

Reconnoitring racism in Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

* Shamim Akhter

** Komal Khan, Lecturer (Corresponding Author)

*** Abrar Hussain Qureshi, Professor

Abstract



The present research study endeavored to reconnoiter the predispositions of African-American women by dissecting Angelou's novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). The researcher has probed into the depth of experiences faced by the marginalized women; addressing blacks' experience in America. Angelou has productively showcased her anguishes of being a black woman in a whitish female over-riding civilization. The researcher has highlighted an assault of black female in her juvenility by all those communal powers of nature. The protagonist is caught up in the tripartite crossfire of male prejudice, white illogical hate and black lack of power. The researcher has critically analyzed the issues of women subjugation and racial discrimination through the lens of Lazar's *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis* (2007). The current research study depicts how the powhitetrash authors/authoresses have misrepresented the history of black woman but the black writers had revealed the authenticity and tangible picture of the white people. They have portrayed the images of the slavery and inequity. The major focus is on enlightening the practices of the marginalized people, mainly Black women, and their protest against oppressors.

Keywords: African-American Women, Marginalized Women, Black Women Experiences, Male Prejudice

Introduction

Maya Angelou's autobiography "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" is about the fight back of Maya's life that is the expedition of success "*from slavery to liberty*." It is the first autobiography from seven volumes of Maya Angelou, in which Angelou had spotlighted the black women's history and racial discrimination by colored people. Many studies have done on this autobiography; researchers have explored the themes of feminism, self-realization, oppression, and cruelty. Yet, they did not pay enough attention to the autobiographical elements especially through the textual analysis and feministic roles in the concerned literary work. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) deals with the true-life aspects of the society; it also presents the true portrayal of white people. It portrays how whites used to treat blacks in a very cruel manner especially the struggles faced by the black women are remarkable. It also proves that the diversity was not prevailing only between blacks and whites but this gap flanked via men and women.

The authoress- the researcher has chosen is an African and American writer named Maya Angelou (1928-2014), who was a successful bard, playwright, civil rights activist, memoirist, feminist, screenwriter, and a legendary writer as well. She had put in writing numerous autobiographies all the way through her career in order to let her voice heard in her published seven autobiographies and poems. She had defended black culture even in her autobiographies. She became a feminist, ambassador of blacks and women. Her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) has unchained other female writers to carve what they perceive and observe the society concerning women devoid of becoming anxious from the male society. She had explored into the inner self of one's rather than questioning into the personality of others.

The basic reason for choosing Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) is that Angelou had a key influence on the Afro American women's plight. Maya through her feminine voice had shed light on the strong doctrines for living the life not only as a woman but also as a strong woman. She has proved that being a woman is not the obsession to bother

* Department of School of Languages, Civilization and Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Kedah. Email: misschudry96@gmail.com

** Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan Email: khankomal34@gmail.com

*** Department of English University of Sahiwal, Pakistan Email: abrarqureshi@uosahiwal.edu.pk

about, but being a fragile woman is really the point to ponder; it all depends on woman how to converse for her rights. It does not matter whether it is a black woman but that woman must be responsible for bringing justice, peace, and fairness in the society through her wits. Maya has proved that she was a real strong woman.

Statement of the Purpose:

The study explored and analyzed the specific writing of Maya Angelou through analytical reading of the black woman's writing who has explored the experiences and roles of her personal life in a racist and male dominated society. The researcher has probed into the gender discrimination issues specifically while indicating the feministic vision of Maya Angelou through her magnificent fictional memoir. By focusing on the reconnoitering of positive Black self-hood, the researcher has depicted the character of protagonist from being submissive object to self-realization. The contemporary research study is dedicated to illustrate how and what kind of experiences are portrayed by the black through reference to Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969).

Significance of the research study:

The present research study is the great initiative for the researchers, peers, practitioners, teachers, scholars and students. It will encourage the readers to research in Afro-American Literature. This study will help the potential researchers to know about black females experiencing oppression, abuses and marginalization due to racial discrimination. Due to the misrepresentation of blacks' women in the autobiographies by other authors, black women in response started writing to liberate them from the concocted picture that was portrayed by the white people. Maya Angelou's autobiographies are multi-dimensional and have numerous facets. Maya appears as a child, daughter, mother, and politician and as a social activist. The researcher aims to fill the gap in the post-colonial critical considerations to understand the concerns of Negro conflicts and racial issues.

Research Methodology:

The present study is descriptive in nature, as it investigates the experiences of downgraded women in Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). This research work is chiefly concerned with the textual analysis of the novel, *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis* (2007) was found to be the most appropriate method for the current study. The primary research method is represented through the scrutiny of the text whereas the secondary data is based on the inspection of research studies that other researchers have done in the Afro-American literature.

