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TREATMENT OF DREAM THEME IN LANGSTON HUGHES POETRY

SANTOSHKUMAR.M. PATIL

H.O.D. English V.N. A.S.C.CollegeShahada
Dist- Nandurbar

Abstract:

*“Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before”*

Edgar Allen Poe

Langston Hughes is one of the most legendary names in the history of modern American and African-American literature. He was also called as an innovator of the new literary form i.e Jazz Poetry. Hughes is also known for his work during the movement of 'HarlemRenaissance'. During this period, black literature began to rise in New York City. The Harlem Renaissance was “a state of mind rather than a concrete movement or even a creative community.” (Cary. D.Wintz:1988). As an important literary artist and a prominent African American Voice of the 20th century during 1930 his work reflected inner voice and deep anguish of the migrated black people of the American society. He advocated tirelessly for civil rights, and he was a powerful voice in the black community at a time of rampant racism and injustice. His poetry is marked with the deferred Dream of black people. He treated dream theme very expertly in his poetry. Therefore his poetry is echoed with the word 'Dream'. The dream replicated in Hughes poetry is the mainly a dream of Negro people.

KEY-WORDS:

Treatment, Dream Theme, Langston Hughes Poetry, Dream., History of Poetry.

INTRODUCTION

VARIATIONS OF DREAM-

Most of Langston Hughes poetry is marked with the word Dream. Several poems are titled after word dream such as 'Dream', 'Dream variations', 'Dream Boogie', 'Dream Keeper', 'Dream of Freedom', 'I Dream of a World', 'Dream Deferred' etc. This paper tries to analyze the connotation of the word Dream and different type of dreams of Langston Hughes. In America Black migrated African-American people were cherished for the dreams of equity and equality. But unfortunately their dreams were not completely pleased. Although, attempts were made for indiscriminate society but it proved as a hallucination. Their dreams were delayed, deferred and postponed. They were given only promised notes. Therefore in his most famous poem 'Dream Deferred' the poet says that “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up? Like a raisin in the sun”. The poet wrote this poem during the time when black Negro was facing partiality and ghettoization. The poet wants to get equal constitutional rights to pursue happiness. Hughes asks the question to the whole society that if the dreams of black people are ignored and not fulfilled then, do they

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will dry up like a raisin in the sun? A dream that is hard and separated is much harder to achieve, and this could lead to feelings of depression. However sometimes unfortunately the deferred dreams explodes like a pressurized container. It can no longer handle any more pressure (oppression) and just blows up. Hence the poet warns to the society that, "Or does it explode?"

Langston Hughes another poem 'As I grew older' is another classic example of the inner anguish of the Black people. In this poem he treats Dream theme by the submissive voice. He expresses his inner anguish that a wall always stands in the fulfillment of his dreams. The poet cries that once he had a dream. He wanted to fulfill it but he had forgotten in the course of time. The poet expresses his submissive approach that "It was long time ago, I have almost forgotten my dream, but it was there then, In front of me, Bright like a Sun- , My Dream". Here poet consciously emphasizes on the word 'My Dream', which means that the poet has complete different dream than a white man. The poet openly blames for white supremacy as a blockage in his dreams. He says that "And then the wall rose slowly and slowly between me and my Dream". Hughes in his another poem 'I Dream a world' dreams for universal brotherhood against racism.

"I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.

A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free"

Here poet dreams like Dr. Ambedkar that someday people, whatever race, colour or culture will be able to live together without discrimination and bias and be able to work together in harmony. Racial boundaries is the main boundary that is raised in the text, expressing the idea that someday the racial boundaries that we have created for ourselves, will be broken down and that we can live in perfect harmony as human beings. In this poem, Langston Hughes expresses what he feels would be a perfect world. In his eyes, a world where there is no prejudice, no greed, where everyone can have the feeling of freedom, and one where "Wretchedness hangs its head, and joy like a pearl, attends the needs of mankind, of such I dream, my world!"

