



Peeking through Maya Angelou's Poetry in the Context of Racialism and Servitude

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Abstract— *The focal point of this writing is to spotlight the brutal gender discrimination, suppression and servitude endured by Maya Angelou, an acclaimed American writer and distinguished poet, a plucky rape survivor, splintered the prejudiced stereotypes, metamorphosing the whole world. This writing further dissects how Maya Angelou swallowed the pellet of subjugation and gender marginalization through her poetry. The kaleidoscopic view of Angelou's poetry unfolds the keynotes of class distinction, toxic masculinity, bondage and notably racism. The particular goal of this writing is the interpretation of Angelou's poetry in context of chauvinist discrimination that tormented the Black women and how Angelou's writings appeased dolour community. The writing engaged both primary and secondary data sources. The primary source includes Maya Angelou's metrical compositions and publications. The secondary source encompasses Angelou's memoirs, the web and other featured treatise. Ultimately, the writing finalizes with an objective ameliorating an unprivileged women's life globally by dint of Angelou's influential poetry.*

Keywords— *Blacks, Discrimination, Patriarchy, Racism, Slavery.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Marguerite Annie Johnson respired for the first time on April 4, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri. Juvenile Marguerite matured in South America. Marguerite's earliest mentor was her maternal grandmother, whose noxious racial anxiety forged Marguerite to contemplate "White People" as guileful and surpassing breed. The abomination of Marguerite towards "Whites" covertly inculcated a timid impulse in her to be like them as white people were prepossessing and revered all time. Light colored skin, according to her was haughty. That was the time when Marguerite's mind got fiercely impacted by racial discrimination.

The demeaning disgrace, barbarity and inequality Marguerite tolerated, moulded her as a unique pioneer and premier poet.

Angelou, in her preliminary years suffered coercion and harassment. In the course of that era, light skinned reinforced the notion Black is not just ugly but a mere

transgression. Angelou kick started writing in her forties. She was an experienced dancer, though situations dictated her to be a stripper, staggered, she accumulated experience and in the fullness of time, sagacious damsel made a mark in journalism. Angelou got intrigued by politics, thus joining American Civil Rights Movement. After the mesmerizing meet up with Martin Luther King Jr. in person, Angelou's first internationally venerated memoir, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*, in 1969. Angelou demonstrated her community that courage is not inherited rather it is contrived.

II. MAYA ANGELOU'S POESY STYLE

Maya Angelou is widely acclaimed rhymester and a champion reformer of African American suppressed people. She was the mouthpiece of those who were victims of prejudice and currently, those, burdening their souls in racist countries. Angelou embroiders her poetry with literal

imagery and descriptive words, administering dialects and jargons in particular, of African American people. She wielded two approaches in writing poetry, that made her poetic expression a jewel in the crown among her all counter parts. These include eye dialect and call and response styles.

Eye dialect is a style where words are spelled in a particular way to mould pronunciation in a desired way. According to Wikipedia; Eye dialect is the use of deliberately nonstandard spelling for standard pronunciation. The term was coined by George Philip Krapp to refer to a literary technique that implies the standard pronunciation of a given word that is not well-reflected by its standard spelling. This technique is further illustrated by Angelou's *Aint That Bad*;

Puttin' down that do-rag

Tightenin' up my 'fro

Wrappin' up in Blackness

Don't I shine and glow?

Here she wonderfully maneuvered an aura of real speech by altering "g" with apostrophe for an authentic touch.

Call and Response;

This is the technique which was famous in African American music tracks. It involves the poet's discourse in to and fro style with an auditor. Conforming to Wikipedia; Call and response is a form of interaction between a speaker and an audience in which the speaker's statements ("calls") are punctuated by responses from the listeners.

This style is smartly demonstrated here by Angelou's *Still I Rise*

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise

These are the techniques with some other poetic tools that assisted Maya Angelou winning prestigious awards counting the Presidential Medal of Freedom in year 2010.

