



## Black Feminism in Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

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**Abstract-** This research work is an important reflection on the author's position as a black female in the hallmark of Afro-American Literature. Maya Angelou as an author defended the black women and their culture in her seven autobiographies while probing her own rather than probing into others. The authoress opines that 'womanism' is always the tag of power, strength, reconciliation, strong commitment and comprehending the gender equality notion keeping in view especially the black women. This study has interpreted and analyzed Angelou's first autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* through the textual analysis of autobiographical elements by the application of Michelle M. Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. (YEAR) This research paper highlights the marginalization of black women in the imperialistic society. One of the ways to raise awareness is to focus on the corpus of Black writing and to re-position it within academic core curricula, rather than relegating it to specialized courses.

**Keywords:** Black Feminism, Racial Discrimination, Gender issue, Ethnicity, Womanism

### I. INTRODUCTION:

Black feminism refers to the struggle of birthright, the voice' search, the interdependence of thoughts and actions, consequences of empowerment and especially it is the refusal by black women to remain silent for their basic rights. Black feminism brought a social change while inducing the spirit of anti-sexism and anti-racism in order to provoke the perceptions regarding fairness, equality, and justice not for only blacks but for all human beings. The powhitetrash authors/authoresses had misrepresented the history of black woman. Nevertheless, the black writers have revealed the authenticity and tangible picture of the white people. They have portrayed the images of the slavery and inequity.

The phenomenon of self-conscious struggle refers to the term black feminism that usually aims to empower both women and men in order to realize a humanistic vision of community. After the act of emancipation, Afro-American women had experienced slavery, racism, sexism, and oppression by the whites. The humanistic potential of the black writers encouraged to develop their individual and unique identity. The present research seeks to contribute in the study of language and discourse through the lens of **Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis**, regarded as the spectrum flow of critical discourse analysis as well as in the field of feminist studies. It concurs with the multifaceted analysis of preeminence and tenets principally in the selected discourse in order to uphold gendered social order in pecking order manners. At present time, the issues coupled with gender, power as well as the ideology has become more convoluted and significant. In the current research, the basic rationale of **Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)** is to draw attention; to inquire that how the social and expected world has represented and portrayed in relation to women as well as it refers to development in the sketch of language structures in Afro-American literature. The interdisciplinary practice, especially for textual scrutiny, aims at the construction of the sociological world, social identities, and relationships through the text. I have focused on the textual scrutiny of the issues- allied with the gender injustice and subjugation in opposition to Afro-American women. It includes the sexual characteristics and constructive roles in the society. This sub-field of CDA has considered as a contribution and dedication to the women specifically it refers to the budding carcass of feminist discourse literature

majorly linked with the sexual category as well as the verbal communication whereas FCDA has engaged a startlingly trivial pose as well. Accordingly, feminists and discourse had a fruitful commitment with each other and both are the complement as well.

As a cognizant researcher, I have perceived the challenging needs of the **Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)** and it is reliably preferred, as both Fair Clough and Van Dijk were not interesting to execute analysis of gender and issues related towards the gender analysis. Therefore, through the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), the researcher aims to analyze the feminist subject matter interconnected to gender and women's studies as it advocates the efficacy of lingo and discourse studies. Thereupon, for the feminist critical discourse analyst, the major rationale is to scrutinize the text profoundly around the corners; to analyze what is the miscellany and divergence of both men and women in the society. Thus, the objective of applying the model of **Feministic Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)** is to make investigate for the main reasons related to supremacy and dominance' constructive roles already discarded through textual illustration of social practices are mainly concerned with the issues of gender in particular. **Michelle M. Lazar** has regarded as one of the chief contributors of **Feminist critical discourse analysis (2005)** as FCDA itself is the pedestal of CDA on the feminist perspective.

### 1.1 Research Questions

**In this paper, the researcher has traced the focus of study as:**

How Maya Angelou has represented the black feminism in her autobiography '*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*'?

