

**LANGUAGE AS CULTURAL PROTEST IN AFRICAN LITERATURE:
A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE**

Submitted by

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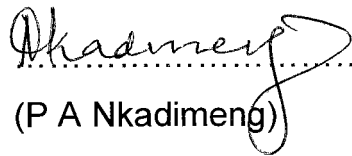
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DECLARATION

I declare that **LANGUAGE AS CULTURAL PROTEST IN AFRICAN LITERATURE: A POST-COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete reference.

 P.A
(P A Nkadameng)

DATE: 2001 – 11 – 09

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife-Lindiwe Pheladi Thabile Nkademeng and children- Sethokgoa Nape Innocent Nkademeng and Mankopodi Mahlako Rose-Mary Millicent Nkademeng.

My dedications also go to Magaseng Bosebo Edward Nkademeng, Mampuru Isaac Nkademeng and Mashianoke Moraswi Christoph Nkademeng. To them I say thank you for your encouragement and inspiration.

Andrew Phaahle Nkademeng

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- (b) Congress of South African Writers (COSAW)
- (c) African Writers Association (AWA)

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter gives a detailed outline of the dissertation and re-states the problem statement in more details. It depicts the hegemonic language control that the colonisers used over the institutions of African communities, which caused perennial suffering. It is for this reason that Margulus and Nowakoski (1996:1) assert that:

Language is often a central question in postcolonial studies... [C]olonizers usually imposed their language onto the people they colonized, forbidding natives to speak their mother tongues.

It is for this reason that language has assumed a function of protest in African literature. A language that is used in African literature is therefore viewed as an instrument towards achieving linguistic and cultural emancipation of the African people and in the process restore their identity in a multicultural society in the local and global contexts. Consequently, language is a central issue in the dissertation since it is intended to prove the struggles of the African people from colonial cultural value systems to African cultural value systems.

Seeing also that language in African literature is a contentious issue in defining this literature, language *per se* is not going to dominate the discussion. For instance, Selepe (1993) made another attempt at re-defining African literature and pointed out that its definition cannot be limited to language but that it extends to broader issues of historical experience and ideology. Although important, this re-definition remains one of the many possibilities. Therefore, the question of language in African literature in this study is going to be viewed also as a vehicle which either projects a particular world-view or inspired Africans to deal with certain socio-political and economic issues both within and outside the framework of literature. In other words, language is going to be considered as an intrinsic element of all other aspects of the unfolding drama on the African landscape. As well-known author and critic, Ken Saro-Wiwa, said before being sentenced to death by the Nigerian military regime:

My lord, we all stand before history. I am a man of peace, of ideas. Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live in a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living, and determined to usher to this country as a whole a fair and just democratic system which protects everyone and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilization, I have devoted my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated (cf. Anyidoho et al., 1999:6)

Another dimension to this is that literary art with respect to language plays a pivotal role in the post-colonial socialization of the African people, especially in acquiring social and cultural value systems of the indigenous societies into which they are born. Speaking from the historical perspective most modern day African people were born into a culture of turmoil between African value systems and western culture that came via colonialism and reinforced through cultural imperialism. This has led to uncertainty among Africans about which cultural and value systems they should adopt. The underlying cause of this identity crisis revolves mostly around the question of language.

This problem has as a result also plunged African literary practice into academic and cultural crisis, which has also driven the wedge among practitioners and in turn affected the question of African identity. Margulus and Nowakoski (ibid.) argue in this case that:

In response to the systematic imposition of colonial languages, some post-colonial writers and activists advocate a complete return to the use of indigenous languages. Others see the language (e.g. English) imposed by the colonizer as a more practical alternative, using the colonial both to enhance international communication [...] and to encounter a colonial past through de-forming a "standard" European tongue and re-forming it in new literacy forms (cf. Ashcroft et al, 1989).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since language is a fundamental aspect of cultural life and cultural identity, there is no way in which African people can realise African dream without achieving linguistic freedom. This linguistic freedom pertains to a right to use indigenous African languages even to deform colonial languages to express African thought (cf. Ashcroft et al., 1989 and Ngugi, 1986). For instance, Seegers (1997) also stresses that:

On the one hand, there is the search for cultural authenticity, the return to origins, the need to preserve minor languages, pride in particularism, admiration for cultural self-sufficiency and maintenance of national traditions.

In post-colonial Africa language rights of people should not be separated from human rights principles that govern any democratic society, which should also afford African people the democratic rights and the freedom to communicate in the languages of their ancestors. This view is expressed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:7) when he argues whether: "Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it."

Post-colonial African writers championed the cause of Pan Africanism, Negritude, African Nationalism, Black Consciousness and presently African Renaissance for the glory and beauty of Africa. They wanted to go back to their roots to achieve cultural emancipation and to revive African cultural heritage. African literature has become a powerful instrument in its advocacy for cultural freedom. African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (**Decolonising the Mind and Moving the Centre**), Chinua Achebe (**Things Fall Apart**), Alan Paton (**Cry the Beloved Country**), Piniel Viriri Shava (**A People's Voice**), Abiola Irele (**The African Experience in Literature and Ideology**). We may as well mention other South African writers and scholars such as Steve Biko, Muthobi Mutluoatse, Miriam Tlali, etc. They have, together with others, made notable contribution to the philosophy of Black Consciousness.

1.3 SOME OF THE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT AFRICAN WRITING

In compiling the findings of my research I have realised that African people still have a sense of negative attitude towards their own social and cultural values. They still seem to regard colonial languages as the highly prestigious media of communication in a post-colonial and post-apartheid world despite the current debate on African Renaissance as another possible vehicle towards achieving cultural emancipation.

This point is emphasised in Chinweizu et al. in, **Toward The Decolonisation of African Literature** (1983:242) when they argue that:

We would like to call an end to the debate over the use of Western languages by African writers. The use of these languages is a part of the problem of contemporary African culture. Ideally, African literature should be written in African languages. But the same historical circumstances that presently compel African nations to use Western languages as their official languages also compel African writers to write in them.

The impact of cultural imperialism has left African people with no choice, but to opt for the promotion of African culture through the medium of Western languages. Chinweizu, et al. (1983:248) also stress that:

If many African writers have to do that in borrowed languages, that is not a fault to be interminably lamented, not a fault of the writers alone, but a symptom of the deeper decay within our culture. When the deep diseases of our culture are cured, most writers will write in the indigenous languages.

The fact that African people still display negative attitude towards their own social and cultural values is also expressed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:3) when he stresses that:

The oppressed and the exploited of the earth maintain their defiance: liberty from theft. But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity,

in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples' languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces that would stop their own springs of life.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is in part to raise the consciousness of the indigenous people of Africa about the danger of continuing falling victims to neo-imperialism which is being perpetrated and advocated by the institutions of higher learning such as universities. Most universities in South Africa are still continuing to perpetuate the seeds of colonialism by promoting European and Asiatic languages while ignoring indigenous African languages. Such universities offer Latin, German, French, Hebrew, etc, but fail to offer tuition in languages which are spoken by the indigenous citizens of South African such as Sepedi, Xitsonga, TshiVenda, IsiZulu, Sesotho, etc.

This is against the principles of the South African constitution and the philosophy of African Renaissance. South African universities should primarily be offering tuition in eleven official languages of the country before considering foreign languages, which are less important to the majority of South Africans. Although I believe in the philosophy of cultural pluralism I think the interests of Africa must come first. What necessitated this research is therefore the way in which the language issue, the cultural issue and the philosophy of African Renaissance are trivialised in African literature. The research is consequently against this socio-cultural humiliation of African people and the mental subjugation they are subjected to.

1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Speaking from the historical and global perspectives, the question of language, culture and identity is something that will take the world centuries before the issue is resolved. Like in African, the Calatan language in Spain has experienced serious cultural and linguistic repression until 1983 when the "Law of linguistic

Normalization” was voted by the Calatan parliament, (Manuel Castells: 1997:48). Pujol, quoted by Castells in his book, **The Power of Identity** (1997:47-48) says that: “Language is the foundation of Calatan identity and that identity Catalunya is linguistic and cultural.” In the same vein Pujol regards language and culture as the backbone of identity. Manuel Castells, (1997:52) in his hypothesis argues that:

Language, and particularly a fully developed language, is a fun fundamental attribute of self-recognition and of the establishment of an invisible national boundary less arbitrary than territoriality, and less exclusive than ethnicity.

Therefore, the marginalisation of African languages in the local and global context should be challenged until language equity is realised and maintained. Related language issues will be elaborated in detail in the following chapters of this research.

1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction focuses on the problems of linguistic enculturation and alienation of the colonial era which made African people to despise African languages in favour of colonial languages. Colonisation of Africa deprived African people of their cultural identity and made them to pay allegiance to alien philosophical hegemony was imposed on them through coercion and enslavement of thought. The chapter depicts the hegemonic control of the colonisers over the institutions of civil society in Africa that caused African people to be credulous to colonial propaganda and consequently suffer considerably from inferiority complex. However, the emergence of Pan-Africanism, Negritude, African Nationalism and Black Consciousness helped to create a new-world outlook for African people toward self-discovery and self-identity.

By definition an African is any one who lives in Africa, who shares and understand African life experiences and pays allegiance to African philosophy and respect Africa’s cultural values. Jane Watts stresses the role of Black Consciousness Movement in her book, **Black Writers from South Africa** (1989:5) when she argues that:

The Black Consciousness Movement served a threefold purpose. It worked to destroy the negative self-definitions imposed by the white minority; it fostered national unity within the black masses, and it sought to establish traditional African cultural values which had been deliberately perverted by Nationalist government in order to separate the tribes and divert them, with a toothless and ersatz version of tribal culture, from any kind of political understanding or power struggle.

1.4.2 COLONIAL AFRICAN EXPERIENCES AND THE INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LITERATURE

Chapter two deals with the colonial African experience and the indigenous African literature, which was characterised by cultural turbulence as a result of colonial tyranny. During this period African writers had been writing from the colonial perspective without realising their own African philosophical thinking. Themes of religion, especially Christianity, influenced African writing of that period. As such African people have been dehumanised and demoralised by colonial policies and were made to detest their own mental creation.

Piniel Viriri Shava's book, **A People's Voice** (1989-7-14) states clearly that colonial writing was influenced by religion. It is stated in this book that Sol Plaatjie's books **Mhudi** and **Native Life in South Africa**, have been heavily influenced by Christianity since Plaatjie himself was a Lutheran and a lay-preacher. However, it is also stated in **Mhudi** that the Boers regarded themselves as "God's chosen people" who used the Bible to profess Christianity to the point of bigotry and to oppress black people.

1.4.3 LANGUAGE POLITICS DURING COLONIAL AND APARTHEID ERAS AS A BASIS FOR A STRUGGLE FOR SOCIO-CULTURAL FREEDOM

The third chapter deals with language politics and linguistic development of African languages for the achievement of language equity. Due to socio-cultural imperialism and colonialism, African languages have been marginalized and have therefore suffered a great deal of linguistic alienation on the African continent. As

such African people started to protest against language policy and planning which have been designed in such a way that the colonisers could enjoy and benefit.

To emphasise this argument **The Citizen** newspaper of 13 January 2000 has published the outcome of a weeklong conference on language and literature, which was held in Asmara, Eritrea whereby delegates concluded that:

The suppression of local languages threatens democracy in Africa. If you take away my right to speak my own language by mandating another language as the official language, you pull me out of circulation, you take me out of the dialogue.

The conference was called “ Against All odds: African Languages and Literature into the 21st Century.” At the conference Charles Cantalupo, a writer and literature professor at Pennsylvania University concluded by saying that “Being able to speak your own language is the most obvious, most fundamental right, yet in Africa, the most suppressed” (ibid.)

The Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) also believes that government leaders should address communities in the languages they understand best. Dr Neville Alexander, a language activist was quoted in the **City Press** of 12 September 1999 as saying:” There will be no renaissance without the development of indigenous languages.”

1.4.4 POST-COLONIAL MENTALITY AND AFRICAN WRITING AS CULTURAL PROTEST

The fourth chapter deals with the experience of post-colonial mentality and the emergence of cultural protest. African people started to realise the importance of their own traditions and customs. They wanted to achieve cultural emancipation and promote the spirit of Africanism. As such the decolonisation of African people was necessary in realising the dream of African cultural freedom.

In his book, **Moving the Centre** (1993), Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that we are all drawing from the languages and cultures we are rooted in, and that English should not be a substitute for our own languages. He goes on to say that the oppressor nation uses language as a means of entrenching itself in the oppressed nation.

English was made to appear as if it was a language spoken by God. English has been regarded as a language of conquerors and African languages as languages of the vanquished. He argues further that culture is a product of peoples' history. Consequently, the economic and political conquest of Africa was accomplished by the mental, spiritual and cultural subjugation as well as the imposition of the imperialist cultural tradition.

1.4.5 THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHY ON AFRICAN WRITING

Chapter five deals with the critical analysis of the possible implications of the African Renaissance Philosophy on African writing, which has become a powerful philosophical concept in a post-apartheid South Africa and the African continent as a whole. This chapter embraces many issues that make the concept problematic. African Renaissance is regarded as a continuation of the previous movements such as Pan-Africanism, African Nationalism, Black Consciousness, etc. However, what makes this concept complex is its application for the entire continent. Some people argue that there is nothing to revive in Africa because Africa was a "dark continent" before the arrival of the colonisers. Some argue that total abstinence from Western culture is necessary for the achievement of cultural freedom. And from other African schools of thought there is a saying that both Western and African cultures should co-exist. Many such issues are raised in this chapter as to whether we are to be Afro-European or fully fledged African people who are proud of their own cultural roots.

In his speech on the 9th of April 1998 "The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World" when President Thabo Mbeki addresses the community of the United Nations about his philosophy of African Renaissance he concluded that:

And in the end, an entire epoch in human history, the epoch of colonialism and white foreign rule, progressed to its ultimate historical burial grounds because, from Morocco and Algeria to Guinea Bissau and Senegal, from Ghana and Nigeria to Tanzania and Kenya, from the Congo and Angola to Zimbabwe and South Africa, the Africans dared to stand up to say the new

must be born, whatever the sacrifice we have to make... Africa must be free!

According to Mbeki it is necessary for Africa to review its historical past of colonial legacy and take a new stand in shaping its destiny in accordance with its cultural values and life experiences.

1.4.6 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The conclusion will give the final analysis and the concluding solution of the entire research process. It will help to give a clear picture about the cultural aspects of African people and to enable them to define their cultural space and identity among human societies locally and globally. People behave differently in different spaces and times. During the colonial period African people tended to identify with Europe and paid allegiance to European philosophy. However, the post-colonial period brought a new mode of critical thinking among African writers that attacked colonialism from all directions.

