



An Exploration of Two Selected Themes: History and Education in Christian Themba Msimang's Poetry

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Abstract. The objectives of this research work are to analyze and interpret the historical and educational aspects in selected poems of C.T. Msimang. The thematic contexts are evaluated through images that convey and illustrate the ideas in an appropriate manner. Poetry is made up of images and allusions that reveal the poet's inner feelings which evoke the appropriate feelings and reaction from the reader. Most images employed are panegyric, that is, they are used to praise the subject. Thematic exploration brings forth refreshment, inexhaustion, and absorption. The series of ideas and events are presented from introduction, development to the conclusion. The historical facts, incidents, and settings are presented in a literary manner. It is a text-orientated study that looks at poet diction and meaning in thematic contexts. The study is informed by descriptive and explanatory researches.

Keywords: *Educational Context, Historical Context, Intellectual Context, Text-orientation, and Thematic Exploration.*

1. Introduction

The major or central idea of a poem is regarded as its strongest cohesive factor. The focus of this study is to assess to what extent themes are used and to establish whether their influence has been positive or negative in relation to the poem as a whole. Reaske (1966, p. 42) defines the theme as follows:

...the central concept developed in a poem. It is the basic idea which the poem is trying to convey and which, accordingly, he allows to direct his imagery. Most of the images, in other words, are designed to present the central theme, or main idea, of the poem. The theme is, in another light, the poet's reason for writing the poem in the first place. It is usually an abstract concept, which becomes concrete through the idiom and imagery.

Cuddon (1976, p. 695) has this idea of the theme of a poem:

...the theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly.

Scheffler (2015, p. 175) expresses theme as follows:

The central idea or focus underlying a literary text. It may be stated directly or indirectly.

Paton (2016, p. 284) defines theme as follows:

The central idea or ideas in texts, such as the journey, comfort in desolation, fear...

Fugard (2016, p. 142) gives this view on the theme:

It is the main idea or ideas in a text; a text may contain several themes and these may occur more than once.

Themes explore and excavate the field of cultural elements. They give a searching analysis of their richness. The poet's state, intention, and attitude are brought about by the supra-segment of feelings or emotions that determine the vocal characteristics of the poet.

2. Research methodology and approaches

The source of information includes critical works on poetry evaluation and appraisal. The theory that is adopted for the study is Russian Formalism. The Formalist Movement became active as early as 1915. This movement placed emphasis on literariness, brought by what they called *ostranemie* (making-strange) or “defamiliarisation”. Literariness is attained by renewing literary sounds and meanings for purposes of aesthetic communication.

This poetry explication considers ‘defamiliarisation’ to locate literariness by ‘making strange’ of familiar facts and objectives as if they are new for poetic devices. It is viewed as the basis of a modern literary theory that makes the study of literature an autonomous and specific discipline. Knowledge of Russian Formalism is thus essential for a better understanding of literary theory. Furthermore, a great deal of terminology and methodology stemming from the Formalism, have over the years been refined and improved to form a contemporary basis approaches.

The descriptive and explanatory researches are looked at in line with content analysis, which is presented by Fourie (2012, p. 5) as follows:

Systematic and objectives means that the organization of the study follows precise rules and a set of procedure.

This is the creative literary work that touches some historical facts, events, and characters in a more interpretive and analytic way. The historical facts are strictly handled following the above-mentioned steps, while the creative literary work is flexible and subjective in its presentation (Derbel, 2017). The theme of education reflects various dimensions, for example, academic figures, institutions, and achievements. In poetry, the theme is the main idea of the interpretation of life as conveyed by the poem as a whole. It is also the strongest binding or cohesive factor in the poem. All details, ideas and poetic devices, which function in the poem, contribute in some way or another towards developing the theme and ensuring unity.

3. Historical context

When a poet writes about historical figures, places, and events, it should be remembered that he writes on these subjects as a creative artist and not as a historian. However, many poets have written on historic topics or events, and some of these poems closely resemble the style and content of the praises. Many poets have written a poem in full or in part on the great Zulu King, Shaka. One of the best poems that can be mentioned here is the poem, *UShaka KaSenzangakhona* (Shaka, son of Senzangakhona). Many poems were also inspired by well-known historical events. The poem, *Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa* is believed to be based on the story of Nongqawuse who told Xhosa people to destroy their livestock and grain because the ancestral spirits would provide the Xhosa nation with new possessions. Poets thus make use of historical events not only to record the details but to throw their own creative light on the matter. Some of the selected poems are *ISandlwana* (Sandlwana Mountain), *Ihlathi LaseNkandla* (Nkandla's Forest) and *Inkondlo KaMkabayi* (Mkabayi's Poem) that entail historical events which are presented through fiction and reworked facts. The poet writes on historical settings, incidents, figures, and allusions. Ntuli (1984, p. 60) stresses this fact:

It is important to remember that a poet writes on historical subject as a creative artist and not as a historian. While the poet must unquestionably lean on historical facts his study is not to produce an historical text. His task is to offer us a new view of the historical subject.

