

CURBING RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DRAMA: A STUDY OF TOSIN JOBI –TUME’S VICTIMS

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Abstract

This challenge of coping with the beliefs of each religion in our country is an issue that has been of great concern to the nation Nigeria, especially with the emergence of terrorist insurgency, that are claiming to be fighting for the cause of Allah in the name of religion. This has made the country to lag behind in substantive and sustainable development. This work adopts the content analysis approach of the qualitative research methodology to analyze Victims written by Tume to expose drama as a means of education, liberation and self discovery of our youths to abstain from terrorism. Relevant literature reviews on terrorism were undertaken to help in giving more relevance to the work. The study concludes that drama has the potentials of sharpening social awareness and presenting alternative approach of solving societal problems. This study recommends that pro-active action should be taken against terrorism related activities through the use of Theatrical techniques for mass mobilisation and conscientisation of our youths and save the nation from further destruction and sustain development.

Keyword: Drama Curbing, Religious Terrorism, Contemporary Nigeria, Sustainable Development,

Introduction

The effects of religious conflict on Nigeria as a nation cannot be over emphasized. Nigeria seems to exhibit the symptoms of a collapsing state whose citizens are perpetually at war with one another (Jega 2000 in Obidah). The religious conflict arising from political thuggery, continued mass attacks by organizations such as Book-haram (literary interpreted as western education forbidden) AlShabaab, ISIS and others, aiming to overthrow Nigerian government and declare Islamic state of Nigeria has resulted in massive displacements, unemployment, corruption, insecurity, kidnapping, cultural barrier, low access to education in the north. The youths are easily recruited for criminal activities characterized by loss of

lives and properties, economic decline, displacement, distrust among people living in the clusters.

Oxford Advance Learning Dictionary Seventh Edition (1997), defines religion as "the belief in the existence of a God or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them". It is undisputable that human existence is premised on religion. In another way, Alaamu (2005) sees religion as the "consciousness of one's dependence on transcendent being and tendency to worship him" religion is belief in an unseen power called supernatural (Ololobou, 1999). In another sense, Frazer says "religion is the propitiation Conciliation of powers superior to man which are belief to direct and control cause of nature and human life cited in (Alao, 2015)

Abdusalam (2002) cited in (Alao, 2015) also defines religion as man's interaction to that which is regarded as holy regardless of whether the holy being is supernatural or even personal to the individual. It is a known fact that religion controls man, his value and environment. It is also a known fact that some individual will die for it (Odeh, 2010). Africans, particularly Nigerians are generally regarded as committed religious people even if the practice has not translated to peaceful coexistence, harmony and progressive socio-economic development (Alao, 2015). In Nigeria the most popular religions, are Islam and

Unfortunately, Christianity and traditional religion that promoted peace and salvation' has been used to mar rather than make our nation Nigeria. This was possible because of the powerful controlling influence religion has on human existence and has served as a veritable tool for political mobilization, fulfilment of parochial and selfish interest and ethno-sectional aspiration (Odeh, 2010). From the foregoing, it is evident that religious values are now manipulated by political anarchists to perpetuate violence and terror. Dopamu (2002) agrees that factors like personal gains, selfishness further accelerate the urge for control and domination

For Aboki, (2004) conflict is a "struggle over values or claim to status, power and science, resource. Alfonso (2001) views conflicts as "disagreement or disputes held, by two or more individuals or group. Conflict is about incompatibility among values where the achievement

of one value can be realized only at the expenses of some other values. Alubo, (2006) stated further that conflict is serious competition between two or more groups, each of which aim to gain advantage of power, resources interest, values, need over the other. There is general agreement among scholars that conflict is a normal character in the interaction between human beings whether in their individual capacities or in group (Mobighe 2003). The aim of the opponents or group is mainly to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals (Bercoritch and Zantman, 2009).

World Commission on Environment defines Sustainable Development as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Awoyemi, 2011). According to Awoyemi, it is the involvement in the creation of conditions that support development in human nation and economic system while safe guarding resources and opportunities for future generations. It includes the types of means or development offered to individual to provide for themselves food, shelter, confidence and acceptable quality of the dignity and suitable manner.

It is a means of living or supporting life by meeting individual and community needs in diverse ways. This is concerned with people's capacity to generate and maintain their means of living and enhance their wellbeing and that of the future generation. According to UNDP (2003) these capabilities are contingent upon the availability and accessibility of options which are educational, ecological, social, cultural, economic and political predicted on equity, ownership of resources and participatory decision making.

