

# **Towards a Cleaner and Healthier Nigerian Environment: An analysis of Bode Sowande's *Mammy Water's Wedding* and Femi Osofisan's *Many Colours Make the Thunder King***

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## **Abstract**

*Drama is a veritable tool of criticizing unacceptable patterns of behaviours in the society. Playwrights, in every society, use their works to re-engineer the society and challenge deplorable behaviours, especially when they come from leaders and notable personalities in the society. Femi Osofisan's *Many Colours Make the Thunder King* and Bode Sowande's *Mammy Water's Wedding* exemplify such situation and characters. In these plays, the playwrights engage with one of the most critical challenges facing humanity today- climate change- a consequence of environmental abuse, degradation and neglect which has become a major threat to the survival of man on the planet. Foregrounded in ecocriticism and eco-literature, this study examines the attitudes of Sango, a Yoruba legend and King, in Femi Osofisan's *Many Colours Make the Thunder King*, and Adagun-Odo and Akila in Bode Sowande's *Mammy Water's Wedding* to reveal the consequences of man's actions on the environment. The study analyses the actions of these characters in relation to the natural elements such as trees and water as employed in the texts by the authors. Its findings are that power, human negligence, oversight, and advancement in technology and expansion for human habitation, are some of the reasons man abuses his environment. It advocates that humanity must intentionally strive for the preservation of the environment to avert the looming danger of self and communal destruction.*

*Keywords: Drama, Ecocriticism, Environment, Climate Change, Humanity,*

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## **Introduction: Man, and His Environment**

Land, waters, trees and other nature endowed elements around man, as created and given to man by God, are means of sustaining him. However, due to his domination over them, man has over time, not only misused them, but constantly abuses them. Thereby, creating environmental degradation for himself which consequently affects his wellbeing. These elements add value to human existence biologically, socially and economically. Forests and trees in them provide food and cash crops for economic uplift of man. Furniture is derived from timbers and man shapes them for the satisfaction of his needs. According to Okia (2012), the forest gives food, shelter and economic sustenance to man. Ironically, each plant and tree around man has its value which may be positive or not, but most importantly, plants add to the quality of oxygen utilized by man. Hence, Chakravarty, Ghosh, Suresh, et al (2012, p. 3) reveal that “forests cover almost a third of the earth’s land surface providing many environmental benefits including a major role in the hydrologic cycle, soil conservation, prevention of climate change and preservation of biodiversity. Forest resources can provide long-term national economic benefits”. Similarly, the ocean and other water sources around man provide many benefits to man. Accordingly, (Akankali and Elenwo, 2015, p. 226) state that “the ocean is a vital source of nourishment, especially to the people in the world’s poorest nations. Many depend on fish for their source of protein; fisheries and aquaculture support the livelihoods of about 540 million people directly or indirectly”. Beyond these eco-biological benefits, the trees and waters work together in sustaining humanity and the environment.

Lack of adequate understanding and proper treatment of rivers, oceans, land and trees have led to erosion, deforestation and climatic change. Climate change is the major resultant effect of both deforestation and pollution of various kinds, and it affects man in more than one way of his existence and, thus, his environment is drastically becoming problematic for him to live in and manage for his wellbeing. Pollutions from organic or biological, energy, chemical, physical and industrial materials, produced by man have caused enormous harm to the waters as well as to man. Personal human shortfall such as anger, ignorance and carelessness are some of the causes of the harms done by man to nature. Industrial gas emission, mismanagement of natural resources such as crude oil spillages, mining of natural minerals and disposal of waste are some human actions that generate pollutions and environmental degradation. Felling of trees for wood, domestic and industrial constructions and expansion of habitable lands and encroaching on the shores and forests are additional means of damaging the natural environments (Pearce and Brown, 1994). It then beholds on man to play his part and utilize these elements positively for his wellbeing.

However, due to personal gratification and other selfish interests, man consciously and unconsciously destroys these elements, thereby causing hazards to himself and the environment at large. The artists mirror the society and call humanity to conscious actions. Bode Sowande's *Mammy Water's Wedding* and Femi Osofisan's *Many Colours make the Thunder King* exemplify man's ill-treatment of nature and calls for a change of orientation and attitudes. Artists, mirror the society and hold up the consequences and methods of corrections at their disposal.