Msimang's historical poems are fictitious reconstructions of historical settings, facts, events or subjects. This type of poem reflects communal structures, performers, performance, theatre, and the audience. The characteristics of historical poems are clearly emphasized by Kunene (1970, p. 12) as follows:

Zulu poetry being communal requires a special method of presentation. The poet does not just recite his poetry but acts it, uses variations of pitch, and aims at communicating his poem through the stimulation of all the senses. He produces at various levels the symphonic chant, drama and dance. The audience is thus held spellbound, not only by the meaning of words and their sounds but also by the performance.

Historical and geographical settings

ISandlwana, as the site of a decisive battle of February 1879 during the Anglo-Zulu War, is a hill of remarkable historical importance. Before the researcher looks at Msimang's use of this site, let the recipients note what Maxwell-Mahon (1984, p. 6) asserts on setting:

The choice of setting or background for the story can be imaginary or realistic. But it is wisest to choose a setting that you know from personal experience, some locality or environment with which you are familiar.

The choice of this setting is real in this instance. The historical hill shares reasonable geographical proximity to the poet's birthplace. Although poetic language plays an important role in describing, the hill reality and authenticity are still maintained. Its significance is compared in relation to other mountains. The height and natural resources are the phenomena that usually draw our perception. It is, however, different in this matter. The hill serves as the geographical setting or battlefield of the Anglo-Zulu war during King Cetshwayo's reign. The poet introduces his poem as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 41):

*Bathe ukhoth' amafu
Wena ngelengele yoKhahlamba...
'You precipitous ascent of Drakensberg
They said you touch the clouds..'*

The height of *iSandlwana* hill is compared to that of the Drakensberg itself which is far from the sultry coastlands of KwaZulu-Natal. *iSandlwana* is taken as one of the successions of broken hills attached to the Drakensberg, a range of mountains which is serene, aloof and purple against the sky. The poet further states (Msimang, 1980, p. 41):

*Bathe nibakhulu niyesabeka
Nina ziqongo zeQhudeni.
'You peak of Qhudeni.
They said you are amazingly big'*

Qhudeni is a mountain range associated with *iSandlwana* - an isolated hill that glowers over a bleak and windswept stretch near Rorke's Drift. *Sandlwana* literally means 'a small house'. The surroundings of *iSandlwana* are rugged and completely bare of trees. The third mountain, which is comparatively mentioned in the poem, appears in the second stanza (Msimang, 1980, p. 41):

*Ngisho iKhilimanjalo ingekhashe.
'Even Kilimanjaro cannot match.'*

Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain in Africa. Its height is incomparably high, but the poet makes the comparison to draw our attention. The height of *iSandlwana* cannot be a central factor at all; only its place in legend and history can. The third stanza describes how *abakwaKhwini* (The British) army reinforcements leave their fortified camps to attack the Zulus. The British rifles, ammunition and cannons make them confident to face any powerful attack. Their hasty decisions and maneuver lead to failure. The poet in the form of apostrophic deliberation likens the Zulu victory to thunder and lightning. The manner in which the Zulu warriors are attacked and how they defend themselves against the well-armed British army is figuratively stated as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 41):

*Wacija ngoMcijo,
Wakhanda ngoKhandempemvu,
Wabagoba ngeNgobamakhosi...
'He sharpened with Mcijo,
Headed with Khandempemvu,
Bent with Ngobamakhosi..'*

The Zulu King's reliance on his regiments is obvious from their dedication to the armed struggle. His regiments, *uMcijo* (The sharp ones), *uKhandempemvu* (white spotted top of the head) and *iNgobamakhosi* (tamers of the Chiefs) are remarkably well trained and have a genuine love of fighting for their country. The poet retells, in poetic language, the battle on *iSandlwana* hill. There is no rigid adherence to actual historical facts but the poet highlights some remarkable incidents. The poet portrays the natural phenomenon, *iSandlwana* hill itself, to depict historical themes. The use of metaphoric language presents the historical events and facts in an artistic and creative manner (Derbel, 2014). The historical theme is

portrayed by the use of two animals of different sizes, the elephant and the ant, which are highlighted as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 41):

*Nina enesaba indlovu,
Niyiqaphelise nentuthwane.
'You who are afraid of an elephant,
Beware of an ant.'*

The two words, *indlovu* (elephant) and *intuthwane* (ant) are employed comparatively to enhance the theme of history. The elephant is a big, powerful animal and is used in this context to represent the English people. The ant stands for the Zulus who had no such fame during the reign of King Cetshwayo before the battle on *iSandlwana* Hill. It is known that a person named after an elephant is of the Zulu royal family while an ant stands for a commoner. In the above context, the Zulu royal family has the attributes of an ant. The emphasis of what happened at *iSandlwana* is illustrated as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 41):

*Bathi duma zulu, laduma;
Bathi banika mbane, wabanika.
'They say let the thunderstorm rumble, it thundered;
They say let the lightning strike, it struck.'*

The poet deliberately uses the repetition of a word at the beginning of successive lines to create a rhythmic effect. The thundering noise, tumultuous uproar and rumbling are followed by the strike of lightning. Severe weather conditions portray how the battle of *iSandlwana* took place. The poem reveals King Cetshwayo's effort, as the last king of the sovereign independent state of Zululand, to withstand the British. It is a tale of Anglo-Zulu war which expresses King Cetshwayo's triumph over the British. The poet has used animals, the natural phenomena, cultural set-up and military regiments as referential impact to the setting.

