

LITERATURE AND MULTICULTURALISM

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Abstract

This paper deals with how Literature connects with Multiculturalism, Contribution of writers and poets to present their culture through their works and Introduction of Literature and Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism means “Melting Pot” which means all identity merges into each other in making of new identity. It is also associated with politics and aesthetic productions. Literature means cultures of different Society, State and Country. Literature is defined in books and other written works, especially those considered having creative or artistic merit or lasting value. This paper highlights the culture of two different Countries “India and Africa”. In Indian culture this paper projects different States like Gujarat, Assam, Punjab, Kerala and Rajasthan. This paper consists different works of African Literature and Indian Literature. This paper consists some examples of African Writers and Indian Writers “Ngugi wa Thiongo’s” “Decolonizing the mind” and the other example is from “Telephonic Conversation” by “Wole Soyinka” of African Literature. From Indian Literature is “Raja Rao” his famous work is “Kanthapura” which deals with Gandhian freedom struggle and also he worked ceaselessly for the eradication of such social evils as child marriage, sati, untouchability and ill treatment of widows as well. This paper includes that how Indians behaved with Africans and called them with different names, and how Africans behaved with Indians for example: they did not like want free Indians in South Africa. All Indians were called “coolies”.

Key Words: Multiculturalism, Literature, Writers, states, Behaviour.

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Introduction:

Research means a careful investigation or inquiry especially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge. There are many types of research and one of them is descriptive research which is used in this paper. India's culture is among the world's oldest; civilization in India began about 4,500 years ago. Many sources describe it as "Sa Prathama Sanskrati Vishvavara" — the first and the supreme culture in the world, according to the All World Gayatri Pariwar(AWGP) organization (Kim Ann). The culture of South Africa is known for its ethnic and cultural diversity. The South African majority still has a substantial number of rural inhabitants who lead largely impoverished lives.

Objectives:

The objective of this research was to ascertain the difference between the cultures of Africa and India. Another objective was to know their perspective towards the culture of each other. How Indians look towards the culture of Africans and how Africans look towards the culture of Indians. How they find difficulty to accept each other's culture. What problems they face while they are interacting with each other.

The Term Literature and Multiculturalism:

In simple words Literature is the mirror of society or we can say that literature is the mirror of our self and it reflects our thinking also. Literature can be classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction and whether it is poetry or prose; it can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama; and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or expectations (Wikipedia). Simple definition of Literature is written works such as poems, plays and novels that are considered to be very good and to have lasting Importance. "Literature is a vital record of what we have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have

thought and felt about those aspects of it which have most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language... it is in life itself that we have to seek the sources of literature..." (Bhatt)

Multiculturalism means a combination of two words "Multi" and "culture". Multi means more than one and culture means the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society. So multiculturalism means the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles. Multiculturalism describes the existence, acceptance, and/or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single law. Usually the term culture associated with an ancient ethnic group and foreigner ethnic group. This can happen when a law is created or expanded by combining areas with two or more different cultures (Wikipedia). For example Parsi community have accepted Gujarati culture and living together for so many years.

African Culture

The vast continent of Africa is so rich and diverse in its culture with it not only changing from one country to another but within an individual country many different cultures can be found. Much of Africa's cultural activity centers on the family and the ethnic group. Art, music, and oral literature serve to reinforce existing religious and social patterns. The Westernized minority, influenced by European culture and Christianity, first rejected African traditional culture, but with the rise of African nationalism, a cultural revival occurred. The governments of most African nations cultivate national dance and music groups, museums, and to a lesser degree, artists and writers. (Africa Guide) Writers Which I took from African Literature.

1 Wole Soyinka

2 Ngugi Wa Thiongo

1 Wole Soyinka:

Wole Soyinka is a Nigerian playwright, poet, author, teacher and political activist who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986.

“A tiger doesn't proclaim his tigritude, he pounces.”

—*Wole Soyinka*

Wole Soyinka was born on July 13, 1934, in Nigeria and educated in England. In 1986, the playwright and political activist became the first African to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. He dedicated his Nobel acceptance speech to Nelson Mandela. Soyinka has published hundreds of works, including drama, novels, essays and poetry, and colleges all over the world seek him out as a visiting professor. As a child, he lived in an Anglican mission compound, learning the Christian teachings of his parents, as well as the Yoruba spiritualism and tribal customs of his grandfather. After finishing preparatory university studies in 1954 at Government College in Ibadan, Soyinka moved to England and continued his education at the University of Leeds, where he served as the editor of the school's magazine, *The Eagle*. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in English literature in 1958. (In 1972 the university awarded him an honorary doctorate).

