

## SATIRICAL SONGS AS A FORM OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN AFRICAN INDIGENOUS NOVELS: A STUDY OF *SAWOROIDE*

EMMANUEL AKINYINKA ILORI, PhD

### Abstract

*Satire is a literary technique (or a form of expression) used to criticise, mock, or expose the flaws, vices, and foolishness of individuals, institutions, or society-often to promote change or self-reflection. While much scholarship on Saworoide (Brass Bell Drum) emphasizes its political satire and cultural allegory, the role of satirical song as a narrative technique remains underexplored. This study fills that gap by foregrounding the satirical songs as essential mechanisms for storytelling and socio-political commentary. This study, therefore, examines the use of satirical songs as a form of narrative technique in Akinwumi Isola's Saworoide (Brass-Bell Drum), exploring how music functions as a medium for political commentary, moral instruction, and resistance. Drawing on sociological and Postcolonial Literary Theories, the study demonstrates that satirical songs in Saworoide operate beyond entertainment; it also reflects how Iṣṣola integrates Yorùbá oral traditions, particularly satirical praise songs, into storytelling to critique corruption, corrupt leadership, abuse of power, and moral decadence in postcolonial Africa, Nigeria in particular. The study adopts a qualitative, textual, and interpretive analysis as its research method for the analysis of Saworoide (Brass Bell Drum). The study identifies how the songs advance plot, mediate thematic concerns of corruption and resistance, and bolster readers' engagement through cultural resonance. The songs are identified and interpreted as embedded in the narrative. A distinctive feature of the novel is its satirical songs, which serve both artistic and narrative functions. The satirical songs in Saworoide (Brass-Bell Drum), a Yorùbá indigenous novel, do not merely entertain; they serve as narrative devices that drive the plot, express communal consciousness, and*

*reflect the moral pulse of society. Through textual and interpretive analysis, this study highlights the significance of satire in reinforcing indigenous modes of expression and preserving socio-political accountability in Yoruba cosmology.*

**Keywords:** *Satire, Oral tradition, Yorùbá indigenous novel, Narrative technique, Postcolonialism*

### Introduction

Literature is the product of society. It emanates from society and remains a product and creation of human imagination of the world around. The world serves as the raw material to the writers (Olive, 2013). Literary artists, being members of society, are vested with the responsibility of critiquing social acts through their writings, prose, poetry, or drama. Oral, performing, and literary artists serve as watchdogs, censuring societal happenings. Many African literary artists have engaged in writing about issues affecting societal advancement to propose solutions to problems, ensuring a stable and better future.

In a typical Yorùbá setting, the efforts of artists are noticed through their praises and condemnations of the characters of the rulers before the subjects, thereby creating room for assessment in the form of accountability and encouragement. This is normally noticed during the period of festivals or rituals when performances, through praise, satirical songs, and dance, show the nuptial link between art and society. Literature examines the whole life, religious, social, political, and economic, of the people. This is in line with Bámidélé's (2000:4) submission that:

*Literature, on the other hand, is concerned with man and his society. It attempts to develop, elevate, expand, and transform the experience of its audience. As a vehicle of human*

*expression, literature seeks to investigate man, his behaviour in society, and his knowledge of himself.*

This assertion points to the relationship that exists between literature and society and the transformative power of the arts in society. Literature is a product of society; it is all about society and human life; it assesses human life, their activities, and behaviour in society. It uses transformative power to change the cause of events and proffer solutions to man's problems in society. Literature has a major impact on the development of society. It shapes civilization, changes political systems, and exposes injustice. Literature offers a detailed preview of human experience, allowing us to comment on basic levels of desire and emotion. Ògúnsínà (1987:19) confirms the foregoing assertion about literature and society, when he states that:

*Literature functions as a continuing symbolic criticism of social values. As a virile vehicle of human expression, literature seeks to investigate man, his behaviour in society, his knowledge of himself, and the universe in which he finds himself. Literature is part and product of society. Its nature is essentially social.*

Literary artists can act as the mouthpiece of the masses or advocate for the political leaders and their ideology through their literary works to foster a tranquil nation. Literature and politics are inseparable because if the literary artists' ideology corresponds to that of the political leaders, the artist acts as an advocate of the political agenda. Where there is a contradiction of ideologies or differences of opinion, the artwork takes a revolutionary stance and acts as the voice of the people. Literature is a medium through which the voice of the masses is heard because literary artists are the visionary power of society. Literary artists bring to the fore the happenings in their society, the exact realities for the possibility of effecting needed corrections in society, and to ensure overall development of their societies.