The poem *Ihlathi LaseNkandla* is based on historical settings and incidents. Nkandla forest lies on the Southern border of Zululand, along the precipices and near the mighty valley of the Thukela River. It is known as *Nkandla* (a place of exhaustion) because of its ruggedness. This forest is beautiful, noble and has historical significance as the scene of vicious human conflict which reaches both climax and anticlimax. The focus on Nkandla forest started during King Cetshwayo's period of reign (Msimang, 1980, p. 23):

*Zotha ngokuzotha kwamakhosi,
Zothela uCetshwayo kwabakaMpande.
'Give the monarch's dignity,
Be dignified for Cetshwayo of Mpande.'*

The poet addresses the forest as if it were a human being. It is endowed with human characteristics and attributes. Its roots are referred to as *izinzwani* (toes) and its branches as *izingalo* (arms). It is one of the ever-respected forests in KwaZulu, because of the following incidents (Msimang, 1980, p. 23):

*Yembesa uHlamvana bhul' umlilo.
Fukamela amaqhawe kaZulu...
'Give shelter to the Zulu heroes...'*

Hlamvana bhul' umlilo is one of King Cetshwayo's praise names. His grave is in that forest. Most Zulu heroes are buried in the Nkandla forest. The poet insists that the graves in the forest must be carefully protected. The greatness of the forest, which has hidden caves and hiding places, is characterized by many sections such as *Dukuza* (where you get lost); *KwaVuza* (place of the dripping one); *iBomvana* (the red place) and *leNdlovu* (place of the elephant). Running through the forest are streamlets, *Mome* (the drainer) and *Nkunzana* (little bull) which flow over a cliff into the gorge. Some of the rivers close to the dark and fearful forest are *iNsuze* (species of poisonous brown snake) and *Thukela* (the startling one). The poet remarks on Bhambatha's Revolt as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 24):

*Sewusa iMome sema,
Ngawubona umfula wezimmangaliso,
Sakhuleka endlini kaSigananda...
Ubesabhunga izindaba noBhambatha...
'We descended Mome and stood
Gazing at the amazing river,*

*He was talking to Bhambatha...
Saluting before Sigananda's house..'*

Chief Sigananda gave most Zulu heroes sanctuary in a lonely kraal within the forest. Bhambatha became the central figure and principal leader of the poll tax rebellion. An old family friend, Sigananda of the Chube tribe and of Lala origin who lived in the forest and had a stronghold in the Mome gorge, joined Bhambatha. Of added importance was the fact that Sigananda's capital kraal at the foot of the Mome waterfall in Nkandla forest was the main spear-making area in Zululand. Both leaders summoned their people to arms, and the forest became full of menace and war cries. In the last stanza, the poet regards Nkandla forest as the home of elephants and lions; as the place where there are species of wild fig-trees and coastal hardwood trees. Lastly, the forest is referred to as an ancestral spirit place which is sacred to the whole nation (Msimang, 1980, p. 25):

*Khaya leNdllovu, khaya lembube,
Khaya lomthombe, khaya lomsimbithi;
Khaya lobhaqa olupheshethw' umoya,
Khaya lesixhumo esimsulwa,
Khaya lenyoni etshilozayo,
Nkandla ulikhaya lamathongo.
'Home of elephant and lion,
Home of wild fig-tree and hardwood,
Home of a wind blowing fire-stick,
Home of an innocent young antelope,
Home of a singing bird,
You are the ancestor's home, Nkandla.'*

The poem is about a historical theme. Some historical incidents are briefly highlighted to endorse the vitality of the forest. The aim is to reveal how beautiful, dense and great Nkandla forest is with its giant trees festooned with creepers. Its uniqueness is seen in relation to the rivers that flow through it and the residents who reside in Nkandla forest. Nkandla forest is referred to as King Cetshwayo's home (Msimang, 1980, p. 24):

*Sakhuleka endlini kaCetshwayo,
Nokho akasiphendulanga.
'Nevertheless he could not reply.
We saluted at Cetshwayo's home.'*

This legendary forest will be associated with King Cetshwayo forever. It is the graveyard of Zulu heroes. In the seventh stanza, the poet refers to Nkandla forest as *Simakade seminyakanyaka* (an ever-standing creation of uncountable years). It is a prestigious and historical forest as it centres on the life of King Cetshwayo.

Historical character

Shaka of Senzangakhona is an epic poem divided into four parts: Events before his birth, his growth, his reign, and his death. The major characteristics of an epic are that it is a long, historical and heroic poem. (Msimang 1990, p.2) Epics are scarce in the Zulu language, and they share similar characteristics with *izibongo* (praises). Gunner and Gwala (1994, p. 13) support this idea by saying:

...royal praises have, like the epic, the capacity to offer a kind of stability and a sense of swift communication with the past; they can thus be used to reflect on the present in a number of ways and can become part of radically different, clashing ideologies.

The epic poem on Shaka is 632 lines long. This narrative presents the life of King Shaka on a grand scale. The above-mentioned scholars endorse Nkabinde's (1976, p. 4) views that:

Epic poems share the same characteristics with praise poems as they reflect a person's estimation in the value system of a particular community. They are a record of a person's achievements, exploits, shortcomings, failures, and his fellow men's evaluation of him.

