

**MAA OMWATI DEGREE COLLEGE
HASSANPUR (PALWAL)**

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UNIT-I

The Joys of Motherhood By Buchi Emecheta

The Joys of Motherhood

The Joys of Motherhood is a novel written by Buchi Emecheta. It was first published in London, UK, by Allison & Busby in 1979 and was first published in Heinemann's African Writers Series in 1980 and reprinted in 1982, 2004, 2008. The basis of the novel is the "necessity for a woman to be fertile, and above all to give birth to sons". It tells the tragic story of Nnu-Ego, daughter of Nwokocha Agbadi and Ona, who had a bad fate with childbearing. This novel explores the life of a Nigerian woman, Nnu Ego. Nnu's life centres on her children and through them, she gains the respect of her community. Traditional tribal values and customs begin to shift with increasing colonial presence and influence, pushing Nnu Ego to challenge accepted notions of "mother", "wife", and "woman".

Through Nnu Ego's journey, Emecheta forces her readers to consider the dilemmas associated with adopting new ideas and practices against the inclination to cleave to tradition. In this novel, Emecheta reveals and celebrates the pleasures derived from fulfilling responsibilities related to family matters in child-bearing, mothering, and nurturing activities among women. However, the author additionally highlights how the "joys of motherhood" also include anxiety, obligation, and pain.

In the words of critic Marie Umeh, Emecheta "breaks the prevalent portraiture in African writing.... It must have been difficult to draw provocative images of African motherhood against the already existing literary models, especially on such a sensitive subject."

Plot

Nwokocha Agbadi is a proud, handsome and wealthy local chief. Although he has many wives, he finds a woman named Ona more attractive. Ona ("priceless jewel") is the name he has given her. She is the daughter of a fellow chief. When she was young, her father took her everywhere he went, saying she was his ornament, and Nwokocha Agbadi would say jokingly in response, "Why don't you wear her around your neck like an Ona?" It never occurred to him that he would be one of the men to later ask for her when she grew up.

During one rainy season Chief Agbadi and his friends go elephant hunting and having come too near the heavy creature, the chief is thrown with a mighty tusk into a nearby sugar-cane bush and is pinned to the floor. He aims his spear at the belly of the mighty animal and kills it but not until it has wounded him badly. Agbadi passes out and it seems to all he has died. He wakes up after several days to find Ona beside him. During his period of recovery, he sleeps with her, and shortly thereafter he finds out that his senior wife Agunwa is very ill. She later dies, and it is thought that perhaps she became ill as a result of seeing her husband making love to Ona on his apparent deathbed.

The funeral festivities continue through the day. When it is time to put Agunwa in her grave, everything she will need in her afterlife having been placed in her coffin, her personal slave is called. According to custom, a good slave is supposed to jump into the grave willingly to accompany her mistress but this young and beautiful slave begs for her life, much to the annoyance of the men. The hapless slave is pushed into the shallow grave but struggles out, appealing to her owner Agbadi, whose eldest son cries

angrily: "So my mother does not deserve a decent burial?" So saying, he gives her a sharp blow with the head of the cutlass. Another relative gives her a final blow to the head and she falls into the grave, silenced forever. The burial is then completed.

Ona becomes pregnant from sleeping with Agbadi and delivers a baby girl named Nnu Ego ("twenty bags of cowries"). The baby is born with a mark on her head resembling that made by the cutlass used on the head of the slave woman. Ona gives birth to another son but she dies in premature labour and her son also dies a day afterwards. Nnu Ego becomes a woman but is barren. After several months with no sign of fruitfulness, she consults several herbalists and is told that the slave woman who is her Chi (or patron goddess) will not give her a child. Her husband Amatokwu takes another wife who before long conceives.

Nnu Ego returns to her father's house. She is married, sight unseen, to a new husband who lives in Lagos; so she journeys from her village to the city where she meets her new husband, Nnaife, whom she does not like but prays that if she can have a child with him, she will love him. She does give birth to a baby boy, whom she later finds dead. Shocked, she is on the verge of jumping into the river when a villager draws her back and comforts her. Over the course of her life, she gives birth to nine surviving children. Her husband, a laundryman for a white man, is drafted into the army during wartime, but on her own Nnu Ego can barely manage to feed them. When her husband's brother dies, he inherits his four wives and moves the youngest and prettiest into the home. Nnu Ego enjoys a bitter rivalry with this new wife. In the midst of the war, the new wife leaves to become a prostitute, while Nnu Ego devotes her life to providing for her children. She scrimps and saves to provide a secondary school education for her oldest son, in the hope that he will help support the rest of the family. After this son graduates, he expects more support so he can study abroad. Her second son wants the same thing. Her third child, a girl, runs off with a Yoruba butcher's son. When Nnaife gives chase, he injures a man and is taken to court, where he is put in jail. Nnu Ego's fourth child marries the lawyer who pleaded Nnaife's case, and offers to rear the fifth child.

Nnu Ego returns to the village, where she is feted as a great woman because with two married daughters, and two sons abroad (the second son emigrates to Canada), she is expected to be filled with the joys of motherhood. It is suggested that her children's success should be enough for her. She dies a lonely death in the village, and is regarded as a mad woman. Only after her death do her children arrive to throw a lavish funeral for her; they spend time and money on her funeral, which they did not spend in her life. It is noted that Nnu Ego never gives children to women who pray to her for them.

Critical reception

The reviewer for West Africa magazine wrote: "Buchi Emecheta has a way of making readable and interesting ordinary events. She looks at things without flinching and without feeling the need to distort or exaggerate. It is a remarkable talent.... this is, in my opinion, the best novel Buchi Emecheta has yet written."^[4] A. N. Wilson stated in The Observer: "Buchi Emecheta has a growing reputation for her treatment of African women and their problems. This reputation will surely be enhanced by The Joys of Motherhood."

Summary

The Joys of Motherhood Buchi Emecheta was born in Lagos in 1944. She was orphaned by the age of 11 and moved to the UK with her husband in 1960. When her marriage broke down, she raised her five young children as a single mother. Emecheta began writing about her experiences for the New

Statesman in 1972, and these columns formed the basis for her first published novel, *In the Ditch*. She went on to publish a second semi-autobiographical novel, *Second-Class Citizen*, in 1974, followed by many more during her thirty-year writing career, including the critically acclaimed *The Joys of Motherhood*. Alongside these novels, Emecheta also published several children's stories, wrote a television play and continued as a regular contributor to the *New Statesman* as well as the *Guardian* and *The Times Literary Supplement*. Emecheta received a number of literary awards and accolades over the years, including the 1977 Jock Campbell *New Statesman* award for her novel *Slave Girl*. She died in London in 2017.