Novelists, through their medium of writing, depict the social, cultural, and political realities of their time in society. The novel is seen as a form of literary outlet and vehicle of strong social and political satire advocating for the liberation of the African continent, Yorùbá nation, and Nigeria at large from the undoing of political leadership and corruption or corrupt practices, and serving as a voice of vision and voice of hope for the voiceless to ensure social and political radical changes in the society.

The novel has both historical and political significance. A novel is important as a critique of nationalism and state power. Novelists in Yorùbá land notice the changes that occur in the game of politics, such as unresponsiveness of the government, lack of accountability, and mismanagement. Some of the changes satirized in Yorùbá novels are political corruption before and after independence, and the bitter experiences of the electorate during elections in the decolonization period. Literature is seen as the mirror of society, to represent and re-present to hold the mirror in a manner that enables people to perceive reality, both reflected and refracted. Dasylyva (1995:82) posits that:

*Literature discusses life by reflecting, or refracting, what may happen or what might have happened (ed), or what ought to have happened (ed), and not necessarily what had actually happened or is happening now.*

The relationship between literature and politics has been a sensitive and controversial issue. Politics relates to the art of governance. Literary artists have engaged in writing on issues of political leadership, ineptness, and corruption, which is the use of illegal and abusive means to mislead (Adèyemí 2003). The efforts of political leaders to misrule and promote injustice within a human society can provoke social reaction from the masses and force the leaders to use force, resulting in conflict between the leaders and their followers. As

a result of corruption, a liberation struggle, a protest against injustice, and the use of political forces emerge.

Political leadership in Africa, Nigeria inclusive, is being accused and criticized for its insensitivity and insincerity to the plight of the masses in society. The hope of a better Africa or society for the masses and for all citizens as promised by postcolonial leaders has been dashed with the presence of lack of direction, wrong policies, lack of will to implement good policies, fraud in governance, fraudulent acts, insensitivity, insincerity, insecurity of both lives and properties, corruption at the corridor of power or corrupt practices, neglect and drift, lack of vision, and selfishness. Africa, Nigeria in particular, after independence in 1960, remains dependent politically, socially, religiously, and economically up to date due to its state and status of underdevelopment as a result of a high level of corruption, exploitation, and oppression of the masses and frustration, Ilori (2021). The masses are subjected to a high level of poverty, hunger, and squalor. With the presence of both natural, human, and material resources, the continent is blessed with, there are traces of a high level of hopelessness and dashed hope as a result of inept political leadership that lacks good vision and the political and required will to change the fortune of its citizens. Agbor (2012) avers that 'the success or failure of any society depends largely on the mannerism of its leadership'. It is on this note that this paper seeks to examine the corruption and corrupt political leadership crisis and its implications on the development of Africa and Nigeria in particular through the lens of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá, using satirical songs in the form of a narrative technique in *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) to criticize the political leadership excesses in Africa, Nigeria in particular. Achebe (1983:10) avers that:

*The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or*

*climate, water, air, or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership.*

Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá utilizes satire as a form of literary weapon or mechanism to expose, criticize, and condemn injustice in governance as it affects Nigeria as a political entity.

### **Conceptualization of Concepts**

#### **Satire**

Satire is a literary and artistic mode that employs humour, irony, exaggeration, ridicule, and wit to expose, criticize, or correct human vices, follies, and social institutions. Its primary purpose is not merely to entertain but to provoke moral reflection and social reform by highlighting deviations from accepted norms and values. It is a poem or a literary work of a special kind in which vices, follies, stupidities, and abuses are held up to ridicule and contempt. (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1990:1044). Satire is a literary genre of form, although in practice it is also found in the graphic and performing arts. It is a means of exposing human follies to ridicule. Satire uses laughter to expose the moral excesses of individuals in society. It is the use of humour, irony, **exaggeration**, or ridicule to expose and **criticize** people's **stupidity** or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

Darah (1982:33) opines that:

*The function of satire is to identify and expose evil in its broadest terms. The practice implies that the act of public exposure helps either to check or prevent those given to anti-social behaviour and mischief.*

