



Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*: A Mirror Of African Identity In A Post-Imperial World

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Abstract:-

Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964) written as a parable and a quest narrative, explores the political and social resonances of an individual's search for the spiritual self. "The Voice" sets in an African society that presents the postcolonial structure of Nigerian Society. The novel promotes and celebrates the African culture, post imperialism, theme of hypocrisy, theme of moral decadence and materialism, theme of fear. The study of "The Voice" not only celebrates African heritage but also urges readers to recognize and reclaim their cultural roots, making it a timeless reflection on identity and tradition.

Introduction:-

Gabriel Okara's poem "The Voice" is generally set in the context of mid-20th century Nigeria, reflecting the period of post-colonial transition. *The Voice* is a poem about listening to the inner voice, which represents the wisdom, values, and culture of the past. The poem shows a struggle between traditional African ways and modern Western influences. Okara uses the character Okolo to show how people are often confused by modern life but can find guidance by listening to the "voice" of their heritage. The poem deals with the conflict between traditional African values and Western influence, which was a major theme in Nigeria and other African countries around the 1950s–1960s.

Poetic technique:-

In 'The Voice', Gabriel Okara uses imagery, symbolism, and repetition to highlight the wisdom of the ancestral voice. His tone is reflective, and his simple yet powerful diction makes the poem meaningful. By contrasting traditional African values with modern influences, Okara emphasizes the importance of cultural roots and moral guidance.

Post imperialism:-

In 'The Voice', Okolo represents a person in post-imperial Nigeria, struggling between traditional African values and Western influence. The "voice" of his ancestors guides him, symbolizing wisdom, morality, and cultural heritage. Okolo's inner conflict shows the post-colonial struggle of identity, reflecting how people are often confused by modern changes yet need to remember and respect their roots. Through his experience, Okara emphasizes the importance of cultural continuity, moral guidance, and the preservation of African traditions in a changing world.

Promoting and celebrating the African culture:-

Gabriel Okara celebrates African culture by emphasizing the value of indigenous wisdom and traditions. The poem shows that the ancestral voice carries knowledge, moral guidance, and the essence of African identity. Through the imagery and symbolism of the "voice," Okara encourages people to honor their roots, respect elders, and uphold cultural practices. The poem promotes pride in African heritage and conveys that true understanding and personal growth come from connecting with one's cultural past.

The theme of hypocrisy:-

Gabriel Okara explores hypocrisy through the conflict between what people say and what they truly believe or practice, which is so pervasive and dominant in the text as every character's thought, action or utterance is shrouded in naked hypocrisy where it is shown a conflict between Satan and angel of light. The poem contrasts the honest, guiding voice of tradition with the false or superficial behaviors influenced by Western or modern ways. People may appear polite or knowledgeable but ignore moral values and cultural wisdom, creating a gap between appearance and reality. This theme highlights how abandoning one's roots can lead to pretense, moral confusion, and loss of authenticity.

The theme of moral decadence and materialism:-

The theme of moral decadence and materialism is also very prominent in the poem, which is closely related to the theme of hypocrisy where Okolo is hated and rejected in both societies in the sense that he preaches moral discipline and sanity which are contrary to the entrenched social order.

The theme of fear:-

It is also very prominent in Okara's "The Voice". The ample evidence that fear plays a pivotal role in determining human action and it is the evidence to the 'darkness' that persuades in the entire society in precipitated by fear. Thus it could be established even the ultimate tragedy in the poem.

Conclusion:-

'The Voice', Gabriel Okara highlights post-imperialism, cultural identity, hypocrisy, moral decadence, and fear. Through Okolo and the ancestral voice, he stresses the importance of listening to tradition, preserving African culture, and upholding moral values. The poem's imagery, symbolism, repetition, and reflective tone reinforce its message, urging readers to reconnect with their roots and embrace cultural wisdom.

Key words: - post-imperialism, cultural identity, hypocrisy, moral decadence, and fear, African culture, upholding moral values, embrace cultural wisdom.