

Theme of Exploitation and Oppression in the Novel of Lere Adeyemi's *Akuko Gagara*

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Abstract

Exploitation and oppression are social illnesses, which are well pronounced in the Nigerian political system and public sector. The belief is that, leaders in position of power, or, at the helm of affairs are those who usually make it a habit to exploit the citizens and use corrupt practices to enrich themselves. This study's main objective was to see how exploitation and oppression can be sources of conflict. It also aimed to suggest remedial measures to the anomalies. This paper discussed the theme of exploitation and oppression as sources of conflict in Lere Adeyemi's novel namely **Akuko Gagara** (2001). The research methodology adopted for this study was descriptive, using classical Marxist theory as postulated by Karl Marx and his followers. The study has revealed, among other things, tricks used by the political leaders to perpetually oppress the masses. It also revealed that, there is strength in unity. The oppressed could be liberated from oppression only if they were united and determined to fight for their rights and freedom. The major findings of the paper included that, truth and fairness were tools to free the oppressed from the hand of the exploiter and oppressor. Another finding was that apart from the use of negative methods such as, terrorism, kidnapping and violence which are now rampant in our society in fighting the oppressors, other positive method like dialogue can be adopted to fight for freedom from the hands of exploiters and oppressors. The study concluded that unless the under-privileged in the society rose to fight oppression, the oppressor would continue to dominate the scene. It also recommended that literature could be used to fight corrupt leaders.

Key Words: Exploitation, Oppression, Conflict

Introduction

Exploitation and oppression are social vices deeply rooted in the society which have become norms in Nigeria. Hence, exploitation and oppression have for long been a disquieting but neglected phenomena in Nigerian society. Scholars and observers have affirmed that it is those in the position of power that exploit and oppress the masses (Agu, 2012, p.166). This is because authority lies in the hands of the leaders. Sarkar (2012, p.12) opines that some people view exploitation and oppression from the economic aspect, that is, exploitation can only exist in the economic aspect of a nation, but this is not so. Exploitation and oppression have spread into every aspect of the society. He is of the opinion that the most potent weapon in the hands of the exploiters is the mind to oppress. Sarkar is of the opinion that exploitation,

deception and oppression are inevitable. He believes there is a relationship between the two terms, exploitation and oppression. The ruling class exploits the masses, either in politics, or other aspects of the society, and uses the position of authority negatively. To the leaders, masses amount to nothing (p.13).

When we talk of the sources of conflict, oppression and exploitation are very unique out of other sources, as they have reflected in the selected texts. Akinnawo and Adetula (2006, p.12) observe that conflict or revolution have been part of the human endeavours. Owoeye (2008, p.5) identifies sources of conflict as revolution from oppression, care-free attitude of leaders, religion, tribalism, etc. Since human beings are not perfect, wherever there is a gathering of people, there is the possibility of exploitation and oppression emerging, which may lead to conflict between the oppressed and oppressor. Adekunle (2013, p.29) says the three prominent religions among the Yoruba today are against oppression, exploitation, misuse of power, war and betrayal in their doctrines. These are vices in Yoruba philosophy. Adekunle's explanation shows clearly that, exploitation, betrayal, oppression, deceit and colonialism are sources of conflicts. Kehinde (1998, p.36) states that since the economy of the country is in the hands of the leaders, they do not want the power out of their hands, this makes deceit, exploitation and oppression to be prominent in the society. Opefeyitimi (1997, p.48) also supports Kehinde (1998) and while examining the Marxist theory, he says:

Awon omo leyin Karl Marx gba pe iyanje, imunisin, itanje
ati ireje lati odo awon adari ati olowo a maa fa ikolura
lawujo

(Karl Marx followers agree that exploitation, colonialism,
deceit and oppression from the leaders and the wealthy,
always cause conflict in the society).

