

# The Portrayal of Ananse as a Deceptive Character In ‘Anansesem’: Evidence from Yaw Asare’s Ananse in the Land of Idiots

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**Abstract:** This paper focused on deception, which has been identified as one of the attributes of Ananse, the Spider in all contexts of Ghanaian folklore. The paper is an analytical discourse which derives its source of reference from Yaw Asare’s *Ananse in the land of idiots* a play based on the Ghanaian story telling tradition. The analysis of deception is rooted on Buller & Burgoon’s (1996) Interpersonal Deception Theory. In the final analysis, the paper concluded that Ananse exhibited various forms of deceptive postures in all his dealings and engagements at different levels. Ananse as a character is also portrayed as epitome of man in the Ghanaian social context.

**Keywords:** story-telling, deceptive character, Anansesem, Ananse in the land of idiots

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Ghanaian society is noted for its axiomatic nature of story-telling that is carved around the culture of instilling a fundamental sense of moral values. Such a practice is perceived as the core values of life that are meant to point to the naturalistic characterisation of human development. This then suggests that story-telling has substantially become the sole beliefs and purviews of the people’s life and culture. Owusu-Ansah et al (2014, p.1) admonish this development and further maintain that story-telling

*... is very important recreational activity in Africa. The significance of this activity, however, goes beyond leisure as it serves as a medium for transmitting cultural values. It is the backbone of Africa’s oral tradition as it made the transfer of knowledge to younger generations both entertaining and effective.*

In this regard, most of the stories told are meant to correct societal and economic vices that are so pervasive in people’s life. This then becomes so achievable through the context of the lessons that are drawn from the messages as the story is being told. As such, story-telling is seen as a community centred agenda which seeks to utilize the harmonious totalities of people’s culture and identity (Spurlin, 2013, pp.71–72). By this, the nature of the story-telling is traditionally featured by some key super legendary characters who only serve to provide a kind of platform for social commentary on various aspects of human life (Owusu-Ansah et al, 2014, p.1). These legendary characters are identified as aptronymic figures whose

roles often provide a significant narrative effect to the development of the story.

### 1.1 The philosophy of traditional Ghanaian story-telling

A typical traditional Ghanaian society is naturally inordinately with series of stories. The scope of this story-telling ability emerged from “the indigenous fireside narrative” (Angmor, 2001, p.39) which is seen to have “trickled down over the decades” (ibid., p.1) and preserved by the common conduit of the people’s traditional values. As such, most of these stories are told to contain some “stylistic traces of the traditional verbal arts” (p.39) which are closely related to the realities of the society” and are therefore used “to conserve the ideals of the people and forestall or correct abuses” (p.44).

In most cases, such stories happened to be told by an elderly person within the community. The practice is normally carried out in the evening where the young and adult individuals are found to have gathered in an opened space after a hard day’s work. The sense of beauty that emanates from this development is often given a full theatrical setting with some “established conventions” (Sutherland, 1975, p.v) according to the tradition of the people. The unique aspect of it all is that the audiences become an active part of the narration in an intermittent manner that promotes optimism and some level of enjoyment. Singing of songs and other interludes remains a periodic choral device which sparkles the defining moment of the audiences’ cultural spiritism.

In some obvious circumstance, these stories are often narrated with animals serving as the key characters. This is because these animals are willed with “human characteristics” and “traits” (Aidoo, 2012, p.39). As a result, when they are used in some of these narratives, it allows the story-teller to then attempt to provide seemingly undesirable characteristics of human nature to bear without risking to involve a face to face confrontation of human relation into a complete focus and attention (ibid.). In this sense, the real identity of human is depicted in a literary contrived form so as to give meaning to an “unknown treasure” of human life “for the appreciation of the whole world” (Crowley, 1971, p.15). Such a classical nature of narrative wave gives some form of formulaic display into the space of Ghanaian reality.

### 1.2 The concept of 'Anansem' as a traditional Ghanaian story

'Anansem' in its simplest sense refers to 'Ananse's story' or the 'story of Ananse'. Deandra (2004, p.2) describes 'Anansem' as the "tales of Ananse" and further links it to and Akan folktale told with Ananse becoming an important figure in the development of the story. The term is literally "used both for the body of stories told and for the story-telling performance itself" (Sutherland, 1975, p.v) with Ananse being "the trickster character who embodies the vices of the society and helps society to correct such vices through the lesson his escapades teaches" (Owusu-Ans et al, 2014, p.1). This, therefore, means that it is a story-which predominately has the portrayal of Ananse's everyday life expedition being the core item in the narration.

Traditionally, 'Anansem' is identified as a typical Ghanaian folkloric story. As such, it is often told in a unique dramatic form to reflect Ghanaian local tradition (Asante & Edu, 2018, p.353) with a particular sense of aesthetic value and function. This story forms part of one of the most important Akan family activities which are staged in the evenings. This aspect of tradition is meant to become part of an everyday reality for the people to accept as the truthful emblem which the community holds as a sacred dogma and to further identify as a psychologically therapeutic booster for the people in all aspects of their societal values.