CHAPTER 2

COLONIAL AFRICAN EXPERIENCE AND THE INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the colonial African experience and African literature that depicted the tyranny of the colonial rule on the African soil. Religious themes, especially Christianity, are among those that characterized African writing of that period. For instance, in **Mhudi**, Sol Plaatje illustrates that Whites regarded themselves as “God’s chosen people” and used the Bible to profess Christianity to the point of bigotry and to oppress black people.

2.2 SOME VIEWS ON INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LITERATURE

From the time African literature became a subject of research a number of theoretical assumptions have emerged, some curious and some alarming. Ngugi wa Thiong’o, for instance, attributes this malady to the malicious attitude of missionaries who pioneered literacy and literature among the African people from the second half of the 19th century (cf. Selepe, 1997). Selepe argues that three distinct periods of development can be identified in Sesotho literature. These are:

(1) 1900 – 1930, which was dominated by Lesotho authors and characterized the dominance of the religious and educational ISAs;

(2) 1930 – 1960, which saw emerging Basotho authors from South Africa joining their counterparts in Lesotho [...]. This period introduced what came to be known as the *makgoweng motif*, an aspect of the economic ISA;

1960 – 1990s, which saw a significant shift from matters of national interest to a variety of social matters... (1997:81).

This shift can mainly be attributed to the stringent censorship laws and prescriptive policies by publishing houses, which left authors with little free choice of themes to write on.

On the other hand, Ngugi views missionaries as the John Apostles who paved the way for the colonial masters (cf. Heywood, 1981). Ngugi (1993) also argues further that it was at the Berlin Conference of 1883-4 where the Western world sealed the fate of Africa by making the West the centre of knowledge and civilization, which degraded anything that was African (cf. Selepe, 1999). As a result, during the colonial era in Africa in general, and during apartheid in South Africa, many African writers were compelled overtly or covertly to project a worldview of self-hate.

However, contrary to the expected outcome, a considerable number of African writers chose to ignore the distorted image of Africa that was encouraged by the West and projected, instead, their own image of Africa – either in colonial languages or African languages. As a result, the issue of language is intrinsically linked to both literature and social developments in Africa (cf. Amuta, 1989; Irele, 1971 and Ngara, 1990). For instance, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986:7) adequately captures these sentiments aptly when he asks whether:

Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it.

It is, however, around the issue of language where some of past and current crop of Western scholars seek to nail the African intelligentsia and African literature. The former has consistently come up with hypotheses that are not only absurd but also smack of ignorance. More often than not, Africans are expected to justify why they consider their literature African, and this consumes most of the time and energy that could have been spent profitably on valuable critical issues of the development of African literature in particular, and Africa in general.

Over the years, African writers and literary scholars have responded to such questions through Pan-Africanism, Negritude, African Nationalism and Black Consciousness but never satisfied the absurd curiosity of Westerners. If this situation obtains in our time, African Renaissance could as well be ruled out as a non-starter. Seepe (2000:6) makes the following observation about the

implications of this scenario for African students and scholars regarding the low output of research and post-graduate student:

A good example is the language question. (...) It is therefore not surprising to find, in some institutions, African language experts who can hardly speak any of the languages in which they claim expertise. Little wonder that black students and researchers prefer to abandon the research world once they completed their studies.

According to Seepe this phenomenon has in particular resulted in the low output of African post-graduate students and publications by African academics in comparison with their white counterparts. Consequently

To keep black researchers within the research environment would require the creation of intellectual space that allows for questions that resonate with the interests and aspirations of the black majority (Seepe, 2000:6).

The objective of this dissertation is therefore to examine the implications of language for African literary study that we could unravel the echoes of cultural protest embedded in them. To demonstrate the quest of Africans to achieve cultural emancipation and to revive African cultural heritage, critical works of the following African writers will be used: Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Piniel Viriri Shava, Aboila Irele, Steve Biko, Mothobi Mutlootse, Thapelo Selepe, Emmanuel Ngara, etc. These scholars/authors have made substantial contribution in tracing and/or reflecting on the philosophy behind African/Black writing.

During the colonial period African literature was characterised by a consciousness that saw the emergence of black writing expressing the long struggle for freedom from colonial rule and promoting African political and cultural thought as a vehicle to reclaim African Identity. Being exploited and oppressed African intellectuals and writers felt so alienated in their own native countries that they regarded literature as a voice of the voiceless African masses who continued to be politically and socially subjugated by colonial masters and Western imperial hegemony.

Michael Chapman (1996:150) asserts that the first local literary movement was formed in Angola in 1947–48 to raise the concerns of Angolan people. The

Movement was called *Movimento dos Jovens Intelectuais de Angola* (Movement of Young Intellectuals) and had as part of its battle cry, *Vamos descobrir Angola!* (Let's discover Angola!). The movement described its purpose as both educational – to instruct the Angolan people in the history, geography and folklore of their country, and “to recapture the fighting spirit of the African writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” in reaction to “exaggerated respect for the values of Western Culture”, and with a view to promoting “the expression of popular concerns and of genuine African nature without any concession to colonial exoticism”. Agostinho Neto, among others, called for the recovery of African indigenous languages. Post-colonial African literature by African writers aimed at revealing the social evils of colonial rule, and to encourage a sense of African identity through which writers of African origin could preach unity and solidarity for Africans against the psychological alienation imposed on her sons and daughters by the imperial colonialists. For instance, post-colonial writing in Angola and Mozambique was virtually meant to promote cultural and political awareness of African life experiences and to alert African people to be proud of their own socio-cultural values.

However, this kind of literature became a threat to the Portuguese colonisers. As a result stringent publication laws were introduced so that every book or journal by African writers was censored prior to publication. What the colonial government required then was a kind of literature that was promoting Christian values or the kind of literary works that promoted the status quo. The colonial regime in both countries was against people or writers who paid allegiance to African philosophical thought.

The gravity of this situation is stated in Chapman's **Southern African Literatures** (1996: 153 – 154), where he alludes to the First International Conference of Black Writers and Artist was held in Paris (19-22 September 1956). The message of the conference was that native literature in Angola and Mozambique should be seen as part of a Pan-African struggle for self-assertion and cultural emancipation given to the continuing inspiration of Negritude at the time. It is not surprising, therefore, that several Angolan and Mozambican poems of the 1950s exalted 'Mother Africa' in the glorification of African values. As such, in transferring the lyrical evocations of an idealised Africa to the collective voice of the people, Craveirinha - a journalist

who was arrested and tortured by Portuguese authorities for his anti-fascist activities,— signalled a Marxist-materialist base that in both countries would begin to characterise the poetry of the independence struggles that was supported by the first Frelimo president, Eduardo Mondlane.

This serves as an example that demonstrates how, in colonial Africa, a hegemonic class imposed its will on African writers. However, African writers expressed in their literary works a will for the liberation of the people whose birth rights were taken away by the former, who were driven by an ambition to rule without mercy and political tolerance. From a Marxist critical analysis of a literary text it can be established that a literary text is the mirror of a nation and a reflection of what is happening in society. A literary text is therefore a reflection of economic, historical and social conditions of society, which means that a literary work is not neutral, but partisan to a particular kind of philosophy or ideology. As such African writers were also writing to raise the concerns of the oppressed black people who have been politically subjugated and dehumanised through cultural imperialism.

2.3 SOME DEVELOPMENTAL TRENDS IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

An important aspect of literary development in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi has been a functioning of literature bureaux which were established in the 1950s under colonial regimes to encourage creative writing in indigenous African languages and to unify the different dialects into standard written language. The establishment of Southern Rhodesia African Literature Bureau and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland Joint Publications Bureau tried to influence the content and ideas of indigenous language expression. This is another example of how black writers came to influence political thinking through literature during colonial Africa. It was the kind of literature that could destroy the colonial social and political fabric. However, on the contrary religion helped to sustain the legitimacy of the colonial regimes by perpetuating the concept that the very existence of the nation is a reflection of the will of God. In other words the colonisers justify their conquest and domination as if it is a design from God to rule over other people and to subjugate them.

Much vernacular literature has been written by South Africans who once lived in English-speaking areas although Christian values influenced African literature considerably during those days. In this respect the Bible had the greatest influence on indigenous literature and the colonised African people were introduced to written European literature through Christian propaganda.

On the other hand the Bible had played a role for the emergence and development of indigenous Christian literature. As stated in Dathorne's book **African literature in the Twentieth century** (1974), the Missionaries translated Bible, religious leaflets which were intended for school curricula and the public as a whole. As such African indigenous writing operated within the religious limitations. It was established that the first missionary in the African continent was established in Southern African in 1823 at a mission station in Lovedale. The first Bible was published in Xhosa, Marianhill Mission Press printed books in Zulu and Sesotho books were initially published at Morija (Lesotho).

Therefore, during these days of colonial rule the indigenous African literary works were solely written to convey a utilitarian message which was meant to advance the Christian cause. The legitimisation provided and advanced by religion is evident in its depiction of society and its establishment as created by God rather than human persons. The possession of this kind of religious knowledge is one of the means by which the forces of social control, i.e. the government in power makes claims to legitimate power and to make the colonised people to be submissive. Historically the African people had its own body of knowledge with regard to African life experiences. But religion as an ideology was misused and mis-interpreted by the colonisers in order to legitimise their position of domination over African people. For Karl Marx, religion was an ideology which had for centuries deluded ordinary people into integrated stable and social relationship conforming to capitalist ideology. Throughout human history, political, religious and racial ideologies have become the characteristics of human suffering and oppression. The colonisers wrongfully used the Bible as an instrument of oppression and they used it to justify their bigoted political interests.

However, speaking from colonial point of view, African people were writing according to Western life experiences and serving to promote western philosophy

which ultimately deprived them of their national identity as true Africans. But as time past by vernacular literature did not remain chained in this single purpose of expanding Christian values among African people to spread and maintain Western beliefs. Writing in indigenous languages was used to serve and legitimise the existing social order of the colonial masters. Religion as an embodiment of national identity and political power was used to socialise African people into European cultural norms and values. Indigenous literature was prostituted and used to advance this legacy. During those days Africans have been writing within a tradition which was alien to Africa. African writers were used by missionaries that were not only spokesmen for the Christian beliefs, but spokesmen of the wishes of the colonising power as well.

However, toward the end of the eighteenth century emerged a spate of protest literature throughout the century highlighting the plight of the Black man against the evils of slavery in Western Africa in 1787. This was banned or censored. Indigenous literature was written in Yoruba, Hausa, Twi and Ga during those early days. The first translations into Yoruba were undertaken soon after the arrival of the missionaries. By 1850 the Bible, prayer books and hymn books had been translated into Yoruba so as to spread religious beliefs as well as European cultural values to the colonised African people. The literature of that period was evangelical because most of the writers were Christians. With the passage of time Islamic religion also appeared in North and West African literature which was influenced by Islamic beliefs where Arab ideas and cultural values began to penetrate into African continent. This shows clearly that African the continent was a bone of content between the two religious ideologies that desperately preyed on African people's cultural and religious beliefs in an attempt to assimilate them into alien social and cultural beliefs.

Against this background, Ibo writer, Pita Nwana, whose short novelette **Omenuko** won first prize in a competition that was organised by the International Institute of African Languages and Culture in 1933 says that "the melancholy which entered Africa with the coming of Christianity is uppermost in this book". In Ghana between 1742 and 1746 Elisa Johannes Capetein, who was an African, reduced Fanti to writing. He translated the Lord's prayer and the Ten Commandments to

vernacular. Christaller translated four gospels into Twi (vernacular). He completed the Bible in 1871 (Dathorne, 1974 and 1975: 15)

In Southern Africa, African writers such as Mangoela, Segoete, Edward Motsamai, Thomas Mofolo etc. Mangela, Segoete and Edward Motsamai promoted and maintained Christian beliefs by intimating that pre-colonial Africa was harsh and brutal. They supported the European assumption that Africa was a dark continent before colonialism. The notion that African people were barbaric and uncivilised before the arrival of the colonisers is invalid and unfounded because on the contrary colonialism brought miseries to African people. Thomas Mofolo who was a product of Morija mission school. His book **Pitseng** (1910) was also written in the context of Christian beliefs where priests were regarded as divine representatives of God on earth. Mofolo in **Pitseng** uses Katse as an instrument of oppression and authoritarianism.

Katse imposed his will on Phakoe to marry Aria and Phakoe used as a passive recipient question. He was so credulous to receive Katse's words without the consideration. Phakoe appears to be a voiceless character, which was deprived of his humanity by allowing himself to be manipulated and taken for granted by Katse. In other words Phakoe suppresses his wishes in favour of Katse's because he realises that he would receive heavenly punishment if he acted against the priest. O.K. Matsepe's novel **Megokgo ya Bjoko** (1969) also regards Europeans as messengers of peace and reconciliation between the two chiefs who were fighting for power. Missionaries used the Bible to reconcile Chief Nthumule and Chief Lefehlo who were in conflict. The Bible used to reconcile Chief Nthumule and his subject, Maphutha, who is a traditional healer and to reconcile Chief Lefehlo and his subject Leilane. This is another feature of the influence of Christianity on African writing.

Missionary influence evidently played a primary role in **Megokgo ya Bjoko**. Also, in this aspect the Bible is used as an instrument of peace and reconciliation, more particularly when the missionaries urge the chiefs to create a climate conducive for an everlasting peace. Consequently, Chief Nthumule marries Chief Lefehlo's daughter and Chief Lefehlo marries Chief Nthumule's daughter respectively to create and maintain a peaceful co-existence. In other words Chief Nthumule has

become Chief Lefehlo's son - in - law while Chief Lefehlo himself becomes Chief Nthumule's son - in - law. Maphutha who was once Chief Nthumule's enemy marries Chief Nthumule's daughter to become his son - in - law and Leilane marries Chief Lefehlo's daughter to become his son-in-law. In this respect it becomes apparent that African people cannot sort out their problems themselves until someone from outside Africa come to solve their disputes.

According to Marxist criticism Marx asserts that economic structure of society serves as the foundation of its social, political and cultural structures (cf. Althusser, 1984). Therefore, literature expresses economic relations between different social classes. Cultural hegemony is perpetuated through literature and it is a vehicle for transporting the ideology of either repressive forces or progressive forces. Africa was as a result gradually transformed to a site of liberation struggle which was dedicated to the eradication of socio-political and economic injustices.