It is noted that the epic describes historic figures of national importance or prominent figures who are internationally, nationally or locally acclaimed. In Shaka's poem, his national significance is highlighted with the full embodiment of historic leaning and aspirations of the nation in a good manner. Although the

heroic epic shares similar characteristics with *izibongo*, praise poems, slight differences are evident as *izibongo* may be free floating in a way that written poetry is not. However, there are still certain conventions of language that mark them off from ordinary speech and give the language a rich, varied denseness. Epic poetry concentrates on form, imagery, and settings. It is the oldest of the narrative forms and its history can be traced to Homer. The language used is rich in parallelisms and other forms of repetition. An epic poem, *uShaka kaSenzangakhona* traces the life of King Shaka as a main character or protagonist who performed wonderful things for the Zulu nation.

The epic poem commences when Senzangakhona the son of Jama and Nandi the daughter of Mbengi of the Langeni clan, meet for the first time. Love burns like a fire between the couple. The expression of love is seen in this extract (Msimang, 1990, p. 54):

*Wab' esalele waphuph' okaJama,
Wab' esalambe walambel' okaJama,
Wab' esanxanwe wanxanel' okaJama.
'While she is asleep, she dreamt of the son of Jama,
while she is hungry, she was hungry for the son of Jama,
While she is longing, she longed for the son of Jama.'*

The extract is about the love between Senzangakhona and Nandi. The poem reveals that love is boundless and has no limits. It persists whether a person is asleep and dreaming or awake and hungry. Senzangakhona (he who acts with good reason) appears to be famous for his physical beauty, his dress, and decoration (Msimang, 1990, p. 54):

*Waphenduka waba yisakabuli...
'He changed to be a black-tailed finch...'*

The feathers of the finch are used for decoration. Senzangakhona is given the attributes of the finch because of his dress, tidiness and attractiveness. The first fruits of the couple become the birth of Shaka who is praised as follows (Msimang, 1990, p. 54):

*UDlondlwan' oluya luhlezi
Oluya ludlondlobele...
'Always in a great rage
The young viper grows as it sits...'*

The above-mentioned praises are those originally found in Cope (1968, p. 97). Shaka's energy, power, and strength were evident while he was still young. His character makes the poet eulogize him as a young viper. Shaka's name was given because of his mother's early pregnancy and means intestinal disease.

Shaka appears to be unlovable and detested by the whole of his father's kraal. Senzangakhona, whose kraal was at Nobamba had a number of wives. The most famous of whom was Nandi, the mother of Shaka. Nandi becomes a virago that she was driven away. Shaka is compelled to flee with his mother because he rejects with disdain the new loin-skins, which his father, as was the custom, presented to him at his puberty ceremony. The atmosphere in which Shaka attained maturity strengthened him. Shaka and his mother became wanderers as the poem illustrates (Msimang, 1990, p. 55):

*Engumnikazi lizwe wandind' ezweni,
Engumnikazi zinto wading' izinto.
'Being the owner of the country, he became a wanderer,
Being the owner of things, he became a needy person.'*

Nandi was driven away. Shaka had a most unlovable nature and was detected by the whole of his father's kraal. His mother took him to Gendeyane (Msimang, 1990, p. 55):

*Walifihl' ikhanda kuGendeyane...
'He took a shelter to Gendeyane...'*

After expulsion from Esiklebheni they went to eLangeni where they were also rejected. They went on to Macingwane, where again Shaka was not welcomed (Msimang, 1990, p. 55):

*Ephikelele kuMacingwan' eNgonyameni;
UMacingwane waphakamis' isihlangu
Wamhlangulel' owohlangu...*

*'On his way to Macingwane at eNgonyameni,
Macingwane lifted up his shield
To ward off the prince's arrival...'*

As a last resort, they put themselves under the protection of Dingiswayo (Msimang, 1990, p. 56):

*Wewus' iMfolozi..
Wewus' iNseleni..
Uyodinga kuDingiswayo..
'He descends Mfolozi..
To be a wanderer to Dingiswayo..
He descends Nseleni...'*

Shaka became a favorite of Dingiswayo because of his prowess in war and sympathy engendered by the similarity of their early lives. His character is described by Kunene (1962, p. 103) as follows:

Fortunately, he was a man of exceptional intelligence and prowess; growing up in this atmosphere of nationalism and the burning desire of each state to realize its ambitions, he infused into himself the great national spirit.

When Senzangakhona died Shaka returned home as Dingiswayo's protégé with an escort under Ngomane to take up chieftainship of the Zulu tribe. The first act of his reign was to take vengeance on those responsible for the afflictions of his early life. The organization of the Zulu military system was Shaka's greatest achievement and was based on Dingiswayo's regimental system. Shaka established the first standing army. This consisted of regiments into which the men of subjected tribes were grafted according to age. Thus, the military system cut across tribal affiliations and so contributed greatly to the unity of the Zulu nation.