Terrorism is the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims. Terrorism infringes on the right of the people and seen as an act to attract attention and put people under tension for some reasons best known to the terrorists. The terrorist utilize a strategy of creating an illusion of magnified strength to cause shock, fear, distress and phobic avoidance at public places. They inflict pain and anguish on people and make it difficult for people to trust one another; neighbours who had lived together in harmony as brothers and sisters have turned against one another with murderous mind (Best 2010). The apparent relative calm that most of northern Nigerians had enjoyed for several years was broken by the violent emergence of Boko haram in 2004. Youths are now tools in the hands of terrorists to perpetuate evil in

the name of religion, claiming that they are fighting the cause of Allah while raping women and killing innocent souls on daily basis.

Synopsis of the Play

Victims, written by Tosin Jobi-Tume in 2016 is a tragic narrative of Gimbiya, a village beauty, Nura, her heartthrob and Nura's friend Sule, the three young promising persons in a typical northern society, Dadinkowa. The trio who are the main characters in the play, enjoyed tremendous communal love, brotherliness and kinship before the sudden and tragic incidence leading to the disruption of peace in the village. According to Gimbiya, peace was shattered by overzealous and trigger happy soldiers who shot indiscriminately at their people whose lives they had sworn to protect. The soldiers' impunity eventually led to an uprising of criminal murders, vengeful people who are bent on avenging the gruesome murder, killing and maiming of their people.

The ensuing development was the emergence of a militant group later known as Boko haram which absorbed many of the aggrieved elements across and eventually turned the hitherto young, promising and enterprising youths into killer squad, the large chunk of the youths and teenagers, having lost their parents, siblings and homes to the raging terror, becomes Almajiris or beggars in their own land. Sadly many of them also fall into the trap of ready tools recruited by the Islamic group. The avenging group unleashed terror in many shades on the innocent and unassuming members of the society. Women, young and old, mothers and sisters were raped mercilessly, with many raped to the point of death. The few survivors of the raging terror and the teenagers including Gimbiya, Nura and Sule unfortunately found themselves in an insurgent's group's hideout.

Nura, being an independent minded and intelligent person, in no time finds out that the claim that militant group was fighting the cause of Allah is false, just as its acclaimed mission to avenge unfortunate souls who lost their precious life to soldiers invasion is falsehoods. Therefore, makes strong resolve to back out. But his friend Sule, a gullible greedy and violent person would not support Nura in his quest for revolution against the insurgents. Sule 's lust for Nura's childhood love, Gimbiya, which makes him envious of his

friends, goads him more into desiring the destruction of Nura and when the opportunity eventually presents itself at the time Sule catches Nura attempting to steal money from the leader in part preparation for his and Gimbiya's planned to escape from the hideout, he didn't give it a second thought to pardoning his friend, but demanded the unthinkable, he would sleep with Gimbiya while Nura watches and also have Nura beg for his life. Nura chooses neither of the two bad options and chooses to go down honourably.

Meanwhile, Gimbiya's appeal to Sule for sympathy was rudely turned down by him who insists she sleeps with him as a condition for guaranteeing her lover's freedom from the hangman's noose, thus giving up on everything, Gimbiya opts for a tragic end of the lives of the trio (herself inclusive) by activating the explosives she had worn to carry out her maiden suicide mission in a local market and the play ends on an overwhelming tragic note.

Thematic Analysis of Victims.

The themes exhorting on Tume's victims include religious tolerance, peace, stability, violence, deceit, lust, love, courage and revolutionary spirit among others. Again, there are numerous dozes of symbolic representation in the play which can be decoded in characterization, costumes, language, music, dialogue, setting, choice of words among others.

Religious Tolerance, Peace and love

In movement one, Gimbiya's interaction with the audience, ensured through the use of the Brechtian dramatic style which breaks the fourth wall of the proscenium stage by directly addressing the audience, portraying her world, Dadinkowa village as a peaceful peace-loving and stable society without the unnecessarily social ills of religious intolerance, tribalism, etc. The atmosphere of the merry making and fun fair created by Gimbiya and her friends while playing the traditional kids games symbolizes this. In another instance, Gimbiya says her father is a northern Muslim while her mother from the east practices Christianity. The society is also devoid of violence as teenagers of Gimbiya's age, Talatu relate easily. In this part of the play, we find out that peace is guaranteed in a relationship where there is religious tolerance, love thrives in such society while stability and seamless society interaction are guaranteed, hence, Gimbiya describes her world as beautiful.

