

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

A) A Brief Survey of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Ghanaian literature:

Ghana is a one of the developing countries in West Africa. It was occupied by ancient Akan kingdoms in pre-colonial times. Several European imperial powers like- Dutch, Portuguese, and British had occupied and colonised various parts of the country during colonial period. The trade between the Akan kingdom and other African regions had prospered because of plenty of gold in the region. The trade with the European countries began after contact with the Portuguese in the 15th century.

Ghana achieved political independence in 1957 from the British colonisers. It was known as the Gold Coast, before independence. At present Ghana as an independent country is created after combining the Gold Coast and the British Togo Land. The process of colonisation has had a massive impact on the country. It affected the native human life in all domains. The forceful intermingling of colonisers' cultures with the local cultures has brought about a radical change in the cultural spheres of the country.

Like most developing countries, especially in Africa, it has certain perpetual social and political problems which include slavery, poverty, corruption, exploitation, betrayal of ideals and trust and abuse of power and money by the native leaders and elites. The progress of the country has been affected due to political, cultural, religious, economic and social enslavement. Consequently, social atmosphere in the country is occupied with the feeling of disillusionment and lack of fulfilment.

As like other African countries, Ghana has glorious tradition of oral literature. It had been was mainly oral until the 20th century. The oral traditions of proverbs, mythological narratives and poetry still exist and influence contemporary writing. Storytelling had traditionally been the most popular indigenous way of transmitting societal values. In social gatherings, stories were told both to entertain and educate people. In the 1950s and 1960s, many of these stories were written down to serve as reading material for school children.

Initially, post-colonial Ghanaian English literature was a tool for celebrating the greatness of its past. Presently, it is being employed as a proper weapon for depicting the postcolonial disillusionment in the country. Major issues in the postcolonial Ghanaian literary works include slavery, betrayal of ideals, military rule, tyranny, corruption and other forms of oppression. It describes disillusionment occurring due to various events and issues happened after independence. Hence, the Ghanaian literature realistically presents the Ghanaian society.

As far as the themes in post-colonial Ghanaian literature are concerned, opposition to colonial rule, political corruption, exploitation and the clash between tradition and modernization in country are recurring themes. The writers have an enduring inclination for social and political commitment. Their texts mostly reflect helplessness and frustration of the people caused due to various factors in the society. The writers depict the impact of neo-colonialism in their various texts. They show their disappointment to the present landscape and socio-political structures of their country. Hence, the Ghanaian literature reflects the social and political realities of the post-independent era in which the colonizer has been replaced

by the native political elite and the plight of the native people is not at all changed after independence.

All the major contemporary Ghanaian authors are born in colonial period and are highly educated. Some of them are professors of English literature and some have served as ministers and diplomats for their country. Majority of their works have been written and published in the post-independence period. Well known Ghanaian writers are Sutherland Efua Theodora, Awoonor Kofi, Cameron Duodu, Aidoo Ama Ata or Christina Ama Aidoo, Lawrence Darmani and Samuel Asare Konadu and Ayi Kwei Armah.

All the eminent Ghanaian writers speak about the age-old socio-political problems like- slavery, corruption and exploitation faced by their fellow citizens in particular and Africans in general through their works. They try to bring about awareness among the people and also suggest some solutions to the problems. They use literature as a tool to eradicate social evils and ills which affect the lives of the common masses and thereby attempt to transform the society.

Sutherland Efua Theodora (1924-1996) had been a poet, dramatist, director and children's author. She has immensely contributed in the development of modern theatre in Ghana. Her best-known works include *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967) and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). She experimented with storytelling and other dramatic forms from native Ghanaian traditions. She also experimented with native African folktale conventions and tried to blend indigenous and Western dramatic theatre techniques effectively to give modern look.

Awoonor Kofi (1935-2013) has combined the poetic traditions of his native Ewe people and contemporary and religious symbolism to depict Africa during decolonization. His poems and novels explore the interaction of traditional and Western ideas in Africa.

Cameron Duodu (1937) one more versatile writer today, is a novelist, journalist, editor and broadcaster. His works present various socio-political problems and also optimistically present strengths in traditional African culture to fight against the present crisis in the post-independent Ghanaian era.

