

OIL AND WOMEN IN NIGER DELTA DRAMA: A STUDY OF AHMED YERIMA'S *LITTLE DROPS* AND HOPE EGHAGHA'S *THE OILY MARRIAGE*

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Abstract

Oil has become a dominant issue in Niger Delta drama. This is because its misuse/‘overuse’ has caused social unrest, poverty, marginalization, degradation and ‘sexploitation’. This paper is designed to examine the consequences of oil exploration on the Niger Delta women in particular and on Deltans in general, concentrates its examination on the plays of Ahmed Yerima’s *Little Drops* and Hope Eghagha’s *The Oily Marriage*. The plays in this study draw attention to the conflict caused by oil exploitation and environmental issues in the region from the angle of the women folk. These contentions result in decrease in fishing and farming activities, and the increase in contaminated streams and rivers, forest destruction, bio-diversity loss, environmental pollution and the attendant poverty. The complacency of the Federal Government in tackling the multinational companies to resolve some of these problems and to address the unfair distribution of the accrued ‘oil dollars’ had been the cause of persistent conflicts and confrontation in the area. These heinous acts that befall the region, have caused a great havoc on the lives of the people, especially women who suffer great hardships. This study uses the theory *ecofeminism* to analyse the connection between the degradation of both the women and the environment.

Keywords: Oil, women, conflict, Niger Delta, drama, ecofeminism.

Introduction

The Niger Delta is the region that comprises nine (9) oil producing states in Nigeria; that is, Abia, Akwalbom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers states. Margaret F. Nutsukpo prefers to call this region, a region regarded by many as “a hotbed of controversy, dissent and conflict in Nigeria, despite its beautiful and intriguing, topography, exciting history, and the rich diversity of its peoples and cultures” (1). According to Oyeh O. Otu and O. F. Anasi, the Niger Delta is “the oil-rich region that is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy” (172). Above all, it is the region that harbours huge deposit of oil and gas and a place the Deltans fight for resource control with the Federal Government and multinationals. In 1958, the discovery of crude oil in the region attracts the interest of Nigerian government and foreign explorers for oil exploitation which exposes,

how oil politics has eroded the values of the communities, broken the communal bonds such that things have fallen apart and brothers and sisters are fighting one another while enemies within and without have taken control of oil resources and the environment is degraded with impurity. And with the degradation of the environment, the lives of the people are inevitably degraded. (Oyeh and Anasi172)

Despite the Niger Delta’s oil wealth, the region wallows in poverty and its people deprived of the accrued ‘oil money’ from their land. This has led the people of the Niger Delta into a series of conflicts with the multinational companies and the government over agitation for resource control and conducive environment for better living of the people. This youth’s restiveness in the region forces H. T. Ejibunu saying,

since the last few years, militants have fought with government forces, sabotaged oil installations, taken foreign oil workers hostage and carried out lethal car bombing amongst others. At the root of the problem is a crisis of underdevelopment. The crisis has been exacerbated by emergent issues of a gross distortion of Nigerian

federalism in respect to resource control; citizenship rights and environmental degradation. (qtd in Ihayereetal,14)

The argument is clear, if the Nigerian state and the multinationals are making profit from oil, then the communities ought to have developed. The oil exploration has been on-going for several decades but there has been little to show for it in the communities, except the obvious degradation of humans and environment. Before the exploration in the region, the environment had been calm, rivers were good for fishing, farm lands yielded foods, trees were fresh and there was no conflict and violence among the indigenes. The Niger Delta comprises fresh water swamp, mangrove forest, and rainforest. Correspondingly, J.O.J Nwachukwu-Agbada quoting Wikipedia in one of his essays, avers that the region is, "... said to be the largest wetland, maintaining the third-largest drainage basin in Africa, its environment may be broken down into four ecological zones of coastal barrier islands, mangrove swamp forests, fresh water swamps and lowland rainforest" ("The Niger Delta..."255).

Because of oil spillage, the area is now characterized by contaminated streams and rivers, forest destruction and bio-diversity loss. The region is now an ecological wasteland. In all, Niger Delta people are neglected, marginalized and exploited by the government and explorers who take the big share of the 'oil dollars' and leave the people to wallow in abject poverty and death. Francis Adeola aptly captures the devastating impact of oil in the Niger Delta milieu when he submits that, "environmental degradation, destruction of habitats, decimation of the modes of subsistence of the indigenous population and the destruction of farmlands and fishing waters are among the contentious claims" (77). Sunny Awhefeada corroborates that the region has "become the harbinger of poverty, disease, death, pollution, extinction of biodiversity, loss of means of livelihood, agitation, restiveness, militancy, criminality and varying degrees of ecocide pointing in the direction of Armageddon" (96).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the exploration of oil and gas has caused, and is still causing untold damage to human lives, property, and the environment.

