

POWER DYNAMICS, SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND REACTIONARY RESPONSES IN BARCLAYS AYAKOROMA'S *A CHANCE TO SURVIVE*

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Abstract

*The quest for high-quality leadership structure is the greatest desire of any nation. Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed problematic and undesirable leadership capabilities within its workforce and people due to capacity to lead and style. Not only do Nigerians encounter socio-economic challenges but the cognitive disposition of leadership quality has become a worrisome issue as presented by Barclays Ayakoroma in **A Chance to Survive**. This paper examines the patterns of dynamism and change of power in terms of utilisation of power as it ought to be, abuse/absurd use of power, activism as reactionary response to the situational contexts and the causative factors. Development, knowledge of environment and good human resource management are the attributes of good leadership. This is achievable only in people-centred leadership where the welfare of the masses is of utmost importance to the leaders. This demands selfless leadership in order to usher in the growth of the society through creating an enabling environment for survival, people's empowerment and needs satisfaction amongst others. Economic issues and effects of bad administration are usually gender based. As such, the social action theory is used as theoretical frameworks to guide our discussion on the subject matter. The contribution of this paper lies in the bilateral complementarities of the people in leadership cadre and the subjects that are most often ignored by the former.*

Introduction

The crisis associated with leadership in Africa nay Nigeria would continue to persist as long as the strategies for mobilisation towards political power and economic empowerment of the leaders continue to remain the same. Johari defines power in this manner: "power behaves in much the same way as the word 'ability' or 'capability'...'power' derives from certain Latin and French words which mean 'to be able'" (457). Power wields influence and gives one the enablement to do whatever he/she intends to do and even order people and expect obeisance. It is this supremacy

and/or clout that impel the empowered with a lot of access to desire additional and even engage in the mundane concerns of day-to-day life.

There are levels of leadership just as the exhibition of power differs. One does not need to be in the leadership cadre to possess power. Mary Isabella Ezeh describes leadership as “a crucial issue in human civilisation” (157). She goes further to explain the nature of leadership as having the ability to “destroy or transform the prospects of a nation. Where the leadership is self-centred, intellectually bankrupt, morally or ethically bad, government policies, the economy and social life will be affected negatively; Nigeria has ceaselessly struggled to have authentic leadership since independence, but to no avail” (157).

Most often power is explained through diverse forms of leadership, being the commonest basis of power exhibition. Such use of power could be well meant or an abuse. Most people in power get intoxicated by exhibit actions and attitudes that are absurd to human coexistence and rights. Certain impending situations are imminent in Nigeria such that playwrights and other literary writers explore for the purpose of awareness creation, conscientisation and solution possibilities. The issue of corruption for instance, has been a canker in Africa, Nigeria precisely, such that Chinua Achebe declared that leadership was the bane of Nigeria’s problems. It is in the same vein that leadership problem is being projected in Barclays Ayakoroma’s play, *A Chance to Survive*.

Issues concerning human life, development, socio-economic lives of people, empowerment and skill acquisition as well as socio-economic challenges are intertwined with the dynamics of power and leaders at different levels. Ayakoroma’s aim is to ameliorate Nigerian society from certain cankers that have eaten deep into her fabrics. A critical assessment of the Nigerian society along the same lines is perhaps what prompted Emasealu into saying that: “illiteracy, unrestrained population growth, a high mortality syndrome, a cancerous tumour of ethnicism and corruption worsened by the deadly phenomenon of superstition” (9), is contributory to the numerous problems of Nigeria as a nation. Indeed, these negative attributes tend to hinder societal development; hence, the efforts of playwrights like, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Olu Obafemi, Esiaba Irobi, Sam Ukala, Barclays Ayakoroma, Rasaki Ojo Bakare, Alex Asigbo, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, and others are poised to create awareness, educate the masses and proffer possible solutions that will enhance sustainable development.