'Anansem' as a local Akan drama, has the most trending mark in revealing the nature of Ghanaian cultural value and the practice of which it becomes an acceptable fulcrum for the thrust of Ghanaian tradition. The traditional value of 'Anansem' has become a "full theatrical expression"(Sutherland, 1987, p.3) with which Ananse is projected as an exaggerated figure in the development of the Ghanaian stories (Peacock, 2015). Okpewho (1992, p.313) has advanced an argument that "the most significant element in the relocation of the oral narrative tradition in the dramatic form" is the development of 'Anansem' which has become too central in the game of the Ghanaian cultural heritage. In this sense, the role of 'Anansem' is identified as the platform that holds and mirrors up a certain reality for the Ghanaian society to see itself and to take necessary steps towards the positive vale of the growing interest of its members (Asiedu, 2011, p.312).

### 1.3 The Personality of Ananse in Anansem

The theatrical personality of Ananse has been in existence in almost all the folklores in Ghanaian society. Literarily, the name Ananse is identified as a male character. Interestingly, many ethnic groups have different linguistic and domestic labels for his existence in their communities. Of these, the Ga calls him 'Aanaanu', the people of Nzema also identifies him as 'Kedeba' as against the Ewe group of people who also happens to be associated with the name 'Yiyi' (see Asante & Edu, 2018, p.349). However, the Fante as well as the Twi speaking communities latently describes him as simply

'Ananse' or 'Kweku Ananse'. Such a name has become a pervasive dramatic figure in Ghanaian traditional story-telling over the centuries.

Ghanaians always see Ananse as having a dual-personified and holly penetrating character that makes him to be identified as a symbolic and an anti-heroic icon. As a result, Ananse's role as a man in a folkloric space as well as being an animal in the physical space of reality is highly remarkable. As a folkloric character, Ananse is seen as an impersonate figure whose actions reflect the universal nature of Ghanaian society and the larger world of humanity. Sutherland (1975, p.v) admits this fact as follows;

*Ananse appears to represent a kind of Everyman, artistically exaggerated and distorted to serve as a medium for self-examination. He has a penetrating awareness of the nature and psychology of human beings and animals. He is made to mirror in his behaviour fundamental human passions, ambitions and follies as revealed in contemporary situations. Significantly, laughter is the main social response to Ananse as a character. In addition, it is in the verbal comments which often underscore the laughter that society's attitude to him is clarified. Of these the most representative is 'Ananse's wealth!' – a sarcastic expression for successes and triumphs which are not likely to last. Indeed most of Ananse's successes are doubtful and temporary. By constantly over-reaching himself, he ruins his schemes and ends up impoverished. That Ananse is, artistically, a medium for society to criticise itself can be seen in the expression, 'Exterminate Ananse, and society will be ruined'.*

This means that the character of Ananse has always been a pervasive development of Ghana's oral tradition and has further become the fountains of human history of the people as well. As such, his actions are always seen as a relevant source of lesson for Ghanaian society in particular and Africa at large. This, therefore, allows him to be assessed as a metaphoric figure in all spheres of endeavour of which several stories are told around him.

The centrality of Ananse's metaphoric posture remains very well grounded in the core annals of human life. In this case, he has been identified as the legendary character whose ". . . socio-cultural relevance to the whole society may be determined based on how he is depicted in stories (be it negative or positive), the world in which he operates, the socio-cultural context and the motive behind his actions"(Addo, 2013, p.44). Such a revelation gives a specific reference to the behaviour of Ananse. In this attempt, Ananse represents "the owner of the story with a conventional right to know everything, to have a right to be personally involved in the action and to be capable of inducing his audience to believe they are there with him and similarly involved" (Sutherland, 1975, p.vi) with an on-stage activity.

### *The Concept of Deception*

Human beings are naturally endowed to talk whenever there is the need to do so. This is because the talking allows them to express their views, sentiments and beliefs about the activities of the world. In most of these acts of talking, various messages that are carried out in the communication process are highly inordinately with the “override stereotypic deceptive display tendencies” (Burgoon et al, 1999, p.672) which are meant to exert enough and considerable influence on both the sender and receiver’s communicative style (ibid.). As a result, deception, which is seen as a productive part of interpersonal communication, becomes ubiquitously eminent in human discourse. This then suggests that people have become used to deception and that truthfulness is now “a scarce commodity” (ibid., p.669) in their everyday interaction. In this relation, Tsikerdekis & Zeadally (2014, p.1) describe “deception as a deliberate act with the intent to mislead others while the recipients are not aware or expect that such an act is taking place and that the goal of the deceiver is to transfer that false belief to the deceived ones”. Burgoon et al (1999, p.669) also consider the development of deception as an “act of knowingly transmitting a message intended to lead a receiver to a false belief or conclusion”.

Interestingly, it appears therefore that throughout the history of human life, deception has become “a benign or hostile intent” (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014, p.2) among interactants. As such, hardly a day goes by without witnessing people swimming in a pool of deceptive tunnel. Hancock et al (2008, p.2) admit this fact with a solemn precision that “Deception, in general, is not infrequent part of human communication” and as such it has therefore become necessary part of ‘our making’ in the world of human activity over the years. This is because most interactants always want to be part of larger framework of theatrical shenanigans in the society, and with that they do not mind what they say at any given situation. As a result, most of the things that are normally said during interactions have the capacity to negatively influence and induce someone into the lane of acceptability and believability. The controlling felony to this behaviour is that interactants always want to enjoy the principle of image management-action that is “designed to project positive-face and . . . preserve relational trust” (Burgoon et al, 1999, p.670) among themselves during communication. With this, the core subject of the interactants is to influence the manner of communication and its subsequent display of deceptive canons all the time (ibid., p.671). As a central aspect of an asynchronous human behaviour, human discourse has become a conduit to its extermination in the affairs of people’s social life.

