

## LITERATURE: A TOOL IN NATION-BUILDING AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

**Raphael, I. Ngwoke, Ph.D**

E-mail: raphngwoke@gmail.com  
07030989229,

**Ngozi Ohakamike Obeka, Ph.D.,**

**Godwin Nwonuvu Nwebonyi,**

&

**Chukwuma Ogbonnaya Chukwu,**

Department of Arts and Social Science,  
Faculty of Education,  
Ebonyi State University,  
Abakaliki

### Abstract

The paper considered literature, a creative work of art, as possessing the capacity to revolutionize a nation in terms of economic and human capital development. It considered the intellectual value of literature as a field of study, the quality and contributory values of the different genres of literature, such as prose, drama, and poetry and shows that literature is not only represented in novels, drama and poetry, but consists of other writings or renditions that document the people's past and show their culture. The paper went further to show the various advantages derivable from literature, such as having deep and better understanding of the society, having a mastery of the machinations of History, and a means of securing national honour and pride among others. Finally, suggestions were given on how to sustain every achievement made in literature.

**Key words:** Literature, Tool, Nation-building, Human Capital Development

### Introduction

The word "Literature" could stand for a number of things, depending on what the user intends to address. For Rexroth (2023), it is a body of written works, especially applying to imaginative works of poetry and prose which are usually distinguished by the intentions of the writers. Gottlieb and Thomas (2023) approached it illustratively, distinguishing a literature with a capital letter "L" and a literature with a small letter "l". According to them, whereas a literature with the small letter designates any written text on any area of discipline, the "literature" that begins with the capital letter "L" designates a smaller set of all books that have been written – a much smaller subset. In the views of Robinson and Davidson (2014), literature constitutes the whole body of written works of a particular country or period in time, the whole body of information published on a particular subject.

Calderwood, Troolin, and Blakeley (2023) add that the definition of literature includes written and unwritten works used for cultural transmission. They could include stories told in the oral tradition and visual literature. The link between literature and writing may not be unexpected when we consider literature from the etymological point of view. Etymonline (2023) maintains that the word had its origin from the Latin *literatura/littera* which means "writing

formed with letters”, alphabetic letter, an epistle, writing or lettered document. Other writings add that the word literally means “acquaintance with letters”, and includes reflective essays or belles-lettres. *Literature, belles-letters, letters*, refer to artistic writings worthy of being remembered.

In research work, when we talk of a review of related literature, we simply refer to all documentations that have been made by different researchers which may have relationship with the research work at hand. In this sense, we can see the relationship of literature with letters or writings. The literature of a people consists of a whole body of written works or oral tradition which has documented the people’s origin and existence over the ages. For instance, through works of literature, we understand that the people of Israel and Egypt have existed for ages. The Holy bible records the genealogy of Israel, and links it to Adam the first creation of God, while also tracing the descendants of Jesus Christ the messiah, through to David, as recorded in Luke’s gospel (3:32-38):

...David, which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Na’ason, ...which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, ...which was the son of Ma-thusa-la, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

In like manner, the nation Egypt, can readily trace their roots and ancestry through the Holy book, the bible. Egypt shares boundary with Israel, and from the records of the Holy bible, Egypt was a cradle of civilization, a centre for agriculture, technology and ancient science. When there was famine in Canaan land, Israel got sustenance from Egypt. The progenitors of the Israeli nation later migrated to Egypt and was sustained by Egypt for over four centuries. Moses, the great prophet of God that championed the exodus was born in Egypt. There is no doubt that Moses became a product of Egyptian education. The veracity of this statement is captured by the Holy bible in Acts (7: 22), “And Moses was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deed”.

The holy bible therefore, can aptly be said to extensively contain the literatures of Israel and Egypt, among other nations. Benko and Parnas (2023) aver that Canaanites of all sorts would routinely migrate to Northern Egypt during times of drought. This was to afford them the agricultural advantages of the Nile delta which provided secure food sustenance. The sudden exit of Israel from Egypt robbed the Israeli hosts of the cheap labour which they exploited in the Israelites and so adversely affected their economy.

**Literature, A Mirror of Society:** Literature is often a reflection of its society. The preceding discourse would quickly show how connected literature is to its environment. The literature of the people captures the people’s life style, their food habit, their marriage customs, their style of education, legal system, religious life, dress code, commerce and general life style. Apparent historical periods are reflected in their literature. National and ethnic relationships, in politics,

economy and wars are often reflected in literary accounts. Most literary works, whether they are oral or written fictions, often capture life as it is lived in its society.

