

Leadership Failure and Consequences: Exemplifying Political Historicity in Chimamanda Adichie's Novels

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Abstract: The absence of a New historicist approach on Chimamanda Adichie's leadership representations created the impetus for this paper. The paper evaluates Adichie's perceptions of the inundating problem of leadership and dictatorship in Nigeria as represented in *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*. Through the qualitative research methodology, the paper adopts Michel Foucault's New Historicist theory of power which reveals an authorial viewpoint that Nigeria has been a casualty of failed leadership since independence. This situation accounts for its inability to optimally realize her noble potentials and effectively take its rightful position among the comity of nations. The study maintains that leadership significantly determines followership, and that whereas good leadership guarantees good followership, the latter does not necessarily guarantee the former in any given society. This also implies that leadership is a factor as vital as the existence of any given society or organization because the type of leadership existing in any particular society largely determines the trajectory of development or otherwise. Indeed, the novelist's representations in this regard clearly demonstrate her immense knowledge and concern about Nigeria's lingering leadership challenges. Adichie's conviction and advocacy that democratization is preferable to militarization are also foregrounded. The discourse challenges contemporary Nigerian leaders to formulate and implement patriotic and progressive policies that can launch the nation to the pedestal of positive development and advancement in all facets of human endeavour.

Keywords: Consequences, Exemplifying, Failure, Historicity, Leadership

1. Introduction

Surji [15] construes leadership as "a position to listen with enthusiasm, having an aspiring mind to be able to make a decisive action, empower and encourage others in a responsible, supportive and humble manner to inspire them to achieve set goals as planned." He further states that "leadership is a method whereby an individual influences a team to achieve a common goal. Therefore, leadership is not only influence but also does not exist without influence." This implies that a leader is someone who leads and possesses a commanding influence or authority over a group of persons which he guides on the way to achieving a common goal. In his *The Art of a Leader*, Cohen [9] believes that "leadership is the art of influencing others to their maximum to accomplish any task, objective or project."

Without followership, however, there can be no leadership. It is from this perspective that we can also say that leadership is the process of influencing followers in an organized group for the purpose of optimal achievement of set goals. Leadership can, therefore, be said to have failed when a leader does not effectively guide his followers to achieve the set goals of a group, an organization or society. In a nutshell, leadership can be said to have failed when a leader acts contrary to the oath of office or what they ought to stand for in an office being held in trust for a group of people. Morgan [13] identifies the causes of leadership failure to include: leading without love, failure to truly serve, bad attitude, being too busy, expecting results from what a leader already knows, relying on title to lead, fear of creating other leaders, lack of enthusiasm, and delegating responsibility along with the task. It may be argued that most of these stated causes of leadership failure largely manifest in various dimensions and

cadres of leadership in Nigeria hence a lot of leaders have often failed in one way or the other, and the country is still in disarray, making very slow if not stunted progress six decades after independence from British colonial rule. It is an open secret that most of our leaders actually lead without love and are being served instead of serving others. Thus in a conversation with the protagonist of Ike's [12] *Shackles of Freedom*, Major Shigaro, Captain Kokoma observes that: Nigeria remains a mere coalition of ethnic nationalities held together by the Van der waal's forces of federation account and revenue allocation. That's our major problem as a people. An average Nigerian [including our Leaders] first of all thinks of the good of his stomach, his family, then his tribe before he remembers the country, if at all he does. He mainly thinks of what he will grab for his stomach and for his ethnic group which he erroneously believes should always be in control. So the country becomes a mere geographical expression that exists only on paper and not in the hearts of the people. No one knows when that trend will stop; when we will begin to reason properly.