Data Analysis:

Maya's first autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird* (1969) consists of thirty-six chapters. The section of prologue is also there before the first chapter that is associated with the life history of siblings' i.e. brother and sister. The autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird* (1969) starts with the prologue in which the authoress's choice of language is so careful that she had not deviated from the path and she had not only focused on the themes but she had also prepared her readers for the upcoming events. As, quoted in the text:

What you looking at me for? I didn't come to stay... (Angelou, 1969, p.1)

The children section of the 'Colored Methodist Episcopal' in prologue prepares the readers for the theme of racism that even the young Maya was encountering. The young girl Maya wished to be a white girl and wanted to awake from her ugly black dream. There is the thrice time repetition of these lines in the very beginning of the prologue. It starts with the recitation of the poem by Marguerite in the church. The repetition of these words and phrases shows that Marguerite, the child of three years had forgotten the poem that she was supposed to recite in the church. The girl which is spotlighted in the text- reciting poem is described thorough her physical features and costume by the narrator. The little girl is black by race and is dressed up in lavender taffeta dress. She as a child has used an image of a "silk dress" to represent her heartiest desire as she wanted to be a white girl.

The image of a silk dress is in the mind of a little Marguerite who is only of three years and still she wants to get exonerate of black race, she has craving to become a white girl as they are charismatic and eye-catching. Then she is also thinking that when she would be in white silk dress, people would recognize that she was from white race, how people will express regret from her because she would be in the right place of white imperialistic race but it is just her wish because she belongs to black race. Then, the speaker narrates how Marguerite looks when she is wearing the lavender taffeta costume. She does not look attractive in her silk dress. The dress didn't conceal her skinny legs and it made her skin like a grubby mud and not only this she was also in the eyes of

everyone in the church and that was the cause due to which she failed to remember the poem that she was declaiming on the Easter's eve. It was minister's spouse who assisted little Marguerite (nickname - Maya), by telling her the line which she had forgotten.

It also shows that Momma- her grandmother or any other black woman, did not help a little black girl. Even so, the white woman helped her only. The authoress has implied the technique of 'Scriptio Continua' in the line as mentioned below:

"Ijustcometotellyouit's Easter Day" (Angelou, 1969, p.3)

It truly replicates the embarrassment, fear, and inferior complexity of a child who is facing the huge audience and lacks fluency in her speech. She has used a style of writing without spaces or other marks between the words. She repeated the words, the words that jammed her speech. Just like a child, she seized her two fingers in close proximity to her upper body in order to show that she wanted to go to the toilet. Yet, unluckily, she peed in the church's porch and got relieved. The prologue ends with the irony on the racism that how it is so painful and plight for a girl who is southern black and is always aware of her displacement, it is just like a needless and redundant abuse. Likewise, when she pees in the porch it foreshadows the growing hatred, racism and disgrace for the whites. The narrator has used the foreshadowing technique of the event that will disclose the displacement of black children, especially of a black girl i.e., Marguerite.

The authoress has used the "First person narrative"- I, as it is the autobiography and the little Marguerite tells the story when she was in her childhood in her three years till the age of sixteen years whereas the adult Maya Angelou is totally changed from the young Maya. The authoress has used the 'Flashback technique' through the narration of adult Maya Angelou who is mature and sensible. The events that were not disclosed by the young Maya are exposed by the Adult Maya in order to inform the reader about the truth and reality of all the mishaps that happened to a girl of seven years. In the text, the young Maya has also used the 'Foreshadowing technique' when Maya dreams to the most beautiful girl among the white race, it foreshadows the successful conclusion with the supremacy of the blacks over whites. It permits the reader to expertise and get familiar with the world in which the young baby Maya was living, the world of the cruelty that changed the life of the little Marguerite after the rape and finally made her experienced to be the adult women, she was young, but after the rape, she became an adult woman. This Adult Maya is a symbolic character for a young Maya and even for every black girl and black woman, nurturing in European countries especially a country like America where the racial prejudices are found commonly. Her life, made by herself into the successful one gives the significant message to the readers whether it belongs to the south, east or west coaches that a girl can speak for her rights, can take position for her career, it doesn't matter whether she is living within a white or black society. Angelou experienced herself as a victim of racism even in her childhood, due to this, her reaction to racism expressed with distinction, and she possessed a sturdy wisdom for acknowledgment of her individuality.

In the opinion of Cudjoe (1990), Maya Angelou was the first black woman writer and an autobiographer as Cudjoe opines that an influential, realistic significance of [African-American] maturity in her pursuit for compassionate and adoration rather than for resentment and anguish.

Angelou has revealed the fact that when she was of only three years and contrary to this, her only brother Bailey was of four, it was the time when they were sent to their parental grandmother's home at Stamps, Arkansas from California. There she came to discover that it was the custom that the black children used to travel alone to their new rich parents after segregation or back to their maternal or parental grandparents' home even the town to which they are going to shift always appeared to cruel towards the little black children.