The warrior of the time represented the epitome of Zulu manhood in physical perfection, loyalty, discipline, dedication, and determination. Shaka insisted upon the highest standards of bravery and endurance. He was a magnificent figure who was devoted to health, physical fitness and the pursuit of war. Shaka made himself paramount over all the tribes in KwaZulu. This epic on Shaka is less personal and more nationalistic. It tells us about his conquests as follows (Msimang, 1990, p. 64):

*Inkunz' ihlab' abayihlabayo,
Kant' ihlab' abayihlabayo,
Ngob' uhlab' uPhakathwayo..
'As it stabs those that stabbed it
The bull that is known to be stabbing
Because it stabbed Phakathwayo...'*

Shaka is likened to the powerful horned bull that gores its enemies. Phakathwayo, the chief of the Qwabe tribe, is conquered and consequently incorporated into the Zulu nation. He was a powerful chief with a greater number of warriors, but still, Shaka defeated him. Shaka's transformation by means of the military system continued to be seen when he defeated Zwide, a powerful chief (Msimang, 1990, p. 65):

*UZwive wamkhandabez' eMfolozi..
'Zwive was defeated at Mfolozi...'*

Zwive, chief of the Ndwandwe tribe, is revealed as a cunning and powerful leader in all texts. His eagerness for supremacy made him suffer. He was destroyed and his followers scattered all over the country. He died in obscurity. Shaka takes care of Zihlandlo, one of Mkhize's chiefs, who becomes completely dependent on him. Mzilikazi, chief of Khumalo's tribe, renders good service to Shaka before he becomes an independent vassal. Shaka, as an accommodative king, extends his help indiscriminately to both Blacks and Whites. Farewell, who was well known as *uMbuyazi weTheku* (Mbuyazi of the Bay) became well accepted in Zululand. He became a great favorite of Shaka, and his close contact with the Zulu nation earned him praises. Shaka is likened to the Black mountain eagle for the warmth and shelter that he gave to many tribes and individuals. His hospitality and generosity and the help he gave many prominent people are extolled as follows (Msimang, 1990, p. 66):

*Ukhoz' olumaphikw' abanzi.
Lufukamel' uZihlandlo kaGcwabe,
Lufukamel' uMzilikazi kaMashobana,
Lufukamel' omnyama nomhlophe..*

*'The wide winged eagle,
That protected Zihlandlo of Gcwabe,
Protected Mzilikazi of Mashobane,
Protected blacks and whites...'*

Shaka died because of a well-knitted plot made by his aunt, Mkabayi, his brothers, Dingane and Mhlangana as well as Mbopha, the administrative official. The death of Shaka was regarded as a misfortune to those who planned it (Msimang, 1990, p. 67):

*Kuyithunz' elibi likaDingane;
Kuyithunz' elibi likaMhlangana;
Kuyithunz' elibi likaMbopha...
'It is a misfortune for Dingane;
A misfortune for Mhlangana;
A misfortune for Mbopha...'*

The philosophy of the nation, which mirrors his deeds, remains in his praise-poems for future generations. His methods of maintaining law and justice are still considered remarkable. His approaches in promulgating new laws and regulations to substitute old ones that the nation had outgrown made him a popular monarch. His leadership qualities which blended aggression and peace, strictness and lenience, fierceness and gentleness helped him build the Zulu nation. Like a song chorus, the poet repeatedly expresses with euphemism his lamentation (Msimang, 1990, p. 67):

*Lala Nkonyane kaMenzi.
Lala Zinyane lesizwe!
'Rest well calf of Menzi,
Rest well lamb of the nation!'*

The poet appeals to the nation to accept the death of Shaka, which came as a blow to everyone. He is regarded as a builder of the Zulu nation. He occupies a position of outstanding authority and rights. He is a symbol of unity and the central figure around which the nation's life revolves. *Inkondlo kaMkabayi* (Mkabayi's poem) is a melodious lyric, which not only allows a person to come to terms with his or her imagination but also to explore his or her own historical background in the hierarchy of prominent figures. The main aim was not to emphasize romanticism only in a poetic way but also in song. In the first stanza, the poet appeals to all Zulu ladies to sing the lyric together. It is a nostalgic lyric, which binds Mkabayi and her suitor, Lamula. Mkabayi was a daughter of Jama who took a stand to never marry. Her firm decision is emphasized by Cope (1968, p. 170) as follows:

She remained unmarried, preferring to retain her independence and political influence, and her position as head of the Abaqulusi military kraal.

People thought that Lamula might win Mkabayi's heart because of the frequency and zeal he showed during the period of courtship. All Lamula's attempts and commitments were futile. Words are well selected for poetic diction. The second stanza emphasizes feelings and ideas in relation to nature. The poet remarks on Lamula's arrival in Nobamba from the mountain peaks while the canaries ululate (*imizwilili yatshiloza*) and the lilies sing (*iminduze yahlabelela*). Mkabayi appeals to the ancestors to save her from Lamula so that she can concentrate on royal matters. She insists on her request because she was highly taken by Lamula's proposal. Her confidence and skill made her turn down the proposal and readjust herself to matters of national leadership. Lamula's total rejection is outlined in the following lines (Msimang, 1990, p. 39):

*Msitheni kimi uLamula.
Ngilamleleni zintaba kuLamula...
'Hide Lamula from me,
Mountains, save me from Lamula...'*

The decision taken by Mkabayi is unique in the history of the Zulu nation. She leads her own life without a male. She commands more power by imposing her will on others and without the consent of others. Despite being feared, her personality enables her to win the affection of many people. She serves as a mediator between the king and his people. She becomes a principal adviser to the king. Overall, the poem portrays the joy, affection, hopes, and aspirations of this historical figure. Its choral nature is seen through its poetic diction, rhythmic pattern and aesthetic repetition.