Kokoma's observations represent the leadership mentality of many Nigerian leaders. Needless to say that this has immensely contributed to the level of underdevelopment and poverty the country is still experiencing. Of course, the mentality of the average Nigerian as pointed out by Captain Kokoma in that discourse is as a result of the way successive failed national leaderships have, over the years, conditioned them to think. Achebe's [1] view is that:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

Most Nigerian leaders have failed because they were unable to rise to the challenge of personal example. In part, Achebe implies that the right leadership with the full consciousness of a personal example would have been the panacea for the myriad of calamities that have befallen Nigeria. He exemplifies his position with Murtala Mohammed as a model:

On the morning after Murtala Mohammed seized power in July 1975, public servants in Lagos were found "on seat" at seven-thirty in the morning. Even the "go-slow" traffic that had defeated every solution and defiled every regime vanished overnight from the streets! Why! The new ruler's reputation for ruthlessness was sufficient to transform in the course of only one night the style and habit of Nigeria's unruly capital. That the character of one man could establish the quantum change in a people's social behaviour was nothing less than miraculous. But it shows that social miracles can happen. We know, alas, that transformation was short-lived; it had begun to fade even before the tragic assassination of Murtala Mohammed.

Chimamanda Adichie [6], in an interview with *The Africa Report* in April, 2020, thus states: "When we start to have

good and accountable leadership in Africa, we will start to deal with the legacy of colonialism. Nigeria is an example. Of course, I don't think we've had fundamentally good leadership since we became independent." This notion is demonstrated in Adichie's trilogy under study. The study focuses on the representations of failure of leadership, dictatorship and their associated consequences in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*. Apart from its benefits to students of English and Literary Studies, Sociology and Anthropology, the study is also significant in its positive contributions to leadership development through its vociferous denunciation of bad and autocratic leaderships.

2. Emerging Issues and Discussion

At the domestic level, Adichie [3] portrays Eugene Achike as a strict authoritarian whose stringent adherence to Catholicism overshadows his paternal love. This is why on several occasions, Eugene beats up his wife and children in the same way Big Oga treats the entire nation. He is often provoked by actions which he considers immoral or ungodly but are apparently not. The novel begins on a Palm Sunday; when Jaja has refused to go for Holy Communion. Since Eugene believes that he has no reasonable excuse for missing communion that day, he throws his heavy missal at his son in indignation. The book hits a shelf containing his wife's figurines. Jaja's defiant behaviour and the resulting violence mark the beginning of the end for the Achike family as Kambili narrates at the very beginning of the novel: "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere."

Jaja states his reason for not going to communion that day when he says that the wafer gives him bad breath "and the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me." Rather than give thought to Jaja's predicament, Eugene is inconsiderate and he throws the missal at him, insisting he continues to take communion against his own desire. By this action, Eugene is portrayed as a tyrannical father who is constantly enforcing his position in the family through the mechanism of fear in his household. He also ensures that both Jaja and Kambili follow strict schedule designed by him; monitoring them on a daily basis to enforce utmost compliance to the numerous rules and regulations contained therein. In one particular instance, he subjects Kambili to a serious emotional trauma and intimidation for falling into the grade/score of second position in her class instead of her usual first position. Kambili states:

The Reverend Sisters gave us our cards unsealed. I came second in my class. It was written in figures "2/25." Mother Lucy wrote: "A brilliant, obedient student and a daughter to be proud of." But I knew Papa would not be proud. I was sitting at my study desk when Papa came home. He lumbered upstairs, each heavy step creating turbulence in my head..."

Rather than encourage her to put more efforts in her

studies, he berates her, thus: "How many heads has Chinwe Jideze?" He goes further to present a mirror to Kambili, for her to ascertain the number of heads she has in comparison to that of Chinwe Jideze. It is for fear of being tortured that Kambili devises a new method of studying. Thus, she complains: "It was like balancing a sack of gravel on my head everyday at school and not being allowed to steady it with my hand." Kambili then turns the entire academic enterprise to cramming in order to meet up with the high demands of her dictatorial father.

When Mama, Eugene's wife, refuses to follow him, to visit Father Benedict because she is ill, he beats her until she miscarries her long desired and awaited baby, thus:

You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly. My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it. Mama shook her head slowly. A thin line of tears crawled down her cheeks as though it had been a struggle for them to get out of her eyes.