### **Theoretical Framework: Ecocriticism**

This theory is hinged on the premise that “nature is constructed by culture, and sharing the feeling of postmodernism, poststructuralism

and other forms of theory” (Philips, 1999, p. 578) with focus on the inadequate representation and utilization of nature in literary works. The representation and treatment of ecological substances in literary works as a sign of activism and social responsibility of all is the concern of this theory. The theory examines human treatment of animate and other natural objects in the environment. The killing of animals for food and commerce, cutting of wood for power and warmth, dumping of refuse in waters, clearing of forest for industrialization and habitation expansion; and many other human acts are condemned by this theory. The theory solicits for a tender treatment of these natural elements as part of contributing factors to human wellbeing, and submits that these elements deserve respect from man. It identifies the fact that human beings are exposed to environmental dangers and if necessary actions are not taken to preserve, rehabilitate and enhance the environment, there would be disasters.

### **Yoruba Worldview of Nature and Animal**

The Yoruba people of the southwestern part of Nigeria and those in diaspora, especially where they were sold to as slaves in years past, hold tradition tenaciously and utilize art works as means of expression of their belief system in gods and artistry. Woodcarving is a major way of archiving these. Masks are generated from specific woods obtained from the forests and are shaped into desired motives. According to Adejumo (2005, p.134):

The rainforests of the Yoruba region provide an abundant supply of timber for indigenous woodcarvers. The availability of wood as raw material has contributed to the development of highly sophisticated Yoruba woodcarving traditions. Yoruba woodcarving consists of a diverse range of objects, such as house-pots, furniture, and religious

paraphernalia. It is important to note that both traditional and contemporary Yoruba art are inspired by cultural practices and religious cults.

The above shows that the Yoruba people constantly interact with nature and utilize timber materials in their various activities. Traditional belief system of the Yoruba people in particular and many Africans in general holds that these natural resources harbor supernatural powers, and some of them are considered gods and goddesses of the communities. The centrality of totem among the various traditions, Owoseni (2017), presents as an expression of religious belief, hence:

Entities like stones, trees, metal, animals or their carcasses, water, humans and other natural entities within the ecosystem are perceived as totems and symbolic figures of spirituality or divinity. Water as a natural phenomenon is caught up in the network of religious belief through substantiation as a symbol or totem of spiritual and divine essence in life and nature. By this, water can be classified as a ‘religious resource’ essential for environmental functioning and order (p. 12).

Beyond elements of worship, “these religions exhibit complementary relationship patterns like stewardship, analogy, cosmic humility, natural mysticism, dominion and worship that inform attitudes towards the environment” (Owoseni, p. 13), while Olusegun (2023) reveals that natural resources of the human environment provide habitation for gods. He, therefore, posits that:

In Africa and indeed Nigeria, the traditional belief system holds the ascription of supernatural powers to objects called gods and goddesses. The major tenet of African traditional religion and belief system lies in the belief that the abode of the gods and goddesses is located on rock, streams, pond, tress, land or anywhere they so desire to live within the community. (p. 83).

In a like manner, Owoseni (p.14) stresses that in Yoruba land, creation myth attributes the contributions of these elements to:

The agency of water, sand and rock should be conceived as religious phenomena, forces and persons continually moving, intersecting, cross-pollinating, challenging, and energizing one another (human inclusive) across a myriad of celestial and earthly spheres.

Since the natural resources of human environment provide habitation for the gods, it then beholds on man to protect the environment, especially those mentioned above. To this end, Olusegun attributes the sacred groves of the gods as a veritable means of environmental protection. Highlighting the contribution of Osun Osogbo grove to the preservation and protection of endangered animate and flora elements, he submits that:

Traditional religion and traditionalists and other cultic functionaries have contributed in the conservation of resources through the ascription of psychic powers to objects, rock, stream/pond, tree, forest land and the like. These ascriptions of the supreme powers and the belief and respect for the gods of the land hold the string to reverence and respect for these objects. The traditional beliefs and taboos helped in enforcing rules and regulations for environmental preservation because people refrained from using resources carelessly, especially as it is related to sacred places. (p. 85).

