

Oppression as a Major Cause of Social Unrest: An Examination of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's Play Text, *Ayé Yẹ Wón Tán*

by

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Abstract

Social unrest has been a common phenomenon in almost all societies of the world and especially in countries where capitalist systems of government operate. It has been a phenomenon that destabilizes the society because of its violent nature. Various reasons have been advanced as causes of civil unrest, the most prominent being oppression. Several efforts have been made and are still being made to prevent social unrest within communities and states. Yorùbá literary writers are not left out in the crusade. This paper examines the views of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá, a prolific Yorùbá literary writer on causes of social unrest and how to curb its frequent occurrence in our societies. It is hoped that suggestions made at the end of the discussion will go a long way in addressing the issues of social unrest within our communities so as to move the society forward.

Keywords: Oppression, unrest, social, cause(s), examination

Introduction

Social unrest has been a common phenomenon in almost all societies of the world and especially in countries where capitalist systems of government operate. Even in the Yorùbá traditional system of government where the Oba is given the power of life and death over his subjects, there are evidences of oppression. This probably informs the establishment of the Òyómèsì Council in the Old Òyó empire to checkmate the excessive use of power by the Alààfin. Various reasons have been advanced as causes of social unrest. These range from tussles over inheritance sharing, misuse of position and power, denial of one's rights, selfishness on the part of the leaders, marital issues and the likes.

There have been cries from different quarters on the aftermath effects of social unrest. People have called on individuals, community leaders, political office holders and even Government to find a lasting solution to the problems of incessant social unrest, and Yorùbá Playwrights are not left out in the crusade.

This paper examines oppression as one of the major causes of the increased rate of social unrest as presented by Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá, a prolific Yorùbá Literary writer, in his written play titled *Ayé Yẹ Wón Tán* (2009). The objective of this paper is to understand the writer's posture on oppression as one of the major causes of social unrest. What, in the writer's opinion, constitutes oppression? What solutions does he suggest for the eradication of oppression? And what actions must be taken in an attempt to free the society from oppression?

The theory adopted is the Marxist's Sociological theory of Literature which states that in any capitalist society, the leader will always want to oppress the led no matter the number of appeals, dialogues, and pleas. However, the theory emphasizes the need for the oppressed to face the challenge and fight for freedom. It however warns that such a fight should not be fought singularly but instead: should carry all stakeholders along.

There is a Yorùbá saying that “àgbàrá òjò kò lóun ò ní'lé wó, onílé ní ò ní gbà fun” meaning “the gutter rain water would always want to destroy or demolish the building, except the Landlord/Landlady does not allow it to happen”. Our findings reveal that an oppressor will always want to continue to oppress as long as the oppressed refuse to fight for freedom. The paper, however, suggests that protest or revolution should be the last option to be employed by the oppressed especially when all other available means have proved ineffective or abortive. This is because experience has shown that most protests end in destruction of lives and properties.

This is confirmed by Fàṣakin in *Ayé Yẹ Wón Tán* when he explained why they should converge in secret to avoid been brutalized. Fàṣakin gives reasons why the protest should be supported. In his address he says:

*Ìjà òhún yóó dójú è láti òla lọ bí wón ò bá ẹ
Ohun tí a fẹ́ a sì ní fẹ́ àtìlẹ̀yìn yín o. B'ájá bá
Léni léyìn yóó pòbọ́ o. ọlọpàá ní wón fí ní lé wa
Kiri o. ẹ ràn wá lọwọ́ o. (o.i.159).*

The fight will reach its boiling point tomorrow if they fail to do what we want and we need your support. If a dog has support, it will devour a monkey. It is the Police they employ to chase us around. Please assist us (pg. 159).

On page 164 of the text, Àyàn testifies to Fàṣakin's claim. According to him, he is seriously brutalized for failure to support Ọba Sinmisólá. It is also evident that the protest results in wanting destruction of life and properties.

What is Social Unrest?

The word “unrest” is interpreted to mean “a state of trouble, confusion and turbulence especially in a political context, a time of riots, demonstrations and protests”. Going by this definition, a number of factors can cause social unrest. These include among others: selfishness on the part of the leaders, insensitiveness of the leaders to the plights of the led, denial of one’s rights, land dispute, cheating, ethnicity, misuse of power and position, and the likes, all of which amount to oppression.

In the culture of the Yorùbá of Southwestern Nigeria, everybody is expected to be his or her brother’s and sister’s keeper, hence they say: “*ẹnikẹni tí iwọ bá ní’pá láti ràn lówó, ẹnikẹjì rẹ ni, tójú rẹ*”, meaning “whosoever you are empowered to assist, he/she is your partner, take care of him or her”. It is believed that being one’s partner is one of the antidotes to social unrest.

