

PROBING LUST AS BANE OF NIGERIA’S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: A STUDY OF WOLE SOYINKA’S *DEATH AND THE KING’S HORSEMAN* AND OLA ROTIMI’S *THE GODS ARE NOT TO BLAME*

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Abstract

In order to address the issue of leadership crisis in Nigeria, writers have criticized Aristotle’s notion of prudence, which he suggests in the Nicomachean Ethics as a crucial moral resource for leaders who are politically inclined. These criticisms have propelled the need for this research. According to the Nicomachean Ethics, intellectual virtues help to identify what is just and amicable, while moral virtue helps to act out what is just and amicable.

Therefore, the paper examines the lack of moral virtue as a bane in Nigerian’s political leadership, revealing that leaders who lack moral virtue are driven by lust for power, which has aggravated Nigeria’s challenges of corruption, selfishness, greed, misuse of power, exploitation and anarchy. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to explore the impact of lust on Nigeria’s political leadership and show its negative consequences at all levels of leadership. The Critical theory of sociology has been adopted as the theoretical framework in this study. The theory interrogates social structures and systems of power in the society in order to cause social change. According to its major proponent, Fuchs Christian, critical theory examines political economy, exploitation and domination in the societies. This research is expected to contribute to knowledge on moral directions for just and equitable political leadership in African societies.

Introduction

One of the ways in which writers probe the social conscience is through the dramatic depiction of those placed in positions of great responsibility as public officers. In writing *Death and the King’s Horseman*, Soyinka sternly warns critics of viewing the play as a depiction of the culture clash between the Western world and the traditional Yoruba culture. This is because, his play was concerned with a theme of great importance- that of addressing the social malaise which had plagued the newly independent African society following the long and rigorous battle for freedom from imperialist domination. The play is a commentary on the tragedy of greed and lustful indulgence exhibited by those who should be the protector of their fellow countrymen after years of subjugation in the hands of the colonial masters. The presence of the western characters only serves as a chronological indicator of the period in history in which the action is set. The *Play Death and The King’s Horseman* raise up questions of ethics in political leadership. Prudence is an intellectual virtue that is essential in Leadership, while moral virtue demonstrates what is just and amicable. This paper captures lust as a bane of Nigeria’s political leadership as portrayed in Wole Soyinka’s *Death and King’s Horseman* and Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods are Not to Blame*. These texts view lust from different perspectives. Soyinka portrays his character, Eleshin Oba as a greedy and self-centered personality who seeks to have a child who will bear his name after his demise. He goes ahead to have a union with the girl who was betrothed to Iyaloja’s son. Again, in Ola Rotimi’s *The gods are not to blame*, several conflicts occurred as a result of lust, that is, lust for power. Hence, this paper identifies lust as a source of numerous challenges in the society today.

The literature review on leadership problems as portrayed in literature suggests the problem of leadership in African societies are triggered by greed, selfishness, insecurity, ignorance and unemployment. For instance, Joseph Ayodabo in an article, "Traditionalism as a source of Change: Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* as an epitome", presents Kurunmi's ability to subdue the colonial administrators and even gain their reverences which portrays Kurunmi's determination against colonial or European influences. Again, his tradition is a symbol for the Yoruba nation, which has been grabbed and ruined by hostile neocolonial forces comparable in greed and selfishness both to Alafin Atiba's pervasion and to the chiefs who did nothing (78). According to Ezeugwu Cindy in an essay "Leadership Question in Contemporary Nigeria Drama: A Study of Selected Plays", inferiority complex is associated to the issue of insecurity in leaders which leads to believe that there are superior people in the society to lead besides themselves thus they become insecure. Therefore, they destroy anyone and anything that might be a barrier to their authority. (29-30) In *The Beatification of Area Boy*, Soyinka presents the overbearing physical danger caused as a result of unemployment especially that of youths in the society. (Ademakinwa 8)

On the other hand, Owoye and Bamigboye in "*Between Madmen and the Specialists* and *The Beatification of Area Boy*: A Comparison of Style" affirms that the two plays explores the leadership problems in military regimes. *Madmen and the Specialists* was conceived from the experience of the author Soyinka while the *Beatification of Area Boy* revealed Soyinka's experience of Civil war. (131-135) Olateju and Yusuf in "Blackchannel Communication in Ola Rotimi's *Our husband has gone made Again*" asserts that it is obvious that Lejoka-Brown is not familiar with political strategies and is very unlike experienced politicians who pretend to know everything and anything the populace may expect from them. If political novices are voted into power, their ignorance and gullibility could lead to political failure, economic collapse and unpopularity of the parties they represent (520-535).

Sikiru Ogundokun in "Literature as a Reflection of Socio-political Realities: An Examination of Three Nigerian writers" states that corruption is exposed in Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* by the actions of three ridiculous African leaders led by Kamini. He travels out of his country with the Chairman of Bugara Central Bank who he orders to mint money for him to waste. He states further that these leaders squander money on irrelevant things, punish, promote, demote civil servants at will with no reason and destroy any opposition that tries to stand on their ways. He also said that African leaders symbolize corruption (170-171). Therefore, this paper will explore lust, a psychological phenomenon that produces intense desire for an object, or circumstance to fulfill selfish desire. The lust can be in any form such as the lust for expensive objects (extravagance) or the lust for power, which can manifest in various forms. According to Adekeye et al, any one imbued with lust of power will experience life and work as a jungle where the rule is eat or be eaten, and the winner destroys the losers. These people see their peers as either accomplices or enemies, and their subordinates as objects to be used.

