

# ***CHAPTER - V***

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## **CONCLUSION**

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Wole Soyinka is a prolific writer. He has written eighteen plays, has published two novels, two volumes of poetry, two books of non-fiction, and one translation and has appeared in numerous anthologies. He is not only well known for his literary and theatrical accomplishments, but also as a political figure in Nigeria.

Wole Soyinka is not only a playwright, but also a producer of plays and an actor. His notable role in founding and sustaining both The 1960 Masks and the Orisun Theatre has been highly appreciated. He has been connected with all aspects of the development of drama in recent years and has contributed more than any other person to the popularity of drama in Nigeria.

Wole Soyinka was born in 1935 and attended the Government College, Ibadan, the University of Ibadan and later the University of Leeds. He taught for sometime in London. It was at this time he started showing keen interest in drama and the theatre. He joined the Royal Court Theatre in London and there, produced his plays. Wole Soyinka has held various posts since he returned to Nigeria, for instance, Research Fellow at the University of Ibadan and Lecturer at the University of Ife. For a short time he made

his living as a full-time playwright, producer and poet. He also worked as the Director of the School of Drama at the University of Ibadan.

Wole Soyinka believes that drama should be made to reflect the way of life and the social aspiration of the people. In recent years he has used the stage as an instrument of political satire. He holds that much is wrong with the independent Nigeria and uses drama to call attention to the evils in society - the great division between the rich and the poor, the lack of social amenities for the lower classes, the corruption, nepotism, greed, bare-faced intolerance and political dishonesty. Soyinka strongly believes that the creative writer should never be silent about these things. He sees it as the business of a writer to expose these evils, as a means of bringing about social and political reforms.

Though, Soyinka has written novels and poetry, his greatest contribution is his plays, which deal with matters and problems familiar and important to the Nigerians. This social concern on his part had made his plays very interesting. His plays discuss the problems of superstitions, evil customs; like bride-price and family carrier, the gathering of tribes the belief in reincarnation and the practise of ancestral worship. All his plays are tremendously popular, because they deal with matters and concerns of the

masses. Wole Soyinka excites people's passions by appealing to tradition and history.

Another important contribution of Wole Soyinka is his use of drama to register his dissatisfaction with his society. He is a radical who is not particularly satisfied with the political authority in his country, and an idealist who is highly critical of the social order. He uses his plays and the stage as a vehicle to show his feeling. Soyinka's contribution here is quite original. Before his time, the stage was considered only as a means of entertainment. But Soyinka has given the stage this new importance by making it an instrument for social change.

Wole Soyinka is likely to be remembered as the author of serious plays. His plays have rich content and an abundance of humour and they are written in fine poetic style. His clever use of mythology and flashback technique also makes his works memorable. Soyinka loves the past and describes and glorifies it with great affection.

We can identify some of the weakness in his plays. Sometimes he is hard to understand. His plots are loose. He uses symbolism excessively. His characters are sometimes mere types. His use of vernacular poses a problem of understanding. Despite these weaknesses, Wole Soyinka is a dramatist to reckon with.

The present study deals with the critical analysis of Soyinka's Comedies. Oxford English Dictionary defines Comedy as 'a stage play of a light and amusing character with a happy conclusion to the plot'. Critics starting from Plato in ancient times to Robert Graves in the modern times have tried to define Comedy and yet there is no agreement among the scholars regarding the exact definition of Comedy. The general notions of comedy are vague. The popular idea of comedy is summed up in two simple notions: If the play makes us laugh it is a Comedy and another is any play with a happy ending is a Comedy. But these notions are too narrow to describe the Whole Theory of Comedy

The theories of comedy can be classified into two groups: 1. Classical Theories and 2. Modern Theories. The Classical theories of Comedy are those which were advocated by Plato, Aristotle, Jamblichus, Proclus, Cicero, Quintilian, Tzetzes, Giambattista Vico, Hobbes, Gottsched, Schlegel, Kant, Spencer, Schopenhauer, Meredith, William Hazlitt and C.C. Everett. The chief exponents of the Modern Theories of Comedy are Bergson, E.F. Carritt, Jankelevitch, Max Eastman, Stephen Leacock, V.K. Krishna Menon, Samuel Seward, J.C. Gregory, Sigmund Freud, Dumas, Dr. George Crile, Dudley Zuver and Robert Graves.