### 1.2 Significance of the study

This research study is a great contribution to the literature of genre i.e., non-fictional (factual). It is inevitably productive as well as imaginative in nature and as a form of textual analysis through the feminist approach. Angelou was the first Afro American writer who had raised her voice for the basic rights of women. Not only this, she was also included in the category of African-American female writers, she dared to carve up her private life while narrating each and every incident even she disclosed that she had also spent her life as a prostitute. She has the courage to talk about the issues faced by women in the male-dominated society. Moreover, the existing knowledge is refined, widened, and improved while having the literary and pragmatically significant approach, attracting the attention of practitioners as well as professional peers by relating this research work in real life situations. Thus, detractors misrepresented Maya Angelou. Nevertheless, later everyone realized the significance of her literary works. This research is significant because it makes us aware of the rights of women in the society. As there are many issues faced by the women in the society and needs to overcome so that male dominant society can realize that both men and women have equal ranks and identity in this society.

### 1.3 Research Limitations

This study is just limited to the author's literary contributions not only to the literary world but also to the society, at large. Her autobiography will be kept under consideration in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Textual analysis as well as representation through semiotics is highlighted while probing into the feministic elements of her autobiography whereas comparison to her other literary works that reflect feministic writings in it has not been cogitated under consideration.

### 1.4 Benefits of the Study

#### 1. Academic Benefit:

It stretches contribution to the advanced form of knowledge predominantly in Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

#### 2. Practical Benefit:

It bounces deeper understanding in literary arena while providing references to the other researchers in order to analyze this autobiographical novel into diverse perspectives.

## 1.5 Research Method

The research design of my study is tentative in nature where as I have used qualitative study of methodology. To probe into the statement of the problem, it implies emphasis on scrutinizing into the condition of women especially the black woman through the critical praxis of FCDA in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The present study adopts Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as a model and method because Maya Angelou like other Afro American writers had spotlighted the issues related to the black women. Consequently, FCDA is an apt way to analyze the text but with a feminist perspective.

For FCDA researchers, intellectuals, and scholars the term gender refers to the self-constructed phenomena by society and individuals. It also intermingles with copious facets of identity including ethnicity, maturity, rank, sexual distinctiveness and especially with supremacy affairs. Therefore, this present study has operated the wide-ranging research model of CDA with a feministic perspective i.e., FCDA.

## 1.6 Sources of data collection

In order to carry out this research study, the researcher has used the technique of documentation and content analysis. In this dissertation, the data is implicated honestly by the researcher. *Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, documentary evidence, interviews through the rudiments of feminism and its waves, lays primary data of this study upon the foundation of the autobiographical novel. While secondary data includes Maya's speeches, interviews, journals, articles, references, her personal events shared with public and material related to study whether taken from library or internet. The researcher has collected the data with relevance to the statement of purpose;

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

*Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye (1970)* is the factual embodiment of the women' pictures questing for their own self, lost identity and for securing freedom they were struggling very hard at that time. Morrison has represented the issues related to gender identity, oppression and cultural identity as well. Being a black woman, her characters mentioned in the novel have to muddle through with patriarchy, oppressions, deprivation of basic rights, slavery, prejudices and so forth. Morrison has probed deeply into the black people' lives in order to outline and trace the effects of slavery even it leaves effect on their sub-conscious mind.

For *Shirley H. Hardin*, black writings attempt to respond and rejoin the general queries about their self-identity that aims at "*Who am I?*" The basic reason behind this is that they want to get liberate themselves from the images of slavery. The black writers wanted to re-create their own identity, dignity, self-esteem while remembering their bitter past experiences.

Due to the misrepresentation of black women in the autobiographies by other authors, black women in response started writing to liberate them from the concocted picture that have been portrayed by the white people. Maya Angelou's autobiographies are multi-dimensional and have numerous facets. Maya appears as a kid, offspring, mother, elected official and as a societal activist.

## III. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Maya Angelou was aware of the fact that living in Stamps was more than avoidable offense because it was the patriarchal society where the *Southern Black girl* was not only the victim of racism but she also had to suffer from gender inequality issues in the South American in 1930's to 1940's. This southern black girl was Maya herself who was also aware of her dislocation from Stamps to St. Louis. She has used the metaphor for her displacement. For her, it was just putting the corrosion on the blade that can cut the throat of that innocent girl. 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.