Apart from deceit, exploitation and oppression, those in the place of power and in position of authority usually force the masses to do things out of their will, which can result in conflict. Olawuwo (2013, pp.198-209) adds that "authority lies in the hands of just a few, which causes misunderstanding in the society". She states that many times, exploitation and oppression which result into conflict can be harmful because of the violence involved, and that violence will definitely bring destruction or loss of lives or scars that cannot be erased on people. No wonder Olawuwo (2013, p.198) states that:

A situation where people begin to fight, engaging in
physical combat of one form or the other, and use all forms
of arms always leads to one injury or the other (p. 119).

When we consider past events on conflicts in the society, we could see that it has never brought forth any good result. Confusion, loss of life and property, pain, bruising, betrayal and countless woes are the result. Ajeleti (2008, pp.14-28) makes it clear those three important things which the Yoruba consider as causes of conflict and loss of lives are: money, land and women. Adeola (2013, p.150) explains how land, money, breach of agreement, women, kicking against exploitation and oppression. Osoba (2008, p.4) opines that resolution of any kind of conflict in society is the duty of various people, starting from the local rulers to the great monarchs, heads of states and establishments, people in authority, employers and even family heads. Furthermore, conflict can be a misunderstanding emerging between diverse cadre of people, or nation, as a result of exploitation and oppression. There is

very urgent and important need for people to rise against exploitation, colonialism, oppression, and misuse of power. This research has shown that wherever there is exploitation and oppression, especially amongst the leaders, conflict is inevitable.

Existing Critical Works on the Subject Matter

Various literary works abound on the topic of this research work. Arohunmalase (1997) identifies power with the ruling class who are oppressors. He arrives at the conclusion that there are exploitation and oppression, struggle and protest between the ruling elite or capitalist oppressors and the masses. Adebayo (2013) examines the impact of Yoruba written literature in conflict and conflict resolutions. Adisa et al (2013) study the roles of community leaders in conflict resolution. He states that the community leaders have much impact in conflict resolution in the sense that most of the conflicts are settled by them. Waheed (2011) investigates argumentative sentences that may result into conflicts and explanatory sentences that can be used to settle conflicts. Adeyemo (2013) examines the impact of Yoruba language in conflict and conflict resolution. He concludes that, Yoruba language plays vital roles in conflict resolution. Hamzat (2014) uses new historicist theory to analyse the abuse of power that led to conflict in *Omo Olokun Esin*. Adeosun (2015) writes on proverb as an indigenous knowledge system which serves as a tool in conflict resolution. The significance of these works which concentrate on theme of exploitation, oppression and conflict as represented in the novels of Lere Adeyemi is that, they will enhance the understanding of the society vis-z-vis oppression in the society.

The research methodology for this study is descriptive. The novels are selected not only because of their political theme, but also their theme of oppression, abuse of power and exploitation, which are the focus of this study. The selected texts form our primary source of information, while other textbooks, journals, articles, dissertations and theses form our secondary source of information. Internet sources have equally supplied us with useful pieces of information that are very relevant to this study. The two novels are analysed within the context of Marxist theory, which is our framework.

Theoretical Framework: Marxist Sociology of Literature

Marxism is an economic and social-political worldview that centers around a political ideology on how to change and improve society by implementing socialism. Marxist criticism is an aspect of Marxism propounded in the communist manifesto (1884) by Karl Marx and Frederic Engels. Among the followers of Marx and Engels are, Lukacs (1862), Eagleton (1976), Lenin (1977) and William (1977) etc. The theory believes that the history of man is all about class struggle, and all actions taken by man are to liberate himself from the oppression of the oppressor. Marx and Engels are of the view that there must be a change in the ruling class because as long as a particular class of people continues to own the means of production, exploitation and oppression will be on the increase. Marxist theory sees literature as a means of portraying the true picture of a society, that is, literature of a group of people says much about them. Literature reveals what happens in society so as to use it for the correction of the ills in the society (Agu, 2012,p.166).