Due to racism, Maya also witnessed her race who was working in the fields like not only the laborers but also more than the slaves. Maya's grandmother- Momma Henderson and the laborers used to work from dawn to dusk in order to support their families. During the season of cotton picking, the workers were promising and full of life in the morning time but at the afternoon due to over loaded effort the workers exposed the unsympathetic and ruthless part of their southern black life; it didn't matter whether the workers were exhausted or fatigued the next hectic day was always waiting for them. When the workers returned to the store some of them used to place their sacks at the store and some of them used to take it to their homes in order to repair their torn sacks due to over-loaded goods. Life was very difficult for them. Maya as a child was aware of the hard routine of her southern black people; she knew that during what time of season the cotton pickers will go to work,

even she is aware of the fact that how their customers will be happy and when and why they will be sad? She keenly observed the hard routine of her grandmother- Momma who used to get up at 4 O' clock in the morning, offered her morning prayers and used to allocate the daily chores to both Maya and Bailey and let the people to come in the store who were waiting for the store' opening time.

Maya as a black girl was the eyewitness of the hard and tough life of laborers who were treated as slaves because they were black in race. Momma's Henderson acted as a true preacher for both Maya and Bailey. As a black woman, she was well aware of the strict rules for the way of living for the black people. This was the main reason due to which she always wanted to see her children with the cleanliness manners. She did not want the white people to say any hatred thing about the physical appearance of her black children. As, quoted in the text:

THOU shall not be dirty" and "Thou shall not be impudent" were the two commandments of Grandmother Henderson.... (Angelou, 1969, p.27)

The grandmother of both Maya and Bailey was very conscious about the cleanliness and manners of her children. She wanted them to adopt the cleanliness manners of powhitetrash people so that her grandchildren must look attractive especially to the white people who used to hate from the black children. At that time, the black woman has not only to suffer from racism, chauvinism, prejudice, subjection, subjugation but she has also to face the mockery by the po-whitesh children. As we are told in the text that the po-whitesh girls used to poke fun at Maya's grandmother by posturing the bodily form of her grandmother who was big and bulky in size and as a black woman they used to compare her figure with the gorilla.

Maya was in strongly adored with her grandmother and she could not bear such a humiliation by the po-whitesh children towards her grandmother. Maya as a child was raged by Mr. Freeman and busted into tears; she wanted to take revenge form the powhitetrash girls by taking the shot through rifle or by throwing a handful of black pepper on to their faces or by screaming and telling them that they were categorically muddy and scummy peckerwoods. But, she controlled herself, consequently her inner emotions provoked. Her feelings were powerful and she in her annoyance, offense burst into tears because she was frail and couldn't defend for her grandmother at that time but later she came to recognize that Momma's face was glowing like a 'brown moon', Momma was contented because she had won from the pro white trash girls who were silly in nature.

Maya as a child realized that the confrontation must be given to the white people by the blacks, as it is the best stratagem to treat them. Even the racism was prevailing in Stamps, Arkansas, that there was also a prohibition on the food for the black niggers, as the white people not allowed blacks to eat ice cream other than the day that was allotted to them. As, quoted here:

People in Stamps used to say that the whites in our town were so prejudiced that a Negro couldn't buy Vanilla ice cream... (Angelou, 1969, p.49)

Such was the racial discrimination witnessed by the child Maya, even the child had the sense that the white people treated them in a disgusting manner, Maya also opines that might be possible that god was white too, that is why the white people in their society were given more privilege than the black ones. The food, the clothes, cars and the shimmering houses that were painted in white color, the white children, and white women everything was totally prejudiced from the black people throughout the text. The authoress carves in Chapter No. 8 as given below:

I couldn't understand whites and where they got the right to spend money so lavishly... (Angelou, 1969, p.50)

Nevertheless, the black people never spent lavishly; neither had they supposed to be, what was appreciable in the black Negroes that they possessed generous nature for their neighbors. If the black people were in any sort of difficult times, they were always helped by each other. They were always supportive to each other and it was the relationship of the donor to the receiver at the difficult time. As, quoted in the text:

Whatever was given by Black people to other Blacks was most probably needed as desperately by the donor as by the receiver... (Angelou, 1969, p.50)

When the protagonist finished her school, she started working as a house cleaner in the white woman's house, named Mrs. Viola Cullinan. The citation in Chapter No. 16 as:

During my tenth year, a white woman's kitchen became my finishing school. (Angelou, 1969, p.105)

The authoress has given the vivid scenario of the difference between the white and the black girls. The young white girls in Stamps were supposed to live a luxurious life where as the little black girls were bound to serve the white society. Maya had also experienced about the hypocrisy of white people, especially at the time when she started working in the white woman's house named Mrs. Cullinan; belonged from Texas, who used to portray herself as a liberal woman and was already willing to tell about her hometown. Maya felt disgraced and humiliated when she told about her grandmother's general merchandise store in the stamps, Mrs. Cullinan questioned her in a very disgraceful manner as:

Why, you were a debutante. (Angelou, 1969, p.104)

While Maya was a student and she was not the type of woman who was making her first appearance in fashionable society of Mrs. Cullinan. Maya as a young girl was shocked due to the appearance of her house; according to her, the house of Mrs. Viola Cullinan was callous and merciless. She appeared to be the richest and mannered woman but the presentation of things in her house were not in an apple pie order. She almost took a week to learn the about the kinds of plates in which salad, bread and dessert was served.

