

**INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE DEGENERATION: FROM COLONISATION
THROUGH GLOBALIZATION AND STANDARDISATION IN NARAYAN'S
*KOCHARETHI: THE ARAYA WOMAN***

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Abstract

Literary work is a reflection of the culture of the society to which the creator or author belongs. Culture is a combination of beliefs, customs, values, modes of thinking, geography, traditions, literature, art, and behavioral norms in society. Culture and society are closely connected. Time brings about changes or modifications in culture. Along with the change in society, culture also changes. Analysis of postcolonial texts depicts evidence of cultural transformation. This paper tries to bring out the cultural elements in the postcolonial novel 'Purple Hibiscus' written by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Adichie in her fiction explores the Igbo culture, which is a traditional culture of Africa. Through her characters, Adichie portrays the conflict between old and modern tradition. This paper reveals the efforts of Adichie to protect the traditional Igbo culture through the leading character of Auntie Informa. Auntie Ifoma is a representative of Nigerians; her voice is the voice of Nigeria. Just like other postcolonial Countries, Africa was also influenced by western culture. While modernists welcome changes in the traditional culture, others highlight the negative impact of modernization. Purple Hibiscus is rich with characters who argue for preserving the old society and culture.

Keywords: languages, indigenious, colonization, traditional, cultural etc

Introduction

'Culture' refers to the social behavior, and norms found in specific human societies based on the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups. The traditional customs and rituals passed on from ages to generations after generations by families and societies become part of the culture of that society. The culture of a specific group or community which shares common experiences takes shape by the way its members perceive the world. Specific community or group may be formed based on race, nationality, gender, class, or religion. The culture of an individual depends on the group to

which he is born. The culture of individual changes when he becomes part of another group, but he will carry with him, many of the elements of his old culture, and his culture becomes a blending of both. In the modern age, all of us are exposed to and influenced by different cultures. The result is that the culture of individuals, as well as societies, is constantly changing. In the present day, the age-old customs and rituals are under scrutiny. Many blind beliefs and practices observed as part of culture are being questioned. Many evil customs that were practiced as part of the culture of particular societies for long were discontinued. 'Sati', one such evil practiced in India for centuries, was prohibited by law.

African Culture

African literature gained popularity in the 1950s. African culture is rich and diverse. There are 54 nations in Africa with their own tradition and history. Each of these nations has a different culture. Within each country, different tribes have different cultures. The art, music, dance forms, literature as well as attire, cuisine, and language dialects of each ethnic group clearly show the difference in their cultures. Geographically, the Niger River divides the Igbo homeland into two sections – eastern (which is the larger of the two) and the western section. Igbo culture comprises of archaic practices blended with new elements added into the Igbo culture by cultural evolution as well as outside influence.

Review of the novel, Purple Hibiscus

Her African consciousness and commitment are evident in her characters, which are well-grounded in their culture. Adichie in Purple Hibiscus displays the powerful influence of the Igbo culture through her characters who are dedicated to upholding the customs and traditions of their people. Adichie's characters represent Africa's stance against cultural exploitation; Africans cherish their culture, tradition, norms, values, and cosmology more than anything else.

The novel Purple Hibiscus presents characters from mixed cultural backgrounds in Nigeria, which is characteristic of post-colonial environments. Father Benedict is the true representative of the British colonial masters and Papa-Nnukwu, Eugene's father, is the epitome of the traditional African religion. In between these two symbolic characters is a very interesting cultural mix: Eugene Achika is a typical representative of acculturated Nigerians, who are so fascinated by the colonial culture that they have discarded the African way of life and language; denouncing them as diabolic and uncivilized. Father Amadi is another character, whom Kambili describes as the "... boyish man in an open-neck T-shirt and jeans faded so much I could not tell if they had been black or dark blue"

She is considered as an embodiment of the Igbo cultural expression. Though she was a well-educated woman, who was trained by the missionaries, she upheld the beliefs and customs of her people; she had high regard for her father, Papa-Nnukwu, who was a traditionalist. Although she did not have a chieftaincy title like her brother, Eugene, she performed the socially ascribed roles to the male gender. To display his self-righteousness,

after the death of their father, Eugene suggested a Christian burial for their father, but Ifeoma resisted it in the following way:

Aunty Ifeoma got up and started to shout. Her voice was unsteady.

“I will put my dead husbands' grave for sale, Eugene before I give our father a Catholic funeral. Do you hear me? I said I will sell Ifediora's grave first! Was our father a Catholic? I ask you, Eugene, was he a Catholic? Uchugbagi!” Aunty Ifeoma snapped her fingers at Papa; she was throwing a curse at him. Tears rolled down her cheeks. She made choking sounds as she turned and walked into her bedroom. (Purple Hibiscus 186-187). Ifeoma believed that the imported religions, namely Christianity and Islam, did not have the same powerful hold on the people as the traditional religions, so their use as ethical instruments was not effective.

In African rural communities, when men die, their wives, i.e. widows are made to go through certain ordeals in the name of mourning and burial rites in “honor” of their dead husbands. But Adiche says there are two things for doing such an ordeal; one is to get sympathy, another one is to avoid suspicion of relatives. On her husband's death, Aunty Ifeoma did not lament and escape from her duties like other widows. Instead, she rose to face challenges and shouldered the responsibility of caring for her three children and their aged father. Ifeoma called her sister-in-law 'wife'. This naming of a relative's wife as your wife was an Igbo cultural practice that showed that the wife did not only belong to the husband but the whole family.

Ifeoma taught her children how to speak the Igbo language and allowed them to speak it freely. Just like other Igbo women, Ifeoma raised her children in such a way that they could perform their domestic chores independently. This clearly showed her affinity for their cultural heritage.

Kambili and Jaja did not know how to perform routine household duties. Even they did not know how to wash plates. Kambili did not know how to cook because her father employed a cook for the family. Amaka taught Kambili, how to cook. It is in Ifeoma's house that Kambili realized human values and the importance of their culture. Eugene did not allow his children to speak Igbo in public places because he wanted his children to be civilized, implying that those who spoke Igbo in public were not civilized. This proves that how he despised his cultural heritage.

Amaka followed the footsteps of her mother in upholding the cultural heritage of her people by refusing to accept an English name during her confirmation. She valued her Igbo name and rejected all the English names suggested to her as her confirmation name. As a result of this, she was not confirmed. She did not bother. What was more important to her

was maintaining her Igbo (African) identity and cultural assertiveness. Amaka's stance represents Africa's stance against cultural exploitation. Africans have a high regard for their cultures, traditions, norms, values, and way of life.

The Igbo people are noted for their respect for elders. Eugene was an exception. In *Purple Hibiscus*, speaking the Igbo language is considered as a yardstick for measuring affinity to African (Igbo) culture. By speaking their language, the characters upheld their African traditional values. The patriarchal system that tends to consider women as inferior to men is a characteristic of African culture. Papa-Nnukwu, who was a typical representative of the traditional African culture, upheld the tenets of the patriarchal system.

Conclusion

In this novel, Adichie has been successful in expressing her African identity through her characters and situations. Though a Christian, the violent way in which Ifeoma reacted to a suggestion by her brother for a Christian burial for her traditionalist father clearly shows her love and affection towards her father and her deep-rooted belief in their traditional customs. Papa-Nnukwu preferred neglect and hardship to a prosperous life promised by his son Eugene by compromising on his belief in the tradition and culture of his ancestors. In this novel, language is used as a very important tool for the expression of cultural identity.

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