In his another noteworthy poem "Dream of Freedom," Hughes says that "This dream today embattled/With its back against the wall—/To save the dream for one/It must be saved for all—/Our Dream of freedom." "Dream of Freedom" personalizes the dream as besieged object. He expresses his inner anguish that some people try to claim for themselves the dream of freedom, not wanting to be a part of it. The poet warns for the selfish approach of the dream:

Unless shared in common
Like sunlight and like air,
The dream will die for lack
Of substance anywhere.
The dream knows no frontier or tongue,
The dream no class or race.

The poem ends by the optimism that "To save the dream for one/ It must be saved for ALL." This earnestness changes the idea of a dream from something contemplated or longed for to something needs to be realized by combined struggles. In these poems, the dream is more of a goal, almost a perceptible realism. The dream of freedom is the ideal that must encourage others to fight.

Langston Hughes constantly dreamed for individual identity. Hence his poetry is marked with optimism. He wrote positively in the dark gloomy era of black people. Once Hughes has stated that "An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he also must never be afraid to what he might choose". Hughes wrote in an era when it was hard to stand on own leg in the arena of American poetry. "While writing fine verse is the challenge for everyone committed to the art, being black in America often complicates and even threatens the role of the poet and the practice of poetry... This estrangement exists obviously because of the extent to which the depressed position of the blacks within the nation has served to alienate them from the standards and the values of the dominant culture". (A.Rampersad:2006) The poet advises that

“Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged chariot
That cannot fly
hold fast to dreams”.

Hughes's poem is more optimistic about the nature of America, even angry. The opening lines, which long for the past:

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.

Langston Hughes is writing a poem of someone who feels that America does not live up to what it should be. The tone is angry and resentful. In this poem it's not representing the point of view of one particular group. It's saying that there are many people who come here with hopes and dreams and they are being let down. The dream in this poem symbolizes what America was meant to be. The dream was formed in the Declaration of Independence and said that America was supposed to be free and an individual country. The dream didn't discriminate based on color, race, or gender. Everybody was supposed to be equal. There are still people being taken advantage of and abused. People come from bad situations in other countries seeking an opportunity to start over, just to find themselves in bad situations in America. However, once America becomes the America that its founders wished for, the country would be a much better place. This is what Hughes means by asking for America to be America again.

In another striking poem 'I continue to Dream' Hughes avows that dreams are very powerful and one should stick it irrespective of the situations. The poet says that “I take my dreams and make of them a bronze vase and a round fountain with a beautiful statue in its center.” The poet means that he takes his dreams and creates something beautiful out of them and keep them with him always to remind him how wonderful his dreams are. The poet also informs that

“Do you understand my dreams?
Sometimes you say you do,
And sometimes you say you don't.
Either way it doesn't matter
I continue to Dream”

Here the poet is more self-reliant and even buoyant. He asserts that he will continue to dream without considering about what the people talk after him. Hughes has cautioned to the whole black African –American that they shall not left away their efforts in dreaming racial free America. There is no need to pay any more heed to the jeering by White people. In the words of Jr. Martin Luther King “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.” Langston Hughes was totally committed to the annihilation of the racialism. The greatly precious principles of fraternity and equality were the boost with which Hughes wanted to bind together a completely cohesive nation. Hence in the poem 'I Dream a world; he dreams that

“I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,”

However this is a dream of every cultured individual. It's a dream world which every one of us desires. Langston Hughes expresses what he feels would be a perfect world. In his eyes, a world where there is no prejudice, no greed, where everyone can have the feeling of freedom. In another short poem 'Oppression' he also fears that it is easy to see the dreams but it is very hard to fulfill it. Hughes says that “Now dreams, Are not available, To the dreamers, Nor songs, To the singers”

Conclusion:-Thus in Langston Hughes Dream poems we find innumerable sorts of dreams. He has treated Dream Themes not only for blacks or African American but for human beings. He has seen the dream of a world as a 'Global Village'. His dreams reflect the aspirations, inner urges, half- asleep volcano of rights of black people. His poetry is a wakeup call for those who have left to see the dreams of individual

or human identity. However to some instances his dreams seem fantasies and more than imagination. However these were not 'Distant Dreams' as Barack Obama has been elected as a President of America for Consecutive term. In conclusion it is very apt to quote the dream of Jr Martin Luther King

“When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

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