***“The Green Leaves” by- Grace Ogot***

1. In which year the short story ‘The Green Leaves’ was published?

Ans. 1968

1. In which anthology the short story ‘The Green Leaves’ was published?

Ans. ‘Land Without thunder’.

1. Mentioned two major works of Grace Ogot.

Ans. i) The Promise Land, ii) The Rain Came.

1. Who is the wife of Nyagar?

Ans. Nyamundhe.

1. Who did injure in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Omoro

1. Who is the clan leader in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Olielo.

1. How many oxen were stolen by the thieves in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Six.

1. Whose oxen were stolen in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Omogo

1. Name the river as mentioned in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Opok river.

1. Which were the two villages that were separated by Opok river in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Massala village and Mirogi village.

1. How many thieves were in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Three thieves.

1. Where did the dead body of Nyagar was taken for Post mortem?

Ans. Kisumu

1. Who does kill Nyagar in the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. The thief.

1. Who is the protagonist of the short story ‘The Green Leaves’?

Ans. Nyagar

1. **Discuss how** **Ogot effectively illustrates the negative effects of colonialism on indigenous people in Kenia, East Africa** **through the story “The Green Leaves”.**

**Ans.**  Literature of Africa in the postcolonial era emerges as a mirror of the colonial power, subjugation, violence and the resistance. Most of the literary pieces of that period deal with the theme of cruel experiences, inhuman treatment and endless exploitation of the native population by the mechanism of power and politics of the white Europeans in the name of colonialism. The white colonizers extended their inhuman, oppressive and cruel treatment to delve the colonized people into the deep ocean of trauma and terror through the application of multiple means of violence, strength and threat. According to M.H. Abrams, postcolonial studies include, "The critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers. These studies have focused especially on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, and South America." What he means is that Postcolonial writings of the postcolonial writers focused on the specific culture, history and literature of the colonized countries. Postcolonial writers of Africa like Chinua Achebe, Ama Ata Aidoo and Grace Ogot steeped their texts with elements of history, culture and tradition of their own country, Africa, of the colonial era.

Ogot in her short story, The Green Leaves presents a pen picture of the negative effects of colonialism on the lives of the native people of Kenya. By describing a story of a group of villagers in the text, She actually attempts to bring out the real realities of the indigenous Luo people of Kenya who were the victims of colonial masters for a long time in the pre independence era of Africa despite having their impressive integrity among themselves and robust resisting power.

The story of The Green Leaves begins with the hero, Nyagar who awakes from his dream by the sounds of movements of feet of a group of villagers. A small group of people is found chased by a larger group of people. It comes to the fore of Nyagar gradually that the small group consists of three thieves who are pursued by the native villagers as they have stolen the cattle of the villagers. Two thieves have managed somehow to escape from the clutches of the villagers while one has failed in his endeavour to do so. Villagers have overrun and caught him. He is beaten mercilessly and cruelly. The condition of his life becomes so severe that he is about to die. At this jucture, one of the villagers warns his accomplices that they should leave the thief to "give up his ghost" by himself. Thus, they return to their respective cottages after covering the body of the thief with green leaves. They also decide that they will meet there again in the morning before the women of the village awake and go there. Nyagar is one of the wealthy and happy villagers. He has a happy family with children and wives. He lacks no material support .But it is the internalization of greed of the Colonial masters that dooms his own life and ruins his happy and contented family which is revealed in the bitter wailing of his wife after the discovery of his dead body under the green leaves in place of the attacked and supposed dead thief. Nyagar cannot resist his temptation of procuring money from the bag of the thief whom they attacked earlier in the evening. As a result of that although physically he returns to his hut with the other villagers from the place where the thief is left to "give up the ghost" by himself, mentally he is lured away by the thought of going back there alone in order to grab the money. He reaches there stealthily and contemplates a lot of things. His pecuniary greed leads him to his own downfall. Here, before placing his hands in the pocket of the thief, mentally he is found purturbed for sometimes as he is engrossed in the thought of the fact that he should remain satisfied with what he possesses. He has a happy family and possesses adequate means for sustaining the same. At this particular time, his soul is divided into two parts. He has an affinity with that of Dr. Faustus, good angel and bad angel.

“In the same way, Nyagar in Ogot's story fails in his endeavour to resist himself from yielding to greed. He falls a sheer victim of greed. What Ogot attempts to portray here is the that the native people internalize in their pure heart the sense of greed from their Colonial Masters who used to transport various resources from their colonies to their own country due to their greed which is better known as Colonial Greed.

