

MORIBUND IDEOLOGY, DOWNWARD SLOPING SIGNIFIERS AND REVOLUTIONARY WAKEFULNESS IN BAKARE'S *THIS LAND MUST SACRIFICE*

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Abstract

The sudden rise in the prices of goods and the complementary increase in demand in Nigeria is an indication that there is a defect in the application of economic ideologies which other nations apply to control their economies. As an escalating social challenge, ideology moribundity alongside with the consequences in an economy has found a cogent conduit in Bakare's This Land Must Sacrifice. This paper is a critical examination of the directionless ideology and how it affects the society to the extent of activating revolution. The method of the study is Causal Comparative Studies, theorized on Marxism which highlights economic circumstance as the stranglehold of conflict and class stratification in the society. Findings show that neither capitalism nor socialism is conscientiously implemented in Nigeria, and a headless economic ideology can sink a nation's economy. Those in the positions of power exacerbate the problem by siphoning and hoarding public funds for private use and diverting public privileges to their relatives; and that as prices rise, the fear of starvation has made people to make more demand while domestic productions are neither implemented as a national assignment nor willing individuals empowered to produce due to the inordinate misappropriation of agricultural funds. The paper concludes that every hungry and frustrated person possesses an angry and revolt-prone mind, but when a hungry man is filled he may sublimate anger to promote creativity in the society; and it is only a united people that can change a social course to create history in the society.

Keywords: Drama, Moribund-ideology, Downward-sloping-curve, Revolution, Signifier.

Introduction

Studies in recent research has indicated that a clear hewn ideology can shape the economic focus of a nation and direct the political processes that harness the socioeconomic thrust of citizens towards a unified goal for national development. In a nation in which neither individuality nor collectivism is implemented based on the rules that govern its operation to its peak, the moribundity may tune the rhythm of activities for national economy to some indeterminate “headlessness” even when there is a clear focus and purpose for the activities. As Charles Darwin reflects in Lee Jacobus, man is the product of his environment (630), which Robert Cohen corroborates to be the determinant of the human conception and mindset to situations in life (235-236). The same force reflects in the art pieces of such society.

Other sectors of life are quite important but the area that keeps human being alive seems near enough to shape his mindset on the way he lives life. For this reason, economic yields and the processes for human satisfaction can shape a nation's citizen's psyche on the tranquility brought to bear by a stable economic culture; and the same factor can also shape citizens' mind on the release of inhibited aggressiveness from unstable and retrogressive economic experience. According to Gabriel Idang “it is the social condition that stimulates the human consciousness to act; it is not the action that stimulate the consciousness” (13). Based on the above position, the outlook of economic cum political ideologies a nation operates can set the dominant demand and supply culture from the prevailing market type in the society.

Currently in Nigeria, both private and public sectors strive to set their price at the perfect-elastic code; for one thing, economic vicissitude has rehashed the producers, the wholesalers, the retailers and the consumers to downplay the primary claim of their distribution role. As prices rise, so do consumption rise; as production falls so do demand rise, other things being equal *Ceteris paribus*. As the current Nigeria's economy portends, no one is sure of seeing the same product in its original form again the next moment. As Ande Cole observes, when the price of a commodity rises, the price indicator marked P will go high; when the demand for it rises also, the quantity indicator for it marked Q will glide towards the right. As the price for the same product increases from $P1$ to $P2$ and the demand for it increases from $Q1$ to $Q2$, linking the curve from the price index to the quantity axis, a downward sloping problem has occurred. The Monopoly indices have gone quite ubiquitous in the present Nigeria. Both the socialist and capitalist outputs are pecked at high cost because there are no substitutes and worse there are no alternative producers at reduced price. As the price goes up, demand too goes up. More money is raised to buy few goods for many more people. The challenge hypes to what K. Nnadi and A. Falodun describe as slump inflation:

A term used to describe an economic situation in which much reduced economic activities coexists with inflation is characterized by idleness and under utilization of resources like labour and capital, at the same time as the general price is rising and the value of money falling. Slump inflation has become a regular characteristic of Nigerian economy (61).

