

## **GABRIEL OKARA'S POETRY FUNCTIONS AS A VEHICLE OF AFRICAN IDENTITY.**

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Gabriel Okara is the first significant English language African poet to write in a modern style. With Okara, Nigerian poetry in English matures and taken a big leap forward. Conflict of identity is often emerged as an issue in Okara's poems. It is not only contradicts with the western and African concepts and values but also develops the identity of Africans with its own history and perspectives. He was greatly concerned about the African people and their thoughts, though he is caught between two different worlds. Okara appreciates his native culture and tradition by accepting the alien culture as it is. This quality symbolizes the rich Africanness which is carried by Okara in his literary work. Throughout his poems he discusses both the cultures but it is evident by appreciates his own culture; he has already made up his mind on Africaness. Okara's treatment of the indigenous theme shows his sense and reverence for his people, no less than his sense of nostalgia for and rootedness in Africa. He has been extremely successful in capturing the moods, sights and sounds of Africa by using the rhythms and sentence patterns of Ijaw speech, oral tradition, folklore, mystery, fairy-tale, local imageries symbolism and metaphor of traditional quiet. The objective of this paper is to shed light on the vitality of African identity, reflects in Okara's poetry. This study is limited to some of his poems which mirror the African identity. In order to achieve this objective, a qualitative analytical methodology is undertaken. The selected poems were examined on the basis of his own opinion. Criticisms were collected from secondary sources such as books, journals and articles. A close examination of Okara's poetry reveals that there are many concerns which make the world understand the African ethos and traditions. His poetry tells the Africans' experiences in Europe as protests/ satires/ lyrics confirming their own identity as well.

*Key words: Africanness, Identity, Indigenous Nostalgia, Vitality,*

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