

## The Textual and Interpretive Study of Folk Sayings and Songs in M.A. Blose and C.T. Msimang's Plays

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**ABSTRACT** This is both textual and interpretive study of the selected indigenous expressions, namely, the proverbs and idioms as well as the traditional songs as they are spontaneously used in two selected dramatic texts. A play is interlinked language development, because of connotative and denotative meanings. Moreover, a significant part of language learning and development comes through the interaction between the people. The feedback given by the dialogue in a play gives a two-way communication which is a meaningful conversation. Drama is the metaphorical representation of concepts, ideas and persons in conflict. Each participant is either imaginatively projecting himself into identity, character and unique self through enactment or empathizing with others doing so. The dramatic action is constructed, organized and designed for real time and space. It demands physical, thoughtful and conceptual involvement in order to be effective. It yields fresh ideas into the human condition. The selected indigenous expressions and songs are accurately reflecting the African roots, trends and situations. They pronounce the behavioral norms and directives. They communicate the awareness of broad educational skills, performance benchmark and aesthetic values which are necessary for entire life.

### INTRODUCTION

It is noted that life as it is, becomes drama because of proficiency and learning. It comes not only from reading, viewing and listening, but from actions that are performed in theatre. Drama is more often a result of spontaneous and creative endeavor which displays free interest than compulsion and forced application. The theatrical performer is responsible for the performance. Theatrical acting is the artistic enhancement of human action which expresses the arguable dynamics of the thinking and feeling of the characters represented. Performance consists of human actions in the external world that create a dramatic meaning. Drama with all its constituents is significant to the public, since it refines, purifies and revitalizes human beings, and reassures them against anxiety and solitude. Drama is the expression of thoughts or the external representation of what takes place internally. In all the performers, it is inclusive of the aesthetic, productive, cognitive, and psychomotor and all the aspects of our inner life.

The dramatic performances become realistic and socially accepted when there is a satisfactory setting. The first theatres in the history of drama were open air, but later the indoor theatres were improvised for more opportunities on

elaborate scenery. It is a construction of an amphitheater or circular with the audience in the central area that focuses on the performers and performance.

Kempe and Nicholson (2007: 1) put forth this notion:

*Play is an important element of children's learning and although it may be enhanced by teachers, most children do not have to be taught to play. However, drama also has an aesthetic dimension, is associated with artistic practice and has significance in a diversity of cultural contexts.*

Their assertion concentrated on didactic nature of play as it touches learners and educators. More emphasis is on functional perspective in the entire play.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is employed to work as a guideline that will help to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. Research methodology provides a description of the precise techniques to be used, the measuring instruments to be utilised and sequence of activities to be carried out in making the measurement (Babbie 2010).

The textual method is used in this study by considering the two plays as primary sources: *Uqomisa Mina Nje Uqomisa Iliba*, (You are courting me indeed, you are courting a grave) and *Izulu Eladuma ESandlwana*, (The thunderstorm that thundered on iSandlwana Hill). The interpretative approach is used to select and interpret the idioms, proverbs and songs.

## THE TEXTUAL AND INTEPRETIVE STUDY

### The Indigenous Expressions

Some of the indigenous expressions that are highlighted for the study are proverbs and idioms. Both proverbs and idioms are logical and intellectual concepts that are based on meanings. Proverbs are easily learned and comprehended by the person who is a speaker of the language. Most idioms are learned without any difficulty, because they tend to be more literal than figurative. They are both folk sayings that are significantly noted for their symbolic functions, connotative and contextual meanings. The history and cultural practices of the people are embedded in folk sayings.

### The Proverbs

Guma (1983: 65) gave the following definition: *A proverb is a pithy sentence with a general bearing on life. It serves to express some home-ly truth of moral lesson in such an appropriate manner as to make one feel that no better words could have been used to describe the particular situation.*

Mthethwa (2014: 162) upheld the following assertion about proverbs:

*Kujula kwelulwimi kubonakala etageni. Taga tingumgogodla welulwimi. Tiyindlela yekufundzisa likhono nebugagu enkhulumeni yeluntfu.*

*(The connotative language is evident in proverbs. They are the backbone of the language. They are a method of teaching techniques and oratory in human dialogue discourse).*

The scholar viewed proverbs in a functional perspective by concentrating on their significance in a language.