As, Maya herself confesses:

*"I knew as much as they did. I was eight, and grown. Even the nurses in the hospital had told me that now I had nothing to fear." (p84)*

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. Maya 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 and the most optimistic support was through the following golden words by her brave mother as:

*"There was nothing a person can't do, and there should be nothing a human being didn't care about. It was the most positive encouragement I could have hoped for." (p267)*

Maya had disclosed her feelings; she felt so lucky and of good fortune to have a brother and she was the only sister to him, she had no other sister to share her brother Bailey, and she did not even want to share her brother with any other. As mentioned below:

*"Bailey was the greatest person in my world. And the fact that he was my brother, my only brother, and I had no sisters to share him with, was such good fortune that it made me want to live a Christian life just to show God that I was grateful. Where I was big, elbowy and grating, he was small, graceful and smooth. When I was described by our playmates as being shit color, he was lauded for his velvet-black skin. His hair fell down in black curls, and my head was covered with black steel wool. And yet he loved me."(p22).*

As a feminist, she had figured out the divergent description of siblings i.e. Maya and Bailey. The narrator reminds the worth and significance of Bailey to Maya. Maya is possessive of her brother too. Their parents are same but their friends and people of the society always praise Bailey because Bailey is a man.

Therefore, there is the comparison between the features and looks of Maya and Bailey, as shown in the table below:

Narrator- Maya's Description	Brother- Bailey's Description
➤ The narrator is described as	
1. big	1. small
2. elbowy	2. graceful
3. grating	3. smooth

Their playfellows portrayed both of the siblings in a miscellaneous manner. Maya's skin color is described in a typical manner and called as the southern black girl. The word 'shit color' and 'velvet-black skin' used for Maya and Bailey's physical features and appearance. Both have the same black color but the way of portraying the image of the black woman and man is very different from each other. The description of Bailey and Maya' hairs are contrary to each other. Bailey has black curly hairs and Maya's hairs are just like any animal' hairs. Her hairs are described as 'black steel wool'. But, Bailey had a deep love and affection for her sister. It does not matter what their playmates or folk give comments about Maya. Bailey is always there for supporting Maya and giving protection to her as a male authority. Female is always considered as kind-hearted and of a delicate nature. Contrary to this, man is not expected to be of soft nature or having sensitivity towards any matter of life. In addition, if a man tries to behave like a woman that man is always reminded by the society or the people living in the society to remember that he is the male entity and is supposed to behave like a man or to show that he possessed masculine qualities. Such is the scene in *Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"*.

As quoted in the text:

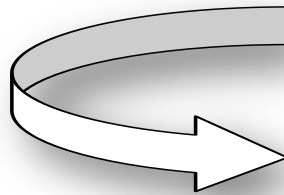
*"Sister, I know you tender-hearted, but Bailey Junior, there's no reason for you to set out mewing like a pussy cat, just' cause you get something from Vivian and Big Bailey." (p53)*

The life of a woman is always dependent on men. Man is always there to control over her actions, to give command, coaching, tutoring, and instructing her. Such is the case in "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou. As illustrated below:

*"This is my sister. I have to teach her to walk."*(p68)

This line illustrates the position of man in the patriarchal society where men are always dominated and appraised. The character of Maya is deeply attached to her brother Bailey Junior. Maya always directed and dictated by Bailey. Even Maya herself liked and loved the way in which Bailey dictated her. Bailey Jr used to tell to the public that he was the one who makes his sister capable to walk. Maya, even in her childhood was instructed by Bailey in order to learn the manner of walking. Maya and Bailey were three and four years old when they came to Stamps. The narrator raised the point whether it was easy to teach a child who was just one year old from the trainer. The phrase, ***'This is my sister'*** replicates the notion that Bailey Jr, consider her sister- Maya as a possessive commodity, the thing that which he was granted by nature, the sort of good which he owns, or he is the owner of it.