Beyond the religious reference and habitation of the gods in several symbols, the protection of the environment also contributes to the social order of human existence and wellbeing. Socially, there are certain taboos about the protection of the ecosystem put in place by communities to guide and direct human interaction with his

environment. These taboos “represent a class of informal institutions, where traditional, religiously governed norms or taboo system define the human behaviour” (Olusegun, 83). This is premised on Tylor’s theory of animism in (Olusegun, 73) “that every object, be it animate or inanimate is being propelled by the spirit”. The spirit presence and perception by man depend on his love, care and will to handle respectably, use moderately as divinely ordained him by the creator. Animate and inanimate creatures around man provide his basic needs. In his quest to satisfy these needs, man, undoubtedly abuse these creatures. Examining human relationship with animals, the ill-treatment as expressed by Bangbose (2007, p. 61) and captured by Badejo (2017) reveals that:

In several incidents, man is shown as an enemy to other creatures. Mammals, birds, snakes, fishes and even spirits and trees all hate man. The reason for this hostility is the way man treats other creatures. Men kill all snakes both poisonous and non-poisonous; they make fishes suffer before they kill and eat them; they torture birds and imprison them in cage; and they kick other animals, beat them, and give them poor food. (p. 75).

This form of treatments to the animals, in my opinion, is hinged on man’s ignorance of the value and worth of these creatures to his existence and wellbeing. However, despite that most men exhibit cruelty toward these creatures, some individuals, outside zoologists and those who study and understand nature, still respectably interact with them. Each in his capacity and understanding extol the beauty, intelligence, craftiness, loyalty and other characteristics of the animals. This same ignorance and manhandling characterized man’s relationship with marine creatures, despite his reliance on them for his wellbeing and existence.

The marine experts call the manhandling as pollution. Pollution of the marine environment according to UN Group of Experts on the

Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution (GESAMP), and as defined in UNCLOS and presented by Kennington (2018) means the introduction by man, directly or indirectly, of substances or energy into the marine environment, including estuaries, which results in such deleterious effects as harm to living resources and marine life, hazards to human health, hindrance to marine activities, including fishing and other legitimate uses of the sea, impairment of quality for use of sea water and reduction of amenities. According to him,

The discharge of pollutants to the marine environment can occur via many pathways including discharge from land through industrial, agricultural and domestic activities, from the atmosphere, and through the weathering of mineral bearing rock. A major pathway for pollutants to enter the coastal zone is via riverine systems (p. 4).

He classifies the pollutants and their effects on man and environment further:

Pollutants can be classified in many ways; those that are readily broken down by organic processes are known as non-conservative pollutants (e.g., organic nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus). Other pollutants cannot be broken down by organic processes and can be very long-lasting in the environment; such pollutants are known as conservative pollutants (e.g., Heavy metals, PCBs etc.). Plants and animals vary widely in their ability to regulate their heavy metal content. Both heavy metals and other persistent compounds such as halogenated hydrocarbons which cannot be excreted, remain in the body in an unchanged state and are continually added to during the life of the organism. This process is known as bioaccumulation. Animals feeding upon

bio-accumulators, that equally are unable to regulate their metal contents, acquire an even greater body-burden of these substances; this is known as bio-magnification. The chief significance of bio-magnification is that higher predators, which in the sea include man, can be exposed to large concentrations of conservative pollutants in their food (p. 4).

Man is affected by his attitude to his environment, since the resultant effects of such pollution have negative effects directly on human wellbeing and the future of man and the environment. The air quality, shipping of goods, marine economy, radioactive waste, ozone damage and water contamination are some of the resultants of the marine pollution and their devastating effects on man, his economy, health and environment at large.