The complacency of the Federal Government and the failure of the multinational companies to address this unfair distribution of the ‘oil money’ led to the mobilization of the radical armed groups, Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) led by Isaac AdakaBoro; Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) founded by Ken SaroWiwa; Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by AlhajiMujahidDokubo-Asari; Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by Henry Okah; Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) byAteke Tom; and other militant and non-milliant groups. The emergency of these groups promote kidnapping, loss of properties, loss of lives, reduction in the production of crude oil, rise of unemployment, as most oil companies left the area due to conflicts brought by these militia groups. As these proclivities rock the region, it has caused a great havoc on the lives of the people, especially women who suffer great hardships. M. S. Jeremiah supports that;

this militancy and the efforts by government to contain it have had a negative impact on women as they get raped, maimed and brutalized by both the militants who are supposed to fight for the Niger Deltans and government forces who are supposed to be protecting them from the belligerents. (78)

In view of this crisis on women, Ovuoke Dorcas Owhofasa concurs with Jeremiah on the response to this environmental crisis in the Niger Delta by the insurgent group that “the women and children in Africa suffer more from environmental degradation because they are not only vulnerable, they are equally the most powerless of the population” (123). Because of this, “women have been involved in the struggle to rescue, preserve and conserve the environment from being destroyed completely; and in a way they are also in the struggle to rescue and preserve the women folk” (Owhofasa 123). It is in the light of the backdrop that this study tries to use Niger Delta plays of Ahmed Yerima and Hope Eghagha to show how

oil and the protests of the people against oil exploitation have inflicted pains on the lives of the people, most especially women folk.

Theoretical Framework

The application of theory is very important in this study. In literature, as MbubeNwi-Akeeri M. puts it “theory provides the philosophical foundation, the aims and goals of interpreting works of art. In reading works of arts, in analysing and in interpreting, we are often guided by certain principles, procedures and processes. All these provides us with basic tools and skills which direct our attention to how to read, what to read, what to analyse and interpret” (44). Therefore, the theory that underpins this study is Ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a coinage from a shortened form of ecology and feminism. As it is also called ecological feminism, is a branch of feminism that examines the links between both women and nature. The term ‘ecofeminism’ was coined by French feminist Francoise d’ Ebaubonne in 1974 “to give expression to the woman’s concerted efforts or struggle to preserve the natural world, which is constantly bombarded by humans in their bid to sustain themselves no matter how this agenda for human sustainability is negotiated” (Owhofasa 124). CheryllGlottfelty sees ecofeminism as “a hybrid label to describe a theoretical discourse whose theme is the link between oppression of women and the domination of nature” (xxiv). It springs from the amalgamation of ecocriticism and feminism and become an awareness or movement that x-rays the degradation of the environment and women in the patriarchal society.

It emerged in 1974 and was later popularized and developed by Ynestra King in 1976 at the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont. Ecofeminism became a movement in 1980 with a major conference on “Women and Life on Earth: Ecofeminism in the Eighties” held at Armherst was the first in a line of ecofeminist conferences, inspiring the growth of

ecofeminist actions, organizations and conferences which gain attention with both academics and activists.

In literary works, ecofeminism tries to achieve the following aims:

- It exposes the society where men oppress nature and women together
- It stresses the relationship between nature and women.
- It reveals the connection between the domination of nature and women domination.

The application of this theory in this study is worthy to mention, as women and earth are viewed as the same because of the different kinds of injustices they receive from men. Both are explored, exploited, dominated, degraded and abandoned when they appear infertile. From the foregoing, the study suggests that if ecofeminism is applied, it will go a long way in resolving the conflict that besiege the Niger Delta region.

Ecofeminist Analysis of Ahmed Yerima's *Little Drops*

Ahmed Yerima does not hail from the Niger Delta but the struggle over oil exploitation in the region has generated different responses in the form of intellectual engagement from the writers both within and without the Niger Delta and Yerima is of these writers. Like J.P. Clark, Wole Soyinka, Tess Onwueme and others, Yerima has not failed to use his creative constructs to bring the issues confronting his people and other people in Nigeria.