It is worth mentioning that this economic upheaval has featured as a social problem which finds expression in drama. Along the line, Robert Cohen expresses that drama as an art form has been a reliable instrument of pleasure and for creating public awareness from the ancient Greek's era (18-19), and the deployment of drama for state or national purpose which brought a remarkable change in the lifestyle of the society has also been identifiable in the classical era and beyond (Brockett and Hildy 36-38). Based on the observations above, this paper periscopes Ojo Bakare's portrayal of the imprecise choice of economic/political ideology, the ungovernable rise in price and increase in demand for the few available products resulting from ideological moribundity, and the accompanying frustration that forces citizens to indulge in antisocial acts leading to the confrontation between the rulers and the ruled in the society.

Theoretical Framework

The uprising of a people stemming from victimization by the privilege class has the undertone of revulsion for a domineering class; it has the colouration of anger let loose from the vortex of frustration; and it has the imprint of alienation of the masses from the basic needs of life. Drawing from the idea above, this paper is premised on Marxism.

In the view of Charles Bressler Marxist theory evolved in the 19th century writing of Karl Marx but his views were expressed in two works *The German Ideology* (1845) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), which he co-authored with Friedrich Engels. The major coverage of his opinion is ensconced in dialectic materialism (163), a term reflecting the dialogue between society and consciousness to react. As Gabriel Idang conceives, dialectic materialism is all about the changes in the society from thesis, antithesis down to synthesis which what the people experience pushes them to revolt to evolve a new order (107).

Based on the outlook of the theory, there is an underlying undertone of revolt in it. Thus, a society that bestride class identification which stimulates cut-throat competition and social stratification for survival might end up facing aggressiveness in speech, arms confrontation or other physical confrontation even to pen –confrontation, violently advocating for a change which Karl Marx terms: “the revolutionary elements in the cities (and) important active background... to shakespearize more” (208). Thus, the idea of thesis denotes a condition; the antithesis suggest the human revulsion to the

condition and followed by an action to prove the hatred for it; and synthesis prefigures a lasting peace gained from the successful revolt of unwanted social condition. This makes the theory to be reclassified as “Leftist”, and “left’ stands for the social, political and above all the economic enfranchisement of a previously submerged, exploited, brutalized mass of industrial labourers” (Bamidele 17). As Friedrich Engels reasons, “the colossal dimension of the struggle... (may) contrast very strongly” (799). The theory advocates for the uprising to address injuries inflicted in the human psyche (Irele 10). According to Yunus Dauda, “Marxism was giving workers their dues and rightful places” (91). Therefore, as Elijah John expatiates on the theory:

Marxists observes that a large portion of the product is siphoned off into the pockets of capitalists in the form of profit or 'surplus-value... the appropriation of the surplus value by the unlaw claimant (the bourgeoisie) is seen by Marxists as exploitative tendency in modern state... and this always constitutes the thrust of the conflict between the capitalists and the proletariat (99).

Thus, the relevance of the theory to this paper is that the wealth of the nation is siphoned and concentrated in few selfish hands who do not partake in the actual labour that raise the nations domestic product, rather their consumption of public funds is making the few producers of goods or the only surviving ones so to say, to raise the price of their products, which the fear of products extinct is making the demand for even the already hyped product to skyrocket.

A Brief Analysis of *This Land Must Sacrifice*

The play was published in 1991. It was the University of Calabar's entry for the festival in 1989 during Nigerian Universities Theatre Arts Festival (NUTAF) at the University of Jos. It is a Marxist play.

Mbakara kingdom had colonized Okanlogun and exploited it for decades, poverty sorrow, death and confusion pervaded the land. In the wake of a season, Mbakara officials are gradually seen off. Okanlogun needs a direction in leadership. The sun is set for indigenous leaders to hold the reins of government and nurture their fatherland to a haven for all to dwell. For one thing, Okanlogun is a rich nation with population, resources but with different tongues.

The gods have commissioned the budding leaders to take on the mantle. Speculations on worthiness to be the king are tone down for Wonbiliki to rule. Everyone is cooperating but there is no certainty whether the means of production should be managed and distributed from the centre or if individuals should be empowered to explore their potentials for collective good. Wonbiliki and his cabinet members adopt an ideology that makes them the sole owner and controller of the nation's wealth; yet they apply the sharing formula of a society which the wealth is controlled at the centre and appropriated from there to all. Capitalism and socialism sprout their tendril but wither in actual practice for greed.

