

C. JEEVA

Ph.D (PART TIME) SCHOLAR,

PG & RESEARCH DEPT OF ENGLISH,

GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE, SALEM-7

ASST.PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH,

PG & RESEARCH DEPT OF ENGLISH,

SRI VIDYA MANDIR ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE, KATTERI,

UTHANGARAI, 636902, KRISHNAGIRI-DT, TAMILNADU.

INDIA

Email: [jeevanra1981@gmail.com](mailto:jeevanra1981@gmail.com)

### A Study of Multi Cultural Themes in the Novels of Ishmael Reed

#### **Abstract:**

Ishmael Reed is an eminent writer in Afro - American literature. He is the pioneer in expressing the sufferings of black people through his novels. Culture plays a vital role in the life of human. When people are forced to live in a culture when is not their own, they suffer a lot. He used multi themes in his novels. He is one of the leading satirist in black literature. His parodic style is differing from other writers. This paper deals how Ishmael used multi themes in his literary pieces to expose the life of black people and their struggle for survival. He mostly examines politics, religion, technology, parody, racism mythology and various themes in his literary pieces.

**Keynote:** Multi, culture, parody, racism, etc....

Ishmael Reed started to write under pseudonym Emmett Coleman. He is familiar and well-versed writer in writing novels, poems, and essays in Afro – American literature. He is one among the pioneer writer in Afro – American literature. He started to write at the early age. He published his first novel ‘The Free Lance Pallbearers’. This novel deals the white domination. The protagonist searches his self -awareness and white ruled society HARRY SAM. Reed meekly brings out the problem of the hero, BukkaDoopeyduk who narrates his suffering through this novel. HARRY SAM wants to control this nation and makes everyone as slave. In this novel Reed slightly applied the homosexuality. This novel is compare with Ellison’s the Invisible Man. These two novels have nearly same theme but both narrative techniques is differ. Reed talks about the black racism and sufferings. Reed describes the

positive thinking in this novel. Reed is a first person to use parody in his novels as in the Afro- American literature. The hero leads a revolution against the corruption of the wicked villain HARRY SAM. However, in his next novel, he diverted his ideas.

Reed did not follow this same theme in his next novels. He introduced a new concept that is Neo-HooDooism. It is necromancy. Reed applied this concept in his next two novels. 'Yellow Back Radio Broke-down' in that Reed applied this concept in a proper way. VooDoo is areal idea of Reed. He differentiated these two things in his two novels. He applied VooDoo in Yellow Back Radio Broke Down as well as Neo-HooDoo in his popular novel Mumbo Jumbo. Reed describes all the bitter happens and how much the black people suffered in his novels. He mostly opposed against the western culture and implemented of their custom in African countries. He talks about one important character in Yellow Back Radio Broke down that is pope, whose arrival and his attitude. Reed may be indirectly indicated the western culture through this concepts. He writes about writing mythically. Reed introduced a new way to the black writers to bring out about their sufferings through these Voo Doo and Neo-HooDoo concepts. The Voodoo is an important one in Afro-American religion.

He extended the same concept in his next novel 'Mumbo Jumbo'. The protagonist Papa La Bas have been searching prolonged the necromancy text because of the Jes Grew. He wanted to save the people from illness where as he searches the necromancy text. The Jes Grew began in many years before, destroyed the society, and disturbed the people. It made the people to dance and changed the mind. After many years over it return, back especially in 1920's. This novel considered as black magic novel.

Actually, JesGrew was an anti –plague.

Some plague caused the body to waste away.

Jes Grew enlivened the host.

Other plagues were accompanied by bad air (malaria)...

Terrible plagues were due to the wrath of God; but Jes Grew is the delight of the gods (Mumbo Jumbo p-6).

Reed uses another concept is Mu'tafikah which is a gender dynamics. This called as third world coalition. During 1960's this concepts called third world. There are four kinds of Mu'tafikah such as African, European, North American, and South American.