South Africa with its apartheid policies also perpetuated social ills of colonialism through its policies of racial discrimination. Black people of South Africa have been victims of both colonialism and the apartheid legacy of White supremacy. In South Africa apartheid functioned and served as a continuation of colonialism and black South Africans were continuously subjected to deprivation, exploitation and harassment. The emergence of protest literature brought about a new philosophical thinking and religious dictations were abandoned. According to Chidi Amuta (quoted by Swanepoel, 1990): "African literature can be discussed only within the framework of political discourse essential to the dismantling of colonial rule and Western hegemony". Amuta goes on to say that decolonising of the African mind cannot be divorced from disengaging the social and economic structures that inform African culture from the deadly tentacles of these economic and cultural value systems that sponsored the colonisation process in the first place. He emphasises further that African literature and its criticism should testify to the historical contradictions that define the African situation.

It is for this reason that African literature assumed a nature of protest. One example of protest literature is Sepedi poem by Reverend Mamogobo with the title, "**Afrika, nagasello**" (Africa the land of sorrow). The poem is among a

number of his poem published in 1953. Deborah Mampuru later translated it into English (Ntuli and Swanepoel, 1993: 57 – 58).

The poem protests against colonial experience and it is also an expression of resistance to the colonial policy of assimilation and cultural imperialism. It protests against the devastation of Africa and its culture by colonial powers. It seems to have been written out of deep human experiences in Africa where African people are deprived, impoverished, oppressed and displaced. I wish to assert that since the arrival of the colonisers African people started to starve because their land was taken away from them. The poet expresses his unhappiness about this tragedy that befell Africa. It is this part and other scenarios that later led to the emergence of several resistance movements in Africa.

2.4 SOME MOVEMENTS THAT CHARACTERISE AFRICAN LITERATURE

Negritude is one of several movements that developed in Africa to raise the concern about colonial policies on the continent. The word Negritude was coined by the poet Aime Cesaire of Martinique, who is generally regarded as the major inspiration of the movement among the French-speaking African poets. According to Burton and Chacksfield (1979: 125) the movement was an expression of resistance to the French colonial policy of assimilation. This was perhaps the beginning of what is known today as protest poetry. This is a literary term that is used to describe a literature that is political.

In South Africa protest literature was mainly inspired by the Black Consciousness Movement, pioneered by Steve Biko and others. Publishing houses such as Ravan Press and Skotaville Publishers made immense contribution in promoting the culture of protest writing (cf. Selepe, 1993). Burton and Chacksfield also argue that poems of protest such as “**Death**” by E Mphahlele, “**City of Johannesburg**” by Serote, etc, have been written as a protest literature against the oppressive apartheid policies. Therefore, poets from Southern Africa have been among those in the fore in writing protest poetry. Protest poets from other parts of Africa have also written deeply moving poems inspired by atrocities, oppression and racial discrimination.

It has been accepted that apartheid was a crime against humanity and was regarded as the highest form of human oppression in the history of mankind. Much protest literature was written during political cataclysm in South Africa, especially during the time when black people were subjected to severe social injustices around the 60s to 80s. During those dark days of state oppression African literature was not only expressed in writing but performances as well and these made significant impact during the liberation struggle. Language used in literature, songs and slogans inspired people to continue the liberation struggle in spite of state repression. Liberation songs such as **“Siyaya ePitori”** was one of those which transcended generations - the young and the old - to fight oppression without fear. These were not used to entertain people, but to advance the cause of political struggle. Slogans such as **“Kill the boer , Kill the farmer”** and **“One settler one bullet”** were chanted during political rallies to arouse the feeling of anger among the people. It is therefore also necessary to consider freedom songs and slogans as aspects of protest literature. After all African traditional literature included such forms of creativity.

During the forced removals in Sekhukhuneland in the Northern Province a protest song was composed and sung by the people of Chief Masha when they were forcefully removed from their land which was granted to a White farmer. That protest song was sung by men and women who had been subjugated and displaced from different locations. Thobela FM recorded that song, **“Mmоторо о motala ka Schoonoord”** (A Green Police car from Schoonoord Police Station) at the time when it was called Radio Bantu or Radio Lebowa. It is a very painful song with a heartbreaking melody.

Protest literature was also written on the walls of schools, colleges and universities, especially the historically black educational institution. Plays and dramas such as **Too late** and **How long** by Gibson Kente and others also played a crucial roles in a quest for political liberations. **Sarafina** by Mbongeni Ngema is another testimony to this tradition. It is a protest drama which depicts the liberation struggle, especially that of 1976 Soweto uprising. Oral poet, Mzwakhe Mbuli, also known as “A People’s poet”, gained popularity as a protest oral poet. His famous poems were dedicated to the liberation struggle of the suffering black masses.

African literature is therefore a painful protest against social injustice and spiritual domination imposed on African people by colonial rule. Protest poetry and music were used to raise social consciousness among the African people who lived under racist, oppressive and exploitative conditions. Poetry had become a medium which was used to advance the social change and development. Since political turbulence became a common feature of life during apartheid most black poets expressed their feelings and emotions in different ways e.g. Mafika Gwala and Ingoapele Modingoana.

Through literature African writers represented the progressive forces that wanted to see Africa transformed and freed from colonial stranglehold. Jane Watts (1989: 153) states that:

The role of an artist in an oppressed place is to sensitise the oppressed to their oppressive surrounding, sharpen their consciousness and shape the mode of their response. She also asserted that the function of literature and the personal record of a man moving from the anguished bewilderment of a sensitive youth attempting to reconcile an overwhelming faith in humankind with the implacable brutality of an apartheid regime, to the serenity of a mature and dedicated worker for the creation of a new society.

2.5 THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON AFRICAN WRITING

Colonialism has left a legacy of destruction because colonisers used the material well-being of the African continent to serve their own selfish political ends. In South Africa the apartheid ideology was used to drive African people out of their native lands. The evils of apartheid are exactly like those created by colonial powers against African people. The poems **“City of Johannesburg”** by Wally Serote decries the collective suffering of African people whose lives were ruined by the evil forces of apartheid. The Black Consciousness Movement which led to the Soweto Uprising on June 16, 1976, had successfully united black people to rise against the brutality of apartheid. More and more people pledged their solidarity and African unity after the brutal shooting of the youth in Soweto in 1976. Afrikaans which was forced as medium of instruction in African schools had sparked the uprisings and it was since seen as a language of the oppressor.

However, Afrikaans as a language had nothing to do with state oppression, but the problem was that Afrikaans was regarded as a compulsory subject at black schools.

The Black Consciousness Movement was also an ideology that sought to unite black South Africans and to revive African cultural heritage. It asserted that Africans should be proud of their own culture, love their own country and be proud of their identity as black people. However in the process Africans did not express themselves in their mother tongue but used English for collective communication and this could be viewed as not paying allegiance to African philosophy. Mother tongue was still considered as an important part of one's identity. For instance, Watts (1989:182) states that Steve Biko in his evidence in the SASO/BPC trial explored at length this peculiarly effective invasion of a man's soul by an interference with the use of his mother tongue. M.W. Serote, at a writers workshop at the University of Botswana in January 1978, recounted a curiously moving trial he attended as a court reporter where the defendant refused the services of an interpreter and insisted on defending himself in his own language regardless of the fact that the judge and jury could not understand him and would inevitably be more severely punished as a result. What was vital for the accused was to speak out exactly what was on his mind, unhampered by the distortions of a foreign and unfamiliar tongue or by another man's interpretations of his ideas.

This kind of resistance was an indication that African people have begun to realise their own cultural identity by resisting foreign cultural imperialism. This goes hand in hand with the spirit of Pan Africanist ideology which asserts that Africa must rediscover herself in order to be a true African continent for African people. All *cultural* values which are alien to the African people should be rooted out and be replaced by social values that impact positively on the oppressed African people. To be a true African one should be decolonized and identify himself or herself with the African life experiences. Every person who pays allegiance to African philosophy and promote its political dream and cultural values is a true African. Therefore, the struggle for political and economic liberation will only be achieved if African people are united and pursue that noble goal of socio-economic and political freedom.

S.J.I. Mabitje's novel, "**Ntshang Dinoga Motseng**" (Remove the snakes, from the village) is based on a concern about the strangers who came to the village of Chief Pootona to cause problems. These strangers are against the traditions and customs of the villagers. These strangers want to assimilate and enculturate the villagers into the Western culture, but the villagers launch a protest against these foreigners. These strangers are therefore regarded as snakes because they secretly introduce value systems that are alien to the villagers. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's, **The river Between** (1965) also deals with a similar theme. The novel depicts a situation where the people of Kenya have been divided along African cultural values and colonial values. People do not know exactly where they belong because of political frustration. This depicts that colonialism has divided African people and also made them to despise their own societal values and to hate themselves for being black. In his other book, **Devil on the cross** (1982) Ngugi appeals to the people of Kenya to fight against neo-colonialism which he regards as the highest stage of cultural imperialism.

Protest literature is however not limited to blacks in South African literature. Bessie Head's novels **Maru** (1971) and **When rain clouds gather** (1971) are also protest literature that depict a black person as a victim of White man's domination. Historically Black and White social relations are characterised by exploitation. It is a master – servant relationship. Both these books deal with the relationship between literature and politics in South Africa, which makes postcolonial South African literature a literature of protest that is against socio-political oppression which deprives African people of civil rights.

Piniel Viriri Shava in **A people's voice** (1989), maintains that apartheid affects every aspect of a person's life like a virulent form of cancer. As such Black Consciousness Movement which became the political mouthpiece of South African people who were oppressed in the land of their forefathers was banned in 1977 by apartheid regime in order to silence black people. In his speech Steve Biko said the following statement about the Black Consciousness Movement.

Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life.... Its essence is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the

blackness of their skin and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It is based on a self-examination which has ultimately led them to believe that by seeking to run away from themselves and emulate the white man, they are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. The philosophy of Black Consciousness therefore express group pride and the determination of black to rise and attain the envisaged self Hence thinking along lines of Black Consciousness makes the black man see himself as a being complete in himself. It makes him less dependent and more free to express his manhood. At the end of it all he cannot tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of his manhood (emphasis added).

It should be realised from this statement that there is always a contradiction within the races, the nations and the classes whereby people undermine each other in pursuance of their sectarian interests. There is always a contradiction of interests between the master and the servant. As the master owns capital or the means of production, he always wants to see his interests dominate those of the servant. This characterizes the relationship between Whites and Blacks - master and servant. This exploitative relationship is based entirely on selfish and egoistic political vision. Several literary critics also argue that racism was also used to consolidate White supremacy and to entrench Black inferiority in socio-economic and political life (cf. Selepe, 1993).

The realisation of such social dynamics has from time to time changed the complexion of the liberation struggle in South Africa and on the African continent. For instance in South Africa the liberation struggle was relatively peaceful until the 1960s. Black freedom fighters have been dedicated to an evolutionary change through a peaceful negotiation. However, after 1960 Sharpeville shooting where many black demonstrators were shot at by state security forces, resistance politics in South Africa changed from peaceful non-violent politics to militant politics (cf. Motlhabi, 1984). There was also a concomitant change in literature. For instance in reaction to Sharpeville massacre, Nelson Mandela (quoted in Piniel Viriri Shava's **A people's Voice**, 1989: 51) said:

During the last twenty years the African people have fought many freedom battles In all these campaigns we repeatedly stressed the importance of discipline, peaceful and non-violent struggle and we sincerely worked for peaceful change But the situation is now radically altered. South Africa is now a land ruled by the gun All opportunities for peaceful agitation and struggle have been closed Today many of our people are turning their faces away from the path of peace and non-violence.... Certainly the days of civil disobedience, of strikes and mass demonstrations are not over ... But the leadership commits a crime against its own people if it hesitates to sharpen its political weapons which have become less effective.

There is a saying that those who kill by sword will die by a sword. The killing of black people in Sharpeville in the Vaal-Triangle in 1960 was a fruitless attempt by the apartheid government to silence the political opponents, especially Blacks and to suppress their freedom of thought. As a result of political anarchy in South Africa, literature was experiencing a revolutionary and radical transformation.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Literary works from the 1960s onwards started to advocate revolutionary militancy as the only option left to dismantle the apartheid system. Black writers exposed the wounds of the massacre and made them public so that more and more South Africans – black and white - either joined or became sympathetic with the liberation struggle. Themes in literature were henceforth dominated by the liberation struggle and conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors.

The works of Nadine Gordimer, Es'kia Mphahlele, Alan Paton, Mongane Serote, Bessie Head, Njabulo Ndebele, Noel Manganyi and many others helped to expose atrocities of apartheid and colonialism. Govan Mbeki's historic book, **The struggle for liberation in South Africa (1992)** reveals race relations in South Africa and how the struggle for freedom has been carried out. **Freedom for my people (1983)** by Z.K. Matthews and **Journey continued (1988)** by Alan Paton are the biographies that epitomise the circumstances of racial hatred in apartheid South Africa.

Dr M J Madiba's poem, "**Sello sa Mogologolo**" which literally means "The Cry of the Ancestor" is a protest poem which appears in his book, **Mahlontebe** (p. 80 - 1). He argues that the arrival of the people from overseas brought hardships and sufferings to the indigenous people of Africa. He asserts that white people came to Africa with guns to decimate African people and to force them to pray alien gods. He perceives capitalism as an evil system which was used to deprive African people of their culture and religious beliefs and also subjected them to foreign cultural values.

Eskia Mphahlele, quoted in Ursula A. Barnett's book, **A Vision of Order** (1983: 31) from **African Image**, says that his own Africanness tells him to turn away from the Christian - Hebrew God and the Islamic God, towards his own ancestors.

It can be assumed that any culture which is alien to Africa also became subject of criticism and resistance. Therefore African writers did not only use literary arts to address injustices of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa but addressed other broader issues as well. Most importantly African literature also encouraged indigenous people of Africa to be proud of their history and their cultural values.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE POLITICS DURING COLONIAL AND APARTHEID ERAS AS SPRING BOARD FOR SOCIO-CULTURAL STRUGGLES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter deals with the politics of the development of African languages with a view of achieving language and cultural equity in a multilingual society. Due to socio-cultural imperialism and colonialism African language writing has been linguistically marginalized and its development hampered both in South Africa and on the African continent. Although deforming colonial languages is an accepted practice to express African thought and protest against colonial language practices that deprived the indigenous people of their languages, culture and identity, the importance of indigenous languages still merits attention.

3.2 SOME OBSERVATIONS ON TRENDS IN LANGUAGE PRACTICE

Evidence of the assumption made around the language question is deeply embedded in both creative and critical works in African literary practice. Therefore, a related aim of this research is to raise the consciousness of the indigenous African people about the danger of falling victims to neo-imperial language practice that is being perpetuated by institutions of higher learning, especially universities. Most South African universities are still continuing the colonial practice of promoting the exclusive use of European languages for academic purposes at the expense of African languages in language and literature studies (cf. Selepe, 1999 and Seepe, 2000). Other languages such as Latin, German, French, Hebrew, etc., also enjoy a better share of attention and resources than African languages.