The Mother Nnu Ego backed out of the room, her eyes unfocused and glazed, looking into vacancy. Her feet were light and she walked as if in a daze, not conscious of using those feet. She collided with the door, moved away from it and across the veranda, on to the green grass that formed part of the servants' quarters. The grass was moist with dew under her bare feet. Her whole body felt the hazy mist in the air, and part of her felt herself brushing against the white master's washing on the line. This made her whirl round with a jerk, like a puppet reaching the end of its string. She now faced the road, having decided to use her eyes, her front instead of her back. She ran, her feet lighter still, as if her eyes now that she was using them gave her extra lightness.

She ran, past the master's bungalow, past the side garden, and shot into the untarred gravel road; her senses were momentarily stunned by the colour of the road which seemed to be that of blood and water. She hurried on beyond this short road that led to the big tarred one, ran like someone pursued, looking behind her only once to make sure she was not being followed. She ran as if she would never stop. The year was 1934 and the place was Lagos, then a British colony. The Yaba housing estate, a little distance from the island, had been built by the British for the British, though many Africans like Nnu Ego's husband worked there as servants and houseboys; a few foreign blacks who were junior clerks lived in some of the modest estate houses. Even then Lagos was growing fast and would soon be the capital of a newly formed country called Nigeria.

Nnu Ego darted past the Zabo market stalls covered with red corrugated-iron sheets which, just like the wet grass and the gravel on the ground, were glistening with the morning dew. She in her state did not seem to be seeing all this, yet her subconscious was taking it in. Little sharp stones in the footpath pricked her soles as she reached Baddley Avenue; she felt and at the same time did not feel the pain. This was also true of the pain in her young and unsupported breasts, now filling fast with milk since the birth of her baby boy four weeks before. Her baby . . . her baby! Nnu Ego's arms involuntarily went to hold her aching breasts, more for assurance of her motherhood than to ease their weight. She felt the milk trickling out, wetting her buba blouse; and the other choking pain got heavier, nearing her throat, as if determined to squeeze the very life out of her there and then. But, unlike the milk, this pain could not come out, though it urged her on, and she was running, running away from it. Yet it was there inside her. There was only one way to rid herself of it. For how would she be able to face the world after what had happened? No, it was better not to try. It was best to end it all this way, the only good way.

Her strength was unflagging. One or two early risers saw her, tried to stop her and ask where she was going. For they saw a young woman of twenty-five, with long hair not too tidily plaited and with no head-tie to cover it, wearing a loose house buba and a faded lappa to match tied tightly around her thin waist, and they guessed that all was far from well. Apart from the fact that her outfit was too shabby to be worn outside her home and her hair too untidy to be left uncovered, there was an unearthly kind of wildness in her eyes that betrayed a troubled Copyrighted Material 3 The Mother spirit. But so agile and

so swift were her movements that she dodged the many who tried to help her. By the time she reached Oyingbo market the sun was peeping out from behind the morning clouds.

She was nearing a busy part of the town and there were already people about. The early market sellers were making their way to the stalls in single file, their various bundles tied and balanced unwaveringly on their heads. She collided with an angry Hausa beggar who, vacating one of the open stalls where he had spent the night, was heading for the tarred road to start his day's begging. He was blind and walked with his stick held menacingly straight in front of him; his other hand clutched shakily at his begging calabash. Nnu Ego in her haste almost knocked the poor man down, running straight into him as if she too was without the use of her eyes.

There followed a loud curse, and an unintelligible outpouring from the mouth of the beggar in his native Hausa language, which few people in Lagos understood. His calabash went flying from his shaky hand, and he swung his stick in the air to emphasise his loud curse. 'Dan duru ba!' he shouted. He imagined that, early as it was, he was being attacked by money snatchers who were wont to rob the beggars, especially blind ones, of their daily alms. Nnu Ego just managed to escape the fury of the beggar's stick as she picked up the calabash for him. She did this wordlessly though she was breathing hard. There was nothing she could have said to this man who was enjoying his anger, recounting what he thought was about to happen to him in Hausa. He went on cursing and swinging his stick in the air as Nnu Ego left him. She began to feel fatigued, and from time to time whimpered like a frightened child; yet she walked fast, resentful that she should feel any physical hurt at all. As she walked, pain and anger fought inside her; sometimes anger came to the fore, but the emotional pain always won. And that was what she wanted. Copyrighted Material The Joys of Motherhood to end, very, very quickly.

She would soon be there, she told herself. It would all soon be over, right there under the deep water that ran below Carter Bridge. Then she would be able to seek out and meet her chi, her personal god, and she would ask her why she had punished her so. She knew her chi was a woman, not just because to her way of thinking only a woman would be so thorough in punishing another. Apart from that, had she not been told many times at home in Ibo that her chi was a slave woman who had been forced to die with her mistress when the latter was being buried? So the slave woman was making sure that Nnu Ego's own life was nothing but a catalogue of disasters. Well, now she was going to her, to the unforgiving slave princess from a foreign land, to talk it all over with her, not on this earth but in the land of the dead, there deep beneath the waters of the sea. It is said that those about to die, be it by drowning or by a gradual terminal illness, use their last few moments of consciousness going through their life kaleidoscopically, and Nnu Ego was no exception. Hers had started twenty-five years previously in a little Ibo town called Ibo.

The Mother's Mother Nwoko Agbadi was a very wealthy local chief. He was a great wrestler, and was glib and gifted in oratory. His speeches were highly spiced with sharp anecdotes and thoughtful proverbs. He was taller than most and, since he was born in an age when physical prowess determined one's role in life, people naturally accepted him as a leader. Like most handsome men who are aware of their charismatic image, he had many women in his time. Whenever they raided a neighbouring village, Agbadi was sure to come back with the best-looking women. He had a soft spot for those from big houses, daughters of chiefs and rich men. He knew from experience that such women had an extra confidence and sauciness even in captivity. And that type of arrogance, which even captivity could not diminish, seemed to excite some wicked trait in him.

In his young days, a woman who gave in to a man without first fighting for her honour was never respected. To regard a woman who is quiet and timid as desirable was something that came after his time, with Christianity and other changes. Most of the women Nwokocha Agbadi chose as his wives and even slaves were those who could match his arrogance, his biting sarcasm, his painful jokes, and also, when the mood called, his human tenderness. He married a few women in the traditional sense, but as he watched each of them sink into domesticity and motherhood he was soon bored and would go further afield for some other

Agbadi was from Ogboli, a village of people who, legend said, had lived in that part of what is now Ibuza before the Eastern Ibo people from Isu came and settled there with them. The Ogboli people allowed the founder of Ibuza to stay, and bestowed titles on him and his descendants. They also inherited most of the widows of the newcomers. This was the arrangement for a long time, until the people of Ibuza grew in number and strength, and those of Ogboli somehow diminished. It is still not known why this was so, though some claim that many of them emigrated to neighboring towns like Asaba. But that is by the way. The Ibuza people, who came from the eastern part of Nigeria, fought and won many civil battles against their hosts. They won their freedom of movement to the extent that they started crowning themselves and refused to send their wives to the Ogboli people again.

