Chapter II

WOLE SOYINKA’S PLAYS: THE LION AND JEWEL, THE SWAMP DWELLERS & THE TRIALS OF BROTHER JERO
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The Lion and the Jewel

Wole Soyinka’s first play is *The Lion and the Jewel* was published in 1962. However, before, its publication was performed at the Ibadan Arts Theatre in 1959. It was the first major play to draw on traditional Yoruba poetry, music and dance to tell the Nigerian story in English. The play enabled Nigerian drama become the part of the world theatre. The idea of the first part of the play was influence through the Charlie Chaplin’s episode.

The Play set in the Small remote village called Ilujinle. Soyinka deliberately selected the location of the play considering its historical background. The Play *The Lion and the Jewel* begins in a Sunday Morning. It is divided into three Section Morning, Noon and Night.

The first Part Called as a morning. As the Play opens, Lakunle a man of ideas, came after acquired knowledge from the Western Country. He is a teacher, while teaching he saw a girl called Sidi across the School by taking a Pail of Water on her head. Lakunle captivated by her beauty. He insist her to take away pail of water, she refuses. He try to convince her and explain he don’t expect such a work from the women.

During the conversation, she endeavours to escape from the place. Meanwhile, lakunle expresses his love for Sidi. She rejected his proposal of love, and showed her interest in marriage but only after paying Bride–Price. It shows the dowry is a significant part of marriage in Yoruba society.
On the other part of the village, some village girls gathered and decides to play “The Dance of the lost Traveller” to celebrate the Welcome of the photographer. Dancing and Singing of girls in front of the Photographer indicate the curiosity of the villagers toward the modern tools like Camera and Bike. At the same time, lakunle grab the opportunity and took the photos of Sidi.

During this, Baroka came to attend the party; everybody stops for his honour shows the significance of Baroka’s (Heads) Place in Yoruba Society. The play continued through the discussion between lakunle and baroka on various social issues. Baroka ordered feast in lakunles honour. First part ends with baroka’s desire to marry new women shows Polygamy custom as a part of Yoruba Society.

At the beginning of the Second part called as Noon, Sidi observe her photos in the cover page of the magazine by near a road in the market place. She filled with joy and showed to everybody. During, Sadiku wife of baroka came to inform his proposal of marriage. After Sidi rejected, Sadiku’s attempt to convince her, demonstrate another important Yoruba tradition, “Wife search for another women for husband.” At last, Sadiku invited Sidi for the feast arranged by baroka. Sidi acquainted baroka and his intentions very well; therefore she discarded both the proposals.

The Scene shifted into baroka’s bedroom, where Ailatu plucking Baroka’s hair. Meanwhile, Sadiku appeared with the news of failure in her mission to win ‘Sidi Permission’, Baroka shows his cunningness by pretending “loss of manliness” to Sadiku with advice not to inform anyone. Scene ends with Baroka compare himself with his father and forefathers concerning to his
manliness, it illustrates having “more wives” become the matter of ‘Pride’ in Yoruba Society.

In the final part called as Night, Starts at middle of the village, where Sidi became the centre of the attraction for entire village due to her photo’s in the magazine. Again, Sadiku came with news of baroka’s ‘loss of manliness’, it amazed Sidi with joy. Both the women celebrate the incidence by dancing. So, Sidi accepts ‘Baroka’s invitation of Feast’ and decide to go to tease him. However, lakunle tries to stops her. Thereafter, a discussion between lakunle and Sadiku takes place where lakunle tells about his future plan regarding to the betterment of the Village.

Again, scene shifted to the baroka’s bedroom however he is busy playing wrestling match. Baroka intentionally avoid the subject of women. However, Sidi flirt with him by raising question on his ability to produce Children? At last, Sidi gets trapped during teasing baroka and losses her virginity music denotes the incidence. At the end of the play, lakunle stunned with Sidi’s decision to marry baroka. As a resulted he left the place with shock whereas Sadiku offers her best wishes and blessing to Sidi.

_The Lion and the Jewel_ is a successful representation of the living significance of Yoruba heritage and culture. The play focus on different tribal traditions, out of that Bride Price is one of the important customs in Yoruba Society. It seen in the incidence, when Sidi asks bride price to prove her virginity among the people, she says

SIDI. I shall marry you today, next week Or any day you name. But my bride price must first be paid… Lakunle, I must
have the full bride-price. Will you make A laughing stock? ... Sidi will say I was no virgin that I was forced to sell my shame. And marry you without a price. (CPII 9)

Sidi justify her stand behind Bride Price to prove her virginity and village beauty infront of Yoruba Society. Soyinka again focuses on a strange Yoruba custom in which last wife of the chieftain known as Bale, will be honoured as the senior wife of his successor usually senior most son. It depicts in the incidence when Sadiku utters,

SADIKU.  Do you know what it is to be the Bale’s last wife? I’ll tell you When he dies … it means that you will have the honour of being the senior wife of the new Bale. (20)

Marriage is an important aspect in the Yoruba Society in which singing, dancing makes it more colourful and cherish able. It carries number of ceremonies expose materialization in marriage.

Nature perform dominate role in the play in which Yoruba people influenced with godliness and force of nature. The imagery used for the title of play is i.e. Lion and the Jewel and imagery of Rain used for the incidence, seduction of Sidi to shows marital bond between Sidi and Baroka belongs to the nature. Hence, the natural elements motivate the action in the play.

Song performs a crucial role in the play. As Edward Jones Observes, “Soyinka uses mime, song, and dance to make an easy transition from the present into recent history, and this device gives depth to the play.” (54) Soyinka celebrates the joyous mood of Sidi and troupe of girls during the arrival of Lagos based photographer such incidence narrated as,
[bending down over Lakunle who has been seated forcible on the platform]:

You are dressed like him
You look like him
You speak his tongue
You think like him
You’re just as clumsy
In Your Lagos ways-
You’ll do for him. (14)

It illustrate role of Song and dance connects people with nature to create natural environment. Thus, Soyinka through elements like religion, traditions, Songs, and influence of nature explore the Yoruba society.

Soyinka depicts role of Lakunle’s as self proclaimed prophet, lead Yoruba Society into disaster. As James Gibbs Says, “Soyinka watches ill dressed school teachers and noted the success of resilient elders who married young wives and used his notes on the conflict as background for The Lion and the Jewel”.

Soyinka, in The Lion and the Jewel, uses major characters like Baroka the Village bale, Sadiku his senior wife, Sidi the heroine, Lakunle a school teacher. Among them Baroka and Sidi stands for Yoruba tradition, on the other hand Lakunle stands for Modernity. Sidi’s attachment towards Yoruba tradition rather than lakunle, shows her affection towards Society.

A ritual is a set of actions, often thoughts to have symbolic value, the performance of which is usually prescribe by a religion or by the traditions of a
community by religious or political laws because of the perceived efficacy of those actions. It may be performs at regular intervals, or on specific occasions or at communities. It may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, or before specific people. A ritual may be restricts to certain subset of the community, and may enable or underscore the passage between religious or social states.

Through marriage ritual, Soyinka tries to show different situation period and culture, at the point of marriage and life, women are not ready to adopt cross-culture. In The Lion and the Jewel, Sidi has shared her bed with Baroka without knowing his potential and inherent nature of him. Later she learns about her seduction, worried a lot at the beginning and she decides to marry Baroka.

Soyinka dexterously depicted the Yoruba culture. Baroka is the leader of the village holds to Yoruba traditional beliefs, but his power is coming under threat from the Western influence. In the course of the story, Baroka’s qualities of cunning, discrimination, and strength shown to advantage; Lakunle is provided with a number of opportunities to display his talents but he fails recurrently. Finally Sidi’s decision to marry Baroka reflects the playwright’s inclination towards Baroka due to his attitudes and favor of native culture rather than western culture.

The title, *The Lion and the Jewel*, depicts a relationship between two objects - “The Lion on one hand and the Jewel on the other hand. Lion is an animal regarded as great in Africa. The Yoruba share this belief too. The Lion is
thus portrayed as the King of the jungle. The Jewel (Iyun or Segi) is valued among the womenfolk in Yoruba Society. The Yoruba use the names of some animals, like the Lion, to depict totemism in the “OrikiOrile”, that is, praise names of a clan or a community to show a person’s origin or lineage. The Jewel is a weaker treatment for women. The language use of the characters in the play too is a reflection of the manner of speaking among the Yoruba Kings or the royalty.

*The Lion and the Jewel* is a play which is anchored on Yoruba ethnography of speaking, where the culture of respect and speech norms are religiously observed. Most of the characters are therefore archetypes, representing different classes, educational standards, status, values and cultural ethos in any Yoruba speech community.

*The Lion and the Jewel* a comedy love and marriage within the context of two conflicting cultures; African tradition and the western culture. The conflict between Lakunle and Baroka is essentially a conflict between traditionalism and westernization between the callow in-experienced youth and the rich wisdom of age. The more robust African culture, personified by Baroka, naturally gains the upper hand in this typical rural setting which has little room for strange foreign values, represented by Lakunle. With the use of comedy of love and laughter Soyinka employed satirical backgrounds to show the encroachment of the western culture upon African value.

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, social institutions in the contemporary society are part of the area that comes under the sharp analysis of the play. The situations take the form of clashes representatives of the old and new systems.
These characters are made to conceive the ideologies of these various institutions from different perspectives, the conflict between Baroka and Lakunle is a social one which is a coincidence of choice between them. Lakunle, who represents the new belief system of marriage, and Baroka, who represents the old belief system of marriage, are both in love with Sidi the village Belle (The Jewel) and they are fascinated about her beauty. He tries to depict to the psychological motive of man in the character of Baroka, who is always antagonizing Lakunle, the school teacher. Baroka declares that:

BAROKA. I have told this to no one but you, who are my eldest, my most faithful one but if you dare parade my shame before the world…. (29)

Baroka’s inner motive is significant because the idea of impotence or virility is both physical and symbolic. At the symbolic level, it refers to the relative power and vigor of the two cultures in conflict as represented by Lakunle and Baroka. At the end, African culture turns out to be more virile on African soil than “impotent” imported culture. Furthermore, the ironic dramatic twist reinforced by the playwright where Baroka who is thought to be impotent turns out to be really virile and Lakunle who is the supposed young and vigorous youth has been desiccated by ill-digested foreign values, and on the way to losing his potency prematurely.

Soyinka expresses this theme through the psychological instinct of Baroka. He tries to show the fear that often exhibits in man due to his agitation to get certain results. Also Lakunle in his feeling of transforming Ilujinle to a western setting,
Lakunle. this is my plan, you withered face and
I shall start by teaching my school
and take your place with twelve year olds
for though you’re nearly seventy,
Your mind is simple and unformed
have you no shame… nor think. (37)

Soyinka cares for the traditional qualities of life and one feels that in this play, he is really on baroka’s side encouraging his subtle control of his little world, but tradition only has value to the society, he seems to be of the opinion that if only it is toughened with familiarity and alertness of changing times and conscious that it represents vital and not constant forces. Lakunle condemns the aspect of the traditional culture that supports bride price and this is what he uses as a bone of contentment between the old and new generation. He describes it as, “Savage custom, barbaric, outdated, rejected, denounced, accursed, excommunicated, archaic, degrading, humiliating, unspeakable, redundant, retrogressive, remarkable, and unpalatable (7). He believes that the idea of bride price is beneath the dignity of a civilized man. Lakunle is ‘half-baked’ in westernization that is portrayed here by Wole Soyinka in lakunle’s use of words. Yet Lakunle vehemently opposes aspect of the traditional culture and in the end, he fails in his mission.

Soyinka represents the conflict between traditional and modern culture in the Society. Soyinka deal with various tribal traditions which are the integral part of the Yoruba Society. At last, Soyinka’s affection and association towards the Native Culture instead of western culture proving tradition is the backbone of
the Yoruba Society. Thus, the present play highlighted social, cultural issues of
the society in humorous way.

The Swamp Dwellers

_The Swamp Dwellers_ written in 1958 and firstly performed in London
during 1959. It is considered to be one of the shortest plays of Soyinka. The idea
of writing a play came into the mind of Soyinka after reading news about oil,
which had been found in marketable quantities in the Niger Delta. Mood and
Atmosphere suggest naturalistic style of the play. As it is a lighter play; examine
the Society in a state of change. The locale of the play is in a small village and a
story about Old Couple waiting for their twin sons.

At the outset of the play, Old Couple Alu and Makuri waiting for
their twin sons. The play develops through their conversation, shows
anxiety, care, fear of the parents towards children. The Old Couple lives in
small hut, busy in their work at the same time waiting for Igwezu younger
son. Igwezu younger son went to the city life for the search of his elder
brother Awuchike. Awuchike in spite of elder son of the family spiritually
no longer alive for the family it shows through the conversation between
Igwezu and his father as,

IGWEZU. “Tell me, father, is my brother a better man than I?

MAKURI. No Son. His heart is only more suited to the city.” (CPI 107)

It suggests awuchike buried himself in the city without any responsibility
of family. As Pushpa says, “The Swamp provide physical image for Spiritual
death (78)”. On the other hand, Igwezu is a family man perform all his
religious responsibility and spiritually gets attached to the village and
family. It shows in the incidence, when Igwezu earn a little money in the city, he send to his father to buy a barbers’ chair which he had promised him when he left home. Makuri praises Igwezu as,

MAKURI. ‘He is a man for keeping his word’ (88)

After went to the city for the search of brother, Igwezu tried his own luck in the city. He is attracted towards city life due to money and success which had with his elder brother. Awuchike’s Settlement in the city area and as a part of the city life attracts Igwezu in the beginning and settled him there. It shows, the village in the swamp seems to be poised on the edge of change (17). Soyinka touches the aspect of, the drain of the youth to the city place.

During Alu a mother of the twins waiting for the Igwezu, makuri thinks he might be drowned in water. The arrival of beggar brings zest in the hut. As K. Rajkumar point out, “In Yoruba Custom, stranger is considered as god”. The character of beggar introduce by Soyinka as ‘Christ figure’ (Jones 18) who “introduce a completely new force, a new way of thinking into the hidebound society of the village” (18). It is the reason beggar gets the special treatment from the Old Couple,

[...  Alu squats down and washes his feet. When this is finished, she wipes them dry, takes a small jar from one of the shelves, and rubs his feet with some form of ointment] (CPI 88).
Though beggar is the older by age but younger in soul and spirit. He is a man of principle and believes in hard work instead of shortcuts. The Role of Kadiye is a contradictory to the beggar. Soyinka depicts greedy nature of the priest. He is a priest in a profession but couldn’t find a single quality of priesthood in him. Kadiye misused his religious position to deceive the peoples. Kadiye doesn’t believe in hard work, he gains the luxury by using his religious position. His appearance and visit to the Igwezu’s hut reveals his financial motives. He waited for Igwezu to come back from the city so he will get money.

In the city, he loses his job and also loses his greedy wife who deserts him for the sake money and marries with Awuchike. Igwezu’s inability to survive in the city in terms of financial as well as family matter makes him frustrated and he returns to the village.

Kadiye disappointed, when he finds out Igwezu return from city with empty hand. Kadiye express his effort for Igwezu to his Success. On the other hand, Igwezu doesn’t allow any respect for kadiye like his old parents do. Igwezu knows kadiye’s false intention, that’s the reason he always ridicule kadiye. It leads, at the end, kadiye threatened Igwezu in front of his parents.

At the end of the play Igwezu again left the village for the sake of his parents, those afraid of kadiye’s threat towards Igwezu and his family, which proves “A Society has its own norms and Ideas. An individual, who wishes to bring in the new ideas, has to contend with a lot of opposition” (Pushpa 83). The play close with the note of hope with the words of Beggar:
BEGGAR. The swallows find their nest again when the cold is over. Even the bats desert dark holes in the trees and flap wet leaves with Wings of leather. There were wings everywhere as I wiped my feet against your threshold. I heard the cricket scratch himself Beneath the armpit as the old man said to me …[The door swings to The beggar sighs, gesture a blessing and says] I shall be here to give Account. [The oil lamps go out slowly and completely. The Beggar Remains on the same spot, the moonlight falling on him through the Window. (CPI 112)

The play unfolds bond between family relationships of the members. The Society presented in the play is three tired one- the conservatives rooted in a sense of permanence of the traditional beliefs (Alu and Makuri), the corrupt priest and his followers, and two positive forces, Igwezu and the blind beggar. It deal with full of cultural elements which is the key to know the truth of the people who lives in delta region, a place where hardly find a live. Soyinka concerns with various tribal traditions in the play. The role of the priest sarcastically exposed. When kadiye a priest and his blessings prove wrong, he suspects kadiye’s ability as a priest, Igwezu utters:

IGWEZU. And when the kadiye blessed my marriage, and tied the
Heaven – made knot, did he not promise a long life? Did he
Not promise children? Did he not promise happiness? (109)

Soyinka also use a myth of the mighty serpent which governs the lives of the people. The priest hope to reclaim the land by cultivate the myth and nourishes it through sacrifice, When he utters as,
And so that the serpent might not vomit at the wrong season and drown the land, so that He might not swallow at the Wrong moment and gulp down the unwary traveller, do I not offer my goats to the priest. (109)

Soyinka shows some of the highly positive traditions in Yoruba society in which Yoruba people consider stranger as replica of the divine. They attribute divine hospitality towards strangers, it shows in the incidence of beggar who received a special attention from Old Couple carefully nurse him as:

“While the Beggar is speaking, Alu Squats down and washes his feet. When this is finished, she wipes them dry, takes a Small jar from one of the shelves, and rubs his feet with some form of ointment.” (98)

Such a high-quality custom and belief nurtured by generation to generation in Yoruba Society.

As nature perform a crucial role in the development of any culture. Here, destructive side of the nature illustrates in both the cases of parched land of beggar and the muddy land of his master. Kadiye, the village priest makes vows to invoke the beneficial nature of Nature, when he utter:

KADIYE. I vowed to the Serpent that I would neither shave nor wash until the rains ceased altogether (96)

Kadiye suggests some solution to come out the situation to Igwezu follows to appease the serpent of the Swamp but he gets the disappointment and utters:
IGWEZU. And ever Since I began to till the soil, did I not give the soil his due? Did I not bring the first of the lentils to the shrine, and pour the first oil upon the altar. (94)

Soyinka puts the role of nature, as a healer it clearly seen from the following dialogue,

**MAKURI.** Do you realize it? You’ve brought good luck with you.

**BEGGER.** Have I?

**MAKURI.** Well, didn’t you hear what the Kadiye said? The rains Have Stopped …. The floods are over… You must carry luck with your staff.

**BEGGAR.** Yes, I could feel the air growing lighter, and the clouds clearing over my head. I think the worst of your season is over (98).

It proves Yoruba people totally sacrifice themselves to the nature. They depend upon the nature for every human activity.

Soyinka discusses religion sarcastically through the character of kadiye, the priest. He depicts false practices of the priest. In African continent, Yoruba belief cultivate that god controls the lives of the people and it’s operate through the village priest. Thus, it proves sacred position of the priest in the society. Igwezu follows every religious step by sacrificial offerings through kadiye. Kadiye offers animal, goats of the villagers to the Serpent of the Swamp. Igwezu directly asks as,
IGWEZU. Who must appease the serpent of the Swamps?

KADIYE. The Kadiye.

IGWEZU. Who takes the gifts of the people, in order that the beast may be gorged and made sleepy eyed with the feast of Sacrifice.

KADIYE. The Kadiye. (108)

Soyinka not only focuses on greedy, treacherous, deceiving nature of the kadiye but also expose it to everybody especially to Igwezu.

At the end of the play Kadiye’s religious ability challenged by Igwezu, when he became helpless due to offering every religious duty. Igwezu utters:

IGWEZU. If I slew fatted calf, Kadiye, do you think the land might breathe again? If I slew all the cattle in the land and sacrificed. Every measure of goodness, would it make any difference to Our lives, Kadiye? Would it make any difference to our fates?.

(110)

In the above discussion, Igwezu raises the question about kadiye’s efficiency. Soyinka exposed innocent nature of the helpless people and how they became the victim of person like kadiye whose advice they follows blindly.

The present play develops on the family background, touches the various Social issues. Each and every character contributes to create a family bonding by touching various social issues. Such characters like, kadiye, a priest of the village. He is greedy in nature took the benefit of religion to fulfil his selfish motives. Kadiye’s uses various tricks to prove he is a messenger of god and
offering the animals for the sacrifice of betterment of the human future. His waiting for the Igwezu to return from city proves his greedy nature. At the end of the play, His original nature comes in front of the audience when his threatening towards the Igwezu leads m to the city. Again it proves faith of Yoruba people over priest.

Igwezu is the central character in the play. He represents youth of the African people lives in the village and fascinated towards glossy side of the city life. Igwezu is a lazy kind of character. Igwezu becomes shocked to see himself in a dilemma of two cultures the city and the rural one. These two cultures have made him a union chamber causing deep frustration to him in the long run.

The role of Beggar is a Positive character in the play. Beggar is a tall, thin and blind person, Muslim by cast. He is a contrast to kadiye. His journey from the unknown land brings driving a moral positive force in the life of Igwezu. Though the begger is deprived of eye sight, he believes in hard work. He does not believe in begging, he believes in the virtue of diligence this is how he leaves his home and search for cultivated lands. He deceives nobody rather raises optimistic views in Igwezu. As Jones says, “The role of beggar introduces a completely new fore, a new way of thinking into the hidebound society of the village.” (129). Thus, even if beggar is Muslim, Soyinka portrayed him as “Christ figure.” (128)

The priest whose head is bold, skin-tender, looks like greasy porpoises begs his in sophisticated form. He takes goats, ores and other sacrifices offered by the simple minded villagers. They offer the sacrifice to appease the god and
want protection at their lives and crops. Priest earns his live hood by false bait and deception.

The play mirrors the Socio-Cultural pattern, the pang and the Sufferings of the *Swamp Dwellers* and under the struggle between human beings and unfavorable forces of nature also captured in the play. It is the simple folk who face rigors of life without any hope. The play reflects the life of the people of southern Nigeria. Their vocation mainly is a cultivated land. They believe in serpent cult. They perform death rites. They lure young women with money. They consider the river bed itself as the perfect bridal bed.

Soyinka’s powerful imagination has made the language of the play metaphorical and got bundles of images reflecting his individual outlook of human life. The characters presented in The Swamp dwellers happen to exists in a particular place and time but the universally significant themes makes the play to a great height. The swamp dwellers may be the culture of Yoruba, but the play excels the demarcations and falls in the stream of international movements for humanity.

The play demonstrates money making society is ruined and falls into a deep tension, disappointment and frustration. As Eldred Jones says, “Soyinka infuses into the play a sense of physical danger which reflects the precarious state of the Society” (17). The play concentrates on the conflict between the old and the young constantly approaching for better life, The Clash between custom and innovation is also reflected in the play. It focuses the struggle of human beings against the unfavorable forces of nature such as
‘marsh’, ‘swamp’, ‘excessive water’, ‘rain’, ‘river’, ‘Serpent’ etc. Moreover, the play involves man’s avarice and greed.

*The Swamp Dwellers* primarily concerned about social changes. Soyinka ultimately portrays love for trends and tradition, love for stability of human beings and love of family the extended family. Although the spirit and tendency of the action is of Nigerian Yoruba community, but the universal appeal for humanity all over the world has explicitly been demonstrated in the play. It depicts the plight of the Swamp dwellers realistically with dependency of human beings upon mercy of furious nature unless they compromise tradition with modernity. Thus, Soyinka concerns with social changes of the society.

**THE TRIALS OF BROTHER JERO**

*The Trials of Brother Jero* was first published in the year 1960. Its original performance Organised by Farris-Belgrave productions held at the Greenwich Mews Theatre in New York City in 1967. It is one of the most popular play in which Soyinka drew his experience of Separatists sects in Abeokuta, Lagos and Ibadan. It is a successful combination of farce, Characterised by slapstick, concealed identities and neat coincidence, with brilliantly observes and sharply realised details of Yoruba life with satire.

The first Scene of the Play starts with a speech of Jeroboam, a Prophet by Profession. He addressed to the audience as, “I am a Prophet. A Prophet by birth and by inclination”(CPII 145). He talks as Prophets and his actions, his parents thought that he was born a natural prophet. Jeroboam is interested in trade and commerce. He talks about his master, how he brings him into this profession. Jero confesses that he deceives his mentor by acquiring the land, desired by him,
“What my old Master did not realize was that I was really helping myself.” As a result, Jeroboam’s master curse him for the wrong. He utters,

“Ingrate! Monster! I curse you with the curse of the daughters of Discord. May they be your downfall

May the daughter of Eve bring ruin down on your head!” (146)

Jero accepts his curse because he knows women is his weakness. Jeroboam praises himself that he is a good-looking and always attracts women, first scene ends with his confession.

Second Scene starts in the morning, when Chume and Amope enter into the stage. Amope selling women’s household stool, during she had a small accident. When Chume asks Amope for help, she replied, “I can look after myself. I’ve always done, and looked after you too….” (148). This remark illustrates that, Amope as an independent women merchant and earnings for her own family and also can take care for herself as well as towards her husband.

Chume, (husband of Amope) is a straightforward Chief Messenger in the local government office. Amope explain her desire towards her husband as, “Am I go to my grave as the wife of a Chief Messenger?” (150). It is an indirect indication of corruption is a part of African life. In Such a Society Chume as an innocent, honest person, but she doesn’t want to be poor in throughout her life.

During, Jeroboam appears on the stage when Amope asks for the money. Jeroboam rejected to give the money to Amope for cap. Amope utters as, “One pound, Eight shilling and nine pence for three Months. And he calls himself a man of God” (150). It illustrates Prophet who teaches morality to other but fails
to apply in practice. Second scene ends with, complete speech of amope with the sound of ‘gangan’. (152)

The Opening of the third scene opens at the beach side. When Jeroboam wearing white flowing gown with very fine velvet cape to prove his supremacy. He makes his reason clear behind wearing this cape,

“…It becomes important to stand out to be distinctive. I have set my heart a particular name. They will look at my velvet cape and they will think of my Goodness inevitably they must begin to call me… the velvet- hearted Jeroboam.” (153)

He thinks, cap will attract more pilgrim customers. Soyinka depicts such tendency of the prophet, is the reason of the tragedy in Africa, and because ignorant women like amope understands the fact but person like Jeroboam doesn’t.

Jeroboam staring a young girl, wears small clothes. He chases her and returns as ‘a much altered man, his clothes torn and his face bleeding’ (220). It illustrates, womanizing factor has become the important ingredient in the life of Jeroboam. He thinks women are attracted towards him because he deserve for that. Once again , he remember the curse given by his master, women will be the reason for his downfall. Jeroboam concerns with trivial matter like boy followed with women. He even didn’t accept his own follies, though he trouble with every time from the women.

Fourth Scene is a continuation of the scene second; it begins with the conversation between husband and wife. When chume asks money for drink
amope refuses straightway. The quarrel between husband and wife ends when chume beat her in front of the People. It illustrates dominant nature of the male in the society.

Again, Scene shifted to the beach side during nightfall. When Jeroboam talking with the member of the Federal House. He tempts the member interested in to become a minister. At the end, he succeeded by the grace of God. He recommended a special prayer for the member. On the other hand, after reveals the true nature of the Jero, chume came to kill him with a knife in his hand. Jero flees during other members busy in praying. Jero return with the massage for the member of the federal House that he has gone for a special recommendation for his ministerial post. At the end of the play Jero dream up for M.P. It is ‘Minister of War’,

“I saw the mustering of men, gathered in the name of peace through Strength. And at a desk, in a large gilt room, great men of the land awaited your decision. Emissaries of foreign nations hung on your word, and on the door leading into your office, I read the words, minister for War.”(154)

Soyinka concludes the play with comic tone to focuses on the gullibility and vulnerability of the victims in the society.

The play deals with numerous Cultural aspects of the native (Yoruba) Society. Soyinka with character of Jeroboam depicts the fundamental truth of Yoruba tradition to which he belongs. The following discussion shows the absence of spiritualism in religious practices,
“Some prophets I could name gained their present beaches
By getting women penitents to shake their bosoms in spiritual
Ecstasy… My master, the same one who brought me up in
Prophetic ways staked his claim and won a grant of land … I
Helped him’ with a campaign led by six dancing girls from
The French territory, all dressed as Jehovah’s witness”. (145)
The Occupation of the prophet is commercialized illustrates through the
following dialogue,

“I am glad I got here before any customers - I mean
Worshippers – well, Customers if you like. I always
get that feeling every morning that I am a Shopkeepers
waiting for customers.” (145)

Hence, the play The Trails of Brother Jero is a bitter attack on false
practices in religion, through the cunning practices of Brother Jero.

Jero is type of character which carries stimulating force; he is a vibrant
and very sure of himself. The nature of profession of Jero is like, “It is a less of
religion and more of a business deal- an investment which is expected to yield
great dividend in a very short time”. (Ogunba 60) “Jero doesn’t make any
mistake” (CPII 169). At the beginning of the play it exposed that Jero as more
intelligent than the people around him, because he knows, “Strange dissatisfied
people. I know because I keep them dissatisfied.” (146)

Chume is a representative of the innocence of common Yoruba people
who blindly accept spiritual leader’s pronounces, such people seen every society.
According to Pushpa, “Soyinka adopts the Yoruba tradition of storytelling in which the narrator especially in describing rouges, changes to first person narration for effect” (wole131). Chume is interested in religion only as a safeguard; as a result he becomes the victim of the cunning person like Jero. His journey from labor to the Chief messenger transform his character in great extends. Thus, at the end of the play, chume psychologically liberated from the influence of the Jero.

Amope is a major female character in the play. Soyinka moulds her role to unfold the role of women in Yoruba Society. As amope carries responsibility of the family on her shoulder, it point out dominance of the women in Yoruba Society. Throughout the play she works hard for the money and always insists chume to earn money proves inclination of the playwright towards the Women’s self–independence.

Soyinka ridicules the technique and practices by number of Christian sects which emerged in Nigeria during the transitional period. Jero is one of the sect leader look as if materialistic nature of the contemporary Nigeria. His motives are only to make money with innate commonsense to cheat the others.

Soyinka examines Nigerian based Yoruba society at the time of Nigerian independence. He concerns social satire from the point of view of religion, political leadership, corruption and betrayal of one’s vocation for attraction of power. Soyinka criticizes his society through the religion. As a Richard priebe remarks, “Soyinka introduced a mechanism for controlling the temperature of the satire. Throughout the satire stays at a mild level, never getting so hot that we are unable to laugh at the folly that we ourselves have become involved in”
(qtd. in Gibbs, 1981:85). It is the reason religion can be seen as the collective expression of frustration of a social grown up and sometime political will. Hence, religion is used as a vehicle in satirizing the societal follies and absurdities. As Pushpa remarks, “Tricks and cheats are integral part of the Society. Soyinka shows his skill by depicting realistic picture of the various segments of the Yoruba Society.” (132)

_The Trials of Brother Jero_ is a religious and political satire on African and Nigerian Society. Soyinka effectively and successfully sends his message across as a satirist. Religious hypocrisy is the central concerns of the play, represents fake and dubious prophet, and turns religion into a means of livelihood. Thus, Soyinka, succeeded to point out the corruption in the Nigerian based Yoruba Society in the name of religion.

**Work Cited:**