The channel of wealth and food distribution is manned by the few in power. They bargain and appropriate wealth to themselves. Citizens are frustrated and innocents are becoming criminals. Worse in it all, price for life is peck at a very high gear but “Okanlogunians” have to pay and live. Prices for goods are high while goods are limited because of Wonbiliki's lack of focus on the tenets of a specific ideology and at whatever price life are pecked; the people still pay groaning in pains. At a higher price more are still demanded; it sets the nations market curve on the downward sloping one. Out of hunger, tempers are raised and hungry young men take to arms to delete the moribundity of their nation's ideology and set a society in which citizens can get from the government according to needs but give to her according to their ability.

Moribund Ideology

A sovereign state practically adopts an ideology for which the focus of leadership and economic options are harnessed. According to D. Dwivedi:

To sum up, government interference with the economic affairs of a country and the nature and extent of interference are determined by political ideology of the society. The society having strong preference for the enterprise would like to limit the state interference to its corrective and promotional roles. The society having faith in socialism would prefer socialization of all economic activities and management of the economy by the state. In the system, all decisions regarding production, consumption and distribution are taken by government agencies presumably on behalf of the society... Between these systems lie the mix-economies in which the state has to play a much more comprehensive role than it does in the free enterprise system, but much less than it does in a capitalist economy (636).

Drawing from Dwivedi's position, ideology is a set of principles that fashion the politico-economic direction of a nation. Its beauty lies in maintaining and nurturing an aspect along its tenets to the height. No one is bad if properly harnessed; no one is good if haphazardly applied. Leaving a nation without a clear ideology will make leaders to grope for radiance without direction. Ideology is the spirit that moves the mind to a state.

The word, ideology evolves from the science of ideas. In the words of John McCormick, "it was coined in 1795 by French philosopher, Antoine Destutt de Tracy to describe the science of ideas. The term has since come to mean a set of ideas or values held by individuals or societies..." (366). For instance, "ideology determines the mindset of people from the force of economic operation they experience either as individual suppliers and consumers of their product and services or the recipient of the type of life lived based on the collective view from the centre" (Anikpo 182-183). To Mark Keselman, *et al*, ideology "refers to how government affects economic performance and how economic performance in turn affects a country's political process" (16). By implication, a society that does not hold to any set values of either individualism in which individuals are guided by rules to operate as private owners of means of distribution or collectivism in which the government controls the forces of economic and political operation from the centre, such society is immersed in ideology moribundity.

Moribund ideology is actually the adoption of every ideology without implementing any effectively based on the principles and its goal. As Besnik Pula puts, ideology is "a state of being, or a set of ideas, but a structurally transformative process... it requires finding what we understand... It involves theorising the relationship between global economic change and locally embedded ideas, organisational practice, and institution" (18). When a nation fails to apply the basics that are relevant to a specific model, ideology moribundity sets in. A moribund ideology does not thrive to the limelight and it does not die off.

On the other hand, the two prominent ideologies are capitalism and socialism; mix economy is the failure to implement any of the first two effectively. For instance, United States of America and other world economies like France, Britain and Japan encourage capitalism. Citizens own schools, hotels, factories, and other means of production. The society is organized for individuals to put their minds together and explore their talents to the limelight of recognition. In China and Russia, it is the government that manages all economic ventures down to schools and determines what a child studies, which is good for the state. There is less competition because they are not perturbed at all to compete for attention.

However, as M. Sharma, B. Sadana and Hapreet Kaur reflect, each of these ideologies has its better part as well as its worse. In capitalism, people utilize their innate strength to the full but there is usually a cut-throat competition that leads to class consciousness. In socialism there is the beauty of collective effort and focus to harness goals which makes the citizens to conform to providence. They shape their individual talent to contribute to the growth of the state which is their source of livelihood; but there is much bureaucratic rigidity which encourages corruption; government agencies are abandoned (387). As Dauda confirms, “in socialism, Mikhail Gorbachev summarized the problem that led to the collapse of socialism as 'bureaucratic paralysis, economic stagnation and moral decay’” (91), whereas the collapse in capitalism economy, individuals get serious to produce for consumers with a much allowance of freedom (Jhingan 17). A nation that seeks direction should choose an ideology and develop. Even in our daily life, what we exert in-depth enthusiasm in with sacrifice alone yields a praiseworthy dividend; the one we handle perfunctorily neither stands nor falls. Moribund ideology is a state whereby the front of an ideology is neither reached nor its back retraced.