Maya's hatred for Mrs. Cullinan nurtured when on one evening she was requested by Mrs. Glory to dish up the white ladies, when she was placing the tray and twisted her backside towards the white ladies in order to walk off to kitchen, one of the white lady inquired about Maya's name. Mrs. Cullinan answered back at this; that she is not the talkative girl but her name is Margaret. The woman that inquired about Maya's name suggested that her name must be Mary, if she would be the mistress of Marguerite she would like to call her by the abbreviated name i.e. Mary. Maya was disheartened because the white woman from Margaret to Mary distorted her name; though Maya's real name was Marguerite. This moment clearly shows when Maya's racism is clearly observed by the wrath and frenzy in Maya's thoughts.

Maya's racism reached at the zenith when she was called through the wrong name; the white woman Mrs. Cullinan as a mistress changed the name of the black girl. In addition to this, the young Maya sturdily disliked this action of Mrs. Cullinan. Because according to Maya it was really the disgusting act by the white people who thinks that they have authority to change the name of the black people who were even serving them; it is not only the matter of changing name rather than this it is the matter of changing one's identity without one's consent. Maya entitled it as a hellish horror of being:

Called out of his name. (Angelou, 1969, p.109)

It also refers to the fact that Maya was a brave girl who was not ready to surrender in front of Mrs. Cullinan or to permit Mrs. Cullinan to change her identity by changing Maya's original name i.e., Marguerite as it was the same name that was given to her by her parents at the time of her birth. One of her friends suggested this naming by Mrs. Cullinan that if she would be the mistress of Marguerite then she would like to call her by a short name for her own convenience. As, quoted in the text:

After I set the tray down and turned towards the kitchen, one of the women asked, "What's your name girl? ... (Angelou, 1969, p.107)

Mrs. Cullinan started to call Marguerite by another name that was suggested by her friend. She started to call Marguerite as Mary. It really offended Maya and her self-esteem and ego was hurt by all this. Marguerite's dedication towards her mistress' work was discouraged and her attention was diverted from her work responsibilities.

Due to proclamation of name' replacement by Mrs. Cullinan, Maya as a black girl felt that it was really insulting for anyone to call the person by the wrong name rather than the real name of that person. Especially, when it was the matter of calling the Negro by the wrong name. It was not only the matter of insulting the niggers by calling them from the wrong name, it was also the way of torturing the niggers by realizing them that once they were slaves or it was indirectly reminding them that they were inferior creature. As, Maya herself confesses:

Every person I knew had a hellish horror of being "called out of his name... (Angelou, 1969, p.109)

Miss Glory- the head house cleaner; she told Maya that she had been serving Mrs. Cullinan for twenty years soothed Maya. She revealed the bitter fact to Maya that her real name was Hallelujah and it was Mrs. Cullinan who had given her a new name i.e., Miss Glory just for the sake for her own convenience.

Miss Glory (the senior house cleaner of Mrs. Cullinan) told Maya not to bother over the preciseness of her name; the former's name was Hallelujah before twenty years but her name was too replaced by Mrs. Cullinan and she didn't mind that her name was changed by her mistress, rather than this she liked her new name. Maya was hazy after listening that whether the name Hallelujah was funny but at the same, she wanted to cry that who has given the right to white woman to call from any other name just for the sake of convenience.

Maya's self-esteem and egoism did not allow her to continue her job at Mrs. Cullinan's house that used to call her from the name i.e., Mary. Therefore, finally, Maya decided to quit her job but for this, she had to justify the reason of resigning especially to her grandmother, Momma Henderson. So, finally Maya's predicament was cracked by her brother, Bailey. According to the plan, Maya broke the 'serving tray, casserole and the couple of green glass cups' by dropping them on the smooth floor that was of marble. At this, the reaction of Mrs. Cullinan was really taken pleasure in by Maya due to racism.

It also represents Maya's rebelliousness because Maya at first broke the serving tray but when she was harshly called by Mrs. Cullinan she broke the rest of the two items of the crockery in order to show that she didn't bother whether the mistress was calling her by the name Mary or whether the mistress was going to snub her. She expressed her internal feeling, her hatred for the race without any sort of shilly-shallying. Mrs. Cullinan herself called Maya from her real name rather than using any name for her own convenience. Finally, Mrs. Cullinan indirectly called Maya from her real name. At this Maya was very happy and appreciated that finally the white woman called her from her real name though she was inquiring about the incident that how her precious crockery was broken and especially who dared it to do such kind of negligence, as her crockery was precious and was passed on to her by her Momma. Maya showed her disliking for her mistress by reacting against her through breaking her precious crockery and by writing a poem on Mrs. Cullinan. The consequence of this incident was that Mrs. Cullinan in her aggressiveness uttered Maya's real name; she called her from the original name i.e., Margaret. In her rage she had thrown the piece of broken crockery on Maya but the screams of Miss Glory reveal that her ear was injured by the striking plate. Maya was very happy because she realized the white woman that blacks must be calling by their proper names. The prejudice in Maya started nurturing at the time when Mrs. Cullinan called her Maya from Marguerite, Mary from Maya. This act of humility by renaming enraged Maya and she decided to leave her job by breaking Mrs. Cullinan's favorite inherited dish. She took revenge from the white woman by making her cry for her broken pottery.