#### *Ananse as a deceptive character*

Ananse’s manner of theatrical presentation has always tattered him as a bad character. In this respect, people do not want to be associated with the name Ananse. This is because he is being “spoken of as a schemer and, indeed, the chief trickster . . . who is capable of getting whatever he wants by outwitting others” (Mireku-Gyimah, 2018, p.23). As such, he is

conspicuously labelled as someone who has “a hybrid identity created by the influence of” (Peacock, 2015, p. 403) greediness and “unbeknownst” (ibid., p.401) intention coupled with a desperation of societal opportunist (Adams & Sutherland-Andy, 2007, p.2) to “outwit all around him” (Perce, 1968, p.80) into “his web of deceit” (Peacock, 2015, p.406). Ananse’s deceptive behaviour is far beyond comparison. In reflection, Addo (2013, p.44) describes the deceptive nature of Ananse in the following words.

*He appears self-centred, cruel, unscrupulous, vain, unappreciative, constantly rebelling against societal norms and values of man. Others also describe him as lawless, anti-social and immoral because his actions are usually geared towards satisfying his own desires for self-gratification without regard for social conventions and moral restraints.*

This unpalatable attribute has become a very obvious and obstinately paramount for his description because he always fights for things that are too advantageous to his own personal survival and self-aggrandisement. Ananse never defaults and kowtows to things that are far beyond his superiority and power. Ananse’s display of wit makes him a very clever and wise being among skygod’s creation (Tekpetey, 1979, p.79). As such, he has become the sole epitome and embodiment of wisdom within the remit of human existence, and in the process that he uses such act to function as a impersonate character to outwit the intellects of others.

As a classical “human like buffoon” (Yankah, 1983, p.78), Ananse’s sense of deception has become part of his anthropogenic character that everybody relates to all the time. The practical evidence of this feature has been too anemic in the description of all Akan folktales that feature him as a prime character. In this respect, the power of his actions always represents the sacrilegious nature of his personality in various displays of reality and consequently the socio-cultural milieu of the Akan society which sometimes serves as the central focus for most of the Ananse’s story. These displays of attitude, even though go against the harmonious totalities of Ghanaian culture (Spurlin, 2013, pp.71–72) and yet follow the core of the Akan concert repertory (Baber et al, 1997, p.23) in Ghanaian set up, showcase the eclectic interest of the materialism which has been embedded in the psyche of many Ghanaians (Peacock, 2015, p.405). As a result, Ananse’s actions and inactions, as observed by Vecsey (1981), make people describe him as

*. . . a paradoxical figure whose antics mock the seriousness of rules, the sacrality of beliefs and the establishment of rituals. He is a vagabond, an intruder to proper society, an unpredictable liar who throws doubts on the concept of truth itself.*

*(Vecsey, 1981, p.161)*

Such form of description looks so canon and makes him a deadly figure in Akan cosmology. This is because whoever begins a folktale with an indication of Ananse as its central

character ends the play with the deceptive antics in display. The nature of such a spurring attitude often delimits that familial effect of his positive exploit in all presentations.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical development for the study is based on Interpersonal Deception Theory being propounded by Buller & Burgoon (1996). This theory provides an argument that whenever individuals are engaged in one-on-one interaction, there is a conscious level of a perceived deception. As a result, the individuals' communicative messages are always identified with a certain pattern of falsification and semantic default. In this case, there is a misrepresentation of "interplay between active deceivers and detectors who communicate with multiple motives, who behave strategically, whose communication behaviors mutually influence one another to produce a sequence of moves and countermoves, and whose communication is influenced by the situation in which the deception transpires" (p.99). This, therefore, means that deception is a character dominated and that individual speakers' "own communication carries substantial weight in conferring credibility, particularly the degree of involvement they portray" (Burgoon et al, 1999, p.682). Such development normally becomes viable when there appears to be "information-processing biases and stereotypes about truthful performance" (ibid.) on the nature of the message being delivered.

In effect, the foci nature of the theory remains an essential factor to the pattern of argument that the present study seeks to advance. As a result, the study takes account of the development of Buller & Burgoon's (1996) theory to draw an argument on how Ananse uses his deceptive character to exploit others in order to achieve what he desires in life. Such a development is uniquely characterised with different negative patterns of focus and ideological concealment. Interestingly, accepting the unconventional manner of Ananse's sociologically protracted ineptitude as an Akan theatrical tradition makes the employment of Buller & Burgoon's (1996) theory eminently applicable under the realm of the present study; hence its adoption in this regard.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The study is obviously descriptive in nature and further adopt textual analysis procedure which falls under a qualitative research as its approach. The basis of this research design is to help interpret text analytically and to drive home the deceptive nature of Ananse in almost every facet of human expeditions. The source of data used in this respect is basically a primary data. These primary data are sourced from Yaw Asare's original text; thus *Ananse in the land of idiots*. Researcher's interest for this text is fairly grounded on the fact that the personality of Ananse and his power to control and to manipulate over-riding nature of life is so an imaginable to such an extent that it needs to be interrogated to realise its interesting nature in the development of contemporary Africa literature, hence the selection.