In the words of Kermode, Hollander, Bloom, Price, Trapp, and Trilling (1973), *Beowulf* is the finest surviving long poem in old English, now written in a single manuscript. According to them, there is no knowledge of the author of this long epic, neither was it given the title until 1805. Before it was put into print in 1815, it had remained an oral tradition. The epic of Sundjata composed in medieval Mali is, according to Senanu and Vincent (1988), a historical account of Susu Sumanguru Baamangana, also called Sosso Soumaoro Kanté, a sorcerer who ruled the Sosso kingdom. Senanu and Vincent (1988) say he had conquered Mali, defeating Dankaran Touman, a half-brother of Sundjata, who had usurped the throne of Mali against the will of Nare Maghan their late father. *The vulture* by Birago Diop, in Senanu and Vincent (1988), x-rays the imperialistic savagery of the colonial masters on African natives. The colonization of Africa is a historical fact which is captured also by literature.

On the other hand, the society benefits by literary works, as they expose the people's life style to the world for global appreciation. Works of literature therefore have symbiotic relationship with the society. It is the content of the society that the literary artist utilizes as raw materials to produce his work. In the classic novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe utilizes the people and their rich cultural heritage to produce his masterpiece. The setting is Igbo land in Southern Nigeria. Names such as Okonkwo, Unoka, Ikemefuna, Nwoye among others, show that Achebe is writing on events that take place in the Igbo society. The people observe the yearly seasons such as new moon, new yam festival, and the rituals of the planting season, among others. In like manner, most Shakespearean works such as *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, among others, were set in Italy, Rome; Scotland, Britain, among others. The names of the characters, their style of speaking and addressing of situations, their food and the climate of their environment all portray foreign, non-African society. Culturally, the works of the above texts reflect the society they are set.

**Literary Language:** Literary works are characterized by a special language which bequeath to it colour, that makes it different from other works such as research report, history, minutes of a meeting or reports of a proceeding. According to [quora.com](https://www.quora.com/), literature in general refers to works that are considered artistic, or of intellectual merit. Such artistic works are usually replete with literary or figurative expressions such as similes, metaphors, imagery, oxymoron, and litotes among others, which are usually not the case with other non-literary genres of writing. In "*The Sun on This Rubble*" by Denis Brutus, he paints a vivid image with the sun beaming its radiance on the debris, caused by the violent rainstorm after a destructive rainfall. In that predictive poem, he uses the sun as a symbol of hope which would come after the destructive apartheid regime that wreaked havoc on South Africa. Achebe (2012:1), figuratively describes the political, economic, religious, and social enslavement and subsequent dominion of the West against Africa, following the Berlin conference of 1885, as a "rain that beat Africa". The unfortunate aspect of Africa's total subservience to the West is that Africa was oblivious of the time the West plotted their enslavement, and so are right now quite unable to ascertain how to free themselves. According to him; "The rain that beat Africa began four to five hundred years ago, from the 'discovery' of Africa by Europe, through the transatlantic slave trade, to the Berlin conference of 1885." In the poem *Breath*, Soyinka (1985), figuratively describes the African belief in life after death. He shows that the dead and the living still have communication and it is only one that listens discreetly that will hear the communicative language:

Listen more to things

Than to words that are said  
 The water's voice sings  
 And the flame cries  
 And the wind that brings  
 The woods to sighs  
 Is the breathing of the dead.

Those who are dead have never gone away.  
 They are in the shadows darkening around,  
 They are in the shadows fading into day,  
 The dead are not under the ground.  
 They are in the trees that quiver,  
 They are in the woods that weep,  
 They are in the waters of the rivers,  
 They are in the waters that sleep.  
 They are in the crowds, they are in the homestead.  
 The dead are never dead...

The language of literature gives it an edge over grammar when it comes to communication. Whereas grammar can only walk, literature can run, jump and fly. Whereas in grammar, one cannot eat a stone, nor swallow a camel without violating semantic rules, one may not only eat a stone in literary language, but can equally squeeze out water from the rocks, swallow a camel, and even develop the serpent's tongue, if only to beautify the creative work of art. The heavens can cry, shed tears, groan in pain and vomit vapour and stone. The language of literature is therefore a special one that colourates speech and writings, making it fascinatingly rich. While literature as a body of study, enjoys that special language privilege, poetry as a literary genre enjoys more. With poetic license, a literary artiste can turn a negative statement into positive orientation. Imagine the late African pop music star, Sunny Okosun (Ozzidi) telling us in his *No More War* track, "We don't want to fight war no more", yet he tells us *No more war*. The poet enjoys a poetic license that makes him use words off the normal grammatical context and yet enjoys acceptance.

