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The Socio-Economic and Political Implications of the Various Episodes of Ayi Kwei Armah's Novel "The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born"

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I. INTRODUCTION

Africa is a continent that God in his infinite Mercy has blessed so much, with both human and material resources. It is however ironical to note that all that Africa has been blessed with are not put into proper use by the various leaders of the different African countries due to misuse of political powers, leading to the nose-diving dimension of the Economy of the various African Countries. Ayi Kwei Armah, a Ghanaian born writer seems to notice the luxurious life style of the African leaders at the expense of the economy of the various African countries and so put in place "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet born" to Lampoon the African leaders.

It is our contention therefore that Armah has achieved his purpose of writing this novel, exposing the destructive tendencies of the misuse of political powers on the economy of most African countries. Armah, a morally upright literary writer has shown through his novel that no country can develop economically where politicians and other people in government are corrupt in the highest order.

"The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" reveals Armah's disillusionment at what has become of independence in most African countries. Though Armah through this novel reveals the mess into which his country Ghana had been put by the regime of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. However, the political mess in Ghana at the time Armah wrote this novel, exemplifies the political mess into which the poli-

tical leaders of the other African countries had subjected their countries into after independence, even till date. Without question, Armah has sign posted different Episodes in his novel that show the unbecoming attitude of the African leaders towards their people through misuse of political powers. Armah has also shown in this novel that the questionable character of most African leaders is exactly what has necessitated the depravity of the ordinary people in most African countries.

II. CORE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICALIMPLICATIONS THAT AYI KWEI ARMAH WANTED TO SHOW IN HIS NOVEL

a) The Corruptive Activities of African Political Leaders

In many Episodes in "The Beautiful one are Not yet born" Armah Signposted the fact that African politicians are indeed very corrupt. Armah used the Character of Joe Koomson in this novel to depict the way African politicians often siphon public funds to enrich themselves at the expense of the ordinary people in the society. In the episode below, Armah revealed how Joe koomson- the Minster plenipotentiary used his political status to amass wealth to himself.

In this episode below, "The Man" the chief character of the novel visited Koomson in his house together with his wife "Oyo".

"The Man" was surprised by the quality of the things in Koomson's house, as well as the expensive nature of the property in the house. "The Man" Thought of the idea below in his mind while in Koomson's:

"There were things here for a human being to spend a life time desiring. There were things here to attract the beholding eye and make it accept the power of their owner. Things of intricate and obviously expensive design" (p.144)

In the episode above "The Man" was amazed at those things he saw in Koomson's house "The Man" is aware that Koomson could afford those things in his house, as a result of being a top ranking politician, using corruptive means to acquire many beautiful things for himself and his family. These characterize the way African politicians use dubious means to acquire many attractive things for themselves.

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In another episode, the mother of the wife of "The Man" in her amazement of the stupendous riches of Koomson posited:

Aaaah, Koomson has done well,
we must say it. He has done well for
himself and for his family too

(p.139)

In this episode, the old woman here was trying to praise Mr Koomson for being powerfully rich, not minding how he came about the riches. This epitomize how most ordinary African people do praise corrupt politicians about their riches, without bothering about the source of their riches.

b) *The Luxurious Life Style Of African Politicians*

In this novel, Armah revealed how African politicians live Luxurious life at the expense of the ordinary people in their societies. He used the character of Mr. Koomson- The politician to reveal this when "The Man" paid him a visit, Mr. Koomson ordered the steward in his house, saying:

Atinga, bring the trolley and put different
drinks, put also ice and put glasses four

(p.148)

In the episode above, the different drinks Koomson ordered for reflect the fact that Koomson has a lot of different assorted drinks in his house depicting his Luxurious way of life.

As an addendum to the earlier mentioned episode, Armah showed another episode in "**The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born**" reflective of the carefree manner in which African politicians spend money. "The Man" and the mother of "The Man's" wife and Oyo" his wife were having a discussion with Koomson about the price of a boat, with which fishing business can be done. Koomson mentioned that one boat can be bought for "twelve thousand pounds" "The Man" and his family members shouted in amazement, claiming the money was too much, but Koomson said:

Twelve thousand pounds yes. But the money is
not the difficult thing after all, the commercial
bank is ours and we can do anything.