Then another striking element of racism is traced in Chapter No. 19. We are told about the wrestling match between the blacks and the whites, when the black community is flocked around the radio in the Momma's store for listening the commentary of the boxing match. Everyone in the town is agitated for it and expecting from the black people to win the match. A black wrestler- Joe Louis was encouraged by his race. The black people were disappointed and afraid of Joe-Louis' defeat. They were thinking that if Joe Louis lost then it would be the defeat of their race. As, quoted in the text:

If Joe lost we were back in slavery and beyond help. It would all be true, the accusations that we were lower types of human beings... (Angelou, 1969, p.135)

Joe Louis is the representative of the black race and the dignity, self-respect, identity and bravery is very dependent on his victory. If Joe will win, his race will survive. Everyone is expecting from him to save the black nation. However, if Joe will lose then the whole nation would be ruined. This loss will be the symbol of slavery and the black race will not be only helpless then all the blames on the black race will be justified, especially the accusation that they belong to the lower race that can be compare with apes-the worst and genius creature on the earth. It will be prove that the black people are stupid, lazy, unclean, as well as unlucky. Even the God hates them but it all will be prove if the Joe Louis loss the match.

During the match' commentary, when the spectacles were told about the Louis' defeat, the black people were disappointed. It seemed that they have lost the last hope of their survival; life. As, quoted in the text:

We didn't breathe. We didn't hope. We waited. (Angelou, 1969, p.135)

However, the miracle happened, Joe Louis not only save the dignity of his nation, he also won the match from the white wrestler. Joe Louis came in his rage, his prejudiced against whites motivated

him, and he moved towards the center of the ring. Finally, he overpowered the whites against the blacks and was renowned as "The Brown Bomber" and he became the heavy weight champion of the world.

The blacks celebrated the biggest victory of their nation by arranging a party for the natives. Joe Louis has not only achieved his goal but he became the winner of the match. In addition to this, he was not only the champion of the match rather than this was the champion of the whole world. In Chapter No. 19, it is cited as:

Then the voice, husky and familiar, came to wash over us---"The winnah, and still heavyweight champeen of the world... Joe Louis. (Angelou, 1969, p.135)

The black natives were very happy because the black man became the champion of the world. The won the match from the white and due to this he won the title of the toughest man in the world. Another remarkable aspect of discrimination is portrayed by Maya Angelou when we are told that the native who lived at distant places from the town, were compelled to spent the whole night in the town because the white people could harm them because the blacks have justified that they were really strong than whites. It also shows that Marguerite as Maya had become more aware of the stark reality of racism that her community was facing.

Maya Angelou illustrates the bits and pieces of racism at the time when Marguerite as Maya has graduated from eighth grade. However, the arrival of the white people as a guest and keynote speaker totally upset the black children, especially the sensitive ones like Maya. A white man named Edward Donleavy gave the commencement address. The specific protocol was given to the two white men. Even the central seat of the black principal was given to the white man who was invited as a visitor. The blacks are bound to show more respect for the whites even the stature of the blacks people were replaced by the white ones in the graduation ceremony.

The token of respect was given to the powhitetrash strange man who goes to the stage and takes the seat of the principal. This was insulting for the black children who were excited for their graduation day. The mood of the children was spoiled by the biased speech of Mr. Edward Donleavy, who told about the expected wonderful changes in the white school in comparison to the Lafayette Country Training School that was for black children. The most awful moment for Maya was when Donleavy predicted about the brightest future of his race while the black students' future was very ill fated in his delivered words. As it was the graduation time and children were expecting the words of motivation and encouragement by the guest speaker but here the guest speaker forecasted the gloomy fate on the little minds of black children. Mr. Donleavy clearly predicted that the whites will enjoy the superior positions in their future but blacks are meant to be athletes and wrestlers. Marguerite was much frustrated at that time and she was compelled to think that it also means that if any black children want to change his ill fate, from the dull fate to the bright fate it means that first that black children had to pay the penance for his black skin. It is the sin of the children if he is born in the black race.