His work: Telephonic Conversation

The poem “Telephone Conversation” has been written by Wole Soyinka. Wole Soyinka is Nigerian playwright, novelist, critic and the first African writer to get the Nobel Prize award for Literature in 1986. In this poem, the poet describes a telephone conversation between a black man and a white woman. The black man is searching for an apartment to live in and is inquiring the lady for any availability. At the beginning of the poem, the man “confesses” that he is an African. He confesses the color of his skin as if he had done a crime. After this, the poet uses irony and sarcasm to describe their conversation. All of these discrepancies between what appears to be and what really has created a sense of verbal irony that helps the poem display the

ridiculousness of racism. The narrator of the poem describes a telephone conversation in which he reaches a deal with a landlady to rent an apartment. He feels that he must let her know that he is black:

*Nothing remained
But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
"I hate a wasted journey—I am African."*

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o:

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a writer of Kenyan descent. One of the foremost living African novelists, he has also developed a reputation as a post-colonial theorist, and has taught at universities around the world. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born James Thiong'o Ngugi in Limuru, Kenya in 1938. He studied at Makerere University in Uganda; as a student there, he published his first short stories. After graduating, he pursued a second bachelor's degree at Leeds University in England. He eventually became a professor of English, and has taught around the world. As an adult, he dropped his Western first name and adopted his current Bantu name to emphasize his cultural pride. This is why some editions of his early books – including *Weep Not Child* and *The River Between* – are published under the name "James Ngugi." (Biography of Ngugi wa Thiong'o)

His Work: Decolonizing the Mind

Ngugi's "Decolonizing The Mind" is an essay on language and how it communicates the culture of its users. Ngugi begins his essay by telling the reader about his life growing up in Kenya. He states they all spoke "Gikuyu", and all told many stories about animals or humans. The over-arching theme of these stories was about the "apparent" weak outwitting the strong, or how a disaster forces co-operation (1998). He continues to describe what makes a good storyteller. A good storyteller, according to Ngugi, is one that is able to use language to make the same story seem interesting, and make stories told by others more exciting (1998). Ngugi then goes on to describe the intruding colonization that occurred. Rapidly, everything he knew about his life was suppressed, and replacing it was the English language. English became to dominate

language to learn, and anyone caught speaking Gikuyu was lashed. The only way to continue in education was to earn a credit in English, no matter how well you did elsewhere. (Kpagonis).

Ngugi describes language as the carrier of culture. Written, spoken, and “real life” or body-language is all used in harmony to define different cultures. Language conveys a culture’s standards and values, something that can’t be picked up by someone who doesn’t understand the language. When English was imposed into Ngugi’s culture, textbooks and teachings made his culture look inferior. The use of language can be used to convey complex messages, as in with the stories told, or used to control, as seen with colonization. Language is an extremely powerful tool that defines the human race, and it’s use can create amazing literature/media, or can be used to manipulate and control. (Kpagonis)

Indian culture

“I venture to suggest that the inhabitants of this country would do well if they wew to assume the ancient, honorable, and national name of Bharata, remembering that India has become famous as Bharatvarsa, the land of Bharats.”

Gustav Oppert (Barad)

*“I am proud of this **noble heritage** which was and still is ours, and I am aware that I too, like all of us, am a link in that uninterrupted chain which finds its origin in the dawn of history, in India’s immemorial past.”*

Jawaharlal Nehru (Barad)

*“India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her **last creative word**; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples.”*

Sri Aurobindo (Barad)

*“It is already become clear that a chapter which had a **Western beginning** will have to have an **Indian ending** if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race.”*

Arnold Toynbee (Barad)

Respect and worship for elders is a key stone of Indian culture. This genuine acknowledgment of seniority is demonstrated through enduring customs, like, not sitting while they are standing, even serving their food first. We find the youngsters never using the proper names of their elders. In respect, we touch the feet of all elders, holy men and women in recognition of their great humility and attainment. A student touches the feet of his teacher. Purity in mind, body, speech, thought, word and deed is vitally important for us. The concept of Zero and the primordial sound of 'Om' were given by India.

1 Raja Rao

Raja Rao was born on November 8, 1908 in Hassan, in the princely state of Mysore (now in Karnataka in South India), into a Smartha Brahmin family of the Hoysala Karnataka caste. His father, H.V. Krishnaswamy, taught Kannada at Nizam College in what was then Hyderabad State. His mother, Gauramma, was a homemaker who died when Raja Rao was 4 years old. He was the one of 9 siblings, having seven sisters and a brother named Yogeshwara Ananda. His native language was Kannada, but his post-graduate education was in France, and most of his writings, apart from newspaper articles written in Kannada, have been in English.