It is the exposure of the vices or follies of an individual, a group, an institution, an idea, or a society, usually with a view to correcting them. It involves the use of irony. Its general aim is to correct or reform by means of ridicule. It is a distinctive feature of many literary works in African societies, including Nigeria. Many scholars have worked on satire; they are Highest (1962:169), Darah (1982:33), Ebewo (1988:13), Ògúndèjì (1988), Adéjùmò (1991, 2001, 2005, 2008), Táiwò (2009), Ìlòrí (2011), Bólárinwá (2013), ò Šàngót óyè (2014), and Oke (2017). They all agreed that satire is a means of exposing human follies to ridicule with a view to correcting them.

Adéjùmò (2008:98) submits that:

*Satire is a strong tool for conflicts, mediation, and arbitration among the Yoruba. It has been described as a form of art that employs sharp irony or ridicule to denounce vices and foibles in society. It is a tool for social control as it censures human folly to bring harmony to society.*

Through satire, human wickedness and acts are exposed and ridiculed with the intention of correcting them and serving as a lesson to others. In *Šaworoide*, the author depicts a scene of political corruption and corrupt political leadership in Nigeria. He presents Nigeria as one of the African nations that is politically free as a nation to manage its own affairs; unfortunately, it is discovered to be politically corrupted and its affairs are being managed badly by a coalition of corrupt political leadership.

Satire, as a form of moral and political critique, occupies a central place in Yorùbá oral tradition. Through ridicule and irony, it exposes societal flaws, holds leaders accountable, and promotes ethical governance. In *Šaworoide* (*Brass Bell Drum*), Ìšòlá harnesses this cultural tool to dramatize the tension between traditional authority and modern governance, symbolized by the royal drum (*Šaworoide*) whose sound represents legitimacy and divine sanction. In *Šaworoide*

(*Brass Bell Drum*), satire is central to the narrative structure. Ìšòlá ridicules greedy chiefs, power-drunk kings, and complicit elites to expose the absurdity of corrupt leadership. The tragic consequences faced by rulers who defy tradition are exaggerated to emphasize moral lessons and provoke critical reflection rather than mere entertainment. The author depicts corrupt political leadership in Africa, Nigeria in particular. Nigeria, one of the African nations, is often regarded as a politically free nation that manages its own affairs,

but it has been discovered to be politically dependent, corrupt, and its affairs are being poorly managed by a coalition of corrupt political leaders. The author uses satire songs as a form of narrative technique to amuse and to arouse contempt. Using this technique, the author attacks foolishness by making fun of it.

### **Corruption**

Corruption can be viewed as dishonest or immoral behaviour that is at variance with the acceptable norms. It is also seen as improper activities and transactions aimed at changing the normal course of events, judgment, and position of trust. It is Nigeria's biggest challenge; it is both endemic and epidemic in nature. As noted by Andvig and Fjedstad (2001), corruption is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with multiple causes and effects; it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts. The impact of corruption on the socio-economic and political life of Nigeria and its people is enormous. Every layer of the population feels the dynamic impact of corruption in Nigeria. Nigeria has a long history of corruption, which is as old as the country itself (Àlùkò, 2009). The colonial era was characterized by allegations of corrupt practices against the state, and this colonial legacy of corruption was carried into the independence period. Corruption is a ruthless violation of established rules for personal gain and benefits

Corruption remains the most endemic and intractable social menace in African societies, Nigeria in particular, with its attendant negative consequences in society. Political corruption, which involves the use of public institutions (state) as instruments of personal accumulation of wealth, is seen as a major cause of Nigeria's underdevelopment. This menace is the greatest form of human rights violation. This has been a matter of deep concern for both the masses and elites in Nigeria because corruption seems to have become an established pattern. The prevalence of corruption in Africa and Nigeria, in particular, is traceable to the period of colonialism. It is of note that the colonialism pattern and style of operations were built on corruption. The colonial pattern or legacy of corruption was fixed into the political structure of the independence period. Corruption is a great impediment to the people of Nigeria. Even though colonization ended more than fifty years ago, the seed and product of corruption is still alive, making Nigeria far from being freed on independence. Àrèó (2014:192) states that:

*Corruption is a structural problem that derives from, and has its existence in, the political-socio-economic organization of the society. In analyzing the causes, manifestations, and remedies of corruption in Africa, it is pertinent to explore the structure-dependent capitalist economy (economy base) into which African States were forcefully integrated, and how corruption is generated and perpetuated. The pervasiveness of corruption in Africa has to be examined from the nature and character of the African states and their ruling elites.*

Corruption is persisting in the African continent because the political elites who emerged at the end of colonial rule as leaders were not capitalists like their counterparts in the metropolitan cities of Europe. The capitalists are the owners of the mode of production, while the colonized leaders depend on the distribution of state resources for their personal benefits and accumulation of wealth at the expense of the masses in the society. Àrèó (2014:193) ascribes this assertion to the political elites "as politically independent, they came to power because of their political power but lack a secure material base".

Against this backdrop, corruption is identified as the root cause of societal woes perpetrated and nurtured by the political class in Nigerian society after the demise of colonial masters' rule. The seed of corruption and its features that have affected the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria since independence were sown during the colonial period. There are numerous cases of corruption or corrupt practices on the part of political elites who took over power from the colonial master, who nurtured the legacies of corruption and primitive accumulation of wealth into the structure and institution of governance in Nigeria; these legacies are still in existence to date. Without doubt, there is an interface between leadership crisis and corruption as a bane to underdevelopment and responsible for neo-colonial woes in Nigeria. Lawal (2006:2) submits that:

*Before the colonial conquest and control of African polities, the traditional African societies, though not morally perfect, were not characterized by the evils of imperialism, capitalism, and colonialism, which became prevalent later.*

Corruption in the pre-colonial period was minimal and not well pronounced, but it was in full force and ascribed to an inevitable result of the dynamism of imperialism, capitalism, and colonialism in the post-colonial period.

## Narrative Techniques

Narrative techniques are the methods and strategies, and devices a writer employs to tell a story and convey meaning effectively. They shape how the story is presented, how the readers experience it, and how the plot, characters, and themes are revealed. Essentially, narrative techniques are the “tools” of storytelling. Isòla (1998: 16) states that:

*A more fundamental aspect of the mode of narration in Yorùbá novels is that of the novelist's point of view. Whatever kind of narrator is used, a novelist's point of view can be detected by examining several things: the role of the narrator, the role of the characters, and the expected role of the audience*

Conceptually, narrative technique governs the relationship between the story, the storyteller, and the reader. It determines whose voice is heard, what information is revealed or withheld, the order in which events unfold, and the emotional or intellectual impact of the narrative. Akínwùmí Ìsòlá in *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) adopts a narrative technique deeply rooted in Yoruba oral tradition, blending it with modern dramatic techniques and political satire to expose corruption, tyranny, and moral decadence in African political leadership, Nigeria in particular. The ruling elite are portrayed as greedy, incompetent, insincere, and self-serving, while Lápitè and Làgàta, who refuse to submit to tradition, meet ironic deaths, highlighting the consequences of lawlessness. Narrative technique is the architectural framework of a novel – the set of narrative choices that guide interpretation, control reader engagement, and transform raw events into meaningful literary experience.

## Synopsis of Synopsis

The novel *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) is an indigenous African novel that depicts corruption and corrupt practices of the political leaders; it shows their insincerity, insensitivity, and neglect of the plight of the masses in the Jogbo community. The tradition in Jogbo is that the newly elected king must undergo some rites and observe oath-taking (oath of allegiance) before he can be finally presented and declared king before the people. This is to show and declare his commitment, loyalty, and sincerity to the people he is elected to rule over and to abstain from any form of corruption or corrupt practices in the land. This tradition of oath-taking has discouraged corrupt practices and corruption from the reigning kings in Jogbo land before Lápitè. The tradition is a nuptial bond between the king, the crown, and the talking drum ( Dùndùn), which signifies faithfulness on the part of the king.