One of the ways to ensure proper development of a society is to adopt gender ideology which tries to create balance between the patriarchal and feminist ideologies which are found deficient in seeking the good of the male and female genders. In strengthening this point, Emenyi is of the opinion that, “the genders must unite for the constructive development of the human society” (162). To Mabel Ewrierhoma, “gender represents the roles ascribed to females and males within the socio-cultural contexts” (137). The playwright represents this in a typical fashion, with the role played by Adi, Oloye’s mother in the bringing back to life, His Royal Highness (Dr.) Kurokaki from the unprecedented live or die situation he found himself.

This paper examines the power dynamics, socio-economic challenges and reactionary responses as portrayed by Barclays Ayakoroma's *A Chance to Survive* with the view to motivating the pursuit of good leadership qualities that would eschew socio/political self-indulgence.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study offers insights on the leadership context underlying the perpetuation of societal structure of leadership quality as observed in the Nigerian nation. With regards to the framework, Max Weber's social action theory is employed to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that engender bad leadership in Nigeria. Weber's social action theory posits that individuals attached subjective meanings to their actions and social actions which are intentional behaviour of actors involving motives and feelings (Ritzer and Goodman 127). The level of interpersonal interaction is all-inclusive, especially as the work examines the dynamics of constituent parts of society such as institutions, communities, social status or stratification, social disorder in form of corruption, deviance, greed and so on, within which conflict can be engendered. It becomes the task of the theatre to discover how organisations/institutions can affect the behaviour of leaders in society in terms of how they relate or interact and how economic structures can also affect their decisions.

In this wise, a conflict theory of stratification is also used to explain the individuals material circumstances which is determined by his/her life-style of making a living. Basically, it portrays the human beings as social but conflict-prone animals; hence he/her is frequently in a conflict over control. The play, *A Chance to Survive* is evaluated in the context of transposing the characters in the play as individuals who take full advantage of their subjective status according to the resources available to them and to their contenders. Different individuals or people are most times explained in terms of their divergent self-interests and aspirations in a material world of survival of the fittest. It reveals that: "each individual is basically pursuing his own interests and that there are many situations, notably ones where power is involved, in which those interests are inherently antagonistic" (Kivisto 236). In the context of the play, His Royal Highest (Dr.) Kurokaki depicts a high propensity of situations that inequalities of resources result in efforts by the dominant party to take advantage of the circumstances over the less privileged in society.

Levels of Power in *A Chance to Survive*

A Chance to Survive treats the theme of power and the two main levels of power portrayed in the play are leadership and followership. Just like the plays of Osofisan which focus most times on lack of social justice in Nigeria, *A Chance to Survive* makes Ayakoroma a playwright in politics whose reactions are in tandem with emphasis on economic growth of a people as a crucial object for the development of such a people. From the point of view of addressing the politics of aesthetics in Osofisan's plays, Sam Ukala reiterates that,

these include corruption and insensitive governance; flagrant display of a few of ill-gotten wealth or power to the shock and envy of the poor and powerless majority; the suffering of the masses in a capitalist and/or totalitarian systems; violence as a means of protest; the roles of the individual and the community in bringing about a new and progressive socio/political order and the obstacles on the way (32).

This is an indication that there is almost corruption at all levels of our national and social life, embezzlement, fraud, biasness and nepotism is fast becoming a norm. It is clear that these issues decisively negate human development in any society, especially as they do not lead to the improvement of the human wellbeing.

However, other levels of power emerged through the analysis of the play. Those who lead, no matter at what level, belong to the category of leadership, while those under them belong to the group of followers. The play is an exploration of lack of profundity, greed of the Nigerian traditional rulers and wrong exploration of political and economic power at the expense of their subjects. This appears to be in line with Ugwunna's thoughts that, "the Nigerian situation requires that certain leadership issues be carefully analysed and addressed, and be directed towards solving society's basic problems" (8). Evidently, leaders in Nigeria care less about the welfare of the masses and their inability to achieve and/or develop the community, due to unparalleled greed. The character, His Royal Highness (Dr.) Kurokaki, the great Ibedawe is the representative of the traditional chiefs in Nigeria who most times maintain a rigid dictatorial approach of master-servant or rider-horse relationship. As the custodian of tradition, His Royal Highness is supposed to protect his subjects but instead, he is overtaken by self-aggrandisement and unparalleled greed. He diverts the compensation for gas exploration meant for his community as his, and so receives twenty million naira from the oil company without the knowledge of his people for his personal use.