III. MAYA ANAGELOU; THE BATTLE-SCARRED AMID THE RACIST WHITE CLASS

In order to perceive the context of racism in any region, the cardinal point is to grasping a perception, pragmatically according to multiple regions. Racism abhors the people, contrasting to you by many ways. By and by, racism imprints anarchy, servitude and biasness.

Racism may also feature physical attributes to hegemonize others.

Angelou pens about the typical mores of African-American society, identified as the inferior whilst whites domineer, dominates everywhere.

Your Momma took to shouting

Your Poppa's gone to war,

Your sister's in the streets

Your brother's in the bar.

The thirteens.Right On.

Your cousin's taking smack

Your Uncle's in the joint,

Your buddy's in the gutter Shooting for his point

The thirteens. Right on

(The Thirteen Black)

Your Momma kissed the chauffer, Your Poppa balled the cook,

Your sister did the dirty, in the middle of the book,

The thirteens.Right On.

Your daughter wears a jock strap,

Your son he wears a bra

Your brother jonesed your cousin in the back seat of the car.

The thirteens.Right On.

(The Thirteen Black)

Angelou in above given two poems employs expression of a street game labeled Dozens. The game functions when the participants humiliate each other using impertinent expression of verbosity. She elucidates how a fair toned skin conceals such hideous patterns of mal-doers.

Angelou is drawing a comparison between Blacks and Whites that both classes have the magnetic pull for illicit characteristics. Why Black people are pondered brutes, beastly and uncivilized? Angelou is of the view that White people do not demonstrate the social values, they blatantly preach to others. It is argued that how can a prostitute heighten to the stature of wrestling for the rights of community of imperfection. Angelou was never ashamed of her remorseful, dead and buried past. In the concrete, Angelou's long time ago framed her magnanimous rhymester and an appraised laureate. Her poetry is tightly packed with the traces of her previous existence.

Angelou has composed poetry from the particulars and the rhythms she knows, and the changes of rhythm themselves become a rhythm, the upsets and restarts in an unsteady state of soul which every life has experienced in some place or other.

When we read Angelou's poetry, we share the sense of it. But then we have a Reaction from the energy and have to reassess it, so that ultimately, when we hear her poetry, we listen to ourselves. Sylvester, (1995)

This is the textual examination of "Still I Rise", typifying the hollow cheeked veracity that acolytes of patriarchalism portray. Angelou's quirky couch enables reciters to have a rapport with her quintessential context that effectuates gender subjugation, and relate it to their first hand occurrences.

And thus, Ramsey mentions;

Her autobiographies and poetry reveal a vital need to transform the elements of a stultifying (dulling, making to seem stupid) and destructive personal, social, political and historical milieu into a sensual and physical refuge. Loneliness and human distanciation (to create distance) pervade both her love and political poetry, but are counter posed by a glorification of life and sensuality (applying to senses) which produces a transcendence (the quality of extending usual limits) over all which could otherwise destroy and create her despair. This world of sensuality becomes a fortress against potentially alienating forces, i.e., men, war, oppression of any kind, in the real world.

This disquisition of Angelou's poetry propounds that her poesy assuredly transports the reader to murky and despairing sphere, where the last resort is the brawny versatile compositions, eroding the beasts inculcated in callous cosmos bequeathing the weaker ,colored demoiselle with the legitimate liberation.

Yet again, Angelou commemorating her female hood, catechizing the biased perverts of the contemporary society, even though she is Black, she possess the same anatomy and sultriness, she enthrones an unchained divan of manumission. Angelou is an epitome of deviating the enforced paths.

Does my sexiness upset you? Does it come as a surprise

That I dance like I've got diamonds At the meeting of my thighs?

Dark toned African American women inevitably subjected to gross oppression at all times. Here a Black seniorita, emancipating the certitude that continuance of Black women is dreaded without confidence and credence. Angelou persuaded her impeccable inky ladies to up rear their voice to be heard aloud to dismantle the archetype of racism and slavery. Angelou equipped an evidential and

emblematic diction to instantiate the guttural voice of the Black "phenomenal" being.