Yerima mirrors in *Little Drops* the conflict situations that are found in the region of oil producing states from oil exploration and exploitation as the people of the region, women in particular, are exploited and marginalized by the Federal Government and multinational companies, even chiefs and some highly placed individuals from the region join in perpetuating these evil acts, collecting bribes, leaving their people to wallow in abject poverty and death. The environment is degraded and the Deltans are betrayed, tortured, exploited and killed as they rise against the injustice that befall them by the explorers demanding better living and jobs for the survival. The militants and the government forces

face physical shooting and bombing endangering the lives of the people, especially women. In *Little Drops*, there is the exposition of the facts that in the patriarchal society, Niger Delta in particular, women remain less important, voiceless and are often reduced to nothing as no man cares for them as they suffer great hardship during conflict. Yerima explores the marginality towards women by men and champions the cause of the voiceless women in the region. The play is a look at the Niger Delta from women's view, during the war between the militants and the government forces over oil politics. Women bear the burden and live with damages of war caused and fought by men.

Little Drops deals with the issue of rape. It opens with Memekize, an old woman who lives in the jungle because of the war caused by men. In her camp, she disguises as a militant with hood and carries long spoon wrapped like a gun. This she uses to keep off attackers. People, mainly women who are the major characters in the play run in of her camp. Mukume, the first woman to run in the camp, announces that she was raped by three hefty men at the night of their wedding in a hotel. Announcing her ordeal, Memekize and Mukume say;

MUKUME:Ha, God! Ayiba! This is rape? No! Don't rape me. I beg you, don't!
(*Sobbing slowly*)I beg you.

MEME: Why? You are too good for me? Haa, I smell? I am good enough to die for you like a swamp pig but good for a little enjoyment? I am not good enough to rape you.

MUKUME: No... You are more than good enough ...

MEME: Then why?

MUKUME: No but please. I am all sore.

MEME: Sore?

MUMUKE: Yes. Please! I have been raped three times today already. Kill me instead. Shoot me and let me die! (*Crying.*) No! I will not let another man touch me. Kill me

first. (*Slowly, she raises her head.*) I shall die first, not one more finger on me. (Yerima 10)

Women suffer in the hands of men in the play. Mumuke is sexually brutalized by the government soldiers in her hotel room where she is having her honeymoon with her newly wedded husband, Ovievie. Ironically, the militants and soldiers deployed in the region who are meant to keep peace and ensure that citizens are well protected turn out to inflict pain on women. This is inhuman to the women folk as the above showcases.

There is the degradation of the environment which involves the streams, rivers and the farmlands which serve as means of livelihood for the people of the Niger Delta have been rendered unproductive through oil spillage. Oil spillage is a product of sabotage perpetrated by oil thieves and most at times it is caused by the equipment failure of the oil companies. These result in destruction of fishes and other aquatic lives as well as the land becomes infertile making farming and survival difficult in the region. ChinyereNwahunanya captures this scenario in his words, “with the uncontrolled decimation of aquatic life and the flora and fauna of the region, the region has lost its human population to massive emigration, with the consequence that the erstwhile vibrant fully employed farmers and fisherfolk that peopled the area have become migrant labour, seeking non-existent jobs in the cities” (xiii). In *Little Drops*, the land and rivers are totally polluted by the oil from the explorers’ company. It has also affected the aquatic life, making fishing impossible, while the people of the region are displaced and dispossessed of their means of living. Yerima elucidates this through Memekize, “See where I live. My family were fishermen before the other war took them. And I was the best fish seller in this part of the Creek, but now the water is polluted. Oil kills the fishes before we get there” (61-2).

The playwright depicts society where women are being marginalized. They never take part in the decision making in their community, men initiate decisions while women receive the consequences of wrong decisions when they result to conflict. This marginalization gives

birth to the issues of poverty, unemployment and displacement. These emanate as the government caters for itself alone abandoning the people they are supposed to take care of. The citizens whose land produces the oil do not have essential amenities such as good houses, good water supply, electricity, good roads, etc. The government and explorers drill oil from the land without compensating the people. There are no jobs for the people, making unemployment rank high in the region. Kuru, during his trial by the women bring this to limelight,

KURU: All we are asking for is the development of the Niger Delta region which has a population of twenty-eight million.

AZUE: Twenty-eight million.

KURU: Yes, and we are the owners of the raw materials, but we don't have a say in the sharing. Because of this there is poverty and mass unemployment.

MUKUME: The youths. How about the youths?