**Literature in Nation Building:** In building a virile and formidable nation, the role of literature cannot be under-played. There can be no hopeful future without a past, captured in the present. Works of literature are very instructive in trying to construct a goal-oriented generation in any nation. From definition, we see literature as a creative work of art through which emotion is poured out for the reader to benefit from the feeling of another. Literature does not only capture emotionally laden situations, but also captures the historical past of a people – their origin, ancestry and cultural past. Such pasts are necessary to reposition today and reconstruct the future. No nation can develop evenly and harmoniously coexist without the past. How the past is presented is important for the stability or otherwise of the nation. If the past is presented with negative orientation, where their different constituent ethnic nationalities never agreed, were never ever one, never wanting to be one, often at wars and each aspiring to undo the other, it will not be unlikely that the succeeding generations would never like to see eye to eye with others from other ethnic groups. If on the other hand, the literary artistes build a bonding past by their literary creations, the succeeding generations will always see one another as people of a common destiny, bound to pursue a common goal. In such environment, the national goals and aspirations

of that nation would seamlessly be pursued and achieved. According to Donaldson (2023), to have a country of national cohesion, every person has to be pulling in the same direction. According to him, if in his country England, one or several groups feel very differently about what it means to be British, then social cohesion would be very much difficult to attain. Works of literature can be used to awaken government's consciousness on the need for comprehensive human capital development for a nation's progress.

**Human Capital Development:** Human capital development refers to the knowledge, skills, and health available to the people that would enable them to achieve and maximize their productive potentials and become fulfilled as members of their society. When government and or individuals of the society invest in education, the citizens benefit and become empowered to not only pursue meaningful goals, but contribute to the making of that society. This brings development and progress to the nation. Literature can be a strong and influential weapon to achieving human capital development. The nation is built when there is human capital development and every member is given unfettered freedom to realize their God-given potentials.

To enhance nation-building and human capital development, the teaching of literature should be given an enhanced attention in both the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, such that by the time products from such system will be coming up to the university, they have become not only inventors of nation-building ideas, but also capable of turning their ideas into concrete working tools. This idea will be more appreciated when we consider the relevance of literature instruction and why it should be not only sustained, but duly elaborated in the secondary school curriculum.

**Relevance of Literature in the School Curriculum.** When we recall that the curriculum of the school consists of all the experiences which are available and which are selected and consistently organized for the purpose of bringing about a positive change in the behavior of the recipient, we begin to appreciate the need to make literature an important aspect of the school curriculum. Currently the Nigerian primary school curriculum has not paid attention to the teaching and learning of literature, for reasons yet to be explained. What looks like literature in the primary school appears in form of social studies or civic education. This ought not to be so when we consider roles the study of literature can perform in terms of developing the nation and building human capital. In trying to see the importance of literature in nation- building and human capital development, we need to examine some of the importance of literary studies especially in our schools. Some of the reasons why literature should be taught in our schools include:

- i. **For Deep and Better Understanding of the Society:** The society is a critical element in curriculum planning and development. This is because, the society is a next beneficiary of good academic products after the student who is the primary beneficiary. For a person to function effectively in his environment, he must have first and foremost understood the values and aspirations of the society. Education is useful only when it benefits the society that offers it. Since literature is a mirror of the society, it therefore means that through the study of literature, the beneficiary would have a deep grasp of his society, thus enabling him to identify the needs of his society with a view to offering useful solution.
- ii. **For a better Mastery of the Machinations of History:** The history of a people defines them. History connects the past to the present and prepares people for future challenges. Literature shares some characteristics in common with History, such as giving details of the past, showing the common life style of a people. A study of literature avails

beneficiaries of historical antecedents, equips them of possible future challenges, taking into cognizance the present. *The interesting narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano (1789)* can be called a “literary history” since it captures the life and culture of a nation in the South Eastern Nigeria. The Epic of Gilgamesh is one of the earliest known literary works which falls into this group. According to Lombardi (2009), this work is a Babylonian epic arising from stories in the Sumerian language. This epic deals with themes of heroism, friendship, loss and the quest for eternal life. Beowulf, a mythical figure is another epic literature of the medieval period which deals with historical narrative.