Aidoo Ama Ata or Christina Ama Aidoo (1940) is a poet, dramatist, novelist, short-story writer and writer of children's books. She became the first woman dramatist, when her first play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* was published in 1965. Her plays, novels, and poetry examine the traditional roles assigned to African women. She has given voice to the exploitation of women in traditional patriarchal African society in her works. Many of Aidoo's protagonists are women who refuse the stereotypical women's roles of their time. She has twice won the Commonwealth writers' Prize for the Best Book (Africa) for her novels *Changes* and *The Sun by Night* in 1992, 2006 respectively.

Another Ghanaian writer today is Lawrence Darmani. He is a novelist, editor and a publisher. He presents problems faced by youths in the country. He has won the Commonwealth writers' Prize for the Best Book (Africa) for his first novel, *Grief Child* for the first book from Africa.

Paul Alfred Kwesi Aboagye (1925-2001) was a Ghanaian poet, essayist, novelist, and historian of the native Nzema language. He also helped in translation of the old and New Testament versions of the Bible into Nzema and co-wrote a number of textbooks for junior and senior secondary school curricula.

Samuel Asare Konadu (1932-1994) was a journalist, novelist and publisher and also wrote under the pseudonym Kwabena Asare Bediako. He presents cultural conflict in his works. His works present cultural conflict in Ghanaian society.

B) Life and Works of Ayi Kwei Armah:

a) Armah's Life:

Ayi Kwei Armah is born in 1939 in Takoradi, Ghana. His parents belonged Fante community. It is one of the major ethnic groups in the country. Ghana was a British colony at the time of his birth. He studied in Achimota College, Accra. He won a scholarship in 1959 to the Groton School in Massachusetts. Then, he went to Harvard University and earned a degree in sociology. His first published short story appeared in a Harvard Advocate issue. Armah lived in Algeria and worked as a translator for *Révolution Africaine* magazine. He has worked as a scriptwriter for Ghana Television. He taught English at the Navrongo School in Ghana's city of the same name in 1966 before leaving for Paris to edit the journal *Jeune Afrique*. Armah currently lives in the capital of Senegal, Dakar.

b) Armah's Works:

Armah is one of the living and leading Ghanaian writers. He is known as a scholar, a critic, a university professor, an essayist, a poet, a short story writer and a novelist. He is one of the socially committed and visionary writers. He started his literary career in the 1960s. He has published several poems, short stories and essays in the Ghanaian magazine *Okyeame* and in *Harper's*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *New African*. He, however, is primarily known as a novelist. The publication of Armah's very first novel, *The*

Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, established him as one of the major African writers. He has often been regarded as belonging to the next generation of African writers after Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi Wa Thiongo.

As a poet and an essayist, Armah deals with the identity and predicament of Africa. The main concern has been the creation of a pan-African agency that will embrace all the diverse cultures and languages of the continent. His major poems are- *Aftermath* (1966), *Aftermath* (1971), *Seed Times* (1988), *The News* (1988), *Speed* (1989). His major short stories are- *The Ball* (1964), *The Night Club Girl* (1964), *Contact* (1965), *Asemka* (1966), *Yaw Manu's Charm* (1968), *An African Fable* (1968), *Doctor Kamikaze* (1989). His major essays are- *African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific* (1967), *Black Star* (1974), *Sundiata, An Epic of Old Mali* (1974), *Chaka* (1975), *Larsony, or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction* (1976), *Halfway to Nirvana* (1984), *One Writer's Education* (1985), *Flood and Famine, Drought and Glut* (1985), *The Caliban Complex* (1985), *The Festival Syndrome* (1985), *Dakar Hieroglyphics* (1986), *Battle for the Mind of Africa* (1987), *Hieroglyphics for Babies* (2002).

So far he has written seven novels- *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, (1968), *Fragments*, (1970), *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons*, (1973), *The Healers: A Historical Novel*, (1978), *Osiris Rising: A Novel of Africa's Past, Present and Future*, (1995), *KTM: In the House of Life* (2002). He has also written one memoir- *The Eloquence of the Scribes: A Memoir on the Sources and Resources of African Literature* (2006)

His first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, was published in (1968). He has realistically depicted the disillusioned and decayed post-

independent Ghanaian society in both the novels. The describes the life of an unnamed railway employee who is pressured by his family and fellow workers to accept bribes and involve him in corrupt activities in order to provide his family with material goods. The other workers who accept bribes are able to live a prosperous life, while he and his family live exclusively on his salaries as a result of his honesty. At times he perceives himself as a moral failure for not providing his family with the money which would allow them to have the beautiful things that they seek. His honesty also makes him a social misfit and he is a man who is truly alone and faces frustration in the end.