Lápitè, one of the contestants for the kingship post in Jogbo contested for the post in Jogbo with other contestants, including Adébòmí. Eventually, Lápitè was elected through an unfair and corrupt process. Because of the inordinate motive of Lápitè to involve himself in corruption and shady acts in Jogbo, he vehemently disagreed to take the oath of allegiance that serves as a check and balance to any Onìjogbo from involving in corruption or corrupt practices and other nefarious acts. Lápitè became king and involved himself in all sorts of corruption or corrupt practices, such as moral corruption, spiritual corruption, and financial or economic corruption. He started embezzling state money and diverting public funds to foreign accounts. His chiefs also involve themselves in corrupt practices at the expense of being responsible and embarking on the socio-economic development of the town. He ignored the cry of the masses who were being oppressed and abused by the political leaders in Jogbo. He assassinated Prince Adébòmí, who contended

with him and his wife. He took the wife of another man illegally. He was searching for the surviving son who, by birth and tradition, is a direct link to the throne in Jogbo (Arésèjòbàtá). The crown, one of the symbols of the oath, was taken away by the youths to dethrone him. He was eventually killed by Lágàtá, who shot him in the chest, without fulfilling his promise to regain the missing crown for him.

Lágàtá, another native of Jogbo who was a retired soldier, promised to recover the stolen crown for Lápité, but instead, he seized power from him. Lágàtá was also involved in corruption, and his reign was too short because of his death as a result of non-compliance with the tradition of oath-taking in Jogbo.

The youths of Jogbo staged a protest that ushered in a new lease of life and an absolute end to the tyrannical rules of the bad leaders in Jogbo. At last, Arésèjòbàtá was installed as Oníjogbo and married Arápàrégángan. His reign witnessed peace and the development of the Jogbo kingdom.

### Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Sociological and Postcolonial literary theories to interpret satirical songs in *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum), especially the one by Bonald (1754 -1849), which is the Mirror Image Approach. The advocates of this theory submit that literature centres on societal issues. As articulated by Georg Lukacs and Lucien Goldmann, literature functions as a mirror and critique of societal structures. In the novel, satirical songs act as social instruments expressing collective and communal ethics against political corruption. The theory encourages researchers of literary works to thoroughly investigate the works of art and the themes in a literary text to determine whether the themes are reflections of daily occurrences or mere imagination. This shows that literary work must be a reflection of what is happening in contemporary society. This theory is relevant because both corruption and corrupt leadership are

experienced in the society where the author finds himself; he uses his artistic lens to mirror the happenings in his society to pass a message to the readers.

The major concern of postcolonial theory is the struggle that occurs when one culture is dominated by another. The term 'postcolonial' is a term used to refer to all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the period of independence or even to the present day. The colonial masters made an effort to compel the colonized people to admit that their culture was inferior to that of their masters. The 'self-rule' political class, after independence, imbibed Western culture and put their own culture aside. The ethos and norms of democracy have not been reflected in people's leadership as a result of in plant of anti-social behaviours and culture of the colonial masters in the Yorùbá and Nigerian politics.

Postcolonial theory is built around the concept of resistance, as subversion or opposition, or mimicry, but with the haunting problem that resistance always inscribes the resisted into the texture of the resisting. It is a two-edged sword. The concept of resistance carries with it ideas about human freedom, liberty, identity, and individuality, which may not have been the same way in the colonized culture's view of humankind. Kèhìndé (2005:127) submits that:

*African literature was a tool for celebrating the heroic grandeur of the African past; later, it was used for anti-colonial struggle. Presently, it is being employed as a veritable weapon for depicting the neo-colonial disillusionment in African countries.*

This study examines the exact realities after independence in Yorùbá societies and Nigeria political climate by employing

postcolonial theory to investigate emerging realities that the colonized who seek their rights and freedom from colonial masters are the architects of and responsible for their own disillusionment and neo-colonial woes. The theory is equally suitable for this study because it centres on oppressive experiences and loss of cultural identity.

### **Satirical Songs in *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) on Corruption and Corrupt Political Leadership**

Akñwùmí Iṣòlá uses satirical songs extensively in his novel *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) as a narrative technique to drive home his points and express his theme of corruption and corrupt practices among political leaders. The author uses cynical satire to expose and ridicule corruption and corrupt practices among political leaders in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. There is a scene of cynical satire in the novel where the old man Òpálábá, who is the royal bard in the palace, explains what would be the consequences of avoiding the age-long tradition of oath-taking by any elected king in Jogbo as very disastrous, unfounded, and dangerous for the people and the throne in Jogbo. The old man told Balogun what would happen if any king avoided oath-taking. The old man expresses this through a satirical song that his sitting there is not in vain, but to listen to the voice of wisdom on all important and related issues to Jogbo land, he sang thus:

*Òrò leye n gbó. Òrò leyeì n gbó o*  
*Èye ò déédéé bà lórulé o*  
*Òrò leye n gbòì o!*

Bird listens to the words around  
Bird listens to the words around  
Birds do not stay on the house roof in vain  
Bird listens to the words around

Iṣòlá (2008:27)

This satirical song is a reflection of the moment Lápitè ascends the throne without completing the sacred ritual, which underscores the danger of illegitimate power. The song reflects the Nigerian political reality where leaders assume office without moral or constitutional legitimacy. The song foreshadows the chaos that follows. It is a reflection of the transition of the readers from conceptual satire (corruption as an idea) to the dramatic consequence of (corruption as lived reality). The crown obtained without ritual consent brings doom in Jogbo land; this serves as a mirror image of postcolonial leadership crises, where political authority is acquired through manipulation rather than legitimacy. Thus, the song becomes a sociological echo, where Jogbo refers to Nigeria, and the corrupt king is the postcolonial political elite.

The author, in another scene, shows how Bàbá Òpálábá, the aged royal bard, sang a satirical song during his discussion with the chiefs after greeting chiefs Sèríkí and Balógun, to show that he knows them, sees them, and is aware of their mission and corrupt practices in the system. This happened at the palace entrance as the chiefs rushed to meet the king inside. The old man sang a satirical song to establish the level of their corrupt practices, their insincerity, and insensitivity to the plight of the people they were to take care of, that is, Jogbo citizens. The chiefs could not wait to greet Bàbá Òpálábá warmly. They were rushing to the palace and told the old man, '*Há à Bàbá ojú ñ kán wa, a fẹ́ sáré dé bikan ni*' (We are in a hurry, we are going somewhere now). The old man replied to them with a satirical song in the form of a narrative technique, such that "Bẹ ni! Afọwọfọná ha le ráyè dúró' (He who uses his hand to hold fire cannot be comfortable). The song was proverbially sung to express the author's view on political corruption in the corridors of power in the Jogbo kingdom. In the two instances where this particular song is used, it is a clear indication that there is no secret thing to the aged royal bard on the activities of the political leaders that are the chiefs and the king, as

he listens, hears, and records happenings wherever he sits and watches. The satirical song is an expression of a replica of what is happening in the corridors of power in postcolonial times, where the masses are watching the activities of the corrupt political leaders, but they are powerless to act. The corrupt leaders are oppressing the masses without considering their suffering and struggle, even though the political elites promised a better society after independence, but they failed the masses woefully with monumental corruption in governance. This is the reflection of African politics, Nigeria in particular where leaders emerged with manipulated electoral processes through rigging and ballot snatching and other numerous means just to get to the seat of power. The consequence are always result in suffering and struggle on the part of the masses.

The author satirizes the activities of the inept political leadership style in Jogbo kingdom, which causes a lot of hardship to the people of Jogbo. This satirical song was sung during the town protest against the corrupt practices of Lápité and his chiefs on how they are mismanaging and siphoning public funds through their collaboration with the timber dealers, the major source of income for the Jogbo kingdom. The author uses this satirical song as a form of narrative technique to project the replica of the situation with African political leaders and Nigerian political leaders in particular, who are mortgaging the lives of the youths at the expense of their own selfishness, diverting and embezzling oil money that is meant for the citizens in Nigeria. The timber dealers symbolise the white explorers who are on the soil of Nigeria to gain access to and benefit from the natural resources, particularly oil, which is the major source of income for Nigeria as a nation, while Lápité and his chiefs represent political elites in Nigeria who wickedly opt to oppress, intimidate, and subject the citizens to abject poverty and suffering. The youth song thus:

*Lápité alábùkù omi ni ó mu ku!*  
*Lápité alábùkù, igi a wó pa ó ljà òtè*  
*yí ni a rán o lèwòn o*  
*O titàlú fáwọn agégedú Láipite*  
*alaibuku, omi ini ó mu kú!*

Lápité, you are a disgrace, you will drink water till you die  
Lápité, you are a disgrace, a tree will fall on you  
Lápité you are a disgrace; you will drink water till you die You  
have sold the masses to timber dealers  
Lápité, you are a disgrace; you will drink water till you die.

