

Negritudism in African Education: The Ghanaian Perspective

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Abstract:- The main objective of the study was to transfer the philosophies of negritude as an ideology in literature into education to sensitize well-meaning Ghanaians, stakeholders in education and traditional custodians on the collapse of cultural awareness subjects from Ghanaian school curriculum. The study traced the continuity from a much older work Ethiopia Unbound to a more recent one Two Thousand Seasons to see how Ghanaian novelists have contributed textually to the sentiments of negritude which can be adapted and adopted by curriculum designers for Ghanaian education. The research design used for this study was a library research which involved activities in which the researcher worked exclusively on literature which addresses the issue. No attempt is made at reviewing literature on this study as the authors, saturated with the numerous experiments with issues of Ghanaian education by politicians wish to express a 'spontaneous overflow of strong emotions.' However, the knowledge gained by the authors was derived from various literature and these are duly acknowledged. The findings led to suggesting subjects and courses to be studied in Ghanaian schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education, they say is a subset of culture, as such formal education in any given area must have as its utmost prerogative, the need to fashion its structured programs to inculcate a cultural heritage into its clients from the immediate community in which it finds itself. It is said that education must have a relevant cultural component to make the pupils hold in high esteem the heritage of their people through educating them culturally, and traditionally refining them to hold to their roots. In such a case, education in Ghana can therefore be said to have no cultural inclination of making its clients take pride in their Ghanaianism but rather succeeds in alienating them from their identity. Though an undeniable fact that education and culture are symbiotic and balancing each other, the existing Ghanaian educational system does not reflect on its own culture, but fashioned after standards and principles of western science and literature and the infusion of its way of life among Ghanaian school-going children. Ghanaian education is still theoretical, abstract and foreign which has no motive than to promote cramming rather than promoting a sense of social, cultural, economic or political development in Ghanaian children.

The authors observe with much gratitude the positive step to highlighting the intimate relationship between culture and education taken by the Ghana government in its implementation of the 4year B.Ed. curriculum in initial teacher training colleges throughout the country. Categorizing

the colleges of education into specialism courses among which are Social Sciences, Languages, Religious and Moral Education and Technical/ Vocational Training, which have electives based on creativity, morality and spirituality on the one hand, and on the other, STEM courses that represent the basic fact of life today, impart to the learner cultural heritage and social heritage. As education must function to systematically maintain a culture by conserving and make modification in it, it should be a process by which society through all educational institutions deliberately transmit the cultural heritage.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE TWO BOOKS

The racial discrimination suffered by the Blackman was as a result of the Whiteman perceiving the black race as having virtually no knowledge of science and technology and so had to be taken advantage of and relegated to the background. The Blackman was made to believe that he had no culture and no history and that he is destined to be a permanent 'hewer of wood and drawer of water'. The tapestry of deceit, hypocrisy and pretentiousness with which our colonial masters lured us into giving into slave trade, colonialism, deprivation of our natural resources still have their roots in formal education. Though many African states have gained independence, their people are still mentally colonized. They see everything European as superior and try to imitate it. There are still pieces of evidence of racial discrimination and other forms of inhumanities Africans are subjected to abroad. It is evidently clear that the philosophy of negritude has not gone down well with Africans. Negritude has to be revived for Africans to be sensitized on the need to discard the view that the Blackman is inferior to people of the other human race.

Some published articles imply that the philosophy of negritude has enjoyed so many flirtations from scholars and literary works since the early 1930's so the philosophy, being over 70 years old, should be dead or nearing death by now.

This study therefore seeks to examine aspects of the African life which are heavily influenced by western civilization and to transfer the philosophies of negritude as an ideology in literature into education for Ghanaians to have a good self-realization and self-identification with it. The study will trace the continuity from a much older work Ethiopia Unbound to a more recent one to see how Ghanaian novelists have contributed textually to the sentiments of negritude.

How will the selected prose-works help to eradicate the cultural misconception held against the African?

How are the main philosophies of negritude reflected in the selected prose works going to influence curriculum developers to Ghanaian Education culturally focused?

What are the effects of using negritudinal framework for the overall success of the work?

The purpose of this study is to examine how J.E Casely Hayford and Ayi Kwei Armah have delved into the determination of some Africans to unweave the tapestry of deceit and to fight against all forms of European imposition as reflected in their narratives, namely Ethiopia Unbound and Two Thousand Seasons respectively.

