

Utilization of Proverbial Wisdom in Enhancing Harmony in Sports: A Case of Devil on the Cross

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ABSTRACT:

Proverbs are the sayings of the wise that affect the society in many various ways. In scholarship, proverbs constitute a significant field of study not only in the discipline of Literature but in other areas as well. This is possible due to the flexibility, contextuality and the multiplicity of their meanings. In African cultural settings, and particularly in Kenya and more specifically among Agĩkũyũ community, proverbs function as the infallible avenues for ferrying messages successfully to their assigned targets. Further, as proverbs enjoy the tenure of flexibility and contextuality they are able to bend to the discretion of the user rendering unequalled service to the community. This paper seeks to explore and investigate the utilization of proverbial wisdom in the sports arena. Sports is one of the developing sectors and constitute a significant portion of social harmony in the community, the nation as well as in international relations. The proverbs are drawn from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*. This postcolonial novel has an imaginary geographical setting: Ilmorog. The study takes a qualitative research design based on the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretation is informed by poststructuralist theory. Data from the text are broken into quotations, analogies, metaphors and images to assist in the analysis. The findings of the study will contribute in the comprehension and appreciation of the role played by writers in highlighting the issues that affect society. Consequently, society will be motivated towards a positive multidisciplinary reading culture. The results of the study will also aid researchers who may want to carry out similar or related scholarship in Literature or any other related disciplines.

Key Terms: proverbs, proverbial wisdom, utilization, disillusionment, revolutionary.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the utilization of proverbial wisdom in enhancing harmony in sports. The proverbs are drawn from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*. The novel was first published in Kikuyu Language in 1980 as *Caitani Mutharabaini*. It was later translated into English and published as *Devil on the Cross* in 1982. Since it was translated into English, it has enjoyed fourteen impressions. This perhaps explains why Ngũgĩ continued to write in English after even the 1962 Makerere Conference of African writers of English expression. During the debate in the conference, Ngũgĩ had asserted "Writing in African Languages is a necessary step towards cultural identity and independence from European exploitation" (Ngũgĩ, 1986, p. 28). Commenting on Ngũgĩ's assertion, Chapman (2003) argues that Ngũgĩ persisted to write in English deliberately in order to increase his sales of his creative works. However, the commercial aspect does not seem to distract Ngũgĩ from his objective to promote the African cultural identity and liberation from European exploitation and oppression. He implemented this by adopting Achebe's ideology of using the English Language 'to express his peculiar African experience'. In the Language debate, Achebe suggested that the English language has been given to him (Africa) as a gift. Therefore, he said that he would use the gift of the English Language and make it "at once universal and able to carry his peculiar African experience" (Achebe, 1975, p.53). African experiences can strongly as well as precisely be conveyed by utilization of African oral forms.

African oral forms consist of songs, myths, legends, riddles, folktales, idioms and proverbs among others. Ngũgĩ is deeply immersed in African orality and skilfully employs the African oral forms in his creative works. In the literary texts, Ngũgĩ utilizes African oral forms such as riddles, idioms, narratives, songs and proverbs among others.

However, this paper addresses only the use and application of proverbial wisdom in *Devil on the Cross* as they apply in enhancing harmony in sports. In the novel, Ngũgĩ invents characters who narrate their encounters in postcolonial Kenya. Further, Ngũgĩ's characters use proverbs and proverbial songs to describe the postcolonial Kenyan state, which can be employed as a microcosm for other African postcolonial nations. In spite of the fact that Ngũgĩ obtains the proverbs he utilizes for construction of the novel from the Gikũyũ reservoir, the paper avails equivalent proverbs in Gikũyũ, which are used to convey the same message. This is premised on the characteristic nature of proverbs where meaning is contextual and fluid as well as multiple.