Marxism is based upon a materialist interpretation of history. Taking the idea that social change occurs because of the struggle between different classes within the society who are under contradiction, one against the other, the Marxist analysis leads to the conclusion that capitalism, the currently dominant form of economic management, leads to the oppression of

the proletariat, who not only make up the majority of the world's population but also spend their lives working for the benefit of the bourgeoisie or the wealthy ruling class in society (Eagleton, 1976, p.60). To correct this inequality between the bourgeoisie, who are the wealthy minority and the proletariat, who are the poorer majority, Marxism advocates and believes in the historical inevitability of a proletarian revolution. Abrahamson (1990) cited in Adeosun (2005, p.41) supports that as long as the poor majority work for the capitalist, they will be helpless and weary. He urges that:

So long as the means of production are owned by one group, there is oppression and estrangement. Recognize its true source. Don't blame it on the stars and don't look to religion or to science for answers and when you recognize the true source of your estrangement, Act!

What Abrahamson is saying is that, since the wealth of a society belongs to the wealthy ruling class, there must be exploitation and oppression. The source of the exploitation and oppression should be exposed. The society should not see it as destiny or God's plan and also scientific methods should not be resorted to, but society should take action and confront the oppressor (revolution or conflict). Marxists believe that eventually a socialist society would develop into an entirely classless system which is known as communism in Marxist thought (Adeyemi, 2006, pp.36-39).

As a tool for the study, analysis, evaluation and interpretation of literary works, Marxism views literature in its cultural, economic and political context (Igwe, 2009, p.167). The implication here is that the critic has to do a thorough examination of the relationship between the artist (say the novelist, poet or playwright) and the society and how this affects what has been written. The application of Marxist theory to this study is appropriate because it captures the exploitation and oppressive tendencies of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. The researcher adopted this theory due to its strength and principles as follows:

1. It shows that literature is capable of exposing the tricks used by exploiters on the masses;
2. It shows that literature can be used to fight the exploiters (bourgeoisie) that is, literature can be used to get freedom from the hand of the oppressor;
3. It shows that literature reveals what happens in the society, so as to use it for the correction of the ills in the society. It is based on the belief that literature and society are related; and it reveals the ideologies of the society and writer.

These are the reasons why this theory is preferred for this study. In spite of the strength of this theory as mentioned above, it has been observed that it has its own weaknesses such as:

1. It may not be capable for analysis of all literary texts that are not closely related to the issue of economy, conflict, exploitation, oppression and capitalism.
2. It has to do with confrontation, protest, conflict, antagonism, demonstration and collision.

Exploitation, oppression and conflict

The word exploitation was borrowed from French and Latin languages. This word is known as "exploit" in Latin language, meaning "misuse, ill-treat" and in French language it is known as "tour de force" meaning "doing things with skill and brilliance". The word exploitation

was established in English discourse in 1538 (Houghton: 2009:405). Houghton defines exploitation as:

An act of slavery or making use of others for personal interest or gain, that is why the authorities see the position or power as an opportunity to accumulate wealth, enslave others, cheat others and satisfy their interest (p.405).

Going by this definition, Houghton is saying that people in power are the exploiters who enslave and squeeze masses for their own selfish interest. When Opefeyitimi (1997) examines Marxist theory as cited in Adeola (2013), he says power belongs to the ruling party and the people in the ruling party are few in number. This ruling party (exploiter) oppresses, frustrates and victimizes the poor. He believes that exploitation of economy and politics are very important to the bourgeoisie. Marxist followers believe deceit, cheating and accumulation of wealth by the ruling class can cause conflict or collision.

Adeleke in Fayemi (2009, p.65) posits that exploitation can cause conflict and conflict can bring brutality. Olawuwo (2013, p.203) states that exploitation can be a source of conflict, while Farlex (2012, p.5) sees exploitation as selfish interest among the ruling party which results into inequality, hatred, collision or conflict. Looking at the above definition of these scholars, one can define exploitation as taking something that rightfully belongs to people from them or the use of people as a resource, with little or no consideration for their well-being. It can also be seen as a social relationship where one person is using others for his own personal benefit.

Oppression is the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel or unjust manner. It can also be an act or instance of suppressing or state of being suppressed and the feeling of being heavily burdened, mentally or physically troubled, Davidson (1989, p.385). He believes that when the ruling parties oppress the masses, they use authority to keep them down. However, this does not mean that those so subjected are aware of their unjust treatment or control. This is an aspect of oppression that is largely missed in popular culture when we consider whether we or others are being oppressed. In contrast, the usual scenario we think of when we think of oppression is that of someone who is captured, confined, tortured or otherwise, unjustly treated or controlled against his or her protests and pleas for freedom (Gil, 1998,p.70).