### ***Analysis of Mammy Water's Wedding***

The play, *Mammy Water's Wedding* is a lovely folktale on the love story between the mortal (Akila) and the Mermaid (Tarella). This is a metaphoric enactment of human relationship, indifference, and selfish interest and the consequence of water pollution is an expression of concern for nature and a fight-back strategy of the environment on man's attitudes to natural elements, especially, the sea. The play establishes the ideal relationship expected between man and his environment. The meeting of Akila and Tarella happened unusually. It is from a Boat Club picnic for Akila to a kind of prison he got into through an invisible opened window of Tarella in the marine world. His kind of songs wore her heart and love for him, yet, he cannot remain in her world, so she comes to his world. His imprisonment for four weeks reveals the human nature of the sea goddess as a woman. Out of love for him and his parents, he returns to the earth, with the help and love of Tarella. Tarella also comes along as Okuntoro, the daughter of Adagun-Odo, a wealthy, selfish, and toxic contractor, who finds the sea as his only place to dump the toxics in total disregard of Akila's

warnings. Adagun-Odo's attitude not only puts the whole village into starvation, but he pays for it with his blind conscience. Akila and Tarella meet again, this time around, as earthly beings, fall in love with each other and get married in Lagos, Nigeria. Right after Akila gains consciousness and savours the hospitality of Tarella and her mates, she makes it known that the human world is constantly in haste. This is contained in her speech on page 12, thus:

Tarella: If only you would be still, but your world is a mighty rush of wind carrying little, scattering many.

This proverbial sentence shows how dangerous human actions, taken in haste could be disastrous to man and his environment. On the contrary, the sea and other natural world could be slow when compared to the human world, but they could be more pleasant and desirable.

Tarella: Can't I ask you to stay here much longer? Think of your rough road. Then consider our marble pavements. Think of your din voices, then, consider our melody of tunes. The lavender of all seasons is better than the scent of decay. You talk of fruits of the earth, but remember where they draw their moisture from. Rivers, springs, streams, lakes and lagoons under the deserts, are our gifts to the earth that came from us. Before you came, we have always been. From us, you came. Even now our outer fringes spoil with things that destroy. What is in that world you are afraid of this one? What is in that wilderness, that you hold this garden in scorn? (p. 22).

This comparison between the orderliness of nature and human handling of nature becomes more evident in the conversation between Adagun-

Odo and Akila upon his return from the marine world. The song of Okuntoro reveals the ill-treatment of man by nature.

Song

Omo ènià e má b'aiyé jé don't wreck the world)	(people of the world,
Omo ènià e má da'lè sókun don't pollute the sea)	(people of the world
Omo ènià e jé ká ronú reflect)	(people of the let us
Omo ènià e má ba'lè yí jé don't spoil the earth)	(people of the world
Omo ènià e má p'aiyé yí ré don't wipe out the world)	(people of the world
E yé ja'gun l'óri òkun sea)	(don't wage wars on the
E yé ja'gun l'ójú òrun sky)	(don't wage wars in the
E yé ja'gun l'óri ilè	(don't wage wars in land)
E yé ja'gun rará mó o	(stop all wars)
Mímó, mímó, mímó lòkun	(the sea is hallowed)
Òkuntòrò	(the sea is pure)
Májèlè ò sunwòn nínú omi water is horrible)	(the toxic waste in the
Idòtí ò dára nínú omi	(water pollution is bad)
Idòtí ò sunwon nínú igbó horrible)	(pollution in the forest is
Idòtí ò sunwon nínú ilé	(filth at home is bad)
Idòtí ò sunwon lófufú	(air pollution is horrible)
Idòtí ò dára l'ójú òrun	(polluting the sky is bad).
(pp. 74-75).	

This song identifies every area of human pollution of the environment and, giving this warning if heeded, there will not only be a clean and habitable environment, man will be at peace with nature and enjoy the

full benefits of these elements. This is echoed by the elements in the dance of the elements. These are the means of pollution carried out by man. According to Tariq and Aziz (2015) forest “provides carbon storage and other benefits while delivering a lot of environmental and social benefits, such as timber and biomass resources, clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreation” (p.52) to man. Manhandling of the forest has led to the removal of “about two-third of known land-based species (primary forests) of trees or are going into extinction. About 8000 tree species which make 9% of the total number of tree species are under threat of extinction” (p. 53). This can easily lead to floods; land sliding, land degradation and climate change, especially in a country like Nigeria that depends on agriculture for sustenance. The riddle of the Earth Element reveals this.

I move with such heaviness that the innocents say that I stand still. I am the heavy garment of your body. I am old but look the same. I am a woman so fertile with offspring. Which is the womb, and the tomb, for I renew all life. Beware, do not abuse me or the world will go hungry. (p. 63).