During the time of Nwokocha Agbadi the town had become known as Ibuza, and Ogboli was then one of the villages that made up the town. The glory was still there, and the Ogboli people still regarded themselves as the sons of the soil, even though the soil had long been taken away from under their feet. Two of Agbadi's wives came from Ibuza, two from his own village of Ogboli, three were slaves he had captured during his wanderings; and he also had two mistresses. One of these mistresses was a very beautiful utiful young woman who managed to combine stubbornness with arrogance.

So stubborn was she that she refused to live with Agbadi. Men being what they are, he preferred spending his free time with her, with this woman who enjoyed humiliating him by refusing to be his wife. Many a night she would send him away, saying she did not feel like having anything to do with him, even though Agbadi was not supposed to be the kind of man women Copyrighted Material 7 The Mother's Mother should say such things to. But she refused to be dazzled by his wealth, his name or his handsomeness.

People said that Nwokocha Agbadi spent all his life on this earth courting his Ona. Ona was Agbadi's name for her, not the name originally given to her. Her father was a chief, too, and Agbadi had seen her as a child following her father about. People used to find it strange that a chief like Obi Umunna would go about unashamedly pulling a tiny toddler with him. But her father told people that his little girl was his ornament. Agbadi then said, jokingly

'Why don't you wear her round your neck, like an ona, a "priceless jewel"?' People had laughed. But the name stuck. It never occurred to him that he would be one of the men to ask for her when she grew up. Her father, despite having several wives, had few children, and in fact no living son at all, but Ona grew to fill her father's expectation. He had maintained that she must never marry; his daughter was never going to stoop to any man. She was free to have men, however, and if she bore a son, he would take her father's name, thereby rectifying the omission nature had made.

She was of medium height, and had skin like that of half-ripe palm nuts, smooth, light coffee in colour. Her hair, closely cropped, fitted her skull like a hat atop a head that seemed to be thrust out of her shoulders by a strong, long powerful neck. When she walked, her expensive waist-beads, made of the

best coral, murmured, and for men raised in that culture, who knew the sound of each bead, this added to her allurements. She had been used all her life to walking in bush paths, so she knew the tricks of avoiding thorns, using the balls of her feet rather than putting her full weight on her soles.

This gave her movement the air of a mysterious and yet exciting cat. She had a trick of pointing her chin forward, as if she saw with it instead of her eyes, which were black-rimmed and seemed sunken into her head. Like most of her people, she had little patience for walking, she ran, in the same way as young girls would run to the stream or run out of their homesteads to find out what was going on, she would cup her hands to support her breasts, which swung with bare health. She seldom wore any tops, neither did she tie her lappa over her breasts like the old women.

But she had many waist lappas, and expensive changes of coral beads for her neck and waist. Greenish-black tattoos stood out richly against her brown skin. Though she was always scantily dressed, she frequently made people aware of being a conservative, haughty presence, cold as steel and remote as any woman royally born. When she sat, and curled her long legs together in feminine modesty, one knew that she had style, this only daughter of Obi Umunna. Nwokocha Agbadi would not have minded sending all his wives away just to live with this one woman. But that was not to be. People said she had had him bewitched, that she had a kind of power over him; what person in his right mind would leave his big spacious household and women who were willing to worship and serve him in all things to go after a rude, egocentric woman who had been spoiled by her father?

This story gained credence particularly when Agbadi's young wives showed signs of sexual neglect. He would be reminded to do his duty by them, then when they became pregnant he would not be seen in their huts until the time came for him to mate them again. But whenever he returned from his many wanderings he would go and stay with his Ona.

It was during one rainy season that Nwokocha Agbadi went to hunt some elephants which he and his age-group knew would be crossing the bush marshes called Ude. He came too near one of the heavy creatures on this occasion, and that single slip almost led to a terrible disaster. He was thrown with a mighty tusk into a nearby wild sugar-cane bush and he landed in the bubbly black mud. The animal was so enraged that, uncharacteristically for a Copyrighted Material 9 The Mother's Mother big elephant, it chased after him blindly, bellowing like a great locomotive, so that the very ground seemed about to give way at its heavy approach.

Agbadi reacted quickly. He was pinned to the sugar-cane bush unable to move his body, none the less with a practised hand he aimed his spear and threw it under the belly of the angry animal. It roared, but still made a determined assault on Agbadi, almost tearing his arm from his shoulder, attacking him with a fury increased by the painful spear under it. The elephant roared and fell, but not before it had wounded Agbadi so badly that he himself suspected he was nearing his end. The other hunters, hearing the commotion, rushed to the scene and quickly finished off the elephant, which was still very alive and kicking furiously

They saw Nwokocha Agbadi bleeding to death. His shoulder bone was thrust out of his skin, and the elephant's tusks had indented his side. The men gathered and with bamboo splints tied the twisted shoulder, though they could do little about the bleeding side; judging from the pool of blood that was fast forming around him, they doubted that he would last long. Agbadi soon passed out and it seemed to all that he had died. The oldest man of the group took his otuogwu cloth which he had left in a dry

hilly place by the stream, rolled Agbadi in it as if he were a dead person, then the anxious hunters carried him in a bigger bamboo crate which they had quickly constructed, and made their way gradually and sadly home.

The procession of dignified men emerging from the belly of the bush into the town was a moving spectacle. It was obvious to those farmers on their way to their lands that something was very wrong, but if they suspected the truth, they could not yet show grief: Nwokocha Agbadi was not only a chief but an important one, therefore the disclosure of his death would have to comply with certain cultural laws – there must be gun shots, and two or three goats must be slaughtered before the announcement. Anyone who started grieving before the official proclamation

would be made to pay fines equivalent to three goats. So people watched the hunters' approach in awe, wondering who it was that had been so mummified. Women and children ran from their homesteads to witness the sight, and observant people noticed that the only chief missing among the returning hunters was Nwokocha Agbadi. His carriers were followed by four hefty male slaves dragging the dead elephant, groaning and sweating with the weight of the beast.

People knew then that Agbadi had either been badly wounded or killed while hunting the elephant! Word circulated in whispers. When Ona heard of it, the more vulnerable personality underneath her daily steely mask came out. She dashed out from where she was sitting by her father and soon caught up with the carriers. 'Tell me, please say something, is my lover dead?' she asked anxiously as she galloped after them on the balls of her feet, her waist-beads rumbling to the rhythm of her movements. She held on first to this man, asking the same question, then to that one, begging him to say something. She pestered Agbadi's closest and oldest friend Obi Idayi, so much so that he lost his temper. He had ignored her for some time, and never had any love for this wild uncontrolled woman. He did not know what Agbadi found in her. Now he stopped in his heavy stride and snapped.