The harsh words of Mr. Donleavy fell like solid bricks around the auditorium. Marguerite was dejected before her farewell note. It all was due to the speech of white guest speaker who has indirectly told them that among the black race, the black children will never be the scientist or academicians. They are doomed to be the laborers or athletes. As Donleavy had exposed; all minor jobs are for the black race. Maya as a young girl realized about the ruthless veracity that what white people perceive about the black ones. She was really distressed, as quoted below:

We were maids and farmers, handymen and washer-women, and... (Angelou, 1969, p.180)

Here the narrator had highlighted the grim reality of the society that even the children of the black people are aware about the bleak and harsh reality that they are inferior beings, even not human beings. They are meant to serve the white people at the cost of their own sweat and blood, hard work and labor and they own no right to think that they can change their fate through education. The highest rank that the black children can achieve is to think that they are the ridicule creature and their existence is absurd in this world but still they are snobbish about their existence and intellectualism. This sort of stance in Marguerite's mind blazes the flame of racism, due to which Marguerite's racism gushed out from her tolerance' altitude.

Maya's racism against the white people was at peak even that she wanted them to be dead in their ugly beds. Maya as a child wished that Abraham Lincoln would be assassinated who has sung the song for the declaration of liberalism because the black people are not liberated from the slavery

by the whites, she wanted that Harriet Tubman must be sentenced to death and the person who has discovered America must be drowned. It was all due to the hatred speech of Donleavy. Even the Negroes started to think that their existence was awful and they did not possess any kind of supremacy in their own life matters. As cited below:

It was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my color with no chance of defense. We should all be dead, one on the top of the other. (Angelou, 1969, p.180)

The narrator was so disheartened that she wished that the black race must be groaned and all blacks must be deceased because it was really painful for the negroes to listen the accusations that they had never committed and not only this they also had no chance to prove themselves as the innocent creature on this planet. But, it was the very good student in voice production, named Henry Reed who changed the mood of all black people who were too much disappointed at that time. The topic of Henry's speech was- "To be or not to be." His speech was followed by the poem by James Weldon Johnson, and it was the national anthem for the Negroes. Nevertheless, the way he sang was really heart touching; it was the kind of catharsis for the black people. It also left an indelible intuition on our narrator's mind.

The black people at that time were motivated and encouraged by their national anthem, they got the reason to live; to rise and shine for their own people. Maya felt that she was not only the member of the graduating class but she was holding the honour to be the providential member of her class.

The subject of racism in Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) is reconnoitred in Chapter No. 24, when Maya was suffering from toothache as a child due to excessive intake of sweets and milky chocolates. The pain was severe and it was not feasible to alleviate it at home through any domestic tilt. The only option was that Maya had taken to Texarkana due to unavailability of Negro doctor in Stamps, Arkansas. But, due to the distance of twenty five miles, later it was decided that Maya must be taken to the white dentist in Stamps, Arkansas.

Momma as a Negro woman had lent loan to the white dentist for saving his dwelling. When momma asked her to treat her grandbaby, he simply refused instead of helping her in the worst time. He simply refused by saying that he as a white dentist could not violate his policy by treating the colored people. He had biasedness even he did not bother himself to help her as Momma did. As a dentist, Mr. Lincoln was bound to treat Maya but the class difference; the race became the hindrance between the patient and the savior. His egoism, self-appreciation, self-constructed policy was so dear that he forgot the pain of a child and generosity of Momma too.

The sedition of Dentist Lincoln shocked Momma; as he was not ready to treat her grandbaby daughter, rather than helping he was saying that it would be better to put his hand in dog's mouth rather than letting it in the Negro's mouth. Momma was hopping mad due to his being whitish attitude, she wanted to let him down and for this reason she asked Maya to go downstairs. She asked Mr. Lincoln to return the payment of interest i.e., 'ten dollars' which she owns when Dr. Lincoln refused to treat her granddaughter.

Moreover, the narrator had employed the literary device; stream of consciousness to expose the feelings of Maya's mind as a child she wanted Momma to behave like this. Maya thought that Momma is also a good-natured woman; she knows how to respect others and how to ask one to confess one's mistake. Maya's imagination about Momma's treatment with Dentist Lincoln was of full authoritative nature. It clearly depicts Maya's offense against hypocrite-white class. Maya's inner self depicts that she wanted to let the white people beg for the repentance. She wanted that dentist to be the caretaker of the sick animals rather than taking care of the white sick people. When Momma told Maya that she had just taken her interest payment from Dr. Lincoln rather than exchanging harsh words as Maya was dreaming; Maya still wished that Momma had uttered it to Dr. Lincoln. Maya's imagination for the insult of Dr. Lincoln can be summarized through textual reference as:

I preferred, much preferred, my version. (Angelou, 1969, p.193)

Maya favored to insult Dr. Lincoln by Momma rather than taking the imbursement of interest.

In Chapter No.25, Bailey Junior- the brother of Marguerite-Maya saw the black man who was put to death by the callousness of the white people. Bailey as a young boy is too shocked that how white people can hate from the black people at such the greatest extent. As cited below:

The colored men backed off and I did too, but the white men stood there, looking down, and grinned... (Angelou, 1969, p.197)

Bailey was so upset that even he did not remember the face of the murderer. He was stuck in the horrible episodes of the unpleasant incident. The white man threatened all of them and he put the corpse of the dead one with the calaboose and the niggers.