Despite the fact that we come to drama with the sense of human being in external or physical

action before our eyes, language plays a major role to make the action efficient and meaningful. The language of drama involves many witty phrases which elevate the dramatic speech. In Blose's drama, the same proverbs are used in different situations and contexts by King Cetshwayo and Nontombi respectively:

*Itshe limi ngothi!*

(Blose 2004: 23; 40)

*(The stone stands by the stick!)*

King Cetshwayo refers to Mehlokazulu and his associates' deeds for precipitating the Anglo-Zulu battle, while Nontombi uses it to refer to her love complications. Nontombi points out that the fact that her parents and other members of the highest council know about their affair, will lead them to total destruction. She suspects that Maqanda will not reap the fruits of his labour. She senses that their love ties will ultimately be described as totally futile because of the antagonistic force building up against them.

In Msimang's drama, Sontinge an army commander utters this expression:

*... ikhotha eyikhothayo, engayikhothi*

*Iyayikhahlela*

(Msimang 1979:40)

*(... it licks the one which licks it, the one that does not lick it, it kicks it).*

Sontinge is remarking on the hospitality and the mutual help that is expected from friends. He clearly illustrates the idea of reciprocity. One helps the one who helps him. The army commanders discuss the adverse conditions that are facing their country. It is an informal gathering of patriots, namely, Sontinge, Magemfu and Macala. They express their dismay and dissatisfaction to the Natal Government which has demonstrated the disloyal behavior and untrustworthiness against their kingdom. They openly lament the Natal Government's hypocrisy in their behavior and manner of dealing with them.

In Msimang's drama, King Cetshwayo expresses his feelings about Mehlokazulu's issue and invites more ideas, opinions and suggestions from the regiments' officials. Mehlokazulu, an army commander, transgressed to attack the camps of co-patriots. He says that:

*... injobo ithungelwa ebandla ...*

*Msimang 1979:28)*

*(... the tail-strip is sewn on in the assembly ...)*

He indirectly suggests that knowledge, experience and advice are acquired from other people. We discover the type of relationship and

rapport that the king has with his people. His good disposition and moral nature through the proverb used is observed. Proverbs occupy a special position in cultural and social life, because they merge the individual into the social and customary patterns of the nation. They bring about artistic expression, concentration and conciseness. The proverbial construction is ever didactic, rigid and static.

### Idioms

Cuddon (1984: 321) defined idiom as:

*A form of expression, construction or phrase peculiar to a language and often possessing a meaning other than its grammatical or logical one.*

Guma (1983: 67) gave the following definition:

*Idioms are witty and humorous expressions which are connected with a particular phrase, but which are not as staid and dignified as proverbs.*

Many idioms are mainly concerned with action, instruction and deliberation rather than a symbolic representation of truth. They are not static in nature because of their semantic and structural constructions. Their change depends upon the syntactic constructions of parts of speech.

In Blose's drama, *Qhathizwe* maintains that:

... *iNkosi ... izulelwa amaqe.*

(Blose 2004: 14)

(... *the vultures are vagrant for the King's life*)

The idiom is derived from *ukuzulelwa amaqe*, where a substantive is preceded by an infinitive. In this case there is a structural pattern which is susceptible and inclined to slight modification within the basic pattern. It is an idiom which is based on a carnivorous bird that is ever dangerous and destructive. *Qhathizwe* reports that the king is faced with the adverse situation from the Natal Government because of land disputes. He experiences affliction and misery which will cause permanent enmity between the two nations. The quoted idiom summarizes the dynamic situation within the country and the diversity of social systems which trigger the action in the play. The idiom depicts the differences that prevail between the two nations because of modes of operations, culture and goals.

In Blose's drama, *Qhathizwe*, the head of an administrative area, remarks that the life of the King is at stake because the vultures are coming around. The vultures are the big birds that are known for eating flesh. They are savage, ferocious and ruthless. Their viciousness nature makes people afraid of them. They represent destruction and death. In the drama they stand for the antagonistic group. They represent the elements of callousness, cruelty and ruthlessness that disrupt the social order and disturb the balances of life.

In Blose's drama, *Maqanda*, a suitor, questions Notombi:

... *noyihlo angaze athathe izinyathelo ezinzima?*

(Blose 2004:16)

(... *even your father could take the drastic steps?*)

The idiom, *athathe izinyathelo* (to take steps), makes the question more meaningful. It is derived from *ukuthatha izinyathelo*, where an infinitive is followed by a substantive. It is a phrasal pattern which is not rigid in form. *Maqanda* points out that their unlawful love affair will end in their execution and that elopement is, therefore, the only solution to their problems.