In this novel, he mostly talks about the Harlem Renaissance; it is more important message in twenties. Reed indicates the affection of the people by the Jes grew, they behave like a wild animals. These people called as the second line. In 1920's the black lost their

identity by the domination of white. How Chinua Achebe delivered a speech in his prose piece *Novelist as Teacher* in 1964 at Leeds about the colonies and his domination. In that, he simply said that how the Nigerian people forget their native culture, even the western culture changed the real name of winter and using tin, metals instead of pots like that Reed exposes his pain.

. Then he changed his themes in his next novels that are *Flight to Canada* and *The Terrible Twos*. Reed applied a new concept that is comic concepts in these novels. Raven Quickskill who is a protagonist in *Flight to Canada*, his master was Arthur Swille. The hero wants to escape from his master but he failed because at that time there was civil war. Reed divided this novel into three parts. He began each part with a poem. It may be one of the styles of Reed. The first part is *Flight to Canada*, the second part is *Lincoln, the Player*, and the third part is *The Burning of Richmond*. The first part began with these lines:

Dear mass swille:

What it was?

I have done my Liza Leap... (*Flight to Canada*, p-4)

Reed wrote first *The Terrible Twos* and then wrote *The Terrible Threes*. These two novels dealt the position in 1990's. Rev. Clement Jones is a first white man to steal the black preaching. This novel mostly dealt the white house and the problem of Jewish. Reed describes the uncomfortable life of the blacks, women and antifeminist.

Then Reed uses a comic sense in his other novel *The Last Days of Louisiana Red* in which he talks about many concepts about postmodernism. Reed uses the same name papa Labas in this novel also, who fights into himself because of the violence. This violence was introduced by the Louisiana Red against militants and the culture where as the protagonist could not tolerate the changes in his society.

*Reckless Eyeballing* is one of the best creations in his life because he talks about the feminism at first time in his novel deeply. He wrote first time with highly joke and series of feminism. The protagonist Ian Ball who came to New York City and started his career as a playwright but there he faced many problems. The woman character is Jim Minks also faced a lot of problem to lead the life. In this novel Reed used a villain smarts. He is the first victim like HARRY SAM. Reed remembered one of the main woman characters in Adolf Hitler's life that was Eva Braun like that Jim Minks. How much Eva was important to Hitler like that Minks but later everything changed by the director and placed woman that was Tremonisha Smarts, who got fame by writing. She wrote a drama 'Wrongheaded Man' in which Reed describes the sufferings of women such as raping, torturing and degrading. Reckless

Eyeballing compared with Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple' because both novels talk about only the sufferings of woman.

Reed wanted to talk about a new concept in his next novel that is Japanese by spring in which he talked about the Culture Wars. This novel called as satirical academic novel. It deals that a satire the period between 1980's and 1990's, this period called as The Culture Wars. During this period the critic analysis the power of white and poverty of African people. This novel talks about the culture, warfare and education. Reed applied full of puns and wit in a meek way. Mostly he talks about the multi-cultural in America and the custom of the American people.

Reed changed his thematic ideas in his recent novel Juice. In that novel, he describes that life and achievements of the Barack Obama, the former president of America. This novel mostly attacks the political power in America. However, he satirised through using the cartoons. Reed indicates the black racism suffering of the black people and domination of the white people.

This paper deals the various themes in Ishmael Reeds novels. Such as the necromancy ideas, black racism, slave, change of native culture.

### Works Cited

- Reed, Ishmael. *Mumbo Jumbo*, New York: Scribner paperback fiction,1972  
----- -----, *The Flight to Canada*. New York: Random House, 1976  
----- ----- The Free Lance Pallbearers, Dalkey Archive Press,1967  
----- -----*The Last Days of Louisiana Red*. California - Berkeley: Dalkey,2000  
----- ----- *Reckless Eyeballing*.New York, Dalkey Archive 1986.  
----- ----- *Japanese by spring*. New York: Atheneum,1993.
- Riley, Carolyn. Contemporary Literary Criticism, Gale Research company, Michigan ,1976
- AchebeChinua. *The novelist as a teacher*. Impediments to Dialogue Between North  
'And South. In: Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965-1987. Oxford: Heinemann,  
1988s