Although the principle of cultural pluralism is acceptable, the basic language needs of Africans must significant enjoy top priority. This research seeks in addition to address the way in which the issue of African languages, cultures and the African Renaissance philosophy, like those of the Black Consciousness Movement in the past, seem to continue to be trivialised in African literary practice. This research

will in turn also address the apparent socio-cultural ineptitude of the African people as well as the imperial mental subjugation they seem to be subjected to.

Languages in general and language policies in education are political issues, but this does not seem to be taken seriously enough in South Africa. South Africa is a multilingual society which comprises speakers of indigenous African languages and former apartheid official languages, Afrikaans and English. Although a basic approach to language is its functionality in society as a whole, mother tongue education in South Africa continue to be ignored. During colonial South Africa the British had introduced a policy of Anglicisation through which they wanted to make everything in South Africa to be British in character. That was the beginning of the cultural subjugation in which the British subjects were dehumanised. The aim of this process was also to marginalise indigenous African languages in favour of English as a medium of instruction and language of civilization in formal schools.

Evidently, this language policy was not negotiated but was imposed on African people without their consent. As mentioned before, the language issue is political and without the political power the British people could not have been able to design such a language policy. The promotion of the English language therefore also determined power relations in South Africa. Related political oppression and psychological torture left Blacks with no choice, but to hate their own languages and culture. English language was deliberately used to create a false consciousness on African people causing them to develop an inferiority complex.

In a similar manner, when the Afrikaners took over from the British in 1948 they too changed the language policy to suit their own linguistic interests. African languages continued to be marginalised. It also became a medium of teaching at some primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. African students were forced to learn Afrikaans as a school subject and to use it as a medium of instruction.

During John Vorster's term as Prime Minister of South Africa, in the 1970s, a new revolutionary philosophy of Black Consciousness Movement emerged from among black students. This movement with figures such as Steve Biko, Tsietsi Mashinini, Onkgopotse Tiro, was instrumental in the 1976 Soweto Uprisings against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at black schools (cf. Motlhabi, 1984).

The 1976 Soweto Uprisings had further negative impact on Afrikaans. It came to be seen as a language of oppression. Although students' uprisings led to some changes in school curriculum at predominantly black learning institutions, Afrikaans continues to be the sole medium of instruction at some White institutions long after 1976. It seems, like English, the purpose to marginalize other languages has not changed. Black people are still expected to be fluent in both Afrikaans and English while Afrikaners and English-speaking people are not compelled to learn any of the indigenous languages.

This is still the case after the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa although according to the **State Language Services** and the **LangTag report** of 26 April 1995, it was declared that languages that were marginalised in the past should be developed and maintained. This meant that English and Afrikaans would no longer be the only official languages of South Africa. The following assertion by Reagan (1988) underlines these developments:

“Language struggle” has been a focus of disagreement throughout South Africa’s educational history. In contemporary South Africa, the issue of the language used as a medium of instruction has been most controversial in Black education, where the government’s policy of initial native language instruction has been widely denounced as an attempt to retribalize black South Africans. Therefore, the British occupation around 1800 marked the beginnings of serious anglicization of the Cape and legal establishment of English as the only official language. Antagonism grew between Boers and English and English medium instruction was consistent. The Afrikaans language movement pressed for native-language instruction among Afrikaans children. As such the 1910 Act of Union made both English and Afrikaans (Dutch) official languages, affirming bilingualism in education.

It is ironic that, in practice, Blacks South Africans are still not recognised as people with languages that give them particular cultural identities. That is why, perhaps, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1986:4) argues that:

The language of African literature cannot be discussed meaningfully outside the context of those social forces which have made it both an issue

demanding our attention and a problem calling for resolution. On the one hand is imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial phases continuously press-ganging the African hand to the plough to turn the soil over, and putting blinkers on him to make him view the path ahead only as determined for him by the master armed with bible and sword.

It is however appreciated that current language policy in education is exploring the extension of teaching African languages to formerly white schools. This means that the era of bilingualism will be replaced by a new era of multilingualism in South African schools. President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa in his address to the Afrikanerbond which appeared in the **Citizen** of 28 July 1999 said that:

The time had perhaps come for South African children to be compelled to learn the language of other culture group at school” He said such a move should form part of a process of cultural exchange through multilingualism. He went on to say that: **“For too long only Black children had been compelled to do this. But the time must surely come in our schools when an Afrikaans-speaking child from Bellville should also learn Xhosa, when a Sotho-speaking child in Soshanguve should learn Afrikaans when an English-speaking child in Durban should learn Zulu** (emphasis added).

There is however always a problem that faces a multilingual society such as ours throughout the world, especially Africa. As stated already, the issue of language is more political than linguistic but political power is linked to economic power. It was possible to introduce English and Afrikaans to Africans without considering costs involved. Economic interests remain a serious stumbling block towards achieving language equity in South Africa and Africa, while those who benefited before adamantly cling to their privileges by deliberately misinterpreting real issues.

For instance, in response to what President Mbeki had said, former AWB leader, Eugene Terreblanche, reacted as follows to President Thabo Mbeki's call for a united South Africa, at a memorial service of Boerestaat Party leader, Robert van Tonder:

South Africa was headed for disaster if the government continued to ignore ethnic nationhood. Trying to unite all South Africans meant destruction of ethnic pride. So who will be proud of their history and say truly that I am Afrikaner or Zulu, Xhosa or Sotho? What will happen to the language, the culture, the pride and sense of belonging for all these people if their nationhood is destroyed? Van Tonder was a staunch protector and champion of the Afrikaans language cause, "Taalbul" (**Citizen**, 16 August 1999).

The hypocrisy in Terblanche's claim is no different from those used by liberals and leading world democracies who claim equality and freedom while their policies towards Africa are the direct opposite. According to study report on language in the Public service, a central clause of section 3 of the interim constitution deals with administrative requirement concerning multilingualism. In regard to government's external communication obligations, subsection (3) provides that each person, wherever practicable, shall have the right to insist that the state communicate with him or her in the language of his or her choice at provincial level in any provincial official language.

This means that the new language policy which was implemented after the 1994 democratic election necessitated the implementation of language equity in which principles of dignity of all languages in South Africa and the principles of the equity of all languages would be realised. However, the sub-clause, 'wherever practicable', has been sinisterly used to stall this process in spite of the fact that:

Language equity does not mean language uniformity. Language rights promotes the cultural rights to be different, which is definitely a promise of creating for individuals and families, as well as for societies, nations and the international community. In the past there were dominant and dominated languages (ibid.).

The scenario in South Africa is that languages had divided society ethnically and racially. Blacks have nevertheless for long championed the cause of multilingualism and non-racialism while oppression has also helped them to be fully multilingual. A significant number of Africans know several indigenous

languages as well as either English or Afrikaans, or both. In any normal society this alone would have qualified black people champion the philosophy of cultural pluralism. However, their skills have not been acknowledged and they are by and large still subjected to heavy doses of the mono-cultural West. This situation is likely to continue far into the future unless African languages developed for full participation in all institutions of society, e.g. all levels of education, the public and the private sectors. This could at the same time be balanced with equitable access to English for those who want to use it, to ensure that those who do not know English do not suffer in the process.

3.3 THE PRESENT LANGUAGE SCENARIO FOR LITERATURE

The philosophy of African Renaissance that is advocated by President Mbeki seems to have received notable support from a significant number of high profile people. For instance, in the **Citizen** of 19 August 1999, the national minister of Education – Professor Kader Asmal, supported Mbeki's call by saying that: "A process of cultural exchange through multilingualism (will enable us) to grasp fully the meaning of real liberation of all our people". If this situation obtains in South Africa we could hope to see very little despondence about post-colonial African governments which is expressed by Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, etc.

However, whenever a need arises for South African people to be re-socialised across racial, language and religious lines in order to cope with the challenges of the present, socio-cultural differences are often cited as insurmountable. For instance the public broadcaster such as the SABC continues to be accused, and justifiably so, for sidelining other languages in favour of English. Constitutionally South Africa has eleven official languages, including IsiNdebele, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. Grievances by the speakers of these languages to be adequately accommodated on the SABC TV channels have fallen on deaf ears. This could be interpreted, rightly or wrongly, to mean that their languages and identities for such a broadcaster which boasts an advanced audience are undesirable. One would acknowledge that **Muvhango**, a popular Tshivenda drama that depicts cultural-conflict, has been re-broadcast on SABC one, it is not good considering the wealth

of creativity among Africans that is suppressed by questionable language practices.

It would also seem that the more attempts are made to resolve language problems in South Africa, more and more problems crop up. As pointed out earlier, the function of language can also be seen in the manner in which people conduct themselves or set out to resolve issues. There is also a group of Ndebele people in the Northern Province who lived among Sepedi-speaking people. Pedi dialect is the dominant language variety in the province. There are subordinate varieties such as Northern IsiNdebele which is predominantly spoken around Potgietersrus, Zebediela, Naboomspruit and Pietersburg. Northern IsiNdebele is different from Southern IsiNdebele which is spoken around Bronkhorstspuit, Denilton, Groblersdal, Witbank and Delmas. Southern IsiNdebele is the language variety which is constitutionally accepted and recognised by the state and the Pan South African language Board as official IsiNdebele language. Despite the fact that the Southern IsiNdebele is being regarded as the official language, there is a big challenge which is not easy to overcome. Northern IsiNdebele has linguistic features or characteristics of different language varieties such as Sepedi, Afrikaans, original IsiNdebele and various dialects in the province. This is indeed a different language from both Sepedi and Southern IsiNdebele respectively. For many years the Northern Ndebele in the Northern Province have been studying Sepedi as their mother tongue at various levels of learning.

As a result they have lost contact with original Southern Ndebele although they are still regarded as Ndebele group. Finding themselves among the Sepedi-speaking people, the Northern Ndebele people have been assimilated into Sepedi culture through the process of acculturation, enculturation and socialisation. Their language therefore consists predominantly of Sepedi lexical items to such an extent that it becomes difficult to believe that the language has originally been a language variety of the Nguni language family. It is therefore interesting to note that immediately after the new language policy was adopted, the Northern Ndebele group protested against the idea that they belong to one group of IsiNdebele language family.

It was then that they realised that they speak a different dialect from both Sepedi and Southern IsiNdebele respectively. It becomes clear that they want to revive their culture which is independent of Southern Ndebele culture. However, historically, Northern Ndebele group belongs to the Southern Ndebele which is part of Nguni languages. Currently Northern Ndebele people are busy writing books for junior primary pupils in their language which is as yet to be approved by government. In other words they want to creolise this language variety so that they could no longer feel pain of being linguistically alienated.

Politicisation of language has also affected the Griquas in the Northern Cape. They also claim that their language differs in many aspects with Afrikaans language. This is another consequence of colonialism which has had negative impact on indigenous languages of Africa through cultural imperialism. However, despite the current politics of language and the blowing spirit of African Renaissance, some Blacks in South Africa seem to be chained to a neo-colonial mentality web. Most members of the black middle class are inclined to sending their children to former white schools to receive education in the medium of either English or Afrikaans.

In South Africa the medium of instruction in almost all levels of education is predominantly English. Learners from black communities at multiracial schools are encouraged to learn English but not only as a medium of instruction, but also as a language of civilisation that could open doors for them to the outside world. Many such students who are in tertiary institutions also hold a similar perception. The danger of these perceptions is that they ignore functional literacy and cognitive development that are crucial for any language user. I wish to argue, however, that for the sake of language equity and to avoid linguistic alienation, indigenous languages should be introduced in White schools. This could be one of the best ways of promoting multi-lingualism and cultural pluralism in a diverse South African society. This could also eliminate the inhibiting effect that English has on the successful learning of black students.

I wish to point out that the issue of language, especially mother tongue education, is a universal one. For instance, Ngungi wa Thiongo (1986) protests against the use of imperial languages in his writing and proposes to write in indigenous

languages such as Kikuyu and Kiswahili. He asserts that his works would no longer be written in the medium of English. He believes that literature which is written in an African language may convey the same message as literature written in English or any other foreign language. Therefore, African literature should primarily be written in African languages to address the African audience who are desperate for knowledge.

To endorse what Ngungi has said about the World Bank in **“Research In African Literatures”** (1992), Richard Bjornson argues that African mother tongues should be used as media of instructions, at least in the lower levels of elementary education. According to the statement of the World Bank it becomes imperative to begin instruction in a local language and then switch to the second language at a later stage. It is believed that native language instruction makes learning easy for any child. That is why exclusive foreign language instruction for black South Africans should also be considered detrimental for successful educational. The World Bank also claims that the educational future of African children arising from instruction in foreign linguistic media would jeopardise the educational welfare of the continent. UNESCO, also, recommended that the shift to local language in the earlier years of child’s education is important.

However, in practice it seems as if the World Bank and UNESCO are not really in favour of the idea that the indigenous languages should be developed and taught at secondary level and post school level. The two institutions support neo-colonialist and imperial domination on African languages. The idea that mother tongue languages are vital for lower primary education epitomises some concerns that were raised at the UNESCO-sponsored Intergovernmental Conference On Language Policies In Africa which was held in Harare on 25-27 November 1996. The conference questioned some of the notions held by the Western world towards the development of indigenous languages. These notions are: (a) that it is a waste of time and resources to try to develop and modernise African languages, that (b) the use of several mother-tongue languages in education is an obstacle to national unity, and that (3) national unity requires official monolingualism.

It was therefore necessary for African people to re-evaluate the role of indigenous languages in a post-colonial world and to protest against any foreign influence that could jeopardise the linguistic development of African languages. Some of the arguments were that if communities are politically and economically oppressed their language will also be subjected to oppression. This happens because those who own the means of production and control the capital are always sole decision-makers. And their sectarian decisions always affect sectors of the oppressed communities negatively. In Canada, for instance, English and French are used equally in one country without one language dominating the other. But in Africa colonial masters want to see the imperial languages dominating indigenous languages in countries where speakers of foreign languages are in the minority. The conference therefore saw a need to address the question of language on the African continent collectively in order to rectify this colonial legacy.

Since the 1994 democratic elections South Africa has, however, taken a right direction towards achieving language equity. In the **Draft Report of the Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG)** (16 June 1993), Joseph G Turi argues as follows: "There are two fundamental principles of language rights which are the principles of dignity of all languages and the principles of equity of all languages." Turi goes on to say that in order to achieve "linguistic peace" the "unacceptable" linguistic hegemony must be avoided. From this statement one may conclude that the LANGTAG committee is committed to a democratic language plan in order to do away with the previous linguistic deprivation and inequality which put indigenous languages at a disadvantage. Turi is also correct in his perception that all languages deserve an equitable treatment in all government institutions and in civil society.