The death of his mother, when he was four, left a lasting impression on the novelist – the absence of a mother and orphanhood are recurring themes in his work. Another influence from early life was his grandfather, with whom he lived in Hassan and Harihalli or Harohalli). (Wikipedia)

His Work: Kanthapura

“Kanthapura tells the story of villagers fighting British colonialism in India. In the first couple of pages of the book, the narrator introduces us to the villagers and Kenchamma, their totally awesome goddess”. (Shmoop)

Raja Rao's first novel Kanthapura (1938) is the story of a village in south India named Kanthapura. The novel is narrated in the form of a 'sthalapurana' by an old woman of the village, Achakka. Kanthapura is a traditional caste ridden Indian village which is away from all modern ways of living. Dominant castes like Brahmins are privileged to get the best region of the village whereas Sudras, Pariahs are marginalized. The village is believed to have protected by a local deity called Kenchamma. Though castes The village has got a long nourished

traditions of festivals in which all castes interact and the villagers are united. The main character of the novel Moorthy is a Brahmin who discovered a half buried 'linga' from the village and installed it. A temple is built there, which later became the centre point of the village life. All ceremonies and festivals are celebrated within the temple premises. Hari-Kathas, a traditional form of storytelling, was practiced in the village. Hari-Kathas are stories of Hari (God). One Hari-Katha man, Jayaramachar, narrated a Hari Katha based on Gandhi and his ideals. The narrator was arrested because of the political propaganda instilled in the story.

How Literature Connects with Multiculturalism:

"Racism can be defined as: a way of thinking that considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, casual way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which on this basis distinguishes between 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups." (Bill Ashcroft)

The reduction of human beings to the simple opposition of Rich/Poor or Black/Brown/Yellow/White is in fact a strategy to establish "**binarism**" between 'Superior' Vs. 'Inferior', which asserts a relation of dominance. A simple distinction represents very efficiently the violent hierarchy on which imperialism is based and which it actively perpetuates. (Bhatt).

We got independence from Britisher's around 60 years ago but still we can say that we are in cage of **racism, casticism and untouchables** etc. we got independence but still we are not independent from these social issues. And Gandhi ji was the one who was also Indian; he fought with Britisher's for Africa but still they dislike Indians They also got freedom in 1930. We act like we are modern people and we accepted western civilization. But when we will talk about Africa and Africans there is only one thing which came in our mind is that they are bad, they are uncivilized. Here I would like to do one question from you all that if we didn't study their culture and didn't know anything about their behavior then on what basis we are saying that they are bad and they are uncivilized. In Africa also people believe in racism, they are also racist for proving this right I would like to give an example of "**Telephonic Conversation**" which was written by "**Wole Soyinka**" shows that they also believe in racism. In this text we can see that how that landlady asks about the skin color of that man who wants to take room in her house.

In the reference of “**Decolonizing the mind**” Slavery existed in Africa, but it was not the same type of slavery that the Europeans introduced. The European form was called chattel slavery. A chattel slave is a piece of property, with no rights. Slavery within Africa was different. A slave might be enslaved in order to pay off a debt or pay for a crime. Slaves in Africa lost the protection of their family and their place in society through enslavement. But eventually they or their children might become part of their master’s family and become free. This was unlike chattel slavery, in which enslaved Africans were slaves for life, as were their children and grandchildren. The treatment of slaves in Africa varied widely. Ottobah Cuguano, a former slave, remembered slaves as being ‘well fed ... and treated well’. Olaudah Equiano, another former slave who wrote an account of his life, noted that slaves might even own slaves themselves. In larger states some slaves worked in government administration, and might become an important state or royal official with wide ranging powers. Other slaves in Africa might work within their master’s household’s domestic servants or as agricultural laborers. Others were sent to work in the gold mines of West Africa. Pictured here are two weights in the shape of a soldier and captive. They were used to weigh gold dust, which was itself used as a type of money. Mining for gold was hard and dangerous work, and many died. Africans usually enslaved ‘other’ people, not their own particular ethnic, or cultural, group. Slaves were taken as prisoners of war, or enslaved in payment for debt or as punishment for crime. This enslavement was usually on a small scale. It was enough to supply the demand for slaves within Africa, but not enough to supply the demand from outside. As the demand from outsiders such as Arabs and Europeans grew, warfare and raids to get slaves and the kidnapping of individuals increased. Europeans wanted to buy enslaved Africans to work on the land they owned on the Caribbean islands and in America. They chose Africans for a number of reasons, one being because they were used to farming. Pictured here is a 20th century hoe, a tool used to work the soil. It is from the Igbo people of Nigeria, West Africa. (Port cities Bristol)

The caste system in India is a system of social stratification which has pre-modern origins, was transformed by the British Raj, and is today the basis of educational and job reservations in India. It consists of two different concepts, Varna and jati, which may be regarded as different levels of analysis of this system. If we will talk about casticism in India then we can say here everybody wants reservation and benefits of this reservation policy for example recently

in Haryana Jatt reservation moment was there, and in Gujarat also Patel reservation moment was there. But if we will ask anybody that will you allow you children to get marry in these casts then nobody will say yes we will allow them. Here people are against these intercasts marriages but on other hand everybody wants reservation and their benefits also. Varna may be translated as "class," and refers to the four social classes which existed in the Vedic society, namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras Certain groups, now known as Dalits, were historically excluded from the varna system altogether, and are still ostracized as untouchables.