This is corroborated by the view of Bodo, Gimah, & Seomoni, (2021):

Through the biological diversity of the natural forest, the basis for life on earth is provided, including human existence and it is a sure means of securing the abundance of the earth for people of the future. In essence, by conserving the forest, we do not just guarantee the survival of several other habitats but also the survival of the human environment. In the long run, we can have food security, improved agriculture, recreational pursuits and other derive benefits through different the varieties of life that

the forest houses by conserving the different characteristic elements and the biological diversity of the forest. (p. 22)

Each of the elements: air, water, fire and earth highlight their importance to human existence. The chorus to their song shows that without these elements, human beings are non-existent. Each portrays purity of their nature and the violation of this purity turns the world upside down. One major attribute of these elements is their living nature and possession of spirit. The conversation between Baba Eleja and Mama Eleja show these attributes.

Mama Eleja: I am talking to the sea. The sea is a woman. She will understand

Baba Eleja: All I hear is a roar. Does this woman with whom you dialogue have compassion?

Mama Eleja: Please don't let the sea know of our anger. The sea gave birth to the world like I gave birth to my son, and I do not grudge her the world. Why should the sea grudge me, my son? This old matron knows the pure sorrows of motherhood. The sea is an ancient matron, the mistress of old gods, the mother of the world. The sea that gave birth to rocks and mountains. Why should this ancient lady hold my son even in death? (pp. 13-14).

This expression of sorrow and motherhood does not only show that the sea lives but that it is compassionate, can be appeased and she's understanding.

### ***Analysis of Many Colours Makes the Thunder King***

The desire to achieve greater feat than his father as a leader and warrior leads Sango into marrying Oya and Osun, the water and forest spirits as wives. Sango was a very powerful Yoruba king. He is known for his strength, courage, bravery, fearsomeness and fearlessness. In addition to

this, being a king and warrior, he was rich in treasures. This must have led him into the adventure and quest to surpass his father in achievements. Ifa sends him Alagemo to help him achieve his desire, but his temperament leads to his self-destruction. Sango, in the play, is a violent man, and his temperament becomes a major pitfall to his personality. Oya and Sango are both jealous, greedy and are ingrates as seen in their attitudes towards Alagemo and Osun despite the latter's kindness to them. However, they both pay for their attitudes in the long run, but they make the innocent suffer unjustly. The manner in which Sango and Oya treat Osun and Alagemo shows an act of ingratitude and selfishness on their sides.

The use of natural elements in this play, by the author, to represent human characters depicts man's careless attitude towards nature of different kinds. The Odon tree, among the Yoruba people, is a special kind of tree seen around the home and it provides shade from heat to people during the dry season. The Odon tree, in this play, is not a mere tree somewhere around the corner of the compound; it is strategically positioned in the community. From its stage direction, it can be said to be a sacred and mysterious tree. The mystery about this tree is its coming into existence in the presence of Sango and his generals. The tree has no fruit on it until Sango demands its fruit. Then, the only fruit which comes from it is Alagemo. Ordinarily, this kind of tree will infuse fear in the beholders, but the reverse is the case with Sango. He does not only attempt to climb the tree, but also to bring down the fruit of the tree as seen on page 20 -21. The speech of Sango and his attitudes toward his environment and all it contains show the subjection of nature to nothing of importance by man.

Sango: Timi! Gbonka! The gods are mocking me! But there's more than one way to pluck down a fruit! Bring the stubborn tree down.

This attitude of Sango's and his Generals to the tree shows complaisance to nature. The creature, Alagemo, could have been hurt by the sword, hence the loud groan. This action may also be an angry reaction to the Generals' inability to climb the tree earlier.

The fact that the tree could not be climbed has been established by Sango and his Generals earlier, this ought to guide their actions and enable them to devise a better way of getting the fruit without violence. Also, if Sango can merely request the Odon tree to give him its fruit, and it is given, a little more patience, perhaps, another appeal to the tree will give him what he wants. Sango refers to the Odon tree as "Mother Odon" in his fruit request, which indicates the tenderness and feminine nature of the tree. This is the personification of the tree and could have been utilized by him and his generals to request and obtain more help from the tree.