The study seeks to analyze these works closely to see the extent to which the authors desire to promote black consciousness and African cultural heritage.

This project work is intended to make readers understand the effect that visionary ideology can work in expanding the scope of negritude as an ideology, not only in literature but also in Ghanaian education.

Commitment to the African Indigenous Way Of Life:

There is no denying the fact that Africa has a tier of rich cultural heritages with diverse aesthetic values that are flexible and highly adaptable. The wisdom of yesteryear which determined the African culture has a lot of educative values which can impact positively on re-regulating societal norms and morals for today's uses and purposes. The enslavement to western value, orientation and culture has produced the conflict of values. We therefore need a re-orientation of the cultural values if we must take for the present what was good in ancient eyes and move forward undeterred to make a better tomorrow.

Ghanaians in particular need to take a bold stance to return to the glorious past so as to re-validate viable values, contextualize and consolidate them for today, obviate the mistakes of the past and confront tomorrow with such lasting eternal values that can make the nation active in a world where values are no longer constant. The way forward is easily traceable and dependent on insight on secondary research sources, to anchor on the need to educate the African mind through a progressive civilization of generative thinking capacity.

One such source is Casely Hayford's Ethiopia Unbound which for some time was hardly being appreciated as a work of art. These doubts may be as a result of the fact that Casely Hayford's subtitle Studies in Race Emancipation does not carry with it any literary scent. In recent years however, students of African literature have taken to the study of this text and now classify it under novel. Most African literature students see the book as an inspiration for all Africans and that:

It (Ethiopia Unbound) is a book that deserved to be remembered and read, particularly At a time when it is fashionable to regret the dearth of literature in West Africa, because it can quite justifiably be considered a classic. It is a wonderfully prescient book containing almost all the ideas and ideology of modern African thought; at the same time it is instinct with urbanity and tolerance that eschews almost all partisan polemic. (p xx)

In the same vein, Two Thousand Seasons has also endured some flirtations from scholars in their attempt to classify the narrative. Derek Wright expresses in his Ayi Kwei Armah's Two Thousand Seasons: A Dissent thus

Armah makes no claim to criticize his 'destroyers' and 'predators' and their African quislings but simply hurls abuse at them, more after the fashion of the Ewe halo than that of Western Satire. These features are more often, the stock-in-trade of epic, saga and chronicle, both in the African oral tradition...

Isidore Okpewho also shows his diffidence in Myth and Modern Fiction: Armah's Two Thousand Seasons as:

Myth therefore, I have argued, is the quality of fancy that informs the symbolistic or configurative powers of human mind in varying degrees of intensity. In that sense we are free to call that narrative of the oral tradition a myth... perhaps no recent work better demonstrates this than Armah's Two Thousand Seasons

A.N. Mensah concludes:

My disagreement with this approach is in the assumption that Armah's work is in fact a novel- Properly so called. The objection is fundamental, for epic and novel as literary artifacts spring from different historical and more importantly philosophical outlooks.

The uncertainty expressed by these critics in easily identifying what kind of composition my selected texts are stems from the fact in my view, there are no narratives written, or ever to be written by Anglophone writers that have skillfully drawn all the sympathy for the African as they celebrate the pure African values unadulterated by the moors of the west. The sentiments of negritude are awakened in both Anglophone Ghanaian prose-works that attempt to rediscover a glorious African past unadulterated by forces associated with the imperialists.

Casely Hayford has been confronted by white racist propaganda with the abuse that the African has no culture of his own and so in a bid to prove them wrong, has in his work sustained the need to uphold and cherish one's home culture no matter how primitive it may look. In his work, he has propounded that the limitations in African indigenous culture allow the useful western culture to be integrated into it but not allowing ourselves to undergo complete acculturation.

Armah's Two Thousand Season, on the other hand has taken a negritudinal position by adorning itself with the style of rich

traditions of African oral narration with an African flavor. Armah, in emphasizing that vital aspect of African communalism is so sentimental in his narration that he makes his reader feel part of the woes that befell Africans way before we were born. He achieves this by the use of the first person plural we and our to include himself and those of his readers who share the same sentiments. Armah's narrator, does so in the true tradition of African communalism to heighten that strength, survival and beauty are to be found in togetherness. Again the use of rhetorical questions, repetitions, long phrases all add to the effect of trying to recreate in writing the effect of the speaking voice which makes his narrative one of the most oral work ever written. "We are not a people of yesterday. Do they ask how many single seasons have flowed from our beginning till now?" The narrator goes on to show his in-depth knowledge about things concerning Africa. He juxtaposes the wisdom of Africa with the impatience and folly of Europe's ways. Armah endows his narrator with requisite vocatives to call Africans attention as he capitalizes on the uncertainties of the past and turns it to positive ends.