The entire community of the Ibedawo suffers from the effects of the gas explosion and the compensation money meant to alleviate their suffering does not get to them. Just as power intoxicates, money intoxicates His Royal Highness and therefore rubs him of his sense of reasoning, especially as he does not have the interest of his subjects at heart. He lavishes money meant for his community on his personal interests such as buying of an Honorary Doctoral degree and other grandiose life-style. Just as it is said that nothing is hidden under the sun, such reckless spending and selfishness of Chief Kurokaki got into the ears of the youths of his community. The action based reactionary response of the youths to the treatment meted out on the people by their traditional ruler, is a decision to exercise their power to check the excesses of Chief Kurokaki. This was done under the leadership of the youth leader, Oloye.

Evaluating the play, *A Chance to Survive*, His Royal Highness, Kurokaki became frustrated because of the steps taken by the youths to appoint Oloye as their leader. Being so desperate to continue to be in power becomes cathartic in the Aristotelian sense, hence Chief Kurokaki resorts to the use of black magic he got from a native doctor to eliminate Oloye. While they were summoning Oloye's spirit to destroy him, his late father, Makpa's spirit appeared instead and throws an invisible object at

Chief Kurokaki and he became unconscious. This is a different dimension of power from the two earlier mentioned. This is purely spiritual power from the land of the dead. The evil he planned against Oloye bounced back at him. It was discovered that the only things needed to bring Chief Kurokaki back to consciousness are three electric fish which were scarce to come by.

The scarcity of electric fish at the time in question released the fate of His Royal Highness into the hands of Oloye whose life he sought to take. This is because he (Oloye) possessed several electric fish in his fish pond. This could not have been a problem if not for the selfishness and greediness of His Royal Highness who had sold the fishing rights of the communal lakes to outsiders. It becomes clear that the title of the play, *A Chance to Survive* is born out of the compassion which led to Oloye's eventual decision to save the life of Chief Kurokaki by providing the required electric fishes in spite of all that he had done to him previously. This is another level of power, power to save, which in this case, emanates through the reversal of situation. It is some sort of insight into motivation of action in human behaviour and sympathetic self-identification to provide total spiritual atmosphere of the collective consciousness of the people. This interpersonal interaction to a certain micro level carries the testing of social rituals, with emphasis on the resources and modus operandi that determine the effectiveness of appeal for emotional solidarity. Accordingly, Kivisto asserts that:

Weber comes to an insight parallel to those of Durkheim, Freud and Nietzsche: not only that man is an animal with strong emotional desires and susceptibilities, but that particular forms of social interaction designed to arouse emotions operate to create strongly held beliefs and a sense of solidarity within the community constituted by participation in these rituals (235).

This simply means that the playwright deposited a premium on the achievement of harmony and survival in man's cosmic environment in the hands of the led like Oloye. It is a point whereby, the mechanisms of emotional bonds are created in order to reveal the coordination of common action or gestures. This level of power is not common or constant. However, through much plea and conviction, the utilisation of the power to save is positively handled by Oloye whose family has encountered antagonism, hatred, denial and challenges in the hands of His Royal Highness who is privileged to be in power.

The second main level of power presented by Ayakoroma in *A Chance to Survive* is followership. Through the incidents in the story, Ayakoroma dramatises the smothering temperament and complementary relationship of people in the society irrespective of their class. It shows clearly that in spite of the organisational structure of the society, those at the leadership cadre and the subjects in one way or the other need each other. The love relationship between Oloye and the Princess also reveals caution in inter-personal relationship.

