



The Ephemeral Nature Of Hope In Ayobami Adebayo's *A Spell Of Good Things*

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Abstract

The moving depiction of modern Nigerian society, which is characterized by social injustice, economic instability, and moral ambiguity, can be found in Ayobami Adebayo's *A Spell of Good Things*. In order to examine how luxury and poverty affect people's decisions, relationships, and moral obligations, the work weaves together the lives of two families from very different socioeconomic backgrounds: the wealthy Solas and the destitute Alayides. The story highlights the frailty of hope and the delusion of short-term respite in an unfair system against a backdrop of gasoline scarcity, political corruption, and violence. Adebayo emphasizes the psychological and emotional effects of deprivation and moral complacency through a variety of viewpoints, especially those of Eniola and Wuraola. The work emphasizes the connection between personal suffering and societal failure while criticizing silence and inaction as forms of complicity. In order to make the case that *A Spell of Good Things* serves as a potent social critique and illustrates how goodness remains ephemeral and vulnerable in the absence of justice and structural change, this article looks at the novel's themes, characterization, symbolism, and narrative method.

Keywords: Poverty and inequality, hope and illusion, moral responsibility, and socio-political critique.

Introduction

A Spell of Good Things (2023) by Ayobami Adebayo, a profoundly poignant modern Nigerian novel, explores the precarious junction of optimism and despair in a culture plagued by poverty, political unpredictability, and moral ambiguity. In the wake of *Stay With Me*, global popularity, Adebayo once again showcases her ethical depth and narrative sensitivity by concentrating on everyday characters trapped in exceptional situations. "Contemporary African novels foreground ordinary lives to critique political failure" (Adichie 49). The novel, which is set in contemporary Nigeria, depicts two families—one wealthy and one poor—whose lives coexist side by side and are linked not by blood but by a common need for security, respect, and survival.

The work takes place amid a time of national unrest characterized by a lack of fuel, a downturn in the economy, corruption, and violence. In light of this, Adebayo examines how societal institutions influence people's decisions and how desperation can warp morality. In light of this, Adebayo examines how morality can be distorted by desperation and how societal institutions influence human decisions. The phrase *A Spell of Good Things* itself is incredibly sarcastic, implying a fleeting appearance of affluence and optimism that conceals more serious structural flaws. Adebayo creates a moving story that explores privilege, empathy, and the price of silence in an unequal society using a variety of viewpoints. "Moral ambiguity emerges when survival demands ethical compromise" (Bauman 96).

With an emphasis on themes, characterization, narrative technique, symbolism, and societal relevance, this article provides a thorough analysis of *A Spell of Good Things*. It contends that the book is a potent social critique that highlights the moral ramifications of inequality and the brittleness of virtue during difficult times rather than just a tale of personal sorrow. Setting and Socio-Political Context: The novel is set in modern-day Nigeria, a country beset by government corruption, unemployment, gasoline shortages, and economic instability. These circumstances are shown as factors that actively influence the lives of the protagonists rather than as far-off background aspects. A tense and uncertain atmosphere is created throughout the story by power outages, gasoline lines, starvation, and fear of violence. “The family in postcolonial fiction reflects the pressures of economic instability” (Ngũgĩ 108).

Lagos and other urban areas are depicted by Adebayo as places of stark contrast: luxurious residences cohabit with impoverished neighborhoods, and abundance coexists with severe hardship. The wider economic disparity in Nigerian society is reflected in this geographical gap. The book makes the argument that poverty is a state that undermines moral clarity, choice, and dignity rather than just being the lack of wealth. The novel’s political climate is one of disillusionment. Ordinary citizens are left to suffer the repercussions of poor government, while leaders are remote, unaccountable, and corrupt. The premise that individual misery is inextricably linked to public failure is emphasized by Adebayo through the integration of human narratives into this socio-political framework.

Two families are followed in *A Spell of Good Things*, the wealthy Solas and the impoverished Alayides. The Solas, who are protected from adversity by wealth and power, are made up of Baba Kola, Mama Kola, and their kids. On the other hand, the Alayide family—Eniola, his parents, and siblings—lives in abject poverty and struggles with instability and hunger all the time. The story switches between several points of view, especially those of Wuraola and Eniola. The reader can perceive the same socio-political reality from radically diverse social positions thanks to this shifting perspective. Eniola faces day-to-day survival and the gradual loss of hope, while Wuraola struggles with moral dissatisfaction and emotional neglect despite material comfort.