Muvirimi (2013, p.13) identifies three types of oppression. These are political oppression, social oppression and institutionalised oppression. Political oppression means any law from a government that weighs cruelly on society. Social oppression is the socially supported mistreatment and exploitation of a group, category or team of people or individual. Institutionalised oppression occurs when established laws, customs and practices systematically reflect and produce inequalities based on one's membership in targeted social identity group. If oppression consequences accrue to institutional laws, customs or practices, the institution is oppressive whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have oppressive intention. Therefore, oppression is a situation in which people are governed in an unfair and cruel way and also prevented from having opportunities and freedom. Muvirimi (2013, p.15) stresses that, "every human being has the right to freedom from oppression, war and famine..." From this quotation, it shows that the word oppression, war and famine are societal problems and diseases that can hinder the development of the citizens. Thus, the society must kick against it.

Conflict is part of human society and there is a relationship between the two, conflict and society. Conflict is one of the societal problems which is inevitable in the society. Fayemi (2009, p.61) says conflict is a collision between two or more people. He believes that there is no how we can stay together without having misunderstanding. Palmer (1998,p.36) is in support of this opinion that conflict is part of society. He says:

As long as human being interacts with others, conflict is to be expected. This is simply because, human beings are intrinsically different and in different proportion.

Adeosun (2015, p.244) defines conflict as “contradiction arising from differences in interest, ideas, ideologies, orientations, perception and tendencies”. He also believes that conflict is an integral part of the society which could be brought about by myriad of factors. This contradiction exists at all levels of the society, individual, group, institution and nation, as well as in interpersonal and international relations. He says “conflict is a situation when the interest, needs, goals, value of involved parties interferes with one another. Different stakeholders may have different priorities. Conflict may involve team members, departments, projects, organisations and clients. Boss and subordinates, organisation needs versus personal needs” (Adeosun, 2015, p.244).

Menthuen (1990, p.92) argues that men are the causes of conflict because it is natural to every man. It is part of man to misbehave. He says:

All over the world, man is over at the center piece of conflicts. It is a matter of fact that the adamic nature of man, most of the time propels him to behave or act in a way to hurt others for his own selfish purpose(s) and when a man hurts a fellow man there is bound to be reaction(s) that will lead to conflict.

At this juncture, one can say conflict is an interaction that is characterised by antagonist encounter of interests, ideas, policies and programmes. Wherever there is interaction between two or more people, maybe of the same or different age, sex, parentage, kinship, ethnicity, religion, race, or political interest, conflict must exist.

The Plot of *Akuko Gagara*

Adeyemi replicates the Nigerian military Heads of State between 1985 -1999 in his novel, *Akuko Gagara*. The novel centers on exploitation and oppression as a common trend of indiscipline in its own time. The novel reflects the period of class struggle in which people of the high class exploit and oppress the masses. There is evidence that those events that happened in Nigeria were portrayed in *Akuko Gagara*. The map of Nigeria carrying different tribes with a cock perching on it is on the cover page. Dende is the hero in the novel. Adeyemi portrays him as an exploiter and oppressor. He is the Head of State as the story begins. He uses tricks, deceit to govern the people of *Etanloku*. Dende exploits the military officers, at the same time, oppresses the masses in all ramifications. The military officers cannot endure these acts any more; hence, they decided to plot a coup d’etat, led by Major Okakara, Major Peju, General Doo, Sergeant Arowolo, Chief Osoru and the rest. The coup

was later aborted. Dende continues to govern the people of *Etanloku*. He maltreats them and annuls the most free and fair election. He wants to become a civilian President automatically but when the masses embark on revolution, Dende decides to step aside and vacates the seat of power.

