



LITERAL CONFIRMATION AND LEGISLATIVE DECEPTIVENESS IN HELON HABILA'S “*MEASURING TIME*”

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ABSTRACT

African literature has in-depth history which makes the readers to go back for thousands of years originating in Ancient Egypt. African literature mainly explains the writings of African nationals living on African soil which depicts the African native sensibility and atmosphere. African writers mostly utilize beauty to bring out important truths and useful message to society. The main motto of African literature includes slave description, protests against colonization, rights for independence, oral tradition, folk tales, pride of Africans, hope for the future and dissent. The moral of each and every story in African literature do contain the message about the history or it definitely conveys a proper thematic lesson. African diaspora is nothing but the effect of colonization which made Africans to be displaced from their home countries and brought to Western countries around the world in order to sell as slaves. Africans faced various difficulties in its long history which left an impact on the themes of its literature. Helon Habila is one of the famous noteworthy African writers who is mainly noted for his style and narrative technique. His novels are more creative and contain wonderful information. One such novel is *Measuring Time* which expresses the story of the village from its conversion to Christianity by white missionaries through periods of legislative machinations and power struggles to the present day. This paper focuses towards African people's life style through Habila's novel *Measuring Time*. It mainly expresses literal confirmation and legislative deceptiveness which happened in the novel. The legislative attitudes and the factual events are highly portrayed through the various figures in the novel.

Keywords: *sensibility, colonization, diaspora, missionaries, legislative, machinations, struggles, literal, confirmation, legislative, deceptiveness.*

Literature is regarded as the best challengeable task for the readers of the current scenario. A tremendous variety of literature creates impact upon the minds of the readers. African literature mainly explores the writings of African nationals living on African soil which depicts the African native sensibility and atmosphere. Helon Habila is one of the famous African (Nigerian) novelist who is noted for his creativity and innovation. He is regarded as the best and fine contemporary African English writer. Major themes in his works would be focused on politics, corruption, kidnapping, history, education and love. *Measuring Time* is Habila's second novel published in 2007 which conveys the tale of twin brothers living in a Nigerian village. This novel is about a story of a nation with the vivid explanation through the people. The whole narrative in the story focuses on the characters and their fears, ambitious mind of the people, aspirations and philosophy which dominantly affects the society.

This novel also deals with the tale of many fictional personalities which has been brought with an aim to bring the conclusion to reality by their thinking, interaction and relationship with other people. *Measuring Time* can be called by yet another name 'a literal biography'. It possesses an anthology of memorable stories of individual who tends to form the entire story of a nation. The author explains this novel through narrating the experience of the people under democratic and military governments. He also brings out the follies of Nigerians with being neither judgmental nor sentimental. Moreover, he narrated the story of his people from an objective point of view. *Measuring Time* seems to be the literal novel that 'Measures Time' which compares literal periods and a psychological study of a man who must 'measure up' to his brother and the critical demands of the society. It elucidates more themes of the modern African novel from the journey of Lamamo as a version of the traditional initiatory excursion to the equivalent quest of the protagonist Mamo for true wisdom.

Measuring Time synthesizes the history of a father named Lamang who is a handsome grassroots politician which makes him to be more ambitious that gradually make him to become a relevant legislative personality. Then the introduction of Lamang's twins named Mamo and Lamamo whose names resemble but the characters vary from one another. Both have the dream of army and possess the strong passion to leave home. Fate plays in the life of Mamo and makes him to become sick. Due to ill-health Mamo remains in his native place and becomes a biographer whereas Lamamo travels to join a rebel group near the Chad border, then gets training in Libya from where he moves to Liberia to fight along Charles Taylor's rebels. It highlights the loneliness and the division of the twin brothers.

The novel also enriches the theme of literal confirmation and legislative deceptiveness which happen to everyone. It specifically contains the series of legislative events including betrayal activities such as snatching ballot boxes, corruption in high places, minority complexes, majority adventurism increasing fragmentation of the social order and advent of a personality oriented scenario.