Hospitality, for example, is equated with kindness. Being hospitable is one of the moral standards set by the Yorùbá. The need to be kind and show love is always emphasized in their culture. Yorùbá people believe that it is good to be kind to one’s fellow person.

This can be viewed from the perspective of being generous, faithful or showing love to one another. It is a situation whereby one feels affected by the distress or pleasure of another. This is what Wilson (1995, p.30) refers to as sympathy. Helpfulness is not expectation of gain or reward of any kind but for the sake of a person or situation needful of help. The natural law of compensation will return our good deeds in kind and in quality.

Yorùbá people believe that it is good to be kind to fellow men. Adébòwálé, (1999 p.122) describes hospitality as:

Kindness or helpfulness. This means helping others to live successfully, giving others a hand in order to enable them realize their life goals, giving a helping hand to retrieve others from their besetting woes and difficulties.

In Yorùbá culture, love is one of the three primary human virtues; others are Truthfulness and Harmony. Love can be seen as a spontaneous, conscious and selfless feeling of benevolence, affection and devotion towards God and to one’s fellow being. It is also an ethical concept implying such similar feelings from individual human creatures towards one another. It is a virtue to be mutually practiced by individual human beings in their relationships with one another. For instance, “*ifá’* expresses love as “avoidance of wickedness to neighbours and kindness, mercifulness and beneficence”. Oppression, of course, is an act bordering on wickedness.

Ìròsùn Méjì of the 'ifá' literary corpus says “*bí o ti fẹ mi sí ni Olódùmarè máa fẹ ọ*” meaning, “you will be loved by the Almighty God only to the extent of your own love for me”. To the Yorùbá, and according to Adébòwálé (1999), love does not wish evil for the other fellow. Love moves one only to wish the other fellow well, even as he himself.

Adébòwálé (1999) lays further credence to this. Making reference to *Òwónrín Rosùn* of the ifá literary corpus, he says:

Òwónrín-Rosùn extolled beneficiary as a virtue which will always make the beneficent beloved, and alternatively, wickedness is condemned as a vice which will always repel good people away from the wicked.

Contractively, perfidy is decried as an act. Perfidy refers to a state of violating faith or allegiance, violation of a promise or vow, or of trust reposed. Adébòwálé simply describes perfidy as a betrayal of truth, (*ilẹ yíyọ dà*). For instance, a person who has declared openly and publicly to pursue a social course but who later proceeds to sabotage that same course can be said to be perfidious.

Oppression no doubt is perfidious. A perfidious person is an oppressor in all ramifications. In a capitalist society like Nigeria, oppression is very rampant. Politicians, Heads of government establishments, Senior Officers, the rich in the society, and the well-placed people, all use their money and position to oppress the less-privileged. Workers are denied their monthly salaries; governments spend money on less important programmes and projects simply because the leaders will have their own share of the contract, without considering the plight of the citizens. The Yorùbá will say “*eni àmòrí ibáà kí*” literally meaning “I don’t care what happens so far it doesn’t affect me”. This is their watchword most of the times.

This has been the situation in the country even before Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá wrote his play *Ayé Yẹ Wọn Tán* in 2009, which can be grouped under “Protest plays”. This leads us to the examination of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá’s view about oppression as a major cause of societal unrest as seen in his play *Ayé Yẹ Wọn Tán*.

Oppression in *Ayé Yẹ Wọn Tán*

The story in *Ayé Yẹ Wọn Tán* centers on the oppressive nature of the leaders of our society today. In the story, the writer presents Oba Sinmiṣòlá Ọṣínyàgò, Oba of Ìpo Town, as an oppressor who uses his position to enrich himself instead of making life better for his people.

In the play, Oba Sinmisólá displays an attitude typical of Nigerian Politicians of today who will promise the people heaven and earth during their campaign rallies but as soon as they assume office, they become different persons entirely.

The author tries to tell us that the position of traditional rulers who are supposed to be the custodians of the peoples' cultures have become that of politicians who are after their own selfish interests. This makes the question as to whether we still have traditional rulers in our societies today very imperative. The answer to this question and similar others is obscure.

Initially, Oba Sinmisólá shows his readiness to abide by his pre-election promises of defending the interests of his people. The market women Association under the leadership of the *Ìyálọ́já* visits Oba Sinmisólá to protest against the inappropriate method used in allocating the new market stalls and the high rent placed on each stall which the Oba (king) himself sees as unacceptable. The Oba says:

Kò burú! Kò s'árùn tí ò lódògùn. Ikú gan an, òdògùn àrùn ni. Bíkú bá dé, àrùn dópín nù un. Èmí ò sí ní' dítí iréjẹ. Bí wón bá tí n' ẹ̀ bẹ̀, ọ̀tẹ̀ yíi ni yóo dópín. Ijọba tẹ̀mi ò gba ibàjẹ̀ láàyè. Ẹ̀ wá dákun, ñjẹ̀ ẹ̀ mọ̀ gbogbo àwọn tí wón pín isọ̀ ọ̀jà náà mọ̀wọ̀? Ó dára, ẹ̀ bá mi kọ̀ gbogbo rẹ̀ sí ibìkan kí ẹ̀ tún padà mú un wá fún mi (o.i.41-42).