Alaasa takes over from him (Dende). He is the second in command. He stands as a mouthpiece for the exploiters and oppressors like his predecessor. Exploitation, oppression, corruption and indiscipline are more prominent during his regime. He kills many people and locks up many politicians in prisons. Immediately after Alaasa performed sacrifice to his destiny deity, the masses went to the street, they confronts the government and kicks against the exploitation and the oppression of General Alaasa. Alaasa does not stay long on the throne, before death comes upon him. Another military General is inaugurated, though his name is not mentioned. He asks the politicians to come and register their political parties. The parties that are registered are: Egbe Oselu Olowo (Upper Class Party), Egbe Oselu Mekunnu (Lower Class Party) and Egbe Oselu Alariwo (Noise makers Party).

Chief Iwalewa contests under Egbe Oselu Olowo and emerges the winner in the election. The Head of State handed over the seat of power to the civilian rule. As soon as chief Iwalewa becomes the president, he increases the salary of the civil servants. He changes the name of the country from "*Etanloku*" to "Ekeope". He cancels the obnoxious laws that tie the citizens into a spot. Goods and commodities are cheap in the market. The breeze of peace and freedom begin to blow round the nation.

Thematic Analysis of *Akuko Gagara* in accordance with Marxist Theory

The setting of the story is the nation of Etanloku while Ajuba is the federal capital. The name Ajuba is derived from Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria. Looking at the derivation of the name, one will see that the author redistributes the letters of the alphabet in Ajuba, bringing the consonant 'j' in the last syllable of 'Ajuba' to replace consonant 'b' in the first syllable and vice versa. This is evidence that the theme of the text centers on Nigeria. The name given to the nation is also symbolic. Etanloku (Nothing more but deceit), reflecting that there is no more truth in the nation called Nigeria. The story reflects the tenure of a retired military General whose lies and deceits were the order of the day. The people were under oppression and the yoke of the military. Things were not easy for everyone, it was at this time that bribery and corruption became a thing of pride in Nigeria. Fraud and corruption tagged '419' became prominent. It was this indiscipline that made the author called Nigeria the name 'Etanloku'. A nation where there is nothing left but lies. For this reason, the main theme the author wishes to bring to the fore is the act of exploitation and oppression in Nigeria. With all these acts of indiscipline in Etanloku, the writer says:

Eya miiran laarin ilu Etanloku a da egbe ole ati egbe adigunjale sile, won a maa fooro emi awon to rowo yo laarin ilu. Awon idile miiran a bere si ko oogun oloro wolu, tomode tagba a maa tagbo mugbo kiri... Awon majesin a maa puro, awon agbalagba a maa seke, iro pipa. eke sise, agbere, jibiti, iwa ika, ka bani laye je....(o.i.1-2)

(Another tribe within the nation of Etanloku founded a group of thieves, smugglers and armed robbers. They trouble the well-to-do in the society. Some families begin

to import hard drugs, both young and old start taking heroine, little children tell lies and adults deceit, lying, deceit, adultery, fraud... Wickedness, destruction of lives,...(pp.1- 2).i

One can infer that the above extract is referring to the atrocities of different tribes in Nigeria who engage in stealing, kidnapping and smuggling during the military reign. The writer opposes the acts of exploitation and oppression which were well pronounced during the military regime. During the regime of the military in Nigeria, a retired head of state was called “Maradona” because of his treacherous behaviours. For instance, if a citizen criticized his government, he would find a way to include such individual in his cabinet in order to tarnish the image of such person. This happened to Prof. Wole Soyinka, who was appointed the chairman of Road Safety Commission, in which he could not curb the corruption within the corps until he resigned.

Apart from this, during the reign of a retired military General (who the author refers to as Dende), people experienced a lot of problems such as lack of human rights, diverse exploitations, oppressions and lots more. Sequel to these wicked acts, the author describes and states:

Dende fola re la ilu bi aayan se n la aso.O n fi ipo re po eniyan mole bi alakara ti n po eree igba. Okiki Dende ti o kan n se lo n fi ki gbogbo aye mole bi ode ki ekulu morun ebe.(o.i.5).

