

Senghor's Poems: Portrayal of Life in Diversity

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Abstract: African poems which amply represent multidimensional cultures, heritages and lively people come to Bangladeshi readers very little as most of the readers here receive them through the western view. But it is time to approach toward African poems where readers can find out the truth of life with unfolded variety. Through these poems it would be noticeable that life can be observed with the continuous process of multipurpose. Amalgamation of struggle and yielding is superbly reflected where each line shows fabulous visual imagery. The poet Leopold Sedar Senghor mentioned in this paper reveals candid voice by his own feelings with personal experiences. For recognizing African literature and culture it is of great use to read Senghor's poems, especially 'Black Woman'. Another name of Senghor's poems is the multiplex of human spontaneous life which the Africans experience most. The present paper will offer the splendor of Senghor's poems that is cherished by its authenticity.

Keywords: Diversity, spontaneity, culture, poetry

INTRODUCTION

African poems are those phenomena by which human mind gets living, rationalism and exemption. History, culture, and tradition cannot exist without human beings. African poems reflect an ever-expanding scope of African voices with greater social, cultural and generational diversity. Through these poems, the historical, political and cultural dynamics of indigenous Africa are contextualized with the help of its multidimensional forms of expression including songs, rhythm, rhymes, verses and dances.

Leopold Sedar Senghor (1906-2001), a Senegalese poet and the first president of Senegal, is distinguished as a creative writer who stands for beauty of blackness (Negritude). He has expressed human art of his culture through his poetry. He can draw his thinking about his land and people by his speeches like William Blake and also like Bangladeshi poet Jibanananda Das. His poems are much more flourished with the use of different symbols. Critic Michael Roberts (1934) mentions Senghor's poetry as having "Consciousness, beliefs, emotions and usages".

DIVERSITY IN SENGHOR'S POEMS AND THE PORTRAYAL OF AMPLE PICTURE OF AFRICAN LIFE

African poems advocate towards the world an optimistic view which is quite identical with African culture. "*Femme Noire*" (1945) ("Black Woman"), the most remarkable poem by Senghor, shows the vivid imagery and symbol of nationality of its people who create their existence and presence through feelings and experience. Sedar Senghor recreates history by a new vision of blackness in his poem, "Black Woman". Diversity of this poem is its strength and knot in a harmony.

"New York" (1956), Senghor's another wonderful poem, represents his tactful intellectuality which makes the dimension of thinking about life and fact. He depicts in it the city of New York as a lifeless artificial beauty having 'blue metallic eyes' (Senghor, 1991, 87) in contrast with the natural beauty of

Africa 'teeming with sounds and ritual colors/ And outrageous smells' (Senghor, 1991, 88). As human life always goes into a parallel way, here the contrasting features of life and lifelessness is displayed. Lyricism of his poems shows his wisdom in one word.

According to German critic Jahn (1968), African poetry always represent contextual expression; instead of expressing the individual self, it expresses something else, the context. In this regard, Chinua Achebe (1984) indicates that African culture and heritage cannot be marked by the emptiness of the primitive age. It is their very existence that equips them with the opportunity to flourish though the progress is slow and time consuming. This exploration of the African life makes Senghor legend to recreate myth.

Through African poems the scenario of the culture which they belong and experience seems to be mysterious to other people. It is because of the shortage of knowledge in their sense of life and multiplex of cultural view. The poet utters so passionately-

Naked Woman, Black Woman
Clothed with your colour which is life,
With your form which is beauty! (BÂ, 1973, p.190)

"Listen to the far beating of
your nocturnal heart, rhythm
And blood of the drum, drum and
blood and drum." (BÂ, 1973, p.249)

Here, connection between life and land is reflected. Images of life spread near Nature by which people can breathe. Putting emphasis on human life through different aspects, Senghor's poems show nationalism as it is depicted communally. His thinking and action advocates African spirit into harmony.