Both novels amplify on religious and political issues. J.E. Casely Hayford evidently satirizes the African society for embracing an alien religion which has its philosophies totally contradictory to the African traditional religion. He focuses on the illogicalities, pretentiousness, discrimination and deceit that are concealed in the European religious philosophies. He establishes the conviction that the average African has lost his bearings in his religious milieu with the dreams shattered by pressure, oppression and destruction endemic in the European Christian beliefs. The novel goes deeper than mere critique to negate the sentiments expressed by European religious leaders but lashes the individual African for willingly accepting this strange religion that aims at sending the African gods to a black ashy death. Christianity is certainly contrasted with indigenous religion to the disadvantage of the latter. The author compares Reverend Whitely, the symbol of Christianity with Kwamankra, a perfect embodiment of indigenous traditional religion and discusses the principles of the two religions and the prospects each has for his followers. Christianity hypocrisy sends this old Nancy to her grave when she realizes the representatives of God she had trusted so much preach virtue but practice vice but when Kwamankra was being operated upon, he was blessed with the opportunity of seeing his dead loved ones even in a trance. The big question is, which of these religions has hope in store for its followers?

Hayford seems to be a bit circumspective in his attack on the colonial predecessors and so instead of directly attacking the Whiteman and his civilization, he rather looks at the negative behavioral pattern that their religion has managed to implant in the African. The novel sees the pride in upholding and cherishing ones traditional cultural practices. He scornfully asserts that the influence of western culture on African life extinct. The black man has adopted foreign religion and its festivals as white superiority and rejected his values. Church festivals like Christmas and Easter have neutralized the

negritude rejection of white values. He recalls that before the advent of the European into Africa, Africa had a culture which was as rich and satisfying as any other, and although there had been an inevitable diffusion of western culture in Africa's, this should not desiccate the culture of Africa.

Casely Hayford brings to light for the average African to realize that even though the whites feel that Africans are uncivilized, before the introduction of their civilization, we had an established civilization and tradition that really guided our path to simplicity, honesty and a camaraderie sort of living in contrast to Reverend Whitely's perception about us that:

The blacks are dishonest people, robbing the white traders and smuggling contraband goods, and defrauding his majesty's government.

African tradition establishes in its members a moral uprightness and the need to accord equal respect to humans of all walks of life. If the people who claim to bring Africa its civilization and salvation have doubts about the very nature of their leaders, then it would be very unforgivable on our path, as Africans, to throw away our rich culture that challenges us to probe into the unknown to ascertain facts for ourselves and not live by mere philosophies.

In two thousand seasons, Armah's narrator shows his disgust at the activities of the imperialist through the use of powerful images and symbols. The images which could have been the preserve of the people who claim to have brought Africa its salvation and civilization are completely denied them. It is not surprising therefore that the desert used to mean an "agent of destruction associated with the white's monstrous devouring force, sucking and converting everything into its own destructive and unproductive self" is the course of their home and for the African home he associates life, vitality, fecundity and inertia. The text is symbolically designed to associate the colour white, the desert and the setting sun with the predators and destroyers. The color white, which represents alien values, death and destruction, was ruthlessly forced down the throats of Africans. It is the introduction of alien culture, economy, education, politics and religion that brought in its wake the upsurge of disintegration among people of the way. The white colour is therefore properly used to describe both the Arabs and the Europeans as the colour of the destructive imperialists.