'In life you tortured him, teased him with your body. Now that he is dead, you cry for his manhood.' Ona was stunned. She held her hands over her head and spoke like someone hypnotised: 'It can't be. It just can't be.' Some older women standing by hushed her, saying, 'He may be your lover, girl, but don't forget that he is Nwokocha Agbadi. Watch your tongue.' With fear and apprehension lightening her brain, Ona followed the carriers to Ogboli. Copyrighted Material 11 The Mother's Mother Agbadi was placed in the centre of his courtyard. The medicine man was able to detect a very faint life in him, although his breathing was toilsome and indicated that he was a dying man.

They had to massage his heart into activity again. All his wives were shooed away, but Ona fought and clawed to be allowed to stay and would let no one touch Agbadi except herself. His people did not much like her, yet they respected her as the only woman who could make Agbadi really happy, so the medicine man let her attend to him. So frightened was she in the aftermath of the accident that, together with the men sitting around Agbadi, she forgot that food was meant to be eaten and that night was meant for sleep. Goats were slaughtered every day to appease Agbadi's chi; others were left alive by river banks and at Ude to appease the other gods. The thought of going home never occurred to Ona, not even on the fourth day. Nor did her possessive father call for her, for he understood her plight; hers were civilised people and they trusted her. For the first time, she realised how attached she was to this man Nwokocha Agbadi, though he was cruel in his imperiousness.

His tongue was biting like the edge of a circumcision blade. He ruled his family and children as if he were a god. Yet he gave her his love without reservation, and she enjoyed it; she suspected, however, that her

fate would be the same as that of his other women should she consent to become one of his wives. No, maybe the best way to keep his love was not to let that happen. But if he were to die now . . . God, she would will herself death too! All the same, she would rather have her tongue pulled out of her head than let that beast of a man know how much she cared. That, she decided, would be his lot for being so domineering and having such a foul temper. She watched over him closely and told herself that she would go if he should start showing signs of being on the mend. On the fifth day he opened his eyes without any help

Ona was so surprised that she simply stared back at him. Her first impulsive act was to scream her joy; then she remembered her self control. Agbadi looked at her for a split second, his eyes unfocused. For that small time, he looked so dependent that Ona felt like gathering him in her arms and singing to him, as one would do to a baby. He started to chew the side of his mouth, a habit of his which she knew from experience was normally the prelude to a hurtful remark. He looked at her sitting there cross-legged beside him, one of her knees almost touching his head which was supported by a wooden head-rest. He said nothing but his sharp mind had taken in the whole situation.

Still biting the corner of his lower lip, he allowed his eyes to wander over her from head to toe. Then he simply rolled away and closed his eyes again. She did not doubt that the light in the open courtyard where he was lying was too strong for his eyes, since he had not opened them for five long days, but she had not missed his look of derision. What a way to thank her for all her help! She did not tell anyone that Agbadi had regained consciousness; she watched hopefully, yet with fear, for further signs of recovery. That evening while she was trying to ease the bamboo splints that had been fixed to straighten his shoulder, two men had to hold his strong long legs to prevent him from kicking. He groaned in pain, and she was told to mop up the fresh blood oozing from the wound. She heard herself saying, 'You have borne the pain like a man. The bones are set now; you only have the wound, and this will heal in a day or two.'

Agbadi's eyes flew open, and this time they were clear and evil. His white teeth flashed in a sardonic smile. He chuckled wickedly, then said roughly, 'What would you have done without your lover, Ona?' 'If you don't stop talking that way, I shall throw this calabash of medicine at you and walk out of here back to my father's Copyrighted Material 13 The Mother's Mother compound. You're much better now, judging from the sharpness of your tongue.' Her eyes burned with hot tears, but she controlled and never shed them, sensing that nothing would please her lover more than to see her face awash with tears of frustration. She got up from Agbadi's goatskin rug and began to make her way out of the compound. 'You can't go now. You have to finish what you started,' Agbadi observed.

She whirled round. 'Who is going to stop me? Who dares to stop me? You?' she wailed, very near hysteria. 'Bah! You think you have the right to play God, just because you are Agbadi? You have your wives – they can look after you. You have your slaves – let them mop up your stinking blood!'

'My wives are too much in love with me to stand by and see me in pain. I need a heartless woman like you . . . a woman whose heart is made of stone to stay and watch men remove my splints and not drown me with tears. I will die if you go.' 'You will die if I go?' Ona sneered, jutting her pointed chin into the air and throwing back her head in feigned amusement. 'A statement like that coming from the great Agbadi! So you are just an ordinary person after all – no, not an ordinary man but a spoilt child who cries when his mother leaves him. Nwokocha Agbadi, hurry up and die, because I'm going back to my father's compound.'

My heart is not made of stone but I would rather die than let it soften for the likes of you.' 'I did not say I am dying because you are so indispensable . . .' This was followed by his low, mocking laughter. He was joined by his close friend Idayi, and they seemed to be enjoying her discomfiture. Then Idayi coughed gently. 'Look, Agbadi,' he warned, 'if you don't stop chuckling you'll start to bleed again. As for you, our Ona, you have lain there by him these five days

He prayed to the almighty Olisa to cure his good friend Nwokocha Agbadi and begged him to give them all good health. Agbadi lay silently on his back on the goatskin, sometimes gazing at the bamboo ceiling, sometimes letting out grunts in agreement with the many prayers being said. For most of the time his eyes were closed, and the sweat on his matted chest had to be mopped with cold water time and time again. Agbadi had slept so much in the day that, now he was feeling better, he was finding it difficult to sleep the night through. He must have dozed for a while, none the less, for when he opened his eyes, the whole compound was quiet.

UNIT-2: July's People

Summary:

July's People imagines an alternate history in which a Black liberation movement forcefully overturns apartheid rule, embroiling the nation in a violent civil war that endangers the lives of the country's minority white population. These circumstances force the Smaleses, an affluent, white South African family, to flee their suburban Johannesburg home. When rebel takeover of ports and airports makes escaping the country impossible, the Smaleses gratefully accept their Black servant, July's, offer to seek refuge in his rural village. Forced to abandon their old life with no notice, the Smaleses arrive at July's village with the clothes on their backs and little else. The Smaleses are well aware that they are lucky to be alive. However, life in July's village is a huge culture shock for the family, who previously enjoyed a comfortable, privileged lifestyle in town. In July's village, the family resides in a small, earthen hut. With no access to modern amenities, they learn to bathe in the river and cook over an open fire. Bam hunts for warthogs with the other villagers, and Maureen helps the women unearth root vegetables and gather grass for thatching.

While the children—Gina, Victor, and Royce—quickly adapt to life in July's village, their parents have more difficulty accepting their present situation. Maureen and Bam are a liberal couple who proudly condemn apartheid. However, at July's village, they obsessively tune in to the radio, anxiously listening for news that fighting has ceased and order has been restored. Although such thinking radically undermines their progressive political views, the reality is that Smaleses long to return to the privileged, comfortable life in Johannesburg that the oppressive system of apartheid—and July's services—have allowed them to enjoy. Maureen considers the fantasies she used to have about taking a family trip to July's village to teach her children how to experience and appreciate a life and culture so radically different from their own. With no choice but to experience that culture firsthand and wholly reliant on July for food, shelter, and protection, Maureen regards her earlier attitude as idealistic and misguided. She and Bam grow

increasingly resentful of having to answer to July and begin to question his loyalty to their family.