### 3.1 The synoptic summary of the text

*Ananse in the land of idiots* focuses on the exploits of Ananse in the village of 'Dim-Nyim-Lira', which literary means 'The Land of Idiots'. The play certainly begins with the presence of Ananse who happens to be travelling to an unknown destination. Such an expedition coincides with a traditional ritual which is regularly organised to maidens in their prime in that community. Ananse observes their splendid performances of the 'ritualist' and the maidens for some time and surreptitiously takes the food prepared for the gods of the land when the ritual performances has ended, simply because he is hungry and needs something to survive on. Quite unfortunately, Ananse is caught red handed by the royal guard, Akpala, who then decides to hand him (Ananse) over to the chief for an immediate action to be taken against his unpardonable behaviour. Ananse is later charged for defiling the tradition and the custom of the land. The detail of his punishment is to be given a death-sentence. With is tricky ability, Ananse is able to convince the chief and the elders of the palace as he bribes them with different pieces of kente bands. Subsequently, Ananse is pardoned to the dislike of the priestess who pronounces the dead sentence. He is tasked by the chief thereafter to weave kente clothes to be used for the royal wedding between Sodziisa (Princess) and Pootagyiri (Prince) for which Ananse agrees to the core. Ananse then goes to the forest to begin his assignment upon the granting of his three most challenging requests by the chief. As Ananse continues with his weaving contract, he persistently manages to influence Akpala to help him win the heart of Sodziisa after seeing the beautiful nature of her personality when she appears for her measurement to be taken in preparation of her wedding dress. With the passing of time, Ananse and Akpala agree on the account that Ananse is going to give him (Akpala) half of the 'chieftain' prepared for anyone who marries Sodziisa and he is also going to educate Akpala on how he can magically conjure honey from a divined source should he, Ananse, win Sodziisa's hand in marriage against his competitor, Pootagyiri. Akpala's total acceptance of Ananse's offer leads to the killing of Pootagyiri who is deemed to be Sodziisa's betrothal so as to allow Ananse to impersonate him (Pootagyiri) at the wedding day and subsequently gets married to the desired lady, Sodziisa. Ananse, having won the contest at the end of the day, selfishly ignores and betrays Akpala by not honouring his promise to him (Akpala) upon working tirelessly to help him (Ananse) succeed. Ananse finally runs away with his new lady after having mischievously poured a sticky substance purportedly belief to be a glue into the mouth of Akpala just to make him completely incommunicado as a result. This is because Ananse seduces Akpala to believe that giving him (Akpala) such a substance will enhance Akpala's chances to harness honey every time without hindrance. Later, the truth of Ananse's deceptive exploits is made known to the entire community under the conduit of Odudu's unsolicited revelation. The chief then tries to organise his army of soldiers

to chase Ananse for deceiving the whole community in order to marry Princess Sodziisa out of a sheer bravado.

### 3.2 Analysis and Discussion

Humans, by nature, are unknowingly gregarious species. As such, they always feel too closed and connected to one another in all conditions of life. This means that human existence is dependent on what brings lives together through a close association with others. The need for such a close relationship often leads to a greater will of trust and then a positive bias (Buller & Burgoon, 2011, p.213) on the nature of information being delivered during conversations. Even though conversation is about creating and sharing of information on people's personal life experiences and relationships with other things around them, it is often realised "without sufficient evidence or proof to warrant credibility" (ibid., p.205) when such pieces of information are delivered in that process. Such an account usually brings to focus the generation of deceptive cues and then the unwillingness to admit oneself to truth of reality among speakers. The scratch of this act is what Yaw Asare has harnessed in his fictional work, *Ananse in the Land of Idiots*.

In this work, Ananse is seen as the main character. As a central figure, he is caught red-handed eating the mashed-yam meant for spiritual purification for the gods in accordance with the traditions of the people in the community of 'Dim-Nyim-Lira'. Being brought before the chief and his elders, Ananse is described as "a taboo-violator" and has therefore broken "social rules by being selfish, mean" and "hypocritical" (Deandrea, 2004, p.2). As such, Ananse is giving a dead-sentence. In refusing to accept the toughest degree of his punishment, he quickly seeks a permission to be pardoned on the account that he is the greatest craftsman ever lived among his contemporaries. Such a development is realised in the excerpt below.

