

**REINTERPRETING ACHEBE’S  
“A MAN OF THE PEOPLE”  
POST-COLONIALLY**



**Literature**

**Keywords:** Chinua Achebe, Chief Nanga, Nuruldin, Odilli Samalu, and Post-colonial Nigeria.

**Amir Hossain**

**PhD (Research Fellow) in English, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.**

**Abstract**

This paper would like to examine Chinua Achebe’s novel *A Man of the People* (1966) in the post-colonial Nigeria perspective. The novel-text depicts corrupt influence of power on the common men and the politicians, sexual-political rivalries. Socio-political disorder gives a way to corruption, exploitation, despair, and anguish in the post-independent Nigerian society and community. The paper aims to present corruption, exploitation, and social injustice in society and acquisition of material wealth by a nefarious policy. Achebe’s novel *A Man of the People* is a mirror of political opportunism and prevalent corruption in the socio-political aspects of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Nigeria. Achebe challenges the derogatory image of Nigeria and refutes western influences on Nigerian nation. As a self-conscious critic and social observer of the age, the novelist wants to present prevalent issues very faithfully. Themes and characters are vividly reflected through political and socio-cultural trends of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Nigeria. For this purpose, the paper would like to examine the characters of Chief Nanga and Odilli Samalu with a view to fostering a perfect picture of post-colonial Nigeria’s corrupt politics. Achebe exposes the political malady through the characters of Nanga and Odilli who represent existing social and political contradictions. Both Odilli and Nanga, representing the young educated Nigerian and a stereotype in Nigerian politics, are drawn to alien culture and are corrupted by emerging new forces of power and wealth. Odilli opposes against an unscrupulous politician Chief Nanga regarding his corrupt political ruling system. The paper would like to unveil how once upon a time the common Nigerians were dominated and oppressed by the British. And, this Chief Nanga is a follower of the British rulers. The paper also would like to investigate Achebe’s treatment of socio-political system of his contemporary age. Finally, this paper would like to make a comparative study between Syed Shamsul Haque’s play *Nuruldin’s Lifetime* and Achebe’s novel *A Man of the People* with a view to highlighting the practical picture of the corrupt socio-political system of the dishonest and powerful rulers of the age. Through similarities and differences, it aims to look at Haque’s and Achebe’s treatment of socio-political system through investigating their texts.

**Introduction**

In *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1996), Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins point out:

The term *post-colonialism*—according to a too-rigid etymology—is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naïve teleological sequence, which supersedes colonialism, *post-colonialism* is, rather, an engagement with, and contestation of, colonialism’s discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies. (Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins)

The said theoretical comments made by Gilbert and Tompkins will certainly help us understand what Achebe in *A Man of the People* actually wants to emphasize on Nigerian political crisis through portraying the characters of Chief Nanga and Odilli Samalu. How an independent state like Nigeria “breaks away from its governance by another state.” Once Nigeria was dominated and ruled by the British colonial rulers. Following their bureaucratic policy, current Nigeria is being dominated post-colonially by the politicians whose only aim is to spread “power structures, and social hierarchies” across the country.

Chinua Achebe presents the corrupt socio-political situation of the newly educated Nigerians who are caught between the tension of traditional values and modern rationality. Achebe has highlighted social, political, and personal turbulence in neocolonial Nigeria. He distinguishes and chooses the proper moment for his literary reflection. He asserts that at the time of transformation, there occurs a shift from one mode of life to another which is important for a nation. This turning point is an indicative of a prosperous future in one way and another, a very crucial moment when the people require to be patient, far-sighted, prudent, and understanding. In that urgent situation, it is the duty of the novelist or the nation of the country to direct themselves with the mighty pen.

In the novel *A Man of the People*, Achebe's portrayal of a politician Chief the Honorable MA Nanga, MP, a charming manbut, inwardly very self-centred, who seeks happiness and hankers after money and wealth. Achebe, in the guise of Odilli, a school teacher, scrutinizes Chief Nanga, who is Odilli's former teacher and a popular politician.

Thus, this paper would like to present corrupt political situation of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Nigeria through the art of characterization and plot-construction. Moreover, it would like to make a comparative study between Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Syed Shamsul Haque's *Nuruldin's Lifetime* with a view to fostering the practical image of post-colonial Nigeria as well as colonial Bengal. It aims to look at Achebe's and Haque's treatment of corrupt politics and social system of their contemporary period. Through similarities and differences, the paper would like to unveil the powerful characters of Chief Nanga and Odilli Samalu in the novel *A Man of the People* as well as Nuruldin and KingDeviprasad Singh in the play *Nuruldin's Lifetime*.