In Msimang's drama, *Sontinge* convincingly tells other commanders as follows:

... *umbuso kaZulu uzulelwa amaqe.*

(Msimang 1979: 4)

(... *the vultures are vagrant for the Zulu kingdom.*)

The same idiom is used in both plays emphasizing the nature of the king's life and the Zulu kingdom respectively. His contention is that the Natal Government uses crafty tricks to outwit the Zulus. To reply upon their imposed laws, culture and false promises will misdirect their struggle and the misfortunes will result as an outcome.

We find Mnyamana encouraging the king to wait for Somtsewu's decisions. He enthusiastically utters that his promises shall be fulfilled. The Zulus are going to feel comforted and live a luxurious life in their own county without any interference.

... *balime basenge, bakhombe ngophakathi.*

(Msimang 1979: 3)

(... *they will cultivate, milk and point with the middle finger.*)

The cited expression is an idiom which means a very comfortable life. It is used to height-

en the effect like all other idiomatic expressions. We observe dynamism in idiomatic forms where we view them syntactically, for example: *ba-* is the subjective concord which is looked at in relation to the subject which is *abantu* (people). *Ukhomba* or to point is an infinitive form which is described by the word *ngophakathi*.

In Msimang's drama, Sontinge idiomatically says that:

... *inkukhu inqunywe umlomo*  
(Msimang 1979: 45)  
(... *the fowl has its beak cut.*)

He indirectly reacts to the decisions that are taken by the Natal Government in connection with Sihayo, the head of an administrative area and his son. He feels that the decisions are uncalled for. The decisions come as a shock to all the officials. Sontinge fails to comment on that situation. He then likens himself to as *inkukhu* or the fowl – a rubbish heap digger – an animal which has a short life span.

The idiomatic expressions are widely used in both plays to bring about the poetic diction. Only the idiomatic expressions that overlap and repeated in both plays are singled out for discussion and looked at the similarities and divergences in syntactic construction and meaning. The idiomatic construction varies according to the structural patterns in most dramatic discourse.

### Songs

Krige (1968: 336) stated the following:

*The Zulus are fond of music and dancing songs play an important part in the life, not only of the individual, but also of the community as a whole.*

She further advocated that the Zulus are a singing nation. Songs are important in maintaining the sense of group solidarity. They are intended to give aesthetic satisfaction because of their well-selected words and rhythm. Songs are often used for recording special events, such as memorable battles, successful hunts and the achievements of important individuals.

It must be realized and appreciated that words of songs are linked in African society, not only with harmonic music, but with actions as well. The songs are the dramatic activities which allow the individuals to come to terms with their joy, cultural practice and experiences. They explore their environments, minds and imagina-

tions. They subconsciously control the pace and rhythm of performances.

They are regarded as the wide-ranging and in-depth survey of mankind's attitude and values towards life in general. They depict the understanding of the human world. Their content and messages are serving as reliable sources and records of the times.

### The Love Songs

The songs that appear in both plays, share the theme of love. They are love songs which are sung by love-sick girls, thinking and fantasizing about their lovers. These are the dramatic type of songs which provide a background of rhythmically flowing speech. In Blose's drama, Nontombi melodiously sings this song:

*Ikheth' emthandayo*  
*Mbangi zobhicela nhlanye.*  
*Inkos' ikhomb' uDlokwe*  
*INgcugce yenqaba; ucu kalulingani;*  
*Zintombi nashis' izwe neqa izwi leNkosi.*  
(Blose 2004: 5),  
(*She chooses the one she loves*  
*Rivals in courtship will find it difficult to cope*

*The king has pointed at Dlokwe*  
*The iNgcugce regiment has refused; the bead string does not fit;*  
*Girls you burn the land by transgressing the king's command.)*

In Blose (2004: 47) Tholakele, a minor character, sings only three lines to clarify that Nontombi has fallen in love with Maqanda, therefore, Mfelandawonye has got no chance of proposing love to her. Nontombi's song has a specific love message that is put forth. The first line establishes that any girl has got a right to choose her life partner, without being influenced by any other person. The second line says that only one was accepted as a lover. She greatly gains confidence and self-assurance in as far as her decision is concerned.

