

The Politics of Language of the African Literature

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ABSTRACT

The paper basically explores the vital role of language in many aspects like, mode of communication and carrier of culture in African culture. The contradictory ideologies of African writers Ngugi Wa Thiong and Chinua Achebe on politics of language in African studies is analyzed in this paper. I have given my personal opinion on how one should preserve its culture or identity without disconnecting himself globally. As both culture and communication are interdependent. It is good to preserve one's culture by considering language as a medium but adhering to native language in all aspect can lead to isolation. Colonizers tactics to impose language on suppressive countries is further discussed. Different writings on African literature by prominent African writers are discussed which shows how African identity is perceived globally.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known fact that Africa is the second largest and second most populous continent that carries 16% of the world's population with the vast diversity of flora and fauna it is highly diverse in language also. There are around 3000 languages spoken natively in Africa. It is very strange fact that even after being such a diverse place, Africa is continuously marginalizing its native languages or you can say they give more reputation to the language of colonizers rather than their own, which has its own significant history in the world.

Among many of the reasons behind avoiding the native language one is the low stability rate of the native language than the one which is in modern trend because for one educated of native language there is no scope after twelfth century. They have to disappoint as there won't be good future. The main motive of this paper is to make people understand that how the language is important in the development of a country by giving example of Africans that how they refused opportunities through unbiased use of English and hence end up with the slow development of their mother nation.

It is quite clear from the above discussion that to choose English a language of learning and teaching is totally unjustified because its use in every field will lift the native language useless or decaying and become oppressive in many perspective and it also oppresses native speakers and destroys their production that will result in the slow growth of country and resists the skill development of that particular culture or country as a whole.

If we talk about the children of Africa, we will feel the difficulty they are facing with. Usually the language which becomes prominent in higher studies is English but it is not the second language but for them it is third or sometimes fourth language. So, the children who speak their native language at home will tend to use the same during their studies because they are more expressive in that language but if they choose their native language it will become very difficult for them to keep on studying with the same language with the higher studies because after their senior secondary examination the most prominent problem that they face is of language here they have to learn and apply English rather than their native language in this way the sufferer becomes the young generation of the country which should not be bound on the bases of language because they are young and raw minds and have capability to do anything if they are let free from any bound. So, they have to act upon the will of society they do not study to explore but to get settled in this way they are colonizing their minds.

Language has become one of the most vulnerable topics of Africa. For this a lot of philosophies have already given these ideas, among them two most considerable are Ngugi and Chinua Achebe. Both of them realized that the language has become a matter of contention for the future of African culture, tradition and moreover society. If we talk about Achebe who wrote one of the best novels on African culture. Things fall apart, though he wrote this novel in English this should not be taken that he preferred English over his native language but because he wanted his novel to reach in every single corner of the world so that everyone should be familiar to the tradition and culture of Africans and above are the sufferings that they have to face. So, it was not easy for Achebe to forget or marginalize his mother language. English being the international language; so he had not any other choice rather than choosing this language. In "Things fall

apart” Achebe allowed others to understand native culture. He not only wants to portray a good image of the these poor people but to uplift and to stand beside the culture of Europeans, though there are some rudimentary faults in the culture of Africa as shown by Author in the novel but some well-educated and intellectual members are doing their best to make every possible change in the customs and make it advanced modern and good for its people in this way the main central issue that Achebe is portraying is that colonialism is not the only solution to advance their culture. If they think and get aware of their pros and cons they can also become one of the best culture the only thing that lack is lack of knowledge.

*“Is it right that a man should abandon
his mother tongue for someone else’s?
It too looks like a dreadful betrayal and
produces a guilty feeling.”*

(Achebe, African writer 1962)

If we talk about Ngugi’s perspective he openly criticize Achebe for not using English language as a medium to make his novel more accessible in his opinion Achebe should use native language to make his work accessible to the lower class people or working class people of the society. Even though it was novel to uplift and portray African native culture but by using English as a medium of communication Achebe has not completely justified to the natives of Africa. On the other hand, Ngugiwas feeling that Achebe is motivating the intellectuals generation of the country that they should not devoid themselves from using English language but keep it side by hide and promote their own languages. On the other hand they should not allow English to become superiors for that the local people of the culture has to make a great effort to reach that language.