One major source of doubt for the Smaleses is that July has the keys to their bakkie, or pickup truck. The Smaleses' suspicions that July is disloyal come to a head when July and a friend drive the Smaleses' bakkie into town without asking permission or saying where they are going or when they plan to return. As Bam and Maureen anxiously await July's return, they argue over July's motivations for helping their family and whether or not they can trust him. While Bam believes that July is helping them out of genuine love and concern for the family's wellbeing, Maureen is more skeptical. Eventually, July returns to the village. When Bam and Maureen confront him about taking the bakkie without their permission, their attempt to reassert control over the vehicle backfires. July explains that he only drove the vehicle to the shops to pick up food and other supplies, including batteries for the Smaleses' radio. July's explanation implicitly reminds the Smaleses that their survival is dependent on his willingness to provide for them, effectively putting them in their place while reaffirming his authority.

Tensions continue to rise. July's mother and his wife, Martha, express their concern and disapproval of July's decision to house a white family in the village. The Smaleses' presence poses a significant risk to everyone. Word travels fast, and if rebel forces receive information that the village is sheltering a white family, they might choose to attack. Eventually, the chief finds out that the Smaleses have been staying in the village and demands to meet them in person. When July relays the chief's message to Maureen and Bam, they assume that the chief will banish them from the village. The family is immensely relieved, then, when the chief allows them to remain in the village.

Much of their meeting with the chief involves a discussion of the ongoing civil war. The chief opposes the fighting, arguing that the Black liberation movement attracts outside tribes that may jeopardize the chief's control over his land. The growing threat of violence makes the chief want to defend his land against rebel forces. Somehow, the chief learns that Bam owns a shotgun, and he requests that Bam give him a shooting lesson. The chief's position horrifies Bam, who can't imagine how the chief could want to shoot his own people.

Sometime later, a man carrying a red box wanders into the town. The man is the village's equivalent of "travelling entertainment." He removes a record player and amplifier from his box and engages the village in a raucous celebration called "gumba-gumba," which consists of music, dancing, and drinking. The Smaleses are in no mood to celebrate and head back to their hut. Upon their return, Bam realizes that his shotgun is missing. After the family's frantic search fails to produce the missing weapon, Bam collapses onto the bed in despair.

Maureen leaves the hut and finds July in his usual spot at the bakkie's hiding place outside the main settlement. She accuses him of stealing the gun but quickly realizes that he has no idea what she's talking about. Maureen remembers that July's friend [Daniel](#) wasn't at the *gumba-gumba* with the rest of the village and identifies him as the probable thief.

July informs Maureen that Daniel left the village a few days ago. However, July also insists that the missing gun isn't his problem and refuses to tell Maureen where Daniel went. He tells Maureen that her family's presence in the village is causing him too many problems, insinuating that it won't be long before he orders them to leave. July's obstinance enrages Maureen. Throughout her stay at July's village, Maureen has witnessed numerous villagers using objects she recognizes from her family's house in Johannesburg. Now, she accuses July of stealing from her family and betraying their trust. July proceeds to yell at Maureen in his language. Although Maureen can't understand his words, his message is abundantly clear: Maureen's repeated attempts to dignify July have had the opposite effect. Throughout July's 15 years of service, Maureen's patronizing attitude and controlling demeanor have only dehumanized and alienated him. Finally, July switches to English to tell Maureen that Daniel has run away to join the rebel fighters. Maureen escalates the situation further, accusing July of being opportunistic and big-headed. She claims that July is a coward who has no qualms about staying behind, driving around in the stolen bakkie, and pretending to be a "big man" while others, like Daniel, fight on behalf of his people.

The next day, Maureen is sewing in her family's hut when she sees a helicopter fly over the village before landing somewhere in the distant bushland. Maureen can't see any markings to determine whether the aircraft carries an ally or an enemy. Nevertheless, she drops her sewing, exits the hut, and walks away from the village. Maureen picks up speed as she nears the river and then crosses it. Ignoring her family's calls, Maureen runs forward into the bushland to meet the helicopter and her uncertain fate.

UNIT 3: The Black Hermit:

The Black Hermit was the first play by the Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and the first published East African play in English. The travelling theatre of Makerere College was the first to produce the play, putting it on in honour of Ugandan independence at the Ugandan National Theatre in Kampala in November 1962. The play was published in a small edition by Makerere University Press in 1963, and republished in the Heinemann African Writers Series in 1968.

Plot

The Black Hermit is the story of a young man, Remi, who is the first of his tribe to attend university. Amidst the backdrop of a politically torn country, Remi himself is torn between his sense of tribalism and nationalism. This struggle runs deep, as he finds it at the heart of his afflictions between himself, his marriage and familial relations, and his greater sense of obligations to his people and the country. The overwhelming nature of these problems drives him into isolation as a black hermit. His self-imposed exile into the city leads him to find contentment in Jane, his new lover, and nightly clubbing. However, after he is lobbied to return to the tribe, he must now confront the demons of his past.

Act 1

Scene 1

The play opens with Remi's wife and mother, Thoni and Nyobi, respectively, carrying out household chores. A conversation is struck as both admit to suffering from the absence of their beloved Remi. Thoni's distress is caused by her lack of fulfillment of motherly and womanly obligations to her tribe. Nyobi seeks to comfort her daughter-in-law, directing her to escape her sorrow: "I hate to see your youth wearing away, falling into bits like a cloth hung in the sun."

A knock at the door distracts them only to reveal the presence of one of the tribe's elders. A premonition had occurred in the village messenger, an oracle, that the strength and bounty of the village would return should the green seed, Remi, along with his university education, be planted. The elder, on behalf of the other elders, approaches Nyobi asking for her blessing in the plan to bring Remi back to the tribe. She obliges the messenger and mission her blessing but seeks out the power of Christ to return her son.

Scene 2

The elders of the tribe are congregating to discuss the plight of the tribe. Uhuru, or freedom, was promised yet not delivered by the Africanist Party and their neighbours who they conceive to be aspiring against them are surely to be blamed for their misfortune. Their salvation would be in Remi, the prodigal, educated son of the tribe, would lead their tribe back to strength and influence; therefore, the leader along with additional elders, along with Nyobi's blessing, elect to travel to the city.

Scene 3

Nyobi fears the elder's efforts will not work without divine intervention from the God of Christ. She visits the tribe's priest for spiritual guidance and comfort, not only for herself but for her daughter-in-law, Thoni, whose demeanour is affected by Remi's absence. She doubts the tribe's elders will be effective in returning him, so after the priest offers her words of comfort, she pleads the case for him to travel to the city and convince Remi to return. He obliges.