The idea of colonial power or dominance over the native population is prevalent throughout the story, The Green Leaves, of Ogot. Ogot embodies this aspect by introducing the conflict between the White police officer and the villagers. The White officer is found exerting his power through his verbal command to the villagers over the incident of murder of a thief in the village. The villagers in the story , The Green Leaves, register their resistance to the growing injustices mated out to them by the White officer. got here records the bravery, courage and determination of Kenya's Luo people who were under the yoke of Colonialism in pre independence era. Olielo, the clan leader, asks people of the village to remain united. They decide that no individual of the village will take the sole responsibility of the murder of the person rather they will have to defend themselves by saying that all the villagers are involved in the murder of the thief. They do the same when the White European officer inquires about the murderer of the thief and asks one individual of the village to surrender as the murderer. They answer to one of the questions of the White officer by saying, "We all hit the thief. If you want to arrest us, you are free to do so."

In conclusion, we may say that the confrontation of the native Indigenous people with the White Police Officer in the story, The Green Leaves is the miniature version presented by Ogot of the larger conflict that existed between the colonizer and the colonized in the Colonial period. The resistance of these native people is impressive and praiseworthy indeed as they do not surrender themselves fully before the White Police Officer. They have shown their courage and cleverness in order to survive the onslaught of the White Police Officer. In short, Ogot has endeavoured to show the rude, cruel and inhuman treatment of the Colonial Masters of the "Centre" to the people of the "Periphery" and their resistance to it through her short story, The Green Leaves.

1. **Discuss ‘Traditional Life versus Modernization’ as a major theme of ‘The Green Leaves’.**

**Ans.** In The Green Leaves by Grace Ogot we have the theme of violence, tradition, modernity, colonialism, gender roles, power, greed and conflict.The major conflict of the story revolves around the traditional ways of Nyagar’s clan as represented by the clan leader, Olielo, and by Nyamundhe, both of whom defy the condescending views of the European policeman who epitomizes the rational, modern subject in his need to charge one individual with the murder of the supposed thief and then subsequently, after the discovery of Nyagar under the leaves, to take the body away to do an autopsy rather than respect the death rituals of the clan. The differing rules and regulations that structure Luo and Western societies regarding death and justice result not only in misunderstanding between the clan members and the policeman but also contribute to the attitude of superiority of the European policeman when he claims, “How many times have I told you that you must abandon this savage custom of butchering one another?” This form of cultural superiority contributed to the colonial mentality of dehumanizing Africans as a way of rationalizing their exploitation and oppression.

Ogot does not glorify the old ways but instead brings them to the attention of the reader as a way of revealing how easy it is to dismiss indigenous peoples as barbaric and inferior due to social rules that may appear backwards to those unfamiliar with them. She seems to suggest that these traditional views are significant because they help define the clan as a community. Although some of their superstitious aspects may appear frivolous, such as Nyamundhe’s sighting of the black cat as they walk towards the pile of green leaves, others, such as appeasing the clan’s ancestral dead through proper burial rites, are indelibly related to how the group perceives its relationship to previous generations. Also, Nyagar’s downfall is that he defies the traditional wisdom that forbids him to go back to the body of the thief until morning. His greed for the thief s money despite his fears and lack of want reflects a counter value system that privileges acquiring material possessions over the safety and security of him and his family. (His need to keep checking gates reveals the importance of keeping intruders away from his hut.) Excessive desire is a negative effect of modernization because it overemphasizes material wealth as a reigning mark of success and happiness.

The increasing influence of modernization in colonized countries resulted in the breakdown of social customs and traditional values that bound communities. Throughout the story, there is an emphasis on what the community will do in relation to the cattle thieves and then later to the European police officer. In this respect, Olielo speaks for the community when he declares that they will bury the thief in the morning to prevent a bad spirit from descending on their village. Because Nyagar takes the law into his own hands, he defies the wishes of the clan leader and thus disrupts the social order. By the end of the story, the clan members, particularly Nyamundhe, look at each other with suspicion, wondering who killed Nyagar. Ironically, this is the exact opposite response that Olielo had foreseen since his plan was that the whole clan would take responsibility for the thief’s death and thus undermine the European police officer’s attempt to blame one man. In this respect, the power of colonialism is revealed through one of its most effective strategies: to divide and conquer. Thus, by pitting individuals and groups against each other, colonial powers could avert mass organizing and actions against them. This common strategy is understood by Olielo when he remarks to the clan members, “If we stand united, none of us will be killed.”