Angelou pictures a bronzed victim of racial biasness in terms of beauty merits. Angelou unpleasantly juxtaposes herself with a charismatic super model.

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.

I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size

But when I start to tell them,

They think I'm telling lies.

In an olden African era, olive skinned, boxed nose, and voluminous lips strayed the norms of "Beauty". That was how inequality on the basis of class and gender , mushroomed. However, Angelou stood this discrimination and averted it into her unwavering strength.

It is ultra rigid for a tormenting past to corrode. Thus Maya manipulated it in igniting her eagerness to pummel the racism from Black people's life.

Maya Angelou is spotlighting an aura of optimism while scraping away the gratuitous gender oppression and discriminative "White" society, here in "Weekend Glory"

Maya since her childhood was put through the terrifying ordeal of social exclusion. However, Angelou's life is settled and she expresses jubilation for having a sky-high stature in the same equivalent world, or even she is head and shoulder above all of the bigots, who anguished her. Angelou counts on self assurance and confidence for this feat. Maya deems white people faux and synthetic. Their whole existence orbits chi-chi disposition. As the matter of fact, fair people merely brag, featuring nugatory practicality.

Some clichty folks don't know the facts,

posin' and preenin'

Buying big cars they can't afford, ridin'

around town actin' bored

Maya Angelou's memoir *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* sets out the past African- American's massive subjugation. Angelou embellished the articulation with the usage of metaphor, stating the plight of two birds. One is free by its own will while the other one boxed in the cage, alluding to Black African and White American , where Blacks are tied up with the ropes of sexism and racial discrimination. As illustrated by Angelou, the free-willed bird gliding in planetary winds, whilst the imprisoned one is just singing to the prerogative of being freed.

Maya amplified the discriminative and authoritative milieu, grinding the suppressed Blacks as in poem, she intended that the caged bird is furious behind the bars of

rage and this imprisonment is not just halting the maneuverability of the bird but also stripping its vibrant freedom off.

Angelou is delving in historical perspective of African American community. Racial discrimination got swollen during the civil rights movement in America. The indifference of White Americans to enslave leathery skinned was further lime lighted by Maya via her poetry. Angelou furthermore is painting a canvas where a free willed bird is vaulting the blue.

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

Maya is hoisting the issue of liberation that is supreme for anyone who is alive and happy. The sky is an illumination of American society. Angelou's Caged Bird regardless of the tyrannies and social segregation, thus cheering, thus singing melodious songs to fortify empower itself to battle the savagery, obtruded by allegedly superior Whites.

Angelou is employing a poetical platform to induce reforms in this gender racist society, and to bare the gruesome idiosyncrasy of anti-blacks.

But a bird that stalks down his narrow cage can seldom see through his bars of rage

his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

Angelou vignettes the actuality of ascendancy of racially biased people. These verses notates as if the all the sitting targets of class discrimination, bleat out in choir. Maya is delineating the quandary of Blacks that notwithstanding the knacks and capabilities, they are enforced to unjustified bigotry. The sexists of that era loathed more specifically the colored, poignant weaker sex, in the same pretext Angelou honed her personality to razor-sharp edges of experience and neglect. She urges her community that in spite of lurking meekly in a system that is incomprehensible and also detestable, fascinating a revolution that will thread the prejudiced sphere to an utopian oasis, must intensify the libido to grapple the oppression by embarking on a crusade to flip-flop the pitiful situation and to fly in the face of catastrophic time.

He went to being called a colored man
after answering to "hey, n***er.

Now that's a big jump,
anyway you figger
Hey, Baby, watch my smoke.
From colored man to Negro,
With the N in caps,
was like saying Japanese
instead of saying Japs.
I mean, during the war.
The next big step
was a change for true,
from Negro in caps
to being a Jew.
Now, Sing, Yiddish Mama.
Light, Yellow, Brown
and Dark-brown skin,
were okay colors
to describe him then

Maya Angelou now in The Calling of Names enlisting the humiliating name white people bellowed for Black people throughout the old days. They were called Nigger; it unfolds an unconcealed racism for African community. Black people are in continuation, ridiculed and cudged by derogatory and wounding names and nicks, White people contemplate themselves as the superior creation, and limned African people hailing from a plebian class, unworthy of being called a human.