Regrettably the majority of black South Africans do not have access to relevant information pertaining to their country since senior politicians in national and provincial parliaments are inclined to using English although a significant number of black people are still illiterate or semi-literate.

This happens in spite of a statement in the LANGTAG report on language equity that knowledge of indigenous language is necessary for nation-building and the promotion of multilingualism in a democratic South Africa. The State Language

Service asserts in another **LANGTAG report of 1995** that all South Africans should have access to the learning of languages other than their mother tongue. In an article, "Road to Pan-Africanism" (**Sowetan**, 15 November 1999), deputy President of Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, Dr Motsoko Pheko, asserts that Pan-Africanism is a privilege of the African people to love themselves and to give themselves and their way of life respect and preference. SABC2 also announced on 17 November 1999 during the news bulletin, that Black and White Americans are busy learning Zulu language at the University of Columbia (New York). Learners appeared on the screen speaking IsiZulu and singing the South African national anthem in isiZulu. M. Ntuli presented the lecture. This demonstrates that the anti-imperialist resurgence is not only reflected in African literature, but throughout the world. It is therefore imperative for African people to intensify the struggle for the liberation of their languages.

South African could learn and avoid repeating the mistake of the Namibians. During apartheid the South African government promoted the use of Afrikaans in the then South West Africa (Namibia) as the official language and as the lingua franca so as to reinforce the link between Namibia and South Africa. As a result SWAPO regarded Afrikaans as the language of oppression which was used to discriminate against indigenous African people. Therefore SWAPO used language issue as an integral part of the struggle for political liberation against the South African rule in Namibia. The people of Namibia who were so desperate for independence associated Afrikaans with apartheid. From this view point SWAPO regarded English as the language of liberation and national unity. As such English was chosen as the only official language of an independent Namibia. From this perspective it would appear possible for an imperialist language to unite people and to achieve national identity.

However, African people of Namibia have no standardised indigenous languages that could express political grievances and convey political message that could reach many ears of the indigenous people of Namibia. Therefore, if the use of English was associated with the promotion of national unity, then Namibians could as well discard Pan Africanism because it has no relevance to the plight and aspirations of the African people. Pan Africanism and African unity can't be successfully promoted and advanced through a foreign medium. Indigenous

languages can do better to achieve that goal. To declare English as the only official language in an African state while ignoring African languages is like betraying the principles of the national democratic struggle of the oppressed masses of the African people. This is totally against the philosophies of Pan Africanism, Negritude, African Nationalism, Black Consciousness and African Renaissance. The possibility of the use of African languages as capable of uniting diverse cultures of the people of Namibia has hardly been explored. The richness of the indigenous cultural creativity of the Namibians has similarly been atrophied.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In the forgoing paragraphs I have tried to demonstrate that changes in the language landscape from colonial to post-colonial Africa have been successful. Adverse consequences of Africa's failure to bargain from conducive conditions for development created by the vanquishing of colonial powers have also been raised. This is a situation which Robert K. Herbert raises in **Language and Society in Africa** (1992). He asserts that the introduction of English as the official language could cause personal suffering in that some speakers of African languages might become linguistic foreigners in their own countries. Evidently, the empowering of colonial languages at the expense of African languages in a free society is an obstruction of the process of linguistic transformation. Traditional patterns of African life would not be revived without the involvement of indigenous languages since language is a carrier of both culture and national identity.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:72) asserts that equally important for our cultural renaissance is the teaching and study of African languages since he realised that African people have become alienated from the value systems of their indigenous languages. This point is emphasised by Kofi Anyidoho (1999:185) when he states that French colonial policy was so harsh and extremely detrimental to the social and cultural well - being of African people. The French language policy wanted the colonised students to learn only French. Students were not allowed to communicate in mother tongues and were subjected to severe corporal punishment because only French was regarded as the lingua franca in French colonies.

To illustrate the problem further, Cabral (quoted in **African Literature**, 1997:87-88) regards the indigenous African elite who were raised through the colonial educational system as "Prisoners of the cultural and social contradictions of their lives who can't escape their role as a marginal class." He also says that "no culture is perfect, finished whole. All culture is composed of essential and secondary elements, of strengths and weaknesses, of virtues and failings" (1997:95).

In a similar manner Naomi Chazan et al in **Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa** (1992: 421) state that:

In transferring power to the minority, Britain sanctioned the regime of white supremacy that deprived African people of fundamental human rights in their own country and treated them essentially as a pool of cheap labour.

Confirming this argument, the Nigerian critic Obiajunwa Wali in Rand Bishop's book, **African Literature, African Critics** (1988:27) says that the whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable media for educated African writing is misdirected and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture. He also asserts that any true African literature must be written in African languages if it is to be of any consequence Africa. These views lead to next notion of post-colonial writing as protest in African literature.

CHAPTER 4

POST-COLONIALISM AS CULTURAL PROTEST IN AFRICAN WRITING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with postcolonial language experience and the emergence of new forms of cultural protest. In his book, **Moving the Centre** (1993), Ngugi Wa Thiong 'o argues that we are all drawing from the languages and cultures we are rooted in and that English should not be substitute for our own languages. Contributions of institutions and movements involved in issues of African literatures and cultures will also be examined.

4.2 SOME VIEWS ON POST-COLONIAL WRITING

Post-colonial African writers championed the cause of Pan Africanism, Negritude, African Nationalism, Black Consciousness and are inclined to write from these contexts, which could be collectively viewed as post-colonial. That is why Williams in his article, 'Mother Tongue' (**The Journal of African Travel – Writing, No.4, April 1998, p.34-44**) asserts that:

The English language and other Western influences pervade daily life in African countries ... once colonized by the British. Even today, the Western way of life is considered ideal, while traditional African lifestyles are quickly becoming part of a distant past, and persons wanting to write ... are systematically forced to decide whether to write in English or their own African languages (ibid. p.5).

As a result post-colonial writing should have something to do with decolonization of Africa. Such writing should not only challenge colonialism, but should also water down prevailing colonial stereotypes, including deforming languages that carry them. She also quotes Marechera who says about the English language:

The writer should be mastering the language. The language should be the slave, we must brutalize it into our own shape. This is the best way to fight back our own former slavery. But every time we try, language escapes. And

so we have to beat it again and again to capture and to punish it again and again (ibid.).

This proves that neo-imperialism has also had a devastating effect and it still has pernicious influence on the life of African people today. Our songs and our everyday conversations, for instance, still depict Whites as examples of people whose moral values should be emulated blacks. The following Sepedi wedding song shows that Blacks have regrets for being black by admiring 'white' as a colour:

*"Tlang Tlang le mmone
Ngwana o swana le Lekhalate
O a nyanyatha.....
Ngwana o swana le Lekhalate"*
*(Come come and see her
The child (bride) is like a coloured
She dances and dances
The bride is like a coloured.....)*

This song demonstrates that the bride is considered beautiful if she is light complexioned. In the past a bride was supposed to use skin lightening complexion creams before the wedding so that she could perfectly match her white dress. However, those complexion cremes caused blemishes, acne and black spots, and in most instances they could not heal. Sadly, those skin lightening cremes are only made to be used by black women to promote an impression that white is beautiful and black is ugly. Again if a black person is wearing a perfume, other blacks would admire him or her by saying: *"Hm! o nkgwa Sekgowa"* (Hm! you smell like a white person). As such post-colonial writing in Africa should be seen as a socio-political revolution adopted by Africans aim at the tyranny of European political and cultural values.

In his definition of Negritude, Samuel W. Allen (in Lewis Nkosi's **Tasks and Masks**, 1981:10) asserts that "the Negritude African poet's endeavours to recover

for his race a normal self-pride, a lost confidence in himself, a world in which he again has a sense of identity and a significant role." Post-colonial African literature is in this way, a reflection of protest by a society that has experienced the social ills of colonialism, committed to the restoration of African cultural value systems. Therefore, what is important in post-colonial African literature is to expose and bring an understanding of the domination of Western culture over the indigenous African people.

It is for this reason that African people who became victims of colonialism should be resocialised and re-enculturated into the African culture through their literature, among other means. Chinua Achebe's **Things Fall Apart** is a novel that depicts the brutal oppression of African people. As a committed African writer Chinua Achebe regards literature as a vehicle for revealing social evils and to restore African dignity and self-respect among African people. The importance of African society depends on African people themselves to respect their religions, customs and their traditional ways of living. Achebe asserts that the African writer should help his colonised people to regain their lost dignity. According to Achebe, colonialism and Christianity caused considerable damage to the spiritual well-being and the moral values of African people. As such African people abandoned their gods and their ancestors in favour of alien religious beliefs which at the end tore African societies apart.

Chinua Achebe is against the way in which African people are so easily influenced by colonialism. They need not be credulous, especially when they want to preserve their cultural heritage and to attain self-fulfilment. Blacks and Whites are equal in all aspects of life because they are all members of one great human family. As such no culture should dominate the other, and the inferiority complex that Africans developed should not be seen as a natural phenomenon but it is a colonial socio-cultural disease. Therefore, post-colonial writing should not only be protest against colonialism, but also a struggle against the emergence black elitism and capitalists - a new threat to democracy and justice in Africa. It is common knowledge that corruption, moral decay and self-enrichment have become trademarks of several post-colonial African societies.

After colonialism a new class of black petit bourgeois capitalists emerged and proved more destructive than their former colonial masters through brutality, dictatorship, autocracy, corruption and authoritarianism.

For instance, in his novel, **The Beautiful ones are not yet born** (1968), Ayi Kwei Armah regards post colonial Ghana as a reflection of the brutal image of colonial Ghana. The title of the novel reveals that after Ghana attained independence, Ghanaians are still living under similar, if not worse conditions, than during colonialism. Generally, after achieving independence, African leaders are blamed for governing undemocratically while some declared themselves life presidents. A significant number of such African leaders governed for more than twenty years in a despotic and autocratic ways. Military governments, coups and civilwars also became characteristic post-colonial African states. It is therefore not surprising that African writers who are committed to total liberation of their people became spokesperson of the suffering masses

It will therefore not be wrong to argue that some African countries have entered the 2000 millennium in a state of uncertainty. Part of the cause of this problem is clearly articulated by Kofi Anyidoho (quoted by Selepe, 1999:272) saying that:

African societies and communities of African-heritage worldwide are rushing into the 21st century in a state of despair and even panic. By certain ironies of history, they were stampeded into directions they did not intend to follow. And now, breathless and quite dazed, they have arrived at a point where they seem to have not lost a sense of where they are or should be going, but even a knowledge of where they were before the [the colonial] stamp. They are trapped in a state of stasis and what has been described as “a culture of survival – not one of development..”

Therefore, it is true that class relations in every capitalist society are dominated by contradictions, and always the interests of the dominant social class continue to be dominated by colonial institutions in all spheres of life. An analysis of these are comparison of South African historical perspective with regard to class conflicts and the socio-economic relations which have been reflected in our literature for several decades if not a century. One will remember that during the past decades

of apartheid regime so many books have been banned because they were revealing the social reality of race relations in South Africa. All resistance literature had been subjected to state censorship and much of protest literature was removed from the society. Race relations between the Blacks and the Whites was a bitter struggle. In fact the Whites represented the dominant social class which is conservative and reactionary whereas the Blacks represented the most exploited, oppressed and the dispossessed social class of peasantry.

Therefore, the ruling class being the Whites preferred the literary work that promotes the status quo. They preferred the kind of literature that change. The literature of those who were partisan to the policies of the ruling class, and the media are continuing to question the sincerity of the ANC government for a 'better life for all'. This betrays the campaign of Steve Biko, others, in the 70s, which were dedicated to the total political emancipation of black people, especially their self-worth (cf. I write as I like). from the chains of slavery. Although from a liberal perspective, Alan Paton, book, **Cry the Beloved Country** (1978) depicts the oppressive socio-economic conditions under which black people lived in South Africa.

The situation has not changed much and Black South Africans are economically poor and still represent the poorest of the poor. Efforts by Ethel Furgard, Nadine Gordimer, and organisations such as the Black Sash haven't changed much. Human Rights Commission, Affirmative Action and The Pan South African Language Board, National Arts Council, etc., still face serious challenges. Prof Kadar Asmal's **Masifunde Sonke Project**, still has to make a mark. In Nigeria and Kenya, for instance, post-colonial literature of Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe Ali Muzrui, and others who voiced the consent of the afflicted voiceless people under the rule of post-colonial dictators were forced into exile because their books are advocating for a democratic civilian rule. The case of Ken Soro-Wiwa of Nigeria is another typical case.

Can we face a similar situation in South Africa if the debate between intellectual monopoly between the government and social critics degenerate into personal attacks? It cannot be denied that comments are a catalyst for lively debates in national media. It is also true that in a democracy conflicting views of social

classes establish the ground upon which ideological conflicts arise and can be resolved. Literature belongs to ideological sphere through which the inherent contradictions of interests between the oppressor and the oppressed are also exposed. The next question is whether post colonial South African literature will continue to depict racial division.

4.3 PRESENT TRENDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

Post-colonial literature is a protest literature which is an inevitable consequence of tyranny and oppression that suppress the freedom of African people. On the other hand colonial literature created misery and false consciousness which resulted in essential dilemma of African social values. Racism as an ideology of colonialism to treat equal people unequally was met with immense protest from black African writers or those white writers who sympathised with the oppressed African people. For instance, **Nadine Gordimer** is a white South African writer who identifies with the liberation struggle of the oppressed African people. Indeed, she is not a protagonist of the black liberation struggle, but her writing is against any form of oppression of man by man.

It is vital to note that black writers did not just become interested in liberation literature, but socio-political and historical conditions forced them to write about the liberation struggle. There are as a result many fiction books that have been written by African people on this subject because race relations between diversified racial groups in South Africa created racial hatred between the races. Tri-cameral parliament in South Africa during the last days of apartheid disenfranchised black people because of the blackness of their skin colour. The Pass Laws denied the black people the freedom of movement in the country of their forefathers. The Sharpeville massacre and the Soweto uprising caused lives of African people unnecessarily. For instance these and other events inspired Merriam Tlali and Sipho Sepamla to write **amandla and third generation** respectively. The lives of innocent people have been taken unnecessarily by the state security forces. The police brutality in South Africa created the spirit of unity among black South Africans. This state of affairs forced the oppressed people to pledge their solidarity and to reclaim their self-identity. As a result African nationalism emerged as a powerful political force that challenged the system. African people united against

their common enemy which was apartheid or internal colonialism (of Selepe, 1993). Therefore, from this perspective African writers as the oppressed members of the oppressed black masses felt the need to voice their grievances through a literary works.

