development into dispossession. Karega argues that plantation workers are virtually enslaved and explains that union control is often in the hands of capitalists, as it is impossible to serve both labour and capital at the same time. As a result, his demand for “unity in labour” destabilizes the economic order and invites a series of dismissals (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, 1977, pp. 328-329).

In India, subjugation is consolidated through domestic authority, ownership of factories, caste, church, politics and police. Velutha’s political engagement offers him no protection, as Comrade Pillai does not consider him to be a party member and orders the police that “he was on his own” (Roy, 1997, p. 218). The subjugation of Velutha’s labour and the crossing of caste boundaries in love in Kenya and India, respectively, are both criminalized because they disrupt the prevailing order of power.

4.4.1.4 Failure of National Promises

Although many countries in Africa and Asia have formally gained independence, poverty, class exploitation, caste systems, gender inequality and social violence still prevail. Foreign companies, along with local African managers in Kenya, have been able to exploit ‘the workers who built Kenya’ by paying them only poverty wages and offering them insecure jobs (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, 1977, pp. 328-329). In India, caste systems and the violence inflicted on the oppressed remain intact when the state ignores Ammu’s testimony and does not prevent the mutilation of Velutha’s dead body. Political sovereignty exists alongside the absence of equal citizenship.

4.4.2 Major Differences

While there are similarities, the two cases cannot be treated as identical. In *Petals of Blood*, the main form of domination is neo-colonial capitalism and class domination. The main

constituents of the struggle are land, the means of production, wages, and the banking and business sectors. The dominant classes are politicians, bankers, foreign companies, and local business elites. The dominant classes impose collective loss of land on the peasantry, cause the disintegration of local businesses, and make the workers functionally dependent on wage labor.

In *The God of Small Things*, caste, patriarchy, and class work in conjunction. The main resources are the possession and control of one’s labor, status, property, and bodily and intimate legal freedoms. The Ayemenem family, caste, factory, and the hierarchical structures of the Church and the police, combined with elements of the Communist left, constitute the oppression system. The most direct and severe effects are of a personal and family nature, manifested in the death of Velutha, the exile of Ammu, the silencing of Estha, and the traumatic imprint on the twins.

The forms of resistance are also different. For Ngũgĩ, the dominant forms of resistance are the organization of labor, education, struggle, and the awakening of class consciousness. Karega, in particular, seeks to transform personal disillusionment into the organization of labor. In contrast, Roy focuses on personal acts of defiance and transgressive intimate acts. The oppression of Ammu and Velutha through their cross-caste and -gender loving relations leads to death, exile, silencing, and the imposition of fragmentation. The thesis, in general, seeks to differentiate Ngũgĩ’s disruption of a collective and economic order from Roy’s disruption of a caste order through intimate and personal acts of trauma.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has shown how innovation in *Petals of Blood* and *The God of Small Things* describes both Kenya and India’s struggles in finding true freedom even after both countries post-colonial independence. Although both countries gained formal independence, citizens are still shackled by many neo-colonial systems such as political, social, economic, family, and institutional systems. Ngũgĩ describes these systems as neo-colonial systems, which he believes are colonial systems as a result of the partnership of native elites and foreign businesses, while Roy

describes the colonial system as caste and patriarchy that governs the control of the labor, property, and even control and protection of the body and social integrity. In both texts, political independence is meaningless as long as there is no social and structural independence.

To address the first research question, Ngũgĩ illustrates the transformation of Ilmorog as a deceptive development process. Physical growth and development of infrastructure such as roads, banks, and factories in the New Ilmorog constructs an illusion of economic prosperity with increasing economic control. As small businesses are run out, the local residents and former land-owning peasants become dependent on wage labor and loans. Contrary to the purpose and ideology of the development, the monopoly of development and modernization of Ilmorog favors the political elite and the foreign businessmen. As such, neo-colonial economic dependence is deepened.

In answering the second research question, Roy shows how caste and patriarchy operate across several systems of domination such as the domestic, economic, religious, political and legal systems. Velutha's talent and ability are of no use against unequal pay, restricted mobility, social death, and police brutality. Ammu is denied safe and secure property rights, and is treated as an undesirable divorced daughter; whereas Chacko is encouraged to fulfill his 'manly' need to have sexual encounters. To preserve their caste respectability the family ends up making false criminal reports and the police do not acknowledge Ammu's account. Therefore, caste and gender determine whose work, desires, speech and even humanity are acknowledged and appreciated by society.

Answering research question three, inequality cannot be understood in simplistic, one-dimensional terms such as income inequality. Access to numerous rights and resources such as land, employment, safe and decent housing, and the right to bodily integrity and personal agency are all governed by one's position in the economic, social, and gender class hierarchies. These positionings also determine one's dignity and worth. Abdulla's case shows how the State's economic exclusion transforms social status from a freedom fighter to a marginalized roadside trader. The death of Velutha tells us that in India, the caste system determines the

worth of human life. Ammu and Estha show that marginalized people can be given a voice, but that systems are under no obligation to accept their voice as one of truth. Structural inequality determines, in addition to one's right to survive, one's right to be recognized and respected as a human being.

Answering research question four, the analysis indicates that Kenya and India cannot be treated as historically the same. In *Petals of Blood*, neo-colonial capitalism is the dominant mode of oppression, characterized by the dispossession of land, exploitative relations of labor, political and banking monopolies, and foreign economic domination. Therefore, Ngũgĩ speaks to the collective dispossession of the people and the potential for resistance through labor organization. *The God of Small Things* outlines an interlocking system of caste and patriarchal oppression that relies on control of property, family, labour, politics, religion, and law enforcement. It focuses on controls of a more personal and intimate nature. There is, of course, a kind of resistance in the cross-caste romance, but the outcome is essentially death, exile, trauma, and silence. Economic and social domination by privileged classes of people means that real liberation is impossible, even with the attainment of political independence; this is true of the two novels. This thesis verifies the same in that she shows historically the Kenyan and Indian contexts are dissimilar, but still have the same structures that protect the dominant class and exploit the working class, peasants, women, the lower castes, and the oppressed.

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