The Downward Sloping Curve in *This Land must Sacrifice*

Downward sloping is an economic condition that reflects a rise in price followed by a complementary rise in demand. This is a situation caused by allowing few hands to handle factors of production which they impose the price of goods based on their feelings. Oligopoly and monopoly are good examples. This is a situation where “too much of money leads to the concentration of capitals in the hands of few capitalists. This leads to monopolies which consume both consumers and workers” (Jhingan 17). The incessant rise in the price of commodities without a corresponding rise in production can lead to the downward sloping curve in the economy. This is case of few producers but many consumers. Bakare portrays it thus:

King: ...Something has just struck my mind. Gentlemen, a new wine is better drunk in a new calabash. We have attained a higher status it means we now live higher before... we need

Chief: Money

King: New houses

Chief: Yes

King: New farms

Aminu: Rai nka dede, which one is farm again? A high chief is not supposed to farm.

King: How then do you eat, gentlemen?

Aminu: All we need is money yanfu, yanfu...

Anyaoaku: No, I have better idea. We just need new houses, new wives, big money and feed from the crops planted in the farm of the village community school (p 23/24).

This is one of the reasons a nation GDP fails to rise. In a situation few goods are produced but more mouths are consuming, a single person or few who may produce it can hoard the produce and double the price. In their lechery, they cannot imagine producing anymore but may have a very high appetite for fresh vegetables, fresh fruits and fresh fish and fresh anything produced by the poor the refuse to empower. Without producing as many are consuming, a downward sloping circumstance will set it.

Another factor highlighting the downward sloping curve is the incessant siphoning of funds meant for public project is another issue portrayed in the play as a possible cause of the downward sloping situation in the economy. A reflection is portrayed in this conversation:

Diviner: Ifa says everybody must be equal in this land. There mustn't be a wealthy man neither shall there be a poor man... There must be equality in the distribution of wealth... Everybody wants to build his mansion in the moon, so they continue cheating the innocent ones...

King: What a hard condition from the oracle... Everyone must have an equal distribution of the economy. No way. No way... The problem of the masses shall rather stay than for me to forfeit my own wealth (p 29).

This is a replay of the Nigerian situation where leaders feed on public wealth. Allocation for projects is partly executed; the money is siphoned for personal use. Cornering public money into few hands that use it to solve personal problem can slope a curve.

Revolutionary Wakefulness in *This Land Must Sacrifice*

Revolutionary wakefulness is the self-awareness of an unyielding life in which the instinct to revolt is stimulated towards struggling to change the status quo of economic, social, political and cultural deadness in the society. Many factors are portrayed as possible precipitates of revolutionary consciousness in *This Land Must Sacrifice*. Hardship, for instance, can cause frustration which may instigate a physical reaction such as stealing, killing and even suicide. This is portrayed in the text thus:

Diviner: My lord, Ifa has spoken lucidly

King: I am listening

Diviner: The oracle says, my lord will have peace of mind if the villagers are at peace.

King: Meaning what?

Diviner: So the problems of your subjects are not known to you?

King: Do they have any?

Diviner: So my Lord knows not that all is not well with the masses?

King: Like

Diviner: Your people are dying of hunger, poverty, starvation, joblessness and all the ailments that plague the innocent common man (p 27).

The conversation above is the reflection of the normal human situation when they face social challenge like hunger, joblessness, or poverty, while others are living a sumptuous and flamboyant life. Those who move about in hunger and starvation are already half-way wakeful to a revolutionary call.

Another factor that calls for revolt in the play is neo-classism, a continuous domination of the mainstream of the economy by foreign firms leading to price increment of product. This is captured in the dialogue between king and stranger:

King: Where do you come from?

