

TWONESS IN PHILIPPE WAMBA'S KINSHIP: A FAMILY JOURNEY IN AFRICA AND AMERICA

Bharati Sachin Deshmukh¹

Research Student, Department of English, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India.

ABSTRACT: *Philippe Wamba was an outstanding and very well-known author of African-American literature. He was widely recognized writer for his fusion of African and African-American culture. In his first novel Kinship, he describes his personal experiences as an African American man. He was born in California and raised in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. As he was growing up in a global world, he was always trying to unite the two different cultures and two identities. This novel sheds light on the issues of African American literature with the combination of historical evaluation, personal accounts, and political criticism. This memoir discusses the issues related to personal and global identities as individuals and nations. This personal memoir was not his only of him, but it is representative of all African Americans and the Africans. He draws the very broad historical references to people and events that were very important resource on this present issue.*

KEYWORDS: Philippe Wamba, Twoness, African-American literature, Homeland.

INTRODUCTION

Philippe Wamba was a prolific writer in African American literature. *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America* was his first memoir that published in 1999. This novel was mainly focuses on being an African among African-Americans, and being an African-American among Africans. He was born on 3rd June 1971. His mother was an American, and a father was Congolese. He was raised in the United States, Congo, and Tanzania. He educated at Mlimani Primary School, Harvard University as an undergraduate, and for post graduation at Columbia University. While growing up he always feels outsider neither Africans nor African-Americans. He was very close observer of the relations between Africans and African-Americans on both continents. In this novel, he was detailing his personal and family history. It was the talk about the Africans, African-Americans, their culture, history, and relations. It was an insightful memoir that explores the meaning of the dream of Pan-African consciousness.

Concept of Twoness (Double consciousness)

Double consciousness was a term coined by W. E. B. Du Bois. This term first appeared in the article *Atlantic Monthly* of Du Bois's titled *Strivings of the Negro People*. It republished under the new title *Of Our Spiritual Strivings* in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois describes double consciousness as,

“It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of

¹ B - 303, Sainath Apartment, Ubha Bazar, Near Vitthal temple, Sawantwadi, Tal- Sawantwadi, Dist- Sindhudurg, Maharashtra, India. Pin Code- 416510.

measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” (DU B., 1903, P. 214-215)

Twoness in Philippe Wamba's *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America*.

African-American literature is mainly focuses on the issues of African Americans self-identity. They have the struggle with the concept of a double consciousness. They are always trying to restore friendly relationship with the two cultures that creates their identity. African Americans are thoughts that Africa was their homeland. They were brought to America forcefully for become an enslaved. They often thought that all African Americans are returning to their rightful home, Africa. In this situation of the slavery and southern acculturation, African Americans' identities were highly misrepresented. In America, there is the new population emerged, which was the slave populations. It was a mixture of Africans from different ethnic groups. They are often banned from doing African cultural practices because to prevent slave revolts. They were not allowed to speak their original African languages. Their original African names are stripped and converted to Christianity. They are not even allowed to dance and use drums. Trough all such things African Americans are keep away the African cultural legacy. As a result, later generations are not getting cultural heritage from their parents. But at a same time, they are also prohibited from gaining the same cultural experience in America that white people have. This is the situation is now double consciousness or the twoness. This is a unique situation for African Americans.

Philippe Wamba's novel, *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America* explores the complex theory of double consciousness. He discusses his experiences as an African American. His double consciousness is created from his experience with as an African American moving and living in California, Harvard and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He experienced the feeling of disconnection between his two cultures African Americans and Africans. He also experienced the struggle of two cultures to outcome from the myths and the ideas about one another.

Africans are very much unknown of racism in the America which causes continual trouble to the nation in more precise ways. Isolation and double consciousness about culture and identity helped Wamba and his family to find a sense of belonging. Wamba's view on the varied ancestry completely changed with their experiences of challenging and reveals a belief to be false these myths. It was a very personal to him and his family. Wamba always thought that kinship is related to the racial similarities, and that is help to his disbelief about the interconnectedness of his background. All people were having their narratives about their homeland. They are having different attachments and familiarity with their nation. In this novel, Wamba emphasizes that every person was having an ability to understand the notion of double consciousness. Wamba was firmly said that restoring the friendly relationship with the identity and the heritage help him to accept his culture without any misconceptions. This feeling would lead any individual to understanding of twoness.

The question of cultural identity and loss of culture of the African American people develops their African myth. They thought that our homeland only gives us freedom and the better life. It was also very superbly explains through these poetic lines from the chorus of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* as following:

"Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home,
Swing low, sweet chariot, Coming for to carry me home.