"Your solemn Contralto voice is the
Spiritual song of the Beloved." (BÂ, 1973, p.190)

"Delights of the mind, the glinting of red
gold against your watered skin.
Under the shadow of your hair, my care
Is lightened by the neighboring suns of your eyes." (BÂ, 1973, p.190)

SENGHOR'S NEGRITUDE AND DIVERSE SIMPLICITY OF AFRICAN PEOPLE

About Negritude movement, it mostly emphasizes on African people and culture through the diversified poetry to spread out across the nation. Speakers always try to convey the message of their pride bearing such spontaneous feelings and also of African culture. They flourish aestheticism in a new mode on their own way where in every poem rhetorical utterance is found cogently. Nothing can change that power of deep-rooted feelings which is spontaneous and only by his poems reader can apprehend this. The foundation for this thought-provoking naturalness and simplicity comes from the poetry of Negritude, a movement whose archetypal poem is Senghor's "*Femme noire*" ("Black Woman"). Feelings are lively which is revealed by the voice of the poet-

Naked woman, black woman,
I sing your beauty that passes, the form
that I fix in the Eternal,
Before jealous fate turn you to ashes to
feed the roots of life." (BÂ, 1973, p.190)

The awareness of the root is undoubtedly remarkable through these speeches. Tradition is much connected to Nature which gives them a life full of rhythm and music. People of Africa who are represented by Senghor's poems are truly civilized. They are not biased by supercilious instincts. They celebrate their life and own identity as human being with a superior soul that has authenticity. People carry old memories in their 'gene'. According to him:

“When I was born, I was black,
 When I grew up, I was black,
 When I am in the sun, I am black,
 When I am sick, I am black,
 When I die, I will be black.”... (“Who is the Colored Man?”, 1991, line: 2-6)

He is considered as a champion of Negro cultural values. Boldness of his voice and values is more remarkable. His political and literary careers were inextricably linked. He wrote poems of resistance in French which engaged his catholic spirituality even as they celebrated his Senegalese heritage. Senghor cofounded, with Aime Cesaire, “The Negritude Movement” which promotes distinctively African cultural values and aesthetics, in opposition to the influence of French colonialism and European exploitation. He utters in “Prayer to the Masks” (1945):

“Masks! Oh Masks!
 Black masks, red masks, you black and white masks-” (BÂ, 1973, p.196)

His poetry is displayed both in rhythmic and stylistic strength. To him, the poetic image does not impose any effect on the Africans unless it has the rhythmic value in which the whole sense, flesh and spirit are incorporated to create a unifying completeness.

In another point, Senghor’s “Elegie pour la Reine de Saba” (1976) which is especially for Queen of Sheba has placed a grand platform for introducing the African mind. This elegy aspires for wanting of a black princess that reminds us of the Negritude poetry in various aspects which advocate more lyrical inspiration than the characteristics of “Chants d’ombrde” (1945). According to Janice Spleth (2002) the substance is- “...an invocation of the kingdom of childhood that period in the poet’s life when he had yet to be exposed to western ideas and when he lived his negritude without mediation. It is to that mythic time and space that he returns to find the elusive Black Woman who is the inspiration for his song.” (66)

He prefers here the ‘directness’ towards other people, because of his attachment to land and nature as well as strong sense of life. His poetry brings knot and unifying mode more closely to readers. He thinks and delivers his awareness through various poems. Nationalism is revealed within his thought throughout his most of the poems. He draws other’s attention by indicating that it is obligatory to create a new man and a new humanism on the African land.

Senghor’s thought about African poetry is that African surrealism is not the same as European one rather it is mystical and metaphysical. Vital forces of life encourage to animate the world. It is because of the effectiveness of awakening and echoing in the mind. Senghor himself says that poetry must be restored to its origin, to the time when it was sung and danced, as it was in Greece, in Israel and especially in the Egypt of the pharaohs, as it is to-day-in Africa. Rhythm and the expression of being is the concerning thing in African poetry.

CONCLUSION

Cultural liberation is a prominent phenomenon in African poetry. It is because African traditional sculpture, music, dancing, literature and philosophy have an identical form which is going to be recognized wonderfully. That African art has its own ground and strength is proved by African writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and so on all over the world. Throughout various tribes it is strongly expressed as ‘My Africa’, the unity of mind. It is because of the connectivity with nature which indicates diversity of life but not superficial.

African poetry gets complete form with the touch of Senghor’s intellectuality. Every part of the world will be unfulfilled without knowing their perception which is broadly found in poems of Senghor who has written cogently on everything from music to metaphysics, from politics to religion. A sense of nationalism based on harmony of human unity is present throughout his various poems. Experiences and memories are re-animated by the witness of profound reality which is much modern than Anglo-American poetry. That is why, African poetry is precious. His poetry is not a constructive object in

modern time but representative of Africa and his community, like a mediator between primitive and modern poet. And so, he stands for his past, present and future people through his spontaneous poems.

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