It is not bad! There is no ailment without a drug to cure it. Death itself is an antidote to ailment. When death comes, ailment is over. I am not for cheating. If that has been the practice in the past, it is now a stop will be put to it. My Government does not tolerate nonsense. But please, do you know all those who shared the stalls among themselves? Help compile the list and bring it back to me (pp.41-42).

This is an indication that Oba Sinmisólá wants to be fair by fulfilling his pre-election promises. It is however surprising that Oba Sinmisólá suddenly turns out to be selfish after he has been wrongly advised by his wife (*olori*) and some of his chiefs. He says:

Bí ayé tí wù kó yípadà tó, bí ó tí wù kí ọ̀lájú tó, bí kí a máa tún mọ̀ àgbà légbọn ọ̀n mọ̀ ni? Wón n' fowọ̀ pa idà mi lójú o. Mèkúnnù, mèkúnnù, èmi ni mo sọ̀ ẹ̀nikan di olòsì ni? Ábí mo ní kí ẹ̀ni tó bá fẹ̀ là má là?... Bá mi sọ̀ fún ọ̀gá ọ̀lópàá pé kí ó máa sọ̀ àwọn ẹ̀gbẹ̀ Alájumọ̀şe yíi, bí wón bá tún tí n' ẹ̀ ipádé, kí wón máa tú wón ká... Bí ó bá ẹ̀ agídí ni wón fẹ̀ lò kí a jọ̀ kò sí i o.i.49).

(No matter the level at which the world changes. No matter the level of civilization, we must recognize the senior as a senior. They are daring me, shouting the poor, the poor. Am I the one that made them poor or I debar anybody from becoming rich...? Help me inform the police boss to keep surveillance on the Alájùmòse society. Any time they hold their meeting, they should be dispersed. If they want to employ force, we should meet force with force) (p. 49).

Here, one wonders if it is not the same Ọba Sinmisólá who promises heaven and earth before his appointment. This implies that for selfish reasons, he allows the personal unconscious in him to prevail over the universal unconscious.

It is unbelievable that a traditional ruler can be so molested and subjected to a rain of abuse in the public by anybody. This tradition is broken when chief Àgbàakin confronts Ọba Sinmisólá openly over the latter's misdeeds, saying:

Ní tí pé ẹ̀nikan lẹ̀ dúnkokò mó àwa nílẹ̀ yìí? Ọlórún má jẹ́ kí a rí àìdáa. Lórí ọ̀rọ̀ tó wà nílẹ̀ yìí, bọ̀kùnrin bá tàtòrìn, tóbìnrin tàtòrìn, ká wá waşọ ẹ̀ni tí yóó rẹ (o.i.128).

(That somebody can threaten us in this town? God forbids bad thing. On the issue on ground, let's see who surrenders) (p. 128).

This is an indication that the traditional position of the Ọbas (Kings) as the overall heads in their domains has lost its values. This is partly caused by their oppressive system of governance due to their refusal to stand by their pre-election promises.

Similarly, too, the Olorì is alleged to acquire one hundred out of the entire one thousand market stalls which she sublets to the market women at a far much higher price. She is desperate to ensure that nothing works against her interest; hence, she condemns the Ọbà for promising to help the protesters, hence, she says:

Gbogbo rẹ̀ ni mo gbó. Ẹ̀ se lẹ̀ máa sọ pé ẹ̀ ó gba isò lówó àwọn ẹ̀ni ẹ̀lẹ̀ni tó fì n jẹun? Şebí Kánsùrù ló pín isò fún wọn.

I heard it all. How would you say that you will take away the stalls from those who earn their daily bread from the stalls? After all, it is the Council that allocated the stalls to them.

And when the Kábíyèsí snubbed her, accusing her of stealing, she says:

*Èwo lolè nibè? Èrè àjẹpajúdé tí àwọn ọlójà náà
ń jẹ ńkọ? Gbogbo owó gọbọi tí wọn bù lé ọjà ńkọ?
Àwọn ò fẹ́ sanwó kankan. Ọwò kii fówò lórùn.*

Which one do you call an act of stealing? What about the exorbitant gain made by the market women? What of the high price they placed on their goods? They don't want to pay any money. Business should Not hinder business.

Her action is an archetype of the selfish, proud and arrogant lion in the Yorùbá folk story. The lion archetype is characterized by selfishness, greed, misuse of power, jealousy and the like. In Yorùbá mythology, the lion is the brute, wicked and merciless king. Whenever it is hungry, it roars and catches its prey effortlessly. One day, the lion held a meeting with all the animals and instructed them to register their names on the death row-call and voluntarily come to him in the cave as prey.