Again the setting sun represents the path towards death. There is no doubt therefore, that the west, where the sun sets is the home of the destroyers of Africa. What they know is falling-seeing African heroes fall, seeing our visions fall and seeing our whole continent fall. It is also seen that the novelist fashions his plot so that everything that poses a threat to the vitality and purity of African and the Black Race heads desertwards. These rather disturbing symbols are placed side by side the colour black which is associated with racial triumph and eventual fulfillment, the rising sun representing life from the east where Africans originate from, is full of life and vitality. The symbol of spring water is contrasted with the desert

because the spring is clear and pure. This therefore represents the good qualities of mother Africa. The contrast between the spring water and the desert is seen in where the spring lives by reciprocity-giving and receiving- but the selfish destructive desert knows no giving. It only takes. Politically, the people of the way see themselves as one people with the same destiny and work for the welfare of the whole. Land, possession and all other properties were held in common and used for the enrichment of the whole. Though there were caretakers, these were not positions for selfish gains at the expense of the masses labour. They provided care, skills, protection, for the productive benefit of the whole. This is in sharp contrast to the destroyers way. The principle of mutual giving and receiving is not a principle they understand and live by so theirs is to feast on others and reap what they have not sown. The religion of the people of the way is so different from Islam and Christianity, which are alien religion associated with the predators and destroyers. Armah believes that the philosophies of both Christianity and Islam are “shrinking theologies” and their myths are mere fables. For the religion of the way, there was no need to invent fables to explain their origins. There is actually no need to know who made the earth and sky for it was not necessary for the earth to have been created by an imagined being. They are thus content with the available facts their religion has proven to them and so they do not pretend to seem more knowing. They however acknowledge that

There is indeed a great force in the world, a force spiritual and able to shape the physical universe off, not something separate from ourselves, it is an energy in us strongest working, breathing, thinking together as one people, weakest when we are scattered, confused broken into individual, unconnected fragments (p 15)

Armah then establishes his acknowledgements to the power and charm of the African oral tradition. He rejects the present social history of Africa as unrepresentative of its true character and projects a vision of an Africa that is free of its shackles and guided by an ideology or religion ‘the way’ on which the race was nurtured from time immemorial. The collective narrator recounts:

All this was before the time when we of our age began our initiation friendship, time of learning, when in blindness of childhood we knew only of our growing power but of the weakening the destruction of the power of the people we were completely ignorant.

The authors, both taking a negritude position, show nostalgia for the pure unadulterated tradition of Africa before the white man came to destroy it.

Does Ghanaian education aim at instilling the pure unadulterated tradition of Africa in our children or it is still pursuing the subjects that aided the white imperialists to train African

This is clearly seen in the subjects of study in our schools today. From the basic school to the senior high school,

subjects that help to highlight the pride in the Ghanaian culture are given little or no attention while those which remind us of the trauma of colonialism are given utmost concentration. The matter is even worse in the colleges of education where subjects like Ghanaian languages, religious and moral education, environmental and social studies, Ghanaian history, vocational skills with emphasis on arts, are each a one credit hour paper and agricultural science is integrated into the sciences with unrecognizable features. These subjects are even taught as either electives or not accessible to the sciences. Contradictorily, English Language, Mathematics and Integrated Science are done as compulsory subjects throughout their three years stay on campus.

How then can a student rediscover his cultural identity when culturally inclined subjects are denied them in schools? How can a Ghanaian teacher who has not studied into details the climatic condition of his country, the agricultural heritage as symbolized by the green in one of our national emblems, the natural language of communism, the cultural and historical, religious and moral inclinations of his progenitors instill patriotism and traditional belongingness to the generations ahead?

III. CONCLUSION

What we have tried to drive at is to raise the awareness that culture impacts on education positively by making the school a miniature of a society whose activities and programs in totality are organized in promoting, molding, reforming, and developing its cultural pattern through curriculum design and implementation, methods of teaching, discipline, text books and the teacher who is imbibed with the cultural values and ideals of the society to infuse in children.

In the same way education in Ghana must be strengthened to influence culture by preserving, transmitting and developing it to ensure its continuity in the physical, mental, moral, social and intellectual development of personality and the removal of cultural lags.

We wish to congratulate the effort made by the government of Ghana to include subjects like African traditional religion, African poetry, African prose fiction, in the new 4 yr B.ED curriculum for initial teacher training institutions in the country. However, we are by this making an assertion that the emphasis on English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science as core subjects of study in the basic and senior high schools in Ghana have outlived their significance in shaping students into well-meaning Ghanaians. These should be replaced by

1. Cultural and historical/social studies of Ghana
2. Religious and Moral upbringing of the Ghanaian Child
3. Languages and Arts for the Ghanaian Child
4. Environmental and Agricultural studies in Ghana, to mention but a few, to help in Rediscovering the African personality in the Ghanaian context.

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