### **Reinterpreting *A Man of the People* Post-colonially**

Chinua Achebe is regarded as a well-reputed Nigeriannovelist. His novel *A Man of the People* depicts the system in which European tradition and Nigerian mode of expression are related to each other. His novel is connected to deem politics as a style of commentary on the emergence and transformation of nationalism which fosters Achebe's treatment of colonial rule of Nigeria. His core philosophy has been reflected by changing discourse on the national identity in colonial and postcolonial Nigeria. His exploration for a postcolonial identity is manifested in the novel-text. (Gikandi 1)

As a representative of the age, Achebe wants to demonstrate to the people of the world that culture, custom, religion, and native belief of the colonized people of Nigeria have been unveiled in the postmodern time. The novelist encourages his readers with self-confidence to give up inferiority complex entrusted by the white nation. He not only writes novels, but also teaches his people to get rid of racial inferiority. In this regard, Achebe writes, "Here then is an adequate revolution for me to spouse to help my society regain its belief in itself and put away the complex of the years of denigration and self-denigration" (Sivasankar 489).

Achebe challenges the derogatory image of Nigeria and refutes the white people's policy and system on Africa. He is a practical man who wants to find out dark aspects of his times which are pragmatic in the postcolonial Nigeria perspective. As a self-conscious critic and social observer of the age, the novelist wants to present prevalent issues very apparently.

For this purpose, this current paper attempts to show how Achebe is practical in writing his novels under the postcolonial creation. We must bear in mind that colonial exploitation and its aftermath in Nigeria is severe owing to its geological position, tradable sea-route, lack of written language, and pittance for human labour. As a result, this study wants to shed a new light how Achebe utilizes colonizer's language and education against western hegemony with a view to regaining Nigeria's equality, superior culture, social structure and traditional policy and practice.

The novel *A Man of the People* depicts post-colonial issues minutely. This is because at the very outset of the novel, we can notice how Nigerians are ruled and dominated by the English. In the middle of the story, it is seen by readers how ordinary people and leaders in Nigeria work so hard together in order to gain their independence. After gaining Nigerians' liberty; readers can be able to realise about corruption and the abuse of authority within society and community. In this regard, Simon Gikandi considers Achebe's novel as a positive manner by pointing out, "the novel provides a new way of reorganizing African cultures, particularly in the crucial juncture of transition from colonialism to national independence" (Gikandi 31), the end of the novel does not have an upright result to society, culture, and community. This is due to the misuse of political authority for the personal interest, which leads to different leadership problems in Nigeria. In this way, Nigerians' hope of an ideal government and nation after independence from British colonial policy gets disappointed. Achebe's novel *A Man of the People* is considered as an attempt to reflect real leadership problem in Nigeria. The paper intends to explain how his novel presents nature of politics during post-independence period and how leadership exploits the independence for their own interest.

Achebe is devoted himself to writing novels and short stories in order to show socio-cultural and historical awareness among nations. He is concerned about the fate of a society through denigration and self-abasement. Achebe cautions his readers that colonial livelihood is not expectable. He understands that urgent need is a form of Negritude in the colonized Nigeria. Therefore, Achebe's *A Man of the People* is regarded as a literary preserver of Nigerian social-cultural and historical value. (Maleki 10)

The novel centres on the theme of disillusionment in post-independent Nigeria. It presents corruption, exploitation, and social injustice in society and acquisition of material wealth by a crooked policy. The novelist wants to express the fact how Nigerian politicians resort to corrupt trick for fulfilling their personal motive. (Singh 55) He wants to depict a powerful commentary on corrupt government body. Contemporary social system in Nigeria is reflected in his novel, where independence provides a new set of black masters in place of white masters. Native masters imitate the arrogant behaviour of colonial masters. Achebe satirizes the grotesque image of new

class of black dominators. Nigerians are exploited and betrayed by former colonizers and later by their own native leaders and bureaucrats. In the book *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Jürgen Osterhammel (2005) points out:

Colonialism is a relationship between an indigenous majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are defined in a distant metropolis. By rejecting cultural compromises with colonized population, colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and their ordained mandate to rule. (Osterhammel 116)

From the above comments, it can be mentioned that Osterhammel focuses on British colonial rule and crooked policy to dominate the black people for their self-interest. Similarly, Achebe's text *A Man of the People* also tells us about colonial rulers' interests and dishonest policy over Nigeria. Thus we can determine a similar view between Achebe's text *A Man of the People* and Osterhammel's *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*.

