

# Delineation of women in Nikki Giovanni's Poems

<sup>1</sup>K. Keerthana, <sup>2</sup>M.Tamilselvi

<sup>1,2</sup>Ph.D, Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English,

<sup>1,2</sup>Vivekanandha College of Arts and Sciences for Women, Elayampalayam, Tiruchengode – 637 205,

“Evocative is our history but existing is our future”

-Lazarus Takawira

**Abstract--** This paper examines the description of women in African poetry. Africa is the world's second, largest and second most populous continent. In this country, the people are the youngest among all the continent's people; they very much suffer due to poverty. In this country, women face many problems like health, financial freedom, education, interpersonal relationships and communication, pro-black woman leadership and political representation. It reflects in poets, African poets use their themes as echoes to savage various inheritance found in the decaying political, economic and social landscape found in the decaying political, economic and social landscape. It brings the description of women in Nikki Giovanni poetry in this paper.

**Key words--** poverty, black people, women

Poetry uses powerful words to x-ray deep thoughts about man and society. African poetry has expressed many concerns which make them unique to the understanding of African ethos and traditions. It reflects in African American literature, African American life is nothing but a struggle for freedom, equality and fraternity. As a result of Harlem Renaissance in 1920s New York City was a cultural flowering for the African America. It began with the slave narratives in that period women are treated in worst way, it brings by many authors in their work. This paper brings the view of Nikki Giovanni. Nikki Giovanni was born in Knoxville, Tennessee. Nikki Giovanni (b. 1943) supported a protest against racism and won immediate recognition. In rapid succession between 1967 and 1970, Giovanni produced three volumes of poetry that were avidly read by black audiences. *Black Feeling* (1967), *Black Judgment* (1968), and *Re-Creation* (1970) were immediate hits on the United States black poetry charts.

*Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day* published in 1978 is a collection of poems about the struggles faced by African Americans, particularly about the women folk. She writes about the homeless people who suffer to lead a life. She dedicates this volume to her father, Gus Giovanni who was a survivor and one who had to struggle and work hard to give his family a decent life. The thirty-five-year-old poet and her nine-year-old son move from New York, back to her parent's home in Cincinnati, to be with her ailing father. The move takes her away from the publishing world and her writing contacts but her parents offer her support and a secure home to raise her young son. This line shows the loneliness of women

Everything some say will change I need a change of pace face attitude and life Though I long for my loneliness I know I need something Or someone. Or.....

In her volume *I am A Black Women*, links the theme of Black enslavement and impoverishment with the Global oppression of the wretched. Claims for freedom and justice for blacks in United States are joined with protest against the imperialistic oppression of the Vietnamese people and the subjugation of people of color generally. In collection, Evans vindicates the lives of poor, particularly poor Black women who work in white home as Domestic workers. It reflects through the Historical figure like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Her famous poems are *Status Symbol* in this poem the famous lines are “I/Have arrived /I am the/New Negro/I am the result of/President Lincoln / World War I (1 - 9)”.

Next her famous poem *I Am a Black Women* it reflects the theme of Sufferings of Black women the famous lines are

I am a Black Woman/the music of my song some sweet arpeggio of tears/is written in a minor key/ and I written in a minor key/ and I / can be heard humming in the night/ can be heard/ humming/ in the night (5 - 8).

In *Those Who Ride the Night Winds* (1983), Giovanni uses a new poetic form with groups of words linked together, separated by a series of three dots so that each verse looked like paragraphs. In this volume, the poet pays rich tribute to mothers, women, friends and influential African Americans like Lorraine Hansberry and Rosa Parks who created history. The poet imbibes the lives of people around her and notes her pride in the courage of her fellow African Americans. Biographer Josephson comments: “She wants ordinary people to love her poetry. That is why the little things in life – sights, feelings, thoughts, sounds - fall under her writer's microscope” (Poet 74). Her ability to note the insignificant details and making it significant, of relating to people irrespective of their age make her a truly popular voice. Her poetry readings are famous; her voice is unique and is recognized by the people. She is loved for her distinctive voice in the world of poetry.

Giovanni published two more books of poetry for children in 1996, *The Genie in the Jar* and *The Sun Is So Quiet*, with colourful illustrations. *Love Poems* (1997), a book of poems about the different facets of life is dedicated to Tupac Shakur, a young rap artist who was murdered. *Blues: For All the Changes* (1999), is Giovanni's environmental work. Recovering from lung cancer, she spends her time watching a family of robins which later features in a poem, “Me and Mrs. Robin”, where her love for birds and nature is contrasted with modern development. Her environmental study of the destruction of nature brought about by the construction of buildings is highlighted in this volume. She quits smoking which is a lifelong habit and she starts nurturing her life with a hope for a bright tomorrow.

Giovanni's collection *Bicycles: Love Poems* (2009) is a companion work to her 1997 *Love Poems*. They touch on the deaths of both her mother and her sister, as well as the massacre on the Virginia Tech campus. “Tragedy and trauma are the

wheels” of the bicycle. The first poem Blacksburg Under Siege: 21 August 2006 and the last poem We Are Virginia Tech reflect this. Giovanni chose the title of the collection as a metaphor for love itself, “because love requires trust and balance” (4).

The Women and the Men display in full measure the gifts that have made Nikki Giovanni one of the most important, appealing, and broad-reaching American poets: her warmth, her conciseness, her passion, and her wit. First appearing between 1970 and 1975, the poems in this gemlike volume reflect the drastic change that took place--in both the consciousness of the nation and in the soul of the poet.

Black separatism poem bring out the personal elements of author relates to the Black Separatism. This movement organize at a night, it acts like a Ghost to pretend the sleep of many innocent Black people. “It starts with a hand/ Reaching out in the night/ And pretended sleep” (1 - 3). Our routine life move into to discuss with our friends about a whole day activities in office, in breakfast time is to know the Baseball score in a newspaper through comic picture. These Things are just an entertainment not a real thing. The real motto of our community people to think of freedom for the children. “And we talk about the kids / Signing our letters / YOURS FOR FREEDOM” (14 - 16).

The growth of the self-actualization of the poet Giovanni can be analyzed through her poems. Her poems are known for their simple language and lofty ideas, taken from ordinary, everyday experiences. She writes mostly from own experiences but she manages to reach out to all her readers, to people regardless of race and gender. A true American to the core, she upholds her African American heritage and strives to revel in its uniqueness. She insists her African American folk to take pride in their unique traits and asks them to celebrate their qualities. She emerges as a spokesperson of her people and a champion of truth. She is a popular, well-loved poet whose distinctive voice is known everywhere.

Giovanni believes that when every woman decides to accept her own self and tries to create her own individuality, the long awaited personal freedom will be attained. She also communicates to her readers to make full use of one’s capabilities. She finds happiness in doing the ordinary things of life. She is proud to be a natural woman doing things that all women do. In this ordinariness, she finds her strength. In this present world, Women play a vital role to make a world in better way. In view of Maya Angelou “A wise woman wishes to be no one’s enemy; a wise woman refuses to be anyone’s victim”.

#### *References*

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