By utilizing proverbs and proverbial names of characters as well as places and proverbial songs, Ngũgĩ creates awareness in the oppressed and exploited workers and peasants in Ilmorog. Aware of their underprivileged disadvantaged situations, the masses are dissatisfied with the African rulers who took over from the colonial administrators. The masses find the postcolonial elite to be worse oppressors and exploiters than their erstwhile white predecessors. This marginalized group earns and agitates for change as evidenced in the proverb, "Change seeds for the gourd contain more than one kind" (Barra, 2010, p. 9; Ngũgĩ, 2014:11). The Ilmorogans wanted change and meaningful change at that where they would be free to enjoy the fruits of independence in their own country and in their own right and on their own terms. Briefly, they campaign for change and want to be the agents of that change. As such, they are ready to fight any oppressive force that comes between them and their freedom. This force manifests itself through capitalism whose perpetrators are the ruling postcolonial African elite and the international capitalists from the business world. By employing dialogue, the oppressed and exploited workers,

peasants and women endeavour to express their disillusionment with the administration. Unfortunately, their efforts to reclaim their lost space, which they had enjoyed before colonization, are thwarted by further and more severe oppression and exploitation. When dialogue fails, the masses resort to a revolution as evidenced in the eradication of social oppressive forces. This culminates in the shooting of the Rich Old Man from Ngorika at the close of the novel.

Apart from the employment of proverbs and proverbial wisdom in *Devil on the Cross* to agitate for freedom and agency, the same can be employed for nation building and also in enhancing national and international relationships. Kenya like any other nation comprise many sectors, which operate differently but work hand in hand for the benefit of the country [countries] as a whole. One such factor is sports which is a communal pursuit. Sports entail training, practice and competitions. These activities are conducted communally whether the persons compete either as a group or as individuals. Hence, people should work in harmony to excel in competitions as well as to build accommodation for mental and physical fitness as stipulated in the proverbs; *a single finger cannot kill a louse, a single log cannot make a fire last through the night and a single man however strong cannot build a bridge across a river* (Ngũgĩ, 2014:48). These proverbs demonstrate that sporting organization and activities demand that people must work together in harmony for success is impossible unless they employ teamwork. Owing to the contextual, flexible and unstable nature of proverbs, some of the proverbs in Ngũgĩ's novel *Devil on the Cross* can be utilized as reliable vessels to enhance harmony in sports. This paper addresses only the use and application of proverbial wisdom in *Devil on the Cross* as they apply in enhancing harmony in sports.

Theoretical framework

The paper utilizes Poststructuralist literary theory in the analysis. Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault advanced this theory in the 1960s to demystify and contrast structuralism. This is necessitated by the fact that proverbs are contextual in nature. Poststructuralists attest that meaning is multiple and not centered on the sign and the signifier and that the sign is dependent on the context in which it occurs. They argue that "meaning is multiple, flexible, dislocated, fragmented, unstable, decentralized and scattered along the chain of signifiers" (Selden, 1989:87). According to Kabira and Mutahi (1988, p.37), "proverbs are culturally and contextually bound." Individual cultures have their own proverbs, which they apply in various contexts. Thus, the meaning of a proverb is derived from the culture from which it is generated and the context in which it occurs. When the culture or the context in which a proverb is used changes, the meaning of the proverb also changes because proverbs derive their meanings from the culture and the context in which they are found. As a result, one proverb contains multiple meanings when it is deployed in different contexts. In the novel *Devil on the Cross*, Ngũgĩ's characters make use of the same proverb repeatedly to convey various messages in differing contexts. Further, the flexibility and fragmentation of the proverbs is demonstrated by use of various words in the expression of the same idea as portrayed in the following proverb; '*the fart of a rich man has no smell*' (Ngũgĩ, 2014:60). The same idea is repeated in the proverb '*the wound of a rich man never produces pus*' (p.63).

In Poststructuralism, meaning is constructed. Every meaning is dialogized and every meaning is arrived at through dialogue. Meaning is therefore a social construct that is arrived at through dialogue after reaching an agreement. This meaning depends on the context and the society in which the object being referred to is applicable

and the same object may have different meanings in varying environments. In Poststructuralism, meaning is therefore multiple, dislocated, unstable, scattered and, fluid. This is because proverbs, like meaning in Poststructuralism, are socially constructed through dialogue and agreement to express and/or deal with the everyday problems and experiences of the community, which constructs them. Proverbs have multiple meanings and themes, which are constructed socially depending on the context and the same proverb, can have different themes in different contexts. Similarly, one proverb can be relevant to more than one situation. Besides, proverbs are socially constructed through negotiations and dialogue after a consensus. These properties of proverbs justify the suitability of Poststructuralism in the discussion.