Maya Angelou talks through an institutional discrimination which is quite imperceptible. A. Sivanandan, Director of Institute of Race Relations states;

Institutional discriminations that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions - reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn.

Here racism is shifting from interpersonal level to a level of group or community. The one group in power, socially and financially elite, luxuriating the perks of privileged class will undoubtedly supported by organizational systems in all aspects, noticeably segregating an unprivileged class. The discriminated society is knitted in a way that the situational influences on lowly cachet class linger putting through antagonism and abhorrence.

Maya Angelou condemns this variety of racism vividly in her poetry. She enunciates that due to the cocky discrimination, Black community is labored to live in tatters, while the Whites being treated as The flowered beau monde.

One foot down,
then hop! It's hot.
Good things for the ones that's got.
Another jump, now to the left.
Everybody for hisself.

Maya Angelou in Harlem Hopscotch points up the prejudice against African-American people, attesting that the bounty splendor, milk and honey is purely for the crème class of White people. Meanwhile, the subjugated Black people are suffocating in the synthetic bulges of racism and inferiority complexes. Angelou further foregrounds the destitution of the Black community owing to the dearth of opportunities to prosper and to curb the meagerness of African people.

IV. ANGELOU, AN ULTIMATE CHAMPION OF MANUMISSION

In the air, now both feet down
you black, don't stick around. Food is
gone, the rent is due, Curse and cry
and then jump two

Maya Angelou pinches the predominance of White class people which is marginalizing the Black society economically. As a part of an unprivileged group, Black people have scarcity of employments, that condition is leading them to an impoverishment. White people's dominancy everywhere in the system is ushering the Black creed to beggary. Maya Angelou resolutely fights the system of American aristocracy, hence defending her community rights and by being super proud of her oneness.

I'm the best that ever done it
(pow, pow).
That's my title and I won it
(pow, pow).

I ain't lying,
I'm the best Come and put me to the test (Pow pow)

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I'm the best that ever done it (pow, pow).

That's my title and I won it (pow, pow).
I ain't lying, I'm the best
Come and put me to the test (Pow pow)

In the musical version of **Still I Rise**, Maya Angelou is throwing challenge to white prejudiced class to try her out. As she is unprivileged Black female of spices, she does not possess any fortune like racist people to flaunt, however, her intellectual capacities like other marginalized Black community people, are of the same standards that while people boast about mostly to evince that they are privileged like no other.

In the wake of Civil Rights Movement, Angelou fully occupied herself in augmenting her community via literature writing and social ventures like **Cabaret for Freedom** to aid the campaign of Martin King Luther Jr. who was boldly leading the civil rights movement. And Maya Angelou's poetry reflects her mettle to make Black American-African people especially women, empowered.

Sixty years in this folk's world,
The child I work for calls me a girl,
I say yes ma'am for working sake.
Too proud to bend, Too poor to break,
I laugh until my stomach ache,
When I think about myself.
Micheal Moore, once stated;

"America is a nation founded on genocide and built on the backs of slavery." This truth is further acknowledged by Maya Angelou's **When I Think About Myself** where she is narrating the verity of working class as a Black being. She sheds light on racism, stood by African-American people. The way she satirizes the racist community, is spot on. Angelou demonstrated the state of a child miner, who is in her sixties, gravely demeaned when a baby calls her a girl.

The working community of African-American people were enslaved and poorly treated by the torchbearers of **Whites, the most reverend** class. The belittling and ignominy spotlighted in the poem is awfully appalling. The Black people who work their blood sweat and tear out, do not get their entitled respect and honor back. The actuality of the blossomed America is the enslavement of Black people.

