

**DRAMA AS A PANACEA FOR CURBING SOCIAL ILLS IN THE SOCIETY:  
AN INTERPRETATION OF ABE AABO WRITTEN  
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**ABSTRACT**

*Lying, corruption and fornication are some of the social ills that are not only common in the public sector but also among the religious leaders. Looking at the society nowadays most people in position of authority and even the spiritual leaders who are expected to direct people aright are the ones misleading the society due to their involvement in negative attitudes. This paper did not only trace the source of indiscipline in the society but also proffered solutions to curb or restrain the incidence of such abnormality, as exemplified in a play 'Abe Aabo' written by Akinwunmi Isola. The paper adopts sociological theory as postulated by Karl Marx and his followers. The findings of the study reveal the theme of lying, fornication and corruption as the causes of indiscipline in Akinwunmi's play titled "Abe Aabo" (Under Refuge). The study reveals the tricks used by the religious leaders to perpetually oppress the members of their congregation. The major findings of the work include: truth and fairness as tools to free the society from the claws of the corrupt religious leaders. Moreover, instead of taking negative steps against the evil perpetrators, the society can engage them in mutual dialogue to stop their evils acts. The paper therefore concludes that unless the under privileged in the society rise to fight corruption, fornication etc., the perpetrators would continue to dominate the scene. Literature especially drama is recommended as a tool to challenge the corrupt religious leaders.*

**Introduction**

Bad behaviour is social illness which is well pronounced in Nigerian religious institution. It has been an incurable diseases in the family, society and nation. According to Samson (2009), bad behavior ranges from actions to mannerisms made by individuals, organisms, systems, or artificial entities in conjunction with themselves or their environment, which includes the other physical environment. Individuals in the society tend to be different in behavior, and also these behaviors may be positive or negative but for society to be of positive behavior the leaders have to inculcate it to the members of the society.

Samson (2009) sees behavior as a phenomenon that is influenced by the endocrine system and nervous system. Behavior influences the culture and tradition of an

individual based on the characteristics it follows and also bad behavior mostly influences the society at large. As it is seen in the society, literary text tries to expose individual behavior either good or bad just as it is exhibited in the selected text for this study: '*Abe Aabo*' written by Akinwunmi'.

However, it is believed that media plays important roles in shaping individual's behavior in the society. Media has really expanded these days as it is available in the form of films, TV, video games, social networking platforms, radio etc. Schools also play a huge role in shaping up the mindset and character of teens (Samson, 2013). They meet all sorts of people there, and in many cases bad advice determine how they turn out. Hence, the society influences one's behaviour in an unlimited ways. This can also differ in diverse cultures. After all, human beings are social creatures who are very much shaped by external factors. For instance, pressures from society may restrict someone to engage in jobs that one may not like, in order to meet societal expectations of success, status, financial stability, gender roles etc. Similarly, immoral act is one which is not acceptable by the society. The adjective 'immoral' refers to the behavior or actions that are not considered good. To be immoral can also mean not following the accepted standard of sexual behavior (Agu, 2012:26).

Drama is an agent of exposing bad behaviors among our religious leaders. Sequel to this, Adelugba, Obafemi and Adeyemi, (2004) provides appropriate context about the importance of drama and theatre as they continuously portray the various positive and negative elements about the society we live in. According to them, drama plays a vital role in molding the members of the society's character, and attitude. It determines how they see other people, their general outlook, and their ethics.