The irony with Eugene is that while he fights dictatorship as perpetrated by Big Oga (the Head of State) at the national level, he replicates a similar attitude in his household. Thus, he denies members of his household their freedom while determining what they wear, where they go, what they listen to and what they say. Fencing his house with high walls symbolises confinement over his subjects (members of his household) which further implies dictatorship. Except to only listen to the radio or watch TV news with him, he does not allow members of his family, particularly the children to watch TV programmes of their choice. Although she is a university graduate, Beatrice is made to be contented as a full time housewife. When Kambili and Jaja share a home with their grandfather in Auntie Ifeoma's apartment at Nsukka, Eugene assaults them with boiled water poured on their feet as a cleansing measure for presumably "walking into sin." Thus, Kambili says:

He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen. I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding. I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed.

More so, for owning a painting of Papa-Nnukwu, Kambili is kicked until she is hospitalized.

He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes... I made to get up but pain shot through my whole body in exquisite little packets. I collapsed back. Each moment was too painful to even think about. "My whole body is on fire," I said. A doctor in white was in the room, at the foot of my bed. He was speaking slowly and precisely... Broken rib. Heal nicely. Internal bleeding.

Despite the monumental pain he inflicts on his wife and children, Eugene tries to rationalize it on the ground that it is

for their own good and for their moral rectitude. Thus, he is invariably exemplified as a dictator at the domestic level. As he constantly beats and berates every member of his household at will, he unconsciously initiates trauma. When Ade Coker observes that his children are too quiet, he says that it is because they have the fear of God. But that does not really represent the truth. The reality is that both his wife and children are afraid of him. Their daily activities are overshadowed by fear of repercussions and threats of what will befall them when they fail to meet up with his numerous astronomical expectations. His character as a dictator is aptly summarized in the words of Ogaga [14] thus: "Their fussy mercantile father builds a world that lacks ventilation, which guarantees a steady relationship with the outside world while the inside becomes too suffocating. Kambili's home is grand but menacing."

Eugene's dictatorship and failed family leadership can be compared to an equally failed national leadership as also demonstrated in the novel in the sense that both failures involve tyrants who perpetrate brazen dictatorship in their respective domains. Again, although both dictators torment their victims, they themselves are equally victims of the monstrous and suffocating systems they create. It is through Auntie Ifeoma's spirited activism and utterances at a point that the reader learns of the failed national leadership of a military despot and its accompanying poverty, lack, bad governance and lamentation in the country generally:

Look what this military tyrant is doing to our country. We have not had fuel for three months in Nsukka. I spent the night in the petrol station last week, waiting for fuel. And at the end, fuel did not come. Some people left their cars in the station because they did not have enough fuel to drive back home. If you could see the mosquitoes that bit me that night, eh, the bumps on my skin were as big as cashew nuts.

Many homes did not have kerosene for cooking nor could afford gas which Auntie Ifeoma says its cost is "outrageous." This results to rising inflation and hardship all over the nation. Auntie Ifeoma reports that, "the traders say it is hard to transport their food because there is no fuel, so they add on the costs of transportation." It was indeed a confusing situation. The question on the lips of many Nigerians was, "Why and how could a nation be said to have crude oil in abundance and be exporting same to other nations of the world, yet the same product is in acute shortage from time to time in the country?" Whenever it was available, it was usually in meagre measures. This situation triggers off strike actions by labour unions, demanding better policy from the government. University lecturers also feel the impact of the tyrannical regime in other ways. Their meagre salaries that hardly sustain them are never paid as and when due, thereby increasing their hardship from time to time. Auntie Ifeoma says:

We just called off yet another strike even though no lecturer has been paid for the last two months. They tell us the Federal Government has no money. *Ifukwa*, people are leaving the country. Phillipa left two months ago. She is

now teaching in America. She shares a cramped office with another adjunct professor, but she says at least teachers are paid there.

The tyranny of the military regime and their inability to pay the salaries of university lecturers as and when due leads to incessant strike actions and brain drain. By these representations, Adichie mimics reality. It is worthy of note that during the tyrannical regimes of certain Nigerian Generals, many respected Nigerian intellectuals on account of persecution, hardship or frustration, relocated to the West. Such names include: Tanure Ojaide, Odun Balogun, Niyi Osundare, and Wole Soyinka to mention just a few. It is such examples that Adichie historicises in her novels.