#### ANANSE

*Great one, as I have already identified myself, and as your venerable elder has rightly acknowledged, I am the greatest Craftsman ever created . . . Odomankoma's Head Weaver.*

*If you'd spare my life, I shall weave for you and your house hold the best . . . the most beautiful cloth anyone ever set eyes upon.*  
(1<sup>st</sup> Movement, p.11)

This statement is purely "a formulaic-call-and-response opening" (Deandrea, 2004, p.9) strategy being employed by Ananse in order to create alternative opinion about himself. In this case, Ananse's "deceptive intent" (Wagner, 2011, p.9) and "duplicious" behaviour (Buller & Burgoon, 2011, p.205) are properly revealed to reflect his nature. What one sees under this circumstance is that Ananse strategically manages his fears by using action that could make him a credible pilot to secure a favourable image that has the tendency of ensuring his escape from the dead sentence. As a result, he claims to be the greatest and the best craftsman ever. The nature of the

claim is based on a foundation that he is just seeking to secure a place in the heart of the members "as a very wise being" (Tekpetey, 1979, p.79). Such a statement is highly identified as a psychological bait to get himself out of the harsh condition that he finds himself in. In doing so, Ananse tries to ascribe his conduct to mean a total defiance of the laws of the land by creating an "instinctual drive towards pure chaos" (Deandrea, 2004, p.3) among members of the jury who are found later to be in a balance of discordant opinions. This development leads the people to "a new way of conceiving reality" (ibid., p.14) rather than being based on mutual inclusion of multiple approaches to issues.

Sometimes, the way a speaker conducts himself or herself reflects the nature of his or her relationship with others. This is because the speaker's "fluid and interstitial nature" (Deandrea, 2014, p.20) makes it possible for a certain behavioural pattern and personality trait to be revealed under the account of the person's conduct. Such an action becomes much more instructive to note in the text. In the act of this development, one sees Ananse being assigned for a specific duty since his plea for clemency has been acceptable against all odds. As he engages himself in his duty, it is then expected that Sodziisa, the Princess of the land, comes around for her measurement to be taken in order to enable Ananse maintain proper shape for her dress. Under this attempt, Ananse seductively manages to ask the maidens who accompany the princess to leave the scene. Further, he tries to ask Odudu to go and fetch water with the perforated gourd that Ananse himself has provided, even though, clearly, he (Ananse) does not need the water at that material time. The following conversation represents the details of such development.

#### SODZIISA

*So what must they do now . . . I mean my friends, the dancers?*

#### ANANSE

*Er . . . Let's see. Perhaps they can go down the river and bath themselves, take a rest until I have finished with you.*

#### SODZIISA

*That sounds fine. Mbisike, take the other girls to the river down the valley.*

*Go there and enjoy yourselves – bath, catch baby-crabs or play games*

*while I finish up with Agya Ananse.*

*(MAIDENS leave through door Down Right)*

#### ANANSE

*Now, let's get to business. (To Odudu) You there, pick that gourd And fetch me water from the river. Hurry, I'm dying of thirst.*

*(Odudu exit Down Left with the perforated gourd)*

*Now, Sodziisa I will have to take your measurements. First will be the length of the dress. Now stand . . . so . . . aha! Now don't move.*

*(2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, pp.24–25)*

Interestingly, we see that Ananse has engaged himself in the strategic behaviour that will enable him to take advantage from the situation. This development registers Ananse's deceptive and to further make his communicative intention possible to achieve whatever he has planned to do. His decision to demand that the other characters leave the stage is premised on the fact that he presents a message knowingly transmitted to foster false belief to the affected people (Buller & Burgoon, 1996; 2003). With this account, Ananse is just seen to be "outwitting weaker creatures" (Deandrea, 2004, p.9) such as Sodziisa, Maidens and Odudu and then makes them passive objects of "opprobrium and therefore scapegoat at the same time" (ibid.). As a result, he seizes the opportunity he has created for himself to tickle the princess from time to time to the annoyance of Akpala. This has become so revealing because Ananse desires to have Sodziisa as a married partner. His conduct in this case amounts to an unjustifiable model of selfishness and deceit orchestrated for his personal interest.

Another important aspect of Ananse's deceptive nature is also realised under the situation where Akpala is seen to be preparing Ananse into the marriage ceremony at the durbar ground. During such occasion, Ananse is found to be messing up with the process, which of course, does not represent the full dictate of the personality of Pootagyiri. This assignment shows that Ananse is expected to show a certain instinctual and adaptive attitude dictated by the need for his survival at that moment. Such a role places a premium on Ananse to live up to a certain threshold without experiencing any "feeling of nagging disquiet" (Deandrea, 2004, p.19) before, during and after the commensuration of the married ceremony. The nature of this development is also seen in the following dialogue.

**AKPALA**

*(stops and observes ANANSE critically)*

*You limp on the left foot needs to be more pronounced. Pootagyiri had long bout of yaws under his left foot in early boyhood, and that left him with a permanent limp. You need to exaggerate that a bit. Pull that hat to the right . . . just a bit. Aha! Now where is the charcoal?*

*I must reinforce that facial mark. Remember, intimate go between who know Pootagyiri*

*would be at the palace. Your imitation of the prince needs to be flawless.*

**ANANSE**

*I am trying my best. I am sure I shall get it all before we arrive at the palace. I am sure I . . .*

**AKPALA**

*There . . . you're slipping back into that awful, give-away ghostly tone again! And, remember never to smile or laugh. Pootagyiri had gab-teeth; you have none.*

**ANANSE**

*Hmm. When you realise I'm slipping off at the palace, shout out my titles, to bring me back on track and also to divert attention from the defect. After all, that is what a friend and companion of the groom is supposed to be. With these marks, my limp and these clan -amulets, no one would suspect. Did you tell the King that Pootagyiri chose you to be his companion for the occasion?*