Act 2

Scene 1

Over the last few weeks, Remi has become increasingly mindful of home. Jane, his long time lover since moving to the city, has noticed this and addressed him about it. His thoughts and concerns are with his mother, so much so that he has become distant from Jane and negligent in remembering their plans. Jane wants for Remi to open up about his past, even suggesting that the two should visit his home. Nevertheless, he evades her inquiries, and the two depart to a night club.

Scene 2

Remi then gets a surprise visit from a long-time friend and colleague, Omange. The two engage in an impassioned debate about social issues in the country. At a glance, it appears to be of the typical matters. race relations, politics and regime transitions, tribalism versus nationalism, etc., are all brought up. Yet, things take a turn, as Remi discusses his politically active past at his university and in his tribe.

He goes on to reveal that his childhood crush, who was to be married to his brother, was left widowed following his brother's accidental death, and that under tribal custom, he was to marry her. This was his reason for leaving, as surely she could not have loved him, and, given his political ideology, he could not agree with following tribal law.

Just as Omange suggests that Remi return home to reconcile this grievance, the elders enter; Remi requests of Omange to depart and to prevent Jane from entering. The elders lobby Remi regarding the same manner, his return to the tribe. However, they desire of him to lead them politically and to be the liaison between them and the government. Remi grows agitated, as the same tribalistic passions he once escaped have followed him. He sends them off, as he vaguely fails to agree or disagree with their demand.

Their departure is followed shortly by the arrival of the tribe's Christian Priest. Shockingly, he too arrives to ask for Remi's return. This time, he approaches the task from a religious and emotional perspective: "God needs you... Your mother needs you."^[6] Finally, after this emotional lobby, Remi agrees to return. He comes to the realization that up until now he has been a hermit, hiding from his conflicts.

Scene 3

Days pass and the date of departure draws near. For obvious reasons, Jane is upset that he is leaving and begs him to let her join him. He provides the reasoning that their cultural differences would not permit her to function within the tribe. Further interrogation reveals that Remi's true reasoning for denying her the trip, and the reason for his coming to the city: his tribal marriage. She becomes distraught and leaves him.

Act 3

Scene 1

The day has now come when Remi is to return. While Nyobi is filled with excitement, Thoni have fear in her heart. Premonitions and dreams fill her mind with symbols that signal to her a less than harmonious return of her beloved. Comforting by both Nyobi and the Pastor prove ineffective, and upon the arrival of Remi, her feelings are proved true. In his return, he detests the tribalistic urges pushed by the elders and rejects the efforts of both his mother and the Pastor to reunite with his wife.

Scene 2

Filled deeply with sorrow, Thoni attempts to escape the village. Her destiny is to be exiled to the country of darkness – a place she has visited before – of where she will be free of the pain

she experiences. A local woman petitions her to abandon the voyage and return to the tribe. Her efforts are to no avail, however, as Thoni disappears.

Scene 3

Remi remains blinded to Thoni's love until the delivery of her letter, where she pours out her heart. This news transforms his demeanour instantaneously, as he rushes to his house in pursuit of her. He finds nothing but Nyobi and the pastor. Nyobi unaffectionately brushes his concerns until she acknowledges the sincerity of them, which causes her to attitude to shift. Nevertheless, all parties become disheartened at the return of Thoni's corpse to the house. Remi is left in pain and sorrow at the sight of his deceased wife as the play concludes.

Structure and genre

Themes and concepts

Multiple themes reoccur throughout the play and factor into the plot and character development. One of the main themes involves the pull between Nationalism and Tribalism that exists in the Post-Colonial country. We see these two varying attitudes on political life expressing themselves in how Remi and the elders in his tribe seek to address the tribe's issues. This can be seen directly in Scene three of Act three where Remi and his friend, Omenge, agree that to deal with tribalism with ruthless vigour is a part of the solution.

Origins

The nature of this work's origin is unclear, being that it was written in one of Ngugi's early years. However, it is believed that the chief of his influences for writing *The Black Hermit* is his personal experience of regime change following independence from a colonizer. In the words of James Ogude: "In the early 1960s, when Ngugi was writing, the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism was clearly a vexed one."

Publishing history

The Black Hermit was the first play by Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and the first published East African play in English. The travelling theatre of Makerere College were the first to produce the play, putting it on in honour of Ugandan independence at the Ugandan National Theatre in Kampala in November 1962. The play was published in a small edition by Makerere University Press in 1963, and republished in Heinemann's African Writers Series in 1968.

Translations

Ngugi originally produced this work in English. Later on, however, a change in perspective of writing in English rather than his native tongues drove him to print the work in Swahili and Giyuku. Today, the work is published in more than thirty languages.

UNIT 4 : Wole Soyinka: Telephone Conversation”

Introduction

"Telephone Conversation" is a 1963 poem by the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka that satires racism. The poem describes a phone call between a landlady and the speaker, who is black, about renting an apartment. The landlady is pleasant until she learns that the speaker is "African," at which point she demands to know how "light" or "dark" the speaker's skin is. In response, the speaker cleverly mocks the landlady's ignorance and prejudice, demonstrating that characterizing people by their skin color diminishes their humanity. It seemed like a good price and the location was fine. The landlady promised that she didn't live in the building. The only thing left was to confess something important about myself.

"Ma'am," I warned the landlady, "I don't want to waste a trip over there. Just so you know, I'm black." When she finally spoke, she sounded like the kind of person who'd be wearing a thick smear of lipstick and have a long, gold-coated cigarette holder in her mouth. Now I was stuck in a terrible position. "How dark are you?" she asked bluntly. It took me a second to realize that I hadn't misheard her. She repeated, "Are you light skinned or very dark skinned?" It was like she was asking me something as simple as choosing between Button A and Button B on the phone booth: to make a call or to return my coins. I could smell her rancid breath hiding beneath her polite speech. She was nice enough to swap around the order of the words in the question: "Are you dark-skinned," she asked, "Or very light?" Finally it made sense.

I replied: "Are you asking if my skin is the color of regular chocolate or milk chocolate?" Her confirmation was detached and formal, devastating in how thoughtless and impersonal she sounded. I quickly changed my tactic and chose an answer: "My skin color is West African sepia." And then, as an afterthought, I added, "at least it is in my passport." Then there was silence again, as she imagined all the possible colors I might be referring to. But then her true feelings took over and she spoke harshly into the phone.

. The speaker, who is black, makes fun of a white landlady who won't rent to the speaker until she knows whether the speaker's skin is "dark" or "light." In contrast to the landlady's simple, reductive ideas about race, the speaker suggests that race and identity are complicated and multi-faceted. Judging a person based on their skin color, the poem argues, is thus ignorant, illogical, and dehumanizing.

At first the landlady seems ready to move forward with renting to the speaker, even "swearing" that "she lived / Off premises." She can't detect the speaker's race through the phone, a fact that emphasizes a) that the speaker's identity is comprised of *more* than his or her race and b) that skin color is irrelevant to the speaker's suitability as a tenant.