Işòlá(2008:70)

The satirical song is sung to abuse the corrupt political leadership directly during the town protest and procession by the youths in Jogbo kingdom. The youth show their repugnance against the insincerity and insensitivity of the political leaders to the welfare of the masses in the town; they expose their wickedness and neglect to the people of Jogbo in general. In this contemporary society, corrupt leaders are challenged through youth protests, especially in Nigeria. The case of ENDSARS is still in the memory of Nigerians when youth challenged the Nigerian Police Force's brutality on the citizens through protest. This satirical song serves as public resistance to the rise of tyranny in governance. As Lápité's regime becomes increasingly oppressive, songs emerge among the people, especially the youth, as encoded resistance.

In another instance, Işòlá uses satirical song to express the callousness and insincerity of the political leaders. Bábá Ọpálábá, the aged royal bard, is narrating a folk tale to the children to let them be aware of the wickedness of the political leaders through corruption and corrupt practices under the reigning king and his chiefs in Jogbo. He sang a folk tale song, and the little children responded and sang it to the town. The old-aged royal bard sang thus:

|                                      |   |                      |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| <i>Wọn ma le o, won ma le o</i>      | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Awọn ijọyè yìí ma le o</i>        | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Wọn sọ fàrá ìlú</i>               | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Pé tíwọn, làwọn ó se</i>          | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Wọn gbagbara tán</i>              | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Wón jiwó, onírú</i>               | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Wón jiwó aláta</i>                | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Ìyà n jará ìlú</i>                | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| <i>Yòò maa leyìn</i>                 | - | <i>Yòò ma leyìn!</i> |
| <i>Òrò yìí yòò ma leyìn</i>          | - | <i>Ajantie!</i>      |
| They are wicked, they are wicked     | - | Ajantie!             |
| The chiefs are wicked                | - | Ajantie!             |
| They promised the masses             | - | Ajantie!             |
| That they will better their lot      | - | Ajantie!             |
| They acquired political power        | - | Ajantie!             |
| They started embezzling public funds | - | Ajantie!             |
| Citizens are suffering               | - | Ajantie!             |
| This act will have consequences      | - | Ajantie!             |
| This issue will have consequences    | - | Ajantie!             |

Ìṣòlá (2008:72)

The satirical song expresses the insincerity of the political leaders toward the plight of the masses in society. The politicians in Africa, Nigeria in particular, are fond of fake promises to the electorate before the election, and after the election, the promises will not be fulfilled; they will not consider the plight of the masses, instead, they will start mismanaging public funds, siphoning public funds, and neglect the masses to their fate. This is responsible for the bad experience on the part of the masses who are wallowing in abject poverty and insecurity of life and property. The satirical song's lyrics ridicule the king indirectly, using animal imagery and proverbs. The tone of the song shifts from warning to mockery and condemnation.

Ìṣòlá, in the novel *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum), uses satirical song to express the carelessness of Laipiteḍi as the king of Jogbo on his agreement with the foreigners who are timber dealers on the natural resources of Jogbo Kingdom. The song is an expression of the greediness and non-vigilance of the political leaders in Jogbo to get rich through the natural resources of the land at the expense of the citizens' welfare. The king offers the greatest natural resource of the land, which is timber, to the hands of outsiders to be managed without considering the features of Jogbo's economy. Chief Baloìgun was trying to caution him on his agreement and promises to the timber dealers during his meeting with Oloikoto, who represent the interest of the timber dealers. Having noticed the danger ahead on the Jogbo economy, Baba Òpálábá says (*Hùn, Hàa! Olè ní òun fẹ́ bá ọ tún ilẹ̀kùn ilẹ̀ rẹ̀ se, o ò sì fura*) (Hun, Haai! A thief offers to repair your broken door for you, and you do not think twice). He sang the satirical song thus:

*Alákísà n jò lóru Bó pé  
ilẹ̀ a mó lẹ̀la*

A man who wore rags was dancing at midnight  
The day will soon break

Ìṣòlá (2008:111)

This is a narration of what is coming or the aftermath of Lápitẹ's callousness and carelessness, that very soon, it will be clear to them that the foreigners who are timber dealers are after their gains, not the interest of developing the Jogbo kingdom as they claim. The satirical song also expresses the corrupt practices of the king and his chiefs, that very soon, their secrets will be exposed in the open to the citizens, showing how they are mortgaging the features of the land. These satirical songs reflect how, in real societies, satire becomes a safe tool for critiquing authoritarian regimes. The people, through satirical songs, gained symbolic voice; thus, the songs mediate the transition from silent oppression to vocal dissent.