Socio-Economic Challenges and the Quest for Survival

The narrator of the play, *A Chance to Survive*, talks as an observer rather than a participant. However, in terms of the imperatives of human development, he takes the issues to a hitherto unknown level of human knowledge and consciousness. Indeed, the narrator's brief interpretation of the funeral dance and the critical essence of it portray the societal respect for the dead, belief system and cultural placement of the strong women as, "the Amazonian type, the man-woman" (19); and goes further to describe the dead man being celebrated as an honest and upright man. Such a good man as the one being celebrated is not influenced by power as far as honesty is concerned. He finally crowns his explanation with the societal superstitious belief that good men do not live long. The narrator's narration was interrupted by a chaotic situation created by the youths outside protesting for change in the village.

The bone of contention is the abuse of power by the Chiefs/leaders of the village who tend to ignore, though for selfish reasons a positive choice of investments directed at human capital formation. To the youths, these chiefs/leaders who have deliberately held on to investment resources are betrayers. The dead man being celebrated is Oloye's father who was collaboratively killed because of his positive position about the socio/economic wellbeing of his people and the settling of the people by the oil companies that have taken possession of their land. One significant thing about their economic situation is that Oloye's father, who stood for the welfare of his people, has sympathisers and followers who had received tutelage and hope of the vision of activism. There is a strong indication here that; his supporters have continued in the struggle to conscientise and liberate the poor masses from untold hardship. In other words, they had carried on with the ideology of the deceased.

The success of activism in the play lies in the nature of its objectives. When it is not personalized and selfish, the success and life span are more assured. The youths under the leadership of Oloye pursue selfless goals because the suffering of the community people affects the generality of the masses who the youths want to exonerate from suffering/poverty. Oloye succinctly describes the situation as follows: "we do not have fish in our river again; our food crops are not producing, and our only source of water supply is contaminated always because of incessant oil spillages. We have nothing to show for the presence of these companies around us" (20-21). Indeed, like most playwrights who "over time, preoccupied themselves with the predicaments that have befallen man in his rather hostile and complex society" (Ejue 127). Ayakoroma, as a member of his society, is propelled by certain degree of mental responsiveness to censor and reprehend the forces responsible for societal decadence. This is the summary of the economic problems bugging the society whose outcome is the abject poverty of the majority of the people.

The economic situation in the society creates two parallel classes of people in the society that is; the rich and the poor. In order to create a balance and/or alleviate the suffering of the masses in a rapidly changing society however, the oil company deems it fit to recompense the people through their leaders. Charles views on the human development aspect supports this point in this manner:

Interestingly, all multi-lateral agencies now see themselves as working in the interest of human development. In fact, donor agencies are now increasingly concerned that beneficiaries demonstrate that human development programmes are given pride of place not only in the evaluation of change strategies, but in the assessment of their outcomes as well (21).

This shows that, the economic growth of society is strategically pursued with the view to improving the human wellbeing. This notwithstanding, the question remains; does the compensation money released by the oil companies get to the people? There appear to be a betrayal of the trust of the people by their chief(s); as such monies never get to the community. This leads to several accusations by the oil company on the community for sabotage and causes of pipeline vandalisation. On the contrary, the youths see this as only a way to withhold the payment of their compensation.

The youths are resolute to sanitise their community of corruption, oppression, et cetera in order for justice to prevail. The change being agitated for by the youths is that of restoring leadership values and ideals. This agitation poses a threat to His Royal Highness, Kurokaki, hence he became restless. The case of looting and maladministration by His Royal Highness and his council of Chiefs led to the youth's agitation for change. One canker that has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria is that of generation of conflict especially in leadership tussle. The elderly ones refer to the youth as rascals as expressed by His Royal Highness who called them the "misguided rascals" (25). This sounds as if the principle of motivational leadership as a distinct aspect of a good leader to inspire their subordinates towards achieving their goals is thoroughly misplaced.