Gimbiya:

I am Gimbiya I was born into a beautiful world, a beautiful nation, a beautiful home ours was a closely-knit family. I had a doting father and a loving mother, wonderful parents. My father was a Muslim from the Northern part of our country, while my mother a Christian hailed from the east. We the children freely practiced both religion without any discrimination from any of our parents. For us it was Bisimilah and Amen and everything in between .though they were of different religious, yet the love between my parents was palpable. As children we grew up in that atmosphere of love, respect, and tolerance (Victims pg.1)

The world depicted in this movement denotatively represents Nigeria of the 1940s to the early80s when such social ills of the religious intolerance and tribalism has captured the soul of the nation and shattered our unity. Love between young Nigerians of different cultural background then leading to inter-tribal marriages as depicted in Gimbiya's parents union peace and security of lives and properties and progress in agricultural venture were guaranteed under such atmosphere but it is quite unfortunate that things has fallen apart and the centre can no longer hold.

Violence, Religious Intolerance, Greed and Tribalism

From movement two in victims, we were shocked with a tragic transition from a peace loving stable and friendly society into a world of hatred, violence, suffering and rejection as occasioned by intolerance in tribal and religious relationship. Nura comes on stage to narrate the tragic development and its causes, some clashes between farmers and herdsmen in the village leading to overzealousness and trigger happy soldiers shooting sporadically at farmers and herders whose lives they are to protect. The ensuing consequence is a social disruption hangs phenomenal effect on all the citizenry.

The youths are most affected negatively as they become beggars in their own land, taking drugs to control depression and suppress frustrating feelings and eventually take to crime to survive. Nura and Sule, his friend, eventually takes to thieving and robbing their benefactors who hands out tokens to them.. Gradually, they become drug addicts and this prepares them to become candidates of terrorism as they end up becoming terrorists for reasons ranging from avenging extra judicial killings of their parents by soldiers and merciless destruction of their once stable social fabrics.

Greed as a theme is denoted in Sule's parents attitude where his father continue to make his wives produce children that he has no economic power to cater for also Nura's uncle who corners the property of his, father and bends the poor young man to fend for himself at the age of 13. Greed and deception are also depicted in Sule's obsession with a promise of seven virgins in the hereafter as reward for fighting against infidels a derogatory word used by the insurgents to describe Non- Muslims such as Gimbiya's mother it is also noticed that the theme of deception in the insurgents claim that they fight for Allah whereas they are actually portrayed as social degenerate bent on terrorizing the society for no justifiable reasons. Sule embodies the theme of lust through his untamed lust for Gimbiya, leading to his hatred and resolves to destroy his only true and courageous friend Nura. But it is this hatred that destroys him at the end.

Love, Patriotism and Courage.

Both Gimbiya and Nura demonstrate true love for each other, even in the midst of very hostile and tragic circumstances. For instance, through helpless, Nura could not participate in gang raping Gimbiya's mother when his team of terrorist unleashed terror on her family. Gimbiya forgives Nura easily when he explains and pleads with her for forgiveness. Even though, Nura has joined the terrorist group, he still finds himself possessing patriotic zeal and decides to toe the path of honour by denouncing the group, condemning and criticizing its murderous deeds and instigating his friend to support him to escape from the hell hole.

In movement four, Nura challenges the modus Operandi of the terrorists group:

Nura: This isn't what I bargained for. Why not go after the corrupt politicians, the bad leaders who have made life so difficult for us, why have we turned on each other? The people, they are victims as well, we all are victims... I am tired.. Just tired... totally fed up.

He goes further to fault its claim to fighting for Allah as seen in his dialogue with Sule in the same movemnent.

Nura: I disagree with you, Sule ours is a religion of peace. If we really

are fighting for the cause of Allah then we don't need to take up arms. If you think about it logically, you will realize that there is really nothing to fight for; our fight is needless.

Sule: How do you mean?

Nura: Allah is greatest right?

Sule: Yes...

Nura: And he created us, not so?

Sule: Where are you going with this?

Nura: My point is that we don't need to fight for Allah. If Allah is the then he definitely does not need us to fight his battles, the created need not fight for greatest. the creator.