Stranger: From the other side of the sea.

King: How did you at the other side of the sea know the problem before my very eyes?

Stranger: (*Laughs*) Ha ha ha ha don't worry. Just listen to what I will tell you. Then we shall help you.

King: What kind of help and what will I do?

Stranger: The first help is that we are going to lend you money. But if you are doing this, then we must know how you collect your tax in this land... If you must do this, then the prices of everything you sell in this land must skyrocket. You must increase the school fees of people in your community school. We must know how farmers harvest and sell their farm crops.

King: Ha ha ha, than you stranger... These are the type of solutions I want. I will fulfill all the conditionalities you've mentioned (p 30/31).

The above discussion is a reflection that hardship faced in Nigeria is partly caused by negotiations Nigeria engages with foreign countries which plunge her to eternal debt. They loan Nigeria some money and detect how they would get back their money with interest, which most times ruins the original plan set down for the nation's economy. This factor also causes hardship through price imposition on goods.

Another set of factors portrayed to have stimulated revolutionary consciousness is alienation which leads to frustration and loss of dignity, property and life. The conversation below is an explication of the issue:

Ngozi: Just last week the authorities of the village community increased school fees... because they could afford to pay for their children... Very soon the children of the poor will no longer go to school in this land.

Agbekoya: What of us the farmers. The government announced the sum of ten million naira for the agricultural loan scheme... but to our greatest surprise, the chief in-charge said the genuine farmers have been given the loans.

Aliyu: What is wrong with that?

Agbekoya: I don't know when chief Ede, Alhaji Mustapha and all rich people in this land became genuine farmers. Could you believe that none of us got a kobo from the loan? But the importers and exporters are qualified for an agricultural loan.

This is a portrayal of the situation in Nigeria where citizens are alienated. They are also part of the system, qualified and eligible for some privileges but are not given. Only the relatives to the ones in power get the privileges. Prices of training and education are raised to squeeze money from the poor while the rich take from public funds to train their children. The schools in the country are not suitable for leaders' children to attend; they send their children abroad where the environment is safe, in which better equipment is put in place to aid their study. Churches that preach liberation of the soul worsen it by nudging from the poor to built schools that only the rich can attend. Budgets made and announced for such equipage in the Nigerian schools are thwarted or the money is embezzled by few, leaving the institutions bare and out of currency to produce competent scholars that can function. These circumstances of alienation can stir revolt in people.

Another factor portrayed as precipitate of revolutionary wakefulness if unity of purpose. As citizens face a common evil and unanimously agree that their condition is deplorable, they revolt in unison. Unity of purpose as a means of revolution is portrayed in the dialogue below:

Wale: It is either we leap or die in poverty. These dubious souls on top are only concerned about themselves. They are well fed and therefore think less of the starved. It is either we wag our teeth or the poverty continues in a vicious circle... There is no future for the poor if we are all afraid of the bullet. Let's shout at the top of our voice and dam the consequences... We are tired! I say tired!

Pickpocket: Brother, I shall join you

Beggar: It is true. I will follow ... (p 40).

Whenever a people perceive a common enemy, it is a step better; and when they fight the enemy as one, they succeed as a body. Nonetheless, “two dissimilar minds that interrogate a similar subject may command oneness that creates harmony” (Udofia 200). Revolutionary wakefulness begins from the awareness that what a poor person hates most is another poor person; that may initiate the desire to pull the flaks of frustration from the psyche to the response of the physicality of the selves that feel the pains. When we lack idea, we grope in the dark: when we stumble we rise again or rest. The downward curve widens the gap between the rich and the poor in Bakare's *This Land Must Sacrifice*.

Reflections of Moribund Ideology in *This Land Must Sacrifice*.

There are actions and dialogue portraying the outlook of ideology moribundity in *This Land Must Sacrifice*. These variables are appropriated into subheadings for clarity below.