Looking at the impact of drama on religion, Ogunbiyi (1981) opines that, looking around the world today shows that religion often causes division than unity. Drama can be used to expose our religious leaders, it can be a tool in the hand of the masses which can be used to fight our religious cheaters because, they use many unexpected ways to gain the followers' mind. Some of the religious leaders are agent of destruction in the society, because they mislead some of their followers. They pretend to be good shepherds to the followers. They make use of the name of the Lord to deceive, manipulate peoples' mind. Drama is one of the best ways of exposing the bad behaviors among our religious leaders as we can see from the selected text '*Abe Aabo*' written by Akinwunmi Isola. The play portrayed the negative and mischievous attitude of religious leaders in the society. It exposes their lifestyles, the method or techniques they use to pollute peoples' mind through fake prophesies and cajole in the name of miracles. They claim to be faithful Pastor or Imam but they are unfaithful. This paper seeks to look at the bad behaviors of these people in the society, using '*Abe Aabo*' by Akinwunmi Isola as a case study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory adopted for this work is the sociological theory as postulated by Karl-Marx and Fredrick Engels in the communist manifest which states that human history is that of struggle for freedom or conflict of power. It concerns the efforts of both man and woman to be free from domination or oppression. It concerns man's struggle to free himself from another man's oppression. According to the theory, life changes from

time to time, from stone ages, to the capitalists and to communist period; each with its own characteristics. The most popular however, is the capitalist period which gives prominence to technological development which improves the economy. However, it also gives room for cheating and oppression on the part of these who are interested in politics. This is because only the rulers are in charge of the economy.

The process of production, according to Marx, is a collective effort, not an individual one organized societies are the Chief creative agents in human history, and historical progress requires increasingly developed societies for production. Such societies are achieved by continual refinement of production methods and of the division of labour. By division of labour, Marx meant that each person specializes on one job, resulting in the development of two classes of people – the rulers and the workers. The ruling class owns the means of production while the working class consists of the non-owners, who are exploited (treated unfairly) by the owners

The theory postulates that there is a very close link between literature and society. It is therefore essential to have a deep knowledge of the social life, economy, history and the entire life-style of a society in order to fully understand the society. There is no doubt that Yoruba moral values come to conflict with foreign ideals, hence, those values are almost completely relegated to the background. For this reason, there is need to fight for the resuscitation and survival of the society's culture and ideals in order to move the society forward.

### **The Plot Construction of *Abe Aabo***

The play portrays Jeneeti and Sande (her brother) outside their house, Jeneeti was cutting her nails at the same time singing while her brother was attending to his homework. Their mother (Maria) came out and heard Jeneeti singing a song that irritated her, she scolded her and talked to her in a good manner. The father (Joonu) met them there and asked for his food. As they were eating, Joonu decided to ask Sande for a word of God on the Bible.

Scene two beings at Joonu's house, Prophet Jeremaya and his friend Solo were seen in the house discussing with Joonu about their false prophesy telling him that the Lord sent them to him for their accommodation and Joonu being a religious man agreed and accommodated them in his house. This led to his downfall and commotion in his family. He was the one feeding Jeremaya and Solo while his own families were being starved.

After a month that the Prophet packed into Joonu's house, Maria was sitting at the same time folding clothes, Joonu asked his wife what made the soup to be watery. Maria answered telling her husband that the money used to prepare the soup was too small because he knew how many people that were eating from the pot of soup every day. This got Joonu angry and he said it is better for his family to starve than the God sent Prophet.

Jeremaya and his friend Maikeeli who were also prophets were discussing on how to loot the church treasury. This depicts the attitude of today's religious leaders how they always loot the church treasury with false prophets. As they were discussing, Jeneeti

entered the house, Maikeeli being a promiscuous prophet started tripping for her but Jeremaya stopped him because he too was having a crush on her but didn't know how to approach Joonu her father about it. Maikeeli also discussed with Jeremaya about some spiritual powers which he could use to generate crowd in his church and others. He told Jeremaya that he would take him to a herbalist who will prepare charm for him the following day.

The following day, Jeremaya and Maikeeli were seen at the Babalawo's house consulting an oracle. This portrays the attitude and bad behaviours of some new generation religious leaders on how they visit ungodly places seeking for spiritual power which negates the will of God.

The Babalawo too gave some charms to Jeremaya and as they were discussing, Jimoo peeped and saw Jeremaya and Maikeeli but they did not see him. So Jimoo decided to hide himself in order to hear the rest of their discussions. He was surprised and decided not to shout. When Jeremaya and his friend left the Babalawo's house, Jimoo entered and the Babalawo's narrated to him how pastors and Imam normally troop to his door step seeking for spiritual power. This showcases the character of the so called religious leaders who always visit different kinds of places for spiritual power.