But when the speaker then makes a "self-confession" about being "African," the conversation abruptly shifts to a discussion of skin tone. Note that the speaker is being [ironic](#) in the use of "confession" here, a word typically associated with the revelation of something criminal, to undermine the racist notion that being "African" is a bad thing. Clearly, the speaker understands how black people's housing prospects are unfairly limited by a racist society.

Indeed, in response to this “confession” the landlady asks whether the speaker’s skin is “light” or dark—a question so absurd that the speaker briefly wonders if he or she has “misheard.” The landlady is playing into the ignorant idea that black people with lighter skin (and, as such, whose skin is closer in appearance to that of white people) are superior to those with darker skin. The key thing that matters to her, then, is how black the speaker *looks*. Instead of asking what the speaker does professionally, what the speaker's habits are—that is, instead of treating the speaker like an actual human being and potential tenant—the landlady reduces the speaker to a single attribute: skin color. Racism, the poem thus makes clear, is inherently reductive and dehumanizing.

As such, the speaker refuses to answer the landlady’s question directly, instead offering a series of clever replies that reveal the landlady’s question to be not just *offensive* but also utterly *illogical*. For instance, the speaker describes him or herself as “West African sepia” (a kind of reddish-brown hue seen in old monochromatic photos) in the speaker's passport, a joke that goes right over the slow-witted landlady’s head; essentially this is like saying, “Well, in a black and white photograph my skin is gray.”

The speaker also notes that the human body isn’t just one color: the speaker's face is “brunette,” but the speaker's palms and foot soles are “peroxide blonde.” The speaker is being deliberately tongue-in-cheek in the comparisons here, but the point is that race and identity are far too complex to be reduced to a simple, binary choice between “dark” or “light,” between “Button B” or “Button A.”

The speaker doesn’t just criticize the landlady’s blatant racism, then, but also critiques the way she thinks about race itself. In doing so, the speaker refuses to let the complexity of human identity be reduced by the ignorant choice that the landlady offers. For all the speaker’s ingenuity, however, the poem does not end on a triumphant note. As the poem closes, the landlady is about to hang up on the speaker—suggesting that, as a white person, she still holds the power in society to effectively silence the black speaker.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

The poem begins with the speaker talking on the phone with a potential landlady, hoping to rent some sort of housing—likely an apartment or a room in a boarding house. The accommodation seems fine: it’s not too expensive, the location isn’t bad, and the landlady doesn’t live on the premises. There’s just one problem: the speaker is “African.”

The speaker refers to this moment as a “self-confession,” with the speaker's blackness being something that the landlady must be “warned” about. This language makes it sound as if there's something shameful or wrong about being “African,” but the speaker is being deliberately tongue-in-cheek here. The speaker isn’t *personally* ashamed of being “African”; rather, the speaker seems fully aware of society's racial prejudices and worries about what the *landlady* will think. The speaker confesses to being “African” to avoid taking a trip to see the rental only to be turned down simply for being black.

These opening lines also establish the poem's form. It's written in a distinctly casual tone, with many caesuras breaking up lines of various lengths. The form is free verse, meaning there isn't

any overarching rhyme scheme or meter; instead, the poem flows along like a conversation—which, in a way, is exactly what it is.

It's also worth noting that until line 4, all the lines are enjambed. That gives the poem a kind of anxious speed, as though the speaker were rushing through the preliminaries, trying to get straight to the most difficult and essential point. Line 5 is then strongly end-stopped. This end-stop conveys certainty and self-assurance, especially after all the enjambed lines that precede it.

NIGHT by Wole Soyinka

Your hand is heavy, Night, upon my brow. I bear no heart mercuric like the clouds, to dare. Exacerbation from your subtle plough. Woman as a clam, on the sea's crescent. I saw your jealous eye quench the sea's fluorescence, dance on the pulse incessant of the waves. And I stood, drained submitting like the sands, blood and brine coursing to the roots. Night, you rained serrated shadows through dank leaves till, bathed in warm suffusion of your dappled cells. Sensations pained me, faceless, silent as night thieves. Hide me now, when night children haunt the earth I must hear none! These misted cells will yet undo me; naked, unbidden, at Night's muted birth. Background of the poem: The night time is believed to be mostly in Africa, the time when manipulative engagement occurs. In addition, it's that time when humanity submits their egos to rest.

It's an inevitable time of transition to daybreak for humanity and it is characteristic of fear, creepy and sneaky things. Soyinka in this poem of nature presents night as a period to be feared. He pleads to Night for protection from the evil that rules the night.

Setting: From the title it suggests that the setting takes place during the night time also, since he is a Nigerian poet, the setting is likely to be Nigeria or another African country. **ANALYSIS:** The poem begins with the speaker describing darkness as a place of fear and uncertainty, a place where danger and negative emotions can grow and thrive. As the poem progresses, the speaker reflects on the role that darkness has played in his own life, describing how it has been both a source of fear and comfort. He speaks of how it has hidden him from the world and allowed him to escape from the pain and turmoil of his reality. However, the speaker also recognizes that darkness cannot provide a permanent solution to his problem because eventually he must confront his fears and emerge from the darkness into the light.

In conclusion, Night is a thought-provoking and deeply moving poem that explores the complex relationship between darkness and human experiences. It suggests that darkness can serve both as a sanctuary and source of fear and that ultimately, we must face our fears and embrace the light in order to find true and peaceful healing. **Poetic devices:** 1- Personification: attributes of a living thing are given to the non-living. Night is personified throughout the poem. In line 1: "Your hand is heavy, Night upon my brow" The use of personal pronouns like "your" and "you" gives credence to the use of personification in the poem. 2-Simile: There is the use of simile in line 2 where the poet compares himself with clouds. In line 4 where he compares Night with a Clam. Also, in line 8, where he expresses his fears and compares his

submission to that of the sand. 3-Alliteration: There is the use of alliteration in Line 1: "Your hand is heavy" Line 8: "...blood and brine" Line 12: "Sensations... silent" 4-Imagery: The use of imagery in this poem makes it possible for the poet to create pictures of fear in the minds of the readers. He creates images of fearful nights in the people. 5-Metaphor: Metaphor is used in the poem to establish the power of Night. In line 6, fluorescence means the shining surface of the sea. In line 13, the devilish people of the Night are referred to as the "night children."

7-Symbolism: The poet's use of night children points to the wicked perpetrators who operate in the dead of the night. 8;Structure of the poem: The poem is five stanzas written in triplets each. This means that the poem has five triplets. 9:Enjambment (Run-on-line): The fear that runs through the poem makes it imperative for the poet to write the poem thus. The lines run into each other

Civilian and Soldier Summary

One of the most prominent post-colonial literary figures, Wole Soyinka, a Nigerian poet, novelist, and playwright, was awarded Nobel Prize in literature. Some of his famous works included poems from *Prison*, *A Shuttle in the Crypt*, *The Lion and The Jewel*, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, *Death and the King's Horseman*, and *A Dance of the Forests*.