Historical allusion

It is not the retelling of historical incidents but the historical references that are nationally or internationally made for the greater understanding of concepts. Cuddon (1984, p. 31) sees allusion as follows:

...an implicit reference, perhaps to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event. It is often a kind of appeal to a reader to share some experience with the writer. An allusion may enrich the work by association and give it depth.

Allusion as a figure of speech is covertly or indirectly used to reference the historical figure, King Cetshwayo, a Zulu leader and a spatial setting, Sandlwana Mountain. It further references the biblical figure, Noah and the biblical event of floods.

The historical allusion

Reference to historic figure and spatial setting

ISandlwana is always associated with King Cetshwayo. A further spatial allusion gives reference to the Nkandla forest as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 25):

*Ngimfunge uCetshwayo eseNkandla!
'I swear upon Cetshwayo at Nkandla!'*

King Cetshwayo took refuge in Nkandla forest after an untiring effort to lead the nation to freedom. His endeavor to free the nation from the domination of other nations and doctrines was successful. Nkandla is situated in KwaZulu-Natal, a province of remarkable topographical features and rich natural resources. What is remarkable about the monarch is that he was an individual who strongly believed in communal existence. He believed in a communal existence bound together and maintained by widely held moral norms, values, and practices. His regiments were recruited according to a spatial setting, for example, the *Mbonambi regiment* (the Evil-seers) came from Mbonambi; *iNgobamakhosi* (the bender of Kings) from the old Ulundi near Mhlathuze River; *uKhandempemvu* (the White-faced) from the north-west of old Ulundi, near UMfolozi river. In the poem, *UShaka KaSenzangakhona* (Shaka of Senzangakhona) we find historical allusion by looking at Shaka as a historic figure (Msimang, 1990, p. 69):

*Uthi mangithini ngoShaka owalala
KwaDukuza wafulathela?
'What must I say about forsaken Shaka
Who slept at Dukuza?'*

Shaka was born out of wedlock as the result of a casual encounter between his parents. Shaka's character is concisely revealed in Cope (1968, p. 5) when he says:

Shaka insisted upon the highest standards of bravery, endurance and discipline, but first he measured up to these standards himself. He was a magnificent figure and a magnificent fighter, devoted to youth, health, physical fitness and pursuit of war.

KwaDukuza was his capital kraal, and there he reached the height of his career. He was assassinated and buried there. It remained undisputed at the time that Shaka was a well-known warrior because of his dedication to consolidating the various tribes into a single, powerful Zulu nation. He is a pioneer of the Zulu Kingdom. The idea portrayed by the poet through the rhetorical question is that of astonishment and regret. The images depicted by the words *owalala* (who slept) and *wafulathela* (forsaken) show that his spirit is still alive: he slept, and he is still expected to wake up; he turned back yet he will change his mind and hold fruitful discussions with us. The allusion refers to Shaka as a historic figure. KwaDukuza gives a spatial, historical setting as well as the historical events regarding his death.

Reference to a biblical figure and incident

In the poem, *Ihlathi LaseNkandla* we find this biblical allusion (Msimang, 1980, p. 23):

*Wena owakha umkhumbi kaNowa.
'You who built Noah's boat.'*

From the Bible, we are all aware that Noah was a prominent and remarkable figure who feared God. He took instruction from God and carried it through despite all odds. He lived in fellowship with God. Noah's family, his wife, three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, as well as their wives, entered the boat. God destroyed the entirely human race during the flood. The forest, Nkandla, is likened to Noah's boat because of its significance as a shelter, protective place or sanctuary. Noah's boat protected his family, and Nkandla forest protected the Zulu patriots. The allusion to Noah's boat refers to a person as well as to the cultural phenomenon and event.

Educational Contexts

Msimang's anthologies include various well-noted poems about education. It is explicit in all of them that education is a great boon and a positive action carried out to instill knowledge. The poems that will be discussed are *Vilakazi Awusayikubhubha* (Vilakazi, you never) which is based on an educational figure; *Nge-Unisa Eminyakeni Elikhulu* (Hundred years of Unisa's existence) about the educational institution, Unisa, and *Mshayeleni Ihlombe* (Give him an applause) which depicts educational effort and achievement.

An educational figure

The poem, *Vilakazi Awusayikubhubha* (Vilakazi, you'll never die) is a fourteen-line poem, a sonnet, which highlights education through an educator. The poet makes a request in the four introductory lines (Msimang, 1980, p. 90):

*Zingane zikaZulu
Zesuleni izinyembezi
Hayani inkondlo kaZulu
Ezonesula izinyembezi.
'Zulu children
Wipe off your tears.
Recite the poem of the Zulus
Which shall wipe off your tears.'*

The poet requests all those who regard education as being of paramount importance to not weep, but to recite the poem of the nation. The poem of the nation refers to education as an alternative weapon of fighting adverse situations. The poet feels that weeping will not solve any problem but will make life more difficult for them. Weeping encourages sorrow and sadness. It is time-consuming to keep on weeping if there is an alternative for joy and cheerfulness. His literary contributions serve as alternatives for happiness and his ever-standing statutes for courage and strength. He further requests Zulu children to take a new directive (Msimang, 1980, p. 19):