*(4<sup>th</sup> Movement, p.43)*

With this situation, one recognises that Akpala and Ananse are just creating and sharing meaningful information which is contained in the conversation in order to convey a message that departs from the truth as they know it to be (Buller & Burgoon, 1996, p.205). That is to say that the two characters are building up a plan that represents what they have decided on. As a result of this development, Ananse is seen to be creating a deceptive impression on his personality that will make the entire audience believe that he is the rightful groom for the bride, Sodziisa. This development has become so because Ananse is beginning to experience a very negative feeling that if he does not do the right thing, he can be spotted on as an impersonate figure of Pootagyiri and subsequently lead to a severe punishment. The practical situation here is that Ananse is seen to be adopting a deceptive strategy for successful lying in order to manage his image and accomplish his personal goal in life (Wagner, 2011, p.12). In this situation, Ananse presents a certain deliberative antic in such a skillful manner that propels him to look nice and truthful rather than a deceit that will make the people misinterpret evidence of deceit from his conduct during the ceremony (Buller & Burgoon, 2011, p.215). With this pattern of life in focus, Ananse is seen to be sharing a message of "truth bias" (ibid.) relative to his action and the conduct; and to also crouch out some display of bravado in order to win the ultimate in life.

Buller & Burgoon (2011, p.217) have indicated that people usually adopt strategic avenues to manage their behaviour by suppressing certain actions and mannerisms that expose them. In this case, the action in force demonstrates a total lack of interactive immediacy with its communicative partners failing to administer a sense of truthfulness on the sort of message delivered (Zhou et al, 2004). Such a condition hides the true identity of those individuals in practice. This move becomes much relevant in the development of the present discussion where Ananse is engaged in a single 'monological' conversation where his actions, either advertently or inadvertently, become noticeable by Sodziisa in the early

hours after their marriage consummation. The hate of this development only sees Ananse hiding his true identity from Sodziisa since his actions have become “sufficiently discrepant” (Dunbar et al, p.25) to be noticed by an uninvited receiver. The following excerpts represent the details of such deliberation.

ANANSE

*Now you see, folks? What did I tell you? Now I've won myself chieftain, a wife, wealth unlimited, and even three boats to carry everything to safety. Soon, I shall be on Boyile*

*Island, King in my own right! There, nobody can reach me, for those boats will never return, nor their pilots! Then it will take these empty-headed souls another decade to carve new boats to pursue me, by which time I would have built a formidable army. I amno fool! I am Ananse, the Supreme Strategist, Master Craftsman in the Guild of*

*Divine . . .*

*(SODZIISA suddenly appears from Up Centre and watches ANANSE with shock)*

SODZIISA

*My husband . . .*

ANANSE

*(taken unawares)*

*Who? Ooo . . . it's you, my wife. What's the matter?*

SODZIISA

*Well, nothing really . . . only for a moment I thought I heard you speaking to yourself. . .*

ANANSE

*Well . . . I may have been meditating . . . I often do, when I am overwhelmed with joy.*

SODZIISA

*And my husband . . . your voice . . . you sounded like er . . . the dead craftsman.*

ANANSE

*Ooo . . . did I? Aa! Now I am sure I know why. Ananse's evil spirit may have crept into my being. Do not worry, wife. I have potent medicines to purge myself of those spirits. I am certain they invade me through those vile gourds he gave me as parting gifts. I must destroy them immediately. Fetch them from that bundle, will you?*

*(4<sup>th</sup> Movement, pp.46–47)*

In effect, what one sees from this conversation represents the cardinal event on some of the things that Ananse and Sodziisa have engaged themselves in. In the first stage of the conversation, Ananse tries to self-disclose his real identity to his fulfilled action he has embarked on. According to Seiler &

Beall (2011), the use of self-disclosure often times allows someone to engage in the “voluntary sharing of information about the self that another person is not likely to know” (p.350). In this case, Ananse, quite unknowingly, exposes himself and displays non-strategic behaviour that can reveal the truth of his identity (Wagner, 2011, p.14). His self-disclosure then becomes susceptible “to an unwarranted sense of trust, only to be shattered if deception is discovered later in the relationship” (ibid., p.92). When Sodziisa takes Ananse unaware upon her appearance on the stage, Ananse then denies his state as the man he is known for and to represent himself as someone he is not. The nature of Ananse attitude in this context makes him a deceptive character who is failing to disclose pertinent information (Cole, 2001) about his true self by misleading his partner so as to manage the personality foundry between himself and his newly relational partner, Sodziisa. Under this situation, one sees that Ananse is engaging himself in the culture of levity with the expressions such as “Ananse's evil spirit may have crept into my being”, “I have potent medicines to purge myself of those spirits” and “I must destroy them immediately” (4<sup>th</sup> Movement, p.47) to keep the wife at “a safe distance” (Cole, 2001, p.112) from the reality on the ground. This, therefore, makes the entire narration to be fiddly dominated by a “trickster-like spirit of contradiction” (Deandrea, 2004, p.14) and self deceit.