The fox put its name as number one on the list but the fox refused to appear on the appointed day. The lion was annoyed and called for a meeting on the second day. The fox complained that a group of wild animals like them (the lion, tiger, elephant and leopard) were very close to his abode and they were looking for him (the fox) and other animals. The lion and other executive members were annoyed and decided to go and fight the wild animals. The fox led them to a very deep well and asked them to look. They looked and saw their own shadows. They rushed and jumped into the well ignorantly and perished there. The lion was not satisfied with little and because of raw power, he misbehaved and died.

Ọba Sinmisólá also displays this attribute when he releases the land slated to be given to the Alájùmòṣe group for farming for building an ultra-modern hotel which according to Ọjó, the agent, would earn the Ọba and his cohorts very huge personal financial and material gains. The remaining portions of the land are shared by Ọba Sinmisólá and his cohorts without making any payment. He terrorizes the Alájùmòṣe group by ordering the Police to disperse them anytime they are holding their meeting. He says:

*Bá mi sọ fún ọga Ọlópàá pé kí ó máa sọ àwọn
ẹgbé Alájùmòṣe yìí, bí wọn bá tún ń se ipàdẹ,
kí wọn máa tú wọn ká (o.i. 49).*

Help inform the head of the Police that he Should keep surveillance on the so-called Alájùmòṣe group, whenever they hold meetings he should disperse them (page 49).

It is certain that the characters mentioned here are aware that the society does not approve of their behaviour. The characters in the text allow their personal unconscious to overshadow the universal unconscious; hence, they fail to follow the ideal path (the path of honour).

In consequence, Sinmisóla, who is supposed to bring peace and harmony and also to better the lots of the Ìpo people, forcefully brings dictatorship, harassment, cheating, mismanagement of public funds and the likes which amount to nothing but oppression of his people.

As earlier said, there are evidences that Sinmisóla is ready to stand by his pre-installation pledges to the Alájùmòṣe Society of Ìpo especially on the issue of allocation of lands for farming and the allocation of market stalls to market women, but just as we have in our society today, his advisers in the likes of Òní, Adédùn and Oyínadé will not allow such a thing. He is advised to consider his personal gains at the expense of his peoples' welfare. This makes him forget his pre-election promises. He supports the idea of running a government for the rich only. Sinmisóla's action is an archetype of the present-day community heads that are offered money to deny people their rights.

During one of the Chiefs meeting with Oba Sinmisóla, Chief Àgbàakin, who happens to be one of the few Chiefs who are opposed to the Oba's style of governance, in furtherance of the protest, says:

Màlúù tó jèbù ló ní ká na Fúlàní, ọmọ ọba tó n jalè ló ní ká bú bàbá òun. È bàà tẹnu bèpè kẹẹ tẹnu bàṣẹ, a ó wí 'un tí a fẹ wí.... Àmọ, kẹẹ rántí, gbogbo yín, ẹni tó bá mọrọ sọ, kó máa rántí ẹni tó mọ ọn gbọ. Ẹni tó mọ nńkan fì pamọ, kó máa rántí ẹni tó mọ ọn wá. ...Òjò ijàngbọn tó sù yì, ẹ fẹ tì í ni àbí ẹ fẹ tún ilé ẹ? òjò sù, ilé ló sì n jò yì (o.i.126).

The cow that eats the yam tuber subjects the Herdsman to serious torture. The Prince who steals subjects his father to ridicule. No matter the amount of curses you invoke, we shall say what we want to say. But you should all remember that, whoever knows how to speak, should remember those who know how to listen. He who knows how to hide things should remember those who know how to look for it. The rain of trouble that is about to fall, are you stopping it or you want to repair your house? The rain is about to fall and the house is leaking (p. 126).

These proverbs are used to condemn Sinmisólá's care-free attitude towards the plight of his people, an attitude seriously frowned at by the Yorùbá people. It is certain that the characters mentioned here are aware that the society does not approve of their behaviour. Ọba Sinmisólá, his Olori and their supporters in the text allow their personal unconscious to overshadow the universal unconscious, hence they fail to follow the ideal path. The author, however, makes us believe that the law of retribution is always at work.

Similarly, in the text, during one of the meetings held by the Alájùmòṣe group, members condemn the Ọba and his subjects' actions in very strong terms. Fáṣakin, Ọlávépò and others proverbially call for serious protest. Bello Ẹtù, one of the members, is of the view that the protest is long overdue. He says:

*È jòwọ ẹ dáké jàre. Ariwo ní kàn? Igbà yì làárọ
tárúgbó n kọgba? Nígbà tí ọrọ ọjà dé'lẹ, tí mo ni kí
ẹ jẹ kí a bá wọn fà á, ẹ ò sọ pé èyin ò fẹ ijàngbọn?
Nígbà tí wọn rí i pé ẹ ò ṣe nṅkankan, wọn tún fi
òmíràn lẹ yín. Èyin ti pé yóó rí? (o.i.56).*

Please, keep quiet. Why do you shout? It is now morning time, when the aged man makes two hundred heaps? On the market issue, I said we should protest, you said you do not want to foment trouble? When they discover that you took no action, they inflict yet another hardship. What do you expect? (p.56).