Method of Study

The study is carried out using the interpretivist paradigm. This method is operates on the premises that meaning is ascribed to attitudes, relationships and occurrences. Interpretivist approach assumes that social phenomena are constructs and creations that are negotiated, dialogized, and widely shared. Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that meanings are sought within contexts because people create meanings and associate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with their surroundings. This can be discerned by identifying and analyzing the proverbs in *Devil on the Cross*. Further, the interpretivist procedure works on the basis that meanings are not fixed or closed systems. Instead, “meanings are negotiated and constructed within certain contexts in the process of the researcher’s engagement with the texts or documents (Silverman, 2008, p.112). Thus, the identified proverbs are interpreted and their meanings sought within the contexts in which they occur. The sample was selected using purposive sampling procedure according to (Mugenda, & Mugenda, 2003). In the analysis of data,

equivalent proverbs to those in the text are provided in other languages where possible.

Proverbs in *Devil on the Cross* that Deal with Sports

Proverbs offer summaries of social experiences, observations and reveal social organizations, power relations in a community as well as provide ready-made comments on personal relationships, social, economic, and political affairs. Proverbs also function as vehicles of transmitting social values of a given society. Rutere and Kirigia (2013, p.35) observed, “proverbs draw images from real life.” This aspect is exemplified in proverbs that apply to dynamic issues in society. For example, “as the dancer prepares himself for the arena, it is he who knows how he is going to dance” (p.98). Dancing as an entertainment activity involves rigorous training, practice and coordination to master the steps and ensure their correspondence to the rhythm. Dancing has become a commercial pursuit in the contemporary society; therefore, the dancer has to perfect his performance for maximum achievement. Indeed, there are dancing who take dancing as a full time occupation. Such artists have achieved not only national but also international fame for instance; the Gĩkũyũ music icon John de Mathew.

Stewart (1997) posits that proverbs provide insight into people’s philosophical thought, epistemology and world-view. Lee (2015, p.561) augments Stewart’s definition and offers that proverbs are mirrors of culture in that they reflect the customs, values and beliefs of a particular society. Collectively, the people and their proverbs form a communication network that preserves, conserves and conveys the already amassed cultural and spiritual wealth. Every community has its own philosophy, epistemology and world view which it endeavours to inculcate from one generation to the next. Thus, every society has its own proverbs through which the society summarizes and conveys its culture, values, experiences and observations.

However, proverbs unlike most literary genres do not occur of and by themselves. Instead, they find accommodation within other literary genres such as songs, narratives, speech, conversations, poetry and prose. Based on their import, the study of proverbs has generated intense interest in African Literature whether oral or written. African authors employ proverbs as significant attributes in the construction of written literature as a narrative technique and to advance their thematic concerns. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a renowned African writer, aptly retains and employs proverbs not just as a narrative technique but also for the salient themes that proverbs serve in advancing his ideology. Ngũgĩ has utilized and immortalized Gĩkũyũ proverbs in the construction of his literary works.

(Achebe, 1975,p.5; Johnson, & Ekpenyong, 2013,p. 74: & Mugo, 2015:,p.13) acclaim that “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” Proverbs as a genre are short forms that do not occur by themselves but are found within other genres such as songs, narratives, myths, legends and novels among others. The proverbs under study are found within the novel *Devil on the Cross*. The proverbs addressed are only those that are applicable in enhancement of harmony in the sports domain. Sports are usually defined as an organized, competitive and skillful physical activity, which calls for dedication and devotion as well as fair play. “Participating in sports can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, promote social inclusion, improve health, counter anti-social behaviour, raise individual self-esteem and confidence, and widen horizons”. (Sportscotland, 2003:7) The publication used is the fourteenth impression of 2014. In this paper, all references made to the primary text are made using only the page numbers. Further, the proverbs are discussed in the order they appear in the text as follows:

The proverb “to swim is to plunge into the river” (p.2 is used after the audience is warned “to bathe is to strip of all clothes” insinuating that once one embarks on a mission, there is no going back. Swimming is a sporting activity that calls for flexibility as well as agility to negotiate the distance in water and steer the swimmer’s movements in the desired course as far as direction is concerned. Agility is also an added advantage in swimming. The aforementioned proverb; *to swim is to plunge into the river* literally means that there is no way that one can move easily and swiftly in water while clothed. This is simply because the clothes will absorb water and become a hindrance to locomotion. Again, one has to jump or dive quickly and energetically into the water if he/she has decided to swim. However, metaphorically the proverb means that if people choose to do something, they must give it [what they intend to do] their full attention, potential and commitment in order to realize the desired effect. For instance; if one wishes to succeed in sports or any other activity, they must participate in thorough training and practice. This involves not only the competitor but also the coach. During the competition, there must be those competing as well as the spectators who make the event enjoyable. These activities cannot be implemented in isolation. People have to come together and work as a social unit for the success of the event hence enhancing social harmony.