For many African Americans, including poet Phillis Wheatley, the attempt to reconcile historical ties to Africa with experiences in American culture became efforts to transcend the original African identity." (P. 84)

This concept of returning home to Africa was extremely wonderful medicine of rescuing Africa. African Americans now thought they should come back to home. They want to reestablish and get out of Africa in backward.

Though the many cultural differences and the problem of identity between Africans and African Americans many African Americans produce from there. They are the struggle with their sense of belonging, identity and value with the sense of belonging, identity and value imposed upon them by white Americans. They are now come far away from their homeland and trying to achieve the status of African American. But African Americans are not treated as the same like other Americans. They are not seen them through their own eyes. They had to try to see them through the eyes of the white Americans. They have no control over their lives but for centuries white American had legal control over their lives. African Americans are faced major problem of twoness of being African and as well as American. Through this novel, Wamba clearly states that this twoness lead them towards the two social worlds. In the social world, they feel like an insider and outsider. They are identifying themselves in a split consciousness. They are not achieving the social position of individuals or groups. This type of consciousness leads them towards the psycho-social tension. This tension was destroying their sense of morality.

Twoness according to Du Bois means a,

"sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others in the mirror." (Edles, L. D. 2005)

Du Bois views the history of the African American is the history of this bitter disagreement.

Phillipe Wamba describes the African American's love-hate relationship with Africa in his prolifically written book *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America*. It was extremely superb personal and family memoir. As an African American, the Wamba family also faced the complexities and challenges in America. They are having the same myths and misconceptions about the relationship between African-Americans and Africans. Through this book, Wamba had stated that for the meaning unity two groups should come together with the some politeness about the differences of culture and geography. Wamba's writing expresses his psychologist and historian view towards the African Americans. He was also passionate about the Africa. But that was not meaning he wrote only in favor of African Americans or explores the opposing points of view. He just tries to shape our sense of identity through his experiences. Through his experiences, he focuses the ambiguities African Americans feel toward Africans. He explored that African American identification with Africa was limited only the skin color, an African name or African clothing.

Wamba points out in this book that there was a tremendous bond between the African Americans and the Africans. There are some kinds of emotional attachment in between them.

Wamba experienced this visceral connection when he met his father's mother first time in Zaire. He dedicated his book to her. In chapters of this book like, *What is Africa to Me?* and *Drumbeats From Across the Atlantic*, Wamba explores the deep and abiding bond between African Americans and Africans. He was showed this bond very beautifully with discusses the subjects like music, politics, religion, food, fashion, literature.

This book has very wonderful hybrid of memoir and history by Wamba. Through his experiences, he promoted the kinship across the nations. He was successfully unites his two cultures through the sense of identity discovery of his significance within the history. This novel explores the racial unity and kinship. He was painful strides two continents and cultures. Africans are always thought about their American cousins unfocused and the African Americans often thoughts Africans as highly judgmental. Through the experiences of Wamba, we come to know that except his father's experience other African experiences are so much positive for Wamba. In this book, he tried overcome people from the myths and misconceptions about the two communities. He tried to understand them the views of W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and many others that were beneficial for them.

CONCLUSION

Kinship was appropriately researched and enlightens work of art-political history. His unique sense of belonging or the identity helps him to examine the relationship between African Americans and the Africans. He was very beautifully explains that the interaction between the isolated kin and the expectations. The interaction was very much complicated when the expectations are influenced by myth and understanding. Twentieth century was highly globalized, and it led to cultural exposure between cultures. Globalization was breaking down the geographical barrier between Africa and America. This cultural exposure changed the views of African Americans and the Africans. At one hand, African was saw African Americans as portrayed by Hollywood carried a quite different impression and the other hand African Americans saw their homeland was real dream world and return there. While some African Americans believed that America was a place of plenty for their displaced kin. Through the experiences of misconceptions in this book, Wamba was prominently illustrates that though the difficulties among the cultures there was a desire for reunion. According to the Wamba, it was a bridge for a new idea of kinship to Africans and African Americans.

REFERENCES

- Du B., W. E. B. (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York, Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books.
- Edles, L. D., and Scott A.(2005). *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Powell, Timothy. "*History & Archaeology: Ebos Landing*." The New Georgia Encyclopedia. Retrieved 3/4/14.
- Sing, A. New Negro. In: Andrews, L.; Foster, F. S.; Harris, T. (Ed.). (1997). *The Oxford companion to African American literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wamba, P. (1999). *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America*. New York, New York: Penguin Group.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_consciousness

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Ferrentino