Jimoo and his friend Oluwole who are also Jeneeti's fiancé were discussing the changes in Jeneeti's behaviour since the arrival of the prophet. As they were discussing, Sande who was coming back from school entered. As they were asking him about what he was taught at school, Jeneeti and Jeremaya were seen coming back from church. Jimoo, Oluwole and Sunday hid themselves and were peeping through the curtain. They were watching sexual immorality that Jeremaya and Jeneeti were doing in order to catch them red handed. Jeremaya was seen looking confused, going-up-and-down soliloquizing as he called Jimoo's name, insulted and rained curses on him.

As he was doing this, Maikeeli entered and he narrated everything to him. He advised Jeremaya to be very careful with Jeneeti because Jimoo and Oluwole would be spying them now since they were caught. In the last scene, Jeremaya and his partner Solo were seen in the church and after the service Jeremaya asked three women to wait behind for Abe Aabo (under Refuge). He asked Solo to go home because he might come back very late. He asked two of the women to go home and tell Maria not to go for her special prayers. As he began to pray for Maria, he started caressing Maria but she, being a good wife rejected the offer from him, to help her in order to give birth after eight years of barrenness.

Jeremaya was caught by Oluwole, Jimoo and Joonu while hiding at the church premises, watching what Jeremiah and Maria were doing in the church. This scenario again reveals bad behaviours and attitudes of some of our religious leaders and misuse of the word of God to deceive the world and also loot the church treasury using fake prophesy.

### **Themes of the Drama “Abe Aabo” in accordance with sociological approach**

Theme is the central idea in a play. It is the main point in a particular play or novel. It is very essential and vital when analyzing a play in order to enhance more understanding. The drama “Abe Aabo” (Under refuge) is an interesting play, although it reveals diverse bad behaviours of the religious leaders. Nevertheless, the writer has a message to pass to the society. Akinwunmi Isola’s works are very relevant to the development of a society.

In *Abe Aabo*, there are themes which are seen as the main points which Akinwunmi Ishola wants to showcase to the society. These themes are discussed below:

#### ***1. Theme of lying***

One of the characters (Jeremaya) lied when he visited Joonu. He lied against the Holy Spirit as he revealed fake prophesy, that God sent him to Joonu to accommodate him and Solo in his house, when he said:

*Jeremaya:* Oluwa ran mi si o, Oluwa n fe  
lo o fun idagbasoke ise re  
sugbon ohun ti o wa se pataki  
julo nipe a n wa ile ti a maa gbe  
laduugbo yii. A si ti fi sinu adura,  
Oluwa si fesi wi pe: “E lo si ile Joonu  
iranse mi, Ibe ni ki eyin ki o si maa gbe”.  
(11-13).

*Jeremaya:* (The Lord sent me to you, He said he want to use you for the development of his work. But the most important of all is that we are looking for where to stay in the neighbourhood. We have prayed over it, And the Lord said: “Go into John’s house, my servant, Thou shall be residing there.11-13).

This behaviour is common among our religious leaders today. Most of them do not fear God. A lot of religious leaders in the society tell a lot of lies. Jeremaya represents one of these leaders that Akinwunmi Isola was trying to showcase his bad behaviour to the society, that whenever they witness such a leader, they should kick against them, for the society to be better. Jeneeti also tell lies when she was asked by her father to explain what caused commotion in his house. She lied, that she was helping Jeremaya to keep his book inside. His uncle and Olu (her fiance) started fighting with Jeremaya whereas she was caught playing love with Jeremaya. She said:

*Jeneeti:* En, in, iwe ni mo fe e ba won ko  
wole, ini awon egbon mi ati Olu wa  
jade lati inu yara ti won si n ba  
wolii ja (58).

*Jeneeti:* (En, in, I wanted to help him keep his books inside, that was when my uncle and Olu came out from their room and started fighting the Prophet.58).