'Civilian and Soldier' was written in reaction to escalating violence in Nigeria, which later gained the shape of a three-year-long civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970. The poem examines a soldier's predicament when attempting to shoot a civilian. The narrator, a civilian, observes the soldier's cruelty willingness or, unwillingness to carry out his superiors' orders and murder the civilian.

Overview

The poem depicted the civil war by depicting atrocities and murders of civilians, which were also revealed by the soldier's distress. Although the soldiers sympathize with their actions, they had no choice but to follow instructions from their commanders, where no one knew the origins.

Summary

First Stanza

My apparition rose from the fall of lead,
Declared, 'I am a civilian.' It only served
To aggravate your fright. For how could I
Have risen, a being of this world, in that hour
Of impartial death! And I thought also: nor is
Your quarrel of this world.

Explanation

This is the introduction of the poem where the dead man is himself speaking. He says that his apparition has soul when he was just about to die because of the fire in the bullet of the soldier at that time and his soul got up and started to address the soldier by saying "I am a civilian and I am the part of the same country from where you belong too. And this thing according to the soul, the soldier got even more frightened and he tried to hit him with his bullet as much as possible. Here the soul asked a question; what was the reason that the soul came forward in order to realize that he was a civilian and was not a soldier to combat.

And the civilian was supposed to be defended and protected by the ordinary man. But this is common in the contemporary world where a soldier hits his own civilian because of the order of high authority which leads to internal as well as external instability. The soul is kind here and he understands that it's not the fault of the soldier but the authority. We observe here that the soul is very much kind and soft attitude but the attitude of the soldier is harsh. As a result, a comparison between the soldier and civilian has been drawn.

Second stanza

You stood still
For both eternities, and oh I heard the lesson
Of your training sessions, cautioning –
Scorch earth behind you, do not leave
A dubious neutral to the rear. Reiteration
Of my civilian quandary, burrowing earth
From the lead festival of your more eager friends
Worked the worse on your confusion, and when
You brought the gun to bear on me, and death
Twitched me gently in the eye, your plight
And all of you came clear to me.

Explanation

The soul continues to say and try to understand why the soldier has killed him. The soul says that he understands that the training of the soldier makes him very cautious and he needs to take care of everything to stop any kind of danger and aggression. When the soul retreated the soldier has no right to kill the civilian but the training affects him too much. In the same way, many things keep on happening although the soldier and civilian should have been confronting each other it leads to fighting and they become enemies of each other. As a result, the soldier hits the civilian and the soul still does not consider him responsible for that rather it's his training that makes him brutal and oppressor. He did not blame the soldier. The higher authority's order and commandment compel him to kill the soul otherwise the soldier is also part of civilian society.

Third Stanza

I hope someday
Intent upon my trade of living, to be checked
In stride by your apparition in a trench,
Signaling, I am a soldier. No hesitation then
But I shall shoot you clean and fair
With meat and bread, a gourd of wine
A bunch of breasts from either arm or that
Lone question – do you friend, even now, know
What it is all about?

Explanation

The soul continues with the same tone and here something different has been portrayed. So the civilian says one day is going to come and the soldier will be killed and his soul will also get up in the same way with the same words. He says I m a soldier. He would not kill the soldier as he killed him instead he tried to feed him well by giving him bread and wine. The soul ultimately raises a question that why it is happening, the killing.

Themes

Major themes in the poem Civilian and Soldier are as under.

- Soldier's dilemma and Brutality
- Teaching and training of the soldier
- Civilian's sacrifice
- Division of humanity
- Equality
- Colonial imprinting
- Insecurity
- Representation of the contemporary society

Dedication by wole Soyinka:

1. Introduction to the Poet

Wole Soyinka is one of the most celebrated African writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Born in 1934 in Abeokuta, Nigeria, he is a playwright, poet, essayist, novelist, and political activist. In 1986, he became the first African writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. His works are deeply rooted in African culture, especially Yoruba mythology and traditions, but they also engage with universal themes such as justice, freedom, oppression, identity, and human dignity.

Soyinka's poetry often combines political protest with deep philosophical reflection. His language is symbolic, layered, and sometimes complex. In many of his poems, he dedicates his writing to particular people or groups who represent resistance, sacrifice, or moral courage.

The poem “Dedication” reflects Soyinka’s concern for humanity, freedom, and social justice. It serves not just as a personal tribute but as a broader statement about commitment to truth and struggle.

2. Background and Context

To understand “Dedication,” it is important to understand the socio-political background of Nigeria and Africa during Soyinka’s lifetime.

Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960.

After independence, the country faced political instability, military coups, corruption, and civil war (1967–1970).

Soyinka himself was imprisoned during the Nigerian Civil War because he spoke against violence and injustice.

Soyinka’s experiences of imprisonment, political persecution, and witnessing suffering influenced his poetry. “Dedication” can be seen as a poetic offering to those who suffer under oppression and those who resist tyranny.

Thus, the poem is not merely personal—it carries political and moral significance.

3. Title Significance: “Dedication”

The title “Dedication” suggests:

A tribute or offering

A sign of respect or loyalty

Commitment to a cause or person

A solemn promise

In literature, a dedication is usually short and simple, but Soyinka transforms it into a meaningful poetic expression. The poem becomes a dedication not only to individuals but also to ideals such as freedom, courage, sacrifice, and truth.

The title itself indicates seriousness and reverence.

4. Central Themes

(a) Sacrifice and Commitment

One of the major themes in “Dedication” is sacrifice. Soyinka honors those who give up comfort, safety, or even life for justice and truth. He respects individuals who stand against oppression.

Sacrifice in the poem is:

Moral sacrifice (giving up personal gain)

Physical sacrifice (suffering imprisonment or death)

Emotional sacrifice (enduring pain for others)

The poem suggests that real change requires dedication and courage.

(b) Resistance Against Oppression

Soyinka often writes about political injustice. In “Dedication,” he indirectly addresses the oppression faced by people under corrupt systems.

He supports:

Freedom of expression

Human dignity

Resistance against tyranny

The poem honors those who refuse to remain silent.

(c) Human Solidarity

The poem reflects unity among oppressed people. Soyinka believes that struggle is collective.

Dedication is not individual heroism alone—it is shared commitment.

This theme connects to African communal values, where the community is more important than the individual.

(d) Memory and Tribute

The poem serves as a memorial. It ensures that the sacrifices of brave individuals are remembered. Soyinka’s dedication immortalizes them in poetry.

5. Tone and Mood

The tone of the poem is:

Serious

Respectful

Reflective

Inspirational

The mood created is solemn but hopeful. Though suffering is acknowledged, the poem inspires courage and determination.

6. Language and Style

Soyinka’s style is often symbolic and layered.

(a) Symbolism

Symbols may represent:

Darkness → Oppression

Light → Freedom or truth

Chains → Slavery or restriction

Blood →...