However, in the text proverb *to swim is to plunge into the river* (p.3) is utilized by the storyteller to point out his readiness to reveal the truth and may have had nothing to do with sports but of necessity, they are practically used in enhancing social harmony. This is because proverbs are contextual and exhibit multiple, dislocated and flexible meaning (Mugo, 2015). Through these proverbs, the Gĩcaandĩ Player who is Ngũgĩ’s invented narrator also wishes to teach his imaginary audience that when one starts an activity, they should be ready to accomplish it and

never back out even when the task becomes challenging. The Gĩcaandĩ Player who proclaims himself as the ‘Prophet of Justice’ encourages his audience to join him as active participants when he beckons, “Come, Come my friend, Come and let us reason together... Come and let us reason about Jacinta Warĩĩnga before you pass judgment on our children... (p.3). In this context, Jacinta Warĩĩnga is used as a metonym for the youth. Ngũgĩ cautions his readership that before somebody apportions blame to another person it is essential to carry out investigations to make an informed choice. Research is therefore an essential step in life.

In the contemporary society, the proverb can be applied to comment on contexts where people are fond of condemning others without taking time to comprehend what stimulated their undesirable behaviour. An example can be derived from the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve when God enquired of Adam’s whereabouts and Adam answered that they were hiding due to their nakedness. When God asked Adam how they found out that they were naked, he replied; “The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). At this point, Adam blame God for bequeathing Eve to him since it is her that made Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit. Yet when saw her after he awoke from the stupor, he did not even recognise God’s presence but simply said “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken from Man” (Genesis 2:23). In the commentary, there is no reference to a point when Adam thanked God for giving him the woman but went ahead to admire, claim her and even append her to himself by giving her the name ‘Woman’. This qualifies her as a portion that belongs to him. Nevertheless, when Adam voluntarily eats the forbidden fruit, he blames God for giving him the woman who made him eat the fruit. The Woman in turn does not take responsibility for the sin but

blames the serpent. Hence, the Judaic myth acts as the genesis of the blame game.

Further reference can be made to the parable of the prodigal son in the Bible (Luke 15:11-32) whose brother dismisses summarily as being unworthy of his father’s forgiveness. The senior brother did not take time and try to understand what motivation or inclination led his brother to return home and his father’s motive for the celebration. Instead, he condemned both of them unfairly and perhaps illogically. Both the biblical texts involve physical exercises, which promote mental and physical fitness as well as good health. Further, the resulting activities such as begging for forgiveness and celebrations culminate in enhancement of social harmony. Through the proverbs, Ngũgĩ dissuades his audience from making a sweeping condemnation or commendation before finding out the motive or intention, which makes somebody behave the way they do. The proverbs are used to comment on situations where people face indecision. They are thus urged to decide and commit themselves. In the novel, the Ilmorogans are warned against making judgment on the youth who have gone to the city to look for greener pastures before they have understood the ordeals that have compelled them to leave the village for the city.

The following are two proverbs whose theme is change: *Change seeds for the gourd contains seeds more than one kind*” and *“Change steps, for the song has more than one rhythm”* (p.11). According to (Soneye, 2003) proverbs are culture markers, which use the objects that are found within the cultural environment in the community in which they are constructed. In the Gĩkũyũ cultural environment, such items are like gourds, calabashes and seeds as demonstrated in the proverb *“Change seeds for the gourd contains seeds more than one kind”* and *“Change steps, for the song has more than one rhythm”* is also about change. These proverbs are used interchangeably whenever the

question of change arises. These proverbs have been used repeatedly in (*Devil*, p.11, 48, 76,108 and 122) respectively. For Gĩkũyũ people song and dance are the same qualifying any to be used in place of the other as the user deems fit. In most African traditional communities, singing and dancing were recreational social pursuits. During such occasions, members of various age groups meet to satirize, lampoon, praise or condemn social behaviour as well as the characters who exhibit those social attributes as well as advocate for change wherever necessary. These two proverbs proclaim change as progress in the right direction and hence define change as a desirable event in life for an egalitarian society.