The spirit of lie is not only found among the leaders, even their followers tell lies. Jeneeti represents one of such young girls. However, Akinwunmi Isola is trying to tell the society that, people should desist from telling lies.

## 2. Theme of Corruption

Jeremaya was seen as a corrupt religious leader when discussing with his friend about himself being the one selling both candle and olive oil (Anointing oil) to the members. Atimes he asks the members to bring the money for the candle that will be used for prayers. He said:

- Jeremaya:* Ogbon ti mo wa n da bayii nipe  
funra mi ni mo n ta abela ati ororo.  
Mo le so fun elomiran pe ki o mowo  
abela wa ki n fi gbadura fun un.  
(27-28).
- Jeremaya:* (The tactic that I am using is that,  
I am the one selling candle  
and olive oil. I use to ask some  
others to bring money for candle  
that I will use to pray for him. 27-28).

This shows that some of our spiritual leaders are oppressors, exploiters and cheaters. However, this behaviour is common to the both political and religious leaders in our society. Some of them lack human sympathy, all they do is to loot and enrich themselves. Jeremaya represents one of these leaders that Akinwunmi Isola is trying to portray to the society so that the members of the congregation will be enlightened on their bad attitude and know how some religious leaders merchandise their followers. This is because, if the society relents, the next generation will see corruption as a way of life.

## 3. Theme of fornication

Jeremaya was seen as a professional fornicator. This was shown in his conversation with his friend when he said:

- Maikeeli:* Taa ni yen? Abi okan ninu awon  
aguntan re niyi?
- Jeremaya:* Rara o, omo baba onile yii ni, Mo  
tile n ro o pe ki n ba baba re  
so o pe kin fe omo naa. O wu mi jojo.
- Maikeeli:* Nibo lo fe fi Abigeeli ti Ilesa si?
- Jeremaya:* Se eewo ni bi mo ba ni Iyawo  
meji? Abigeeli wa ni Ilesa. Ko le maa  
ba mi kiri. O si ye ki n tun ni okan  
lodo. Un kuku nii so pe mo ti ni  
Iyawo kan. (32).
- Maikeeli:* (Who is that? Is she one of your sheep?)
- Jeremaya:* No, She is the landlord's daughter. I was  
even thinking of discussing with her father  
about my intention to marry her.  
I really like her.
- Maikeeli:* What about Abigeeli in Ilesa?
- Jeremaya:* Is it an abomination to marry two wives?  
Abigeeli is in Ilesa, She can't be going

everywhere with me. I will not even tell her that I have a wife already. 32).

With Jeremaya and Maikeeli's conversation, it can be seen that Jeremaya is a chronic fornicator. Despite the fact that he is already married, he wants to marry Jeneeti as second wife. This also reflects the behaviour of our religious leaders in the society who married more than one wife (especially Christian leaders), which is against the teaching of the Bible, inculcating bad behaviours to their church members/congregations by teaching bad doctrine. Here, Akinwunmi Isola wants the society to oppose this awful behaviour so that the society would be better.

#### **4. Theme of using charm**

The use of charm by our religious leaders can be seen from the character of Maikeeli and Jeremaya when they visited Babalawo's house, seeking for spiritual power and charm that would make their church grow. This is reflected in Jeremaya's conversations with Babalawo in the play when he said:

*Jeremaya:* E ba mi wa apero to dara,  
E ma si gbagbe madarikan, nitori  
pe enikan wa nile ti mo n gbe  
ti ko feran mi. A a mo ohun to  
le se e (44).

*Jeremaya:* (Get me a charm that will make my church to be crowdly. Again don't forget 'madarikan', because there is someone in my house, who doesn't like me. We don't know what he can do.44).

In the play *Abe Aabo*, the use of charm can also be seen on the last page when Jeremaya was caught by Olu, Jimoo and Joonu, playing and seducing Maria. When they started beating him, he removed his waist charm (Igbadi). Looking at our society nowadays, one notice that this behaviour is common to some of our spiritual leaders and their followers. Jeremaya was an example of those leaders, who use charm and spiritual power while preaching the word of God.