(Dende has oppressed the masses with his wealth just like the cockroach licks clothes, he used his position to rub people in the mud just like the bean cake seller stirs the milled beans thoroughly in the calabash. Dende has used his fame which has risen to stomp the whole world like a hunter stamps a deer on the ridge. (p. 5).

Adeyemi shows the ideology of the military, how they suppress and oppress the masses. The oppressive tendencies which characterized a former head of state are fully exposed by the author and how he uses tricks to rule the people. The plot of the story reflects the organisation of the Nigerian community in which the leaders have power over the people, that is, poor and workers. In *Akuko Gagara*, the writer reveals other things that cause conflict in Nigeria especially religious conflicts and tribalism:

Gbogbo igba ni iselu, esin, eto oro aje ati ibaraenigbepo maa n da houhou sile...(o.i. 1)

(All the times, governance, religion, economy and co-existence bring about conflict (p.1)

The excerpt above shows other things that cause conflict in the society and also the political problem of the nation (Nigeria) is behind the economic instability, religious crisis and tribalism which make things go from bad to worse. The traditional rulers have sold their conscience, they do not speak the truth; the great monarchs have become complacent. They

also exploit the people; receive bribe and contracts from the Federal Government. It was during this regime that exploitation, indiscipline and embezzlement became a right and very common. The author opposes this behaviour of the monarchs and presents them as corrupt leaders and betrayers. They know that, the government of the day is that of an exploiter, colonialist and an oppressor, yet they sing its praises. What binds them together is corruption; this is why the monarchs express themselves in this manner after the coup:

Awon lodi si ifipagbajoba, won ni omo buruku ni Okakara, Osoru....Awon ilu ko ran won nise. Ise ara won ni won n je kiri. Ogagun Dende ni oga ilu, eni ti ko ba ti fi ti e se awowo a wo iru eni bee ni. Nitorin naa, awon fi owo si i, awon fi ese si i iru ara ti ijoba ba fi awon arufin da ki won fi won da (o.i. 17)

(They opposed the coup; they said that Okakara, Osoru....are bad people. The people did not send them what they had done; they went on the errand on their own General Dende is the head of state anyone who refuses to dance to his tune will be dealt with. Therefore, they are in full support of whatever punishment the government decides on the criminal. (p. 17).

The excerpt above indicates that, the author refers to Major Orkar as Okakara and Chief Ogboru as Osoru. It also indicates the coup that was staged in 1990 by Orkar. Orkar led the coup together with some military officers. Their plan was to overthrow the Head of State. What prompted the coup was the way the Head of State was maltreating, exploiting and oppressing some military officers (especially those in the lower cadre) and the masses. People's cry reached the military officers (the oppressed officers) and they decided to stage a coup to kick against exploitation and oppression of the government. The coup was later aborted. Some of the accused were killed, some were sacked, some ran into exile and the Head of State still remained in the position of authority. Therefore, instead of traditional rulers (in *AKuko Gagara*) supporting the attempt of these military officers, they preferred to dance to the tune of General Dende.

The author also makes us to understand that the military heads are less concerned about developmental projects. This is why he states:

Aare ko da si oro ilu ti ko rogbo, ko da ko da si eto oro aje ti o denu kole, ko ro kan de, idaamu ile epo, ko wo ti aisise fun awon odo. Ko tile wa ona si eto iselu ti ko fese mule, ko si ohun ti o kan Aare nipa owo orileede to lole (o.i.26)

(The President shows no concern about the national instability. He shows no concern about the economic meltdown. He does not think of the fuel crisis or the unemployment of the youth. He does not even endeavour to find a solution to the political unrest. The president is less concerned about the devaluation of the national currency. p. 26).

