Négritude, Aesthetic Form, and Cultural Identity in the Selected Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor

Dr. Shimi Paul Baby
Professor, Department of Malayalam, Union Christian College (Autonomous), Aluva

Abstract:

Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001), a leading theorist of Négritude, a distinguished poet, and the first president of independent Senegal, played a significant role in the development of African literary and cultural consciousness. His poetry affirms African identity and cultural heritage while challenging colonial ideologies that represented Black people and African cultures as inferior. Négritude emerged as a literary, cultural, and intellectual movement that sought to reclaim the dignity of Black identity and foreground the distinctive traditions of Africa. Senghor's poetic vision draws upon African oral traditions, music, rhythm, ancestral memory, spirituality, and the relationship between human beings and nature. Through these aesthetic elements, his poetry challenges Eurocentric standards of beauty and cultural superiority while articulating an alternative vision of African identity. This paper examines the relationship between Négritude, aesthetic form, and cultural identity in selected poems by Senghor, particularly "Black Woman," "Night of Sine," "The Dead," "Paris in the Snow," and "Chaka." It explores how his poetic representations of Blackness, womanhood, nature, and ancestral traditions contribute to the construction of postcolonial consciousness. The paper argues that Senghor's poetry transforms aesthetic expression into a form of cultural resistance through which African subjectivity is reclaimed and colonial hierarchies are challenged.

Keywords:

African Literature, Négritude, Colonialism, Cultural Identity, Cultural Nationalism, Postcolonialism, Aesthetic Form.