Both the political and religious leaders in our society are guilty of this behavior. They use charm and other spiritual power to talk to the innocent citizen and members of their congregation in order to adhere to their instruction. Akinwunmi Isola is trying to expose this bad behaviour to the society so that whenever they witness this, they should avoid such a leader, so that the society will become clean and peaceful. It is no longer news that, there are some religious leaders in the house of God who wear waist charm (Igbadi/Onde) Jeremaya displayed this when he was being beaten by Olu, Jimoo and Joonu. He removed the charm (Igbadi/onde) from his waist to beat his opponents.

#### **5. Theme of Faithfulness**

Two of the characters (Maria and Joonu) in the play were faithful. Joonu's faithfulness can be seen when he was told by Jeremaya that the Lord sent him to his house. He accommodated him because of the faith he has in the religious leaders. Likewise when he was told that Jeremaya was seducing Jeneeti, he did not believe it because he has

faith in the word of God and he believed that Jeremaya is a true prophet of God. This is reflected in the play thus:

Joonu: Maa wule soro mo wolii, ma soro.  
Gbogbo re lo ti ye mi... Mo si mo pe  
inunibini nilati po, sugbon baye sata  
pelu esu, eke ni won, won nse e lasan.  
Bi ko ba se pe aireni fomo fun iru iwo olu  
yii, ti o lemii isin tile ti je. O ri i pe Jeneeti fee  
maa sunmo Oluwa, inu tun n bi o (59)

Joonu: (Don't bother to talk again Prophet, do not talk. I could understand everything... I know there must be much hatred. but people and Devil may take you unserious, both are liars, their plans will be in vain. If not that there was no responsible person to give my child to, you of all people like Olu that did not have spirit of worship. You could see that Jeneeti is moving closer to God and you are angry. 59).

Hence, Akinwunmi Isola wants the society to know that being too religious can be dangerous sometimes but it helps Joonu not to fall into Jeremaya's trap for his family because he was faithful. He believed in the word of God. Joonu exhibits the spirit of fanaticism which the writer was trying to expose. In most cases, he talks against Islamic religion which his brother practices. He says:

Joonu: Bi o ba le ri bee inu mi iba dun pupo,  
Nitori pe ibanuje lo je fun mi pe aburo mi si wa  
ninu okunkun. Mo ti gbiyanju titi, ko gbo, boya  
Olorun le titori tiyin yi i lokan pada. (14).

Joonu: (I will be so glad if you can preach to him,  
because am not happy to see my brother being  
in the darkness. I have tried my best to convince  
him, but he did not listen. Maybe God can use  
you to change his mind. 14).

Also, Maria's faithfulness is revealed in the play *Abe Aabo*, when She went for "Under refuge" (Abe Aabo). Jeremaya promised her that once he sleeps with her, she will conceive. Maria refused because she is a faithful woman. She did not want to cheat on her husband. Although there are people who cheat on their spouses, yet, still faithful to their husband/wife. A woman like Maria is not common nowadays. Her faithfulness was presented in the play when she said:

Maria: Emi ko, Olugbala ma je ki n ri ru e  
Olorun lo lomo, mo sa a ti bimo ri....  
Wo o, e se, emi o fe o. E fi mi sile  
(Wolii fee tu aso Maria.) E wo o, e se,  
e se, n o pariwo o...Mo ni ki e fi mi sile!  
bi bee ko maa kigbe (74-75)



Maria: (Not me, may the Savior forbid bad things  
It is God that provide child, after all am not  
a barren woman...See, leave me, I don't want.  
Leave me alone,(Prophet wants to lose Maria's  
cloth) See, leave me!, I will shout...I will shout.  
If not, I would shout.74-75)

In the play, the writer wants the readers to know that even though the society is corrupt, there are still some wives that are faithful to their husband and no matter what the situation is, they will endure and never go against the will of God.