The cutting down of the tree by Sango and his Generals, does not only terminate the life of the tree, but also deprives man the coolness the shade would provide during a hot sunny day. It will completely remove the oxygen and carbon dioxide man would have had and enjoyed from the tree. The greenness of its leaves would also have added to the beauty of his environment, prevent his house from storms, prevent erosion and retain the soil's richness which could add value to human wellbeing. The birds that sing from the tree, add melody and refreshment to human hearing and ease his stress. Even the fallen leaves help to manure the soil for the richness of the soil and better production of his food. The characters of Turtle as a messenger to Oya, Alagemo as a companion to Sango, and the Ants to Alagemo in his captivity, as employed in the play, assume human roles, and render noble assistance to each of them.

**Discussion: Towards a cleaner and healthier Nigerian environment**

Nigeria, like many other countries of the world, operates multiple environmental laws which are geared towards the protection, preservation and promotion of healthy environment (Ogbodo, 2009). This was to ensure that a cordial relationship exists between man and his environment, for man to enjoy the best of his efforts and health (Pona et al, 2021). The proper working order of the environment provides man with food, drink and economy. However, due to both natural and artificial factors, the working order of the environment have been tampered with and there are adverse effects on man. The natural disorders oftentimes are beyond human control, while the artificial ones are resultant effects of human activities that affect man in negative ways. Some of the adverse effects are erosion, deforestation, desertification, loss of soil fertility, air pollution, flooding and droughts and climate change. Some of these happen as a result of technological advancement, negligence and carelessness, inappropriate disposal of refuse especially in the urban cities, industrial waste, and so on. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2008), the petroleum industry, the major income earner for the country is not left out of the contributing factors to the environmental hazards. It reveals that:

Oil Pollution (from spills, oil well blow-outs, oil ballast discharges and improper disposal of drilling mud from petroleum prospecting) have resulted in problems such as: the loss of the aesthetic values of natural beaches due to unsightly oil slicks; damage to marine wildlife, modification of the ecosystem through species elimination and the delay in biota (fauna and flora) succession; and decrease in fishery resources (p. 7).

This can be attributed to negligence especially on the part of the government of the country and the oil merchants as a result of

technological and industrial revolutions experienced in the country's economic development. According to Nwankwoala, (2015) and NNPC report of 1983, a great devastation may occur in the oil producing region of our country if necessary protective and rehabilitation measures are not put in place.

It is currently feared that the region can experience a loss of 40% of its inhabitable terrain in the next thirty years as a result of extensive dam construction in the region. The carelessness of the oil industry within the region is also a serious factor. Thus NNPC in 1983 report to the Federal Government of Nigeria stated “ we witnessed the slow poisoning of the waters of the country and the destruction of vegetation and agricultural land by oil spills which occur during petroleum operations. But since the inception of the oil industry in Nigeria, more that twenty-five years ago. There has been no concern and effective effort on the part of the government, let alone the oil operators, to control environmental problems associated with the industry” Spills in polluted areas most times spread out over a wide areas, destroying crops and aquaculture through contamination (p. 230).

Other forms of degradation of the environment include deforestation. This is also linked to human efforts and advancement in technology. Its adverse effects are decried by Chakravarty et al, (2012),

Sufficient evidence is available that the whole world is facing an environmental crisis on account of heavy deforestation. For years remorseless destruction of forests has been going on and we have not been able to comprehend the dimension until recently. Nobody knows exactly how much of the world's rainforests have already been destroyed and continue to be razed each year. However, it is obvious that the area of tropical rainforest is diminishing and the rate of tropical rain forest destruction

is escalating worldwide, despite increased environmental activism and awareness (p. 3).