The tales they tell,
sound just like lying,
They grow the fruit,
But eat the rind,

Maya Angelou further reveals the unconditional suppression of Black people concurrently eulogizing the

workfolks of her society. She laments that the Black blue-collar workers are voiding their due share of accomplishments, America attained because of them. Maya exhibits the situational perplexity, the prejudiced class encounter on daily basis. They are in the muddle, whether to have laughers for attainments, oppressors have because of them or to cry for the respect they ceded to American white people.

Angelou's *One More Round* sets forth an African American wage-earner ménage, they do not whine for the laborious work, their skeleton can endure numerous delts of pain.

Their anatomy is adopted to do arduous activities but they cannot withstand fetters of subjection. Servitude is more grueling than bone-shaking weariness. They perform tasks in order to get paid respectably.

Merriam Webster defines servitude as a condition in which one lacks liberty especially to determine one's course of action or way of life.

Papa drove steel and Mama stood guard

I never heard them holler cause the work was hard

They were born to work up to their graves

But they were not born To be worked-out slaves

Servitude is the most aching facet of Maya Angelou's life. That is what she is projecting in her **My Guilt** poem. She embellished her diction with different moods i.e. regretful, dejected, gloomy, and enraged quite often. Here, Maya Angelou's poem is focusing, particularly on contrite. She suffers this feeling owing to the sacrifices of Black people's lives in the wake of civil rights movement, pioneered by Martin Luther King Jr. to safeguard the interest of African- American people. They borne racial discrimination, sexism and tyranny in combating their basic rights. Maya Angelou experiences ambivalent, stirring emotions along whilst harking back to departed ones. They bequeathed peaceful, independent future for their young generation, and plated their existence to death for good. She recalls the liberation seekers from past and present respectively, such as Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner and Martin King Luther. They are commemorated with platinum esteem. Freedom is immensely high cost. It can charge mortals yet rewarding.

My guilt is "slavery's chains,"

too long the clang of iron falls down the years.

This brother's sold, this sister's gone,

is bitter wax, lining my ears.

My guilt made music with the tears.

Maya Angelou encountered Malcolm X whilst she was in Ghana. She determined to flow back to America as beneficial to succor him in edifying a new organization for Black people. But on her crucial return, Malcolm X was assassinated and Angelou welded herself with Martin King Luther Jr.'s civil rights movement. The infuriated Black people played havoc with American several parts. African American people had no finances, employment and resilience to wrangle the racism and biasness. Angelou ruminated to be a spokesperson of the Black subjugated creed and broadcast their trials and tribulation to the whole sphere.

In 1990, Angelou **In Equality** avowed audaciously to racist bigots;

Take the blinders from your vision,

take the padding from your ears,

and confess you've heard me crying,

and admit you've seen my tears

Angelou is interrogating the intentional amaurosis of White people. The oblivion of the oppressors to pitiful disposition of the African American beings is being cross questioned by Angelou. This is the grotesque reality of aristocratic white people, even after clutching the Birthright from the Blacks, they have an insatiable desire to dominate every creed, peculiarly the African American folks.

V. CONCLUSION

Throughout the venture of analyzing Maya Angelou's poetry, racial discrimination, sexism and unfairness can be witnessed towards the Blacks. Maya Angelou encapsulates the hostilities, encountered by the Black community, and simultaneously vaunted them for their extraordinarily valorous of living the oddities of life. . The sole gradation of worthiness is the possession of light

skin color not just in American context, but widely. Maya Angelou through her poetry endeavors

to smash the stereotypes of society, hence making it salubrious vicinity to live merrily, barring the racism and biasness assuredly. Maya Angelou's poetry undergirds the independence of oppressed class in particular, the women.

No matter tis' a long time to go

The hurricane approachin'

The sailslinerin'

The propeller tis' slow

The birds hoverin'

The cage tis' broke

The girl rovin'
 The sky tis' shadow
 The vessels drowin'
 No matter tis' a ketos Slittin' the currents
 A better show
 No matter tis' a long time ago
 (The Smooth Sail)

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