### iii. A Source of Advancing National Life

We can draw from literary works to advance our nation, economically, academically, and technologically. After the fall of old Ghana Empire in 1076 AD, the State of Kangaba broke away and became Independent. Onwubiko (1967) writes that it was Sumanguru of the State of Kaniaga that brought the old Ghana Empire into ruins, after executing eleven out of the twelve heirs of Kangaba except Sundiata, a sickly, weakling. Surprisingly, it was this same Sundiata (also known as Marijata) that eventually grew and ascended the throne of Kangaba. Kangaba later became what is today Mali. History credits the foundation and imperial greatness of Mali to Sundiata. Both Sumanguru and Sundiata wrote poems and other inspiring literature works that x-rayed their military, economic and technological exploits. Other rulers made their literary contributions. There is the *Epic of Sundiata* written in medieval Mali, the Kebra Negast or book of kings from

Ethiopia, the *Epic of Dinga* of old Ghana Empire, *Zambia Shall Be Free* by former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, *Because I am Involved* by Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu among others. These are inspiring literature books that unveil both the military and leadership experiences of these leaders. What was the magic of Sundiata for Instance? How was a sickly, weakling able to survive after the extermination of his whole family? How was he able to come to the throne in view of the avowed hostility of Sumanguru? What was his military secret? What was his economic secret? No doubt, these must be revealed in the *Epic of Sundiata* knowing full well that epics are literary records of kingly exploits. Ancient historical records hold that Sumanguru was a sorcerer –who used occultism extensively to consolidate his hold of the newly born kaniaga Empire but alas, it was the sickly, weakling Sundiata that terminated both he and his empire. What a colossal disappointment to any ruler that would want to use diabolical means to both establish his kingdom and remain on the throne?

Idi Amin unleashed the worst terror on his subjects only equaled in the recent times by those of Samuel Doe of Liberia, Charles Taylor and the late Muammar Ghadafi of Libya. Just like Sumanguru of Mali, It was the soft –speaking, gentle Julius Nyerere of Tanzania that sacked the murderous government of Idi Amin of Uganda. Great lessons abound for leaders who would think that might is right. Any City built on terror and occultism must collapse and with much ignominy.

The reign of terror and racism in Africa and the obnoxious apartheid government in South Africa were captured by such literary artists as Denis Brutus, David Diop, Kwesi Brew, and Oswald M. Mtshali among others in Senanu and Vincent (1998). In Denis Brutus’ *A Troubadour I Traverse*, he pictures a medieval European knight called *Trabadour* who dedicated his life to the service of a lady. His service would often entail fighting to rescue the lady- his mistress- from monsters and other unfaithful Knights. In this poem, the land of South Africa has become the lady mistress which Brutus is fighting to liberate. David Diop in Senanu and Vincent (1998) pictures Africa in three stages of history: the pre-colonial, the colonial and post-colonial

Africa. Pre –colonial Africa was the period of Africa’s glory when they prided in their warriors, a time when Africa had sovereignty and flourished, then came the next gloomy and hopeless period of colonialism when African pride was taken from her and replaced by the mockery of the colonial masters. But there is hope for Africa in future when colonialism would be over thrown to restore the black man’s dignity. In his poem *Africa*, David Diop pictures the pre- colonial, colonial, and post-colonial states of the African continent. In the pre-colonial era, Africa prided in her local warriors who defended their territorial borders from external aggression. The colonial era witnessed the humiliation of this great continent with her continental warriors by the colonialists. Hope however resurges at the end when the colonial oppression is over thrown thus restoring the African pride. David Diop in Senanu and Vincent (1998:73) captures Africa this way:

Africa my Africa  
 Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs  
 ...The work of your slavery  
 The slavery of your children  
 Africa tell me Africa  
 Is this your back that is bent?  
 The back that breaks under the weight of humiliation  
 ...But a grave voice answer me  
 Impetuous child that tree young and strong  
 That tree over there

Splendidly alone amidst white and faded flowers  
 That is your Africa springing up anew  
 Springing up patently obstinately  
 Whose fruits bit by bit acquire  
 The bitter taste of liberty.

A common feature in the poems of Africa freedom fighters is the hope they build in their readers that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Denis Brutus in *The sun on this Rubble* in Senanu and Vincent (1998) reveals the hope of things being well again after the destructive period of the ravaging storm of the South African Apartheid government. No doubt, the literary succour provided by these artists became the basis of hope that sustained the liberation struggle through to independence in 1990 .We can safely say that the nation of South Africa was built mainly by the courageous words of literary scholars.