Achebe's novel is thus a real picture of political opportunism and prevalent corruption in socio-political aspects of Nigeria. He highlights changes in social and political life that leave a nation under the spell of gloom and uncertainty. He mirrors human life and many events in the year 1960s, like political corruption, proliferating bureaucracy, mode of communication and so on. He employs an irony of the satirist to ridicule and denounce circumstance by marring social morality. His novel depicts corrupt influence of power on men and politicians, sexual-political rivalries. He attempts to look at the fact that no political order is permanent and an old order is destroyed to make a way for novelty and innovation. Socio-political disorder gives a way to corruption, exploitation, despair, and anguish in post-independent Nigerian society, culture, and community.

*A Man of the People* presents an ill-consequence of Nigerian exposure to the west. It is about the legacy of white nation, and documents an avarice of the people resulting in corruption in post-independent Nigeria. As a result, such a Chief Nanga, the Honourable Minister of Culture, a man of the people, a seasoned corrupt politician provides a book with its ironic title, which is the flamboyant embodiment of rising ambition and failure of Nigeria. Achebe is concerned with the loss of human values and dignity due to exploitation of natives. He attempts, "to capture the sense of this mutation in the African character during and after colonialism, as a detached observer reconciled to inevitable change" (Achebe 50). The novel shows postcolonial situation in a modern Nigeria state, which is to sever its ties with the traditional past. The novelist wants to present a satirical stand to show how obsolete values are exploited by politicians to meet their selfish demands. In this regard, this paper would like to mention a globally famous mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander Pope. Through this long narrative poem, Pope's purpose is to highlight the 18<sup>th</sup>-century social picture of England. Mainly as a satirist, the poet wants to expose human vices and faults through the characters of Belinda and Adventurous Baron. He has satirized the sophisticated familial life style of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century England. In fact, he aims to unveil the real social image of his time with a view to unmasking in front of his readers. Similarly, Achebe wants to

satire the selfish political figures of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Nigeria whose only aim is to cheat the common people for gaining their personal motive.

However, plot-construction fosters an interaction between the two main characters, like Chief Nanga, an unscrupulous politician and Odilli, a young school teacher. Chief Nanga is the representative of a particular class of politicians and postcolonial elite who inherits power and pelf from the British at any cost. Odilli is a native young school teacher. The novel presents his resistance to an imperialist politician Nanga who wants to resist the internal forces of colonial hegemony. On the other hand, Odille is dedicated to fighting against the hypocrite politician Chief Nanga for the greater welfare of his native land. Apart from native politician and imperialist politician, there is a category of common men, cynical complacent electorate who know that their leaders devour nation's funds, but are reconciled to exploitation. Achebe satirizes the selfish Nigerians who get themselves involved into politics only for their personal benefits.

However, Chief Nanga and Odilli are presented as opposite characters. Chief Nanga unscrupulously makes his way to power and affluence by swaying people by hearts, and Odilli scrupulously remains away from politics and critical of ethical degradation in politics. As an idealist, Odilli does not prove an exception to corrupt trend and turn into an imperialist politician. The novel is a satirical document that satirizes institutions and people by attacking the dark aspects of the corrupt politicians of his times. In this regard, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* may be regarded as a political satire of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century England. As an expedient thinker and socio-political critic, Swift has satirized the corrupt political system of England very faithfully for which he was sent to jail. The novelist has tried to unmask the corrupt socio-political system of his age.

Similarly, the novel *A Man of the People* shows how a country faces a hurdle crisis while the colonial masters leave Nigeria. Though they have left the country, the native political figures are still following their policy. It "is a scathing denunciation of the political corruption of the new governing classes and the cynicism of the masses" (Palmer 72). Here, Achebe gives a clear indication about the elected representatives of Nigeria who are politically corrupted.

Social image in the novel represents Nigerian nation at the mercy of white nation, but retains a legacy of colonialism. It reflects the breakdown in the continuity and unity of tribal life by being vested within intricate balance between religious customs and traditions. Achebe focuses on corruption from official to political level, false promises and intrigues of politicians where "bribery, thuggery and chicanery summed up the prevailing malaise" (Sivaramakrishnan 24).

