

DRAMA AS A LITERARY TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

This paper is divided into five sections. It highlights the definitions of literature, the scope of literature, the functions of literature. It takes a close look at the negative and positive aspects of drama which the playwrights portray. The paper concludes by stating that, if people should put into practice the moral lessons learnt from drama texts there must surely be a positive change of attitude among Nigerians.

Introduction

Language is very essential and indispensable to any society as it is the vehicle through which any society's culture could be transmitted from generation to generation. From the dawn of man's creation, there has always been the need for people to talk to one another, understand one another and to communicate or share ideas among themselves.

Mgbodile (1999) sees language as a vehicle for social interaction. Man is the only animal that has evolved and perfected the use of language. Other lower animals have lower order forms of communication which are instinctive responses of reaction to external sound and stimuli. Man has developed and perfected the use of language as a means of maintaining interpersonal, inter group as well as international relations. This has been made possible through the use of language. For this transmission to be effective, there must be the mastery of the language of the society.

An in depth study of the language of any group of people or any linguistic group must take cognizance of their grammar, literature and culture. They are the major areas of language teaching and learning. Each of these three areas has its own device of imparting knowledge to the members of the society.

A grounded knowledge on the three areas of language will promote harmony and sustainable development among the members of the educational system. However our focus in this study will be on literature, since drama is an aspect of literature. Before we go into the details of the study, let us take a look on some definitions of literature.

The word literature according to Abram and Harpham (2007; 152) is derived from the Latin word 'literae' (Letters). Therefore, literature as a work of art refers to any kind of composition in prose or verse which has for its purpose not the communication of fact but the telling of a story. Literature is an avenue through which life is projected and it is representing the life of a people. The writer as a member of the society advertently or inadvertently voices out the norms and all that gives the society its identity. As a result, a writer's background is discovered in his work as he cannot completely hide his identity as he writes.

Nchikogwa (2008) defines literature as creative composition of art which has beauty and value, created by man handed down from generation to generation. According to him, literature is the field of human studies that man comes in contact with right from birth to death, because it embodies the people's culture, festivals and arts. In it, there are a number of branches

such as the prose, drama and poetry. All these are works of imagination or the capacity for invention.

According to Moody (1968), it is important to notice that the writer of literature is not tied to fact in quite the same way as the historian, the economist or the scientists whose studies are absolutely based on what has actually happened, or on what actually does happen in world of reality. The writers of literature, being less tied to fact than the historian or the scientist, have more scope to comment on the facts, to arrange them in unusual ways, and to appreciate not only what is, but on what ought to be or what might be (for better or worse)

The Scope of Literature

Writers of literatures are sometimes, People with visionary or prophetic insights into human life. Literature as a work of imagination, is a mirror through which the writer represents the society in its ideas and ideals, its thought, its visions and its way of life. It is a mirror through which a society sees itself. Literature therefore, teaches us about life. It is an academic discipline, and is studied for its intrinsic value

Functions of Literature

The major function of literature is entertainment. It delights us as we read or watch it acting out. It gives us pleasure and satisfaction, for it brings us back to the realities of human situations, problems, feelings and relationships. We use it to spend our leisure hours instead of passing away time in idleness and melancholy.

Literature serves pedagogical and didactic functions because the literary artist is writing about life and humanity. What he presents are facts of life from which we learn. Literature makes our knowledge of human affairs broadened and deepened, whether in the individual, the social, the racial or the international sphere. Like history, it helps us to understand peoples and their cultures better. It helps us to understand the possibilities of human life, both for good and evil. It helps us to understand peoples and their cultures better. It helps us to understand the possibilities of human life, both for good and evil. It helps us to understand the way which are open to us, and perhaps, to be able to make right rather than wrong choices.

It compels us, through the forces and logic of its imagined worlds, to give serious consideration to important concepts with which we are familiar or with which we disagree. Literature throws laughter in truths of life. For instance, "Macbeth" is written to show that over-ambition is bad. In "Things Fall Apart", we are taught that it is foolhardy to fight the progress of time. In "Julius Caesar", we are meant to learn that over-confidence is bad. Literature is interpretative of life as it shows us the hidden aspects of life. The literature of a people or race is the cultural house of the people, therefore, it serves as a medium of cultural production, preservation and historical documentation. Literature is in itself an academic discipline which people study as a course in institution of learning for purposes of career in life. Therefore, it provides people with Job Opportunities.

Drama as a Tool for Condemning the Evil in The Nigerian Society.

In the Nigerian society, there are so many evil practices which bring disharmony among the people and consequently hinders development. Such evil practices need to be condemned so that people should stop indulging in them. Some literary artists have tried to highlight such practices and condemned them through the work of drama. Some Nigerian playwrights have done that in their works written in both English and Igbo languages. However most of the examples used in the study will dwell much on works written in Igbo language

One of such evil practices that need to be condemned is using poison to eliminate people. For instance, Ezejesi (2011) in his drama "Omekitoro", shows that using poison to

eliminate people is rampant in most Igbo polygamous families. He cited the case of Apali who uses poison to eliminate the children of "Nwogwugwu". In the drama, Apali told Ezeomeji the first son of Nwogwugwu that she will kill him the way she killed her mother Nwogwugwu and her husband, Dim.