In my opinion Ngugi is the perfect preserver of culture because we should keep both languages side by side. Parents should educate their children to make them understand every language or particularly that language which would help them to explore more or become a part of global modernization but should not allow them to speak English but should make them understand their own culture in this way they are making their future generation not only educating their children but also making them realize who they are and what their history in and real identity is From the above discussion it has been clear that how colonial language is important over native African language to summarise this discussion, I would like to quote some lines by BernthLindfors.

“An African writer who chooses to write in colonial language-particularly English or French – will be able to reach a much larger audience both at home and abroad and will not be prevented from articulating mature ideas that the church, state or school finds offensive. As a consequence, what he writes will be for more representative of the intellectual climate of his time and place than anything written in local language for a smaller, younger and less heterogeneous audience”

(Achebe 1965:27-30)

Now the question that arises here is, why has the colonialism been the central factors of African writings? To answer this question we have to look back in history of Africa that reflects the rules imposed by Europeans over the continent has made a trauma in writers of the age hence the only aim for generating the African literature is to restore its historywith dignity that is the reason why Achebe reveals his feelings in this quotation.

“I feel that English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience but it will have to be a new English still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.”

(African writer, 1962)

Africans are emphasizing on language because they not only want to preserve these history but also want to portray these culture to the world. History shows that Africans have been suffering from ages it is not only their language on the bases of which they face discriminated but color their physical features also because of their skin texture, they were not considered asa human beings but less than animals after so many years of slavery they are considered as equal t white skin people. Even though the world is focusing on Modernization and globalization; they are not treated well that is the reason that rise after being independent they are not liberal from mind somewhere at some corner of mind they feel alienated so they keep on struggling for their identity among other genes.

Let us focus on the language and its feature. Basically, language plays a vital role in two aspects

1. It is a mode of communication
2. It is a carrier of culture

For example- English is a source of communication and also carry culture for British people but if we talk about Swedish it will become only a mean of communication but not a carrier of their culture, for this purpose they have their own language.

In my opinion rather than criticizing and abandoning a particular language one should have a proper knowledge of prominent language so that he will co-ordinate with the world otherwise he become alienated and could not be a part of globalization on the other hand on should keep his/her native language as a carrier of culture and tradition in this way his upcoming generation will understand the significance of their origin and would preserve it for further generations in this way their language become raw and original for ages. Hence, written literature is the only course through which a language reflects the culture it inherits.

Language is a intermixture of culture and communication both are interdependent, if someone use some foreign language as a mean of communication as well as a carrier of culture it means he or she is destroying his culture, their art, history, literature and on the other hand he is becoming a factor responsible for the elevation of someone's else's language in short he is destroying his own identity.

It has already been described that how English language has become prominent among the current generation. It "Decolonizing the mind" Ngugi talks about the use of language in a post-colonial country and criticizes European languages because according to him African rill only can free their culture and heritage if they stop following western culture because west has a control over their culture and heritage according to Ngugi they can only free themselves from the clutches of westerns by using their native language over western. In this section he describes that how alienation from one's own culture would leads to the hatred for it. So, decolonizing the mind is Ngugi's affective attempt to let free the minds of Natives to think what is right and what is wrong. Ngugi approaches Marxist perspective further Ngugi gave example of a child that how language is imposed on a child so that he can do good in studies but the society on parents are not aware with the fact that adopting colonizers language is the first step to adopt their culture and their culture and their native will become dominated indirectly in the beginning and directly later.

From the past history of Africa it is very clear that this country has suffered a lot. There are so many writings that portray the life of an African like Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Train; where the character of Jim describes the position of a Black man in society. Even after playing a faithful, humble and truthful character people don't want to accept him as a hero. Even Fredrick Douglas in his autography "*A Narrative of life of Fredrick Douglas*" describes deeply how racism was deeply embedded in the society. People had to suffer on the bases of their skin color. Hence it has been clear that how anyone can likes writings of a person who has not even given the basic rights.

CONCLUSION

This point becomes clear from Lord Macaulay's address to the parliament of British in Feb. 1835 that accepts Ngugi's point here is what he thought about India think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this country, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage. Therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become that we want them to be, "*A TRULY DOMINATED NATION*".

It is very clear that whatever the nation is to conquer it. The first step is to control its culture to make it hollow from inside to show the language of colonizers and culture superior to their language and culture that will hurt them from inside, not only hurt a feeling of hatred starts developing somewhere back of their own heritage and they will become responsible for the domination and imposition of the language and culture of some alienated Nation over them which will lead the destruction of their own identity and reality. Ngugi criticizes them for singing praises of those who have emptied Africa from all direction.

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