KURU: There is frustration among the youths, this is what draws them to violence. They need a sense of belonging, then they will be less attracted to violence. (Yerima 62-3)

The chief and government representatives in the play sabotage the people. Because they represent the government and the community, they unduly appropriate the money meant for the compensation of the community to their individual pockets. In the play, the Chief of Gabaramatu Kingdom typifies this attitude as he collaborates with both his people and government to further his selfish interest of wealth accumulation to the detriment of his people. At a point of realization, the people(militants) unleash violence on chief to show their grievances over the sabotage which leads to the decapitation of Chief, Azue's husband. Azue and Memekize confirm this, thus,

MEME: (Screams.) Deads? Did you say dead? They shed the royal blood? Now we are doomed race. (Pause.) No wonder Benikurukuru cried with the rains this morning. Shame!

AZUE: Dead ... and his death baffles us. One moment he walks tall, and in another, he fell and melted with the morning dew.

MEME: How?

AZUE: First, the boys came and drank and ate. They danced and chanted his praise. They left driving like wild animals. Then came the government boys. Again they drank and ate with him. Leaving bags of money in the palace. Unknown to the king he was being watched by his driver who was the informant of the boys. They came back, and there was confusion. They cut off the head of the king right in front of his family. (22)

As this happens, Azue suffers emotional trauma who loses her husband, the king and her only son shot on her back as she escapes militants who attack the palace. This emotional violence can also be seen on the lives of the other women in the play. First, Mukume exposes a vivid picture of her emotional state as a result of the rape by the men and how unworthy she would feel in the presence of her husband and the community. As recorded, “**MUMUKE:** Down there ... where my virtue once lived. Tell me, Mother, will I ever be the same again? I ... we just got married, four days ago. Ovievie, my husband, has only just given me this wedding ring and vowed to treasure and please me till death do us part. (*She begins to cry.*) He always said that my body was his temple. And I was his goddess. But see what they have done to his temple. They have trampled upon my virtue, turned my passage to marshy swampy ground, and my soul lost, full of shame and pity. (*Grabs MEMEKIZE*) I do not deserve this, by the gods, I do not. (*She begins to cry.*) What do I tell him now? (17). Bonuwo, the school teacher, on her part, would have been stoned to death by the parents of the forty-one children who died in the explosion, if she had not escaped after the shell that hit the school where she teaches. Also, Memekize is not left out in this traumatic situation, as she loses her husband and her two sons during the war fought by men. It is pathetic to see the old woman fend for herself even in her old age, it strikes her psychologically as she has no cause in the war nor

her family. This nightmare forces Memekize to say “Not every wound matters ... no matter how small one sheds blood ... no matter how small. And if it is for a cause you don’t even understand, it hurts deeper ... leaving you used and spent. Always it is a cause borne from the ego of men. One that you had no hand or foot in. One in which you had no choice but you have been ordained the loser, then it hurts the more. Heeooo!” (34-5).

Women are being fade up from the evils of the oil that emerge from its misuse. Therefore, they have taken it upon themselves to campaign against the injustices inflicted on them in particular and Niger Delta in general. In achieving this, the women in the play launch a violent surrender on Kuru who is one of the ring leaders of the militia groups in the region, their concerted effort to end oppression and domination of women and nature help them to melt down Kuru’s heart in order to bring back peace in the region by ordering his boys to surrender their arms and embrace peace. Kuru says “I swear! With my blood I swear to bring peace here again (Niger Delta). I swear” (64). Kuru also acknowledges that the government must listen to the plights of the people for peace to reign in the region, “but the other side (government mine) must also be sincere” (64).

In the same vein, E. Oseghalu and Clifford Oshodin analysing the solution to the Niger Delta crisis advice that,

Oil companies and the government should pay adequate compensation for all previous environmental damages and economic deprivation by the people of Niger Delta as a result of operations. The oil companies operating in the Niger Delta should cultivate the culture of consultation and dialogue in dealing with the host communities on all issues that affect their lives. It is equally imperative that youths and leaders of the host communities should not resort to violence at the slightest provocation. Prospective oil companies should be made to reserve a certain quota or percentage of their staff allocation for indigenes of communities where they are located ... (qtd in Nwizu 322)

Yerima has successfully used his play to speak to the public on the nature of the Niger Delta crisis as it affects the women folk. The playwright has used his play to draw attention to oil politics and how oil exploitation in the area has affected the lives of women. In addition, the collaborative efforts made by women to end oppression and seek for a cleaner environment in the region are worthy of emulation.