1. **Discuss the major themes of the story ‘The Green leaves’.**

**Or,**

**How does greed play an important part in the story ‘The Green Leaves’. Discuss.**

**Ans.** In The Green Leaves by Grace Ogot we have the theme of violence, tradition, modernity, colonialism, gender roles, power, greed and conflict. Narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator the reader realises after reading the story that Ogot may be exploring the theme of violence. Though the three thieves are guilty of stealing some cattle how they are dealt with is interesting. Those in the village consider it appropriate to kill or at least try to kill the thieves. It is as though the villagers are taking the law into their own hands. However Ogot may also be defining what law and justice is. Those in the village believe in their own traditional way of dealing with thieves. Yet the European police officer believes that the thieves should have been handed over to him in order that they face a trial and then if found guilty be sentenced for their crime. If anything those in the village disagree with the practices of the European police officer which may suggest that Ogot is placing a spot light on colonialism and the difficulties incurred by those who live in the village who have their own values when it comes to matters of the law. It is as though both are in conflict with one another.

The role that women play in the story is also interesting as they appear to be subservient to men. They have a definitive role to play in what can only be described as a male dominated society. If anything women are not at the forefront of village life. Those in authority are all male. Those who chased the thieves are all male and the women in the village are not told of what has happened till the following morning. If anything there is a social hierarchy in place and women are not treated the same as men. Nyagar’s actions also suggest that he is being greedy. Though his inner voice tells him he has no need for the money he still attempts to steal the money from the thief. The consequences being that Nyagar has paid a heavy price for his greed. Should he have remained in his hut as others have done. He would still be alive. Instead he leaves behind a large family who in all likelihood have no way of providing for themselves. As mentioned the role of women in the story is limited with it being possible that their role is to maintain the home and look after their children.

It is also interesting that there is a shift in power when the police arrive at the village. Where previously the men in the village had the power this is no longer the case when the European police officer begins to ask questions. In reality Ogot may be highlighting that the real power in the village rests not with the men of the village but with the white colonizers. The fact that the villagers remain together throughout the story and do not change their story when the European police officer arrives might also be important. There is a sense of unity within the village which could also be considered to be a stance against colonialism. Very little if anything is given away by the villagers. They remain united against the European police officer. It is as though the villagers are rebelling against colonial authority in preference for their own traditional ways. Which may leave some readers to suspect that those in the village consider the European police officer (or colonizers) to be an unwelcome guest. That they have no role to play in the village or in Africa itself.

The end of the story is also interesting as the song sung by Nyamundhe gives the reader an insight into how deeply loved Nyagar was and how he will not be replaced. Nyagar may have made a mistake in attempting to steal the thief’s money but he is not being judged by this by the reader. Instead the reader feels sympathy for both Nyagar and Nyamundhe. Nyamundhe obviously loved Nyagar regardless of what he might have done. She also knows that she will live her life as a widow as too will Nyagar’s other wives. This might be important as it is possible that those in the village will now look upon Nyamundhe as being spoiled. That no man will wish to take on the responsibility of looking after Nyamundhe and her children. Something which may not necessarily be the case outside of the village were a widow may have every opportunity to remarry. In reality one foolish mistake by Nyagar has resulted in his family’s lives changing forever. Driven by greed ironically Nyagar has left his family without the means to support themselves. The reader left aware that life will only get tougher for Nyamundhe and Nyagar’s other wives and children.

Thus, in conclusion we may say that Grace Ogot’s The Green Leaves focuses on the consequences of greed. Nyagar joins his fellow village men in the attack and death of three cattle thieves. The village men attack these men for their greed and believe to have killed one. Nyagar after the attack has the yearning to go back to the body and search for the thief’s money. When he goes to search for the money, he has a moment of crisis when his conscious tries to show him that his greedy was are wrong: “’Why should you disturb a dead body?’ his inner voice asked him. ‘What do you want to do with money? You have three wives and twelve children. You have many cattle and enough food. What more do you want?’ the voice persisted”. Nyagar’s inner voice points out the concept of never having enough: “Don’t deceive yourself that you have enough wealth. Nobody in the world has enough wealth”. This statement reveals true human nature. A person could have everything they ever wanted, but they are not satisfied: they need more. Our constant needs to have the best or more of what we already have doesn’t allow us to fully appreciate anything.

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