(p. 136)

In the episode above Koomson's statement is indicative of the fact that money, however big is nothing to him. This episode exemplifies the lavishing manner with which African politicians buy whatever they want because they believe they can lift any cash from the government purse without any problem. The resultant effect of this lavish spending is the killing of the economy of the different African countries.

c) *Putting The Economic Phase In Jeopardy*

Ayi Kwei Armah, has used "**The Beautiful one are Not yet Born**" to showcase the fact that it is indeed

as a result of the corruption in the highest order in different African societies that the economy of the African countries keeps nose - diving. To Armah, the corruptive activities of the African leaders are what is putting the Economic phase in serious Jeopardy. The Episode below Justifies Armah's view in this direction "The Man" went to a public toilet and saw some inscriptions on the wall of the toilet:

Money Sweet Pass all
who born fool socialism
chop make I chop,
Contrey Broke

(p.106)

The episode above is indicative of the fact that there is corruption at the highest level in the world of this novel. "Chop make I chop" in the above episode implies that while the politicians are lifting the money they could from the government coffers other members of the society too are busy stealing in whichever way the opportunity for them to steal comes. "Contrey Broke" in the episode suggests that after people have carried money from different angles, then the entire country goes down being broke. This episode above clearly shows the negative effect of corruption as going on in different African countries. The episode also gives the impression that when politicians are corrupt, the people under them have the possibility to be corrupt, after all people are watching what their leaders are doing on a daily basis.

d) *The Frustration Of The Morally Upright People*

Furthermore, Armah has used his novel "**The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born**" to portray the fact that in any society where there are corrupt people, the morally upright ones in the society will always be frustrated. In one of the episodes in this novel, "The Man" a morally upright railway worker becomes frustrated as a result of the pressure mounted on him by his wife and other family members to join in the activities of the corrupt people in the society, particularly using his office to help himself, but he never consented this negative idea. Mr. Koomson, the politician was the classmate of "The Man" while in school, but Koomson became rich due to his corruptive activities as a politician. "The Man" at a point in the novel, while discussing with the "Teacher", another morally upright person in the novel said:

I am asking myself what is wrong with me.
Do I have some part missing? Teacher, this
Koomson was my own classmate. My classmate.
So tell me what is wrong with me?

(P. 57)

In the episode above "The Man" expressed his frustration over the mess in the society which he has refused to be part of. "The Man" distances himself clearly from the corruptive activities of the society. This

frustration above arises from the fact that though he hates corruption and he does not engage in it, but he keeps wondering whether his decision to avoid participating in the corruptive activities of the society is right or wrong. The episode above exemplifies the frustration of most ordinary African people in different African Societies, seeing how some people are siphoning money and could not join in this nefarious activity, due to their principle of honesty.

e) *The Depravity Of The Ordinary People*

Amah has shown in this novel that when corruption is perpetrated by the political leaders, the possibility is there for the ordinary people to also engage in corruptive tendencies. The episode below shows how the people at the lowest ebb often engage in corruptive activities, since the leaders are also corrupt.

A messenger at the railway corporation had won a lottery but because he knew that many people are neck deep in corruption, he started doubting whether or not he would be given the entire money accruable to him, and so he said:

I hope some official at the lottery place
will take some of my hundred Cedis as a
bribe and allow me to have the rest

(p.19)

In the episode above, Armah showcased the fact that since corruption is everywhere; no one can get what is due to him fully in terms of money, because the entire society is a depraved one. The episode above also epitomizes the doubts in the minds of the people in most African countries, wondering at all times whether they will not part with some of their money in order to get what they should get. To Armah, a corrupt society is a society of injustices.

In addition to the highlighted episode earlier on the depravity of the ordinary people in this novel Armah signposted an episode in which a timber contractor tried to bribe "The Man", in order to get a space in the train to move his woods from the bush. "The Man" found the bribery act quite offensive and so rejected it. The discussion of the rich timber contractor and "The Man" goes, with the businessman saying:

Take one for yourself and give the other one
to your friend. I myself will find some
fine drink for you. Take it. Take it, my friend.

(p.30)

"The man" responded saying:

I will not take it

(p. 31)

The episode above shows the level of depravity of the entire people of the society in the world of this novel. The bribery episode above is a representation of how people in different African societies do engage in bribing their ways to get favors, which Armah considers to be awful and particularly detestable. The writer tries to

tell the readers that it is indeed bad for the people to bribe their ways at whatever time, as this will not make any society grow.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion therefore, it is germane to say that "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" has been Ayikwei Armah's weapon to lambast the misuse of political powers by the African political leaders, for corruption will always keep destroying the economic phase of the various African countries. "The Man" in the novel represents Armah himself. Furthermore, the honesty posture of "The Man" in this novel, represents Armah's principle of honesty.

Ahmah is African who believes so much in the well being of the African people and so he used this novel to condemn bad governance of African leaders, such that there can be a change for the better in the economic and political terrain and by extension putting African people in different African countries on a better pedestal.

Ayi Kwei Armah has used this novel to expose corruption at both the highest and the lowest level in the various African societies and he has sent the message straight that the people of Africa, both leaders and their subjects should eschew corruptive tendencies, for corruption and other vices are ill wind that can blow no one any good.

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