Naked Light & The Blind Eye is a story set in a society that has gone through phases of change but the changes seem to make the lives of the inhabitants worse. The narrative is told in interlocking stories that comprise three parts and which are the main sub-divisions of the text. Each short story unravels into another interrelated story that helps the reader make the connection between the different mini-stories. In part one, the reader is introduced to Solomon Wenku, the main protagonist in the novel. The novel begins with the disappearance of Solomon’s wife, Tani, and this greatly troubles Solomon. But it also creates for him the occasion to reflect on his life and it is through his reflections that we know about the larger society and the influences that have shaped the life of his community. This first mini-story reads like a monologue. Solomon takes in every detail of his surroundings and then begins to analyse each situation with a critical and sceptical eye.

The first part of the novel is set in a flat in a city suburb, where Solomon lives with his wife, Tani, and their two children. The story moves from the flat into a slum where Tani goes to live with her friend, Shadun, after she is battered by Solomon. Whether it is in the suburb or the slum, the city described is dysfunctional, filled with heaps of garbage, potholes, beggars and general chaos.

The physical environment in a way depicts the chaos in the social environment as portrayed by Solomon’s life, which is chaotic. He is in a second marriage that is often on the brink of collapse. It is a marriage of convenience more than anything else, driven by nothing other than the survival instinct of the partners. Solomon’s wife has deserted him and gone to live with her.
friend in an informal settlement. He has tried living a few days without her and realized that life has become unbearable. Despite his wife’s tantrums, she has apparently played a critical role in making life tolerable. He goes to fetch his wife back but the price is almost equivalent to the dowry he paid to get her in the first place. One is left wondering whether there is not some collusion to extort money from him, given the dubious character of his wife.

In a flashback, the chaos and decadence of the city is contrasted with that of the rural Oroke. The reader is taken to the world of the villagers of Oroke, who live up on the hills, far removed from the trappings of the modern world. Although some have descended to the valleys, those who remain continue to lead their lives oblivious of the changes that inevitably impact on their way of life. Their rural life is juxtaposed with the modern, urban decadence and sub-human existence and interactions in the slums, which are depicted as a place of ugliness, filth, decadence and despair. The urban periphery is then contrasted with the suburban, which is modern, with the lives of the inhabitants considered to be better; but the unrelenting cycle of the water and power supply and the uncollected garbage immediately negate the idea of a well- resource suburban existence because basic essentials are lacking. One is left asking what really is the difference between the lives of the slum dwellers and the suburbanites except for the structure and larger space of their dwellings.

The text describes a community full of tragedies, both private and communal. Tragedy in the private sphere is personified in Solomon Wenku, who apparently played a critical role in helping to ease the tension and resolve the conflict by narrating a number of parables. How this conflict is resolved is not clear, but it appears that in the end there is a semblance of peace. The narrative then takes a turn when Tani decides to stay in the village with her relatives. Her stay is depicted in a series of bizarre stories. In a flashback, we are taken to the life of Solomon and it is here that the details of his two marriages emerge. Tani (Solomon’s second wife) is depicted as an unruly sex-crazed teenager who used underage boys to fulfill her sexual desires and then graduated to an affair with the village shopkeeper. In addition, Tani is depicted here as being a daughter from a dysfunctional family. What began as a love story between Tani’s parents takes a dip when Tani’s father remorselessly has affairs with other women despite pleas from his wife. Tani’s mother decides to take revenge by seeking lovers from among the men in the village. Her affairs end tragically when her own husband sexually molests her. Her wayward ways too come to an end when his own cats bites off his genitals.

There is also the tragedy of the young farmer strikes him and he falls to the ground, wailing. When the delinquent offender loses an ear and in fact has the sympathy of the authorities. There is no end to her woes until she dies. The yam thief is the metaphor of the woman who is poor and has no recourse for her poverty. When she steals to feed her children she is brutalized, defeminized, humiliated and shamed in a way that men are not.

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