Apart from this pair of proverbs, there is another pair whose theme is also change but change in a different dimension. These proverbs are constructed thus; “*He who used to dance can now only watch*” and “*he who used to jump over the stream can now only wade through it*” (p.60 &76). In the latter two proverbs, the ideology of change is used in juxtaposition to the former set. Whereas in the first two proverbs, change is a requirement and is therefore is recognized and respected as well as encouraged. In the second case, change [which is a result of old age] is seen as inhibitive and therefore regretted as it culminates into incapacitation. This disqualifies people from taking part in events in which they excelled in at some stages in life. In the novel, Ngũgĩ addresses the first two proverbs to the masses that are exploited and oppressed in the postcolonial African states. The second set targets the postcolonial ruling elite to remind them that they do not have a monopoly of and to leadership and that once the peripheral groups become aware of the mistreatment, they are likely to rebel and oust them from their pedestal.

The first two proverbs are concerned with change that is brought about by the poor impecunious living conditions, which issue from the scars left by the colonization process.

When the colonial administrators departed from the colonies, the Kenyans and by extension, other postcolonial African states were left to manage their affairs. Nonetheless, the African nation states in spite of the fact that they were independent suffered from teething problems for they had neither the resources nor the techniques to support self-rule. The African material resources like land were grabbed and polluted by the departing imperialists who at the time and even today assume[d] the role of landlords as demonstrated at Delamare Ranch/Farm at Naivasha where some Kenyans live like squatters in their own independent nation state. Such a situation demands change, which was then carried out through resistance movements like Mau Mau. The Mau Mau supporters were the peoples’ fighters with the intention of reclaiming their land from the *Nyakerũ*: White colonizer and reclaim their lost statuses. Indeed among the three enemies Kenyans battled were poverty [they were fighting to eradicate poverty], ignorance and disease. In spite of their efforts however, only a few of the Africans achieved these objectives. Only the ruling elites who constitute just a small fraction of the Kenyan population enjoy[ed] the fruits of the new won independence in the republic.

As for the majority comprising workers and peasants, this was only an illusion that only existed in their imaginations. When the downtrodden and the tyrannized peasants, workers and women woke up from their deep slumber, they found that the Pan-Africanist spirit was just a bait to influence them to risk their lives for a few selfish minorities. It was [is] then that they came up with the ideology of campaigning for change and not just change for its own sake but worthwhile change for egalitarianism at that. That is when they recognised that although they had fought capitalists on one side, their fellow blacks who took over similar positions as the colonial masters were worse oppressors as well as exploiters than their fellow ousted

departing masters were. The peasants and workers so called the masses came together and organised themselves to agitate for change so that united [as the saying goes *kamuingi koyaga ndiri- unity is strength*] they can squash the capitalistic regime. In this condition, they too would reap and enjoy the fruits of independence like the bourgeoisies. They encourage each other to change for even the gourd, *though one does not contain seeds of one kind* and that they should *change steps, for the song has more than one rhythm*' (p.11). Some produce calabashes, others medium gourds used for fetching water or putting gruel, others mature while others abort. Hence, the analogy of the seeds and steps calling for change serve as an epiphany for the masses.

The other pair of proverbs is; '*He who used to dance can now only watch*' and '*he who used to jump over the stream can now only wade through it.*' The duo is used for counseling people as well as urging them to appreciate that no situation no matter how appealing or repelling is lasts forever as stipulated in the Swahili proverb; *hakuna marefu yasio na ncha or kilicho na mwanzo kina mwisho*. Literal translation: *There is nothing that is so extensive that it has no end and whatever has a beginning has an end respectively*. Other equivalent of the aforementioned proverbs is; *there is no night so long that it will not give way to the light of day* (Ngũgĩ, 2011, p. 157). For instance, youth stage or childhood is only temporal facet of life because one is young only once. Similarly, *one cannot cross the same river twice*. Consequently, when old age eventually creeps in, youth recedes and the energy diminishes as well. As a result, one is unable to participate and perform effectively games or sports in which they were famous prizewinners. Quintessentially, for such activities, they can only watch nostalgically from a distance outside the arena as others perform the acts. This proves that sports are social phenomena where communities come together for entertainment and to demonstrate their prowess in various

sporting activities during competitions and friendly matches. However, due to the expertise of the retired senior citizens, they are endowed with the prestige to offer advice although some of them may be unable to demonstrate owing to their dwindling energy. The social event calls for co-operation in the various age groups, thus enhancing social harmony. The occurrence is not only an attribute of Kenyans or Africans but is an international concept where the senior are respected coaches. Consequently, this is supported by the proverbs that; *he who used to dance can only watch* and *he who used to jump over the river can now only wade through it*.