Most of the writers have been involved in the struggle and they committed themselves to the liberation struggle. Realising the hostilities and atrocities committed by government forces against the protesting black people, African writers had to change their mode of writing. Revolutionary militancy has been adopted and advocated by African writers especially after the Sharpeville shooting. Revolution was the only hope left in the mind of black people. As such African poets promoted a militant attitude towards the apartheid regime. Poetry was used as an expression of anger and protest against the reactionary forces of neo-colonialist system. The poems of Mtshali and Serote exposes the social evils of South African political situation in which black people had been subjected to fatal racial discrimination. Suffering, deprivation and alienation of black people consolidated the revolutionary forces from different sectors of society to combat the abominable cruelty of racial prejudice in South Africa. The false consciousness which was created by power and ideology of colonialism has been defeated by new ideology of Black consciousness in which a black person identified himself or herself with African continent and its cultural values (cf Biko, in Arnold, 1987).

The anti-colonialist resurgence reflected in African literature inspired young African writers to resist imperialism by advancing revolutionary transformation. African writers have been staging resistance through literary works in order to achieve political, social and cultural survival. All this protest literature was meant to advance the course of human socio-cultural liberation and to confront the forces of neo-colonialism. **Ngugi Thiong'o** in his book **Moving the Centre**, (1993: 88) asserts: that under the colonial rule the native cultures were repressed, while through the school system other imported traditions were encouraged. He goes on to assert that the result of this economic, political and cultural alienation of the majority from their post-colonial rulers has been a perfect replica of colonial practices. This post-colonial approach can at best be interpreted and understood from a materialist perspective

4.4 A MATERIALIST INTERPRETATION OF LOCAL SOCIO-CULTURAL CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Human existence is a dynamic process which is characterised by unfulfilled desires and dreams that frustrate human person's reasoning capacity. The struggle for human rights and political freedom is a fundamental ideology which dominates human life. But the quest to eliminate social injustices is a continuation process of struggles. People are born with different dreams and each one's dream could affect the whole humanity either positively or negatively. Class conflicts and contradictions are part of human existence. Different ages past and present people are born, but they are still not satisfied. Feudal system passed with its conflicts. Monarchy was also dominated by conflicts. Violent struggles erupted during the colonial period because of racial class conflicts that have been caused by social and political inequality. Colonialism has been met with vicious protest and resistance. Post colonial period was expected to bring an everlasting peace to the formerly colonised people. But on the contrary the post-colonial expectations brought another age of suffering and misery.

Post-colonial expectations in Africa have been thwarted by tyranny of power of those who claimed to represent the oppressed people. Post-colonial leaders betrayed the democratic forces of change and transformation. They became political hypocrites and governed their own people with an iron fist. Most of the post-colonial leaders have been despotic and politically bigoted. Therefore the general perception is that post colonial African leaders have been cruel to their own people. Most of them were in favour of one party political system. Dictatorship and military rule have been the characteristics of post-independent Africa.

Black African leaders oppressed their fellow African people without mercy. Some of the great African leaders declared themselves the life presidents without the consent of the people. Nigeria, for instance, has experienced coups and military rule since independence. As a results of military rule and dictatorship so many civilians have been killed for criticising the government. So many prolific writers whose literature voiced the grievances of the people were forced into exile or either detained or executed. In Kenya some great writers have also been subjected to torture and imprisonment.

4.5 THE GLOBAL DIMENSION OF IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Following some research investigations it becomes evident that African people themselves plunged the whole continent into civil wars. Different ideologies in Angola and Mozambique created insurmountable socio-political problems. Democratic forces and Marxist forces created many problems, because the Eastern block and Western block countries used an African continent as a political pawn or a bone of contention. African countries have been used as battlefields for ideological conflicts which clouded the real nature of problems in Africa. There is a misconception about Africa's economic decline and its political freedom. Most African people think that only western countries have contributed to Africa's failure in terms of economic development and its spiritual well-being. But the fact remains that the power struggle between NATO (National Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and the Warsaw Pact have had negative impact on Africa's economic well-being. The struggle between capitalism and socialism was fought in the African soil. The Western powers used African countries as a political base to advance capitalist and the so-called democratic ideologies.

The Eastern countries also used African countries as a political platform to advance socialist and the Leninist-Marxist ideologies. All these alien ideologies equally frustrated African people. Most African countries experienced civil unrests and the civil wars because of these ideologies. People did not know precisely which political ideology or which economic system was more appropriate for their country. Even today African political parties in the majority of African countries are divided along these ideologies.

It was as a result these foreign forces that were competing to dominate Africa which resulted in the invasion of African people's collective consciousness. This invasion of the African mind continue the enslavement of thought and the dehumanisation of African people. As a result of this state of anomie, African people further lost their collective consciousness and allowed themselves to be divided and ruled as separate communities.

That is why even today in African most of the oppressed people feel proud when communicating in colonial languages than their own indigeneous languages. Even

black academics and politicians are still inclined to communicating in colonial languages. This demonstrates that African people were only fighting for political freedom while on the other side ignoring social, economic and cultural freedom. The language function in society is necessary for the promotion and advancement of African national identity. The selection of colonial language as the official language after the African state has achieved independence is a betrayal of the liberation struggle. It is difficult to believe that the newly independent state could promote the practices of the old colonial government. People's government in Namibia failed to liberate the oppressed Namibian people from linguistic alienation in a post-apartheid state. SWAPO's language policy of introducing English as the only official language in Namibia is contrary to the principles of African Renaissance. African languages in Namibia are still the marginalised languages like during the colonial regime. English was accepted as the only official language of an independent Namibia on the **25 January 1990** to affirm a notion that African languages are the languages of low linguistic prestige which are not suitable for use in national affairs in a liberated state such as Namibia. The suppression of African languages in Namibia emanated from the outset during the liberation struggle in which SWAPO identified Afrikaans as a language of oppression and English as the language of liberation. However African languages too have played an essential role in the struggle for liberation.

To identify one language as the language of struggle and liberation is not true because in any multilingual society all languages play a complimentary role. South Africa at least has done better after apartheid when Language Equity was introduced even though the role of African language is still below that of English and Afrikaans. Truly speaking if really African people are proud of being Africans in the African soil why should they persist in glorifying the alien languages even though they are politically independent?

It is generally difficult to accommodate both conflicting forces within the same room. The struggle between the conservative forces and the liberal forces can't easily be united for the sake of political compromise. The philosophy of cultural pluralism maintains a belief that the various languages ought to co-exist on an equitable basis in order to allow the historically marginalised languages to play a meaningful role in the society which has been racially divided. Any political

liberation without cultural emancipation is not complete because a true nation is the one that has achieved both cultural identity and socio-economic freedom. **Ngugi Wa Thiong'o** in his book **Decolonising the Mind (1986)** stresses that imperialism makes people see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. And it makes them want to identify with other people's languages rather than their own.

Ngugi stress the point that African countries as colonies and even today as neo-colonies came to be defined and to define themselves in terms of the languages of Europe. The myth that everything from Europe or where else except Africa is good is still in the mind of Africa people.

4.6 HOW CAN AFRICANS PRIDE BE RESTORED

We need to plant the seeds of cultural freedom in order to espouse the ethos of Black Consciousness Philosophy and African Renaissance philosophy. In his book *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngugi quoted Ezekiel Mphahlele as saying:

“English and French have become the common language with which to present a nationalist front against white oppressors and even where the white man has already retreated, as in the independent states, these two languages are still a unifying force”.

Mphahlele's argument is relevant to the unfolding post-colonial circumstances that cloud the light of African freedom with imperialist colours. If this phenomenon persists Africa will remain economically and culturally subservient to the imperialist colonial powers unless major steps are not taken to obstruct the pace of neo-colonialism. As long as the moral consciousness of African people is allowed to be invaded by impenitent legacy of neo-imperialism then African people will be faced with the essential dilemma of Africa's cultural values.

In his **Decolonising the Mind (1986)**, **Ngugi** quoted **Chinua Achebe** as saying:

“It is right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling” That is why post-colonial African writers should write the kind of literature which

reflects African life experiences, especially the history of race relations between the indigenous people of Africa and the colonial masters.

African literature does not exist in vacuum, but in a world of human social relations. The race relations between the colonised and the colonisers was characterised by bitter struggle for dominance. The colonisers wanted to dominate every aspects of African life through coercion and enslavement of thought. African writers were urged to resist any further mental subjugation in the post-colonial world.

The ambition to dominate and rule over others is the burning desire of those who want to see their will be imposed on other people. Political tolerance and cultural tolerance go hand in hand in any free and just society. But on the contrary the colonisers being foreigners in Africa wanted to oppress African people on their soil and arbitrarily took a decision to suppress and undermine African cultural values. Therefore, the culture of resistance which was necessary to eliminate the evils of cultural alienation which African people should be used to as well as colonial and imperial hegemony, because Neo-imperialism is an anathema to the African people. The Africa of the colonial era was full of egoistic colonial mentality which trivialised the beauty and glory of African philosophy.

4.7 CONCLUSION

South Africa being the last country in the African continent to achieve political freedom has witnessed the most painful historical moments of human suffering in the history of human existence. The colonial experiences had negative impact on the indigenous people of South Africa than any racial group because during the tricameral parliament of apartheid regime in South Africa only black people have not been represented in parliament. From this historical perspective I would therefore like to stress the point that protest literature has emerged from the minds that have been afflicted and traumatised by pain-inflicting colonial policies. Black people having suffered from colonial injustices were among the first people to write about the protest literature. From this argument I also want to point out that the White South Africans and black South Africans have different views of colonial experiences because colonialism affected both sides differently. The difference is

that almost all Whites had been the beneficiaries of both apartheid and colonialism whereas all the indigenous people were the victims of the social injustices of colonialism and apartheid.

However protest literature was heavily censored during the colonial and apartheid periods. Post-colonial Africa has been inundated with new publications of protest literature. African Nationalism, Pan Africanism and the Black consciousness philosophies have been the driving force behind Africa's cultural revolution. However, the imperial culture continued to dominate the indigenous culture because protest literature was mainly written in the medium of colonial language. Post-colonial protest literature was concerned with race relations and cultural identity. However this polarised African people to such an extent that they developed inferiority complex.

But the emergence of post-colonial writing helped to promote and advance the spirit of African unity and also to raise the spirit of class consciousness. African people pledged their solidarity to face the challenges of colonial social predicament that had deprived them of their real African identity. The class consciousness united African people since they regarded themselves as the oppressed social class of African identity. Having experienced discrimination and oppression African writers used protest literature to advance socio-political change and to launch cultural revolution. Protest literature was written by Africans because they were the people who suffered under the brutal legacy of colonial rule. These experiences of colonialism robbed African people of their cultural values and subjected them to the colonial values.

In terms of South African context black people among all diversified racial groups in South Africa were the only group that suffered the pains of apartheid system. As such the protest literature emanated from the social class that has been socially, politically and economically oppressed. Without the existing policies of apartheid there couldn't have been a protest literature. Resistant or protest literature played a pivotal role in dismantling the political hegemony of colonial social fabric which denied African people the right to be true human beings. On the other hand socio-political and cultural exploitation of African people also gave them a sense of belonging to the global society of humanity by undermining their own cultural and

social values in favour of colonial values and beliefs. Colonial beliefs are still having negative impact.

From perspectives of African protest literature contradictions have also emerged from within the camp of African writing. Not only neo-colonialism has threatened postcolonial Africa, but the main threat to Africa's political liberation is the postcolonial African leaders who betrayed socio-political and cultural revolution of the oppressed African people. Protest literature shifted from attacking the colonizers and attacked the new African leadership who are accused of corruption, nepotism and autocratic dictatorship which culminated in Africa's economic ills. This point has been emphasised in Neil Lazurus's book **Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction (1990)**. In this book several books of Ayi Kwei Armah such as **The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet born (1968)** **Why are we so Blessed (1972)**, **Fragment (1970)** etc, have been quoted as depicting the social decay which has been experienced after the independent Africa. Beautiful promises that have been made during the liberation struggle have not been fulfilled after independence. Neil Lazurus quoted Fanon's essay on "National consciousness" as saying after the African nationalist parties had assumed government at independence they started to consolidate their positions and enrich themselves at the expense of their communities who dedicated all their lives to the liberation struggle. As such post colonial Africa is seen as having betrayed national democratic struggle of the oppressed African people. Quoting from Armah's novel (Why are we so blessed) Neil Lazurus says that African revolution is being corrupted by its leaders who practise inequalities within the struggle to end colonial inequality.

To advance the argument, Livie Mqotsi in his book, (House of Bondage:1989 p 4-8) depicted the brutality of apartheid system as an ideology of racist oppression whereby the non-white citizens were forced into exile or banishment because of political intolerance. When Vusumzi was banished from Devilworth in the Transkei to Bethal in the Transvaal he resisted by saying that, "This is my father's house. This is the home of my ancestors. I will not desert them."

Furthermore, some of the tribesmen protested against the banishment of Vusumzi by threatening that there would be bloodshed and chaos if Vusumzi could be

forced to leave the land of their ancestors. The native people of Devilworth vowed to die for their rights if the aliens from the West come to harass them. One of the people who stood there in anger to protect Vusumzi said, "It is better to die than to live in bondage. For my part I am prepared to die for my King and and for my motherland."

The House of Bondage is a protest novel which depicts all forms of resistance against the injustices of apartheid system in South Africa whereby equal people were treated unequally because of race or colour. Protest literature by African writers emerged from such hardships of imperialist - colonial rule as the voice of the oppressed voiceless African people. With Negritude, Pan Africanism and Black Consciousness having run their course, the next chapter will be devoted to African Renaissance for its possible contribution.'

CHAPTER 5

THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF AFRICAN RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHY ON AFRICAN WRITING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter deals with the critical analysis of African Renaissance philosophy that seems to be emerging as a powerful philosophical concept in a post-apartheid South Africa and post-colonial African continent. To achieve objective, the chapter will also refer in passing to the contribution made by movements such as Negritude, Pan Africanism, African Nationalism and the Black Consciousness by placing them on the African historical continuum, and in consolidating the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The contribution of these developments have culminated in the regrouping of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the initiative of the African Renaissance and the founding of the African Union, which has replaced the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). For instance, according to Mbeki it is necessary for Africa to review its historical past of colonial legacy and to take a new stand in shaping her future destiny in accordance with its indigenous cultural values and historical experiences (Selepe, 2000:12-17). All of these issues will not only be viewed from a literary perspective but also in terms of the language in which they are expressed.