The message Oloye puts across to His Royal Highness is that, ideas especially when good and progressive in nature, lives on even after the death of the initiator. Such ideas keep germinating in the lives of those who share the same vision with the founder. This makes it possible for the wind of change initiated in the past to keep being projected to yield the expected fruit. Ideas generated by one, lives in others who share the same vision. Though Oloye's father is dead, but the seed (ideas) he planted becomes the stepping stone for the youths' agitation for change and better things for the community. Oloye defends this new ideology as he remarks before His Royal Highness thus: "My father planted the word, someday, in the past...and now it has taken root and is bearing fruit. You can't stop the wind of change now..." (25). Through the use of proverbs, messages are being passed on by both Oloye who is the representative of progressiveness (youths) and His Royal Highness who upholds age and position for wisdom.

The environmental degradation in Niger Delta area caused by gas explosions, affects everyone both old and young and the expectation of the masses is that such effects could be cushioned especially with the twenty million naira compensation given to the masses by the oil companies. The embezzlement of such huge amount triggers off reactions especially from the vibrant youths. Such negligence and abusive use of power by those who have looted and brutalized the land is also portrayed by Esiaba Irobi in his

play, *Nwokedi* and the vibrant youths who took up the challenge of clipping the wings of those who indulge in abusive use of power. In the words of Nwokedi, a character in the play:

Nwokedi: We must revolt against those disembodied godheads, those spotted scavengers of the Sahel Savannah who have plundered this nation like a conquered territory. We must revolt...Have you ever asked yourself what vision they have for us. What vision have they ever had? What is the vision of a grey-haired generation that ruptured the future of their offspring and tore it into shreds? (*He displays Awado's cap.*) This is our future! This is our tomorrow! Friends, where is the life we have come to live? (*There is fury in his chest. Fire in his eyes. Anger between his teeth. The corpses stare at him spell bound.*) We must seize the reins of power in this nation. Every generation comes and go. But each must leave changes... (30).

The socio/political and economic maladies due to poor leadership in the region have further widened the monumental gap between the haves and have-nots, thus creating a class conscious society and gloomy picture of the future of the nation. In this regards, Tsaku, however, insists that:

The insincerity on the part of leadership in the Niger Delta region and the national level has made the crisis to degenerate to this dimension as the enormous resources for the development of the region are merely shared among few individuals and groups who benefits from the crisis in the region and thereby, do not want the resolution of the crisis (326).

The bourgeoisies in the society uphold corruption and marshal out unjust treatment on the people of less economic standing especially on the slightest attempt to expose or prevent acts of corruption involving the rich and people of class in the society. In this regard, the playwright blames the suffering of the people on the greed and self-aggrandisement of the men in power who tend to vitiate the efforts of the masses. Yakubu and Iyav reinforced this assertion more succinctly thus:

playwrights on their parts have an important role to play in shaping attitudes, perspectives and understanding of the populace as they address corruption, exploitation, ethnicity, tyranny, and other ills which increase breeding grounds for war, within the country and the global level (124).

It is a case whereby, the playwright depicts a contest in which man's conscious will is engaged in what appears difficult to attain hence his resilience in making progress is yet actively resisted by the power that be. It is perhaps this attempt by the playwright

to mirror these callous and insensitive realities through his characters that Abbotson affirms that, “law and justice are clearly not synonymous in the eyes of most playwrights” (174). Characters that are relevant to the incidents in the play are created through their speech and behaviour patterns, thereby creating clashes between moral and legal law on one hand, and engaging audience’s judgement on the other hand. The situation is a clear case of power dynamics and reactionary responses to certain unprecedented challenges.

Emerging Relationship, Family Line Continuity and Feud

...women are endowed with mystical insights into the future. This is why a man usually seeks the opinion of his wife or daughter before embarking on any venture of importance. Due to this perceived epistemological depth of women, they tend to fore-warn the entire society on crucial matters (Azeez as cited in Asigbo 19).