Owing to the reason that "things are tough" Auntie Ifeoma struggles on a daily basis to cater for her family as a widow, although she is a university lecturer. Ifeoma sees these developments as abnormalities and vehemently protests against them with every opportunity she has. Eventually, when Ifeoma is frustrated and her appointment at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka is terminated, she opts to relocate with her family to the United States. Ifeoma's statement before her departure is worthy of note: "...the educated ones leave, the ones with the potential to right the wrongs. They leave the weak behind. The tyrants continue to reign because the weak cannot resist. Do you not see that it is a cycle? Who will break that cycle? Yet, stressing how some of the nation's military dictators plundered the economy, Fayemi [11] states:

The Nigerian economy did not escape Abacha's grip. He ran it as a personal fiefdom. Unlike Babangida who parceled out the state to friends and mentors within the military, Abacha kept the spoils of office for himself and his family, a small coterie of his security apparatus and his small circle of foreign friends.

Adichie [3], again, exposes another aspect of failure of leadership in Nigeria in *Purple Hibiscus* when Kambili narrates that "Auntie Ifeoma was cleaning out the freezer, which had started to smell because of the incessant power outages. She wiped up the puddle of wine-coloured foul water that had leaked to the floor and..." Although so much money has been sunk into electricity projects in Nigeria, the country can still not boast of near stable power supply to date. Electricity supply that cannot sustain Auntie Ifeoma's freezer to preserve the fresh meat kept therein for family consumption can certainly not power and sustain industrial machines and processes for sustainable industrial development and growth. This is the scenario Adichie portrays and the message she conveys in demonstrating the losses Auntie Ifeoma incurs in her home as a result of "incessant power outages."

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie [4] maintains her portrayal of Nigeria's leadership failure and exhibition of dictatorship from various angles. Odenigbo's statement concerning the character of Nigeria's First Republic politician, Prime Minister Balewa, is quite indicting: "...but to send the army in to kill in the name of order? There are Tiv people lying dead for nothing. For nothing! Balewa has

lost his mind." The statement suggests that although the administration of the Prime Minister is a civilian one, it nonetheless exhibits dictatorial traits by "...sending the army in to kill in the name of order." The people said to have been killed for political reasons are, of course, citizens of the country whose political view do not align with that of the central government led by the character of Prime Minister Balewa who at the inception of his administration took a carefully worded oath of office; a promise to protect the lives and properties of the citizens of the country. So, to send in the army to kill the same citizens he swore to protect, mainly on account of their divergent political view and alignment, is considered by Odenigbo as nothing but dictatorship and "loss of mind." Odenigbo's comment also suggests that the citizens of the country have expected the Prime Minister to handle such a political situation differently, in an amicable and democratic manner other than issuing order to the army to move in and kill the Tiv people. Stating some of the reasons that resulted to the ugly situation in Tivland at that point in history, Audu [8] maintains that "... The government having made it impossible for legitimate opposition voices to be heard made itself vulnerable to violent aggression."

Odenigbo also identifies the failure of leadership in Western House of Assembly when lawmakers fail in their duty. He says: "What about the stupid politicians in the Western House of Assembly that the police had to use tear gas on? Tear gas! And their orderlies carried their limp bodies to their cars! Imagine that!" This is a failure of legislative leadership since leadership can as well be said to have failed when leaders act contrary to their oath of office or contrary to what they ought to stand for in any office which is being held in trust for the people. In this case, the lawmakers engage themselves in unrestrained physical combat because of their political and party differences, until policemen start using tear gas on them in order to contain the violence.

Diamond [10] affirms that the crisis Adichie [4] reflects at this point in *Half of a Yellow Sun* was a political crisis predicated on the polarization of the Action Group Party between the two aforementioned political figures in the Western region, mainly on account of their ideological differences. He [10] states:

During 1960 and 1961, fundamental tensions in the Action Group had begun to crystallize and then to surface. Chief Awolowo...while convincing his party's more conservative businessmen and traditional rulers of the futility of political pursuits beyond their own region. Increasingly, the party found itself sharply divided over ideology, political strategy and party control between the rival factions of the party leader Obafemi Awolowo and Regional Premier Samuel Ladoke Akintola.