Armah's second novel, *Fragments*, also deals with the themes of corruption and materialism in contemporary Ghana. Baako Onipa, the protagonist of the novel, who has just completed his university studies in the United States, returns to his own country. As a result of this privilege, he is expected to return with money, influence and prestige to the family. He finds himself alienated from his society by its open and cynical corruption and from his family by their inability to understand that his ambitions are not primarily material ones. Again, a single more or less good man is isolated from society by his refusal to involve in its corruption; and again, his honesty gains him nothing and does not alter the social order. Thus, the disillusionment, caused due to various factors, is one of the major themes in both the novels.

Armah's third novel, *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), presents the problem of racism and disillusioned youngsters who are torn between freedom and Western values. In his fourth novel, *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), presents horrors of slavery. Very few African writers have dealt with the slave trade in the African past. His fifth novel, *The Healers: A Historical Novel* (1978), exhibits mixture of fact and fiction about the fall of the

celebrated Ashante empire. The healers in question are traditional medicine practitioners who see fragmentation as the lethal disease of Africa.

Armah, after a long *gap*, wrote *Osiris Rising: A Novel of Africa's Past, Present and Future* in 1995. It is about an educational reform group, which reinstates ancient Egypt at the centre of its curriculum. It is an attempt of reviving ancient African mythology. *KMT: In The House of Life* (2002), is Armah's seventh novel. It analyses and assesses past in search for identity. *The Eloquence of the Scribes* (2006) is a book of memoirs. It presents his childhood and adult memories.

Armah's first two novels, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments*, are selected for the present study. Much of Armah's earlier work deals with the betrayed ideals of Ghanaian nationalism and Nkrumahist socialism. He has realistically depicted the disillusioned and decayed post-independent Ghanaian society in both the novels. The first novel describes the life of an unnamed railway employee who is pressured by his family and fellow workers to accept bribes and involve him in corrupt activities in order to provide his family with material goods. The other workers who accept bribes are able to live a prosperous life, while he and his family live exclusively on his salaries as a result of his honesty. At times he perceives himself as a moral failure for not providing his family with the money which would allow them to have the beautiful things that they seek. His honesty also makes him a social misfit and he is a man who is truly alone and faces frustration in the end.

The novel is generally a satirical attack on the Ghanaian society during Kwame Nkrumah's regime and the period immediately after independence in the 1960s. The novel expresses the disillusionment felt by many citizens of the newly-independent country after attaining political

independence. The novel presents the acceptance of corruption as a standard in society, one man's struggles with it and disillusionment faced by the man.

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The common citizens had dreamt and expected that the political independence will bring about positive development in the country and their lives will become better. They thought of independence as a single solution to all their problems. The social and economic dependence, exploitation and corruption did not end. Conversely, gravity of all these major problems increased after independence. The wave of disillusionment is evident in the post-independence Ghanaian and African literature. Ayi Kwei Armah strongly, acutely and naturalistically presents this disillusionment in Ghana and in the African continent. He analyses mainly of the psychological impact of neo-colonialism and suggests some feasibly ways to come out of it in his works.

Armah realistically presents the disillusionment felt by the people due to injustice, prejudice and atrocities done over the years by foreigners and also by natives on Ghanaians. He has confronted and dealt so honestly and courageously with the problems of the country. His fight can be defined as a radical quest for a new direction that can change the fortunes of the country and the black people. His vision is to emancipate the country from the forces of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism by raising the awareness of the fellow citizens to the imperialist socio-economic structures that cause social inequalities.

C) AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The first objective of the study is to explore the factors responsible for creating the disillusionment and the second objective is to analyse and interpret impact of the disillusionment on the society in light of the select novels.

Hence, this study explores the various factors responsible for the atmosphere of disillusionment in the contemporary Ghanaian society and importance and influences of Armah's novels on the post-independent Ghana. The study also reveals how the novels can be a contributing factor towards the socio-political development in Ghana.

D) REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, some work has been done on the writer's selected works but no one has so far made study of disillusionment in his works. The research work done on the select novels is mentioned in the bibliography.

E) HYPOTHESIS

The select novels of Ayi Kwei Armah reflect the atmosphere and feeling of disillusionment in the contemporary Ghanaian society caused due to various socio-political factors in the post-independent Ghana.

F) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

For the present study, emphasis is given on close reading of the primary and secondary sources. The analytical and interpretative methods are also used for the present study.