This proverb is used to create awareness over the need to oppose any form of oppression on the part of Ọba Sinmisólá. It further heightens the people's feelings and the need to join hands to fight tyranny and oppression. What happens in the story is similar to what happened in Ọkédíjì's *Rẹrẹ rún* and Ọdúnjọ's *Agbàlọwóméři Baálẹ Jòntolo*. However, Lávúwo's failure in *Rẹrẹ Rún* according one school of thought is attributed to the fact that he decides to fight the freedom battle alone. For instance, he refuses to employ the services of a lawyer to prosecute his case. In fact, the money contributed by the workers for hiring a lawyer, which Lávúwo bluntly rejects, marks the beginning of his failure. Others however feel he is not diplomatic about his approach to the issue involved. This cannot succeed especially with tyrant rulers such as Onímògún in *Rẹrẹ rún*, Àgbàkànmí in *Agbàlọwóméři Baálẹ Jòntolo* and Sinmisólá in *Ayé yẹ wọn tán*.

The author gives the impression that only collective protest can make those in power listen to the yearnings of the masses. The author is of the view that our leaders understand no other language for addressing their anti-*ọmọlúàbí* activities than protests and demonstrations. To succeed, however, the author believes in cooperation because according to the Yorùbá saying, "*àikọwọrìn ejò, ló n ṣe ikú pa wọn*" meaning: "the failure of the snakes to move in a group makes them easily exposed to death". This is because the people they are protesting against are 'stubborn'. Fáṣakin's address to his people no doubt contributes to the cooperation the protesters later receive.

Even when Fášakin is beaten to a point of coma, thinking he is dead, he manages to get to his people in their farm settlements. In his address, to the villagers, he says in part:

*Ibi tí ọ̀rọ̀ wà lá dé yìí o. iréjẹ̀ yìí pọ̀. Àwá sí tí múra
ìjà..... Àwá tí ẹ̀tán láti kọ̀yà o. Ìjà yìí, ìjà gbogbo wa ni.
Gbogbo owó tó yẹ kí wọn fì máa tún igbèríko ẹ̀, àpò
ni wọn n dà á sí o. ìjà ọ̀hún yóó dójú ẹ̀ láti ọ̀la lọ bí
wọn ò bá ẹ̀ ohun tí a fẹ̀. A sí n fẹ̀ àtílẹ̀yìn yín o. Ọ̀lópàá
ni wọn fì n lé wa kiri. Ẹ̀ rán wá lówó (o.i. 159).*

This is where the real issue lies. The cheating is too much. We are prepared to fight... We are prepared to free ourselves. This fight concerns everybody. All the funds meant for community development are kept in their pockets. The fight shall get to the peak from tomorrow if they fail to do what we want. We solicit for your support. They use the Police to chase us around. Help us please (p.159).

There is no doubt that Fášakin's address won the protesters the support of all villagers under the jurisdiction of Ìpo town. They all cooperate to fight against the 'tyrannical' rule of Oba Sinmisólá.

According to a Yorùá saying: "Ajá tí yóo sọ̀nù, kò ní gbọ̀ fẹ̀rè Ọ̀dẹ̀", meaning "a dog that is destined to get lost, shall not listen to the hunter's whistle". Despite the warnings and threats of protest and demonstration, Oba Sinmisólá is adamant on pursuing his personal interest. This is because he has been told what his personal gain will be if he gives the controversial land out for a hotel building project. Therefore, he responds thus:

*Ò bá fì wọn sílẹ̀ Başòrun. Ẹ̀ni tẹ̀ ẹ̀ bá fẹ̀ rán, ẹ̀ rán an.
Ìwòsí ọ̀hún mà pọ̀ o. Àifẹ̀nipeni. Bí ó bá jẹ̀ pé àwọn Ọ̀lópàá
tí kó gbogbo ẹ̀yìn ìjòyè ọ̀lòtẹ̀ ni, ẹ̀ bá mọ̀..... Ẹ̀ kéré..... (o.i.127).*

You better leave them, Başòrun. You can send whoever you want to send. This insult is too much. Lack of respect. If the Police had arrested all you rebellious Chiefs, you should have known.... You are small..... (p. 127).