The protagonist of the novel, Nanga is a Minister of Culture in the West African State of Nigeria who professes to be a representative of the common people by making his pretext to understand their problems. Chief Nanga's self-centredness is rooted in this sense that he gains a "princely seven bathroom mansion with its seven gleaming, silent action water closets"

(Achebe<sup>41</sup>) in Nigeriawhere peasants and workers live in shacks and afford pails of excrement. There is a contradiction between his public and private face. Chief Nanga, despite an uneducated man, is proud of his power and wealth, and has a general distrust for the educated people who are deviated from own culture. But, he himself obtains an honorary doctorate from American university. Inherent contradiction in his personality is not as harmful as other contradictions. He amasses a plenty of wealth and builds a four storeyed mansion. He takes a fat commission from contractors. In his critique of colonialism in Africa, a Guyanese historian and political activist Walter Rodney (1972) states:

The decisiveness of a short period of colonialism and its negative consequences for Africa spring mainly from the fact that Africa lost power. Power is an ultimate determinant in human society, being basic to the relations within any group and between groups. It implies the ability to defend one's interests and if necessary to impose one's will by any means available. (Rodney 149)

Walter Rodney's and Achebe's treatment of colonial power and domination is almost same. Both of them have wanted to present the British ruling system over Africa. Achebe clarifies the fact that politicians get themselves involved into politics with a view to gaining their self-interest and power. In the name of politics, the whole country is dominated by the crooked political rulers. This dire and utterly truth is manifested in the novel *A Man of the People*.

Moral debasement is reflected in the type of relationship between Odilli and Nanga. Nanga's philosophy is one kind of survival whereas Odilli is an unsteady, fickle and ambitious young man lacking in convictions. Nanga offers Odilli a scholarship to study in England. But, this cordial relationship between the two is disrupted by an unexpected turn of events. Nanga is a womanizer who gets any girls any time without difficulty. Odilli is antagonized when Nanga sleeps with Elsie, his girlfriend whom he brings to Nanga's house for a job. Nanga's argument that he considers the relationship between Elsie and Odilli as a casual one which does not convince him. Being offended, he decides to take revenge upon Nanga not only at political front, but also at the emotional and sexual front. So, He plans to avenge himself through seeking Maxwell's help and they form a new political party called the Common People's Convention. Odilli is resolved to contest the election and tries to remove the ground under Nanga's feet.

Political enmity between Chief Nanga and Odille is thus aggravated by sexual jealousy. Odilli tries to brainwash Nanga's first wife. But, he succeeds in dissuading Edna from marrying Nanga. It is a sexual jealousy, which takes the form of political rivalry. Nanga, being a shrewd politician still in power, is not defeated so easily. Nanga first tries to influence him through his father and offers him not only a foreign scholarship, but also an amount of two hundred and fifty dollars to dissuade Odilli from partaking in politics. He does not budge an inch. He sticks to his gun and proceeds with his party work by canvassing and denigrating Nanga and his illiterate gang. Unlike Nanga, a mature and seasoned politician, Odilli is a young school master at Anata who does not know the power of black money in politics. Neither he nor his party has sufficient funds to squander on elections. His impractical approach towards life also makes him into failure. In the

public meeting of Nanga, Odilli exhibits his foolhardiness by going up to the dais and insulting the minister in front of the public. No wonder he is attacked by Nanga's bodyguards and party men. Consequently, Odilli is hospitalized and kept under arrest until the elections are over and Chief Nanga is re-elected with a thumping majority. Odilli's faithful friend Maxwell is killed while the election is held. But, the corrupt government of Nanga and others is overthrown, a few months later by the military rule. Odilli succeeds in taking small revenge on Nanga in private life, his marriage with Edna, Nanga's fiancée but he fails in realizing his political aspirations. Odilli is symbol of Nigerian spirit who anticipates the emergence of a new generation for a better future shaped by the wisdom of past and present. (Ezejuru)

Achebe exposes political malady through the characters of Nanga and Odilli who represent existing social and political contradictions. Both of them, representing the young educated Nigerian and a stereotype in Nigerian politics, are drawn to alien culture by emerging new forces of power and wealth. The novelist offers a critique on female position in a post-independent Nigeria. The novel marks a radical departure from his male-dominated novels and imparts a space to his women characters. In the post-independent Nigeria, women have access to education and quite a few of them earn a position equal to men. Chief Koko's wife is the leader of women's wing of the POP in an operation. Prime Minister nominates Chief Koko's widow to the senate and later makes her a minister of women's affairs.