Portraits of Women and nature in Hope Eghagha's *The Oily Marriage*

Eghagha as a writer advocates that a work of art should be used as a tool for projecting the injustices to the downtrodden in society who are not able to fight their battles. Chinua Achebe asserts that "the African writer cannot be unaware of, or indifferent to the monumental injustices which his people suffer" (79). On the same matter, Psalms Chinaka quoting Achebe that, "an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames" (117). It is true from the above notion of using one's art as a tool of expression of his people that Eghagha's *The Oily Marriage* stands out in this regard. The play preoccupies the long aging crisis that befall the Niger Delta region through oil exploration and exploitation. Eghagha is not just engrossed in the prevalent issues of the environment, marginalization and other socio-political crisis in the region, he is also interested in exploring the essential issues that delay the woman's growth and impede her happiness in the play.

The play demonstrates the colossal mismanagement of oil resources by the government and its effect on the deltans. Alhaji Yusuf who represents the government has not in any way proffered solutions to the sufferings of the people, he makes profit from the oil without paying compensation to the people. To worsen the situation, Alhaji employs workers from other parts of the country instead of the people of the Delta making unemployment among the youth in high profile. This results to the peaceful protest among the angry youths who want resource-control of their oil minerals. After the protest, Alhaji Yusuf goes to Chief Adjarho

who represents the deltans with fat envelope to calm the youths down not to engage in further protest. As the anger of the youths grows wider on AlhajiYusfu who they see as a traitor in their land, Ahlaji Yusuf plans an ‘arranged marriage’ between his son, Bala and Chief Adjarho’s daughter, Maiden which he thought will bring a good relationship between the two families and the entire community to harness good atmosphere for the oil business. The arranged marriage brings in conflict in the family of Chief Adarho as Maiden and her Mother, Tiro wage war against Chief for refusal.

There are forces of exploitation in the play. In spite of the accrued oil money derived from the region, development has been lacking. The government never cared to put the environment on the right tract and the lives of the people in their fullness. The exploitative tendency depicts by the government and the rich oil workers is very heinous in the play as the youths have taken it upon themselves to fight for justice for the good of the Niger Delta. The youths engage in war against the government for resource control, calamities befall the region deteriorating the lives of the people. Chief Adjarho’s conversation with members of his family is captures thus,

Chief Adjarho: Yes, fight for justice. See the way they have pushed our boys into bombing oil facilities and all kinds of atrocities?

Tiro: Including kidnapping for money! Criminals now use the struggle as subterfuge to do terrible things. (17)

The major factor responsible for the abject poverty in the region is marginalization by the oil workers as it results in unemployment arising from the nonchalant attitude of the government, not providing jobs to the indigenous people of the delta while non-indigenes getting all the juicy jobs. The youths decry the state of unemployment on their land which has left them depressed. They organize a peaceful protest to lay down their grievances for liberation. Nwachukwu-Agbada implies that liberation is “any deliberate attempt made to open people’s eyes to both what is wrong with themselves and what is wrong with their society” (“Literature

as Liberation..."15). The people trying to liberate in the play, Omimi, the youth leader narrates,

Omimi: The oil in our land will not last forever. All the jobs from the oil prospecting firms are given to foreigners, people who are not Nigerians and Nigerians from the other states. Even the small jobs which we use to eat are given to non-indigenes. This is not right. This must stop. See the contractors doing all the jobs. Can't some be given to our men and women? Who says we cannot do contract? We are giving **FLAMES OIL COMPANY (FOC)** a ten-day ultimatum; except they recruit our boys or give jobs to our people, we will turn the town upside down. All the other companies like the one owned by Alhaji Yusuf in the town must give jobs to our boys.

Omimi: ... Tell the government that all oil companies should bring their headquarters to the region. Do they think we do not like beautiful houses or beautiful offices? See those fine houses in the federal capital; we want them here as well. We need bridges like the long Third Mainland Bridge in the former federal capital. We are not for violence. ... We are for peace. But nobody should take us for-granted any more. (38-9)

Their lives are defined by poverty, and from afar they watch as the rich oil workers live comfortably from the wealth from their land. They watch as their community leaders collect bribes from the oil companies and the government, while they get nothing. There is a scene, in the play, where Chief Adjarho, the community head collects a fat envelope from Alhaji Yusuf to help calm down the nerves of the youths.