So the fracas and show of shame in the Western House of Assembly as alluded to in the novel was basically a fight between the Awolowo and the Akintola factions of the Action Group Party, particularly at a point when the Awolowo faction opted to impeach Akintola as Premier of Western Nigeria. In historical reality, tear gas was used on

the lawmakers when an intense combat broke out between the two factions right inside the hallowed legislative chamber. This occurred on May 24, 1962 when Akintola's faction vehemently disrupted the impeachment proceedings, and because of the ensuing fracas resulting to a breakdown of law and order, the Federal Government dissolved the House. In any case, Adichie [4] captures the incident as a historical situation which demonstrates a failure of leadership by some supposedly honourable members of the House who represent their respective constituencies and ought not to have acted in any dishonourable manner. In his "How Operation Wetie led to the 1966 Nigerian Coup d'état," Akinbode [7] believes that these bizarre occurrences in the Wild-Wild West significantly catalysed the first military coup in Nigeria which snowballed into a thirty-month civil war. He [7] states:

The operation wetie of the First Republic Western Region...was one of the excuses Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna and Kaduna Nzeogwu with their cohorts gave when they struck on the morning of January 15, 1966, to end Nigeria's First Republic. There were widespread looting, riots and murder as many political opponents were also burnt alive. The West...was now a political war-zone where thugs and urchins engaged in wanton killings and destruction of properties. The event came to be known as Operation Wetie. And the Western Region was nicknamed Wild-Wild West...

This is, of course, a regrettable consequence of failure of leadership as demonstrated by the legislators who instead of upholding the statue of law and order and amicably resolving whatever differences existing among them chose to engage themselves in bitter fights, arson and killings which spread fast to the entire region. Again, in their "Building Democracy without Democrats? Political Parties and Threats of Democratic Reversal in Nigeria" Adejumo and Kehinde [2] posit that forty-five years after the bitter and retrogressive occurrences in the Wild-Wild West, Nigerian politicians have not really proved that any meaningful lessons have been learnt from it. They state that:

Democracy in Nigeria has a chequered history. From the 'Wild-Wild West' experience of the First Republic through prolonged autocratic military regimes and the truncated Second and Third Republics to the present democratic dispensation, democracy has suffered debilitating experiences in the country. The perennial travail of democracy is predicated on a number of factors, including ineffective structures and institutions, the foreboding presence of the military, corruption and money politics as well as the centrality of the state as the most important player in the economy. As such, whoever controls the state has at his/her disposal a well-oiled money machine; hence the contest for the access to the apparatuses of state becomes a matter of life and death. Unfortunately, the political parties in Nigeria are locked in the Hobbesian war of 'every man against every man,' negating the very essence of the party system in a democracy.

Even after over two decades of uninterrupted democratic experiment in the country, political thuggery, arson, snatching

of ballot boxes and other electoral frauds, malpractices and irregularities are still visible characteristics of Nigeria's elections and electioneering system. It is from the utterances of the character of Major Nzeogwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun* that we learn that Nigeria's First Republic political leaders have failed the legitimate expectations of the masses, and therefore have to be toppled in a coup d'état. Nzeogwu's [4] reference to the politicians as "...the political profiteers...men in high places...that seek bribes and..., those that seek to keep the country permanently divided so that they can remain in office...those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society..." is a clear perception of their failure of leadership. The vices they are being accused of are actually things that are apparently contrary to their oaths of office.

In *Americanah*, Adichie [5] continues to portray and demonstrate the abysmal leadership failure in Nigeria from various perspectives. It is from the voice of the omniscient narrator of the fiction that the state of joblessness in the country, even among medical graduates, as well as other debilitating national situations bordering on failure of leadership are revealed:

Only weeks before, she had been a new graduate and all her classmates were talking about going abroad to take the American medical exams or the British exams, because the other choice was to tumble into a parched wasteland of joblessness. The country was starved of hope, cars stuck for days in long, sweaty petrol lines, pensioners raising wilting placards demanding their pay, lecturers gathering to announce yet one more strike.