“Structural violence shapes individual suffering more powerfully than personal failure” (Galtung 171). The novel’s thematic themes are reflected in its structure. The image of a ‘spell’—a fleeting, false sense of goodness that eventually gives way to harsh reality—is reinforced by the tension’s progressive increase interspersed with intervals of seeming comfort. Both families are forced to face the repercussions of their decisions and inactions at the violent and irreversible finale. Psychological Depth and Characterization

Eniola: The Silent Suffering Face, the novel’s moral focal point is Eniola, a teenage boy from the Alayide family. Poverty continuously prevents him from pursuing his ambitions of school and a brighter future. He is intelligent, perceptive, and compassionate. He is emotionally and intellectually hungry in addition to being physically hungry. The voicelessness of millions of people ensnared in structural deprivation is symbolized by Eniola’s quiet and reluctance to express his anguish. By eschewing romanticism and highlighting the severity of circumstances that deprive Eniola of agency, Adebayo depicts Eniola with amazing empathy. His slow decline into hopelessness serves as a reminder of how even the strongest hope can be dashed by protracted adversity.

Wuraola: Privilege and Ethical Uncomfort, the affluent Solas’ daughter Wuraola provides an opposing but complimentary viewpoint. She is morally uncomfortable and emotionally ignored despite having material luxury. She is different from her family in that she recognizes injustice and unfairness, but her luxury prevents her from seeing the actual cruelty of poverty. The moral theme of the book is reflected in Wuraola’s internal struggle: awareness without action is complicity. Her battle to balance comfort and guilt highlights how morally fragile goodness is in an unequal society.

The parents in these households represent distinct reactions to luxury and adversity. Eniola parents’ love is limited by desperation, in stark contrast to Baba Kola’s moral compromise and emotional detachment. Adebayo explores how parental authority, responsibility, and failure are shaped by social conditions through these characters. Inequality and Poverty: In *A Spell of Good Things*, poverty is portrayed as an all-consuming force that robs people of their freedom and dignity. Inequality is revealed in the book

as a lived reality that affects who eats, who studies, and who survives rather than as an abstract idea. Adebayo criticizes a system where poverty encourages vulnerability and aggression while riches provides protection. “Hunger operates as both a physical and symbolic condition in narratives of deprivation” (Mbembe 14).

Illusion and Hope: The main irony of the book is summed up in the title. A brief sensation of hope is created by moments of relief, such as financial support, unanticipated generosity, and seeming opportunity, but this ‘spell’ eventually proves to be brittle. The work makes the argument that without structural change, hope is frequently a mirage that provides momentary solace but no long-term remedy. **Complicity and Moral Ambiguity:** Simple moral dichotomies are resisted by Addayn. Characters are shaped by circumstances, fear, and want rather than being entirely good or bad. The work explores the morality of being silent in the face of injustice, posing the question of whether doing nothing is morally wrong in and of itself.

Family and Accountability: In the novel, family connections are characterized by sacrifice, love, and conflict. Children face the emotional burden of adult failures as parents fight to shield them. The family, which is greatly impacted by outside socioeconomic forces, is portrayed by Adebayo as both a haven and a place of strife. **Imagery and Symbolism:** Throughout the book, Adebayo uses subtle but potent symbolism. Hunger serves as a symbolic and literal element, signifying the lack of opportunity, love, and sustenance. While darkness brought on by power outages represents moral and political obscurity, fuel scarcity represents national immobility. The novel’s ethical complexity is enhanced by the multi-perspective storytelling, which inspires readers to empathize with people from different social backgrounds. In an uneven society, this method emphasizes how interrelated people’s lives are. “Literature humanises statistics by transforming social issues into lived experiences” (Eagleton 53).

Conclusion

A Spell of Good Things is a compelling examination of privilege, poverty, and moral obligation in modern-day Nigeria. In a society formed by injustice, the socially grounded narrative and well-developed characters of Adebayo reveal the brittle essence of optimism. The work forces readers to face difficult issues like empathy, culpability, and the moral obligations of residing in an unfair society. In the end, Adebayo implies that goodwill is only fleeting—a spell that dissipates, leaving behind the terrible truth it once concealed—when it is not accompanied by justice and institutional change. The work is a significant addition to African and international literature since it calls for moral awareness and group accountability in addition to criticizing social failure.

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