Women, despite their careers as lawyers or nurses in the new society, seem to be tied to subordinate roles as sex objects to men with whom they encounter. They are still subjected to sexual exploitation and gender bias. Odilli does not digest the fact that a responsible politician like Nanga can be a womanizer. The novel is a constructed portrayal of the contemporary Nigerian society by confronting chaos and disorder at social and political front. The subtext of the novel indicts common people for prevalent anarchy and chaos in the socio-political sphere. He is one man, who can realise through corruption, hypocrisy of Nanga and intends to publicly humiliate him.

The novel *A Man of the People* holds the fact that social predicament and political malaise are not the evil effects of colonialism, but manipulation of Nigerians. Achebe satirizes a world where the title of Chief, the Honourable MA Nanga or MP is showy. A contemporary political reality in Nigeria has been presented by Odilli, who examines post-independent political reality, though he fails to put its strategies into action. At the public level, unscrupulous political attitude towards Nanga is contrasted with an idealism of Odilli and, at the private level, corrupt politician's treatment is contrasted with selfishness of idealist. Being objected to Edna's marriage to Nanga, Odilli employs western mode of perception.

Thus, the novel can be evaluated firstly from Nigeria and secondly from western point of view. Odilli epitomizes the mental colonization of literate Nigerians. His idealism, political ideology and affiliation with a new political party for personal benefits and his triumph in winning over Edna regards him as a product of western policy. But, he fails in western values for which he

is still rooted in a traditional past. A famous critic John S. Mbiti points out that the basic concept of time underlies the life of the people who work or live in cities. Thus, linguistic, mental, and intellectual colonization of the natives is complete. (Mbiti 20)

However, in *A Man of the People* Nanga's life style is not completely blind to existing moral contradictions in his personality. Odilli is aware of the rift between ignorant masses and the upholders of postcolonial politics. He swears to follow a path of honesty and goodwill only to switch over to former politician's corruption for his propaganda. In this regard the novel may be deemed as an early "postcolonial disillusionment novels" (Sarvan 56). Nanga is a fraud not only as a politician, but also as a pseudo-champion of Nigerian culture and cause.

Thus, the fiction presents anarchy, violence, and immortality of an autocratic politics. Corruption and self-interest are pervasive in a political arena. Present situation is opposite to a precolonial situation where communal harmony and well-being is the sustaining force of the clan. Political turmoil and moral decadence in the postcolonial Nigeria is presented in *A Man of the People*. It is a critique of disenchantment with the fruit of nationalism. Achebe posits the need for the demolition of the leftover of colonial administration as a pre-requisite by building up a newer and happier nation.

### **Similarities and Differences between Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Haque's *Nuruldin's Lifetime***

Now, this paper would like to make a comparative discussion between a novel *A Man of the People* and a play *Nuruldin's Lifetime* through shedding a new light upon the corrupt political system of post-colonial Nigeria and colonial East Bengal (now Bangladesh). It also aims to look at Achebe's and Haque's treatment of political hegemony of the age.

Achebe's *A Man of the People* is a perfect example of post-colonial Nigeria. In this novel Achebe's treatment of socio-political system is vividly presented through the two powerful characters of Chief Nanga and Odille Samalu. The social picture that the novelist wants to expose in the novel is similar to his contemporary age. The political rulers and corrupt figures who dominate the whole nation are the great selfish persons living in each and every country of the world. In his novel, Achebe has portrayed two types of opposite characters, i.e. Odille versus Nanga. One wants to sacrifice his life for the greater welfare of his countrymen; and another is addicted to corrupt political system and remains busy to earn money in a crooked means by cheating and manipulating the common people in Nigeria. Here we can mention the comment of Anthony Chinedu Okoko regarding post-colonial Nigeria thus: "Trends in Achebe's novels have been changed constantly from colonial to independence, and then to post-independence times" (Okoko 8). From this quotation, it can be understood that the major novels of Achebe bear the testimony of African colonial system.

As a self-conscious critic and observer of the age, Achebe has minutely observed his contemporary politically ruling system very closely. Turmoil politics, culture, society and



corruption are the major issues in the novel *A Man of the People*. Thus the novel presents the nature of politics in Nigeria during post-independence period and how the leaderships exploit and manipulate the independence for their personal interest.