***I have to***



***teach her to walk***

This shows that Bailey himself recognize and believe that it was his compulsion, duty, obligation as well as moral duty to teach Maya to walk, to train her in the different field of life. So, Maya was instructed and directed by her brother who was just one year older from her. The narrator has exposed the marital relationship of women that what it was to be a woman. But, it was so pitiable situation. Such was the case with Annie Henderson- who was called by a name "Momma" by the people of Stamps. We came to analyze and evaluate that Momma resists against the gender inequality. She was the paternal grandmother and Mr. Johnson was the paternal grandfather of Maya and Bailey. The narrator narrates that Mrs. Henderson- Momma, was married three times; the duty of Momma was to raise her two children that were from Mr. Johnson. The narrator has not provided any description about Mr. Johnson's death in the textual lines in the narrator's voice. As quoted below:

*"Momma had married three times: Mr. Johnson, my grandfather, Who left her around the turn of the century with two small sons to raise; Mr. Henderson, of whom I know nothing at all (Momma never answered questions directly put to her on any subject except religion); then finally Mr. Murphy. I saw him a fleeting once."* (p46)

So, there can be two possibilities:

- i. Firstly, the grandmother might have separated or divorced from Mr. Johnson, that's why she had two other marriages after the separation from Mr. Johnson Henderson.
- ii. Secondly, it might be possible that Mr. Johnson died naturally and in order to raise two sons by Mr. Johnson Henderson, Momma got married to let any man share her burden.

But, these are just possibilities, because the state of affairs portrayed in the text is changed. We are told as:

*"Mr. Henderson, of whom I know nothing at all"*

The narrator-Maya did not inform anything about her grandfather, as she was a granddaughter, but she knew nothing about her grandfather. Momma was not interested or reluctant to tell anything about her marriage. As quoted in the text:

*“(Momma never answered questions directly put to her on any subject except religion)”*

Momma’s attitude had totally changed as a woman, as a grandmother. As the grandmother is always believed to recount the stories of her past times, but Momma’s attitude is altered by other traditional women. She is not bound to respond to any query/queries that are asked straightforwardly from her on any area under discussion excluding religion.

*“then finally Mr. Murphy.”*

Ultimately, the narrator makes the readers known about the third marriage of Momma. Momma’s third marriage is with “Mr. Murphy” who is seen by Maya and Bailey when he came to Stamps. As, we are clue-up by the narrator that her first interaction is with Momma’s third husband- Mr. Murphy at the time when he came to Stamps, Arkansas. It evaluates that it is only Momma who is responsible for perpetuating the entire burden of her family. Therefore, it means that it does not matter whether the husbands are alive or dead the point being raised here is that the sole person who is supporting the family is Mrs. Henderson- Momma. That is the reason due to which she does not bother to give a response to any question that is about her married life. She just responds to the questions related to religion in order to clarify the concepts of her new generation. The description of Momma’s character is very masculine in nature. The narrator- Maya had deconstructed the character of Momma in a very vivid and in an influenced manner.

*“I saw only her power and strength. She was taller than any woman in my personal world, and her hands were so large they could span my head from ear to ear. Her voice was soft only because she chose to keep it so. In church, when she was called upon to sing, she seemed to pull out plugs from behind her jaws and the huge, almost rough sound would pour over the listeners and throb in the air.”(p 47)*

These lines confer the sketch of the protagonist’s grandmother-Momma. This paragraph embodies the true picture of Momma. This paragraph is transmitted to accepting, divulging and exacting gender discrimination or unfairness in the society as well as it is the discourse that constructs and de-constructs gender and its societal roles.

As in the very first line:

*“I saw only her power and strength”.*

Momma has illustrated as a powerful and strong woman without considering that these are the qualities of a man in our patriarchal society. Here the word, ‘power’, and ‘strength’ are used for the woman. The word **power** and **strength** are very symbolic here.