In Msimang's drama, Hleziphi a one-dimensional character boldly sings her love song as follows:

*Ngibambeni ngibambeni bomama!*  
*Ngibambeni ngibambeni bakithi!*  
*Nakho ngimuka nemoya bomama!*  
*Nakho ngimuka nemoya bakithi!*  
*Wagibel' elimhlophe ngamthanda,*  
*Wagibel' elimnyama ngamthanda,*  
*Wagibel' elinsundu ngamthanda,*

*Wagibel' elibomvu ngamthanda,  
 Wab' uyath' uyahleka kwamfanela,  
 Wab' uyath' uyakhuluma kwamfanela,  
 Wab' uyath' uyathula ngamthanda.  
 (Msimang 1979: 32)  
 (Catch me! Catch me! Mothers!  
 Catch me! Catch me! Countrymen!  
 There I am blown away by wind mothers!  
 There I am blown away by wind countrymen!  
 When riding on the white one I loved him,  
 When riding on the black one I loved him,  
 When riding on the dark brown one I loved him,  
 When riding on the red one I loved him,  
 When trying to laugh it suits him,  
 When trying to speak it suits him,  
 When trying to keep quite I loved him.)*

She expresses her love with a song. She appears to overcome nostalgia. She loudly expresses how she loves Washesha. Her love song depicts spontaneity and freshness in its form. The initial word repetition pattern of the following lines is 1-2, which are verbs; 3-4, are demonstrative pronouns and 5-11 are verbs. The terminative repetition of the following lines 1 and 3 are nouns; 2 and 4 possessives; 5-8 and 11, are verbs and 9-10, verbs. It is a pure form of art which has three to four words in each line to bring about the equilibrium in rhythm and rhyme. The songs too, are of great significances because they are fertile seeds for dramatic activity. They are the means of stirring the emotions of love. The difference is that the first song is sung by Nontombi, who is the character of the main plot in Bloese's drama, while the latter by Hleziphi, the character of the sub-plot in Msimang's drama. The song reveals the ethical atmosphere, clean and pure language.

#### *The War Songs*

They are splendid harmonious songs that are sung slowly and in strongly marked rhythm accompanied by earth-shaking stamping of feet and spears struck on shields. The example of war cry is only found in Msimang's drama, when Mehlokazulu leads the warriors:

*Mehlokazulu : He ...be!  
 Mabutho : Usuthu!  
 Mehlokazulu : He ...be!  
 Mabutho : Usuthu!  
 Mehlokazulu : Mina! Mina! Mina!  
 Mabutho : Awusinikel' abafo!  
 (Msimang 1979: 58)*

*Mehlokazulu : Shouted severly!  
 Mabutho : Usuthu!  
 Mehlokazulu : Shouted severly!  
 Mabutho : Usuthu!  
 Mehlokazulu : Take it! Take it! Take it!  
 Mabutho : Hand over the destitute men  
 to us.*

The king as the head of the nation occupies a position of outstanding right and authority. He is, however, a symbol of unity and the central figure. Mehlokazulu, the army commander shouts a regimental cry. The warriors respond by shouting and striking the sticks together. Ultimately, the warriors appeal to the King, pleading for permission to fight against their enemies. He is a ruler, guardian of law and leader in war. He is greatly revered and treated with a good deal of outward respect.

#### *The Traditional Native Song*

The song that is sung by Ntshingwayo is evidently a traditional national song as the playwright plainly states "... *amabutho ahube ihubo lesizwe.*" (The warriors sing the native song):

*Ntshingwayo : Uzithulel' uzithulele!  
 Mabutho : Bayamaqal' okuNdaba!  
 Ntshingwayo : OkaNdaba uzithulele!  
 Mabutho : Engaqali muntu!  
 (Msimang 1979: 58)  
 (Ntshingwayo He is quiet, quiet!  
 Mabutho : They provoke the son of Ndaba!  
 Ntshingwayo : The son of Ndaba is quiet!  
 Mabutho: He is not provoking any person!*

Ntshingwayo, an army commander is one of the special officials, acting as an intermediary between the king and the nation. The song is a special way of saluting the King whose status is elevated to an almost godlike eminence. The members of the nation bow before him in humble adoration and obeisance. The king is the only person who has the right to convene the meeting. He is the person who is expected to carry out the different duties and obligations. Therefore, the songs are a tribute to him. They are irrefutably at the centre of both the leisure and obligatory lives in the Zulu society. They are the intellectual and the sensual expressions that are developing creativity in the nation, though they exist on a spontaneous level in the dramatic art.

The traditional songs that are widely appearing in Msimang's drama are those depicting the

following: war, national and love. They form an integral part of the traditional poetic heritage. Only love songs appear in Blose's drama to enhance the theme of love. Songs are essentially intimate and subjective as they depict joy, sorrow, aspirations and hopes of the individuals with no conscious attempt at being either elaborate or detailed.