#### **iv. Stimulation of Creative instincts:**

Creativity is in the gene of every human. According to edu.gcfglobal.org (2023), everyone can be creative, whether or not they realize it. Creativity, according to them is not only exhibited in art work, but in all other aspects of life endeavors – in retail business, in office work or as a professional athlete. Creativity, they believe, is learnable and perfected on, through practice. Literature is a creative work of art which makes use of language. Novels, poems and drama as different genres of literature are creative works. A creative mind is a productive mind. The contribution of creative writers in the development of any nation can in no way be underestimated. Professor Wole Soyinka is a Nobel Prize winner due to his literary creativity.

**v. A Means of National Pride and Honour:** Good literary works earn honour to a nation. Authors of such works are revered and such reverence goes for glory unto the nation of such authors. Professor Chinua Achebe was a literary icon that attracted international recognition and

reputation for Nigeria. According to Egwu (2012), Achebe is "... the man who taught the English people how to write the English language". To underscore Achebe's international importance, the New York senate adopted a resolution honouring Achebe, describing him as a novelist of international repute. Sahara Reporters (2013), confirms that both the New York State senate and the Mayor of the city of Washington DC both adopted resolutions honouring Professor Chinua Achebe. In the words of the mayor of Washington DC; "Along with the District's African community and the entire world, I grieve the passing of Chinua Achebe...His respected legacy will be the young writers he inspires to tell their stories for future generations to enjoy".

In their own tribute, the New York state senate states:

WHEREAS it is the sense of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to the life of those esteemed individuals of international renown who distinguished themselves through their life's work: and WHEREAS foremost novelist, Professor Chinua Achebe, died on Thursday, March 21, 2013, at the age of 82; and WHEREAS, born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe, on November 16, 1930, Chinua Achebe was a Nigerian novelist, poet, professor, and critic; he was best known for his 1958 novel, THINGS FALL APART, selling over 12 million copies around the world, and having been translated into 50 languages, making him the most paraphrased African writer of all time; and WHEREAS raised by his parents in the Igbo town of Ogidi in south eastern Nigeria, Chinua Achebe excelled academically and earned a scholarship for undergraduate studies; he became fascinated with world religions and traditional African cultures, and began writing stories as a college student; and WHEREAS after graduation, Chinua Achebe worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS), and soon moved to the metropolis of Lagos; he gained worldwide attention for THINGS FALL APART; his later novels include: No Longer At Ease (1960), Arrow Of God (1964), A Man of The People (1966), and Anthill Of The Savannah (1987), and WHEREAS when the region of Biafra broke away from Nigeria in 1967, Chinua Achebe became a supporter of Biafran independence and acted as ambassador for the people of the new nation; the war ravaged the populace, and as starvation and violence took its toll, he appealed to the people of Europe and the Americas for assistance;...WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Chinua Achebe leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time, and will remain as comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of paramount novelist Chinua Achebe, founder and pioneer of African literature; and be it further RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Chinua Achebe.



There is hardly any other recognition that can be rightly adjudged to be higher than that for a nation like Nigeria from the Western world. This has been made possible through literary work. Professor Wole Soyinka the Nobel laureate is another literary icon of international repute who has achieved a similar feat through literature. Not worthy of omission is the woman literary icon of the present time, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Nigerian image has been towering, courtesy of her literary exploits. According to Guardian News (2022), Adichie holds 16 honorary doctorate degrees from universities of Yale, university of Pennsylvania, university of Edinburgh, Duke University, Georgetown University, Johnson Hopkins University, and the catholic university of Louvain. If we view these against the background of the disrepute the nation has suffered as a result of people who portray the country in bad light, we then see the power of literary works in nation building. Creative minds are great minds that do great things for their country. Literature creates great minds that launch their country into greatness. Poetry takes us into deep thinking and everyone knows that every idea that launches any nation into greatness comes from deep thoughts. The computer system, internet services, mobile telecommunication network and their likes, are all products of innovative thoughts. In technology, new products are manufactured; in literature, new ideas that unravel new methods of problem-solving are equally unravelled.