**Power** = to have a quality to control, authority, supremacy, influence, to rule or to command

**Strength** = to show your potency on someone, vigor, strong point, to force or to compel someone

Such was the character of Momma. Then, there is the physical illustration of Momma’s character. The comparative degree ‘taller’ is used for her in order to compare her to others women of the Stamps. As a woman, her physical appearance was just like a woman. The narrator, Maya has stark-naked that her hands were so large that she can extend her head or skull from one ear to another ear. Momma seems like a superwoman having an extraordinary power as well as strength. In her voice, she was of glee and soft natured. Even, she was performing the religious duties not as a man but as a strong woman. The choice of vocabulary for Momma is masculine in nature.

The terminology used for Momma is listed as below:

- a. **power and strength** (physical appearance)

- b. **taller** (in height)
- c. **large** (her hands were so outsized)
- d. **soft, rough, huge** (a voice that seemed to pull out plugs from the rear)

So, the narrator has uncovered and refused to accept the social inequality interrelated to gender through the character sketch of Momma. Moreover, the narrator has given masculine features and reconstructs the Momma's character through discourse. It is true that in the patriarchal society it is language that decides the power with respect to gender.

Maya Angelou has given a real picture of the patriarchal society. The gender and power always presume as a mixture of forms in different cultures. Power is all the times governed and overlooked by sex. In patriarchy, males are dominant and females are always taken for granted and treated as subordinate and subdue creature of the society.

*"They also told me how I got the name "My." After Bailey learned definitely that I was his sister, he refused to call me Marguerite, but rather addressed me each time as "Mya Sister," and in later more articulate years, after the need for brevity had shortened the appellation to "My," it was elaborated into Maya." (p68)*

This text uncovers the transformation of Maya's name. The narrator is of the view that when her brother was in the age of becoming conscious, that Maya was his sister; he rejected and discarded to entitle his sister's from the name Marguerite- that was the name, which was given at the time of her birth. But, it was Bailey- his elder brother who used to call her from the name '**Mya Sister**'. As, it was the exceptional name given by Bailey Jr, the brother of Maya. After some years, her brother used a short and snappy name for her i.e. 'My'. This name 'My' given to a sister by a brother is very symbolic and significant. Because '**My**' is a possessive pronoun that shows the power of possession or the right to be the owner of anything. Later, the sister of Bailey named as Maya and the first name remained the same throughout her life. Maya was treated as a pet animal by the male-dominated society, even her name was changed almost four times by her brother.

### **Transformation of a female name**

**Marguerite → Mya Sister → My → Maya**

In these lines, the narrator has enlightened us through the bitter reality that in a patriarchal society it is the woman who always expected to transform her name with respect to different periods of her life and this change of name is always brought by a male authority who is the dominated one. Bailey Junior was given the name of his father but it was Maya whose real name was Marguerite but it finally changes into different names and finally, she became. This is the identity given to a woman by a man according to his own choice, convenience and feasibility. It was Bailey Jr, her brother who for his own eases and effortlessness has abbreviated his sister's name. Thus, the brother has represented himself in such a manner that the authority along with power is endowed even in the character of Bailey Junior, as a chap of the patriarchal society.

The transformation of the immature Maya's mind after the incident of molestation by Mr. Freeman draws our attention that young Maya is fond of Horatio Alger- who is the best American writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*"I READ more than ever, and wished my soul that I had been born a boy. Horatio Alger was the greatest writer in the world. His heroes were always good, always won and were always boys. I could have developed the first two virtues, but becoming a boy was sure to be difficult, if not impossible."(p75)*

Firstly, the reason of reading the novels of Horatio is that Maya is possessed with the desire of being a boy, she is repenting that she is a girl and she would be a boy and the same case is in the characterization by Horatio. The characters of the American writer were overloaded with the qualities of an impoverished boy who usually belonged to middle classes. So, Maya peeps and dissects the characters portrayed by Horatio and she always finds her inner self in the characters. Secondly, the narrator has interlinked the concept of gender relationality. The approach of acting and being a woman and a man in fastidious particularly represented in society. The text which is loved by Maya is very symbolic in nature as it truly reflects the ideology that how a man in our society is represented and appreciated as well through the text. Thirdly, the desire of the young

Maya to be a boy seems to be difficult for her. She can turn the impossibilities into the possibilities through her willpower and determination but transforming from the girl into the boy is quite a difficult task and she too confesses that like the heroes of Horatio Alger she could develop other two qualities in herself; she can widen goodness in her character just like the impoverished boys in the novels of Horatio and not only this she can also touch the zenith of the victory but it is complicated and thorny for her to become a boy. The portrayal of alteration of gender categories i.e., from girl to boy by the narrator- Maya Angelou shows certain likeness for the masculinity, for the power, liking for the domination of male and acceptance of female's subordination and subjugation in the gender roles' constructive society, where the responsibilities are taken and accepted on the basis of gender categories.