The practice of deception has become ubiquitously common in the services of human activity and the development of interpersonal relationship. As such, individuals are allowed to present themselves as they wish they were instead of how they believe they are in actual fact (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998, p.77). This means that human activity and its development in terms of relationship do not represent the ideal lifestyle of those individuals involved; and as a result they intend to deceive others in the long run. This is because human beings usually feel extremely reluctant to portray their true selves about their nature; rather they adjust their behaviour to make them appear more credible (Buller & Burgoon, 1996). This serious state of human attitude is so profound in the relation between Ananse and Akpala when Ananse persuades Akpala to believe that he (Ananse) is the only source, originator, giver and above all the producer of honey; and further assures him (Akpala) that when he (Ananse) wins Sodziisa in the marriage contest, he is going to share the chieftain (that the King who happens to be the father for Sodziisahas presented as a bait for anybody who marries the daughter) equally with him (Akpala). Under this scenario, Ananse is seen to have registered his deceptive seed in the heart and on the mind of Akpala to such an extent that there is nothing that Akpala can do to get to refuse to the planned scheme of Ananse. At the end of the day, Ananse takes a stance that is in a complete antithesis to his earlier promise, by deceptively denying Akpala of what he is due for. The development of this account is illustrated below.

ANANSE

*Listen. I want the princess for myself.*

**AKPALA**

*(rather shocked)*

*Did . . . did I hear you right? You . . . you mean you want to . . .*

**ANANSE**

*Marry that princess . . . Sodziisa. Yes. I want her for myself, and you must help me!*

**AKPALA**

*You are surely out of your senses, Ananse. The princess is betrothed to the ferocious Pootagyiri, the most ruthless warrior and wrestler in our time.*

*[Flashback. AKPALA and POOTAGYIRI wrestle, and the former is thrown]*

**ANANSE**

*Forget about what he is. Look, pretty princesses are won by brain, not brawn. Are you ready to help? Then the secret of the honey will be yours . . . for good.*

**AKPALA**

*Well, but the very thought of it. Pootagyiri is the prince of an esteemed clan. Immediately after their marriage tomorrow morning, the King is going to offer him a whole chieftain, the island of Boyile, beyond the Kpeyi River – a chieftain complete with palace, cattle, an army, food barns, everything. And you think . . .*

**ANANSE**

*It is all the better, Akpala. If you co-operate in this plan, I will share all that with you, on*

*an equal basis, in addition to giving you the secret of the gods.*

**AKPALA**

*You mean, you intend to acquire all those things meant for Pootagyiri as well? How?*

**ANANSE**

*Simple. That's where an active brain comes handy. Are you ready to accept the bargain?*

*Think yourself with half a chieftain – an autonomous empire with pretty maids to choose your wives from, countless cattle and food barns, loyal subjects, an army, palace. . . think of all these pleasures. An exciting life . . . away from this dull one of watchful servitude.*

*(2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, pp.30–31)*

**ANANSE**

*Now. . . you. . . come this way! Hurry, there's very little time. Kneel down and close your eyes. If you as much as blink, you ruin the magic. Open your mouth. . . wider. . . good.*

*(ANANSE drops a little honey on his tongue) What do you taste?*

**AKPALA**

*Honey!*

**ANANSE**

*Good. Swallow it. . . and open your mouth again. (pours another round of honey) What do you taste, Akpala?*

**AKPALA**

*Honey, Sweet honey!*

**ANANSE**

*Good! Swallow it again. Now open your mouth again. But this time, do not swallow. Keep your mouth open until I have smeared your lips with honey. Then I will tell you what to do next, right?*

*(AKPALA nods anxiously. Ananse quietly places the gourd of honey back into its strap and brings out the gourd of gum. He begins to pour its contents into AKPALA's mouth).*

**ANANSE**

*(with pious dignity)*

*By the powers given me by the timeless gods, I give you Akpala this secret of honey, as a token of your untainted loyalty, help and kindness to me. Let it be with you forever. Any time you want honey, may your very spittle become honey – just on the thought!*

*(ANANSE begins to smear some of the gum on the lips of AKPALA).*

*Now, do not swallow. . . you hear me? Do not swallow! If you do so, it will turn to crocodile bile, and you will die this very moment. Slowly, close your mouth. . . good. Now press your lips tight so your mouth won't open to let off the spirit. Now open your eyes and take this gourd. Run back to the crossroads and there, think of honey. Tell yourself you want honey. Then open your mouth and you will see honey filling this gourd and spilling over! Ha! Now you have the secret of the gods! Go! When you return, we will work out the details of the other rewards.*

*(AKPALA, now beaming contentedly, nods repeatedly as he piously holds his mouth shut, picks the gourd of gum and heads hurriedly off towards exits Down Left. ANANSE quickly runs to bushes Left and hides the other gourds.)*

*(4<sup>th</sup> Movement, pp.49–50)*

This scenario creates two different scenes. The first part of scene is found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, pp.30–31 which gives a clear indication to the initial arrangement made relative to the planned agenda. In this sense, we see Ananse in a self-oriented partnership work with Akpala and the sort of plans and promises he has tabled before Akpala if he (Ananse) succeeds in clinching Sodziisa as his loved partner in future.