### RESULTS

The researcher observed that both proverbs and idioms share literal and figurative meanings. They are folk sayings that are structurally constructed and function at various situations. Proverbs have fixed form, while idioms are ever changing because of their syntactical constructions. They share various themes and meanings. It is further noted that proverbs are metaphorical in nature. A metaphor can be used to make an abstract idea more real or concrete. In order to understand why or how a metaphor is effective, the researcher needs to establish a connection between the different things or entities that are linked. It is regarded as the most important figure of speech used in folk sayings because it enriches the language.

The songs that are highlighted in the study are characterized by variety of themes, personal and subjective messages as well as the lyric flavor. They are the records of the times and people's perception about specific thematic events. The love songs depict poetic techniques such as initial, medial and terminative linking, parallelism and rhymes. The war songs are always accompanied by actions, rhythm, high pitched voices and refrains that punctuate the leader's words. Most war songs are made-up of predicates and ideophones to fully depict the actions. They are compositions that are characterized by rhythmic effect and the imaginative interpretation of the situation. They are traditional in nature and display originality and enchanting atmosphere. Their content, themes and messages are depicting orality, stylistic diversities and heightened language.

### DISCUSSION

Blose's drama climaxes in unhappy disaster because the major characters, Nontombi and Maqanda are confronted by a tragic flaw. Death is their ultimate end. Msimang's drama has a

pleasing resolution in that King Cetshwayo, the protagonist and his nation emerge triumphant over the opposing force. The two plays have all dramatic qualities necessary for successful plays because they are literary works suitable for theatrical performance. Their aims do not lie in adherence to the traditional life, but rather in the presentation of the historical facts, incidences and personae for dramatic purposes.

There are no kinetic and social barriers involved in theatrical participation. It gives exultation and exuberance to achieve goals if dramatic performance is understood by the audience. It gives the possibility for free expressions and communication through the physical skills. It acts as an incentive to other modes of learning, providing a condition which gives group cohesion, didactic value and refined linguistic discourse. The audience should feel directly involved in, or feel that they are watching and learning something that is happening in their midst, not that they are observers of stage show. Drama is a teaching and learning tool of other subjects because it evokes pleasure to make them more satisfying and meaningful in the eyes of individuals. Any numerical or statistical problems can be dramatized to make them more interesting and comprehensive. Similarly, historical events can be dramatized to make them fresh in our minds and bring forth the dramatic realities.

It is an art form that explores human tension, conflicts, dialogue and actions. It is a communal experience which focuses on the corporate rather than the individual feelings and response. Theatrical production is a revolutionary form or art that serve as the catalyst, guide and mirror of social change. Makhanya (2009) gave more information on various folk sayings, namely, *tibhimbi* (ceremonial), *timphi* (war) and *umgidvo* (dance) songs. They are characterized by strong rhythm, stamping of feet and special messages. Their dramatic nature reveals the significance of the theatre, audience and performers.

### CONCLUSION

The indigenous expressions that are selected for discussions are proverbs and idioms. The proverbs add semantic meaning, stylistic variations and taste to both literary works. They depict the wisdom, observation and reflections of the tradition and cultural practices of the nation. They enrich a language and keeps it alive en-

downing it with the wealth of experiences, witty expressions and the depth of thought. The proverbs are the short pithy sayings which are didactic, metaphorical and allegorical in nature. The idioms are form of expressions which are peculiar to language and approved by usage, although their meanings depend on the syntactical variations and logical signification. Songs develop the plot, characters and themes of the plays because they are meaningful and significant in the overall structural and semantic patterns. Responses to songs are personal and societal as they are original creations that have a message that is transmitted to all who listen to them. Songs are known as a voice of the entire nation. The metaphoric language plays an important role to express the ideas and ideals. The imaginative passion and analogic expression are fully delineated in these songs. It is evident that most selected songs depict meanings, themes and messages.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to note that language discourse plays a vital role in drama, therefore, more attention on vocabulary, phraseology and communication is needed. The plays encourage the growth of self-discipline, creative thought and positive self-image. They fulfill the role of conversation and as a force contributing to man's spiritual well-being in his social adjustment and the acquisition for an understanding of self in relation to others. They enable an individual to

cope with adverse situation which is beyond our conscious comprehension and serve as art of leisure, recreation and amusement. A greater understanding of the play's nature and potential as a means of human inquiry lies in their educational values and implications which must be thoroughly examined. Drama as a genre ought to be included in the formal school curriculum. Drama has its characteristic methods, aims and basic ways of working. Its autonomy should not neglect its effective use as a way of teaching and learning other subjects.

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