Another evil habit found among the Igbo's is re-echoed by Akoma (1977) in his drama *Obidiya* as well as Onyekaonwu (1985) in "*Uwa Ntoo*", it is a common feature in Igbo traditional society to eliminate any person who is considered an obstacle or stumbling block on the way of progress. In "*Obidiya*", Oriaku Dike eliminated Onuma simply because his attempt to take his parcel of land was resisted at the court. Also Agamaevu killed Ebubedike with poison to enable him take over his wife Onukwube, and even went ahead to poison Oguamalam, Ebubedike's son because he suspected an affair between him and his daughter, Olamma. Unfortunately for him the poison turned out to clear his family. This account by Onyekaonwu (1985) in "*Uwa Ntoo*" points to the evil habit of the Igbo man (Onwudiwe 1998)

Wickedness among co-wives is another evil practice found among Nigerian families. "Chukuezi (1974) portrayed that in his drama", Akwa Nwa where he stressed that the evil practice is rampant in most Igbo polygamous families. The playwright presents a typical situation in Igbo society where woman who has children scorns her co-wife who is not fortunate like her. In this drama, we see "Ihudiya, Chimma's co-wife abuse Chimma simply because her daughter, Nkiru is assisting Chimma in cooking. Here, after Chimma has appealed to her to allow Nkiru to help her, she says.

Ihudiya: Go and bear your own child so that she can put yam for
you do you know the pains that follow child-bearing?
Somebody that eats another person's form produce, will
he ever cultivate his own?

This abuse later escalated to exchange of words and reigning of abuses, which often occur in this kind of situation

Another evil practice that needs to be curbed among Nigerians is taking people's property forcefully as mentioned in Onyekaonwu (1985), Agamaevu poisoned Ebubedike to enable him take his wife. This is a case of forcefully taking somebody's property. Also Chukuezi (1974) in his "*Udo ka Mma and Akoma*" (1977) in his *Obidiya*, vehemently condemned the common occurrence of taking somebody's land forcefully, especially when the rightful owner is considered to be poor or weak. This is one of the most rampant occurrences among the Igbos, and it is also a negative aspect of their life, which the writers project

Also condemned as one of the evil practices that sets development back is having sex with one's daughter or blood relation. The modern Igbo writers frown so much at this crime and to anybody who indulges in it. The punishment which is believed comes from the gods, and the punishment is often severe. For example, Onyekaonwu (1980) who is the playwright of "*Nwata Rie Awo*" presents the story of Aworo whose marriage with his own daughter, Odinchefu, even though he did not know that she was his daughter, brought a lot of calamities to the society. In "*Eriri Mara Ngwugwu, Onyekaonwu*" (1985) presents another case where Ochonanooko her affair with his daughter, Uduaku, although the marriage was also not intentional. He was reported to commit suicide in the end like Aworo. These men are meant to end up in suicide to cover their shame (Onwudiwe 1998).

Although these examples are cited in Igbo drama texts, there is no doubt that such evil practices are found among other tribes in the Nigerian Society. People should therefore, try to desist from such practices for them to promote peace, harmony and unity in the Nigerian society. It is only when there is a peaceful and harmonious existence among people that we can dream of a sustainable development in Nigeria educational system.

Apart from evil practices, Nigerian playwrights portray and showcase positive practices, which are evident in the life of the people. Some of the positive or good practices as contained in some literary works especially drama help to promote a healthy and progressive society. Let us discuss the practices of promoting the law of retributive justice and hard work as examples. The law of retributive justice, we know has it that anyone who does wrong receives instant punishment in return. In Igbo community, the wicked is punished for his wickedness; the disobedient child gets punished for his disobedience and so on. In that same vein, the Modern Igbo writer helps in preaching this gospel. Consequently, he presents some characters who receive punishments as a result of their misdeeds and sometimes wickedness. In "Isi Kote Ebu", Ihentuge (1981) presents Osuchukwu as abandoning his wife Nkiru for the prostitute, Obiageli. He later loses Obiageli, having separated with Nkiru and even commits suicide (Onwudiwe 1998).

The Igbo are hardworking breed. As a result, Nwadike (1999) x-rays this in "Nwata Bulie Nna ya Elu", where Iloka had a son called Emuka, he is a waster and never ready to work hard like his father. He rather wants to go to the city and waste his father's money with prostitutes and people like him, who are not ready to work hard.

Conclusion

We have seen that drama as an aspect of literature is one of the necessary tools for promoting sustainable development in the Nigeria educational system. Through the negative and positive aspect of life portrayed by different playwright's, people are directly or indirectly advised to desist from evil practices and involving themselves in good practices, if people should put into practice the moral lessons learnt from drama texts there must surely be a positive change of attitude among Nigerians. This positive attitude will in turn lead to sustainable development in Nigeria educational system.

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