The narrator clearly depicts that not only the black man was put to death even the prisoners along with calaboose were tortured by the white man when he placed the dead body of the black nigger with the colored people. He not only physically agonized the black people but they were also tormented mentally. It seems that the black people were meant to beat, hate, and hurt by the colorless ones. It was really a pathetic and miserable condition. The narrator Maya Angelou has also talked about the dislodgement of Japanese. She had spotlighted the theme of racism here. The narrator opines that the racism was not prevailing in Stamp, Arkansas but it also existed in San Francisco in the premature months of World War II. The black people swapped the Japanese and nobody was interested to speak about them.

The bitter reality disappointed Maya that racism spread in America not due to any movement but it spread like a fatal disease. Even the Negroes and Southern blacks did not realize that once they had also gone through the process of slavery. The lack of sympathy by the black people for the dislodged Japanese is really the indication of black advocacy for the double standards. The maturity of clashes over racism not only occurs in white and black people but also between the black and Japanese.

It clearly shows that racism was not missing from the city; both groups have so much racism against each other. But the condition was so worst that even they couldn't sympathize for each other. But it was the city- San Francisco that is compared to the woman; the woman that is the symbol of bravery, freedom and wisdom. This is the reason due to which city enacted as a wise woman. The city enacted as a protective shield, preserved what she has given to her people, and struggled to secure all those things, which were in her's approach and extent.

Moreover, the story was narrated among blacks that the matron who was a white lady of Sans Francisco; once in a streetcar she had denied to sit on a seat with the Negro civilian when the man had made enough space for that lady. She justified herself that she would not like to sit with a Negro who is a draft dodger too. According to her, the man should fight for the defense of his country just like her son. The man came in resentment and replied to that white woman with respect and dignity that she should ask her son to fetch the broken arm of him as that Negro black woman had already lost his arm in war. In Chapter No. 34, Maya as the representative of the black woman decided to challenge the racism and its consequences. After completion of Maya's education from 'George Washington High School', Maya was thrilled to pursue for a job as an independent woman by becoming a streetcar conductress. Actually, being a black woman she wanted to end up with all racial discriminations. Maya's mother informed her that it was not possible to be as a conductress when they belong to the black race. Vivian Baxter discarded Maya's scheme in the following words:

They don't accept colored people on the streetcars. (Angelou, 1969, p.266)

She as a black girl decided to raise voice for the basic human rights that must also be applicable for the black people. Her mother also supported her. Angelou herself grasped and recognized the significance of her existence in the male dominated society along with the fact that she was also the southern black girl. She has portrayed her personal feelings and geared up her readers for response about the chronological events of her time. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), she has sketched her early age until her adulthood when she became mother. She as a black child, as a black southern girl, as a black student in high school, as a raped girl, finally as a first street conductress in the history, and as a black mother proved that the society has put so many obstacles for the woman. But, the brave women like Maya Angelou can change the fate of their lives.

The journey of obstacles from the black ugly dream to the independent woman was just due to the struggle by Maya Angelou herself. Maya defended and guarded herself against the unfavorable circumstances. Nevertheless, Mr. Freeman raped her.

She survived and got inspiration from the black woman, named Mrs. Bertha Flowers. She encouraged Maya to survive, if not for the society than for her own self. Maya has put in plain words that the black girl has not to face the struggles but she had also to encounter the challenges of racism, gender discrimination, adolescence, sexism, and slavery too. She as a black student was selected due

to her intelligence and brilliant grades. Her struggles for advancement in educational field lead her to own the scholarship from 'California Labor School'

She as a black woman decided to get a job because her self-conscious struggle forced her to live her life as an independent woman rather than spending her whole life as a slave. So, she decided to work on the streetcars as a conductress. As, mentioned in Chapter No. 34:

From disappointment, I gradually ascended the emotional ladder to haughty indignation, and finally to that state of stubbornness where the mind is locked like the jaws of an enraged bulldog. I would go to work on the streetcars and wear a blue serge suit. (Angelou, 1969, p.266)

Findings and Conclusion:

The major finding of this research is interesting and unique that affirms racial discrimination and prejudice promotes chances for triumph. However, racism has considered as an abuse in Afro American society. However, as far as the reality is concerned, racism had assisted Maya to challenge the white people. The sense of inferiority, disgrace, humiliation, and subjugation acted as a vehicle for motivation especially for the southern black girl. Maya proved that she is the representative of her own race.

Mr. Edward Donleavy's ironical speech hurted and encouraged her; directly on her heart and indirectly upon her mind to challenge the white race. She felt that her race is grunted and whimpered too. Nevertheless, when Henry Reed- the student of class 8th sang a national anthem, she felt motivated. Moreover, not only this, she won a scholarship and proved to the whites that she is the pride of her nation. Rather than, bringing disgrace to her nation she becomes the embodiment of her class.