There are two distinct types of drama: Tragedy and Comedy. The traditional distinction between Tragedy and Comedy is that a Tragedy has a sad ending and a Comedy a happy ending. The chief attributes of Comedy are laughter and humour. The sources of laughter are degradation, incongruity, automatism and the sense of liberation. A good Comedy depends upon humour as its mainspring of amusement. The playwrights create humour by using the devices of satire, ridicule, whimsicality, nonsense and exaggerations.

Farce is a low kind of comedy. In Farce, characterization and wit are less important than a rapid succession of amusing situations. There is a large-scale use of surprises, coincidence and exaggerations. Farce confines itself to merely physical situations, because its only purpose is to excite mirth. It has relatively low artistic value.

There is a lot of difference between Comedy and Satire. The Comedy appeals to the feelings while Satire to the intellect. The satirist presents to the reader a series of pictures addressed to reason. He attacks the vices in society. His real object is to ridicule follies. The Comedy tries to highlight the emotional aspect and accepts life with clear vision and understanding. The Satire is always bitter and is subjective in nature.

There are several types of Comedy, such as: 1. Romantic Comedy, 2. Comedy of Humours or Satire, 3. Comedy of Manners or Wit, 4. The Genteel Comedy, 5. The Sentimental Comedy, 6. Comedy of Intrigue, 7. The Dark Comedy and 8. Tragi-Comedy. The plays under study belong to the type of Satirical Comedy.

In The Lion and the Jewel, Soyinka compares the old and the new order in Nigerian society. The play deals with the conflict of the old order with the new order and it is a struggle between progress and tradition. The new order in society is represented by Lakunle, the village school teacher and the old order is represented by Baroka, the Bale or head of the village. Soyinka has presented this conflict very comically.

Lakunle is a comic character and his appearance creates a lot of laughter. West Africa has a lot of phoney reformers. The characterization of Lakunle serves to caricature such individuals. Soyinka satirizes the inherent dishonesty of the modern African reformers, who proclaim modern radical ideas merely to serve their own ends. There is a tone of sustained satire in the characterization of Lakunle. His monotonous volubility, his rhetorical insistence on the theme of progress and the various clichés used by him to assert his love for Sidi create humour in the play.

The dramatic presentation of Sadiku, the eldest wife of Baroka, creates gay laughter. The behaviour of Sadiku and Sidi are comical. There is a mixture of farce and satire, as well as pure comedy and author's ironic wit. Soyinka displays much wit and humour which keeps the audience roaring with laughter. There is an abundance of proverbial sayings, which add much force to the humour in the play. The use of dance and mime add more charm to the comedy of the play. The play has many elements of the true farce. The tone of the play is airy and subtle throughout. Soyinka's description of people and situations is humorous.

Soyinka is not against modernism. The target of Soyinka's satire is not modernism, but people like Lakunle who are mere imitators of the Western ways of life. Soyinka tries to expose the pretense, falsehood and false values which are being upheld in West Africa in the guise of modernism. He effectively condemns the sham values of self-seeking preachers of progress in the contemporary Africa. The play is successful in communicating Soyinka's message: wisdom lies in deliberately adhering to moral choices rather than in making use of traditional wiliness or proclaiming the cause of sham modernism by using hollow intellectualism.

The Trials of Brother Jero is a high-spirited satirical farce about a beach evangelist, named Brother



Jeroboam. Here Soyinka tries to expose the inherent dishonesty and corruption that have affected people in all walks of life.