The Oba's statements no doubt further ignite the urge and need for protest. We would like to say that only corrupt leaders engage in such acts. The Oba's "id" personality type is very weak. It is the personality that loves pleasure and material prosperity. The egoistic nature of the chiefs makes them to fall for cheap money. Thus, they are all corrupt archetypes as found in the Yorùbá mythical lion who wanted all animals in the jungle to give their lives as bribe for safety.

The kingmakers know the ideal thing to do but their love for money forces them to go against the tradition. They are all archetypes of corrupt leaders in our society today who take something before they perform their legal duties appropriately. When this is not forthcoming, they behave immorally and irrationally too. The actions of the kingmakers have very great negative consequences on the people. Their actions have increased the level of moral decadence in Ìpo community in particular. In consequence, Sinmisólá who is supposed to bring peace and harmony and also to better the lots of the Ìpo people, brings dictatorship, oppression, cheating, mis-management of public funds and the likes on the people.

In the text, Lágúnnà, a chief, is opposed to the anti-omólúàbí behaviours of the other chiefs including Oba Sinmisólá. He accuses them of greed. The other chiefs believe it is too late to oppose Oba Sinmisólá. They accuse Lágúnnà of backsliding but Lágúnnà says:

*Ojò kan làá yanjú nnkan, iná sèsè jó dórí kókó
ni. Ohun taa rò tẹlẹ ni pé oní nnkan làá jẹ kó ẹ é..... (o.i.124).*

A problem is solved one day. The fire has just burnt to the point of the nut. Our thinking before was that we should allow him to handle it himself (p.124).

The quotation above emphasizes that the time is ripe to fight oppression. When a situation becomes critical, Yorùbá will say "iná ti jó dórí kókó" meaning that it has got to a point where action must be taken immediately. It is a known fact that it is not easy to untie a hard nut. When you have a serious problem that looks unsolvable, the Yorùbá say "iná ti jó dórí kókó" literally meaning that when fire burns to the point of a nut, it becomes very difficult to proceed. This best describes the situation on the ground. This is what Àgbàakin is saying idiomatically.

The author frowns at any form of anti-social behaviour. He makes us to understand that society leaders and politicians alike display non-chalant attitudes towards the need to abstain from all forms of anti 'omólúàbí' behaviours. Most of them see such behaviour as part of culture and, therefore, they are not making any effort to suppress or eradicate it if possible. The author is of the view that unless the society rises against leaders who are morally blameworthy, the future of the society will be in jeopardy.

The author makes us believe in the Yorùbá saying that ‘everyday is for the thief, one day is for the owner’ (*ojó gbogbo ni t’olè, ojó kan ni ti onìnnàkan*). People are certainly watching and the belief is that one day, nemesis will certainly catch up with morally blameworthy people.

Ọba Sinmisólá is the main character in *Ayé yẹ wọn tán*. He represents Ọbas and political leaders who promise heaven and earth before they are elected into an office but forget their promises soon after they assume office. Sinmisólá promises to allocate land to the Alájùmòṣe Group for farming and to ensure equity in the allocation of market stalls to market women but fails to honour these pledges when he is made to understand that he stands to gain more personally if he surrenders the land to be used for the building of an ultra-modern hotel.

The author condemns Sinmisólá’s action via the mass protests that follow and the Ọba’s eventual dethronement. The author affirms the authenticity of the Yorùbá proverb that “everyday is for the thief, one day is for the owner”.

The functional characters in *Ayé yẹ wọn tán* include Fášakin, Bélò, Şítù, Ìyálójà, Abọrẹ, Àròni, Àgbàakin and Sàmù who represent truth and equal justice. In the face of death, they all stand by the truth. The author presents them as ‘*omólúàbí*’, the kind of people any society needs for its growth. Fášakin, for instance, educates the people on why they should cooperate to fight cheating, oppression, unfaithfulness and other vices perpetrated by Sinmisólá and his cohort. He says:

Owó tí ó yẹ kí gbogbo wa fi sànfàní ni àwọn kan ní jí yẹn o. Bí o bá gba ribá isọnu, ribá iwòsí, ara rẹ lo ẹ. O ò lè bó nínú iyà o, èpè kọ. Nítorí pé igi tí wọn ó fi dáná sun ó jẹ ni ò n ẹ yẹn o..... Ẹ wò ó, àkókò àtikòyà tó (o.i.54).

They are stealing the money meant for the benefit of us all. If you take ridiculous bribe, you are nailing yourself. You cannot be free from poverty, this is no curse. You are only gathering the firewood they will use to roast you... Look, the time for protest against poverty has come (p.54).

Conversely, Òní, Başòrun, Àjé, Oyínadé and the Kingmakers represent the enemies of our society today. They are full of social vices. Their moral integrity is questionable because they support Ọba Sinmisólá’s anti-social/anti-human behaviours which include unfaithfulness, selfishness, oppression, cheating and the likes. They encourage Ọba Sinmisólá not to yield to his people’s demands. The author believes that the end of tyrannical government is not better than that of Sinmisólá in *Ayé yẹ wọn tán* who is disgraced out of office.