Past experiences in life have made some women to prefer caution to outright bravery especially when it has to do with human life. Attribution of wickedness to individuals is imminent in Africa especially in relation to causes of death of certain individuals in the society. This drew a clear demarcation between Oloye’s perception of preparedness for change and that of his mother – Adi who out rightly condemns an open confrontation and frontal attack on His Royal Highness as a mode of achieving positive change. Oloye’s mothers’ recommendation of caution is not as a result of weakness but an outcome of pain, sorrow and death of loved ones which are clearly not based on natural causes. This is an indication that, feud once in existence will always provoke caution in future dealings with life-bound issues. Adi, drums up support for all to see His Royal Highness’ dilemma as that which require thorough reflection and penitence, the type whereby, common sense, understanding and spiritual concerns should take precedence over those that are mundane.

Family line continuity is very vital in Africa. This also explains the reason for Oloye’s mother’s uneasiness. Oloye is the only son of his parents hence his mother’s demand of him to get married and beget grandchildren for her. Meanwhile Oloye’s belief is that, issues concerning marriage should naturally fall into place rather than sort for by human crave and concern. The natural flow of friendship between Oloye and Princess could be an attestation to his claims of naturalness in relationship.

Oloye’s natural air and spontaneity of friendship, devotion and help given to Princess and carrying her bag won her heart. Providing companionship and walking her to the palace, heightens the anger and hatred of His Royal Highness on Oloye and his family. This reaction rather strengthens Oloye’s tenacity to build a strong relationship with Princess not minding the threat by His Royal Highness. However, to give peace a chance, he takes his leave and leaving Princess with these words: “Princess, please let me not spoil your happy family reception. I see you later as agreed. May the day break, your Royal Highness (Dr.) Kurokaki, the great Ibedaowei” (33). Fate has brought the two families’ heirs together in spite of the misunderstanding between them. The younger generation perceives life differently, especially when it comes to matters of being in

love with someone. Just like in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Oloye did not allow the existing feud of the older generation to act as a hindrance to the affection he already has for Princess. Thus, Princess disapproves of her father's reaction towards Oloye and openly declares that her mind is clear and made up, "I like him and if he gets serious about me..." (34).

Determination to have their way becomes the decision of both father and mother. However, as commonly exhibited by most men, Miebi, Princess' mother becomes the object of blame by His Royal Highness as Princess conveys her love for Oloye. Both old and young generations perceive love differently. To the older generation, love is not supposed to be the bedrock of choice of life partner as both tradition demands that both parties learn to love and content with each other when married, being originally strangers to one another. But to the younger generation especially in contemporary Africa, love is the main force of marital unity.

The reactionary behaviour of His Royal Highness is absurd. His instant visit to the widow, Adi, does not befit his status as a royal leader of the community. His threat on Oloye's life if he persists in seeing Princess is normal, but the mode and manner of delivering the message to his mother counters his royal status as, "the father of the whole land" (42), as the First Chief refers to him. Life threat is not taken lightly in the African cosmology, more so that it involves a traditional ruler. Hence Oloye's mother paid a visit to His Royal Highness with her son and three chiefs all in the bid to plead with His Royal Highness to leave Oloye alone. Little did they know that Oloye has a different intention for the visit as he stated clearly before them not minding the purported anger of His Royal Highness. Oloye pours out his mind thus: "...I wanted to state in the presence of you witnesses that I am asking for the fatherly blessing of Your Highness, that is if Princess agrees to marry me" (43). Oloye is so confident of himself in spite of the unhealthy atmosphere His Royal Highness tries to create. What gives Oloye so much confidence is the power of love for the Princess, which he declares openly before His Royal Highness and others without fear. He says: "You are correct, your Royal Highness. It is a real, deep, sincere and affectionate love for my darling Princess" (44).

On the other hand, what reposes confidence on His Royal Highness is his position as the ruler and the fact that he is Princess' father. Ayakoroma's realises that, "Arts becomes useful when it achieves the power to communicate..." (Yerima 93) The character portrayal of Oloye reveals a sarcastic response before leaving the palace with his mother as if to say that; no one is all knowing no matter the position one occupies in the society. In other words, power and knowledge of evil do not lie with royalty alone.