Corrupt leadership is noticed very clearly through the character of Chief Nanga whose main aim is to procure self-power and wealth through cheat and false commitment to his nation. Christopher Heywood regards post-independent Nigeria as a “cesspool of corruption and misrule” (Heywood 82). By the name of politics, the powerful leaders earn money and power. But their commitment and pledge is never implemented at all. If any country faces a turmoil situation or faces a war crisis, such selfish political figures will leave the country along with their family members and will take shelter in a safer place of the world. But, in front of the public, they consider themselves as real patriot. Showy patriotic persons are greatly seen in most countries of the world. It is the common people who fight for the liberation of the country but the hypocrite politicians never participate in the battle field rather they hide themselves in a safer zone. Their true colour is unveiled when any country faces a severe crisis.

However, Achebe has presented Nanga as a seducer who rapes his girlfriend Elise forcibly. For this situation, Odille decides to take revenge for Nanga’s longing for money, power and sex. At one point, he takes an active part into politics with a view to wreaking vengeance. He hits upon a plan to steal Edna, Nanga’s intended parlour wife to avenge. He forms a false friendship relation with her with the help of an unsuspecting first wife of Nanga. He conceals his true identity from her father and pretends to be a close companion of Nanga with a view to achieving his goal. His only one aim is to defeat Nanga though he has no power in politics. His growth is noticed in his capacity to separate his personal relationship with Edna from his political desire and ambition. He grows up from narrow-mindedness, political ignorance and sexual prurience to a politically mature African ready to play his part in the African future. (James 118) Odille is not expert in politics like Nanga. He never supports hatred politicians. He hates corrupt politics but love real politicians. Achebe, in the guise of Odille, wants to unmask cheat politicians of his country so that their true identity can be exposed.

Achebe wants to highlight a true picture of corruption in this novel. He aims to make the countrymen conscious of corrupt political system of Nigeria. He has portrayed Chief Nanga as a corrupt politician. On the contrary, his portrayal of Odille is a symbol of true patriot of Nigeria. He never hesitates to sacrifice his life for the interest of the nation. Though he is village school teacher at Anata, he dares to take revenge against Chief Nanga who is a very powerful political figure.

A certain research scholar writes that the society in the novel is no society at all. If there is any one, it is in the throes of anarchy, to be dissolved if chaos continues because without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection.

In fact, Achebe wants to uphold the reflection of the colonial rule by the white people over the Nigerians. Colonial domination and hegemony would exist in Nigeria once upon a time, when

the majority of Nigerians were oppressed and maltreated by colonial masters. Chief Nanga is the follower of the then colonial masters. The novelist has created Nanga as a real culprit in the novel. He has created his characters in such way that readers can easily understand theme, plot-construction, and art of characterisation of the novel.

On the other hand, Haque's creation of *Nuruldin's Lifetime* (1982) presents Nuruldin as a peasant leader of the anti-imperialist peasantry in Rangpur-Dinajpur region. There has been a lot of controversies in the history of Nuruldin's name. Nuruldin leads a revolt of the peasantry against exploitation, torture, and wrongdoing of the year 1782-83. In fact, through the nominal war of Palashi in 1767, the sun of independence of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa is established. In 1765, the East India Company takes power to collect revenue from Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. The company starts inhuman exploitation to collect revenue. Consequently, in 1776, the scandalous incident in the history of Bengalis known as '76 Famine in Bengali history. According to various sources, about one-third of the people die owing to starvation and famine.

The incident is widely criticized in the House of Lords in England. In that context, Warren Hastings begins to sell the ownership of the company in a contract to earn revenue from 1772 to 1773. King Deviprasad Singh gets the right to collect revenue of Rangpur-Dinajpur of an undivided Bengal in 1781-1783. With the landlord of Dimla, Gourmohan Chowdhury starts a fearful inhuman exploitation and torture in the name of revenue collection.

The poor subjects hardly escape the cruelty of King Deviprasad Singh despite selling cattle and calf, property, wife and son. Farmers are sent to jail. Land and property are confiscated. They are whipped and evicted. Rubble and ashes are burned. Many farmers are compelled to go to the doorstep of the Mahajan. Some of them escape taking shelter into the forest. Women are accused of indecent atrocities. In such a cruel situation, a majority of farmers unite under the leadership of Nuruldin. The united farmers demand the Rangpur Collector Goodland to stop the torture of Devi Singh. They also protest that their demands must be obeyed. But, Goodland rebels against the oppressed and tormented farmers by refusing their demands.