The writer is not just exposing all these acts of indiscipline for no reason but he wants to educate the society about these bad acts and to urge them to rise to free themselves from the military government as Marxist propounded. It can be established that Adeyemi is opposing the military ideology, brutality, wickedness and bestiality of the military generals especially the regime being portrayed in the text. The impunity got to the peak when the supposed, most free and fair election tagged June 12 was annulled. The masses embarked on Marxist revolution by igniting a riot which made the Head of States declare that he had stepped aside. The sort of action the masses displayed is the type called for by Marxist and his followers, that the people of a society should rise and fight for their freedom from the rule of the oppressors, exploiters and colonialists. Another point which the writer preaches is that, all the people of the society should rise to disrupt the plans of the oppressive leaders. The society opposed military rule, they saw them as oppressors that is why another conflict arose right after another military ruler took over. The author states:

Ni kete ti Alaasa boori re tan, ni igboro bere si daru, awon alatako ijoba Ologun dide. Awon egbe ajafominira dide ija, awon oloسلu ti won da ibo ru mo lori dide ija, iwode wa kuku bere ni rebutu (o.i. 75)

(Immediately after Alaasa performed sacrifice to his destiny deity, the nation was in disarray. The opposition to military rule arose. Human activists arose. The politicians involved in the botched election arose and protest started in full force. (p. 75).

The character referred to as Alaasa is believed to be Abacha. The author uses the technique of naming characters in fiction to achieve this feat. Abacha killed so many people, many fled abroad, and many were locked up. He even lied against some retired military Generals that they were involved in coup planning. He locked Chief Obasanjo up and Chief M.K.O. Abiola who won the 1993 general elections became a prisoner. Things were hard during Abacha's regime. He was trying to change his government to the civilian rule by force when death came upon him. General Abdusalam ruled after Abacha, even though his name was not mentioned by the author, the writer states:

Oru ojo ti Alaasa ku naa ni won sinku re. Ki ile ojo keji to mo ijoba miiran tuntun ti de, sugbon ijoba yii ko pe lori aleefa to fi gbe ijoba le awon oloسلu lowo...O ni ki awon ologun o pada si bareke, ki won pe awon oloسلu wa (o.i. 76).

(It was in the night of the same day when Alaasa died that he was buried. Before dawn, another government emerged, but this government did not last long before handing over to civilian rule... he asked the military to return to barracks and called in the politicians. (p. 76)

Immediately, another military General came into power, political parties were founded within six months. They are Egbe Oselu Olowo (Upper Class Party), Egbe Oselu Mekunnu (Lower Class Party) and Egbe Oselu Alariwo (Noisemakers Party). Chief Iwalewa contested under

Egbe Oselu Olowo and emerged the winner in the elections. Obasanjo is believed to be referred to as Iwalewa by the author, because he was the one who took over the power immediately after the military regime in 1999. As soon as Obasanjo came in, he cancelled all laws enacted by the exploiters and oppressors. For instance, he cancelled law against freedom of speech and allowed people to be involved in the decision making of the country. The writer states:

O fowo si ofin ki oko okeere maa wolu, nipa bee opolopo eniyan n ra Oko ayokele, O fowo kun owo osu awon osise, o da eko ofe sile. O fagile eto alumonijeri to wopo laye ologun...Isu egbe di ohun ti omo mekunnu le ra je laidagbese. Ni Sokoto eran namo di abera, ni ilu Eko eja tutu di gbanjo...Awon onise owo n jaye oba, awon mekaniiki ki i fi aso idoti wo takisi mo...Iwa ibaje n dinku diedie. Owon gogo epo ti yo mole bi eekan ojo. Awon oni takisi ki i sanwo bode nile epo, ijoba la titi tuntun (o.i. 75 – 78)

(He signed the law that allowed imported vehicles being brought into the country, as a result of this, many people were able to buy cars. He increased workers' wages, started free education. He cancelled the Alumanjeri programme of which was rampant during the Military Regime... the masses were now able to feed without trouble. At Sókótó, people were begged to purchase meat and in Lagos fresh fish became cheap... Artisans started enjoying, the Mechanics stopped going around in filthy work clothes... corruption started reducing, scarcity of fuel faded away. Taxi drivers do not have to bribe their way into petrol stations and the government has made new roads. (pp. 75-78).