5.2 LOCATING THE PREMISE OF AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

African Renaissance is concerned with the self-discovery of African history and the socio-cultural revival of African people. According to Selepe (2000), African Renaissance is aimed at correcting a notion that Renaissance is a sole preserve of Europe. In fact he argues that the latter “marked the beginning of the re-writing of world history from a European perspective” (ibid. p.12). He also points out that a similar movement, the Harlem Renaissance, emerged in America during the 1920s and 1930s where Black Americans that were inspired by W.E.B. du Bois were inspired to liberate their people through literature and art. Therefore African Renaissance should be seen as a manifestation of African consciousness for self-assertion and identification with the liberation of the African continent and the

acknowledgement of her contribution to world civilization (cf. Koka, 1999). In an article that appeared in the **City Press** of 29 August 1999, W. Serote says that: "African Renaissance is the idea to reconstruct disadvantaged communities to become a political, cultural and social force that can transform our society for equality".

Looking critically at the African Renaissance, as a philosophy, there are numerous challenges that need to be considered. Historically a historical perspective it follows movements such as Negritude, Pan-Africanism, African nationalism and the Black Consciousness Movement. Central to the philosophies of these movements was the restoration of Africanness and resistance against colonialism and neo-colonialism. What is significant about African Renaissance, however, is the fact that it:

Is a call for the restoration of Africa and her people, demanding the creation of a space for her to make contribution to world development. It is also a call to denounce the distortion of African history written on the Western historical continuum, and to rewrite Africa's history – past, present and future, from the African perspective (Selepe, 2000:12-13).

Therefore, for African Renaissance to become a flourishing philosophical reality, African people need to be re-educated and re-socialised in their unblemished historical epoch. Therefore, any African writer who is committed to promote Africanness should write in a manner that would serve African people. In his interview with the **Sowetan** of 30 December 1999, Professor Es'kia Mphahlele said the following about the concept of African Renaissance: "If African Renaissance means anything at all, it should mean an African consciousness. We have to outgrow our dependence on white people and become self-reliant"

Furthermore, Mphahlele regards African literature as a powerful instrument in the emancipation of black people from colonial mentality. Of course, through relevant literature people are able to stand by themselves and pledge solidarity against white domination. African literature therefore has a responsibility of interpreting the socio-cultural imbalances of the past and re-current African thinking. African Renaissance should not be equated with racism which gave birth to crime against

humanity - apartheid, but should be viewed as a re-birth of a new humane society that will be nurtured by the African spirit of *ubuntu* (humaneness).

5.3 AFRICAN RENAISSANCE IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

The whole movement into a global era presupposes that where there will one main stream, which will evidently be dominated by the Western world. It is again in this dominant culture where Africa has to find her place and a role to play. In realising the plight of African people who experienced severe cultural polarisation during colonialism we should not ignore other possible aspects of Western culture that could impact negatively on the development of Africa.

However, we can't deny the process of cultural interdependence since no society can exist in isolation from the others. Cultural assimilation was necessary for both Africans and the Whites if the Whites were also prepared to be accommodated in Africa. But the colonial masters failed to appreciate the virtues of African traditional customs because everything African was regarded as barbaric and old fashioned. Only African people had been subjected to assimilation while their white counterparts were continuing to despise African cultural heritage. Some African people have been assimilated into white man's culture. As a result of this annihilating condition the indigenous people have lost their cultural identity and subsequently they have been polarised.

One wonders whether the African Renaissance philosophy could be used as a strategy by African people to make everything in the African continent, African in character, just like the British policy of Anglicisation during the colonial Africa which made everything British in character. Speaking from historical perspective, throughout the centuries of oppression and dehumanisation of African people by colonial masters, African beliefs, customs and traditions have been suppressed. Because of the political power that Whites had enjoyed during their rule in Africa they forced African people to accept their alien cultural values. Should post-colonial Africa dictate non-Africans to accept African cultural values like they (Whites) have done to African people during the colonial period? If political power is a privilege of one race to oppress the other then one could easily assume that African people have the right to assimilate non-Africans into the African culture.

For instance the colonial rule was the despotic manner in which the ancestral naming system of African people had been affected by the cruel policies of colonialism. African people have been given the new names which are called "Christian names" which are the names that were not known to the ancestors of African people. African people had been given the names that have no meaning to them. Almost all African people, especially in South Africa have a colonial name in their identity documents. This is an epitome of an act of humiliation which dehumanised African people. The condition epitomises the horrific past of colonial era where the life of a black person was cheap. It is necessary to pay attention to other aspects of African Renaissance, because there are many people in South Africa whose family names are European names. Some views seem to suggest that to reverse the horrific historic past of colonialism, African people should cancel the names which are alien to African tradition and go back to the names of their ancestors. By so doing Africans will have achieved one of the noble goals of African Renaissance philosophy.

Some African American have done this e.g. Malcolm X or nearer home PAC's, Khoisan X, formerly Benny Alexander. It becomes incredible and it is a time-wasting effort to continue giving African children the European names while on the other hand we are talking of African Renaissance. Africa has beautiful people with a wealth of beautiful African names.

Africans need to be positive and critical when dealing with the concept of African renaissance. For instant polygamy as a system of customary union in Africa has been attacked in many parts of the world, especially by those who advocate Christianity, or for the rights of women or gender equality. Speaking from African perspective a male person is always the head of the family. Traditionally, an African man is entitled to marry more than one wife's and this practice kept the sanctity of marriage. Is African renaissance going to give a new birth of society which will abandon all disrutive colonial traditions and customs and pursue pre-colonial African traditions? If that is the case, should African Renaissance accommodate the feminist ideology and the gay and lesbian rights in order to keep pace with democratic transformation of African society? Africa is faced with socio-cultural problems that are challenging the fundamental question of renaissance. In the true sense of the concept renaissance, it means the revival of culture and

human potential. In case of African context the concept African renaissance is two dimensional in the sense that it constitutes two conflicting forces. For instance, there seems to be two different African schools of thought which promote the type of African Renaissance which is based on the principles of cultural conservatism and the one which is based on democratic cultural assimilation.

For instance those who are in favour of cultural conservatism do not want to mix their culture with any cultural element from foreign countries. They want to see Africa which is truly African in texture and character. And on the contrary there are progressive African people who are in favour of cultural dynamism. They are in favour of cultural assimilation. So the main concern of Africans is to know which of the African renaissance philosophy is more appropriate for the attainment of true African identity. What is important is to shape our cultural destiny for the present African generation and for the generation to come. The struggle for cultural revival should not be a merciful struggle of compromise. African people should be united by their common will to defeat the brutal system of cultural imperialism. Unfortunately the process of this cultural struggle to maintain the glorification of Africa is being challenged by African people who prefer to be both African and European.

Those who want to serve two king at the same time impede the social development of the indigenous people of Africa. True African people want to be liberated from foreign or colonial cultural domination without conditions. Culture is relative to a particular society and no cultural values of any human society are more superior than others since all human societies are members of one great human family. To undermine one's culture in favour of other people's culture is a social dilemma which leads to socio-cultural catastrophe.

Those who opted for the conservativist approach in dealing with African renaissance philosophy are the ones who mostly feel alienated in a foreign culture. Most of those who feel alienated are the most exploited and oppressed class of the African people. This exploited class has never been assimilated into the colonial culture because they have been discriminated against in all social and political institutions of the colonial order. Even today the class of peasantry still go to the graves of their ancestors to pray and they are performing several African

cultural rituals. They have never gone to the White man's church. When they are not feeling well they consult traditional healers to prescribe medication for them.

A significant number of the indigenous people of South Africa is illiterate or semi-illiterate and they have resisted colonial influence on African culture. This group sends its children to the initiation schools in the mountains to be taught the moral values of their ancestors. The virginity test which is performed by the Zulu nation in Kwa Zulu Natal is one which forms part of the African renaissance culture. But today in post-apartheid South Africa human rights institutions and the government departments are still carrying out the missions of the colonial masters by undermining African traditional values. They interfere in the administration of initiation schools and traditional virginity test. They hypocritically deny the existence of witchcraft and the controversial man-made lightning. Black academics and professionals who have been assimilated into the White man's culture are rallying behind the campaigns to undermine the beauty of indigenous cultural values.

For the betterment and advancement of African cultural heritage, the spirit of *ubuntu* (humanity) should be revived in accordance with virtues of the African renaissance philosophy. However, the progress is slow in establishing indigenous African standards is the black middle class who are still being trapped in colonial traditions and customs. Due to the colonisation and the acculturation that they have been subjected to they fail to recognise their own African people as knowledgeable people. They define African culture according to the European context. They fail to contextualise and redefine African situation in accordance with African life experiences. The only way through which Africa could be redeemed from the distorted realities of colonialism is by educating the black middle class about the virtues of indigenous traditions.

However, the very thing which is primarily detrimental to the process of Africanisation is the way our school system is operating. During the struggle for liberation black political activists have been telling the oppressed black masses about the danger of Bantu education. The process of Africanisation can't take place in an education system which is divided along the provincial education departments. Quality and same education policy is needed for all South African

schools in order to meet the challenges of African renaissance. Of primary importance is mother tongue education which is still lacking in traditionally black schools. What is necessary in achieving a sustainable development is to develop the youth by means of high quality education which is conveyed and communicated through the medium of mother tongue. To supplement what has been said, **The Asmara Declaration on African Language and Literature** which has been held in Eritrea in the first weeks of January 2000 concluded that:

African languages are essential for the decolonisation of African minds and for the African Renaissance. All African children have the inalienable right to attend school and learn in their mother tongues. Democracy is essential for the equal development of African languages, and African languages are vital for the development of democracy based upon equality and social justice. The vitality and equality of African languages must be recognised as a basis for the future empowerment of African people.

In pursuing this noble course of African Renaissance much emphasis should be put on Africa's creative ability and intellectual potential. What poses a threat to the ideal of African Renaissance is the lack of commitment on the part of black intellectuals and academics. They are allowing the neo-colonialists to tarnish all beautiful hopes about Africa. Tertiary institutions such as the universities are busy planting the seeds of colonial legacy in the post-colonial Africa and the post-apartheid South Africa. While all attempts are being made to revive African traditions and customs, the universities are still ignoring the importance and the role played by African languages. Instead of promoting indigenous languages which are the official languages of the legitimate citizens of African continent, the universities are still continuing to play a major role in the marginalization and suppression of African languages. For instance, even traditionally black universities in South Africa failed to realise the significant role of African languages in the development and transformation of African societies. Most universities are promoting the colonial legacy of cultural imperialism at the expense of African people. The universities are busy bringing in new European and Asiatic languages such as German, Italian, Portuguese, Hebrew, Latin, French, etc, into the South African universities to be learnt by African people. Almost all universities in South Africa do not offer tuition in all eleven of the South African official languages.

Some offer lessons in two or three indigenous languages, but many in foreign languages.

It should be understood that the institutions of high learning could play a pivotal role in the process of decolonization and deculturalization of African people or those who pay allegiance to the African philosophical thinking. The purpose of African Renaissance is to achieve those African cultural standards which have been suppressed during the past. African Renaissance is challenged by the effects of neo-colonial education which justify and inculcate the belief that the African people are biologically inferior and they (Africans) are still being stripped of their human dignity. Children who are raised in the multiracial schools are still absorbing the same spirit of colonial cultural absolutism that assign inferior cultural traits to the African people. The colonial masters and those who share the same beliefs still believe that their customs and values are absolute and universal. The superiority complex which has developed inside the minds of the colonisers was abysmal and it is not easy to be rooted out completely. Those who are the beneficiaries of racial discrimination in South Africa or else where in Africa still treat African people as inferior and unequal.

Post-apartheid South Africa is still saturated with incidents of racism. Multiracial schools are playing a crucial role in socialising black children into the Western culture and they provide educational programs which deny African children the right to identify themselves with the African life experiences. They want African children to perceive the world the way the Western do. African languages are not offered in those schools. Therefore, African people are going nowhere with their quest to achieve a true socio-cultural freedom. For African Renaissance to exist and flourish meaningfully, it should strive to transform all learning institutions and eliminate racial discrimination. African Renaissance should not exist in isolation of human social institutions. African Renaissance should first strive to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination which appear to be a primary source of conflict in the post-colonial and post-apartheid world. Many African countries are experiencing civil wars and the genocide. Post-colonial Africa has become a battle field because of those African leaders who betrayed the National democratic struggle of the African people who are thirsty for peace and political freedom.

It is vital and imperative to resolve our political and social problems before African Renaissance philosophy could survive and function normally. Military governments are not part of African culture because one person who has not been elected democratically emerges as a leader of the civil society. Of course, there are many self-proclaimed presidents in African states who govern undemocratically with an iron fist. These tyrant leaders are dictators and autocrats who abuse their power and kill people without mercy. These politically bigoted leaders of the second and third world countries have plunged their respective countries into violent civil unrest. Nigeria has experienced several decades of military rule. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, Mozambique, Algeria, Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo), Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia etc, are example of the African countries where political conflicts eradicated the lives of the civilians. Millions of African people are still displayed and several thousands are still living in refugee camps under unhealthy living conditions. This turbulent state of affairs is perpetuated by one party political system or autocratic authority. Many African writers whose writings exposes atrocities and human abuses were forced into exiles and some are hanged or arrested. In Nigeria the military rule sentenced Ken Saro-Wiwa to death. All these depict the African continent as the continent of human rights abuses.

Chidi Ikonne et al. (**African Literature and African Historical Experiences** (1991:1) assert that most African writing is historical since it is a response to a definite historical and socio-political conditions.

Therefore, the impact of African Renaissance on African writing is historical and the language question is part of historical experiences. The history of African languages as marginalized by the linguistic policies of apartheid rule led to the 16 June 1976 protest. Michel Chapman's **South African literature** (1996:329) stresses the point that school children in Soweto took to the streets on 16 June 1976 in protest against their inferior Bantu Education. The immediate issue was their rejection of Afrikaans – dubbed the “language of the oppressor” as a medium of classroom instruction.

Afrikaans was also declared the language of the oppressor by SWAPO in Namibia during and after the liberation struggle as stated by Robert K. Herber

Language Society in Africa: The theory and practice of socio-linguistic (1992) This bears a testimony that language and literature are the mirror of the nation that reflect on the social, political and economic conditions of the society. Therefore, language is used to articulate the socio-political conditions in African literature. Literature is always articulating the society's life experience.