### **6. Theme of love and affection**

One of the characters in the play (Oluwole) showed love to his fiancé, Jeneeti. When Jeremaya was trying to seduce Jeneeti, he came out from his hidden place and beat up Jeremaya. This is reflected in the play when he said:

Oluwole: Aa, wolii Iya, owo te o,  
Ase olosi ni o, owo mi te o lonii...  
Se iru ohun ti e n fi wolii se niyen...  
Iwo, n o na o pa ni, agbaaya yii. wolii  
toromaya (56-57)

Oluwole: (Ha, useless prophet, you are caught  
So you are so useless, you are caught today...  
Is this what you are doing with post...You, I  
will kill you today!.You this promiscuous, old  
fool. A promiscuous Prophet. 56-57).

From the play, the writer wants the society to know that love is a very strong emotion that can be expressed to anyone. Oluwole represents the man who has true love and affection for his partner at all cost. The writer wants lovers/spouses to inculcate the spirit of love and affection through the character of Oluwole, despite the fact that Jeneeti accepted Jeremaya's offer, Oluwole did not allow the love he has for his fiancé to be altered by what he saw Jeremaya doing with his fiancé. This is in line with the saying, "Love is the fulfillment of laws"

### **Discussion of the Findings**

In this study, it is revealed that our religious leaders are the architects of most of the problems facing our society as presented in the play "*Abe Aabo*" by Akinwunmi Isola. The findings made us to realize that there are many fake pastors with evil intentions in the society. They disguise as faithful men of God. Therefore, the major findings of the paper include:

- i. The bad religious leaders do fornicate and also lie in the name of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, they use charm to increase their congregation.
- ii. The paper also reveals that some of our religious leaders are out to merchandise the unsuspected members of their congregations. They don't care about the salvation of the congregation; instead the love of money occupied their hearts.

- iii. There is nothing like “Abe Aabo” (Under Refuge) but fornication and adultery that our some of our religious leaders do engage the young ladies into.
- iv. Many men of God were not called; they are just looking for means of making some income. Therefore they see the establishment of churches as business ventures.
- v. This paper reveals the importance of songs. The author makes us to realize that songs play vital roles in any religion. Towards the end of the play, when Jeremaya and Maikeeli were caught, they started singing religious songs like true and faithful Christians. The Babalawo (herbalist) too did not relent in his traditional songs. Likewise, Jimoo did not stop singing while rounding off his roles. All these show that, song cannot be separated from religious activities
- vi. The findings reveal that the three religions can exist side by side without being in disarray or commotion.

### **Conclusion**

Yoruba says “If a boat, sails on the sea/ocean, it will definitely come back to anchor by the seashore. This play tries to emphasize or expose our religious leaders that lack the gift of the Holy Spirit which result to stealing, fornication, fetishism and unfaithfulness. The writer uses this play to portray the situation of our religious leaders especially, in Nigeria. Most of the problems which are common to these leaders are: lying, fetishism, stealing, corruption, cheating, killing and deceitfulness.

In “*Abe Aabo*”, the playwright makes use of personification, quotations from the Bible, simile, hyperbole, proverbs, incantations and songs to display his literary work which makes his work to be unique. The paper X-rays the bad behaviours of our religious leaders which include adultery, fornication, lying, stealing, cheating and hypocrisy. Sociological theory was used to bring out the theme simultaneously. The study adopts the theory because the theorist postulates that, there is a very close link between Literature and society. The writer expresses his experiences in the society in the play “*Abe Aabo*”. Also, he pictures how the society at large can get rid of the social evils such as, fornication, lying, stealing, cheating, hypocrisy, exploitation, sexual immorality etc

In this paper, all the evils, being perpetrated by the so called Prophets or Men of God by subjugating their congregation to unnecessary exploitation are thrown open. Moreover, the effect of such attitude in terms of lack of progress and untold hardship in the society are also revealed. The paper concludes and recommends that, the various religious leaders most especially the Christian, Muslim and traditional priests should be in harmony. As stakeholders, there should be a forum where the three religious leaders should be meeting to deliberate on both national and societal issues. Furthermore, all the adherents of the religions should stop being subservient under their leaders. Hence, their unnecessary manipulation will be reduced.

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