Before the coming of Iwalewa, people of Etanloku are experiencing different kinds of hardship. As the Head of State, General Dende was exploiting the citizens, his governors and their wives were oppressing the masses. The citizens could not afford to buy bicycles let alone cars, the salary of the workers was small compared to the work they did, School fees became problem for parents, artisans were suffering, there were scarcity of fuel and food, the roads were not motorable; exploitation, oppression and indiscipline were prominent. The hardship was so numerous to the extent that the masses had to confront the military regime. They embarked on protests, which made General Dende to vacate the seat of power and General Alaasa died on the throne. At the end, a democratic system of government reigned supreme.

In conclusion, although, the first revolutionist (the military soldiers that staged the coup) were surmounted by the oppressor, yet at the end of the day, the masses emerged the winner in the sense that the military vacated the stool of government for the people's choice of government which is the civilian government.

Findings

The selected text is realistic novel that based on exploitation and oppression within Nigerian context. It also based on the true reflection of the happenings of the Yoruba society. The

oppressed defeated the oppressors at the end of the struggle in the text. In addition, the text is political and revolutionary novel. The author calls for the revolution and freedom from the exploiters and oppressors. The text depict that the masses or the oppressed may triumph if they have the support of the activists. In *Akuko Gagara*, the masses enjoy the support of Barrister Agbeti. In another development, the text depicts capitalist system of government, where the leaders exploit and oppress the followers. On the other hand, *Akuko Gagara* is a historical novel that deals with the exploitation and oppression during the military regime of a retired military General till the commencement of the fourth republic in Nigeria. Adeyemi uses protest as tool that the oppressed can use to fight the oppressors, alsopresents the policemen as ruthless and corruptible officers in the society

This paper has established the fact that exploitation, oppression and conflict are common phenomena in every society. Conflict is an integral part of the society which could be brought by a number of factors. In the text selected for this study, exploitation and oppression are sources of conflict and these form the ideology of the author that, exploitation, oppression and colonialism should be discouraged in all ramifications. After the critical analysis of the selected text, the paper observes the following: there cannot be an iota of love between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, because they see each other as enemies. Also, there cannot be any tangible development wherever there is exploitation and oppression. Because of their selfish interest, bourgeoisie will refuse to carry out any meaningful developmental projects, neither would they take the interest of the masses seriously.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are made. It is our belief that if implemented, they will enhance and foster peace and unity between the ruling class and the oppressed. Our recommendations include the following:

- i. Yoruba writers should continue to write novels that will further expose the tricks that are used by the oppressors or exploiters on the defenseless populace.
- ii. Seminars and conferences should be organised by institutions of learning to create more awareness on the tricks the ruling class use to exploit and colonise the masses.
- iii. Once the people have observed oppression, exploitation and misuse of power, they should act by kicking against the source immediately as recommended by Abrahamson (1990) in Adeosun (2005, p.41).
- iv. The legislative and judicial arms of government should enforce that section of the Nigerian constitution that says every citizen is equal before the law. This will encourage people to be bold enough to report crimes and criminals. There is no doubt that when criminals are exposed and dealt with according to the law, crime rate will reduce.
- v. Our leaders, politicians or ruling class should carry out their administrative work with fairness. They should allow good governance that will produce positive development in areas of politics, religion, economy and even in terms of social development of the society.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the impact of written literature on politics, good governance and development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. It is very clear that the writer of the

selected text is a mouthpiece of the masses. The contemporary authors know the importance of good governance, development and freedom. That is why he was passing the message directly or indirectly to the leaders and the society (oppressors and the oppressed) that, they have to carry out their obligations and duties in a way that Nigeria will record tangible development. The writer calls for good governance that will bring comfort to the people. The selected text has revealed Nigeria's events and her leaders. Directly or indirectly, the author is telling Nigerian leaders to allow freedom (freedom of speech and movement), human rights and equality, as this is the only way the society can experience meaningful development. The selected text was analysed within the Marxist theory. Despite the fact that some scholars argue that exploitation, oppression and conflict form an integral part of the society, they are bane to societal development, and therefore they need to be checked. The proletariat or the masses should be encouraged to confront the bourgeoisie (oppressors or exploiters), otherwise they will remain captive forever. The Yoruba say "No le wa ku, ko le ri oye ile baba re je" meaning "he who does not want to die should not dream of becoming a chief in his father's house".

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