Farmer leader Nuruldin protests that if farmers do not comply with the demand, they will not pay any tribute to Deviprasad Singh. As a result, the rebellion begins. Many people regard Nuruldin as a Nawab. Regardless of caste, the poor people of Razpur's Kazirhat, Kakina, Fatepur, Dimla and other zones continue to revolt against Deviprasad Singh under the leadership of Nuruldin. Both Devi Singh and Goodland send the troops to Rangpur under the command of General Macdonald. The forces encounter obstacles on the way and burn lots of villages for which a bloody war occurs. The revolt lasts only five weeks.

Nuruldin's forces attack the English at Moghalhat. In the unequal battle of Moghalhat and Patgram, Nuruldin is killed at the hands of Lieutenant McDonald's company forces. His revolution did not stay in front of the British forces for a long time. But, the liberation, that Nuruldin sows, the sowing of the awakening generation, motivates the British colonial rule to achieve an independence for Indian Subcontinent.

Dipankar Das plays an extraordinary vitality in the role of farmer leader, Nuruldin. Honesty really brings the touch of Nuruldin. Many sensations are expressed in a very subtle way. The clothing of the farmer-leader Nuruldin is an art of beauty. He is distinguished from other characters by the time he wears a tail and a kurta and a cloth on his head.

Nile Force begins to search for the rebel Nuruldin. The use of sticks catches the unique good. Cultivation, jalu, yogi, oil, changara, yarn, loin, and potter awake to Nuruldin's revolt. He is an umbrella like umbrella on the head. His consciousness is manifested in various ways. The Nile squad, on the other hand, is a trapped mental prisoner. The life and struggle of the peasantry under the leadership of Nuruldin gets emerged by playing an important role. (Ahsan 2008)

In this regard, Nuruldin's revolt against the British may be compared with Dudu Mia and Syed Nisher Ali Titumir who revolt against the colonial role and domination. They sacrifice their lives for the liberty of the mother land. For their noble deeds, they are still remembered and honoured. They have occupied a remarkable place in the pages of golden history. Like Dudu Mia and Titumir, Nuruldin has occupied a prominent place in the field of Bengali literature. They are the great heroes and real patriots for all times and for all ages.

From the above discussion, it may be expressed that Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Haque's Nuruldin's *Lifetime* are packed into a one single thread. Themes, plot-construction, art of characterization, dialogue are emerged from British colonialism. Both writers have written their texts to expose the true colour of the British rule and system. One has written in English and another in Bengali. But, both of them were born in the same century. They are contemporary litterateurs.

The novel *A Man of the People* presents a post-colonial Nigeria and the play *Nuruldin's Lifetime* a colonial East Bengal. These texts help us understand that the British want peace and happiness neither for Africans nor the inhabitants of Indian Subcontinent.

In the light of character-study, it may be expressed here that Chief Nanga is a black dominator like the white. He follows the western policy and technique to dominate and oppress the poor Nigerians. On the contrary, a modest like school master Odille revolts against Nanga.

Similarly, King Deviprasad Singh maltreats and dominates the common farmers of Rangpur-Dinajpur regions under the command of Lieutenant McDonald, a British political figure. The pathetic and miserable existence of the peasants are difficult to describe in word or in language. Like Nanga, Deviprasad Singh oppresses and kills the poor farmers of Bengal, and even he burns a lot of villages and loots all sorts of land and property out. Like Odille, Nuruldin revolts against Devi Singh and the British with a view to gaining their rights.

In the light of plot-construction and dialogue, there is a difference between the two works, one text deals with the theme of post-colonial Nigeria and another highlights the dramaturgy based on colonial Bengal. Corruption in society, culture and community is greatly exposed in these texts.

Corrupt politics, oppression, maltreatment, selfishness, unjust, etc. are the major issues in *A Man of the People* and *Nuruldin's Lifetime*. These texts are originated from historical facts.

History tells us that British colonial rule and domination are manifested in world literature. Being centred on the colonial rule, litterateurs have written literatures in the form of novel, fiction, story, poem, play, treatise, and so forth. However, Achebe and Haque have wanted to present treachery, corruption, torture, mass killing, and oppression of the British and their supporters on African and Asian nations through their texts. The present corrupt politics is emerged from colonial and post-colonial political system.