Furthermore, *Ìṣòlá* portrays another scene where *Bàbá Ọ̀pálábá*, the aged royal bard, satirizes the foolishness of King *Lápitẹ̀* and his chiefs by committing a greater task in the hands of the timber dealers *Olókòtò*, who wants to use what he has to gain what he wants in the economy of *Jogbo*. *Balógun* was trying to convince the old man that some people have offered to help the king on how to get money from the resources of the land, *Balógun* says: (*Bàbá, mo gbó orin tí è n kọ, Ọ̀rọ̀ yín yé mi. Amọ̀ bóyá ẹ̀yin ò mò pé àwọn kan ti n ba ẹ̀ba rán aṣọ̀ rẹ̀ níbi tó ti ya*) (*Baba, I listened and heard your song, your message is clear to me. It occurred to me that you don't know that some individuals have offered to help the king to get rich*). *Baba Ọ̀páláinba* sang thus:

*Àsá n bá ẹ̀yẹ̀lé ẹ̀seré*

*Ẹ̀yẹ̀lé n yò*

*Ẹ̀yẹ̀lé n fì ikú ẹ̀seré*

Eagle is playing with a pigeon

Pigeon is full of joy

Pigeon is playing with death

*Ìṣòlá* (2008:112)

The expression in this satirical song serves as a narrative technique utilized by *Bàbá Ọ̀pálábá* as the narrator to tell the king and the chiefs the danger of committing the economy of *Jogbo* land to the hands of strangers because of their selfish interest. This is typically a reflection of economic exploitation of the natural resources of the nation; the timber represents oil, which Nigeria, as a nation, is blessed with. *Àsá* (eagle) literally means the foreigners on the exploration of the oil, which is a natural resource, while *Eiyelẹ̀* (Pigeon) refers to the Nigerian government that is insincere and insensitive to the plight of the citizens.

*Bàbá Ọ̀pálábá*, the aged royal bard, also expresses his concern over the missing crown, 'Adé Idẹ̀' (Brass crown), because of its

significance to the throne and the well-being of the citizens in *Jogbo*. *Balógun* was trying to convince *Bàbá Ọ̀pálábá* that all is well, but the aged man, as the narrator sang a satirical song to express the danger ahead of the missing crown in *Jogbo*:

*Kò ì yé wọn*

*Yòò yé wọn lóla!*

It is not clear to them

It will be clear to them tomorrow!

*Ìṣòlá* (2008:112)

The message was not clear to *Balógun*; he left the old man and started moving on. Satirical songs in *Saworoide* are used as a structural spine; the songs give warning before crises, helping readers decode events, and serve as moral adjudicators - passing judgment on characters. The songs mark a shift in narrative phase- from legitimacy to illegitimacy, silence to resistance, and power to collapse. It is a kind of cyclical narrative pattern aligned with Yorùbá cosmology – disorder-exposure-restoration.

### Conclusion

*Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá* in *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) utilizes satire as a weapon to express concern over the political situation in *Jogbo*. Satirical songs in *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) operate as powerful narrative tools that enrich the novel's thematic depth for the readers. He uses satire to censure, expose, and ridicule the high level of corruption and corrupt practices of the political leaders in the *Jogbo* kingdom. This is done to correct the abnormalities in governance in *Jogbo*, and by extension in Africa, Nigeria in particular. The author exemplifies how satirical songs can transcend mere ornamentation to become integral narrative strategies in an African novel. The satirical songs reinforce themes of accountability, justice, and cultural

continuity, and at the same time offer a critique of corruption and illegitimate power. By integrating Yorùbá oral aesthetics into modern storytelling, Akinwùmí Ìṣòlá reaffirms the vitality of indigenous forms as instruments of resistance and moral reflection. The satirical songs in *Saworoide* (Brass Bell Drum) thus operate as both narrative engines and ethical compasses, ensuring that the novel remains a timeless commentary on governance, morality, and the enduring power of culture. They function at the intersection of folk tradition and socio-political critique, making the narrative both culturally rooted and universally resonant. The novel transforms songs into active narrative agents, ensuring that satire is not positive commentary but a force that shapes, reveals, and ultimately resolves corruption.

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