The revelation is at the instance of the character of Aunt Uju, a medical doctor who promptly gets a job after graduation because an army General who she later ends up as his mistress helps out in securing her the job. In her words, "The hospital has no doctor vacancy but The General made them create one for me." In pointing out how Aunt Uju and The General first met and the real motive behind the generosity of The General, the narrator states:

Then she went to a friend's wedding. The bride's father was an air vice marshal, it was rumoured that the Head of State might attend, and Aunt Uju joked about asking him to make her medical officer at Aso Rock. He did not attend, but many of his generals did, and one of them asked his ADC to call Aunt Uju, to ask her to come to his car in the parking lot after the reception, and when she went to the dark Peugeot with a small flag flying from its front, and said, "Good afternoon, Sir," to the man in the back, he told her, I like you. I want to take care of you."

This is how the relationship which results to Aunt Uju's "miracle job" started. Adichie's portrayal of a nation where a newly graduated, competent and qualified female medical practitioner only gets a job because she acceded to satisfying the sexual appetite of a General in a military dictatorship is as thought provoking and pitiable as it is lamentable. On a certain occasion, we are told that "Aunt Uju hurried home to shower and wait for The General..." As for the rest of Aunt Uju's classmates who might not have the same kind of

"privilege," the narrator observes that there are only two options left: leave the country to take the American or British medical exams in order to gain employment and advance their careers abroad or "tumble into a parched wasteland of joblessness" in the country.

When Ifemelu's school friend, Ginika, tells her, "My popsie said we are going to America next month," it is not meant to be for leisure or holiday travel but a desperate escape from a suffocating nation whose dictatorial leadership has continued to frustrate the citizenry in all sectors of national life. The narrator informs that "Ginika's parents had been talking for a while about resigning from the university and starting over in America." Although they are already employed as university staff like Aunty Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* [3], the frustrations in the system cannot allow them to do the job. This makes the option of resigning and relocating to America to "start over" again an attractive possibility since they do not seem to see an end to their travails in their own country. Thus, through these portrayals, Adichie has demonstrated the historical socio-political crises in Nigeria. Ginika's father's statement on why he and his wife chose to resign from a Nigerian University and move to America with their children is even more revealing with regards to the frustrations in the country [5]. Thus:

We are not sheep. This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I have not been able to do any real research in years, because everyday I am organizing strikes and talking about unpaid salary and there is no chalk in the classrooms.

Adichie also associates leadership failure and dictatorship with the enthronement of mediocrity and jettisoning of meritocracy and credibility. This is revealed when Aunty Uju comes to an expensive hair-dressing salon in Lagos with Ifemelu. Thus, the narrator observes that:

...the haughty hairdressers sized up each customer, eyes swinging from head to shoes, to decide how much attention she was worth. With Aunty Uju, they hovered and grovelled, curtsying deeply as they greeted her, overpraising her handbag and shoes. Ifemelu watched, fascinated. It was here, at a Lagos salon, that the different ranks of imperial femaleness were best understood.

Ifemelu cannot adduce any justifiable reason for such lavishly deep curtsies being showered on Aunty Uju, or is it just for entering their salon to make her hair? So as soon as they leave the salon, Ifemelu snaps at Aunty Uju, "Those girls, I was waiting for them to bring out their hands and beg you to shit so they could worship that too." Aunty Uju laughs and replies:

You know, we live in an ass-licking economy. The biggest problem in this country is not corruption. The problem is that there are many qualified people who are not where they are supposed to be because they won't lick anybody's ass, or they don't know how to lick an ass. I am lucky to be licking the right ass. It's just luck. Oga said I was well brought up, that I was not like all the Lagos girls who sleep with him on the first night and the next morning give him a list of what they want him to buy. I slept with him

on the first night but I did not ask for anything...