In the past African literature was used as a vehicle towards achieving the political liberation and was used as a protest against the historical and political conditions under which the African people were living. Now the focus on language issue and African literature should take a new direction. Because of African Renaissance philosophy, African people are developing a sense of self-image and self-discovery. They want to see their indigenous languages spoken over the media and in public gatherings. The language issue affected every institution in South Africa. Commercial Banks, Insurance companies, Government department, Industries etc, have language services departments that deal with translation, editing, language practitioners, etc. All these efforts are carried out in recognition of African language and to promote multilingualism and language equity.

Currently the African literature is serving the purpose of transforming the society into accepting the African languages as official languages that can communicate message like English and Afrikaans. Therefore literature does not exist independently out of social, political and economic conditions of the society.

If really African people are proud of being Africans in the African continent, let African writers voice the grievances of the voiceless people who suffer without complaints because of tyranny of power. There is no freedom of expression in most of the African countries. Journalists have been arrested in Zimbabwe in the first week of February 2000 before the referendum concerning the rewriting of the Zimbabwean constitution was held. This depicts authoritarian chauvinism in the African countries. It is therefore necessary for the African Renaissance to address such problems that continue to afflict African sons and daughters. African Renaissance philosophy can't survive under these conditions. What is necessary in rebuilding African societies is to concentrate on essential issues such as the political aspects, social aspects, economic aspects and the cultural aspects.

African Renaissance as a post-apartheid philosophical concept and a post-independence ideology should not have a limited role. It is a philosophical concept which should promote human and race relations in Africa. It should condemn racial and ethnic discrimination in the African continent. African people should be governed by these noble principles if they want to resuscitate the spirit of humanity and to maintain their Africanness. Ethnic discrimination resulted in genocide in Burundi.

African Renaissance should strive to promote multicultural understanding among African people and to appreciate cultural differences. It should strive to achieve social equality and create harmonious race relations in the African continent. African people should appreciate the philosophy of cultural pluralism where diverse cultures of African people could contribute to a common cultural heritage. And what renders the African Renaissance as a myth is the way African people could contribute to a common cultural heritage. And what renders the African Renaissance as a myth is the way African people have devastated the spirit of brotherhood among themselves. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo which was formerly known as Zaire has plunged the entire African continent into a serious political cataclysm. Instead of solving the problems of the DRC amicably, several countries in the Great Lakes and the adjacent ones took a decision that created many problems than solving them. This is against the spirit of African Renaissance which is meant to unite African people. But instead of unity African political leaders are falling apart to create many problems against themselves and against their respective countries.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo claimed many lives of African people. This will have serious economic impacts on the countries involved in the conflict. The African Renaissance as a vehicle towards achieving African unity and Africa's economic viability is thwarted by conflict situation in the Great Lakes. Namibian forces and the Zimbabwean forces have been sent to DRC not as peace keepers, but as a force behind Laurent Kabila's military offensive against the rebels who also enjoyed military support from Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. All these wars tarnish all beautiful hopes about Africa's economic independence. African Renaissance is not just a concept to be entertained, but it should lead the way towards racial reconciliation. There is no other way that Africans can survive

peacefully in their continent unless African leaders refrain from declaring themselves life presidents dictators who want to rule without opposition. African Renaissance should give African countries direction, especially in policy making and should create an atmosphere conducive for peaceful political settlement of African disputes. It is really impossible and difficult to be proud of our Africanness whereas masses of innocent people are slaughtered every day under tyrannic and despotic leaders who care nothing about the well-being of fellow Africans. African Renaissance should revive the spirit of Ubuntu (Humanity) which has been Africa's heritage.

In his address to the 3rd African Renaissance Festival in Durban which was held on the 31st March 2001, the **City Press** quoted Inkatha Freedom Party president and Home Affairs Minister – Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi as saying:

“Traditional leadership was the cornerstone to maintaining the credibility of our pursuing our renaissance in a truly African fashion .”

It is true that the issue of African Renaissance would remain a myth if African traditions and customs remain suppressed by the colonial standards. Glorifying Western cultural values while undermining African cultural standards poses a threat to the blossoming philosophy of African Renaissance of which most of us do appreciate. Buthelezi further argued that it is better to forget about African Renaissance if African Renaissance is not structured in our indigenous African roots.

What Chief Buthelezi is asserting is true in the sense that denying ourselves the right to cherish Afrocentric values and customs is like denying African people the right to be real Africans. African people can't achieve cultural emancipation without the active role of traditional leaders, otherwise African people will remain objects of abuse and exploitation. Colonial mentality which alienate African people from their cultural values still exists in our post - apartheid South Africa. The ongoing attitude of self denial symbolised the essential dilemma of Africa's socio-cultural values and African Renaissance in particular.

Therefore, my objective in this research is to highlight my critical debate on language issue which as a result of private/multiracial schools in South Africa will

obstruct linguistic development of African languages. Like in the 70s during the apartheid rule when African children were coerced into speaking Afrikaans as the only medium of instruction of classroom, the private schools in South Africa are also engaged in the process of cultivating the imperial culture through their adoption of only English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction and denying African children the opportunity to learn in indigenous languages.

In support of my argument Pan South African Language Board stated in their **June 2000 Annual Report** (2000:22) that language in education should promote the development of previously marginalized language at all levels of education. They support education through the mother tongue to the highest level a right that should be available to speakers of all official/languages, not just English and Afrikaans.

Thiong'o in his book **Decolonising the Mind** (1986:4-5) asserts that the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe.

On the contrary, English and Afrikaans still serve as only medium of instruction at all private schools. Africans learners are encouraged to promote the imperial culture and are denied the rights to communicate in the mother tongue. From my point of view, all private schools and the institutions of high learning should be compelled by law to offer tuition in all official languages of the country in order to promote the idea of multilingualism., It is vital that African people should identify themselves with the African cultural values by defining themselves in terms of African languages and literature.

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Since language is a central question in postcolonial studies, Ngugi argues that a specific culture is not transmitted through language in its universality, but in its particularity as the language of specific community with a specific history. African writers and scholars are still maimed by linguistic hegemony of colonial legacy because in South Africa, for instance, any social and cultural function is communicated through the medium of English though the majority of African people cannot understand the language.

What Ngugi is asserting is that cultural imperialism will never come to an end if African people use foreign languages to revive their cultural heritage. I have realised also that the institutions of higher learning and multiracial schools in South Africa are still promoting the colonial legacy by undermining indigenous languages and African cultural values. Almost all multiracial schools in South Africa have only English as medium of instruction and few with Afrikaans as medium of instruction. There is no single multiracial school in South Africa where African language is used as medium of instruction although majority of learners are blacks.

Are the multiracial schools in South Africa, the agent of Anglisization, whereby the children of other racial groups are forced to learn the language of the master like during the colonial era? What about language equity and linguistic democracy if we really want to nurture the philosophy of African Renaissance in a post-apartheid South Africa? A multilingual society such as ours in South Africa is characterised by cross cultural values of which language is one of the components.

If the learners of other racial groups have difficulty in learning African languages, the African learners should also have difficulty in learning English and Afrikaans. There is urgent need to revolutionise the language issue in order to achieve Africa is cultural destiny. Neo-cultural imperialism which is being advocated by institutions of higher learning and multiracial schools is a threat to South Africa and its language policy.

If the language question is not addressed urgently in a constructive manner, the new breed of English speaking black generation would be born out of these learning institutions and consequently they (black generation) will regret for being black or African. What happened to Black Americans will also happen to us if precautionary measures are not taken against this new wave of cultural imperialism. For being linguistically marginalized and alienated, Afro-Americans have lost their cultural heritage which is rooted in Africa because of the English language they were forced to speak.

Having suffered from both cultural and linguistic alienation African people lost national identity and a number of them started associating themselves with Euro-American culture. During those dark days of human suffering African people who have been living with the legacy of colonialism hated their own cultures and defended the pernicious colonial policies of domination and oppression. The colonisers created false consciousness inside the minds and the hearts of African people so that they could accept the superiority of the white people. Thiong'o in his book **Moving the centre** (1993:88) asserts that:

“Under the colonial rule the native cultures were repressed, while through the school system other imported traditions were encouraged”

This comes to my point that I raised in saying that the learning institutions are the carriers of colonial cultures. For many years African people have been subjugated and confronted by evil forces of imperialist – colonial rule. The struggle between the two conflicting forces has been expressed in various ways including protest. Protest was inter alia carried out by African literature. African writing has become a powerful instrument in fighting and eradicating the social evils and the injustices of the imperialist – colonial rule which dominated every aspects of African life. African literature is used as a vehicle towards achieving social, political and cultural freedom. Due to colonial oppression and domination African people developed a sense of inferiority complex and a sense of self-denial.

But despite the influence of the imperialist –colonial propaganda, African writers emerged as a powerful force to restore the African image and encouraged African people to be proud of their Africanness. African writers have become the

mouthpiece of the oppressed voiceless people of Africa who suffered considerably from the trauma of colonialism. The ideological struggle between the oppressive forces of colonial regime and the progressive forces of cultural revolution is expressed in African literature. African literature is a protest literature which reflected oppression, and the agony of racial discrimination that dehumanised African people during the dark days of colonial dictatorship. Economic exploitation and cultural alienation have been met with resistance from African writers who championed the cause of African cultural emancipation, Negritude, Pan Africanism, African Nationalism, Black Consciousness and presently African Renaissance.

Of utmost importance in my research is language politics which dominated African literature during the liberation struggle and now. African people feel that the indigenous languages are marginalized and therefore, suffered a great deal of linguistic alienation. They want to promote African languages to the level of imperial languages. In South Africa, for instance, the new language policy was formed in order to promote the linguistic status of indigenous languages that have been previously marginalized. In 1976 during the Soweto uprising the language politics became a thorny issue that spread to the whole country. Black students protested against the use of Afrikaans as an official language of educational instruction in all black schools in South Africa. This point has been stressed by Robert K Herbert **Language and Society in Africa : The theory and practice of socio linguistics (1992)**. African people regarded Afrikaans as the language of apartheid regime and also the language of oppression. The saying that Afrikaans was regarded as the language of oppression is also emphasised by Michel Chapman, Southern African literature (1996:329). Although Afrikaans in Namibia was regarded as the language of oppression, Herbert (1992) stresses that Namibia failed to associate English with the evils of cultural imperialism. Although English is an imperial language than Afrikaans it has been regarded by SWAPO as the language of liberation.

In my view, it seems as if apartheid was more cruel than colonialism and imperialism though they have equally contributed to the decline of African languages and African cultural heritage. However, post-apartheid South Africa has made a good example in the African continent by declaring both the imperial

languages and the indigenous languages as the official language of democratic South Africa.

In South Africa there is a bill which was introduced to promote language equity and multilingualism and also to see that all South Africans irrespective of colour or race do enjoy the freedom to exercise their language rights. As such no language should be singled out as a medium of communication in any African society which is governed by democratic values.

Pan South African Language Board, National Languages Service and Langtag are behind the idea that all languages spoken in South Africa should enjoy equal treatment. Reagan, Timonthy (1988) was quoted in the National language services and Langtag report of 26 April 1995 as saying the "language struggle" has been a focus of disagreement through South African" educational history.

In my view, language question will not be resolved easily unless drastic measures are taken against the educational system operating in "model C" schools. My findings in all multiracial schools is the deliberate attempt by the multiracial schools to marginalize African languages and ultimately socialise indigenous language speaking learners into Euro-American culture. It is also necessary for the South African Broadcasting Corporation as a public broadcaster to take into consideration the language issue. Almost all programmes of SABC are in English with few in Afrikaans. Films and soapies are in English in all three channels of SABC and African people that constitute 70% of the South African population have an opportunity to view one or two dramas in few of the Afrikanerbond which appeared in the **Citizen** of 28 July 1999 said that:

"The time has perhaps come for South African children to be compelled to learn the language of other cultural groups at school"

Language question embraces African Renaissance which is a philosophical concept concerned with self discovery and socio-cultural revival of African people. Language is a fundamental aspect of African Renaissance. Without empowering African languages the philosophy of African Renaissance will become a myth and a time-wasting philosophy. Democracy is against any form of discrimination and it is fundamentally based on the principles of equality. So to discriminate against

other people's languages is undemocratic and it is therefore a violation of human rights. Therefore, since South Africa is committed to a philosophy of cultural and linguistic pluralism, it is stated in the draft report of the **Language Plan Task Group (LANGTEG)** that was submitted by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology, (June 16). In that report Joseph G Turi (1993:6) says there are two fundamental principles of language rights which are, "the principles of dignity of all language and the principles of equity of all languages".

What is important is to encourage African people to be proud of being Africans. According to the philosophy of Pan Africanism it is necessary to first decolonise African people from colonial mentality which viewed everything African as bad and uncivilised. According to Thiong'o (1986:2), culturally and socially most black professionals and academic adopted Western styles of living.

Of course, to speed up the process of African Renaissance the indigenous languages should be introduced in predominantly white schools so that no culture or language of any culture group should dominate others. Language as a social asset plays a pivotal role in the development and socialisation of society since it promotes the culture and the collective consciousness of a people. African people can't afford to live in constant fear of foreign domination. Something must be done to liberate African people from tyranny of colonial mentality. Thapelo J Selepe in his article " (**SAJAL, 1997 17(3) p.139-142**) argues that:

Language carries with it the people's consciousness and culture which are informed by, among others, recurrent social, political, economic, religious and other social phenomena.

This shows that African Renaissance would not materialise if African people feel ashamed of speaking indigenous languages in public gathering like our politicians who prefer to use imperial languages when addressing African problems that concern African people.

The detrimental effect of colonial languages on black Americans and Africans as a whole left them in the wilderness of cultural dilemma. Since language and culture are mutually dependent, African languages should be taught at all learning institutions in order to allow African scholars to pursue their culture and to curb the

spread of neo-cultural imperialism which is rooted at African Universities and multiracial schools.

Therefore whenever one looks at post-colonial literature, language emerges as instrument of cultural protest. African literature reveals that the language problem has also to conflict among the African scholars regarding the definition of African (cf. Amuta, 1989; Ngara, 1985 and Selepe, 1993). There are on the one hand those that have as yet not seen the dawn of the day-the incorrigible ones, that still regard colonial languages as the only prestigious medium of communication in post-colonial Africa and post-apartheid South Africa. On the other hand there are those who have begun to address African concerns from the African perspective and are well poised to consider, among others, African Renaissance as one of the vehicles towards achieving cultural emancipation. By betting the right horse the latter have laid a firm foundation towards the cultural emancipation of African literature from the claws of the Western imperialism.

In conclusion it might help to give a clear picture about the culture aspects of African people and to enable them to define the cultural space and to force identity among human societies. People behave different in terms of space and time. During the colonial period to identify with Europe and pay allegiance to European philosophy. Post-colonial period it was considered good brought new critical thinking and colonial mentality was attacked from all direction by African people.

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