

## **A conflict between Traditional Customs and Modern Generation on Corruption in Achebe's *A Man of the People***

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### **Abstract**

Based on the impact of modernism in the conventions of aristocratic traditional Nigerian people who were utterly submerged in ignorance that caused the despotic rule of inefficient leaders, as a Nigerian novelist of revolutionary thoughts in African culture and politics, Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) represents a conflict between traditional customs of Nigeria and changing younger generation regarding to inequitable politics in his novel *A Man of the People* (1966) that indicates the virulent of greed and its truculent impact of Corruption. It certainly focuses on the concept of how bribery was practiced by the unjust politicians of traditional Nigeria and how the younger generation of twentieth century agitates for redemption from the flaw of electing them. Achebe too insists through the novel that one can preside such an agitation only with an aid of politics with the support of the People. At the same time, he depicts the impacts of such a protest that causes in the wounds and death committed by the aspirants of the revolt and even the fact that they might be attacked due to the conspiratorial speech of unjust leaders by the ignorant People for whom they take the troublesome task.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Greed, Redemption, Power and Politics.

The researcher has chosen this novel to convey Chinua Achebe's pathetic portrayal about the state of Nigerian traditional people due to their corrupted politicians by the impact of the English Colonization and how they suffered through their intention of agitation for the instant need of redemption.

Albert Chinualumogu Achebe (16 November 1930 - 21 March 2013), a Nigerian novelist, poet, a prominent critic for African culture and also a professor of African studies in Brown University since 2009 till 2013, has been a pre-eminent heir of oral tradition of African literature, who is even now praised for his trilogy of novels namely *Things Fall*

*Apart(1958), No Longer at Ease(1960), Arrow of God(1964)*, which glorify the cultural values of African heritage. He was active in the field of African literature from 1958 to 2012, when he mostly produced his works on Igbo communal background of having plots in colonial period state of his country under white imperialism. As not being a chauvinistic writer, he has won Nigerian National Order of Merit Award(1979), St. Luis Literary Award(1999), Man Booker International Prize(2007) and at last Dorothy and Lillian Fish Prize(2010).

In this novel, Achebe talks about the controversy between the traditional customs of Nigerian Illiterate people who assimilated with corrupt politicians and the modern generation that can not accept that in his novel *A Man of the People* that is about the conflict between a present politician(minister of culture) and former teacher named Chief M. A. Nanga(antagonist) and the present teacher and former pupil of Nanga named Odili Samalu(protagonist) who organizes an opposition party to demolish the rule of aristocratic Nanga's Corrupt party surrounding the village of Anata.

Achebe declares that the immoral politician is even praised by the eager and ignorant people about celeb charm that attracts the public mob, as in the very first chapter as a first person account, Odili Samalu, the protagonist says to his school friend Maxwell Kulamo, a Lawyer in Bori,

"Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata,

they would tell you he was a man of the people"(Achebe, 1966, p. 1)

by referring to the People of Anata, who are completely attracted by the charisma of the campaigning of Chief M. A. Nanga, the minister of culture, without knowing his real face of bribery.

Even the novel illustrates the truth that being a minister of culture, Nanga though doesn't clearly know what his position stands for. If there is a point of describing the state of Nanga, the epoch-making quote of George Bernard Shaw May be remembered that is

"Power does not corrupt men:

Fools , if they get into position of power, corrupt power"

to reveal that Nanga doesn't know the duties of a progressive minister for a country of having traditional background for lots of generations.

Besides, his position has not made him to be bond on corruption: but he, himself, has made his position of a reputed minister of culture for a very pioneer customs of a glorious country.

Likewise, the narrator clearly depicts the minds of people that they are genuine to the corrupted leaders who offers them money even though they May not consider only their own luxurious life without concerning their duties and needs of the common people of Anata due to their aristocratic custom that provided nothing but poverty among the villagers, and further he tells his friend,

"They were not only ignorant but cynical.

Tell them that this man has used

his position to enrich himself"(Achebe, 1966,.p. 5 & 6)

as he could get a chance to stay in his luxurious house and knew about his so many rental houses, those were built by the funds for the welfare of his people, for his own benefit.

By this, the author remembers his famous short story entitled "*The Voter*"(1965), where the People praise the campaigner of giving just more Shillings to vote for his leader and the People ignorantly pole their votes with the consciousness that the leader had ever never did anything for them.

Besides, the novel illustrates the pathetic condition of the family of the protesters by that of Odili and especially the impressionment of his father Hezekiah Samalu. Here, Achebe contrasts some rebel of forethought, who can remove the fake mask of those politicians of injustice from the rest of ignorant, who are skeptical of the re-construction of their social circumstances and an establishment of a capable political concept for their fortune and are

longing about how good fortune goes for only one in wasting of time, as Odili says to Max about the opinion of these people about Nanga,

"... if you thought that a sensible man

would spit out the juicy morsel

that good fortune placed in his mouth". (Achebe, 1966, p. 6)

In other hand, Achebe portrays a progressive impact of the revolt of Odili's party that causes a military coup in the reign of Nanga's party. This coup refers to the drawback in the reign of Chief Nanga's party, which was consciously again elected, after a large bloody agitation, in which Odili is wounded due to his fury at a campaigning. Of Manga, where he was severely beaten that reflects an irrespirable universal concept that the spirit of a person who stands for the ignorant people might be utterly demolished. Yet the People change their minds with their illiteracy, like the narrator says

"Overnight everyone began to shake their heads at the excesses of the late regime, at its graft, oppression and corrupt government: newspapers, the radio, the hitherto silent intellectuals and civil servants ... And these were the same people that only the other day had owned a thousand names of adulation, whom praise singers followed with song and talking-drum wherever they went". (Achebe, 1966, p.100)

Notably, like the eleventh president of India and an Aerospace scientist, Bharat Ratna Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam has declared about the origin of Corruption and the suggestion to demolish it with the root-

"Where do the evils like corruption arise from?

It comes from the never-ending greed.

The fight for corruption-free

ethical society will have to be fighting against this greed".

In this novel, the society of rebels against, greed Nanga of great Corruption, has done the the ethical deeds of fighting for the construction of corruption-free country that is reflected in the sacrificial deeds of the People of Anata. Hence, the modern generation will have to be fighting against corruption for attaining the innovative political circumstances that may reduce the aristocratic and despotic rule of inefficient and unjust leaders. By this progressive process, an optimistic apparent reign can be established in any country in general.

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