His Royal Highness did not only threaten Oloye but makes attempt to accomplish it by visiting the native doctor to invoke his (Oloye's) spirit in order to kill him. In a somewhat twist of doom, Oloye's father's spirit rather appeared before His Royal Highness and the Native Doctor; and that becomes a serious problem for both of them as the reverse becomes the case. His Royal Highness becomes inert. The only therapy to resuscitate the life of His Royal Highness is electric fish which shockingly to the community became so scarce. Ironically the only person in possession of the electric

fish in his fish pond is Oloye, his targeted victim. Oloye finds it difficult to save the life of His Royal Highness knowing that His Royal Highness is after his (Oloye's) own life.

Princess on her own part finds it difficult to understand how a man who confesses love to her can refuse to save her father's life. She turns violent, slaps Oloye and storms out of his compound. To her, if his love is genuine, the object of her interest should be a concern to him. However, Adi, through her motherly intervention and advice, makes Oloye to understand that the object of interest of the Princess which is her father's life could be a channel of restoration of their love relationship.

The playwright introduces a narrator who recounts the incidents concerning the life of His Royal Highness and his stale relationship with Oloye and the object of his safety, the three electric fish from him (Oloye). However, the electric fish brought by Oloye and administered to His Royal Highness by the native doctor revived his life. Oloye's merciful action worked like a magic and dissolved the hatred of His Royal Highness for him. The Princess not only apologised to him but surrendered her love openly which His Royal Highness commemorated by bringing them together in a fatherly embrace. Ayakoroma's preoccupation here is that genuine love is a serious binding force of opposing partners as it can neutralise hate and turns it into joy.

Conclusion

Barclays Ayakoroma's play, *A Chance to Survive*, aims at awakening the consciousness of the rural folks in understanding the socio/political configurations of their society and how they can better survive as vectors of change and progress. The play is a representation of the inconsistencies, sympathies and frailties of the human nature, especially their fundamental dispositions and traits as they affect functions and positions of leadership at the regional, national and international levels. These humanistic instincts are clearly depicted in the play by the characters' ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Indeed, the playwright upholds a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism and rather stresses an individuals' dignity, worth and capacity for self-realisation through reason.

The playwright engages in a problem – solving effort that encourages change as a process that can make a difference in empowering communal reforms in terms of our human resource policies and practices. In other words, the play, *A Chance to Survive*, provides a platform upon which values and beliefs that are based on the idea that people are basically good and those problems can be solved using an attitude, or way of life centred on humanistic ideals and values. Oloye's mother however had the foresight of the possibility of one good turn leading to another. She visualises the possible power of reversal of decision by His Royal Highness over the relationship and possible marriage of the Princess and Oloye. Besides this mental picture and foresight, one vital dramatic technique adopted by the playwright in the resolution of the conflicts in the story is sudden illness. Abbotson describes the use of illness in drama as an attempt to "humanise the stories of those afflicted and to promote a better understanding of what affects them in order to encourage the general public not to demonise or exploit these people" (128). This explains Ayakoroma's use of the sickness as experienced by His Royal Highness to resolve the conflicts in the play, *A Chance to Survive*. The incidents in the play venerate the saying that 'experience is the best teacher'. Personal affliction

brings about a re-direction of the human mind stemming from torture and fear of death. The metaphorical death danger and the realisation of the source of life restoration are antidotes to feud and hatred, forgiveness being the master key.

The lesson born out of the situation in *A Chance to Survive* is a deep understanding and realisation by His Royal Highness of the unpredictable nature of life and the future. Ayakoroma proffers forgiveness as solution to feud and hatred and love for one another as a means to avert future problems. The portrayal of His Royal Highness, self-indulgence, and relationships, especially between him and Oloye's family is a precursor of prudence to leaders the world over, to mend their ways and establish harmonious accord for peaceful coexistence with their subjects. In essence, advocating for specific policies on the human survival space of the fiercely partial leadership value that ignores new knowledge and communal growth imperatives is the concern of the playwright.

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