The black women must be the embodiment of a rescuer and liberator. From her childhood age, the black woman had to encounter numerous challenges. In an African American society, these impediments are for every child. But, the black female is extraordinary in this regard. She has to not only face the challenges set by the society rather than this she has to continue her struggle's errand with tolerance and patience.

*"The black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power." (p273)*

This extract signifies the power and vigor of the black woman and she is not cursed through the strands of multi intimidations or terrorizations including the following medium of crossfires as:

- i. *'masculine prejudice'* refers to the male powers that are violently practised on the body and soul of the female. We may call it sexism.
- ii. *'white illogical hate'* indicates irrational hatred towards black; racism
- iii. *'Black lack of power'* clearly states the miserable condition of blacks; slavery

In addition, the common forces of nature or fate control these all multi crossfires. Maya is representing the girls of her age. She as a spokesperson of her race truly portrays that black woman must prepare themselves for the catastrophes related to sexism, racism, and slavery. Above all the sense of alienation is due to the displacement. So, these lines clearly depict that the black woman had also to face displacement. The narrator has used a satire on the patriarchal society in which even the eight-year girl is raped because she is the girl.

***"The act of rape on an eight year-old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. The child gives, because the body can, and the mind of the violator cannot."(p78)***

The narrator implements the technique of personification for a girl. The needle is given the quality of the needle as needle can sew the torn things. Whereas, the man is compared to the camel who is vast in size and shape. There is no contrast and link between the needle and the camel. Such is the case with a little girl Maya who is only of eight years and Mr. Freeman who is the mature person and an adult one. The relater of the text recounts the incident of rape and inquires the patriarchal male-dominated society that what it is to be when the eight-year girl is exploited by the rapist, the girl who is even not adult and is not ready to accept the bitter and harsh reality of the society. And such type of rape is just like the camel is taking from the needle. The narrator highlights that it is really the matter of oppression and cruelty for the little child as the child is compared to the needle because the size of the child is just like the needle that is minute and small, a child can't give and just like needle the child can make the camel's way to 'be in' rather than giving the way with willingness. And the way that child gives is not due to the fact that she is willing for her rape. But the bitter reality is that the body of the child can co-operate, can give but it is the little and an innocent mind can't bear the pain and is not ready to take the pain and this is the reason due to which the child is violating because she is not in the age to afford it, neither she is aware of it nor she wants it. Thus, the narrator has given the comparison between young Maya and Freeman. There is the conflict of relationship, age difference, and child to man interaction, distinction in physical features, variation in emotional feelings, denial and strongly willingness of sexual relationship with reference to child Maya and the rapist Mr. Freeman. The autobiographer- narrates that how our society is on familiar terms from the perspectives of the feminism. The narrator highlights the social reality of a woman when she becomes the victim of sexual harassment in her male-dominated society. The relater has portrayed it through the mishap of young Maya who is exploited by Mr. Freeman and faces the court trial as well. During the trial, the lawyer of Mr. Freeman who is shielding and



protecting the rapist inquires such sort of questions that even the reader and the victim herself feel that whether the rape is done by the young girl- Maya rather than Mr. Freeman.

