It is impossible for a writer not to have an ideology. This is truer in the African context since the aftermath of colonial era has left Africa in chaos. The traumatic experiences of colonialism have been very severe in Africa. Africans have been subjected to insult, humiliation, high-handedness and racial discrimination by the whites. This generated a deep colonial consciousness among Africans which is conspicuously noticed in the writings of African literary artists. After achieving political independence from the European rule, Africans, like any other colonized people, had to face countless challenges such as new political order, international relations and problems of culture and socio-economic progress. An eternal quest for the master key that could open new avenues of success for them has been a preoccupation for every African intellectual be a politician, thinker, economist or writer. A writer cannot create in vacuum. He cannot alienate himself or his writing from the happenings in his society. Therefore the very genesis of the African literature is bound up with historical and political circumstances. The development of African literature has been concomitant with rise of nationalistic feelings and an urgent need for social and political freedom from the hegemony of colonial rule. African literature tends to be literature of protest - protest against the alien culture and alien rule. The nightmarish colonial experience has always been at the backdrop of literary outcome of many major African writers whose subject matter has been the impact of colonial rule in Africa. In their writings, the African writers
scrutinize the process of change that has been going on in their societies. So, in Africa, a writer is a ‘sensitive point’\(^1\) within his society. In his “The Role of the writer in a New Nation”\(^2\) Chinua Achebe observes: “The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer’s duty is to help them regain it …. to tell them… where the rain began to beat them.” Thus an African writer must be both a cultural nationalist who explains the richness of his traditional culture to the non-African world and a teacher fostering dignity among his people. Further he needs to act like a torch bearer, a guide and a prophet to show the right path of recovery i.e. ‘the place where they can dry their bodies after being beaten up by rain.’ Being a social critic he must expose and attack injustice and must influence his society. He needs to be a social transformer and revolutionary. This demanding and disconcerting situation compels him to propound an ideology that could fulfill the socio-political requirements and economic needs of Africans, an ideology that could bale out African from the troubled waters and ensure a better future. Therefore it has become inevitable for the African writer to come out with an ideology.

What is an ideology? It is a term that is interpreted with various shades of meanings. The term was first coined by French philosopher Desutt de Tracy by the end of 18\(^{th}\) century. Hegelians explained it as a way of transforming ideas into actions. However, the term ideology came into currency and gained importance with Carl Marx, and with the advent of Marxism. It has been defined as “the sum of conceptions which enables a social group to systematize the values in which the mystified consciousness and the activity of this group are expressed.”\(^3\) Ideology, thus, is an artificial construct and its function is to legitimize the power of ruling class, for the dominant ideas of a society are the ideas of its ruling class. In Stalin’s time Marxist themselves began to use the term “ideology” to denote all forces of social consciousness, including those that were supposed to present a scientific account of the world, free from mystification and apply the term ideology to Marxism and also to other systems
or ideas and representations which dominates the minds of certain social groups which they use to interpret reality, to make sense of the world or propose as the only alternative to be used as a solution to the socio-economic and political problems of man in the present-day world. Here, an attempt is made to briefly examine and compare the ideologies of two major African writers Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. However, insights have been borrowed from the writings of Wole Soyinka and a bird’s eye view of his ideology is also presented here.