Those characters who fail to exhibit the spirit of ‘*omólúàbí*’ can be said to have been driven by the ego or personal unconscious in them. In the end, they are all reproached while those who allow the ideal or universal unconscious to have prominence succeed. The writer presents the idea that every individual is expected to be controlled by the society’s way of living which is mostly found in their myths such as the creation stories but that the personal unconscious which is inherent in every human will still have influence on people’s behaviour.

In the final analysis, we can conclude that the author agrees that imbibing the Yorùbá spirit of ‘*omólúàbí*’ is a panacea to positive societal development. However, there are certain forces that form stumbling blocks in the path of achieving this laudable objective. Unless we go back to the drawing board, the society may not be better off.

At this juncture, it is necessary to state that some characters in the selected play are painted to create conflict. For instance, Sinmisólá in *Ayé yẹ wọn tán* was prepared to abide by his pre-installation pledges to the Alájùmòṣe group and the Market Women Association, respectively. However, Òní, Ajé and his mischievous chiefs introduce conflict when they advise the Ọba to release the land he promised the Alájùmòṣe group for the building of an ultra-modern hotel which will benefit Ọba Sinmisólá financially and materially too.

In the same text, the author gives the impression that many people including politicians and even traditional rulers of today are not ready to play the game according to the rules. They believe that they must get whatever they need at any cost even if it involves terminating another person’s life. No wonder why political appointments are based on how big or heavy your ‘kola’ is. One should recall that the author makes us aware of the fact that the oracle was against the choice of Sinmisólá but for the corrupt Kingmakers. This is typical of what goes on in our society today. Ọba Sinmisólá and his cohorts allow their individual egos to dominate the ideal but as pointed out earlier, the super ego which punishes such people is also at work.

Ọba Sinmisólá is desperate in his bid to protect his interest even if it involves terminating people’s lives. He makes frantic efforts to stop the usual annual sacrifice in Ìpo town using thugs, policemen, charms and his loyalists to disrupt the programme which definitely would not be in his favour. Unfortunately, the people overpowered him with the assistance of Àròní, the powerful medicine man. Ọba Sinmisólá himself confirms this when he says:

Òní lojọ pé o! orí mi gbà mí o (Ó diwọ mọ’rí)
.... *A lo afòràn tíí, kò dàbí ení pé ó sişé o. Àbí
ojọ náà kọ ló pé yíí? Ó kù bí wákàtí mélòò kan.
Ká yáa gbàgbé t’afòràn un o (ó fi afòràn lélè).
Eléyí, wọn ni kí n fẹ ẹ sáféfẹ. Apá ibo l’aféfẹ n
fẹ lọ báyí o jàre?..... (o.i. 178).*

Today is the D-Day! My destiny should save me (he holds his head). We use ‘afòràn’ charm, it doesn’t look like it works. The day is very much around with only a few hours left. It is better we forget about the ‘afòràn’ charm (he drops the charm). I was asked to blow this one into the wind. Which direction does the wind blow? (p. 178).

Ọba Sinmisólá later regrets taking advice from his wife (Olori). When all efforts to stop the annual sacrifice fail, he puts the blame on the wife saying:

*Àbí irú ìyàwó wo lèmi ní yìi gan an? Wọn ní kí n
şe kinni yìi láfẹmọ, kí ẹníkẹni má rí mi. Mo sì yọ
bọ síta lóru yìi, obìnrin yìi tún wá yọjú ọràn. Ọun
nàà ló sọ mí dà báyìi..... (o.i. 179).*

What kind of wife is this my wife? I was asked to apply this very early in the morning, without anybody seeing me. And I sneaked out this midnight, this woman still comes to poke nose. She is the one that put me in my present predicament.... (p. 179).

During the occasion of the sacrifice, the Ọba and his cohorts make frantic efforts to force the ‘abọrẹ’ to tell lies. Ẹdá Kin-ín-ní says:

*Ìwo Abọrẹ, tí ó bá fì di ẹlẹ̀kẹ̀ta, kí Ọlórún fì ọrun ké
ọ o. Ohun tí a ní wí ní pé ẹ̀yìn ní ẹ́ ó sọ fún àwọn ará
ilú pé Ọba tí yege léyìi, ẹ́ ó sì tún sọ fún wọn pé òòsà
yìi tí ní kí a má şe búra mọ léyìn ẹ̀yí o (o.i. 186).*

You ‘abọrẹ’, by the third time, may God give you eternal rest. What we are saying is that you will be the one to inform the people that the king has successfully made this and that the oracle has directed that this kind of annual sacrifice cancelled, stopped henceforth. (p. 186).