*Buyani kwabalele eMalanihili,
Nimfunelani uBhambatha kwabaphansi?
Khangelani amal' ezulu,
Nizombona eziqongweni zezintaba.
'Come from Marianhill graveyard,
Why are you seeking Bhambatha from the graveyard?
Look at the horizons,
You shall see him on the mountains' peaks.'*

Although Vilakazi, who is called Bhambatha in the poem, is no longer alive, his literary works circulate worldwide and serve as a yardstick for isiZulu literature. His ever-remarkable work marks the period. The poet requests the people not to focus on his grave in Marianhill, but to look at his works. The worth of his writings caters for human situations, historical periods and geographical settings. His works, especially the volumes of poetry, *Amal' Ezulu* and *Inkondlo KaZulu*, endorse liberal ideologies for social harmony.

The poet feels that fundamental social change can be brought about through formal education. The idea of the poem is successfully highlighted by the use of the word *umthombo* (fountain) as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 19):

*Lo mthombo awusoze washa noma nini.
Lo mthombo ungashiswa yini nje nempela?*

*'This fountain shall never run dry anytime.
What could possibly cause this fountain to run dry?'*

The word *umthombo* (fountain) speaks of formal education as an ongoing process. The rhetorical question emphasizes the idea, which is stated in the preceding line. By using the word *umthombo* the poet illustrates that education should be part of a culture for survival. Msimang's use of the titles of Dr BW Vilakazi's literary works is concealed as ordinary norms that convey apparently denotative and connotative meanings. For example: line 3: *inkondlo kaZulu* (Zulu song); line 7: *amal' ezulu* (Zulu Horizons); line 13: *noma nini* (Anytime) and line 14: *Nje nempela* (Truly indeed). The latter is the title of Vilakazi's novel on authentic love. The eighth line reveals that Vilakazi will be seen on the peaks of mountains, but not at the graveyard (Msimang, 1980, p. 19):

*...Nizombona eziqongweni zezintaba.
'...You shall see him at the peaks of the mountains.'*

The word *iziqongo* (peaks) refers to the highest level of education. Vilakazi's commitment to education is revealed in his contributions to literary works, his academic qualifications, and his qualities as an educated person. The poet appears to be inspired by Vilakazi as an educator. Vilakazi's literary contribution reveals him to be an intellectual educator who positively acknowledged communal factors, the diversity of cultural lifestyles and languages of the inhabitants. We conclude by saying that Vilakazi deserves further praise as an outstanding academic and a forerunner in blending African and Western Cultures for the benefit of the South African nation. His pioneering work is internationally acclaimed because of the special attention he gave to harmony and co-operation between school and life in general; the emphasis on the development of the whole person and the stimulation of self-activity and creativity.

An educational institution

The praise-poem, *Nge-Unisa Eminyakeni Elikhulu* (Unisa centenary) is about the hundred years of existence of the University of South Africa. It is a masterpiece, which is rich in vocabulary, poetic diction and in figurative language. Unisa began as an educational institution in 1873. It serves as a light to all those who value its importance. The poet reveals the history of the institution and its location as follows (Msimang, 1980, p. 2):

*Ukhoz' olubhul' amaphikw' eKapa,
Lukhuphuka ngeziqongo zezintaba,
Lwagoq' amaphikw' esigodlweni ePitoli.
'The hawk that claps its wings in Cape Town,
Ascends with the mountains, peaks,
Fold the wings in the capital city Pretoria.'*

Unisa opened as an institution for distance education in Cape Town and moved to Pretoria. It was the first South African institution to emerge and acquire international recognition. Its prestige, greatness and wide acclaim are compared to other well-known institutions (Msimang, 1980, p. 3):

*Wen' owathwesw' isidlodlo nguKhwini Victoria
Ngokukweqhatha noCambridge no-Oxford kowe-1877.
'One who wore a bunch of feathers by Queen Victoria
Comparing you with Cambridge and Oxford in 1877.'*

The fame of this institution is highly pronounced. It is compared to the English universities Cambridge and Oxford because of its tuition, competency and large number of students. It is further referred to as a source (Msimang, 1980, p. 3):

*Mthombo wolwazi ogobhoze ngemihoshahosha,
Gobhoza ngiphuze, uz' uphuzise nabezayo.
'Fountain of knowledge flow through the deep gorge,
Flow so that I shall drink, until the coming generation drinks.'*

It is a source of knowledge likened to the ever-flowing fountain. The fountain water is utilized by multitudes of people; therefore, it is equated to the functions of the institution. The purpose of this praise-poem is to present Unisa as an object of admiration. It is glowingly lauded for its physical structure, attractiveness and its function (Msimang, 1980, p. 2):

Indonsakusa kudabuk' ukukhanya,

*Ikhwez' elikhanye umnyama wanyamalala...
 'The planet Jupiter that brightens and dawns,
 The Venus that brightens and the darkness disappears...'*

Unisa is likened to the brightness of the planet Jupiter and the morning star, Venus. It is nationally and internationally taken as a source of light to all the goal-oriented people who are keen, diligent and well-motivated in achieving and reaching certain specific levels of education. Unisa is the first tertiary academic institution to draw the attention of all people because of its prestige. It is looked at in relation to other institutions, which came up later in the following extract (Msimang, 1980, p. 3):