Though Nura's position is very clear and progressive, but greedy Sule, overtaken by his own lust for power and material things, refuses to reason with him.

Sule: You are making no sense

Nura: (Pleadingly) Sule we can leave now we can surrender our arms and embrace Peace.

Sule: Peace...Peace...Peace is a relative concept so is War, Peace and War are symbolic, how do you appreciate peace if there is no war?

Nura: We don't need war to have peace

Sule: Stop your sanctimonious bullshit man, You are as dirty as the rest of us, holding the gun in our hands and the Quran in other won't take you to heaven

Nura: (Determinedly) listen to me, Sule I am sick and tired of all these atrocities being committed under the guise of fighting for a religion which advocates peace. I want true peace and freedom opt out Sule.

Generally, the message being passed across by the playwright in victims is that our government and certain negative thinking individuals failure to employ counter measures to tame or stop terrorism in all its facets would destroy our future as it did those of Gimbiya,

Nura and Sule when Gimbiya's last resort is to activate the explosives that killed the three of them in the end. The writer is sounding a serious note of warning to all stakeholders in the project of effecting counterterrorism measures to combat the menace of insurgence, the security agents, the government, citizenry and the civil society organizations among others to rise up to the challenge of positive and proactive steps to nation building so as to save the nation's future from being jeopardized in the present.

There is the need to radicalize captive terrorist and potential terrorist who have felt disillusioned with the system not working for their positive growth. We have many disillusioned youths in the nation today leading to a sad situation that have made many to join terrorists groups, become armed robber or sex workers, prostitutes or internet scammers popularly called yahoo boys. All these youths ranging from 16 to 24 years need urgent de-radicalization and this can be done through the use of theatre for development as a paradigm to curb all these vices for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Symbolism of Characters in the Play

The logo of the Movement

In movement three, (A terrorist camp). The logo of the movement is symbolized by a big black backdrop with white deliberately unintelligible Arabic-like inscriptions drawn in a circle on it. Lights pick Gimbiya as she comes on stage in a Zombie mood. She sings a melancholic song as she wanders aimlessly about the stage then she sits down unhappily. She looks totally different from the happy go-lucky girl in movement One. She has aged a bit her school uniform is now tattered and she has no socks on. She looks dirty and unkempt

"The big black backdrop with white deliberately unintelligible Arabic-like inscription is a connotative portrayal of the fact that the terrorist do not truly represent Islam which is a religion they claim to protect, neither do they even understand what the religion stands for in the Quran Islam preaches peace but the terrorists are violent men (victims pg.2).

The use of the Religiously Derogatory Words

Infidel, meaning an unbeliever, to describe non-Muslims such as Gimbiya's mother by the terrorists is an extension of this description and confusion being created by the terrorists. The word infidels as a linguistic signifier shows the hatred the terrorist have for fellow human. Connotatively, certain characters in the play's structural paradigm signify ideas and concepts. For instance, Gimbiya and Nura are signifiers of true love, courage and patriotism amidst chaos. Sule is a signifier of greed inordinate ambition, lust, and untamed passion for material possession and unchecked energy for violent actions among other negativities.

While Gimbiya and Nura represent Nigeria promising youth/future that have been corrupt by the dehumanizing system, but may be de-radicalized and become agents of positive change and progress for nation's growth and development. Sule signifies the lost generation, the degenerate, whose human foibles, largely innately, have made the ready tools for destruction and violence.

Conclusion

Conclusively, drama is highly recommended for use in the development programmes especially those that involve mobilizing and enhancing attitudinal change to peer influence among the youths because the approach is a practical approach that confront the menace of terrorism and other vices that can jeopardize the development of the nation Nigeria so by actively involving the youth in the drama and not just through passive instruction alone, so but through active participation in decision making that is when Nigeria can move to next level like other developed countries.

Recommendations

The stakeholders in policy planning should see to it that development programmes are given laudable support to empower the women and youths in achieving their goals in life. Again, Government at all levels should adopt performance arts because it serves as mirror for the society to correct their ills especially religious contacts so that people can co-exist without bias.

Government should establish a Federal commission on religion, to educate the populace on the principles of equity, religious tolerance and power of unity and love for one another. The commission should also strive to find out the primary causes of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria and ways of eliminating them. They should watch out for any likely issues that will

breed crisis and ensure they lip it on the bud while the terrorists are rehabilitated and trained in skill acquisition so that they will be self-reliant ad be responsible citizens.

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