This has been on the increase and its resultant effects could have risen by now. The tropical regions of Africa, Nigeria inclusive, are the majorly affected areas of deforestation. This is attributed to clearing for farming, expansion for habitation, urbanization, industrial development and many other reasons. One major areas through which Nigerians contribute to environmental hazards is through water pollution. Marine pollution affects directly and indirectly, yet, it is a common sight in urban areas, especially Lagos whenever it rains to see inhabitants empty their wastes into the drainages, the resultant effects of such an act is thus presented by Pant et al (2020),

Marine pollution occurs when harmful effects result from the entry into the ocean of chemicals, particles, agricultural and residential waste, noise, or the spread of invasive organisms. Eighty percent of marine pollution comes from land. Air pollution is also a contributing factor by carrying off pesticides or dirt into the ocean. Land and air pollution have proven to be harmful to marine life and its habitats. When pesticides are incorporated into the marine ecosystem, they quickly become absorbed into marine food webs. Once in the food webs, these pesticides can cause mutations, as well as diseases, which can be harmful to humans as well as the entire food web. Toxic metals can also be introduced into marine food webs. These can cause a change to tissue matter, biochemistry, behaviour, reproduction, and suppress growth in marine life. Also, many animal feeds have a high fishmeal or fish hydrolysate content. In this way, marine toxins can be

transferred to land animals, and appear later in meat and dairy products (p. 270).

This calls for extra care and frantic efforts from man in relation to his environment. The water becomes unsafe for both human and animals and fish consumption and the long-term effects are borne by man. Frantic and renewed efforts by Nigerians will go a long way to bring about a cleaner and healthier environment.

The directorates in charge of promulgating, enforcing and evaluating the compliance of the citizens to environmental laws should be better equipped by the Nigerian government in carrying out their designated duties. The directorates should be replicated at the state and local government levels for it to be effective, since the federal office will be remotely removed from the people. Part of the responsibilities of the directorates include, but not limited to the following:

- Proper monitoring of planning of towns and cities with sewage allocation and adequate sewage disposal capacity.
- Properly monitoring of mining sites and other activities associated with them
- Provision of basic sanitary facilities across the nooks and crannies of our towns and cities.
- To ensure adequate and enough dumpsites. If possible, waste to wealth turnaround of such waste by industries.
- Double efforts by all to reduce the desertification of our cities and towns through the annual tree planting ceremony.
- Build and manage drainage systems along the roads and highways in the country.
- Initiate alternative methods for farmers to clear their farms for planting season beyond bush burning system.
- Education of herders on green pasture and feeding of their herds against the nomadic system.

- Education of all citizens for the proper handling of environmental elements such as trees, water, air, and others.

## **Summary and conclusion**

Natural elements such as water, forest, rock, tree and animals are symbols of religious intermediaries and abode of spirits among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria. Where these elements are regarded as totems, paid obeisance and referenced. However, degradation, floods, deforestation, water pollution, air pollution, smuggling of forest material and climate change are the negative effects of human manhandling of the environment. Due to the need for man to have shelter and decent abode, furniture is produced from timbers obtained from trees. Man fishes in the waters around him, and both the waters and the fish contribute to his economy and feeding. Playwrights and other writers deliberately include human interactions with nature in order to establish a balanced human living. Through the performance of these literary works, both the performers and the audience get to know the ideal relationship with nature and the natural elements expected of them.

The need for more proactive efforts by the government at all tiers of planning and enforcement of the environmental laws will go a long way to make our environment friendlier. To achieve this, education of the citizens by this directorates and other agencies such as ministry of information and orientation will be of tremendous effects. Artists, as social crusaders, will not stand aloof through their works, but collaborate with the government to ensure the renewed efforts yields the desired results.

This study is a projection of the synergy between nature and man. It is obvious that man benefits more from the environment, but unfortunately, man ill-treats nature. Domestic animals are poorly treated, simply because they are animals, and trees and plants are not so much regarded as contributing to the wellbeing of man beyond herbal and medicinal remedies and food, especially among the Yoruba people of western Nigeria. Man needs to realize that hurt done to plant, animals, water bodies and other natural elements around him, will come back to affect him directly. Man needs to respect other creatures around him in order for him to have the best of them. Political and community leaders are expected to treat nature well and lead by examples. The loyalty of other creatures to man should be emulated to a great extent in order for our society to be orderly. Man needs to be environmentally friendly and think of others in his quest for power, prestige, positions, wealth and greatness in life. Yes, it is right to be ambitious, but excessive ambition will hurt someone else or the community at large. We are our environment! Our environment is our health! The animals, water bodies, plants and trees are part of who we are.

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