*Sibonga nemithantikazi yakho nayo esisengwa,
 Ngish' uNgoye, iTurfloop neFort Hare kwezomdabu,
 Ngish' uWitwatersrand nabakwabo kwezimhlophe,
 Ngingamlibali uWestville kumaNdiya,
 Ngingamlibali uBellville kumaKhaladi.
 'We thank your young heifers which are now milked,
 The Ngoye, Turfloop and Fort Hare to Blacks
 The Witwatersrand to the Whites,
 Not forgetting Westville for Indians,
 Not forgetting Bellville for Coloureds.'*

The institution is likened to a heavy-milking cow. It is the first higher academic and professional institution that precedes the following mentioned universities: University of Zululand, University of Limpopo, University of Fort Hare, the then University of Durban Westville and the University of Western Cape. Other universities are likened to precocious heifers because of their commitment to teaching-learning situations. The young heifers reflect liveliness, healthiness, helpfulness, and productiveness. In traditional Zulu culture, the bye of a man had a number of young heifers in stock as an endorsement of his manhood. The poet likens the institutions to the milky heifers when he says: ...*nemithantikazi yakho nayo esisengwa* (your young heifers that are now milked). The milk reflects on nourishment.

Intellectual attainment

The poem, *Mshayeleni Ihlombe* (Give him an applause) is both an instructive and educative poem which moralizes for acceptable social behaviour. It consists of only three stanzas which are rich in poetic diction. The first stanza depicts this information on encouragement (Msimang, 1980, p. 49):

*Nxa nibe nisakhwele nidilike,
 Yena athi nombe okwenkawu,
 Nibe nisahlambe nigwilize,
 Yena athi tshu okwenhlanzi,
 'Lo muntu unesalamuzi'
 Mshayeleni ihlombe bo!
 'When you are climbing but easily fall,
 He simply climbed like a monkey,
 When you attempt swimming, but drown,
 He simply swam like a fish,
 "This person has magic"
 Give him an applause!'*

Everyone is striving to achieve a specific goal. A person's strivings entail an attempt which is either successful or unsuccessful. The poet teaches us that we must learn to congratulate a person who has achieved something in life. The unfortunate group fails to appreciate, praise and clap hands. One's success must not create anger and enmity but must be taken as a challenge. People should desist from associating individual achievements with *isalamuzi* (magic) because that spoils and derogates the name of an achiever despite his or her tremendous goal achievement efforts, diligence, integrity and sense of responsibility. It is therefore notable that a person who profitably devotes his time to formal education will climb the academic ladder. Such a person needs applause rather than the defaming utterances which shield other peoples' unsuccessful attempts.

The third stanza compares the achieved goals and not achieved the goals of two selected individuals (Msimang, 1980, p. 49):

*Nxa nibe nisambongoze banganizwa,
Yena akhuleke bamphendule...
Yena angqongqoze bamvulele...
'When you are wailing but not heard,
He prayed and is answered...
He knocked and the doors opened...'*

The stanza teaches us that we can pray together, but that not all our prayers will be answered; you can knock, but not all will be called to enter. We need dedication to our human endeavor. If one of your colleagues has achieved something, it is wise to appreciate his achievement, celebrate with him, *mshayeleni ihlombe* (give him an applause) rather than look at him as *umsheshelengwana* (a sneaking informer), a magician or a witch. The poem under discussion is didactic as it aims to give instructions and moral lessons. Mankind is encouraged to give credit where it is due. The sender highlights the relations which are sincerity, compassion, gratitude, cordiality, and thoughtfulness. Msimang's poetry reflects on various perspectives as it touches educational figures, institutions and achievements to explicate the theme of education in both explicit and implicit ways.

4. Discussion

It is noted that historical accounts are studied from various angles. The poem *UShaka KaSenzangakhona* is an epic in which events, facts and lineage figures are fictitiously examined. In *Inkondlo KaMkabayi*, the proposal of love between Mkabayi and Lamula dominates as a historical incident. It is evident in the poem that a woman can sometimes play a vital role in state affairs and that she can command the same respect as men. *ISandlwana* and *Ihlathi LaseNkandla* are both historical poems that do not look at history as a perspective but as a creative art. The events and topographical features are rich with historical facts presented in a poetic manner.

Msimang has exhibited various dimensions to explore the theme of education. Dr. BW Vilakazi is selected as an educator and is portrayed in the poem as a figure of encouragement, aspiration, and strength. His outstanding academic achievements and pioneering literary works blend African and Western cultures for the benefit of the South African nation. Education is approached by using an educational figure to bring together various African nations, cultures and the co-operation between school and life in general. One tertiary institution, namely the University of South Africa is selected to highlight the significance of education. Educational achievements are the outcome of disciplines, industrious effort, and open-mindedness.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the two selected themes are looked at from various angles using content analysis for systematic description, explanation and contextualizing researches. The messages that are imparted through these themes are succinctly explored in this study. In addition to thematic analysis, the language structures and conversations are explored. The word choice depicts effective and precise vocabulary. It expresses the implied and contextual meanings. It further emphasizes emotive and persuasive language. The different types of sentence constructions namely; simple, compound and complex are demonstrated. Most extracted poetic verses ensure coherent introductory sentences, supporting and main ideas and concluding closing sentences.

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