### **Significance of the Study**

This paper signifies a socio-political picture of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Nigeria. Achebe's well-reputed fiction *A Man of the People* represent a psychological conflict of the two nations, the white and the black. The weaker is ruled by the mighty. Achebe never supports colonial crooked policy. He has unveiled the dark aspects of society, culture and community. On the behalf of the poor of the poorest Nigerians, the novelist has taken his sharp pen in his hand to write their miserable existence and untold sufferings maltreated by the powerful rulers and politicians of Nigeria. His literary works are symbol of freedom and power for the Nigerians.

### **Conclusion**

In the novel *A Man of the People* (1966), Chinua Achebe wants to focus upon the important aspects of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Nigerian politics and colonial rule. With his subtle attitude, the novelist has wanted to present dark sides of the hegemonic people who dominate and oppress the poor Nigerians through his art of characterization. As a political and social critic of his contemporary age, he has highlight postcolonial rule, domination, injustice, and maltreatment of the selfish and cruel politicians, who follow the tricks and politics of the formerly colonial masters. In the own country how the powerful leaders inhumanly and illegally rule and dominate the poor working class has been minutely presented in *A Man of the People*. The novel bears the testimony of political and social reality of the age. For this purpose, the paper has focused upon Nigerian colonial, postcolonial and corrupt political system through the critical investigation. Achebe in the guise of Odilli has opposed the corrupt political ruling system of Nigeria. Finally, this paper has made a comparative study between Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Haque's *Nuruldin's Lifetime* through drawing a new light upon corrupt political system of post-colonial Nigeria and colonial Indian Subcontinent. Achebe's and Haque's treatment of corrupt politics has been manifested in their works.

## References

- Achebe, Chinua. (1966). *A Man of the People*. New York: Anchor Books, 1989.
- Ahsan, Mostafa, Tarequl. *Literary Works of Syed Shamsul Haque*, published by Dr. Abdul Wahab, Director In charge, Text Book Division. Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2008.
- Ezejura, Phanuel Akubueze. *Towards African Literary Independence: A Dialogue with Contemporary African Writers*. Connecticut: Connecticut Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Gikandi, Simon. "Forward: Chinua Achebe and the Institution of African Literature." *The Chinua Achebe Encyclopaedia*, edited by M. Keith Booker. Green Wood Press, vii-xvi, 2003.
- Gikandi, Simon. "Chinua Achebe and the postcolonial Aesthetic: Writing, Identity, and National Formation." *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, 15(1). Boston: University of Massachusetts, 1991, p.31.
- Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. Routledge, 1996.
- Heywood, Christopher, editor. *Perspectives on African Literature*. London: Heinemann, 1975, p.82.
- James, Luis. "The Protest Tradition Black Orphans and Transition." *Protest and Conflict in African Literature*, edited by Cosmo Pieterse & Donald Munro. London: Heinemann, 1969, p.118.
- Maleki, Nasser and Maryam Navidi. "Foregrounding Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A Postcolonial Study." *Canadian Social Science*, vol. 7, no. 6, 2011, pp.10-15.
- Mbiti, John S. *African Religion and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1970, p.20.
- Okoko, Anthony Chinedu. *Narrative Mobility: Comparative Studies of Chinua Achebe's Five Cultural and Political Novels of Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, No Longer at Ease, A Man of the People, and Anthills of the Savannah*. MA thesis. Department of English, University of Dalarna, 2006.
- Osterhammel, Jürgen. *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, translated by Shelley Frisch. Markus Weiner Publishers, 2005, p.16.
- Palmer, Eustace. *The Growth of the African Novel*. London: Heinemann, 1979, p.72.
- Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. East African Publishers, 1972, p.149.
- Sarvan, Charles Ponnuthuri. "Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Narayan's *The Guide*: A Comparative Study." *South Asian Responses to Chinua Achebe*, p. 56.
- Singh, Satyanarain. "Chinua Achebe and the Dynamics of Change in African Sensibility." *The Indian Journal of English Studies*, p.55.
- Sivasankar, K. and Dr. V. Ganesan. "Chinua Achebe: An Exemplar in the Postcolonial Epoch." *International Journal of Science and Research*, vol. 4, issue 12, 2015.
- Sivaramakrishnan, V. *The African Mind: A Literary Perspective*. Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1990, p.24.