The ‘abọrẹ’ refuses to tell lies, the thugs pounce on him and he is seriously brutalized. The venue is turned into a battle field, many lives are lost and the Ọba is captured and so also are his other supporters in the village. Although we are not told what befalls them, it is not likely they would escape punishment.

Our Findings:

From the foregoing, we can say that:

1. Oppression is one of the major causes of societal unrest.
2. Most traditional rulers have turned politicians. The traditional system used in the choice of an Oba has been abandoned. Governors now appoint and dismiss an Oba as they please. Money does everything, and this is not benefiting the society in any way.
3. The voice of the oracle is no more respected in the choice of the Obas. People, especially leaders, overturn whatever the oracle says in order to achieve their selfish ambitions especially if the oracle's pronouncements do not go in their favour.
4. The 'id' and ego personality in the individuals (especially the leaders) dominate the forces responsible for the high level of oppressive rules in our society today.
5. Unless people allow the universal "unconscious" to prevail over the personal unconscious, the society may not be better off morally.
6. Our leaders understand no other language than protest. However, apart from the fact that protests most times have devastating negative effects on the society, it is advisable that it is jointly carried out. Fásakin's awareness of this fact helps the protesters to successfully fight oppression. Although many lives are lost, the future is bright for the remaining people, and this serves as a lesson for subsequent Obas and leaders to desist from any act of oppression.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In this paper, we have been able to address the problem of oppression often displayed by most leaders of the society using Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ayé yẹ wọn tán* as our guide. The purpose of the study among others includes: to determine what constitutes oppression? Why do people oppress one another? What are the effects of oppression on the people and how do we erase the ideas of oppression from the minds and the agenda of oppressors in our society?

Oba Sinmisólá's actions are resemblances of leaders of our present-day society. Most leaders of today are being driven by the 'id' and ego personality which seeks wealth void of any form of pain. They do not think of the effects of their actions on others inasmuch as those actions do not affect them negatively. Sinmisólá makes a pledge but as soon as he tastes the beauty and benefits of being a king, he changes and bluntly refuses to honour his earlier pledge. Instead, he wants to forcefully impose his wish on the people.

The people, on the other hand, under the able leadership of Fáşakin boldly and courageously stand against oppression by fighting the ‘war’ of freedom. Going by Karl Marx’s suggestion, Fáşakin carries his people along. He makes them see reason why they should join hands to fight oppression and this earns them the huge success recorded.

This paper recommends that favoritism and god-fatherism must be discarded if the society wants to move forward. This is a vice that is more noticed in issues concerning the choice of political and religious leaders. In Yorùbá tradition, the oracle would be consulted before final decisions were taken on any issue, and the words of the oracle were strictly and jealously adhered to. Today, however, that tradition has been polluted. The size of the ‘kola’ of a contestant determines his or her victory just as it is in the case of Ọba Sinmisólá in *Ayé yẹ wọn tán*. The oracle warns against his choice, saying:

Ifá wí báun, ó fi tì. Ní ti pé ẹni a dáfá fún
Yóó fẹ́é máa ẹ̀nkan èèwò, bíi ẹ̀nkan tó
Lè ba’yé jẹ. Kí a sọra o (o.i. 15).

The oracle says this and stopped. That the person
Divined for will be attempting to do things that are
Forbidden, like those things that can destroy the
World. We should be careful (p.15).

Despite the warning, the kingmakers go ahead to choose Sinmisólá as the Ọba of Ìpo. The tradition is however vindicated as Ọba Sinmisólá misbehaved just as the oracle predicted.

It is also recommended that people should allow the universal unconscious to prevail over the personal unconscious; if not, the society may not be better off morally. People at the corridor of power should shelve the idea of ‘my will be done’ which negates the Yorùbá principle of moral behaviour.

Our leaders must always consider the effects of their actions on the led. Any action that would bring devastating and negative effects on the people should be avoided. As earlier said, Ọba Sinmisólá operates on ‘id’ and ego personality and he is removed as the Ọba of his community.

Furthermore, people in the society must not allow the legacy of colonialism and its attendant civilization to erode their cultural heritage. This is very important if we realize that before a man or woman does away with his or her cultures, he or she must be sure he or she has something of value to replace them. The Yorùbá believe that no matter what a man or a woman has or what he or she is, if he or she is morally bankrupt, he or she will not be accorded any respect in the society.

Oppression is a vice among the Yorùbá. A leader who oppresses is not respected. No wonder they say: “*Àgbà tí kò tíjú àti gun kètékèté, kètékèté náà kò ní tíjú àti là á mólè*” meaning “an elderly person who is not shy of riding a camel, the camel will not hesitate to fall him”. If an elderly person fails to behave well, he or she is disgraced no matter his or her position in the society.

For Africans people in general, myths and, indeed, oral materials should no longer be seen as inferior. African artists in general and the Yorùbá artists in particular who wish to use them in their works should seek universal relevance for them.

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