Such is the case with Momma Henderson who lived in Stamps. Despite of humiliation by the powhitetrash, Momma ignored them and let them feel that they were not humiliating Momma but they were representing the whites themselves. Finally, the training that Momma had given to Maya led Maya at a successful errand.

In chapter 34, Maya's mother told the bitter reality to Maya that the people of their race could not have selected as a conductorette. However, the spirit of advancement keeps Maya's strength of mind and fortitude alive. She challenged the anti-blacks and finally achieved her all goals.

The researcher has traced out the bitter reality of racism that Maya's probability of pain, sufferings, and woes increases due to her black African American' identity. The tragedies are expected not to be at end, they are to be continued for the black girl. Maya as a child, little girl, student, kitchen cleaner, graduate, street conductress and ultimately mother undergoes through different faces of her life that were tough. In the very start of the autobiography, it is stated that it is really challenging as a black girl to survive in the society. Later in the ending chapters, Maya confessed that black woman has to not only suffer from racism, sexism, gender discrimination but she has also to face the challenges set by the nature. Maya's upheaval trials continue even when she is grown up. But, Maya has the potential to cope over the hard and bitter storms laid down by the whites.

Her firm determination, will power, and aggressiveness against the white people supported her to turn the impossibilities into the possibilities with success. She did it very well. She persisted to fulfill her ambition and finally achieved it. There is transformation of a feeble, raped black girl into the strong and independent woman through the reflection of Maya Angelou in Marguerite's character.

Conclusion

A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer it sings because, it has a song. (Dr. Maya Angelou)

Dr. Maya Angelou delivered the influential quote that gives us the moral lesson to "Spread your wings", in order to transform your existence from Blacks to Humans. Therefore, Angelou demonstrated practices of marginalized women by enchanting herself as a protagonist of in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) as a specimen of resistance literature. As presented in the investigation part of this research paper, the novel indirectly or parenthetically compacts with the authority of women to endure and contour their particular upcoming sufferings. The moral lesson of the present study is that misfortune is preordained but it is reasonably indispensable to boost oneself up and doing all over again. Angelou had tied the acquaintances between Black and white people via the practices of the Black girl in Southern America. Such as supremacy is tranquil in the big hands of white people and Black people are soothing; mostly hooked on them. In the European countries, the

fight for impartiality, predominantly in the southern states, has been protracted and challenging, from the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s to the party-political deliberations still going on today.

Recommendation

It is recommended that marginalized women in African-American community may be given powers for their own self-determination efforts to continue peaceful and respected life. The male prejudice against black women must be eradicated for ever as it is the spirit of humanity.

References

Primary Source:

Angelou, M. (1969), *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, ISBN 0-553-38001-X

<http://etd.aau.edu.et>

<http://www.goodreads.com>

Secondary Source:

Angelou, M. (1989), *Maya Angelou: Poems*, New York: Bantam Books

Alabi, A. (2005) *Telling Our Stories*, Springer Science and Business Media LLC

Assefie, B. (2012), *Experiences of Marginalized Women: Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Braxton, J.M. (1999), *Maya Angelou: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings- A Casebook: Oxford University Press*. P.121. ISBN 9780195116076.

Brown A.D. (2006), *Maya Angelou: Diversity Makes for a Rich Tapestry* Berkeleyn Heights, NJ: Enslow, Print

Chouliaraki, Lilie & Norman, F. (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity – Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Dujon, G. (2010), *Women and Leadership: Towards a Gender, Race, and Class Analysis*

Eda, U. (2008), *defining the black mother in Maya Angelou's autobiographical works in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings and The Heart of a woman*.

Elvira, G. P. (2016/2017), *A Minority within a Minority: A Study of the African American Women Based on Maya Angelou's Autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Fairclough, N. (1995), *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Boston: Addison Wesley

Graham, J.L. (1991), *Freeing Maya Angelou's Caged Bird*

Johnson, C. (2008). *Introduction in Johnson, Claudia. Racism in Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Press. p. 11. ISBN 978-0-7377-3905-3

Krolokke (2005), *Discourses of Difference and Identity*

Lazar, Michelle M. (2007) *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis*, *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4: 2, 141 — 164 DOI: 10.1080/17405900701464816

MANORA, Y. (2005), *what you looking at me for? I didn't come to stay: Displacement, Disruption and Black Female Subjectivity in Maya Angelou's, Women's Studies*

Nancy, C. (1997), *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Oxford Reader Feminism. Kemp, Sandra, and Squires, Judith (Eds.). New York: Oxford Up., pp.182-188

Rees, H. (2012), *Their Eyes Were Watching God: Black Feminism and White Ideals*

Saptarini, (2008), *Racial discrimination in Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings: A Marxist approach*, A 320 040 426

Wisker, G. (2000), *Post-Colonial and African American Women's Writing*, Springer Science and Business Media LLC