Caste systems in Africa vary from one community to the next. Some societies have a markedly developed strict caste system between groups of differing origins, whereas others are characterized by a looser relationship between their constituent elements. Countries in Africa that have societies with caste systems within their borders include Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia and others.

Afro centrism also called Africentrism, cultural and political movement whose mainly African American adherents regard themselves and all other blacks as syncretism Africans and believe that their worldview should positively reflect traditional African values. The terms Afrocentrism, Afroecology, and Afro centrality were coined in the 1980s by the African American scholar and activist Molefi Asante.

Perceptions of each other's racial attitudes:

Respondents in the survey were asked what they thought most Indians think about Africans and what they thought most Africans think about Indians. More than four-fifths of the African and Indian respondents thought that most Indians had negative attitudes towards Africans. Africans also were aware of Indian attitudes on the more specific issue of intermarriage. In response to a separate question, 86 per cent of the Africans said that they thought most Indians would object to their son or daughter marrying an African. African awareness of Indian attitudes, of course, contributes strongly to African defensive racialism. Africans not only fear economic and political competition with Indians, but fear that Indians in power would be biased against Africans. Four-fifths of the Indian respondents but only half of the Africans thought that most Africans had negative attitudes toward Indians. Since most

Africans did not express negative attitudes toward Indians in response to other questions in the survey, it appears that Indian respondents greatly exaggerated the extent to which Africans had negative attitudes towards Indians. On the more specific issue of intermarriage, Indians had more accurate perceptions of African attitudes. Only four per cent of the Indian respondents thought that most Africans would object to their son or daughter marrying an Indian. (Landis)

Conclusion:

We are not ready to accept co-existence in the society. In India we go only with the references of caste, race and colors but who thinks about humanity and culture. If we support our culture then why we want reservation not changes in our society and what about minority who will think about them? We all can only talk about all these issues but cannot do anything practically about this, and this is the only problem. And whenever we got chance to highlight these issues then we took only benefits of those policies, and didn't saw from that point of view that these are the very big issues of our society.

In India People from other countries are treated differently by some Indian people, based both on skin color and country of origin. African people are especially affected by racism in India. Many African people who go to India to study have been victims of racism. Some are denied living accommodations and face other forms of racism. In Africa Racial discrimination has occurred against White Zimbabwean communities. The government has forcefully evicted them from their farms and committed ethnic cleansing against them. As I already mentioned in objectives of this paper that the objective of this research was to ascertain the difference between the cultures of Africa and India. Another objective was to know their perspective towards the culture of each other. How Indians look towards the culture of Africans and how Africans look towards the culture of Indians. How they find difficulty to accept each other's culture. What problems they face while they are interacting with each other. By concluding this paper I just want to ask one question to you all that how we can stop these social issues like racism, casticism and many other social issues through which we cannot accept the people of different countries and different community. If you all will say that by accepting each other's culture then also again I would like to ask you all one question that is it so easy to accept each other's culture. I think no because these social issues are in roots of our culture, community and Nation.

From the description of Indian and African racial attitudes it can be concluded that Indians in Guyana tend to have super ordinate racial attitudes towards Africans while Africans tend to have defensive attitudes towards Indians. Indian super ordinate racialism is based on the belief that Indians are more thrifty or ambitious than Africans and the belief that Indian racial characteristics are superior to those of Africans. Indian super ordinate racialism is restrained by the norm of no racialism and by a fairly strong commitment to integration. Indian super ordinate racialism is evident, however, in Indian attitudes towards intermarriage with Africans and in Indian perceptions of what most Indians think of Africans. (Landis)

Indian Society is obsessed with white skin and it could be because of colonisation from British Empire that Indians want to look like their former master. If we look in Indian society the darker color of skin the person is then more likely the person to be treated as a lower class in Indian society that it's colonial mentally that Britain left for Indians to discriminate among themselves.

However, today India is considered one of future economic power in world and it has high advance education institutions included IT institutions that it's attracting lot of African students to study computer Science in India and also it's attracting African immigrants to buy cheap goods to send back to Africa. It means Africans are contributing for development of Indian economy too. (Racism in India against Black people)

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