God's greatest gift to human beings is nothing but the life. Humans must recognize this and thank God for creating us without much defect. Many living beings in this world suffer with lot of problems such as no parents, no proper

education due to poverty, lack of food and shelter and much more. Here Habila turns the reader's attention towards Mamo and makes to show sympathy towards him by portraying him differently from his brother. Several attitudes like taking revenge develops in the mind of Mamo due to the careless unaffectionate attitude of his father. Father would be the real hero and best role model for the children's life. But here the relationship of father and son are not maintained in the effective manner. Lamang as the family man and father of twin brothers didn't care much but spends his time only in politics. Due to his detachment from his family and involvement in legislative attitudes, Mamo and his brother decide to take revenge on their father. The twin brother's revengeful view is expressed in novel as follows:

“They'd drop the occasional scorpion into his shoe, or

Misplace his car keys as he was about to go about”(24)

Mamo spends his lonely life by reading many books. He brings out his talents slowly by pen down his ideas without any hesitation. He starts to write more and atlast became the historian. He got the opportunity to study history and he became the history teacher in Ketu. He emerges as the good history teacher by providing definition of history with Nigeria as a proper example. He inculcates interest in the minds of students to study history with more interest. A biography is a detailed description of a person's life. It includes more information than basic fact like education, work, relationship and death. It moreover produces a subject's life story by highlighting various aspects of his or her life along with the intimate details of experience with an analysis of the individuals personality. Likewise, Mamo tries his level best to write biography and he has become the biographer and the historian. Many chances knock his door and he rightly utilizes it and his life changed entirely due to his writing professor.

In general, Opportunity knocks once at the door but in Mamo's life it knocks more than once. With full of enthusiasm and spirit, Mamo has the plan to write the essay entitled *A Plan for a True History of the Ketu people*. He somehow makes the entire society to get attraction towards his work but his father never spends his time to read his son's work rather he showers his attention only towards the legislative activities. Later he has got tremendous opportunities to write the biographies of many people in and around Ketu. Being the great historian and biographer, he has captured many famous personalities like Governor and they never want to wish him. Chances approaches Mamo one after the other. Mamo is highly capable of producing uncountable number of books if it's the worthwhile story. In *Lives and Times* he clearly depicts about the lives of Mamo's father's legislative life, mother's death, Zara's relationship and about his twin brother Lamamo. Through the character of Mamo, Habila brings forth the importance of history and much literal confirmation has been given which tends to kindle interest among the readers.

Politics is noted for doing good for the people and the community. It possesses authority and power. But at times, instead of doing welfare for the people, it comes out with plenty of malpractice which makes the legislators to be highly profitable. In Habila's *Measuring Time*, he sketches the legislative deceptiveness that is happening in the real world. Clear depiction of the legislators works which includes corruption; bribe, dishonest, betrayal etc are

shown by the author. Here with the invention of electric power, Lamang plans to attract the group of people to approach him and he utilise the chance to transfer the electric power into legislative power by using his business trick. Generally, people will get attracted towards new invention. As per that, here too people are greatly admired when they noticed the fluorescent tube and television box in front of Lamang's house. Lamang fully covers his attention on politics and he never lends his ears to the advice of others. He always tries to become legislator by using legislative activities.

A legislator is one who is actively participating in politics or one who holds or seeks a legislative office. Legislators often play a central role in common people's lives and they are the individuals who put their involvement in public policy and decision making. Habila in his work *Measuring Time* through the character Lamang reveals the legislative attitudes. Lamang make the legislators to visit his home and useful to conduct meeting more frequently. Along with legislators, widows have visited the house of Lamang and they would discuss about campaign strategies and legislative allies. They would talk about the politics and spend their time uselessly. Mamo who dislikes the arrival of the legislators doesn't have any other option rather than sitting in his and listening. A legislative career is meant for the people of high integrity and additional skills to achieve results and finding better ways of making life better for the people whom they represent. Politics usually meant for doing right activities which includes both legally and morally always even when there is no one to look after. The only essential thing for the legislatures is to be true to their work which they are doing. But at many times it goes in a different track which means the legislatures completely forget their responsibilities and they work for their personal benefits. They always must remember that it is the duty of the legislatures to be significant in their work especially while doing administrative process. When they involve in taking important laws and policies to their communities and countries, they must the rule of the proper effective legislator. They must be well educated with experience and they must keep in mind that they should bring welfare for the society and the people.

Lamang converses with the legislatures in favour of the victory party. Apart from that he tries to capture the people towards his side through catching words. One such person he tries to attract is none other than his brother's son Asabar. Lamang tries to kindle Asabar towards politics by uttering the following words:

“Well, I like your spirit. You are a fighter, and you value family. I'll make you into a politician .

That is where the future is”(113).