Chinua Achebe has a bunch of five novels, a couple of short-stories’ collections, critical essays and speeches to his credit. He is from Igbo community - an ethnic group in southern Nigeria. He has been awarded ‘Man Booker Prize 2007.’ A meticulous study of his writings especially his latest novel Anthills of the Savannah implies that he negates both Capitalism and Marxism. He appears to be sick with leftists’ behaviour not only in Nigeria but in whole Africa. His political taste lies in a radical form of populism which is similar to the philosophy of conservatism advocated by Edmund Burke. Like Burke Achebe also opposes revolution, since in it, there is always a possibility for violence. He proposes decentralization of power as Mahatma Gandhi envisaged it. The power must trickle down to the rural masses -- the village dwellers. The distance between the ruler and the ruled must be bridged. This idea has been explained through the situation in Anthills of the Savannah where the soldier turned president is reluctant to visit the drought stricken area named Abazon in his state. His unwillingness arises out of the opposition of Abazonians to vote in favour of his life presidency. The ruler all the bore well projects to be undertaken in that area as a punitive action simply for their reluctance to vote in his favour. So Achebe advocates participation of people from all walks of life in the affairs of a nation. He discards democracy where only the elite rule over the commoners. He accords due weight to the roles of commoners like taxi-drivers and market women in the making of a nation. He
opines that abstract concepts of the West do not fit in African canon. He stresses on cleavage of the rich and the poor. He does not favour radicalism and suggests a slow progress, reform rather than revolution. He writes: “Experience and intelligence warn us that man’s progress in freedom will be piecemeal, slow and un-dramatic.”(\textit{Anthills of the Savanna} p.99)\textsuperscript{4} However he is hopeful of bright future for Nigerians as the title of the novel subtly tells it. The new grass of the savannah will survive the brush fire and continue to live in future. The grass imagery explains the patience and enduring power of Nigerians to withstand all odds like dictatorships and military rules. To achieve peace and order and to restore normalcy the path of struggle must never be closed. At the end of the novel the new born girl child of Ikem Osodi (who embraced martyrdom while fighting against the brutal dictatorial forces) suggests this as she is named “Ameachena” meaning ‘May this path be never closed.’

James Ngugi or Ngugi Wa Thiong’o is Achebe’s counterpart or contemporary in Kenya. Ngugi is a hard-line Marxist. He urges Kenyans to be ever ready to thwart all attempts of exploitation of man by another man. His novels are novels of ideas. He believes in the roots of his own Gikuyu culture; as against the temptations of alien cultures. This is evident in his novel \textit{The River Between}.\textsuperscript{5} According to him Africans must use the tool of education to achieve success. Education is a key to power and better life. As far as his ideology is concerned, Ngugi is a committed socialist. He believes that socialism can resolve the African crisis in post-independence scenario. This has been manifested in \textit{Petals of Blood}\textsuperscript{6} which addresses the issues of corruption and exploitation in neo-colonial era. People have been betrayed by their own leaders in the post-independence period. Rebellion is shown as the only course open to set the things right and to put up a tough fight against the establishment. This novel endorses struggle that leads to revolution as means of liberation and therefore suggests socialism as only alternative. The struggle has been personified through the hero character, Karega, the trade unionist. So \textit{Petals of
Blood is called a novel propagating socialism. Ngugi’s socialist approach is also manifested in his celebrated essays *The Homecoming* and *Decolonizing the Mind*. The validity and relevance of socialism is repeatedly questioned in the backdrop of failure of socialist power centers in the eastern Europe, especially in the U.S.S.R. But Ngugi’s faith in the class war and in the seizing of the political clutch by workers and peasants, even if it is through violent struggle (symbolized by the character of Kihika in *A Grain of Wheat*); is unshakeable. He is a staunch advocate of decolonization of African mind in all forms of colonization viz. cultural, linguistic and political. He believes that to write in English is a sort of cultural colonialism. Therefore he abandons English as a medium in his later writings. He shifts back to his Gikuyu language. In this respect he is different from Achebe who considers optimum use of English by Africanising the English language.

Wole Soyinka, the Noble Laureate is also from Nigeria. Unlike Achebe who belongs to Igbo ethnic group, Soyinka comes from Yoruba culture. The bulk of African literature comprises of fiction or poetry. Soyinka is the only name that comes when we talk about African Drama. He has fifteen plays and two novels to his credit.

While Achebe negates Marxism and suggests class cleavage, Ngugi stands for socialism. Soyinka negates both the approaches. He suggests absorbing and assimilating modern insights, grafting the new to the traditional and achieving the ideal fusion. He proposes a new order which is blend of traditional African system, humanism of Christianity and economic reforms of new world order. Soyinka’s dramas preach his social, economic and political views. They are structured on Yoruba rituals dramatizing the cyclical views of life, and argue continuity between the past and the present.

In conclusion I would like to state that human experiences for centuries have revealed the inadequacy of prevailing ideologies in
addressing the needs of mankind. Independence or freedom from the shackles of injustice and exploitation in the real sense still needs to be achieved. Therefore, thinkers and writers need to continue their endeavours in discovering more suitable alternative ideologies that ensure peace, progress and justice throughout the world.

References: