CHAPTER IV

Season of Anomy: The vision of Light

Wole Soyinka’s second novel *Season of Anomy*, published in 1973 after a lapse of eight years since his first novel *The Interpreters* was published in 1965, has been warmly received by Soyinka’s critics. The reasons for this are quite obvious: *The Interpreters* proposes to analyse the Nigerian society politically and morally and present the tragic picture of the State in all its nakedness; and the business of those five intellectuals who have had education in alien countries is just to interpret and not to make or pass any critical comments on their own findings. But in the second novel *Season of Anomy* the writer is determined to lay bare the body politic of the Nigeria immediately after its post-independence period, his ruthless searching eye exposes the carrion-state of Nigeria that was rotten to its core by evils of every description in its social, political, moral and economic spheres. The carcinogenic corruption, the mother of all evils has eaten away the society of Nigeria to the marrows.

Soyinka, in the light of his immediate past bitter experiences of seven years, since the publication of *The Interpreters* in 1965, views the whole panorama of Nigeria against its political, social, and moral backdrop as being rotten to its core. It seems, as it were, beyond redemption; if anyone were to be in the place of Soyinka, he would be left cynical and even pessimistic. Such was the irretrievable gloomy picture of Nigeria at the time. But Soyinka has been an incurable optimist and with a view to recreating Nigeria of his dreams -- as something that would emerge as a kind of utopia of his
heart’s desire. So, Soyinka projects a rosy vision of a new Nigeria where men enjoy equal rights and where justice comes as succour to the oppressed. And this optimistic vision of Soyinka’s takes the form of his second novel, *Season of Anomy*. Soyinka, by now a past master in the art of play-writing, instinctively feels that the contemplated novel to be very effective should be in the form of an allegory. Thus, *Season of Anomy* finally comes to us as a powerful political allegory.

The interval between the publication of his first novel *The Interpreters* in 1965 and the publication of his second novel *Season of Anomy* in 1973 was a kind of phantasmagoria that disturbed the thinking of the serious writers like Soyinka, who were committed to ameliorate the nightmarish state of affairs on social, political and moral fronts. It was during this dreadful period of anomy that Nigeria experienced one of the most horrid periods in the annals of the state. It was during this darkest period that Nigeria had witnessed military coups that entailed large scale massacres of the civilians. The Ibos were the chief targets of the ruthless dictators since the former were politically very active and economically well off.

Soyinka, by nature and temperament being non-violent and altruistic, was naturally prompted or impelled to set things right between the two tribes of the same African community by his timely interference. But ironically enough his efforts to bring about peace between the Federal military government and the Biafran Forces that rebelled against them, resulted in his imprisonment for a term of a little more than two years. The immediate bleak background to this novel was the horrible massacres perpetrated by the Cartel Organisation in 1966. Most of the excruciatingly bitter experiences that he suffered were vividly chronicled in his prison diary *The Man Died*. 
The second novel *Season of Anomy* reflects all these sad, bad incidents and his own bitter experiences. All this has brought about in him a kind of transformation that finally moulded him into a relentless fighter for human justice. The massacres and large scale devastation caused by that civil war had left an indelible impress of the brutal, dehumanising effect of war on his mind. War, as man’s experience shows, is a game of the savages; and it is a negation of civilisation and all that is beautiful and useful on this side of the grave. All thinking people condemn and denounce it in the most vehement terms. Soyinka’s mouth piece is the protagonist of the novel, *Season of Anomy*, namely Ofeyi; and Ofeyi warns the Dentist of Aiyero against the use of violence in any form. Even when he is convinced that there is no choice left for him except violence to check the brutal actions of barbarous nature, he feels once his objective is realised, he must eschew the use of violence.

In *Season of Anomy* Soyinka attempts to present the ghastly state of affairs social, political and moral, touching the very nadir of depravity. The postcolonial Nigeria is a veritable imbroglio in every respect. The very fabric of society has been shattered. Disorder has been let loose. The chaotic conditions that prevail through the length and breadth of Nigeria do not warrant human habitation in any form. Soyinka who was released from his 27 month solitary confinement was now an entirely different man. He must have felt that there was something rotten in the state of Nigeria which he thought was almost beyond repair. But Soyinka was an incurable optimist and, therefore, he mustered what energies still remained in reserve and took it as a mighty challenge that he would set right things again. The present novel, *Season of Anomy* is nothing but Soyinka’s genuinely honest efforts at presenting those nightmarish
conditions in the postcolonial Nigeria. As such, the whole atmosphere from first to last savours of rankness of blood and putrefaction. After witnessing these mind-boggling sights Soyinka had resolved himself to be a political activist from being the conscience of society.

In the title of the novel *Season of Anomy*, anomie or anomy which derives from the Greek word ‘anomia’ and it means lawlessness and in general; it means lack of social or moral standards in an individual or society.

The novel deals with a prolonged season or period of lawlessness or social and moral disorder. The title succinctly sums up the theme of the novel; the theme of this novel has been his favourite motto and in his own words: ‘the first condition of humanity is social justice and other sub-themes are there implied. For instance, the implied theme is that a state that is completely under the authoritarian control of an alien power will naturally wilt or peters away slowly and steadily and dwindle into slavery, totally or partially eclipsing the age-old traditions and their cultural moorings. Freedom is the life blood of a state or a nation in whose salutary influence all the natural talents and latent genius fully blooms into full blossomed flowers.

As a man with a deep sense of commitment to recreate and reorganize the society which at present is festered with all kinds of evils, social, political and moral, Soyinka is greatly disillusioned. The most infectious disease is its ubiquitous corruption. The writer feels rather convinced that a kind of militant approach to eradicate these evils root and branch is the only way left to deal with them. Thus we
perceive in this novel Soyinka’s zeal for a revolutionary bent of mind. It is appropriate to quote Emmanuel Ngara here;

The theme of the novel is based on the dialectical relationship between exploitation and revolution, and Soyinka points to the inevitability of violence as a method of bringing about justice to the oppressed peoples of Africa. For thinking people like Ofeyi (the hero) the prevailing social conditions present a serious challenge. But the challenge implies no less to Soyinka than he does to Ofeyi, for Soyinka is certainly becoming a militant writer. (115)

Wole Soyinka is, undoubtedly, a zealous freedom fighter of the first order who justly deserves to be called the true political heir to such celebrated personality like Nelson Mandela. If knowledge, gained through education and experience, is put to ill-use or nefarious activities, it becomes, by its very nature, evil; and evil, as long as it remains unchecked, grows stronger and stronger and without any effort, it can bring the innocent under its oppressive grip and use them as a massive tool to gain its own selfish ends.

The European colonists, who were very enlightened politically and socially with no effort subjugated the African peoples who lived in tribes independent of one another. They knew nothing beyond fighting with one another when there was a cause for such a fight. Otherwise they lived simple, contented lives in peace almost in the lap
of Nature. They may justly be described as the relics of the tribe of the Nobel Savage as was conceived by Rousseau.

The colonists had, as it were, raped their (Africans) primordial innocence and exploited their native ignorance. Thus the colonists prospered by plundering their natural resources and thus they subjugated the natives almost to the status of slaves.

It is quite appropriate to quote Soyinka’s opinion from his famous Nobel Prize speech “they (the adventurers) spoke of living communities which regulated their own lives which had evolved a working relationship with Nature, which ministered to their own wants and served their future with their own genius.” (3 Jan 1987)

When the European thinkers held a very low opinion of the black race equating them with barbarians, these colonists applied every method to make the natives feel that they were culturally, socially and educationally inferior to them. And the wielded one weapon -- to make them mild and passive -- that was proselytization, since a true believer in Christianity is mild and is prone to forgive his offender. These aliens on the soil of the black continent had succeeded in realising their objective to a larger extent.

It would be a Herculean task for those who would curb or curtail the influence of these formidable forces that had already gained an upper hand over the converted natives. Those thinkers like Soyinka and others were hell-bent on obviating the influence of the colonists by rousing the spirit of the natives against this exotic religion that it slowly kills the religion of their forefathers and thereby, the colonizers were drying up the very springs of their racial culture.
A thorough and critical reading of the novel *Season of Anomy* unmistakably reveals that Soyinka has changed his attitude from being the ‘conscience of society’ to a fervent political activist-turned a rebel. James Booth observes; “the pessimistic retreat into the private-self found in *The Interpreters* has been superseded by an energetic attempt to realise his ‘social potential,’ to forge a practical rationale for revolutionary action.” (Booth 146-47). Soyinka, having delved deep into the rotten body of society which to a large extent has been putrefied, is constrained to take up cudgels almost in violence against those Forces that were chiefly responsible for this sad and pitiable plight in which Nigeria is at present. And this zeal for revolutionary advancement is clearly perceptible in both Ofeyi and the Dentist. It must be observed here that Ofeyi would leave his revolutionary activity once the present system has been cleansed thoroughly of all its evils and establish a quiet peaceful society. This shows that Ofeyi would adopt the revolutionary methods temporarily as an inevitable means to achieve his cherished ends, namely, a Nigeria of peace and prosperity. The Dentist, on the other hand and as a contrast to Ofeyi, sees violence as the only means of eliminating the enemy. He makes his point clear when he observes; “don’t ask me what I envisage. Beyond the elimination of men I know to be destructively evil, I envisage nothing. What happens after is up to people like you.”(108)

Aiyero is an imaginary village township that Soyinka idealises in the novel. It is his utopia. The Aiyero community leads a life of Spartan simplicity and are not attracted by the veneer of modern civilization they live a life of peace and truthfulness; they are all close-knit and well bound together by common interests. It is modelled on an ideal communistic society where the motto is: from each according to his ability and
to each according to his needs. Of course, utopias have been the dream of mankind from time immemorial. Man’s desire for a perfect state has remained a dream, a noble dream at that. It has never had any real existence outside of his fond imagination.

The Aiyero ideal has been variously explained by critics. Eustance Palmer views it as ‘vibrantly life affirming’ with the need for a commitment of truth and a better life’. (271) Juliet Okonkwo observes: “Aiyero represents the egalitarian, morally incorruptible essence from the African past” (79). Gerald Moore, an eminent critic of African literature, makes the following observation: “communistic in the sense that every free born son was entitled to the land he could farm.”

Even a causal reader of the novel can rightly guess that Soyinka envisions his own idea of utopia through the model of Aiyero. The welfare of every member of the community will well be safe-guarded by the Custodian of the Grain. The members are well taken care of. Utopias have never been new to human endeavour. But utopias live in men’s dreams which remain unfulfilled. Perhaps a utopia remains as illusory and elusive as Shelley’s: “the desire of the moth for the star; of the night for the marrow: our devotion to something afar; from the sphere of our sorrow”.

The Chief Minister of Aiyero, Pa Ahime describes in detail, the social philosophy of the Aiyero community to Ofeyi just on the occasion of the death of the Custodian of the Grain:

We are farming and fishing community so we acknowledge our debts to earth and to the sea. And when a great man dies, a founder, we pay him homage. If we wish to take one full year
burying him it is still less than his due. For a people who own 
everything in common what we spend merely returns to us. (11)

The speech by the Chairman, one can guess, is replete with affected excitement
and it betrays the vainglorious vaunt and shameless hypocrisy of the Cartel
establishment. The hypocritical speech of the Chairman reveals the irony of the
situation at its height.

Pa Ahime enlightens Ofeyi about the customs and conventions of the Aiyero
community. One prevailing custom is that a dead man is honoured according to the
respect the deceased one has commanded. The whole Aiyero community had seen a
father figure in the Custodian of the Grain. He was the veritable patriarch of the
community and he was duly honoured by the whole Aiyero people who sacrificed
fourteen white bulls on his death in a most befitting manner. And just before his
demise, he declared Ofeyi as his rightful heir, realising the latter’s dedication to the
welfare of the Aiyero community.

It is to be noted that Aiyero is the near replica of Aiyetero, an ideal village in
Nigeria. This is Soyinka’s concept of an ideal society. The people of the society chiefly
depend on the earth that produces the grain and the sea that provides them with the
wealth of fish and, therefore, Pa Ahime tells Ofeyi that they are deeply indebted to
them.

The philosophy of the people of Aiyero is innocently simple; they believe that
what they produce belongs to one and all and what they spend will nearly return to
them just as the earth does. This concept of a society like this is the Utopia of
generations of people in the past and Soyinka perhaps, wishes to realise such a one as this and the people of Aiyero esteem Ogun as one of the chief deities.

This ideal of the Aiyero community is not without its critics. The Chief among them were those who dismissed it as a piece of social anachronism and yet the Aiyero community survives, breathing the air of ideal existence. The unique factors that go into the making of its structure are based on firm foundation. They speak eloquently of its viability. These members of this community are lovers of truth and have firm faith in social justice. And, moreover, their thinking has been guided by unerring reason.

Soyinka does nowhere expatiate on his philosophy of social reconstruction or regeneration. He expresses his concrete views on this subject of social amelioration through some of the characters in the novel chiefly through the mouth piece of Ofeyi. He makes the Dentist, who is no less patriotic, express his own views. He believes that the snake must be scorched to death before it has time to bite. The policy of the Dentist may give short term results but they are of little avail in the long run. But Ofeyi believes that a change for good must be brought about by a radical change in the spirit of the people; and in this process, although violence for its own sake has no place in this scheme of his things, something that has semblance of violence may be resorted to only to nip the evil in the bud. Soyinka, one can easily understand from some of the notable incidents in his life, is a pacifist and a lover of non-violence but we know that from his writings that he changed from the conscience of society to a revolutionary. He makes Ofeyi his mouth piece to envisage his political philosophy for the upliftment of the Nigerian society. In his broadness of vision, Soyinka’s nobility of thought wishes to save the artist, the singer and their ilk to make a better society.
The Aiyero community, with its simplicity of life, reinforced by their pursuit of truth and social justice, is reminiscent of the Arcadian simplicity of life led by those people of ancient Arcadia. Here, like an ideal communistic state, people collectively produce food grains and other things needed to lead a quiet life. The produce is equally shared by them according to the needs of an individual. Their motto is “each according to his ability and for each according to his needs. Thus people of the Aiyero community have a fair sense of social justice and a sense of commitment to work hard in the general interest of the whole community.

Ofeyi has been very much inspired by the idealism of the Aiyero community that is based on agrarian culture and spiritual values. It can easily be inferred from Ofeyi’s conversion to the social philosophy of the inhabitants of Aiyero; for good is attracted by good and evil by evil -- a common observation. The innate goodness coupled with a certain amount of idealism has impelled him towards the Aiyero community with a sense of dedication, he is espoused to the cause of transforming Aiyero into a kind of utopia. Ofeyi is the hero moulded in spirit to Soyinka’s heart’s desire.

Ofeyi seems to leave out, as it were a slough of his old self, slowly, steadily and inevitably, only to discover a new self, instinctively falling in love with the alien culture of the Aiyero community; a mysterious metamorphosis, perhaps, unconsciously takes place in him. This discovery on his part seems to be twofold: firstly, the change of his attitude which is one of peace-loving and secondly, his discovery of a new found-land which is his utopia. Ofeyi recognizes in Iriyise a source of fecundity and identifies
her with agricultural Aiyero; and even the women there regard Iriyise as a source of plenty and fortune, since they believe that her presence brings rain.

Ofeyi is thoroughly convinced of just practices of the Aiyero community and is equally convinced that the strategies adopted by the Cartel are nothing short of satanic designs to eliminate the Aiyero people. Therefore, he is now whole heartedly espoused to the righteous cause of supporting the Aiyero community at any cost in their just endeavours to uphold their cause. He thoroughly identifies himself with the Aiyero community and does everything with a missionary zeal towards the betterment of that community. He is so deeply in love with the Aiyero ideal that he snaps off all his connections with the Cartel Organization. He is impelled by the innate goodness of the Aiyero Community so much that he would spread their ideal even beyond the confines of their little realm. He tells himself: “the waters of Aiyero need to burst their banks. The grain must find new seminal grounds or it will atrophy and die” (6). Ofeyi’s total metamorphosis from an official of the Cartel Organization to a staunch champion of the Aiyero ideal has not been sudden; but by subtle, perceptible degrees. The plausible explanation for such a transformation in Ofeyi’s character is that innate goodness, wherever and in whatever form it may be, is naturally attracted by the proximity of goodness as if by some law of nature. Goodness, easily and instinctively, identifies its kindred anywhere around itself. He (Ofeyi) now understands that the Cartel Organization is an embodiment of evil and now it is doubly emphasised when it is contrasted with the unalloyed goodness of the Aiyero people.

Ofeyi exposes the cunning and deceptive nature of the Cartel through composing satirical poems. The Cartel authorities have taken no time to see through the
sudden unexpected inimical role that Ofeyi assumes; the Cartel’s business acumen figures it out that if Ofeyi is left unchecked; he would prove to be highly detrimental not only to their advancement there but also to their very existence. Therefore, they hit on some emergent design to wean Ofeyi out of the influence of the Aiyero ideal. At first they intend sending him to a faraway place on his business as the promotions officer and the Cartel Corporation also demands an explanation from Ofeyi why, being a servant of the Corporation, he betrays the interests of the Organization. So the Cartel Corporation sends him on study tour of the West. But this gives rise to a situation which turns out to be a petard hoisted by his own hands, since Ofeyi comes in contact with Demakin, the Dentist. The contact between these two develops into a bond of patriotism; for Demakin, a native of Aiyero, is fiercely against the Cartel Organization. Actually, as the incidents unfold themselves in the course of the action, we are given to understand that it has been the plan of Pa Ahime to bring them together.

We know from the beginning that Ofeyi, who is the mouth piece of Soyinka, is non-violent in his attitude and resists violence in any of its form. But Pa Ahime, as the present circumstances demand, desires violent action against the aggressive Cartel Organization. He, therefore, brings about the contact between the Dentist and Ofeyi so that Ofeyi may come under the influence of the Dentist who is a votary of violence. And a little later, Ofeyi is convinced that it is right for him to resort to violence as an inevitable measure to check evil and, if possible to root it out. And once evil is eradicated by means of violence, Ofeyi would have none of violence again. The hypocritical speech of the Chairman of the Cartel Organisation (chief Batoki) on the occasion of installing and unveiling the statue of St. George, and the mind-boggling
atrocities at the church, filled Ofeyi with untold wrath against the Cartel. When Ofeyi has been taken to task by the Cartel for supporting the Aiyero ideal, which act of his, would certainly imperil the collective interests of the Organization and other organs that have their illegal share from the loot the Cartel has been getting through different channels. Ofeyi openly, rather with suppressed anger, tells the Cartel that he is whole heartedly in support of the Aiyero ideal. And this rather bold answer of Ofeyi has been the last straw on the Cartels back. And this confrontation between the Cartel superiors and their employee, Ofeyi, severs all the connections between them.

Now things have come to such a pass that the Cartel Organization is bound to destroy the Aiyero ideal lest it should threaten their very existence in Nigeria. That Ofeyi proves to be recalcitrant to his mother Organisation, the Cartel which is very vindictive towards him and hell-bent on fizzling out his schemes that might promote the interest of Aiyero Community. One is naturally reminiscent of Satan’s wicked design to bring about Man’s Fall, through seducing Eve, since he, the Satan failed to wreak vengeance directly on God.

Ofeyi has scored a moral triumph over the Cartel and has proved his mettle worthy of a hero. Now begins a series of troubles unto Ofeyi when he sets out on a long quest full of perilous situations to rescue and restore his beloved Iriyise who has been abducted by the agents of the Cartel. Cartel’s abduction of Iriyise is a mean and cowardly, heinous act. Soyinka casts Ofeyi’s quest for Iriyise in the form of a famous Greek Myth which narrates the adventure of Orpheus, a great musician-poet who journeys to Hades in order to bring back his dead wife from there. But all his efforts ultimately bear no fruit since he failed, in his great curiosity, to honour the condition
laid upon him by Pluto, the king of the underworld, that he should not look back to find whether his wife Eurydice was following him or not till he reached the earth. Since he failed to fulfil the condition, his wife Eurydice disappears with a painful cry. But the quest made by Ofeyi for his beloved Iriyise has been crowned with success.

The implication of this allegory is quite simple for the reader to understand. Iriyise is the personification of the domain of the ideal Aiyero and Ofeyi is the real hero who succeeds in rescuing Iriyise, that is the Aiyero Community, and the Cartel is the embodiment of evil that tries to stifle all the heroic efforts of Ofeyi. Here we may compare the Cartel to the Cerberus which guards the gates of Hades and prevents anyone from entering it.

The Cartel is now determined to cause reckless devastation that should engulf the whole of the Aiyero Community including Ofeyi subsequent to their abduction of Iriyise. Ofeyi is very much tormented and tortured by what the wicked Cartel has done unto him. He is thoroughly convinced that unless Iriyise is restored, the Aiyero ideal can hardly be realised. So he must at any cost rescue his beloved, though hell should bar his way in this context Ofeyi feels within him certain vibrant stirrings to which he gives expression:

I’m sure every man feels the need to seize for himself the enormity of what is happening, of the time in which it is happening. Perhaps deep down I realize that the search would immerse me in the meaning of the event, lead me to a new understanding of history. (213)
Meanwhile, the Aiyero people drawing inspiration from Ofeyi’s tenacious patriotism, now are determined to oppose the Cartel brute force, for in the words of Soyinka “the sowing of any idea these days can no longer take place without accepting the need to protect the young seedling, even by violent means” (23). Ofeyi, in fact, gives his people new verve and the Dentist pursues his ruthless philosophy of elimination. All these subversive activity on the part of the Dentist incenses the wrath of the Cartel. And Ofeyi by now has been thoroughly convinced that “nothing can be achieved by isolated acts.” (100). Ofeyi possesses all the rare qualities deep inside that are required of a true leader; leadership is born in the cradle of conflict. He quiescently endorses the Dentist’s ruthless philosophy of elimination.

Wole Soyinka has always been a votary of peace and non-violence and Ofeyi who is the mouth piece of the writer advocates the avoidance of violence. He insistently and persistently exhorts the Dentist not to indulge in acts of violence and to put a stop to his act of “selective elimination”. But the Dentist deferentially turns a deaf ear to his word of advice.

But Ofeyi, in course of time, when he witnesses how many innocent people were killed in frenzy of the Cross-River rioters, is thoroughly convinced that one must resort to violence only to check violence. And yet, from time to time, he vacillates between his natural propensity for peace and the necessity to incline himself to violence. Soyinka takes care to see that this change on the part of Ofeyi from one of peace to one of violence is not sudden: nor does Ofeyi seem to rationalize the use of violence. He feels the practical need of violence and thereby to make a virtue of violence.
In the long quest for Iriyise which entails him perilous adventures on his way to discover where the abducted Iriyise has been kept. The thin veil of allegory leaves the political significance of the novel well transparent.

Ofeyi’s toughest journey in search of Iriyise involving many a perilous situation inevitably makes him discover himself. The Promethean patience and heroic perseverance on his part ultimately leave (render) him what he is in essence -- a hero. Here we may observe that true love, which calls for voluntary suffering, often of a very excruciating nature, seems to be one form of masochism. Whatever name one may give it in essence it is a mark of heroism. To cover all the quest adventures of Ofeyi, Soyinka devotes a considerable portion of the novel to the great significance of the quest episode. This quest adventure is cast in an allegorical form, which Soyinka compares to the famous story in Greek mythology that deals with Orpheus, the fabulous poet-singer’s quest for his beloved Eurydice and would restore her to earthly life from the gloomy regions of Pluto’s realm i.e. the nether world.

With the unexpected help of Lieutenant Sayi of the Air Force and the Catechist Elihu, Aliyu, the brave cripple and a few others, in one way or the other, have been serviceable to Ofeyi in his peril-laden quest for Iriyise.

With all the magic touch of man’s ardent wish to translate his utopia into a concrete reality, still a stain of imperfection leaves its mark on it. But man’s resilient aspiration and hope spring eternal in his breast. It is a glorious compliment to man’s sense of persistent pursuit after perfection.
Ofeyi, although strongly disinclined to use violence at first keeps himself away from the corrupt establishment; but in no time after passing through bitter experiences realises that to make his dream come true the only way that offers itself to him is violence through the revolutionary path. This change towards revolutionary action on the part of Soyinka, who by nature is non-violent, speaks eloquently for this act that the invincible force of circumstances has the power to change the outlook of an individual, however inflexible his convictions might seem to be. Paradoxically enough, in the case of Ofeyi, it is the ends that justify his means. The shift from his original non-violent stance to a revolutionary militant is quite natural since the atrocities perpetrated by the Cartel could hardly be quelled out by any other means than through violence.

The Cartel is a well organised group consisting of four forces that work together towards one goal, namely, the total extermination of the people of Aiyero who slowly established their authority. The exploitation of the common people by the Cartel group goes on unchecked. They -- the Cartel group perceived with rancour how the Aiyero ideal threatens and endangers their very existence in the Cross-River province. The Cartel resorts to all possible means of precluding the efforts of the Aiyero people. This conflict between the Cartel and the Aiyero citizens grows fiercer. The Cartel being thoroughly equipped with requisite material forces attacked the Aiyero people, causing much destruction of human lives and property. The Cartel oppresses and suppresses the Aiyero people mercilessly. The Cartels leave no stone unturned in trying to eliminate or annihilate, if possible, all the Aiyero cadres by whatever wicked means that are at their disposal. Zaki Amuri, the northern traditional leader and a deadly designer subjects them to inhuman sufferings. The notorious killings of men in large numbers at the
church were engineered by satanic genius of Zaki Amuri. Soyinka vividly describes this infernal scene in such phrases that reading of that passage leaves a most agonising picture indelibly impressed the readers' mind. It is how the passage reads;

It was a moment the attackers had awaited. As the first man leapt out an arrow flew toward the flames, transfixed him briefly. The figure staggered recovered balance and fled towards imagined safety. More followed him, and so did the steady procession of arrows, thudding into their targets and wringing execrations from their lips. The last man turned, pulling at the shaft embedded in his throat and, crazed by the pain tried to clamber back into the inferno. Another arrow struck him in the spine and he shuddered, fell over the sill and hung there as flames licked his clothes and soon engulfed him completely. (195)

Everything, politically, economically and morally is at sixties and seventies in the state of Nigeria in the years immediately preceding her independence from the colonial rulers. Everything was in a state of anomy and in the post-colonial Nigeria things have become much worse under the rule of the ruthless dictators. It was against his background Soyinka wrote this novel with a view to chronicling the whole tragedy and the calamitous conditions which left the whole of Nigeria no better than a vast graveyard, reminiscent of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot. Reconstruction and recreation of the almost ruined state of Nigeria was needed very badly. Moreover, Soyinka’s vision had become embittered by his own tragic experiences -- the two coups, the massacres of the community and the atrocities perpetrated by the wicked dictators that
entailed the deaths of many an innocent citizen and his unjustifiable solitary confinement for a term of a little more than two years, have gone into the making of this novel. *Season of Anomy* published in 1973. The novel records all these tragic facts blended with his creative imagination in the form of a political allegory.

Obi Maduakar in his critical assessment of *Season of Anomy* makes a very pertinent observation that the quest theme has been nowhere has been so consistently and vehemently pursued as in the novel *Season of Anomy*.

The same author observes “Ofeyi, the social reformer, is also the archetype. Like all eternal voyagers and all lone seekers, Ofeyi is led by his own vision into the unchartered regions of the object of his quest. Such a quest must be above all considerations of race and religion. The lode-star is the unfailing guide through thick and thin, through doubt and distress and these lone seekers after the beauty of truth go forwards undaunted until they reach and realise their cherished goal. Ofeyi possesses considerable amount of goodness in him; it is this that draws towards the Aiyero community which runs on idealistic lines.

The immediate source of Soyinka’s inspiration was Victor Banjo’s Third Force, although it failed to realise its goal. Soyinka, in spite of his great esteem for Victor Banjo who would adopt methods of military tactics to achieve his ends, be they ever desirable, desists from violence. But Ofeyi, the hero of *Season of Anomy* would do nothing of anything that smacks of violence. He would bring about a quiet revolution through a steady transformation of hearts of the people.
Ofeyi and the Dentist are zealous patriots, each in his own way. The Dentist believes in eliminating all these men one by one who are detrimental to the welfare of the people of Aiyero.

But Ofeyi’s means of winning over the people is by gradually changing their hearts. That is the difference between their attitudes and that makes all the difference between them. Thus, Ofeyi emerges himself as the lover of peace and non-violence. But the Dentist fails to appreciate Ofeyi’s point of view. It is not out of place to quote M. Rajeswar; “the Dentist has no such vision. He envisages nothing beyond violence and elimination of the enemy. He clarifies his stance to Ofeyi at one point: “Don’t ask me what I envisage. Beyond the elimination of men I know to be destructively evil, I envisage nothing. What happens after is up to people like you.” (6) But later on we find that Ofeyi is constrained to take recourse to methods of violence since he realises that in order to eradicate evil that is stubborn one must resort to violent methods.

The Cartel’s brute force consists of four formidable organs. Chief Batoki, the western governor who is the élan of the Cartel -- the brain behind all the nefarious operations of the organization. The other one is Chief Biga. He is the “muscle quota of the Cartel.”

The chief supporters in the background who constitute one of the four important organs in feeding the Cartel for its illegitimate and undemocratic survival in an alien country have a share in the booty of the victims by the Cartel. The Cartel’s survival based on their exploitation, both politically and economically, is persistently threatened by the ideal, democratic ideas of the Aiyero community; so, the Cartel regards them as
its arch-enemy and believes that their safety and survival depend on the total eradication of such ideas from the Cross-River. Thus, the two forces, namely, the Cartel and the Aiyero community, symbolise the evil and the good forces respectively. And the conflict between them grows stronger and stronger while the Cartel insidiously gathers its forces to oppose and annihilate its enemy. Each group of the Cartel has its own axe to grind and they have sensed where their common peril lies and how dangerous it is for all of them, if the enemy is allowed to outgrowing their concerted might. Now it is Ofeyi who imbibes the spirit of the ideals of the Aiyero community and he is now the embodiment of all the virtues, social and moral, of the Aiyero people.

Ofeyi was at first the ‘insider’ of the Cartel organization and he is thoroughly acquainted with their wicked designs, inside out. Ofeyi is the protagonist of the novel. He is on his adventurous voyage to get his cherished prize, namely, Iriyise. He would have it at any cost. Now it is the be-all and the end-all of his mission. Soyinka chooses to narrate the perilous adventures of the hero in the form of an allegory. This novel, *Season of Anomy* is, indeed, a political allegory. He borrows the most exciting and memorable episode from Greek Mythology, for this political allegory, dealing with Orpheus’s quest for his beloved dead wife, Eurydice. She is now in Hades, the Kingdom of Pluto in the nether world. And the gates of Hades are vigilantly guarded by a many-headed- ferocious dog, named Cerberus. While the Greek Myth of Orpheus and Eurydice helps familiarise the perilous adventures of Ofeyi, it also adds a new dimension to this part of narrative by reinforcing the spiritual relationship between Ofeyi and Iriyise. Orpheus of the Greek Myth succeeds in winning Eurydice from Hades but because of feverish anxiety to know if Eurydice was actually following him
just looks back, while he is above to reach the earth and alas! Eurydice disappears with a cry of pain, since Orpheus has been guilty of the breach of promise given to Pluto but Ofeyi rescues Iriyise and brings her back to Aiyero, be it for a brief period during the Cocoa Campaign. During this incredibly brief time, Iriyise has cast a spell of love and affection that go deep into the hearts of the people of Aiyero; the women especially felt that the magical presence of Iriyise has inspired the rains. Now Iriyise has come to be regarded as the embodiment of their quiet prosperous life.

The atrocities of the Cartel have escalated to such a pitch that it was almost intolerable for the Aiyero community. But the people of Aiyero persisted to resist the Cartel cruelties with heroic spirit. They are hell-bent to oppose at any cost. They draw inspiration from the Dentist’s continuous process of eliminating one after another of the enemies. They have become used to being violent of necessity. The Dentist’s constant practice of his selective elimination of the enemy made him a thorough going perfect killer. The Dentist in his own words reveals himself as follows:

All that we must do is take control of that violence and direct it with a constructive economy. Our people kill but they have this sense of selectiveness . . . select the real kingpins and eliminate them. It is simple, you have to hit the snake on the head to render it harmless. (107)

The stark realities that Ofeyi, the Dentist and the people of the Aiyero experience at the hands of the Cartel, force them to resort to tactics of violence and Ofeyi believes that nothing can be achieved by isolated acts. He forms an army of
progressive thinkers of that society and sets them out in search for Iriyise. Ofeyi is now inclined to agree with the vindictive activity of the Dentist, although at first he did not subscribe to the Dentist’s vengeful indulgence in his selective elimination of the opponents.

The Nigeria of this period is a veritable Inferno and Ofeyi’s voyage through the vicissitudes of the thoroughly deteriorated political and moral conditions that prevail through the length and breadth of the State of Nigeria. In this process of excruciating experiences, in search for Iriyise, Ofeyi seems to pass through an enlightening state of self-discovery. With this, he also discovers that pursuit of violence at times is not out of place or unjustified. This realisation dawns on Ofeyi only in the face of meaningless and undeserving cruelties let loose in a fit of thoughtless malignity by the Cartel. Here it is the motive of self-defence and self-preservation that justify the use of violence as means of the last ditch efforts to quell or root out violence. Here the philosophy of Ofeyi -- that is of Soyinka’s -- seems to assert the truth that for one’s ultimate survival, one is right to adopt means whatever be their nature.

Ofeyi, in the course of long journey in search of Iriyise, comes in contact with men of progressive ideas, wandering hither and thither. Soyinka spends many a chapter in the novel that deals with the search for Iriyise. Ofeyi leaves no stone unturned in finding out his Iriyise. He even lodges a complaint to the police about the whereabouts of the missing Iriyise and even these efforts on his part go in vain. Advised by lieutenant Sayi of the Air Force, Ofeyi goes to the refugee camps on the outskirts of the city in search of her. Somehow, Sayi is sympathetic towards Ofeyi and all the Air Force men are deadly opposed to the inhuman activities of the army. And with the kind
cooperation and help of many people whom he comes in contact with, he continues his search for Iriyise. Ofeyi has been taken aback at the cruel killings perpetrated by the Cross-River rioters. He is at a loss to know why they behave the way they do. Ofeyi pauses for a moment and then reflects:

. . . was the blood lust that seized upon the populace just another legacy of climate? . . . Or was there a truly metaphysical condition called evil, present in epidemic proportions. . . . For this was not a mere question of slaughter. A relish had coloured their actions, a deep hunger of perversion both in inventiveness and magnitude. (270-71)

Ofeyi’s deep reflection on the thoughtless, brutal killing of the innocent by the Cross-River men convinces him of the necessity of violence.

Ofeyi on the advice of Ahime proceeds to the mortuary of the government hospital with the hope of finding at least the dead body of Iriyise but the mortuary is piled with innumerable dead bodies. Here Ofeyi comes in contact with the doctor, by name Chalil Ramath, an Indian doctor, in charge of the hospital. He is one of the most progressive minds that Ofeyi has ever known. The doctor proves to be a good angel unto Ofeyi and with the latter’s guidance, Ofeyi finds Iriyise in a state of coma at Temoko prison. Ofeyi is intimately acquainted with the young Indian lady Taiila who is none other than the doctor’s sister. Ofeyi, somehow, is deeply impressed by the calm, self-possessed Taiila and after a brief conflict between the impulse to search for Iriyise and the feeling to give up the search; he decides to marry Taiila.
Two things are brought out from this episode: in the first place, Soyinka’s high opinion of the Indian family there for their kindly attitude and Soyinka’s presentation of Thaiila’s character as a young maiden of cultured breeding who hasn’t lost her poise of mind at Ofeyi’s desire to marry her and settle down in peace thereafter. She, as would become of a well-bred lady, politely dissuades him from these unwelcome thoughts and, on the other hand, she encourages him to continue his noble pursuit of rescuing his beloved from her perilous situation. Ofeyi has been momentarily impelled by some transcendental quality that he perceives in the Indian maid. We know what tremendous influence Iriyise has exerted on him. But why does Ofeyi give way to such an unworthy desire as that, be it ever for a fleeting moment? The answer is not too far to see. Ofeyi has been irresistibly drawn towards Thaiila since she seems to be a haven of peace unto him. Peace -- peace that passeth all (mis)understanding (bracket is mine):

I, Ofeyi, the eternal intruder, what do I know of these family scenes, these insulated oases of peace, peace, these microcosms of Aiyero. A wild improbable idea rose from within and suffused him -- why don’t I marry this being and forest the outer chaos. Now, this instant, accept the most tempting interpretation of improbabilities -- her presence here, the manipulative sequence of the encounter, accept, accept. . . no, impose my own need for peace that passeth all misunderstanding. (233)

From these deep reflections of Ofeyi we infer that there is a genuine conflict between a life of peace and the pursuit of violence. This is quite natural and he is in tune with his innate love for peace. But Taiila on her part, like her doctor brother,
whole heartedly wishes Ofeyi to pursue his mission of his search for Iriyise and she 
would remain his companion throughout in a Platonic sense.

Eustance Palmer observes as follows:

To many, it seemed that the continent was retrogressing to a state 
of barbarism where the ordinary human being was deprived of all 
rights and his life was of no account to the authorities. . . . The 
immediate post-independence phase of social and political 
corruption and intellectual dishonesty was now giving way to 
bleaker phase of dictatorship, victimization, thuggery and 
vioence organized occasionally at the highest level, and 
prevailing atmosphere of fear. (267-68)

The years that follow 1966 witnessed chaos and disintegration of Nigeria both 
politically and morally under the ruthless dictators that oppressed and supressed all men 
and it was during this period two military coupes did take place and left Nigeria in a 
state of continual bleeding. Soyinka who was so much distressed to see the sad state in 
which Nigeria was caught, was impelled to write his second novel, *Season of Anomy* 
merely seven years after the publication of his first novel *The Interpreters*. This is the 
reason why the second novel is described by some critics as a political one. James 
Booth makes the following observation:

Soyinka’s treatment indicates that the real sources of tension 
within society are not the apparent ones of regionalism and 
atavism. These are merely tools in the hands of class interests. In
Soyinka’s version the outbreak of tribalism in the northern massacres is in fact a deliberately orchestrated diversionary tactic, used by the alliance of military government and bourgeoisie for their own material ends. (148).

One of the most gruesome atrocities perpetrated by the Cartel men has been very vividly described by Soyinka and the way that the writer presents the most macabre scene is mind-boggling. It is better to read the whole passage in the authors’ home idiom:

The varnished skull of one -- he seemed to be the oldest among them -- rose above the others and his mouth moved, shedding what seemed to be a brief devotional fragment on the scene. Then someone unsheathed a dagger, placed it in his hand. It rose, glinted briefly in the sun and the old man stooped and drew it across the throat of the prostrate figure. His hand moved again, this time down the body, the knife tip drew a swift, practised circle on the crotch and his other hand held up the victim’s genitals. He passed it to one of the many eager hands which also uselessly held open a jaw that had opened wide to thrust out pain. Into that mouth they stuffed his penis with the testicles. Then they all stepped back and looked on the transformation they had wrought. (159)
Such a macabre incident as is described above kindles the righteous indignation of Ofeyi against the Cartel men of which he was an erstwhile member; there he held the office of the promoter of Cocoa. In spirit he is already the opponent of the Cartel organization and would take cudgels against them. Soyinka in this particular context creates a situation where the Chairman of the Corporation would inaugurate the installing and unveiling of the statue of St. George, the pattern Saint of England. He was a legendary Christian martyr of the fourth century A.D, supposed to have killed a dragon. The Chairman of the Cartel Corporation represents the horse as the authority in power and the dragon as the collective forces that oppose them, namely, Ofeyi and the Aiyero community. But in Soyinka’s view, St. George, who always stands for justice, represents all the good forces -- the progressive men of Nigeria -- and the horse that he rides is human justice and the dragon that St. George kills is the evil forces embodied in the Cartel. The statue represents St. George as seated on the back of a horse with a dragon at its feet and St. George is in the posture of killing it with a dagger. The chairman delivers his speech on this occasion addressing a large number of people assembled there.

Soyinka introduces the particular incident in this context only to mercilessly expose the hypocrisy of the chairman and the subtle irony involved in the situation. The symbolic significance of this statue is obvious to anyone St. George is the symbol of protecting the nation against any evil force that might threaten the welfare of the nation. The dragon which is shown as being trampled under the four legs of the horse symbolises the great evil, namely, the corruption that eats into the very marrow of the body politic of Nigeria. The chairman of the corporation identifies himself with St.
George and the dragon which is under the feet of the horse is the symbol of corruption. Nothing is more ironical than the chairman representing himself as the enemy of corruption. Corruption, indeed, has been a well-organized institution that has spread its roots into every walk of human activity. It has been fathered by the organization itself. This incident reveals the brazen-faced attitude of the Cartel organization. To quote the chairman’s words:

“We all know the story of St. George and the dragon I think” the Chairman expounded as the applause rose and fell and the oh-ahs quietened “Well, you may not guess that what I have done here is put it to symbolical use. Which is why I specially hoped that one of our new rulers would be able to unveil the master-piece in person. St. George seated on that horse there as you can see is representative of the new order which is battling the dragon which represents the forces of our greatest national enemy -- corruption!” (42)

A band of Aiyero people have become estranged from their community, who for all intents and purposes, have embraced Christian faith. But the Christians of the colonial people, who are the masters of the Aiyero community, have betrayed themselves by creating an ever-increasing gulf between what they preach or profess and what they practise. The quintessence of Christ preaching is a life of detachment from the material things of the mundane world and to love one and all and forgive those that are at fault.
Soyinka now shows the thoroughly emaciated body of Nigeria figuratively, fitting the whole narrative into the frame work of an allegorical satire.

A critical reading of *Season of Anomy* reveals at ones Soyinka’s righteous indignation and the agonizing outcry at the atrocities and outrages perpetrated by the despotic rulers of Nigeria. To Soyinka the outrage done to Nigeria is nothing short of the rape of social justice. Soyinka’s relentless crusade waged against the oppression of justice of humanity, has been a part of his avowed vocation. “For me, justice is the first condition of humanity.” This most agonizing cry that comes piercing from the very depths of his being, is the very unconscious echo of the clarion call given by the French thinkers of the 18th century, namely Voltaire and Rousseau, with their fiery slogans “liberty, equality and fraternity “which set the old Order aflame and a new Order was born out of its ashes. The valiant warrior in him came bursting forth with their inevitability and invincibility of an elemental force and declared a relentless war against the brutal and inhuman rule of the authoritarian of despots of Nigeria of his time. Soon after his release from prison where he served a term of internment for 18 long months, Soyinka’s uncompromising struggle against the Cartels -- the well organised groups of the white colonists. The writer’s zest for the quest of justice shows itself in an unmistakable degree in *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1972) and this trend blooms into a full blossomed flower in this second novel, *Season of Anomy* (1973).

Soyinka’s imaginative faculty invokes an amazing variety of appropriate and eloquent images that have the dewy freshness. *Season of Anomy* is a plain statement of the widespread prevalence of moral and social chaos in Nigeria. The onerous
responsibility of a writer with a deep sense of commitment is to reconstruct and recreate society when it peters into pieces under the crushing weight of corruption.

Soyinka, in this novel obviously highlights the quest motif; it is clear from the blurb-note which runs as follows:

Utilising the allegorical form, as much infused with African nature myths as with European archetypal allusions, the search of the protagonist, Ofeyi, for his abducted mistress takes us through a contemporary Waste Land whose moral and physical devastation owes as much to the acquisitive desperation of cynical elite, as to the failure of others to translate existing alternatives into political realities.

A critical reading of the novel _Season of Anomy_ is reminiscent of the terrible scenes of _The Waste Land_ of T.S. Eliot. Soyinka has had at the back of his mind the whole of Waste Land with its moral atrophy and spiritual paralysis of the land. The recollection of the gloomy horrid scenes of The Waste Land brings to his mind the Nigeria of the post-colonial period vividly in a detailed condition. Now The Waste Land that is Nigeria with its arid, barren soil is to be fertilized and regenerated back to its normal health. This is the theme of the novel in outline.

The author narrates the whole story of _Season of Anomy_ under the guise of another story – employing an allegory -- choosing the famous story of ‘Orpheus and Eurydice’ from Greek mythology.
Soyinka chose to express it through an elaborate allegory which does not exclude satire—and the target of his virulent satire is the Cartels.

Ofeyi’s quest for Iriyise has been full of perilous adventures. And it ends in his final rescue of his beloved from the incarceration of the wicked enemies that abducted her.

Ofeyi enters a land bristling with dangerous hardships in search of his beloved Ireyise and then to rescue her from her prisoners. He has to pass through horrid scenes of breath-taking incidents. Soyinka here describes in his own characteristic language employing the most original imagery that has the freshness of dew and evokes a vivid picture that he wishes to portray:

…the news from Cross-River re-surfaced in serpentine coils, asphyxiating, ringed him with paralysing knowledge of futility in thought or motion. Both seemed fated to tend towards the starting point. The refutation of change brought moments of despair. Behind the canoe, even the lake conspired to breed spores of this paralyse, closing up the seer of passage, blotting out the Challenge of the voyager, substituting a statement of immutability, even for the simple rite of passage. (91)

Ofeyi’s perilous quest ends at Temoko. It is from here Iriyise rescued and this place is the very image of inferno that is well guarded by ‘Suberu who may be identified with Cerberus -- the many-headed dog which guards at the gates of Hades.
Although certain critics like Mary. T. David and Abiola Irele believe that the novel *Season of Anomy* is not a politically motivated one; of course, it is not. Soyinka has described at length the sad, bad political conditions in the Nigeria of postcolonial period. But Soyinka has not propounded any political theory of his own or any that is in practice elsewhere and, therefore, this novel cannot be designated as a political novel. Soyinka’s first novel *The Interpreters* does not smack of any political atmosphere. In that it has nothing to do with the political conditions prevailing there in Nigeria at that time. But he deals with the social conditions which were in a deplorable state and which were the results of a systematic undemocratic misrule by a series of military dictators. The chief purpose of the novel *The Interpreters* is obviously to study the social conditions of society and note the reasons for that sad bad state of affairs in Nigeria, and nothing beyond that. The five or six interpreters have studied the body politic of Nigeria and they are not supposed to give any remedial measures to set right the present conditions, social and moral, in Nigeria; they are, as the title suggests, are only the interpreters. In essence, they are like a doctor whose duty is to diagnose the nature of disease and not to prescribe curative medicines to remedy the disease. But in *Season of Anomy* the action of the hero, Ofeyi has been directed against the total elimination of the anti-social and the undemocratic elements responsible for the chaotic conditions, social, economic, and moral.

If the composite hero of *The Interpreters* is a critical observer of society from outside, in *Season of Anomy*, the hero is an ‘insider’ and with the knowledge of an insider he becomes an outsider in league with the Aiyero community and fights the Cartel which is the embodiment of all the evil that the hero fights against; and,
therefore, this novel is full of action and reaction, aiming at the recreation of a perfect political state.

*Season of Anomy*, according to Abiola Irele, is not a political novel. She observes:

There is no real definition at the level of the novel’s political reference to the purpose of his quest, and even the political meaning ascribed to the novel does not involve an active participation in any form of concrete political events. . . It is a poetic sensibility that Soyinka brings to his treatment of social and political questions in this novel. The vision behind the work is not that of a limited programme of social transformation but rather of a renewal of the wellsprings of the collective life and sensibility.11 (77-79)

We do partly agree with the critic. But the main theme of the novel, certainly smacks of aspirations, though nowhere overtly expressed as such. The immediate inspiration for this novel is the sadly prevalent politico-social conditions that the post-colonial Nigeria had reflected. Soyinka, of course, propounds no political theory; nor does he support any political philosophy in practice at present. Regarding the social structure of Aiyero Community, Soyinka expresses his opinions that lean towards Marxism and this he voices forth through the mouth piece of Pa Ahima, the Custodian of the Grain. He tells Ofeyi that the Aiyero community people work each according to his ability and each according to his needs -- and not beyond it.
We have earlier observed that Soyinka was the conscience of his society and as a responsible writer, witnessing the atrocities committed by the dictators and their stooges that stung him so deep that he is constrained to play the role of a political activist. It is as a political activist wedded to bringing about a new society of men where human values like social justice and the rights of mankind prevail. Once, Soyinka made a highly characteristic statement that all literature, in its final analysis, is but a political statement.

Nowhere in the civilized world is there a society living in peace and harmony without a political organization in one form or another. Soyinka is a realist to the core of his being and envisions an ideal society such as Aiyero, an ideal township, a kind of utopia -- a dream of his heart and to realise this Reality he gives his practicable suggestion in the form of a story -- the story of Ofeyi passing through a series of indescribable perilous situations and ultimately rescuing his beloved mistress from the diabolic clutches of those that abducted her. This is only an allegorical representation of present reality: Iriyise is the state of Nigeria under the total control of the colonists represented by the Cartel. And the Cartel is the oppressive dictatorial authority and Ofeyi represents the body of men with progressive ideas intent upon liberating Nigeria from the bondage of the Cartel. And Soyinka hopes with the collective efforts of the patriots and the progressive men, to create a society of their own on the lines of Aiyero ideal. This is what can be justly construed by the reader as the final message of this novel.

Ofeyi, straying into the Aiyero community instinctively falls in love with the ideal of that community. And Iriyise, his beloved follows him and identifies herself
with the sweet spirit of the community and, in no time, endears herself especially to the women folk of that community so much that these women began to look on her as the harbinger of “Gods plenty.” They even believe that her salutary presence brings rains.

Thus the advent of their joining the Aiyero community, heart and soul, has changed the whole place of Aiyero and transformed it into an Eden. But this has been achieved not by any magic-touch. All the labour of the people has gone into the reconstruction of this ideal township. All creation artistic or social is preceded by heavy pangs of pain and suffering and a large amount of excruciating labour. Ofeyi and Iriyise are fitted into a perfect unity as a good soul in a sound and sensible body. Since, Ofeyi obviously possesses leadership qualities endowed with clear sight and forethought, he has undertaken certain measures to render the Aiyero community economically sound and with this view in mind, he has installed a power station and started a cocoa farm. They have started farming on experimental basis and established amicable relations with other working communities; and thereby, they outgrow the atavistic instincts gradually.

Ofeyi’s search for Iriyise entails him in breath-taking adventures and the process of this search is symbolic and as such, it is a kind of his self-discovery.

The very presence of Iriyise instils the Aiyero women with a sense of awe and reverence. They even believe that she is a bringer of good fortune to them. She exercises on them what is popularly known as charisma. Thus she is their heroine held in highest esteem. But, after all, her stay there in Aiyero has been very brief.
And as far as Ofeyi is concerned, he had shed no less influence on the Aiyero community; and their chief and guardian, the Custodian of the Grain, the founder of the Aiyero community, seems to have a flair for genius; and rightly has he chosen Ofeyi as his successor of the Aiyero community.

*Season of Anomy* is entirely different in tone and purpose from Soyinka’s first novel *The Interpreters*. Although both the novels, broadly speaking, deal with the same theme: the sad and deplorable decline of Nigeria in the immediate postcolonial period. But the emphasis laid by the author on the themes of these two novels is different. For instance the first novel, *The Interpreters* as the title suggests the theme is the present deplorable state of affairs, socially, politically and morally and the job of the interpreters is only to study critically the body politic of the Nigerian society and, therefore, the chief business of the these interpreters is to lay bare the present state of the society and find out the various diseases from which the Nigerian society is suffering. And their job is so far and no further. These interpreters, each in his own way discovers the factors that are gravely responsible for the sorry state of affairs in Nigeria. They assert that corruption rules the roost from top to bottom in that society. It is ubiquitous and it must be eradicated root and branch and other evils can easily be wiped out if the mother of all evils, namely, corruption is eliminated from society.

One, who wishes to understand the purport and significance of the novel *Season of Anomy*, must have a crystal clear knowledge of the political background of the postcolonial Nigeria which won freedom in 1960.
The immediate political background to these two novels, *The Interpreter* (1965) and *Season of Anomy* (1973), will shed a greater light on the real significance of these novels.

*Season of Anomy* was published in 1973 nearly eight years after his incarceration or solitary confinement for about 27 months. It was during this period, Soyinka wrote this novel when his spirit was embittered, (since his solitary imprisonment was not due to his fault) and his vision sharpened. If Soyinka was indignant for this unfortunate incident, he was indignant with none but with the despotic rulers that gagged the mouth of social justice and ruthlessly trampled on the rights of man. Although by nature and temperament Soyinka was non-violent and peace-loving, the atrocities perpetrated by these dictators, the mind butchers before his own eyes changed his attitude from a lover of peace to an advocate of violence. The criminal activities indiscreetly carried on by the Cartel organisation with a view to extirpating the Aiyero community as a whole. In this novel, Soyinka chooses the protagonist, Ofeyi, as his mouth piece. Ofeyi has been dead against violence and at first he admonishes Demakin nicknamed the Dentist against acts of violence. But the Dentist was adamant and continued to indulge in acts of violence in eliminating the enemy. But gradually Ofeyi, intolerant of the inhuman barbarous atrocities of the Cartel, is constrained to adopt violence as the only means of checking the uninterrupted acts of wickedness on the part of the Cartel.

The Biafran war, which in its wake left a trail of devastation and destruction, evitable loss of human life and property, caused untold misery of the masses. And personally Soyinka had to pass through an odyssey of perilous trials and tribulations
that entailed almost his life and freedom; his daring involvement in major conflicting events of a political nature and this part of his life during this period embittered his vision of life, although he remained optimistic. He looked upon the events of those nightmarish times with a great sense of detachment and thus he sustained his poise of mind. Any person in his place would have succumbed to utter despair. It was against this tragic background Soyinka wrote this novel and to appreciate *Season of Anomy* thoroughly and critically, the reader must have some knowledge of the background of that turbulent period of the postcolonial Nigeria.

*Season of Anomy* holds a faithful mirror to the chaotic conditions that ravaged not only the material structure of society but the very moral values on which any human society, worth its name, is founded. Soyinka’s motto has been that the primary condition of humanity is social justice. No African writer has ever taken up cudgels in such righteous indignation against the misrule of the junta of dictators who tried to oppress mankind and deprive them of their legitimate rights and claims to justice.

We perceive that *Season of Anomy* chiefly deals with antihuman, antisocial activities. The behaviour of the characters, hostile to the ideals of Aiyero community, is far below the level of acceptable norms of moral or ethical standards. There is too much of killing one another which smacks of barbarism. It has the savour of savagery. There seems to be an undeclared war by the Cartel organisation against the defenceless Aiyero community. Figuratively speaking, there has been a fierce conflict between what we designate ‘good’ and evil. The forces of violence systematically organised on one side represent the Cartel that is hell-bent on annihilating the forces that oppose
them tooth and nail, namely the Aiyero community. For the Cartel organisation killing is a routine game there.

Ofeyi’s determined action to quell the nefarious advances of the Cartel towards the land of the Aiyero community, indeed, forms the major theme of this novel. That there is a moral law that operates itself through all human activities good and bad and ultimately resulting in the inevitable triumph of good over evil. And in this process of establishing the sovereignty of virtue over vice, much good may perish as we perceive in a Shakespearian tragedy. This is well worth observing that in real life too, this moral law unfailingly and inevitably operates itself. There is no better example than the life of Soyinka himself. In fighting for social justice and the rights of man, with no iota of selfish pursuit, Soyinka had to suffer, Christ-like for the sins of others. Ofeyi is non-other than Soyinka himself and the Cartel organisation represents the oppressive forces in Nigeria. Behind Ofeyi’s prolonged heroic fight against the Cartel organisation, we see Soyinka’s relentless struggle against the oppressive and undemocratic forces that appear there in the form of the Id Ameen and the like of him. The Aiyero community under the able and paternal guidance of the Custodian of the Grain stands for a utopian society. Thus this novel is unmistakably cast in the trope of an allegory.

When the thin guise of allegory is unveiled, what remains is the political scenario of the postcolonial Nigeria. Soyinka so adroitly manipulates the historical situations in the Nigeria of those most turbulent times. But the trope of allegory is so thin and transparent that a causal reader faintly acquainted with the social and political tumult of the postcolonial Nigeria can discover the real significance of the characters
involved in this novel. There has been so much adverse criticism against Soyinka’s first novel *The Interpreters*.

It seems that Soyinka is recounting in retrospect all the agonising experiences that he witnessed with his own eyes and passed through those infernal and excruciating suffering through the perilous adventures of Ofeyi when he sets out in search of his beloved Iriyise, abducted by the Cartel Agency and was hidden in an almost unknown and inaccessible secret place. Ofeyi’s quest for Iriyise is analogous to Orpheus’ search for his beloved Eurydice whom he restores from Hades, the nether world, the realm of Pluto, although he has failed to regain her for not fulfilling the condition laid by Pluto. But in this story the harrowing tale of Ofeyi’s perilous journey in quest of Iriyise, Ofeyi succeeds in rescuing and restoring Iriyise back to her original state. One can easily see all this through this thin disguise of the allegory. The allegorical significance of it is that, finally Nigeria would be set free from the diabolical clutches of her misrulers and the organisation like the Cartel. All that Nigeria requires badly is a strident hero like Ofeyi, who with his Promethean patience and untiring perseverance would fight undaunted till the state of Nigeria is delivered from all kinds of bondage. Mere liberation from political bondage will not ensure real freedom, although it is an imperative pre-requisite for freedom in its real sense. As long as deterrent and obscurant forces like the Cartel cast their dark shadows there on Nigeria, there could hardly be any freedom there at all.

The heinous acts butchery committed by the Cartel Agency inflicted on the innocent people of the Aiyero Community best illustrates this fact. Soyinka out-Dickens Dickens in describing the most horrible scenes of human suffering and the
sense-paralysing, harrowing sights that are reminiscent of the untold, indescribable torments endured by the sinful souls in Dante’s Inferno. Cross-River is the horrible scene of mind-boggling carnage. Soyinka’s allusions to classical, Egyptian and biblical mythologies lend a sense of universality and timelessness to the incidents described there.

A critical reader perceives a striking difference between *The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomy*. In the first novel, we find a plain statement of facts as garnered through keen observation and personal experience; whereas in the second novel which entails the author’s bitter encounters with grave problems of personal and political nature; are painted vividly it is obvious that the story has been cast in an allegorical garb. Naturally, it admits of levels of meaning. The Cartel, the Aiyero Community, the Ofeyi-Iriyise episode and the Cross-River references can be symbolically explicated. The whole novel is replete with rich suggestions of political overtones.

Dealing with the political conditions of a society, however turbulent they may be, will hardly be designated as a political novel. If the author explicitly or implicitly must propound a political theory or in supporting any existing political system and represents the community as enjoying the fruits of that system, it may be called a political novel. Soyinka has none of any political philosophy which he offers in solving the problems that society is confronted with.

In Soyinka’s first novel *The Interpreters* we have a band of five young and enthusiastic characters propelled by patriotic passion to study the political, social and
moral conditions and take stock of factors inimical in themselves and insidiously eating into the marrows of its sustaining faculties.

As young men, they get involved in their personal problems which leave them enervated. They seem to be serious in their intent but when it comes to executing their ideas into action, they are found to be indecisive or evasive. But “Season of Anomy” is packed with action which resolves itself into a fierce conflict that occupies a major portion of the novel. It is the conflict between the Cartel which represents an organised evil force to quell out the Aiyero Community root and branch as the latter poses a grave threat to its own existence on the African soil.

In *The Interpreters*, all social evils are mercilessly exposed; the Nigeria of the postcolonial period was suffering from moral paralysis. Corruption, which is the mother of all evils, was rampant. The job of the interpreters was to study the body politic of Nigeria and discover the factors responsible for her moral and social disintegration.

In *Season of Anomy* the conflict between the Cartel and Aiyero Community has been well dramatized. The advent of Ofeyi’s dynamic presence at Aiyero adds a new dimension to the community. The impeccable atmosphere of Aiyero which breathes all the blessings of nature, enthrals Ofeyi and the innate goodness that has been there dormant in him, has suddenly burst forth in a flush of effervescence. Ofeyi, in no time became the focal point there and with his amiable conduct, he endeared himself to the “Custodian of the Grain, who was an inspiring father-figure to the whole community there. Ofeyi’s spirit feels a natural affinity with the place and the people there. In brief, he totally identified himself with the interests of the Aiyero community.
Wole Soyinka, with eloquently suggestive phrases and evocative description presents a veritable inferno through the most excruciating sufferings that Ofeyi has to pass through. And in view of the untold miseries of those innocent people at the Cross-River area only leaves Ofeyi more incensed at the perpetrators of these wicked deeds, namely of the Cartel organisation. Ofeyi’s sense of revenge has been well ignited and he wants to avenge the acts of all the criminals, resorting to violence.

A votary of peace and non-violence that Ofeyi has been till now, he feels convinced that he should resort to violence as the only means of opposing the nefarious activities of the Cartel and, if possible, to strike at the root of their existence on the Nigerian soil.

The transition from the non-violent attitude to the violent one is slow and steady; at first he vehemently condemns the Dentist and his subversive activities through his favourite device of ‘selective elimination’ but he follows the example of his companion, namely, the Dentist, subsequently, being convinced that at some inevitable stage, man is constrained to resort to violent means in order to check or stem the spread of evil any further; he follows the Dentist’s confirmed philosophy of violence. Sometimes good, however invincible and resilient it may be, becomes too weak or ineffectual to fend for itself, as a measure of exigency, the instinct for self-survival prompts man to take cudgels -- a means of violence -- against the persistent attacks of evil or any destructive force. This is the law of nature. And ultimately it is good, despite its initial setbacks, triumphs over evil. This transition from being non-violent to violent is slow, steady and rational. Experience, the best teacher, confirms this inevitable change of attitude in him in favour of violence.
Intellectuals, by nature and training, are idealists; they are averse to adopting unethical means to realise their avowed objectives. Practical experience as contrasted with vicarious or theoretical knowledge entails both negative and positive side of things. Men learn real lessons from real experience. All real heroes, in a sense, rediscover themselves in the process of passing through many ordeals and unpredictable vicissitudes of life.

The contumacy on the part of Ofeyi enrages the Cartel organisation which holds an official impeachment against him on grounds of his renegade activities. Dauntless, he faces the official impeachment and obstinately sticks to his own guns. In the unique delineation of Iriyise’s character in the novel, Soyinka creates a coronet of exquisite artistry over her brow and envelopes her in a veil of his visionary glow and renders her more than a mortal and less than an angel. And the Custodian of the Grain also subscribes to this faith or religion.

Figuratively, the Grain represents germination and Soyinka believes that germination and regeneration are the inalienable spiritual qualities of the Aiyero community. Soyinka is hardly oblivious for a moment that the essentially sustaining qualities (principle) for the lasting survival of a community are the spiritual values on the foundation of which an ideal society is built which is known in the Hindu concept as ‘Ram Raj -- the utopia according to Mahatma Gandhi. It is a state of society where good reigns supreme, where men lead a life of peace and prosperity, where social justice is the very breath of the people, where births and deaths are just inevitable accidents, has ever been the one unrealised dream of mankind since Plato. This shows
that Man is an incurable optimist, yes: as Pope says, “hope springs eternal in the human breast; Man ever is but always to be blest.”

A critical reading of the second novel of Soyinka, Season of Anomy reveals two prominent features: In the first place, there is the quest motif which is strikingly felt as the incidents in the novel unfold themselves towards the close of it; and secondly, to all intents and purposes, it is politically motivated; but Soyinka has not chosen any political thesis in the guise of a fictional work.

The story of the novel is evidently cast in the trope of an allegory; it is, undoubtedly, a political allegory. Soyinka envisages a society where, in every respect, the men are above want; spiritual values are the ingredients in their upbringing so that men of greed will have no room in that ideal social structure. Soyinka’s Season of Anomy is a literary blueprint for men who would found a community where all are provided with the needs whereby life is sustained. The motto of the community of Aiyero is that each according to his ability and for each according to his needs.

‘Utopia is a state of society where men lead a life of ease, contentment and fulfilment. It is not known by any political ‘isms’. It is a neutral state in this respect; for it reflects, in the final analysis, an ideal state of life that every political party, whatever be its denomination, or manifesto, wishes to identify with this utopia.

That Aiyero is not without its religion -- but Christianity is certainly not its religion. Politically, socially and religiously, Aiyero has its distinctive image of its own. While the Aiyero community is heading towards progress in their own way -- the first condition being absolute freedom from the Cartel. But these people have not
completely severed their connections with their past. They prefer to follow the religion of their forefathers and, therefore, they choose Ogun as their god. Ogun occupies a significant place in the pantheon of their gods.

Soyinka’s vision of life, as we perceive it in this novel, has been envenomed by what he had actually seen in the War-torn Nigeria and if we gather from the novel certain gruesome descriptions of physically maimed and mutilated figures humans and if they are arranged together one by one, the whole picture presents a ghastly sight. The totality of impressions that a reader gets from the reading of this novel is one of a disorganised society as represented by the three figures dismembered in one limb or other. They may be taken as being symbolic of the mutilated society of which they are the members:

Three figures stood by the board, one the figure Ofeyi had observed, his nose eaten away. The second figure was nearly blind. A third had rested his mud-padded crutch against the wall and was clutching at a bowl with both hands. Stumps, in strict accuracy. The stumps were smooth, but they fastened to the sides of the bowl more tenaciously than any ten figures. The noseless one was intent on pulling [the bowl] away. Gub-nose continued to stare at stumps. Soon only his bowl was left on the board (297).

These three disfigured humans speak eloquently of the “contagious rampage” caused by the Cartel. These tragic and pitiable “figures” are in the Temoko Wards that the Cartel had created. Soyinka most mercilessly and fanatically presents the dehumanised nature of the Cartel and their “universal deathness” (222) and “debris of
faces”. (196) there is no end to the Cartel’s organised mischief which appears in the form of massacres. The Aiyero community, to save and spread their ideal, are forced to defend themselves by offering unyielding resistance and reinforcing their efforts through “constructive economy.”

The Dentist, namely, Demakin the frenzied patriot who has a method in madness has mastered in ‘selective-elimination’ is, indeed, a force to reckon with. He says:

There is a pattern even to the most senseless killing. All we must do is take control of that violence and direct it with a constructive economy. They pick the key men, but they also kill from mere association. An agent is marked down for death. An informer is butchered. We cannot stop it even if we want no part of such righteous vengeance’ (111).

Demakin is nicknamed the Dentist because of “his unassailable logic of extraction before infection. Extract the carious tooth quickly, before it infects the others” (92). Demakin’s another piece of infallible logic is: “self-defence is not simply waiting until a lunatic attacks you with a hatchet. When we have watched his attack on a man up the road, you don’t wait any longer” (134) Demakin’s reference to a lunatic attacking you with a hatchet corresponds to the Cartel’s “hatchet-man, Chief Biga. Demakin associates “the hatchet-man” with “the carious tooth” that must be extracted “quickly, before it infects the others.” This logic of the Dentist is justifiable since he is determined to rid of the Cartel Organisation one by one. He stretches his elastic logic to
suit his purpose and this type of his logic may justly be described as sophistry. Apart from the rational basis of his logic, the Dentist is impelled by his enormous zeal of patriotism. He is a man who is convinced that ends justify the means.

It is worth quoting what Kofi Owusu observes in this context “availing itself of the services of Demakin, “the self-confessed assassin,” is only a symptom of the paradox introduced as Aiyero in the novel’s opening paragraph, Aiyero, the “oasis of peace” (238), is itself a product of violence: “the founding history of Aiyero had its roots in violence” (23). This “quaint anomaly” (2) in Season of Anomy manifests itself in ways that are credible in their irregularity and oddity:

‘Violence is not what I (Ofeyi) want from here (Aiyero). Just the same, the sowing of any idea these days can no longer take place without accepting the need to protect the young seedling, even by violent means’ (23.)

Ofeyi is thoroughly convinced that as a last resort he should adopt means of violence both in self-defence and as a tool of offence. In a sense, Ofeyi accepts the Dentist’s choice philosophy of “selective-elimination.” But we are mistaken if we think that Ofeyi has become an apostle of violence -- as a last ditch-effort, and as exigency demands, he is constrained to adopt means of violence. Ofeyi’s transition from non-violence to violence is quite justified since, in the final analysis, it is all for self-survival which includes the Aiyero ideology.

Ofeyi, the Cartel’s promotions officer, was a part and parcel of the Cartel family and his attachment with different members of the Cartel Organisation was deep rooted;
as such, one might feel that Ofeyi’s sudden conversion to Aiyero ideology is paradoxical. But as has been already observed, Ofeyi possesses that innate goodness, which, has been there in a dormant state, finds a natural kinship with the Aiyero ideology. And, more-over, Ofeyi doesn’t blindly accept the Dentist’s philosophy of “selective-elimination” for Ofeyi is against violence.

Soyinka makes his view-point quite crystal clear regarding material wealth and moral scruples. Soyinka, in the course of the novel, brings Ofeyi in contact with Chalil Ramath. He has great love and affection, even a sense of respect for this Indian family of Ramath’s. Ofeyi then asks Chalil why they had remained there -- after all that had happened. Chalil then answers:

‘Oh I don’t know. Guilt? A need make some competition. I can’t help feeling that there is a chain reaction in all this. My father is first and foremost a businessman. One of the richest men in Calcutta. He doesn’t much care what sort of associates he makes. Profits Mr. Ofeyi. Profits. That is my old man’s one philosophy. He had no scruples. He got on very well with your political leaders’ (231-232).

Soyinka makes it clear through Chalil’s reply that people all over the world are almost of the same mould and he believes that the majority of mankind are inhuman. Chalil observes in his reply that his father was first and foremost a businessman and one of the richest men in Calcutta and he cared only for profits and he had no moral scruples. It is worth recalling here the interview conducted by Nkosi in 1963 in which
he asks Soyinka as to the theme of the novel intended by him -- obviously it was the novel *The Interpreters* published in 1965. Soyinka tells the interviewer that the theme of the novel is ‘cannibalism’ -- that is men eating men. So in his opinion the majority of mankind are wicked and they exploit one another to their best advantage. Chalil’s answer to Ofeyi as quoted above echoes the same sentiment -- “Profits Mr. Ofeyi. Profits. That is my old man’s one philosophy; he had no scruples.” The attitude to ‘Profits’ without ‘moral scruples’ is stark materialism. There is no room for moral or spiritual values in that philosophy. As such, there is practically no difference between the Cartel Organisation and the Indian businessman who are unscrupulous in their pursuit of profits, with the least concern for moral values.

Towards the conclusion of the novel *Season of Anomy* Demakin, “the Dentist” observes: nothing much. We merely harnessed chaos to our own ends” (317). We infer from what the Dentist says and what Ofeyi observes sometime earlier that the storm was sown by the Cartel…. Unless we can turn the resulting whirlwind against them, we are lost, (24) that both the Dentist and Ofeyi share the same spirit with regard to opposing the wicked Cartel force. Soyinka seems to aver that life on this side of the grave is full of conflicts and bristles with problems of grave nature and in trying to resolve the conflicts or solve the problems, man has to muster all his resources toward them off or eliminate them completely. But once the strength of man is not equal to the well organised inimical forces, man is compelled to resort to violent means. The question is whether it is possible to eliminate evil thoroughly and completely from the face of the earth. In other words, man’s dream of creating a perfect state for him to live in -- a state which he calls ‘utopia’ can ever be realised or should it remain a dream for
ever. As things stand now, and as things have been till now, a utopia must remain a utopia, a kind of man’s day dream. This is what man has learnt from his own species that has occupied this planet since the dawn of creation. Even if one believes in the Biblical myth, two forces have been there inimical to each other, namely, God and Satan; that is good and evil respectively. Eden, before the Fall of Man, was our concept of utopia. So, man must compromise with evil to some extent and yet he must continue his ceaseless struggle against the forces of evil and he should leave no stone unturned in coping with the forces of evil. It is bitter reality; willy-nilly, he must accept, as a sturdy realist, the proposition that good and evil exist in the world as hostile to each other.

In conclusion, we may observe that Soyinka who, by temperament and practice, is disinclined to follow tradition in respect of fiction writing. Of course, it is quite obvious from the two novels, namely, *The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomy* that he has shown little regard for the traditional structure of a novel. And, therefore, his novels present certain difficulties for the common reader to appreciate them. Soyinka is aware of this fact and tells us that he does not write “for the assimilation of simple minds.” As Kofi Owusu observes towards the close of his critical assessment of Soyinka’s novels, “Wole Soyinka’s *Season of Anomy* deliberately fragments traditional novelistic structure/structuring; in this second novel, the Nobel Laureate uses language that “shatters the foundations of conventional thought” in its recreation of human suffering.” (2002)

In this novel *Season of Anomy*, the protagonist, Ofeyi goes in quest of his beloved Iriyise who has been abducted by the Cartel Agency. And she had been hidden in a far-away place the whereabouts of which are almost not known to the hero. He has
to pass through many a danger before he gets to know the place where she has been hidden. But between quest adventure and his rescue and the restoration of Iriyise, there have been challenging incidents which he copes with and overcomes. The whole adventure of Ofeyi has been cast in the garb of an allegory and, as such, the author needs must employ certain symbols to convey the significance of each incident to a reader who is well acquainted with the turbulent political conditions of the postcolonial Nigeria; the allegorical garb appears to be too transparent a thing not to be able to see through it. After all *Season of Anomy* is not a political novel although it deals with the sad, bad political conditions of Nigeria during its postcolonial period.

According to Obi Maduakor, the quest theme in the novel has two aspects; one is social and the other is personal. They are not independent of each other. They are really interrelated; one helps fortify the other. On the social level, Ofeyi plays the role of a reformer. Ofeyi, a member of the Cartel Organisation, working as promotions officer at one stage dissociates himself from the Cartel group. Now having come under the salutary influence of the Aiyero community, under the kind and able leadership of the Custodian of the Grain, Ofeyi leads comparatively peaceful and prosperous life. The social fabric of Nigeria has been disrupted beyond repair. Soyinka sees in his imagination, the birth of a new Nigeria out of the debris and debacle caused by the corrupt bureaucracy and the misrule by inhuman despots. Soyinka is very much inclined towards the reconstruction of human society based on the true moral values of life, such as social justice and human rights. With this broad and noble conception, Ofeyi sets on his journey which bristles with no small difficulties. Soyinka’s hero at that time was Victor Banjo, although his Third Force failed to deliver the expected
goods. Yet the heroic image of Victor Banjo continues to stir Soyinka’s imagination. It is with this inspiration drawn from Victor Banjo, Soyinka creates the character of Ofeyi. Talking about the Shage Project to Zaccheus, Ofeyi tells him; “New projects like Shage Dam meant that we could start with newly created working communities, new affinities, and working class kinships as opposed to the tribal. We killed the atavistic instinct once for all in new ventures like Shage.”(London edition 170) In real life Soyinka’s hero, Victor Banjo, a trained military soldier, would resort to violent actions to quell the enemy; but Ofeyi is cast in a different mould as an advocate of non-violence. Ofeyi’s conviction is that he can bring about a quiet revolution through the means of the “trick of conversion” on a subtle incursion into the territories of the human heart. He was such a pacifist that in the course of the action of the novel, Ofeyi has to confront situations which would demand violent action to overcome them. Ofeyi, ironically enough, has to change his pacifist views to views of violence. Although he admonishes ‘the Dentist’ not to resort to acts of violence in the initial stages, Ofeyi gradually converts himself to being violent. There is what is called exigency and it demands a kind of action that may be violent in order to overcome a hostile situation. Ofeyi is convinced that resorting to violence becomes imperative. His conversion into an agent of violence has been gradual and quite logical. As Kofi Owusu justly observes that there is a paradox in Ofeyi’s adoption of violent action to achieve his laudable objective, since the Aiyero community has been founded on principles of peace and non-violence but we can defend Ofeyi’s resorting to violence as Ofeyi is by temperament and nature is a lover of peace and non-violence. And, therefore, he wants Demakin, “the Dentist” not to indulge in any criminal activity. Ofeyi confesses that
necessity constrains him to adopt violence to realise his goal and once his goal is realised, he would eschew all acts of violence. From this it is crystal clear that Ofeyi is much opposed to violence and as we know by now he does not prefer violence for its own sake. If we deem Ofeyi’s use of violence is a crime, it is, indeed, a venial one.

Iriyise, like Ofeyi, abandons the Cartel Organization and follows Ofeyi. Both of them identify themselves thoroughly with the Aiyero Community. The presence of these two lends enchantment to this domain of Aiyero. There has been a visible change in the whole atmosphere of this place. The way that Soyinka describes both Ofeyi and Iriyise is such that we feel that the whole Aiyero Community has passed through an experience of alchemy that sheds an indefinable glow over the whole region. The women, especially, have completely come under the salutary influence of Iriyise. They began to look upon her as one that is almost supernatural and believe that her presence would bring rain. To them she is more than a mortal.

Since the whole story of the novel *Season of Anomy* is cast in a trope of allegory, the author needs must employ symbols to bring out the hidden significance of things in real life. We know for certain that Soyinka deals in this novel with persons and particular situations of political and social nature. But he does not allude to historical persons nor does he refer to any specific situation. The whole novel evidently describes in a dramatic manner the rotten conditions that prevailed during the postcolonial life in Nigeria. Any reader, who is a little acquainted with the sad state of affairs in Nigeria during these years, can easily perceive the symbolic significance of the characters in the novel. For instance, Ofeyi stands for a social reformist and Iriyise represents the state of Nigeria that is now completely dominated by the wicked Cartel
Organization. The trials and tribulations that Iriyise undergoes, during the period of her abduction by the Cartel Agency, represent the most deplorable conditions both political and moral of the Nigeria of this period. Ofeyi’s untiring quest for Iriyise and his ultimate triumph in rescuing and restoring the latter to her original position, represent all the efforts of a reformist to leave morally and socially stained Nigeria thoroughly cleansed. The Cartel Organisation, which directed all its concerted efforts to destroy the whole Aiyero community, looks upon it as a thorn in its bed. It is terribly afraid of the Aiyero Community, especially, after Ofeyi had joined hands with them. And, therefore, the organisation uses all its means of wickedness to stifle the Aiyero Community out of existence. It knows that Ofeyi has been a great asset to the organisation; and so the organisation tries to impeach him for his disloyalty. But Ofeyi remains strident and sticks to his guns, turning a deaf ear to what the organisation says. This is Ofeyi’s open declaration of war against the organisation. And, moreover, he, being an insider, knows all its weaknesses. Iriyise is no less recalcitrant to her home organisation than Ofeyi. And now Ofeyi and Iriyise are like the body and the soul together. Iriyise represents spiritual virtues while Ofeyi represents all the skill, intelligence and courage. The Dentist looks upon Iriyise as a “touch and standard-bearer, super-mistress of universal insurgence. To abandon such a political weapon in any struggle is to admit lack of foresight or imagination.” (219)

The Dentist is a staunch member of the Aiyero Community. But his indiscriminate assassination is rejected on moral grounds. Obi Maduakor observes: “His obsessions with a sheer concept of violence link him with chief Batoki or Zaki Amuri, whereas it is the point of the novel that Ofeyi’s humane, almost religious
approach towards social problems should be distinguished from the brutal means by which the Cartel oligarchy imposes the dictatorship of the privileged few on an unwilling many. “When you eliminate, you have in mind something to follow,” Ofeyi tells the Dentist, “something to replace what you eliminate. Otherwise your action is negative and futile” (111).

Soyinka represents Iriyise as a force to reckon with. She embodies the spirit of revolution but it is under Ofeyi’s control; she establishes her spiritual affinities with the Aiyero community and affects certain salutary changes within that land itself. Soyinka sees in Iriyise a strength that can well match that of Ofeyi’s. When Taiila, the Indian girl, whose spirit is calm and serene, is confronted by Ofeyi, the latter seems to be susceptible to her overwhelming influence, the former withdraws herself from Ofeyi’s path gently saying that he is in pursuit of a noble objective, namely, the rescuing of an abducted lady, from the captivity of her enemies. Otherwise Ofeyi, who seems to have been tired of his perilous adventures in quest of Iriyise, wishes to marry the Indian girl Taiila and settle down in peace, the rest of his life. But this was not to be. Taiila perceives the great significance of Ofeyi’s quest for Iriyise and she would not stand in his way of his noble pursuit. And Ofeyi goes on his journey of the quest.

Aiyero considers Shage most important since it is a kind of bridge of contract with the outside world now represented by the world of the Cartel. Aiyero’s operations at Shage end in success and Iriyise feels that it is her personal triumph. Soyinka is describing the role of Iriyise at this point, waxes poetically eloquent and flies into flights of lyrical joy. He goes on to describe her as follows: “her dance of the young shoot sought to re-enact the process of sowing germination, and budding, “leaves and
fresh buds from neck and fingers, shaking her hair free of dead leaves and earth and absorbing light and air through every pore” (41). At Shage, Ofeyi sees “where the rest of mankind had rushed, and now his was the only consciousness observing the dark pulsating chasms of tearing, grasping, clawing, gorging humanity” (176).

Ofeyi’s complete severance of all connections with the Cartel Establishment, although it entails his personal safety, marks a kind of spiritual rebirth unto him. It is a series of excruciating experiences that Ofeyi has to pass through in the long course of his search for Iriyise. As a matter of fact, this strenuous journey has thoroughly metamorphosed him in spirit and he emerges as a new incarnation; one conspicuous change that manifests itself can be perceived in the obvious change in his unflinching attitude in favour of violence. Experience, of course, is the best teacher. And necessity makes virtue of vice; and in this case it is the end that justifies the means. The nature of means becomes neutral when the ‘ends’ ultimately prove to be salutary and beneficial to the great majority of mankind, if not to one and all.

The conversion of Ofeyi from non-violence to violence has been slow and logical and on the basis of strong and healthy reasoning. The rationale behind it is very logical and, therefore, convincing.

It is, as he realises himself, a “wild improbable idea rose from him.” Yes, Ofeyi is justly right. It is only a passing fancy. This reveals that Thaiila’s presence which is suggestive of some indefinable spiritual touch rather than any wild irresistible feeling, be it for a moment, on the part of Ofeyi. Soyinka, indeed, pays a rich compliment to Thaiila, the Indian maiden’s transcendental quality.
Thaiila’s presence that reveals of a spiritual touch seems to mystify Ofeyi so much that the latter is hardly sure of what he feels about the situation; on the one hand, he is overwhelmed by her charming presence which infuses in him a deep sense of peace and on the other hand, he feels that it is imposed on him by his own need for peace. But from his own confession, it is obvious he is not so irresistibly tempted as to be swept off by his own emotion.

This particular passage quoted above, eloquently speaks of how deeply Ofeyi desires to have her.

And Thaiila’s response to Ofeyi’s reaction at the sight of her presence, equally confirms our opinion about the nobility of her character; without a second thought, almost spontaneously she answers him that there should be no deviation from the straight path of his noble pursuit of rescuing a damsel in deep distress -- almost in the jaws of death. Like the knight errant of the Middle Ages of Europe, with dauntless courage and single-minded tenacity of purpose, Ofeyi, with a spirit of dedication and devotion continues his journey that bristles with problems of grave consequences. Thaiila’s self-detached, impersonal attitude towards the present situation is at once an eloquent testimony to her deep sense of concern for a young lady in a perilous condition and her genuine admiration for the chivalrous spirit in him. Thaiila is certainly not a sentimental romantic type of young maiden. In delineating the character of Thaiila, Soyinka ennobles her character with an impressive touch of idealism.

Thaiila genuinely admires Ofeyi and, perhaps, loves him but her love for him transcends all traces of sensual desire. It is, beyond all shade of doubt, of platonic
nature on both sides. Thaiila is whole heartedly inclined even to follow Ofeyi to the Tabernacle.

Ofeyi instinctively, be it for a fleeting moment, escapes into a realm of fancy where he would lead a life of domestic peace, leaving far behind him, far away from the restless life of perilous adventure, and lead a quiet life of ease, by settling down with Thaiila, the Indian maiden.

This momentary shift in thought from Iriyise to Thaiila shows a conflict between his deep desire for peaceful existence and the present search for Iriyise which calls for a risky adventure. Iriyise is a symbol of rebellion and ceaseless activity towards a better social life; and she totally identifies herself with Ofeyi and the Aiyero ideal as Ofeyi does; she is restless and dynamic in spirit but Thaiila possesses a quiet that passes our understanding. It is quite natural that Ofeyi, a lover of peace by temperament, craves to have a tranquil life. This inevitable intrusion of this thought on Ofeyi’s part reveals more of Thaiila’s spiritual influence on him than of his weakness. Moreover, this incident as a whole, unfolds an admirable dimension of Thaiila’s character; although Thaiila admires Ofeyi for his noble mission to rescue a hapless young lady -- that damsel in sore distress, she keeps herself detached. This lofty attitude of Thaiila reveals a noble aspect of her character.

When at long last, Ofeyi reaches the end of his quest and finds Iriyise there in that infernal Temoko, in a sad state of coma, he feels that he himself has been trapped with no exit to go out. At any cost he must rescue Iriyise from this veritable hell of
Temoko which is most vigilantly guarded by Suberu, a formidable sentry at the gates of Temoko-prison, like Cerberus, the many headed dog that guarded the gates of Hades.

Suberu, in the course of twenty years of his service, as the sentry of Temoko-prison, a formidable organ of the Cartel Organisation, has lost all his human qualities; he has grown alien to all feelings of love or kindness; Ofeyi knows full well that habit is second nature and time in its unceasing passage has the power to corrode that tenderest sensibilities of man only to transform him into a brute. Suberu is no exception to the assaults of time.

Soyinka very adroitly brings in this context the most passionate episode of Orpheus and Eurydice from Greek mythology in order to bring out the nature of Ofeyi’s ordeal in trying to regain Iriyise from the diabolical clutches of the Cartel Organisation just as Orpheus hypnotises Cerberus -- back to earth, Ofeyi uses his inimitable persuasive argument and wins the heart hard hearted of the Suberu and with the aid of the kind hearted Dr. Ramath, the Dentist and Zaccheus, he gets Iriyise out of Temoko.

This act of Ofeyi’s rescuing Iriyise against a series of risky situations, symbolises the ultimate triumph of the intellectual in emancipating Nigeria from the life-sapping clutches of the colonial power. Although Ofeyi at first thinks that he could single handedly and non-violently affect the desired change, he has been well convinced that such mighty tasks as the one he has undertaken could hardly be realised by acts in isolation and without resorting to acts of violence. The first of it, he learns from his own experience and the other from the example of the Dentist’s practice of
‘selective elimination.’ Thus Wole Soyinka has given the literary blueprint for a socially, politically and morally ideal society.

Corruption which is ubiquitous in the post-colonial Nigeria, is the major theme in the first novel *The Interpreters*; and the whole of Nigerian society has been eaten into its marrows and left hollow by it. And the theme of *Season of Anomy* is regaining Nigeria’s social and moral health and restoring it to its normalcy through the constructive efforts of a band of ideal workers like Pa Ahima and Ofeyi and their faithful band of followers. The theme of the second novel is represented through the trope of allegory. For instance, the Cartel Organisation, the Temoko prison, Aiyero, Ofeyi and Iriyise are highly symbolic of certain forces. Allegory makes use of striking images that stand for certain significant objects. Ofeyi stands for a zealous reformist and intellectual and the abducted Iriyise for Nigeria under the oppressive power of the colonialists and the Cartel stands for the ruthless colonialists. Aiyero is the dream-land, the utopia where people “seek truth, a better life, all the things which men run after” (9).

The ultimate triumph of Ofeyi over Suberu, the hard-core member of the Cartel Organisation, goes to the credit of his persuasive art. Suberu has been thoroughly dehumanised in the course of his twenty years of service by the fiendish influence of the Organisation. Suberu stands for slavery; and Ofeyi’s conquest of Suberu is symbolic of his successful attempt to liberate Africa from the debased slavery under the Cartel.
The novel ends with robust optimism since Iriyise and the Aiyero ideal have survived in spite of the concerted efforts of the Cartel group to wipe the Aiyero ideal out of existence.

Ofeyi ultimately realises his objective and all the inhabitants of the Cross-river region where they suffered a lot, come back to Aiyero along with Ofeyi and the Dentist. It now bubbles with fresh and rejuvenated life. Ofeyi attracts all the men of progressive ideas and reinforces the land not only with hard working men but also with high moral values that work efficaciously like the elixir of life. The concluding sentence of just seven words, of the novel is, cryptic and pregnant with prophetic suggestion that the deplorable state of the post-colonial Nigeria will emerge with her native vigour, enjoying afresh spring time of lasting rejuvenation, relegating the season of anomy to the oblivion of the past.

Soyinka presents in this novel a clear vision of ‘man’ as has been understood by him in the light of his bitter personal experience in confronting the dictators -- the mind-butcherers -- of Nigeria immediately after her independence from the erstwhile colonists. This novel mercilessly exposes the Nigeria of those years i.e. 1960-1967 when she touched the very nadir of its debasement and degradation socially, politically and morally. In waging a relentless crusade against these antisocial forces that reduced Nigeria into a veritable Inferno on earth, Soyinka suffered detention by the then dictatorial government for about two years from 1967-1969.
Soyinka, against this sad background of political, social and moral entropy, envisages a new Nigerian society in a fresh utopian garb and out of his utopian dream, Aiyero emerges in all its perfect social order.

As a young man Soyinka was fascinated by leftist philosophy, but his love of the essential man, prevented him from accepting it; since, in the ultimate analysis, communism reduces man to a mere consumer of his own goods, leaving him subordinate to reason and freedom of speech which is the sovereign virtue of man.

In a sense, Soyinka is an eclectic who is above prejudice to any particular religious or political philosophy. He greets and welcomes open heartedly anything that is salutary to man. It can be well inferred that Soyinka is not an extremist in any sense of the term; for all his extreme actions are employed to realise his ultimate objective, namely, social justice and human rights. He is anything but fanatical. He does not pursue any particular ‘ism’ to the inane exclusion of all other things like a fanatic.

Soyinka’s bitter struggle to fight all the anti-social and morally oppressive forces, in the form of the mind butchering dictators of Nigeria, has brought about a change in his former attitude; he shows inclination towards violence as a tool of expediency.

Soyinka garnered enough material from his bitter experience during this period for his second novel Season of Anomy, to project his utopian vision.

It is thus, his ideal Aiyero, his vision of the utopia, takes shape. It is actually modelled on a passive Christian Aiyerto. But the elders of the community are not in favour of Christianity since they know that this is a soft tool through the means of which the colonialists wish to keep them under their oppressive control.
Works Cited


Madhuakor, Obi. Soyinka’s Season of Anomy: Ofeyi’s Quest. University of Ife, Nigeria.