Elimination of Privatization:

In the play, the major challenge is how to send Mbakara packing. Mbakara has colonized Okanlogun for decades exploiting them and making them subservient in the land. The people of Okanlogun feel that when they succeed in eliminating the force that is drilling them as a private enterprise without a commensurate recompense for their labour, they will have rest, peace and progress. This reflects their hatred for capitalism/privatization as portrayed in the dialogue below:

Narrator: Tonight's tale is that of our time. The one that reveals our past, present and looks ahead of time... it all happened in the land of Okanlogun... a land flowing with milk and honey. The milk and honey were exploited by outsiders and the indigenes taken into slavery... They realized the joy of being free (p 6).

Freedom implied by narrator is the dethronement of capitalism. This means, socialism is the needed ideology. The hatred for privatization should be the love for liberalism. In a situation capitalism is frowned at then the ideology is not capitalistic at all. The benefits of capitalism cannot thrive in such society.

Revolution for Liberalism:

Another disheartening discourse in the play is the way Bakare presents the very socialism that should nail capitalism. In Okanlogun, the problem is one person owning the means of production and exploiting others to fatten himself alone. As indigenes take over power, what they seem to hate most is giving to the people according to their need; yet they appreciate collecting from each according to his ability. This enigma is captured in the dialogue below:

King: Da ken be, she who lacks manners complain of ghost enemies. I was in my farm to harvest my cassava and ...

Adeola: My Lord, listen to me... it was the two jobless beggars who came here yesterday to beg for alms that I tried to help. Having listened to them, I thought the best way to help them was to take them to the farm and give them some cassava to take home and eat. After all we don't eat anything made of it. The cassava is planted purposely to feed your goats and cattle.

King: Ee! You mean I have now become the feeder of nations (p 20).

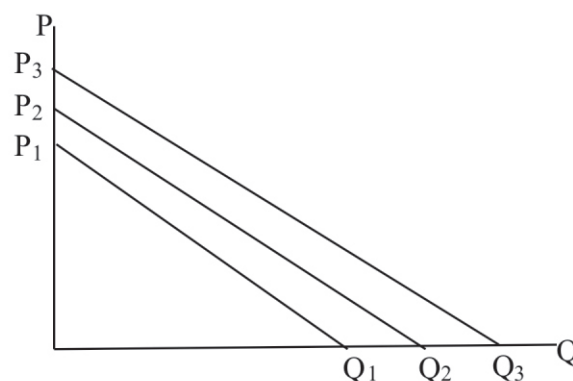
The conversation above is rather symbolic. King symbolizes government, Adeola symbolizes the revolutionary force while jobless beggars symbolize the masses. Bakare is demonstrating the peak of socialism which is communism in this discussion. The tenet is from each according to his ability; to each according to his need. The king can produce cassava, the beggars can take cassava; but the cassava is scheduled to feed animals which belong to the king. Socialism that the people clamour for by eradicating capitalism is not put to practice at all.

A society in which citizens do not have the freedom to develop their personal talent to its height and are properly brought up under the government scheme does not implement any ideology. It may be said, such a society is operating mix-economies, but mix economies still require the optimum utilization of the combined models. Ideology moribundity is a cankerworm in the Nigerian society. It does not allow Nigerians to have an attitude in business, and it warps the needed character to forge a decision in politics. In a nation facing ideology moribundity, “the labour force... mainly consist of illiterate and poorly educated unskilled workers, and their industries are characterized by lack of competent engineers and technicians. People's poor health and other socio-economic and environmental problems, lead to low worker productivity” (Dauda 97).

Conclusion

The in-depth treatment of corrupt practices and popular reaction to them in *This Land Must Sacrifice* has shown a prophet who foresaw the tomorrow of his today yesterday. That is the role of drama; it should be used to envision the future and reinforce for intervention and change in the society. That being the case, anything a man conceives in mind to do, he should do it right by applying the rules correctly. There is no venture that works for one but fails to work for another except there is a wrong application. Capitalism is not too bad; socialism is not an evil; all fail Nigeria because she does not follow the tenets properly. When a few persons control the price code of products, they will heighten the price at will to be in control. When people need a product so much to live on, they would strive to pay to stay alive. A downward sloping curve occurs when a rise in price portends a rise in demand and the peak of the higher price and the higher demand may stir a revolt, other things being equal, *ceteris paribus*.

Fig. 1: Downward Sloping Curve



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