Asabar works as an assistant to Lamang and he involvement in legislative activities becomes more vivid in his life. Legislators generally gather crowd and publically announce that they will do this and that and make people to believe. In most of the cases, it is not possible for them to do what they said. From this it is clearly revealed that the legislators are making people to believe and atlast cheat them. Expectation and Disappointment dwells in legislatures life as the both sides of the same coin. Legislators can not win all the time. There may be many offonent team to approach people. Likewise, in *Measuring Time* Lamang's decline is known to the readers when he goes to

the state capital with his huge entourage, expecting to be crowned as his party's chairman. Mamo in his biography mentions about his father's legislative activities. Lamang tries to grasp the people through the words below:

"I know how we can supply the whole state with water cheaply and steadily using a technique

Called osmosis "(135).

Disruption plays the major role in legislator's life. It may occur in many legislative meetings. Once it happened in Lamang's life too. He gets up and walks out of the convention hall without making a presentation due to some of the disruptions in the meeting. Some delegates blame him as a bad loser. After few days, Lamang has resigned from the party. The chief and notable delegates from the Victory Party headquarters avoid meeting with Lamang. As Days passed, there is no one to visit Lamang except the widows. The tragic situation of Lamang emerge when there is not even the few friends from his legislative meetings arrive to meet him. Generally, all the legislators home would contain crowd. For any reason people remain coming and going to legislators home. Here also in Lamangs home, people keep coming and going and they used to spend time talking something about politics and other issues. When Mamo returns from the state capital, he finds the entire road before his house has been blocked with cars and pickups bearing the victory party logo. From this it is clearly known that Lamang involves himself in legislative activities than anything else.

Legislators would have the power and influence even after they left from their legislative parties. They would be respected by few people even they have no legislative power. The work done during their rule makes the people to think about it and give respect even after their loss of legislative power. In the same way here in this novel, Habila produces Lamang as the great legislator who possess lot of influence over the society. He uses his power and makes uncle Iliya and Mamo not to wait when they go to meet Mai in his palace. Lamang also says that he would talk to the school of the Governor to see if anything can be done regarding the opening of the school. Due to his legislative influence, Lamang speaks with the Governor and to Mamo's surprise, letter came after two weeks from the ministry of education to reopen the school.

Mere expectations in all cases will definitely bring failure. That is true in Lamang's case. He has expected a lot from his party. He has expected that he would be offered good position in the party or else he would be nominated as chairman. Nothing like that happened and due to disappointment Lamang has written the letter to the party mentioning about maltreatment that happened for him. No reply has come from the victory party so Lamang left the party.

Legislators mind will play the same tune for the song. Their mind will never be neutral. Their may change from one party to another party for their personal benefits. As per that, Lamang, a member in victory party receives a delegation with preposition but the delegation has not from his party but arrives from the opposite party, the new victory party. It offers the great opportunity with the information that he will be provided chairmanship the same position which he lost in his former party. Lamang who never wishes to the opportunity announces his move from the victory party to the new victory party the very next day itself.

Legislators in order to hold people in hand, they try to build trust by showing good sense of character and qualities composed of values, beliefs, traits and skills. Many Malpractices would happen during election time. Legislators would never survive without Malpractice. It definitely happens in one or the other way. Habila portrays one particular incident during election time. Mamo reaches Asabar's home to find what is happening. He gets shocked to find a bundle of cards on the mat before the youths and when he looks closer, he finds out that they are ballot cards. When he questions Asabar, he notices the shock and concludes the illegal work of the legislators. Asabar says that the same thing would happen in opponent team also somewhere else. When Mamo further enquires about the cards, he says:

“It is not important. We have over ten thousand cards here if we can distribute them to the different polling stations on time, then the local government chairmanship is ours, after that the government “(203).

Money makes everything. Legislators start to do this kind of illegal work with the aim of getting more money. Here Asabar too for the sake of money continues to do this type of illegal business by joining hands with Lamang without lending ears to Mamo's advice. One can not judge what kind of politics may happen in legislators' life. At once they may be in peak position with more influence and support but all of a sudden they have no support from the legislative party if they face any problem. Here, as a legislative team leader, Lamang tries to involve himself in doing legislative deceptiveness and he is arrested by the police. When it happens, not even a single from his former or latter party are willing to help him. He suffers endlessly due to his over involvement in legislative activities.

Human beings may learn the lesson only if they face it. Lamang at last realized his mistake when there was no one to help him. Mamo his son feels pity towards his father and he was the one who took care of him during his struggling stages. Even Lamang failed to be the responsible father, Mamo appeared to be the good son at the end of the novel by forgetting all the legislative deceptiveness done by him.

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