Lust is the insatiable desire for more. In this case, the desire of lust is fulfilled by dehumanizing persons who are barriers to satisfaction and it brings pleasure for being in control of something or another person. It is self-gratifying and void of patience. It breeds selfishness, greed, misuse of power, murder and anger. It can be sexual and non- sexual. Lust is a universal, supernatural phenomenon that is beyond human control. Anyone can fall a prey to it. For instance, Sutherland in the *Marriage of Anansewa* portrays lust. The text presents this inclination vividly as exhibited by Anansewa's father who keeps exploiting the chief who showers gifts on Anansewa in order to win her heart because of his intense desire for her. As a phenomenon, the lust for power by the affluent few affects African people suffer because of poor leadership. It is exhibited by leaders who are greedy and lack self- control, and not ready to make sacrifices for the people they claim to be serving. These are the major causes of war, poverty, and poor management.

Concept of Lust in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

Since lust is an intense desire to possess an individual or acquire objects, materials, money and power especially through the use of force, without consideration about its effect on any other person, Elesin Oba's desire to have a union with the girl who was already betrothed to Iyaloja's son is lustful because he is not concerned about the effect on Iyaloja's son. Elesin Oba can be said to symbolise leaders in the society who exploit the masses without considering the effect of their actions on the citizens, while the girl is a symbol of masses who suffer denial of their rights as a result a leader's lustfulness.

The Elesin Oba also shows his interest in the girl betrothed to Iyaloja's son and she cannot decline because of his position in the society. He commands a position of great respect and honor as a chief so he attracts the respect of Iyaloja who volunteers her son's bride to him as a sacrifice for communal peace. This can be related to the way leaders manipulate the constitution in order to suit themselves and their relatives or how

they are suddenly discharged and acquitted after being summoned. Some leaders see their positions as opportunities to manipulate people and processes among others.

Iyaloja did not give her son the opportunity to express himself pertaining to the demand of the Elesin to have a union with the girl who had already been betrothed to him. She feels her son's wish is hers.

Woman: But she is betrothed to your son. Tell him

*Iyaloja: My son's wish is mine. I did the asking for him,
the loss can be remedied. But who will remedy the blight
of closed hands on the day when all should be
openness and light?.....p21*

Elesin Oba is autocratic; he demands to have a union with the girl despite the fact that she was betrothed to Iyaloja's son. His action symbolise the leaders who vow during political campaigns to serve the people with their lives, only to rip apart the national treasuries and embezzle the funds accrued through the sweat and sacrifice of the working masses. He symbolizes the leader who enforces his wishes rather than harnesses the contribution of his followers. Elesin has no interest in the welfare of his people. The girl is a symbol of citizens who are voiceless and whose fates are determined by their leaders.

Concept of Lust in Rotimi's *The Gods are not to blame*

Anyone exhibiting lust seeks to bring judgment on any obstacle to his/ her satisfaction. Odewale and King Adetusa misuses power at the place where three footpaths meet when both of them lay claim to a single land. They use charm on each other because they were angry. This results in the death of King Adetusa.

Some leaders buy off people's land at ridiculous prices; destroy citizen's properties because they are in power and despite the people's lament and complaint, they are not heard because those in power are driven by the overwhelming lust to possess as much as possible, while the citizens suffer in silence.

ODEWALE: Bundle me up?

You will have to kill me first!

*(Pulls out his tortoiseshell talisman pendant, hold
sit towards his assailants, and Mesmerizes them.)*

What are these before my very eyes?

What are this before my very eyes?

Are they mountains or are they trees?

They are humanbeings and not trees.

They are humanbeings and not mountains.

For trees have no eyes;

And mountains have no eyes

Then let this eyes around me close.

Close in sleep, close in sleep.....p47

OLD MAN(King Adetusa):No termite ever boasts of devouring rock!

I am your lord, your charm can do me nothing

Venom of viper does nothing to the back of a tortoise

The grinding stone says you must kneel to my power;

The basket says you must tremble when you see me.....

.....Drop dead, drop dead.....p48

The town people of Kutuje laments their fate, remarking how good leaders die prematurely and the bad ones enjoy longevity. The Gods are Not to Blame dramatise the plight of good leaders whose lives are cut short arising from the conspiracy of negative elements in their government who unseat them through violent coups and politically engineered removal. Good leadership requires great sacrifice as much suffering is endured on the path to rule equitably. King Odewale and King Adetusa fight over the claim to piece a piece of land and the ensuing conflict leads to the death of King Adetusa.

Townpeople: (variously.)

The world is bad

One does not know who to trust

The good ruler who stands for people becomes a victim too soon.

And bad rulers like bad sauce, stay longer!

A world that knows not what it wants.

A dizzy world, this.(24)

King Adetusa and Odewale lack self-control. Because they cannot control their ire, they engage in a fight over a piece of land. Leaders also exhibit bad attitude even when convening a meeting. They engage in all sort of fight, at the local and national level, using vulgar languages on one another.

Conclusion

The major cause of crisis in Leadership is lust for power. Lust for power is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the economy of many societies. Misuse of power, lack of self-control, treasury-looting and avariciousness in leadership occur because of the lust for power. Lust results in power-drunkenness and becomes toxic to political administration and leadership, because when a leader begins to put self-interest before that of the people he has been elected to serve, the citizens or masses inevitably suffer for this. When our leaders and citizens embrace moral virtue and allow the greater reward of good governance of the people to suppress the lust for power, this would impact on the future generation who will then have ideal role models to fashion their ideology of leadership in the right directions. The result of equitable, morally driven leadership is justice for all which should usher in contentment and fulfillment.

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