Both jumping and dancing are actions that involve flexibility, agility and vigour. The three are common characteristics of youth. These proverbs are utilized to discourage, castigate or reproach, caution people who waste their time especially their heydays when they are full of energy and have the time to exploit their full potential. When and if this group appears wayward, they are often admonished and corrected using the proverbs such as; '*today is tomorrow's treasure*' and *tomorrow is the harvest of what we plant today*' (p. 11). The warnings serve as an eye opener and provoke them to prepare adequately for oldage as they realise that they should make the best use of every opportunity because with every passing day, their energy diminishes. Eventually, they would only be spectators as other replace them in whatever they were renowned champions. Consequently, as people advance in years, they should not dissipate their time mourning and remembering their youthful endeavours as *nobody ever gained from moaning and groaning* (p.11). Besides, people should realise that the solution lies neither in lamentations nor regrets but in a more desirable change. Therefore *change seeds, for the gourd although one contains more than one kind of seed! And Change steps, for the song has more than one rhythm!*' (ibid).

In the novel, Ngũgĩ demonstrates that Kenyan workers, peasants and women are fed up with the oppression and exploitations by both the neocolonial and postcolonial capitalistic regimes through the outbursts of Wangarĩ and Mũturi. Wangarĩ is metaphorical for female leopard and Mũturi is the metaphor for the worker. According to Ndambuki (2010:149), “metaphors are often used by the speakers in an attempt to get a grip of new events that are motivated by their personal experience as members of a cultural group.” The duo is the representatives of the disgruntled workers, peasants, women and any other marginalized people suggest that change is inevitable through their speeches, which show their provocation. Wangarĩ displays extreme bitterness in her defense as she explains to the passengers in Mwaũra’s Matatũ Matata Matamu Model T Ford registration number MMM 333:

Even now, I can’t say where I found the courage that suddenly gripped me. (Was it courage or pain?) I told the judge: “Look at me properly. I am not a foreigner here like you. In addition, am not a vagrant here in Kenya, and I will never be a vagrant here in Kenya. Kenya is our country. We were born here. We were given this land by God, and we redeemed it from the hands of our enemies by our own blood. Today you see us clothed in rags, but we, the peasants and the workers, are the people who were there with Kĩmathi (the renowned Mau Mau leader). Now look at me closely again (p.39-40).

As if in response and echo to Wangarĩ’s diatribe, Mũturi initiates a conversation:

This country, our country is pregnant. What it will give birth to, God only knows...Imagine! The children of us workers are fated to stay out in the sun, thirsty, hungry, naked, gazing at fruit ripening on trees that they can’t pick even to quieten a demanding belly! Fated to see food steaming in the pantry, but unable to dip a calabash into the pot to

scoop even a tiny portion! Fated to lie awake all night telling each other stories about tears and sorrow, asking each other to guess the same riddles day after day: ...this country should have given birth to its offspring long ago. What it lacks is a midlife (p. 42).

Through Wangarĩ’s and Mũturi’s outrage, Ngũgĩ indicates that the masses are aware of the injustices perpetrated by the neocolonialists. Wangarĩ cannot even explain what gave her the courage that stimulated her to challenge the white judge to give her a chance to reveal the den of the ‘real’ thieves in Ilmorog. She even displays the capacity to fight any oppression and exploitation by reminding the court of the peasants’ and workers’ determination and commitment to their own liberation. Wangarĩ achieves the effect by calling the court’s attention to the workers’, peasants’ and women’s participation in the struggle for independence and bringing up the name of the Mau Mau hero: Dedan Kĩmathi. She expresses the masses’ disillusionment with the postcolonial administration that treat them with suspicion as if they are lawbreakers while all masses wish for is their rightful of the national cake. They are prepared to work for their upkeep but they are denied such opportunities by being kicked about whenever they go out in search of jobs since their freedom of movement is curtailed.

In addition, Mũturi is unable to conceal his mental agony as revealed by the utilization of exclamation marks in the tirade. Through Mũturi, Ngũgĩ denounces the deprivation and atrocities that the common people have to go through while the proceeds of their hard-earned freedom are only beneficial to the elite. In the conversation, the masses demonstrate that they have been expectant about having a share in the national cake but as it appears this is just a riddle that their children can only guess. They are commonsensical that change is essential. Indeed, it is long

overdue as pointed out thus; “this country should have given birth to its offspring long ago. What it lacks is a midlife” (ibid) and “I am not a foreigner here like you” (p.42). Therefore, Ngũgĩ calls on the masses to awaken from slumber and midwife their liberation by delivering the country from the pangs of the corrupt postcolonial demagogues. That is why the enlightened Wangarĩ and Mũturi are headed for Ilmorog; their Ilmorog to stage a revolution because there is need to change as underlined in “change seeds for the gourd contains seeds more than one kind and change steps, for the song has more than one rhythm. Besides, he who used to dance can only watch and he who used to jump over the river can now only wade through it to sensitize the elites that their time has come to an end and they have to change or else ‘change will change them’.

Further warning is made available in the song that admonishes the corrupt, oppressive and exploitative capitalistic postcolonial administration. The song focuses on awakening the masses to their disadvantaged conditions. The song consists of proverbial wisdom, which provokes the oppressed, and the exploited peasants, women and workers to act by composing the song as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

That which pecks never pecks for another.
That which pinches never pinches for another.

That which journeys never journeys for another.

Where is the seeker who seeks for another? (p.10).

The song contains four proverbs that criticize capitalism and raise the masses’ awareness to the fact that each should mind their own welfare for none is concerned with their poor living conditions. They are reminded that no one works for another, pinches for another, journeys or even seeks for another. Furthermore, the masses are also

informed to call to mind the saying that ‘everybody is responsible for their own happiness and should therefore not expect anybody else to be troubled about their welfare. Similarly, when one endeavours to do something; they only do that to satisfy their selfish motives. They are further reminded that the wise can also be taught wisdom (ibid) for nobody has a monopoly of knowledge.

The proverbs; “*talking is the way to loving*” and that “*today is tomorrow’s treasury*” for “*tomorrow is the harvest of what we plant today*” (ibid) respectively are also employed in with the intention to instill and enhance social harmony especially in the youth. These proverbs are used to warn, educate and inform those that purport to know everything and tend to ignore advice especially if it comes from people who are not regarded highly in the community. Such people are poor, hold detestable or dismal positions in society or the youth. Among Agĩkũyũ age is highly esteemed as well as revered as evidenced in the Gĩkũyũ proverb *harĩ mũthuri hatĩtagwo maaĩ*. Literal English translation: *In the presence of an elder, water is not poured*] (Njogu, 2004, p.189). The proverbs also castigate those who boast of being of more significance than others and consider themselves as indispensable. The proverbs are further utilized to inform such people that everyone is important in their own light for no one can live solely by himself or herself. The ‘haves’ need the ‘have-nots’ and the reverse is true as envisioned in the proverbs “*a single finger cannot kill a louse*” and *a single log cannot make fire last through the night*” (p. 48).

This shows the importance of team work as stipulated in the proverbs introduced thus:

“That humanity is in turn born of many hands working together, for as the Gĩkũyũ said, “*a single finger cannot kill a louse; a single log cannot make a fire last through the night; a single man, however strong cannot build a bridge across a river; and many hands can lift a weight, however heavy*” (Ngũgĩ,

2014, p.48 & 63). The unity of our sweat is what makes us able to change the laws of nature, able to harness them to the needs of our lives, instead of our lives remaining slaves of the laws of nature. That is why Gĩkũyũ said: *Change for the seeds of the gourd are not all of one kind*” (p. 48)

The dialogue-cum monologue is aimed at inducting the readers to the epistemology of modern society. This is done through a stream of proverbs in order to exonerate the speaker of any blame because whatever he says is contained in the proverbial wisdom of the ancestors. According to Mudumulla (1995, p.18), a “proverb is a short saying in common use expressing a well-known truth or common fact ascertained by experience or observation.” Therefore, through these proverbs, Ngũgĩ indicts the postcolonial rulers for their greed and selfishness. Ngũgĩ reprimands as well as cautions the elites that for them to be ruled, they must work in harmony with their subjects. Indeed, they although they deem themselves as the owners of the means of production, they should understand that they need other human beings to work for them as stated in the statement ‘that humanity is in turn born of many hands working together’ (p.48). In addition, He advises the masses that they should unite in order to negotiate for effective and meaningful change for their emancipation from oppression and exploitations by the authorities.

Songs and weight lifting are physical activities where participants are required to co-operate not only for the purpose of competition but also to enjoy themselves as well as entertain their audiences. The proverbs caution those intending to disregard others and dismissing them as making insignificant contribution that no matter how skilled, they cannot perform the activities singly: That even the losers are an essential part of the sports for there are no winners without losers and thus the two parties complement each other. Nobody or team is complete

without the opponents. Besides, people in the same team have to co-ordinate in order to perfect their skills. For instance, in ball games, they must mark their partners as well as opponents and the target to emerge victorious. Indeed, the most skilled goalkeeper is irrelevant without a scorer and the reverse is true. Hence the proverbs; “*a single finger cannot kill a louse*” and *a single log cannot make fire last through the night*” (p.48) and *many hands can lift a weight, however heavy*” (p. 48, & 63).

“*A restless child leaves home in search of meat just when a goat is about to be slaughtered*” (Devil: 15) suggests that one leaves/abandons better or greater things in pursuit of those of less value. In some cases, the person ends up not getting their heart’s desires. By the time they come back home, they find that the goods and the ceremony are depleted. They therefore end up losing goodies that are rightfully theirs as exemplified in the proverb; *mtaka yote hukosa yote*. The literal English translation of the aforementioned p Swahili proverb is; *he who wants all loses all*. The proverb is further used to admonish people who like shortcuts especially if they are selfish, lazy and irresponsible. This is so because home is taken as a place where people as family members are allocated duties which they are expected to carry out diligently. For such obligations, they are accountable to the authorities that are. At home, the authority is vested on the parents and so the children have to give a record of their goings and comings. The children therefore disappear from home in search of adventure without taking into consideration whether their parents are for or against it. The proverb; *a restless child leaves home when a goat is just about to be slaughtered* has the same theme as, *a borrowed necklace can make one to lose one’s own* (p.15).

In African societies and particularly among the Gĩkũyũ, song and dance were spectacular occasions that were highly cherished. Those events were held for

entertainment especially after a bumper harvest. It was also during song and dances that people from the opposite sex espied suitors. As such, it was convenient to adorn oneself as attractively as possible in order to be noticed and attract attention. [The aspect is still in vogue even today]. However, in every society, not all members have everything that they need especially luxurious effects such as ornaments. These people then resort to borrowing for auspicious festivities like dances. Of the conspicuous adornments are bangles and necklaces not to mention the clothes. Sometimes as the dancers show off their attires, some get damaged while others get lost and those that had borrowed have nothing to return to their benefactors after the dance. They therefore have to strive and replace the borrowed items, hence the proverb; *a borrowed necklace can make one to lose one's own* (p.15).

Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated that proverbial wisdom is a necessary aspect in the construction of African Literature. Further, Ngũgĩ has used proverbs to stimulate social harmony, political and economic liberation in in different spheres of life. One such domain is sport, which has become extremely popular in the contemporary society. *Devil on the Cross*, contains a lot of proverbs which due to

their varied, multiple, flexible and unstable meanings can be utilized in many different fields subjectively and inter-subjectively. These can be subjected to multiple discussions such, the title of paper Utilization of Proverbial Wisdom in Enhancing Harmony in Sports. In addition, although proverbs are studied as a genre of Oral Literature, its importance and the contribution to written literature cannot be underestimated. Further, the study realizes that proverbs are liberating devices that are utilized by both the old and the young to admonish, educate, advice, praise as well as caution in a more gentle manner hence making the unbearable bearable. Besides, proverbs allow the user to negotiate sensitive matters without losing face as well as bearing responsibilities for their utterances in case their ideas do not work. The study further finds that proverbs serve as a reliable vehicle of ferrying knowledge and values of the society in a more acceptable and an appropriate manner. Hence, communities should preserve their proverbs, as they are valuable not only in orality, but also in literacy. Since proverbs are value laden social aspects, more studies should be carried on them.

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