Trials of Brother Jero is a satire on the gullibility of religious 'believers' and their complete powerlessness in the hands of a manipulative 'prophet.' The satire in the play is almost concealed by the predominating humour which depends on a series of undiscovered identities which threaten at any moment to become known and to upset the beach prophet's house of cards.

We can't help laughing at Brother Jero's tricks. He keeps his worshipers dissatisfied. Prophecy for him is a lucrative 'trade' and he addresses his worshipers as 'customers'.

The first encounter between Chume and his wife produces a lot of verbal comedy. Here Chume is portrayed as a meek husband. But in the second encounter, Chume is powerful enough as he gets the permission from Brother Jero to beat his wife. Chume's lifting up of his wife bodily creates a lot of laughter. The playwright uses the device of comic conflict in order to produce humour. The encounter between Amope and Brother Jero is full of wit and humour. Brother Jero nearly escapes through the window of his house in order to avoid the troublesome Amope. The comedy in this encounter is both

verbal and visual. The ludicrous action and situation often gains in effect from the element of dramatic irony arising out of the mistaken identities.

The Trials of Brother Jero is a satirical comment on the contemporary politicians in West Africa. We witness how Jero manipulates a member of the Federal House. Soyinka dramatizes the gullibility of the modern day legislators of his country. Soyinka has a message in this play; he seems to say that, if the people are corrupt and stupid, they deserve the corrupt leaders they get. This is the central point of the play and it is obvious in the very title of the play. The playwright exposes the gimmickry which is being taken recourse to packaging and selling the religious and political leaders today. Soyinka's aim is to show the hypocrisy of both the so-called religious and gullible politicians.

While there are satirical implications in the play, its prevailing mood is one of hilarity. Soyinka invites the audience to laugh in delight, but at the same time focuses our attention on the purveyors of fraudulence and deception that thrive in his society.

Jero's Metamorphosis is a sequel to The Trials of Brother Jero. As the title of the play suggests, Jero is a changed person. However, the change is physical one, as he has moved from his rent-troubled shack of Trials to a new white-washed room. Within heart, Jero has grown more cunning.

In Jero's Metamorphosis, Soyinka has presented a gallery of vivid characters who tumble over one another. There is a lot of verbal wit which produces a lot of easy laughter. Even the appearances of some characters create laughter. For example, the Chief Executive Officer wearing a bowler hat and carrying an umbrella with him is a figure to laugh at. The encounter between Chume and Major Silva has the sole purpose of creating humour. Major Silva is a figure who, with his affected accent and stubbornness, provides a lot of fun in the play. Chume's use of pidgin English increases humour in the play. The encounter between Chume and Brother Jeroboam, in which Jero manipulates Chume for the second time, is a comic one. We cannot control laughter, when we come across the prophets present in the meeting called by Jero. The assembled prophets, with their antics, create fun in the play. The fun arises mainly from the verbal wit and the idiosyncratic character traits. Almost all the characters, major or minor, with their ways of eccentric behaviour add to the humour of the play.

In Jero's Metamorphosis, Soyinka satirizes the ailments of his own society. The play is more substantial than many of his directly political writings. The play has much on the surface to entertain and excite mirth, but its vision is bleaker than the earlier Jero play. It is far more

vicious in its attack. In this play, Soyinka satirizes the military regime of Yacubu Gowon in Nigeria. In Jero's Metamorphosis, we find an equal framework of Gowon's military regime reflected in Jero's CASA Army. The audience is invited to despise the Gowon's junta. Soyinka is a courageous man and he criticizes the military regime of Gowon openly. He has targeted his satire against the ruthless leaders of his time.

Thus, Soyinka's Comedies underline his concern for various social and political issues. Soyinka is at his best when he exposes the pretense, the falsehood, the corruption and the political exploitation prevalent in his society. Satire being his favourite preoccupation, his Comedies naturally tend to be farcical.