**vi. X-ray of a People's Culture.**

Culture is the totality of a people's way of life. A people's culture is their way of life, their food habits, their dressing code, their means of livelihood, etc. Literature shows us our culture in practical terms. Nigerian artifacts have stood high even in Europe. Works of art such as sculptural works, tell the history of a people. *Breaking Kola nut* is a poetic rendition of the cultural importance of kola-nut in attracting divine guidance and companionship. In this traditional poem, Lawrence Emeka in Senanu and Vincent (1998) portrays the Igbo nation of Eastern Nigeria as a religious people who have much dependence on God. They believe that God is "...the creator who lives on high and his eyes cover the whole ground...", a God of justice and equity who would not allow the innocent to be punished like the wicked. Emeka in Senanu and Vincent (1998) captures the words of the libation of an Igbo man in which he intends to declare his innocence this way:

I am a little innocent child, who washes his stomach, but your eyes see me, and you can judge. If I have ever touched the wife of a relation or seen the nakedness of a sister ..., May this our land and the mother Earth eat me".

Culturally, it is an abomination in Igbo land for a man to go into the wife of a relation or to see the nakedness of one's sister. This taboo is echoed in Leviticus (18: 6, 9-13). There is an affinity between the Igbo and other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria when it comes to the use of the kola-nuts. However, among the Igbo, the kola nut commands a very strong cultural significance. The kola nut is used as an object of communicating with the gods and spirits. The kola nut serves as food and stimulants. Among the Igbo, apart from serving as the food for the gods through which ancestral prayers are believed to be carried to God, it is also an object for welcoming visitors. It is in fact believed among most Nigerians that three of the four-lobes of some species of the kola-nut represents the three major ethnic nationalities of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, while the fourth part represents the minorities in block. The Igbo however believe that the four -lobed kola-nut represents the four Igbo week days of *Eke*, *Orie*, *Afor* and *Nkwo*.

By x-raying our cultural similarities, literature builds a common bridge of relationship among us. Religiously, the African traditional religion, Christianity and Islamic religions have several things in common. Firstly, all the three religions which hold sway in Nigeria emphasize

the supremacy of the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God. All of them have some form of morality; the only difference lies in the mode and purpose of worship. Both the Jews and the Arabs through whom came Christianity and Islam have a common ancestor; while the Christians call him (*father*) *Abraham*, the Muslims call him (*father*) *Ibrahim*.

We need Nigerian creative artists who would devote time to create literary works that bring out the similarities of both religions. This move will definitely bring about a harmonious co-existence as against the present situation of ethno- religious rancour and acrimony. The Bible extensively captures Israel's history which embodies her cultural and religious life.

### **Sustaining the Advantages of Literary Works; The Nigerian Situation:**

It is really disheartening that Nigeria, as endowed as she is with great literary icons, have failed to utilize the great honours and lofty heights which her great literary giants have both gained and aspired for her. The leaders of the nation should have leveraged on the personal efforts of these literary giants to improve the life of her citizenry both at home and in the diaspora. Nigeria could appoint such internationally revered figures into offices that would require international diplomatic relations. Such people's goodwill could be coveted in times of strained relationship with any country. Chinua Achebe was in his thirties when the defunct Biafran government appointed him an ambassador of the new republic. In that capacity, Achebe played a great role in ensuring that Biafran children were not all starved to death during the notorious economic blockade of the Nigerian government. He was able to appeal to and secure the goodwill of some western nations who came to the Biafran aid in terms of reliefs.

On the other hand, it appears that the observed endemic corruption of most Nigerian political leaders scare these literary icons to a distance. Some of them have on their own shunned government appointments due to established mal-administration resulting to abuses of public office, especially through corruption. Flood (2011), reports that Chinua Achebe declined the offer of a national award of Commander of the Federal Republic (CFR) and observed that this brings it to the second time Achebe has refused such offer from the Federal Government of Nigeria, the first being in 2004. According to Flood, Achebe cited chaos in Anambra, his home state where, according to him some small clique of renegades, openly boasting themselves of having connections with men in high places, had muzzled both the economy and peace of the state. This calls for a reawakening on the part of government, to get things rightly working for the good of all in Nigeria. Succeeding governments in Nigeria should understand that there are Nigerians who are ready and willing to live decent and honest lives, devoid of corruption. Government should sustain the interest of such honest individuals by trying to be honest themselves.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the role of literature in building a strong, united and self-reliant nation, through human capital development cannot be underestimated. Most students find the study of literature very boring due to the volumes of books that are often prescribed for studies. When teachers of literature cultivate the habit of taking time to explain to students what they and their nation stand to gain by literature studies, more students will assuredly opt to study literature. Nigerian literature curriculum should be broadened to incorporate the gains of literature studies to the student, the immediate community, the government, and above all, the international honours awaiting very good literary artistes.

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