One really shudders on realizing that this self-confessed "ass-licker" is a graduate of Medicine who had spent at least six years in an ivory tower and presumably worked hard to earn her qualification. But that is the reality of the Nigerian situation today – a situation whereby a female medical doctor, for instance, can accede to become a mistress (semi-prostitute) to someone in a position of power in order not to be jobless after graduation. And she will shamelessly admit, "I am lucky to be licking the right ass. It's just luck." Of course, the ass-licking "profession" as meant in this context is both metaphoric and figurative from both her personal as well as a broader perspective. Such is a manifestation of failure of leadership in the country. To demonstrate that Aunty Uju really detests being the mistress of The General even with her hard-earned medical qualification, she later tells Ifemelu, a younger female sibling, "I would not even advise you to do what I'm doing," then she "turned back to the window," an indication of regret, dissatisfaction and disillusionment. In describing the physiognomy and general appearance of The General, one can clearly observe Aunty Uju's disgust when she says, "...with his teeth like Dracula... The General had yellowed eyes,... His solid thickset body spoke of fights... and the buck-teeth that gaped through his lips made him seem vaguely dangerous."

Again, Aunty Uju herself will later concur that "He has a beer belly and Dracula teeth and a wife and children and he's old." That notwithstanding, she is glued to him in an ignoble relationship because she does not want to "tumble into a parched wasteland of joblessness" like many of her course-mates. Adichie believes that the despicable status Aunty Uju is circumstantially constrained to assume as a mistress to an ugly-looking General, despite her hard-earned qualification and profession as a medical doctor is a reflection of failure of national leadership as well as a consequence of a devastating dictatorship rocking and robbing the nation. Obinze's mother aptly depicts the situation affecting the entire nation when students from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka vent their grievances in a demonstration primarily on account of "No Light! No Water!" which they chanted to the high heavens. She [5] says, "...but we are not the enemy. The military is the enemy. They have not paid our salary in months. How can we teach if we cannot eat?" Expectedly, another strike action which "...lasted too long" is embarked upon by the lecturers. And "the strike was nationwide." The narrator [5] goes on to state:

Strikes now were common. In the newspapers, university lecturers listed their complaints, the agreements that were trampled in the dust by government men whose own children were schooling abroad. Campuses were emptied, classrooms drained of life. Students hoped for short strikes because they could not hope to have no strike at all. Everyone was talking about leaving. Even Emenike had left for England. Nobody knew how he managed to get a visa. One girl, already in her final year at the University of Ife, got an American visa the first time she tried and gave a tearful, excited testimony in church. "Even if I have to start from the beginning in America, at least I know when

I will graduate,” she said.

This is the level of forlornly which a failed dictatorial leadership has brought the nation to. The narrator suggests that the situation in the education sector, for instance, keeps degenerating to the point that “everyone was talking about leaving” because the people in government who are supposed to consciously put things in order in the sector all have their children “schooling abroad.” Of course, mainly in Europe and America, in orderly and well-organized institutions as against the mess they have deliberately created at home. It is a time when a Nigerian student in final year in a Nigerian University prefers, even rejoices, to start afresh in a foreign institution than to remain at home and waste her years in ceaseless university strikes. When Ifemelu eventually joins the train of frustrated citizens emigrating to America for greener pastures, and visits to say goodbye to Obinze’s mother, a professor at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, her words are as touching as they are revealing: “Nigeria is chasing away its best resources.”

3. Conclusion

Adichie’s novels vividly demonstrate that the failures of successive national leaderships in Nigeria have been a major challenge to the development and advancement of the nation. The manifestations of these failures and maladies as encapsulated in the novels include: suppression of the citizenry by those who are supposed to protect their legitimate interests, a harsh and suffocating economic climate which results to poverty, inflation and unemployment; abysmal dearth of basic amenities amidst abundant natural and human resources, corruption, dysfunctional administrative and bureaucratic systems, stagnating educational system, incessant industrial actions, political persecutions, lawlessness, mass emigration of citizens to politically stable and prosperous nations, brain drain, etc. Thus, one hopes that all wrong values and approaches to leadership in Nigeria which consequently birth disunity, violence, lack of patriotism, agitations and tensions of all kinds within the Nigerian State be resolutely addressed by the current government.

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