The second leg of this discussion is derived from the 4<sup>th</sup> Movement (pp.49–50) where Ananse is seen as “a clever deceiver, a master-schemer and a mischief maker” (Tekpetey, 1979, pp.78–79) and puts himself into “foolish mishaps out of greed” (ibid). Because of these personality traits, he deceives and destroys Akpala who has a selfless attitude and does not “see dupery as shrewdness or being witty” (Tekper, 2008, p.7) as the only means to human survival into drastic jeopardy. According to Buller & Burgoon (1996 as cited in Wagner, 2011, p.34), deception is interactive, strategic and also influences the context of communication and the relationship that it occurs in. In this case, the context here is referring to the point where Ananse sees that he has obtained all that he needs, therefore, he sees it as a grand opportunity to engage in “a deceptive interaction” (Wagner, 2011, p.34) that will allow him to amass wealth for himself in a clandestine manner without recognising the role played by Akpala in securing what he (Ananse) now owns.

In some extreme situation, the deceptive role of an individual is predicated by the personal interest and the management of information. The nature of this information can be managed by manipulating the essential fact through falsification, equivocation and the concealment (Buller & Burgoon, 1996, p.220). Under this form, there is an obvious communication strategy being used as a significant item for such information to be carried out in utilizing the development of human nature. Such a development is identified at a point in the play where Ananse seeks to employ deception as the only communicative ploy to pave his way out of the looming danger. The ploy is so visible that Ananse makes sure that Akpalais found in a state of aberrant incommunicado by pouring a hard-sticky gum into Akpala’s mouth. Since Akpala cannot talk, Ananse deceives the King and the entire members of community to believe that Akpala has committed a serious crime by receiving gifts from the supposedly ‘dead craftsman’, Ananse, and that anybody who touches Akpala will be in the same situation as him (Akpala). The excerpt below puts this development in perspective.

#### **KING**

What is the meaning of this Akpala? What is wrong with you? Can’t you speak?

#### **ANANSE**

*Aaa! . . . I understand, Great King. The dead craftsman gave us his two gourds of honey as parting gifts before he died. But I suspected the sweet stuff contain an evil spell, considering what everyone knows about his ghostly ways. I told Akpala we must bury those gourds, and he agreed. A while ago I made my wife fetch me those gourds and I went to bury them in the bush. I am sure Akpala hid by and thought he must have those two for himself. This is one of the gourds, and he drunk all the stuff no doubt. Ananse warned that none should taste it on a Friday else the one would have his mouth sealed forever, and then go mad. Today is. . . (pretends to reckon the days)*

#### **CROWD**

*Friday! Friday!*

#### **ANANSE**

*Now if you allow him to touch anybody with his mouth, that person will suffer the same affliction.*

*(Everybody, including GUARDS restraining AKPALA, begins to protect their mouths. AKPALA is struggling without success to speak or charge on ANANSE).*

#### **KING**

*Hold those hands firmly! Fetch a rope, someone, and bind the greedy fellow! He is surely mad, possessed by Ananse’s evil spirit! See his blood-shot eyes! Keep him off! What shall we do with him now! He’s surely a great danger.*

#### **ANANSE**

*Great King, it saddens me to make this suggestion, Akpala being my best friend, companion and peer during initiation. But if this empire is to be saved from the scourge dumbness and madness, I’m afraid he’d have to be killed immediately. For one must endure the pain of pulling out one rotten tooth, to save the rest from infection.*

*(4<sup>th</sup> Movement, pp.51–52)*

From the ongoing argument, we realise that the scope of Ananse’s delivery is pounded on deceit. There has never been any such occasion that the alleged decision occurs. In effect, what Ananse is seeking to advance is to control the situation before he takes leave of the community. This is because he fears that his deceptive actions could be detected if he goes to his promised land. He does that so skillfully by strategically managing the behaviour of the chief and the whole population of ‘Dim-Nyim-Lira’ in order to suppress a certain falsified action and then makes such an action appears more credible (Buller & Burgoon, 1996). This then suggests that Ananse is fully aware that all his actions and/or inactions have a very negative effect and can cause guilt over a behaviour he knows is certainly unethical in the eyes of the general public (Vrij & Semin, 1996, p.66). In this case, Ananse wants Akpala who has helped him (Ananse) succeed to be murdered in order for him (Ananse) to have his freedom and for his deceptive motive to remain secret forever as well. As a result, his conversation with the chief and the people is to enable him manage the “informational content” (Burgoon et al, 2001, p.503) that he has carefully to result “in less accurate deception detection by the patterns” (ibid.) of development that is cleverly unfolding.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

So far, the paper has provided a classical rendition of Ananse’s personality and attitude in all spheres of life. Throughout this development, “Ananse develops his tactics blow by blow, adapting himself to the developing situation” with “. . . the art of weak and of wit, of survival tactics which

are not based on open, direct force, but on subtle cunning” (Deandrea, 2004, p.6). In this revelation, one is able to see and register on the mind the true representation of the deceptive nature upon which Ananse operated. His exploit also becomes excellently remarkable that he is able to manipulate and work on the minds of certain individual members of the land in order to earn what he desires for in life. As a result, there are an obvious recognition of his “clear and consistent differences” (Burgoon et al, 2006, p.31) that emerged throughout the entire discussion and the manner in which such differential outputs have become a social product to reflect the pluralistic aspect of Ananse’s universal nature in Ghanaian folklore.

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