It is now becoming more dangerous for the rich oil dealers (the likes of Alhaji Yusuf) in the region to live and work in peace as the conflict arising from the complacency of the Federal Government and explorers in tackling the menace. Alhaji Yusuf who represents the government smells threats from the actions of the youths that will hinder oil activities in the area, devices a means of securing good environment for his business. For him to become

familiar and popular to the people of the region, he decides to use woman as a bait to establish a good relationship with the people in order to stay in power and accumulate more wealth from oil business. Alhaji Yusuf arranges marriage between his son, Bala and Maiden, Chief Adjarho's daughter as he (Alhaji Yusuf) comments "... Please teach me how to go about it. I want to arrange the marriage" (44). The two fathers (Chief and Alhaji) are not after the happiness of their children after the marriage, all they care for, is the money and fame that will be accorded to both families without minding its detriment to Maiden, a lady who never loved Bala.

It is true to say in Nigeria, Niger Delta in particular, women suffer more in the times of conflicts from oil as they are subjected to all kinds of abuses. The hunger for affluence that occupies Chief Adjarho's mind makes him to accept an 'arranged marriage' from Alhaji Yusuf. He agrees because the sky is going to be his limit, as recorded in the play,

Chief Adjarho: Can you imagine the wedding we would host in the town? Even the President of the Federal Republic will be present; of course the Governor of the State will be there too, along with other governors and Senators and elected officials. You know what that would do for me?

Tiro: That's your dream; not mine! My daughter will marry the man she loves; she will not be used as part of the exchange in business transaction!

Chief Adjarho: At the national level, I 'be recognized. Big jobs would follow and the sky would be our limit.

Tiro: Count me out!

Chief Adjarho: I could even become a Minister of the Federal Republic!

Tiro: That's your problem with our people! They like crumbs; they like to be fed with crumbs from the master's table. Have you thought about your daughter's happiness?

Have you thought about the happiness of your people? Only a few moments ago the youths were here and you told them that you were fighting for true federalism for them. Is this part of it? To give out your daughter in order to climb the social ladder and collect a brown envelop? (48-9)

The above shows that men see women as an object to be exploited for their better living as popularized on the character of Chief Adjarho. This prompts Tiro to fight her husband's wish and support her daughter's right of man in marriage. The main reason for Alhaji Yusuf's 'arranged marriage' for both families is captured thus; "Tiro: Yes, he wants to use my daughter to purchase your conscience and the right to live freely in this community" (51). As a woman who understands the exploitative nature of women in the area by men oppose the marriage.

The women's (Tiro and Maiden) refusal to accept the marriage proposal triggers off conflict in the family of chief Adjarho, as it ranges between daughter and father, and wife and husband making unhappiness the order of the day. According to Frantz Fanon "at the level of individuals, violence is seen as a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (74). The women, the two female characters in the play have come together to complain and fight about their sufferings, exploitation, murder and rape of their land, men and women. Since no one will listen to them, they decide to take severe actions and speak for themselves so the people of the world will get to know what is going on their country. As Maiden, the daughter of chief Adjarho continues to fight and outline her plans against the marriage and makes final comments on her stand on the evil meted on her,

Maiden: They all want or wanted or loved me for different reasons, some good some not so good. My father loved me because I was his gateway to national wealth, fame and politics. It's sad that my father whom I loved so dearly also commoditized me. Bala

wanted me as his wife to in order to establish his father's business in my locality. He has been following me everywhere I go even since the night that they dropped the letter of employment. I will not accept their offer of employment. It's a trap. ... I am the oil love, the one exploited or the one everybody but mom and Odion want to exploit. ... I will go away; I will go my way. I will seek love elsewhere and continue to live my life in full. If people want to make a victim of my beauty and intelligence, I do not accept that as my fate. (103)

Maiden who stands against the injustice placed on her by men which impedes her happiness shows the concerted efforts by women to end all kinds of oppression, exploitation, marginalization, etc. imposed on the patriarchal society.

Conclusion

The plays of the Niger Delta demonstrate that oil exploration has been doom instead of boom on the lives of the Niger Deltans especially the women. We have seen the different ways women are victimized – through poor condition of life, marginalization, oppression, unemployment and various forms of exploitations. But the worst calamity that besieges the Niger Delta region is that oil business has turned husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters against one another and created adversaries who support both the Federal Government and Oil Companies. It recommended that the indigenous people of the region especially the most victimized ones (women) who have the oil minerals in their land are adequately compensated with social amenities and juicy jobs to forestall future occurrence of the conflicts. It is also important that multinational companies drilling oil in the land should put an end to oil spillage in order to maintain 'a cleaner environment' and keep the lives of the people living in the area safe.

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