***“What was the defendant wearing?” That was Mr. Freeman’s lawyer.***

***“I don’t know.”***

***“You mean to say this man raped you and you don’t know what he was wearing?” He snickered as if I had raped Mr. Freeman. “Do you know if you were raped?” (p84)***

As the very first line is evidence for the suspicion by the lawyer of Mr. Freeman as:

***“What was the defendant wearing?”***

The storyteller highlights through the questions asked by the defendant of Mr. Freeman that the young Maya is forced to answer such humiliating questions especially about sort of clothing and sexual record with relevance to the rape case when the child was not in her senses. When the victim denies about answering the sort of clothing by saying that she does not know that what sort of clothes the rapist was wearing, she is again re-questioned by the defendant as quoted in the text as:

***“You mean to say this man raped you and you don’t know what he was wearing?” He snickered as if I had raped Mr. Freeman. “Do you know if you were raped?”***

Maya is the victim of sexual assault but the lawyer cross-questioned her in the court during her trial instead of questioning the rapist. This also shows that how in the patriarchal society the victim is verbally tortured, the defender always tries to memorize the victim how, and when the rape was done. This attitude of the trial also acts as the hindrance and obstruction for other victims to move towards for the justice. The young girl- Maya really feels that the defendant indirectly charged Maya that whether she is sure that she is raped or not. Maya feels that the defendant is asking her that is she sure that the rapist really raped her or whether she raped Mr. Freeman. Such is the biased and prejudiced treatment by the defendant, who is inquiring from the little girl who is already raped by the lawyer’s client. There are no doubts in this rape case but the rapist is not inquired in an intense manner than the victimized girl. The defendant of the rapist asks the question from the child- Maya that was it the first relation of her with the rapist? Was she stroked and contacted by the rapist for the very first time?

The chronicler exposes to the reader about the trial of the little innocent girl who was raped by Mr. Freeman. This is the harsh and bitter question from the girl who is already raped by the so-called man. The narrator highlights that such sort of question makes her victim guilty and it discouraged her to speak any more in front of the public. At the very same moment, the injured party- youngster- Maya realizes that she is also blamed for this rape, she allowed, permitted and helped him to do it. She came to remember the scene of molestation before her rape, she as a victim is aggressively fed up of questioning by the defendant and when she tries to answer the question the lawyer of the rapist, is not allowing to justify herself, so as a teenager she remains silent. In addition, this is how her trial ends. The storyteller as a feminist raises a question that why only the victim is inquired during the trial in the court. Instead of asking questions from the rapist, the victim is examined through the series of questions when the victim is already raped. It brings the victim in the state of dilemma. The victimized girl- Maya is in the chaos that either she is raped or whether she has raped the rapist. Why woman has to justify herself in the court?, when she is the victim of sexual assault. It is really hurtful, distressing, painful, and torturing to answer all the questions that recount the trauma. But this time, this traumatic trial in the court is fortunate for the little girl. The silence possessed by the victim is in the favor of the victim herself. This silence is the foreshadowing of Mr. Freeman’s arrestation and death news. The defendant is in the favor of Mr. Freeman, and Maya is questioned as being a rapist. The narrator satirizes that if the woman asks for justice then she is blamed always whether directly or indirectly. If a woman wants to get justice, then she faces trials in the court, in front of the public and defendant of the accused person always tries to let down that child, girl, or woman. Mr. Freeman is not questioned like Maya though Mr. Freeman is the rapist. But Maya’s quietness can be a failure for Mr. Freeman. Maya as a child of just eight years feels ashamed by the question of the defendant. She blames herself that she could have stopped the rapist to do all

this rubbish but she let him do at that time. But, the narrator arouses the awareness that the rapist was much stronger than the little child in the physical feature, in gender position, in age, in rank and finally in power. So, there would be no way out to a rescue by the rapist. The rapist also threatened Maya during the time of the rape that she may not scream or not to tell any other. If she cries or yells, he would kill her and if she complains he would have killed her brother Bailey, so she compromised but it does not mean that she let him to do it, as the rape is always an unwilling deed. As a girl or child, she was also distressed, disappointed, and embarrassed and was stunned that what was happening by Mr. Freeman with her. That was the reason due to which she did not resist. Due to trial, the dishonor that Mr. Freeman brought to Maya is officially noticed in the court and finally, before the orders from the court, there comes the twist in the story. The narrator narrates that Mr. Freeman is dead now through the voice of the recording angel.

***“And the recording angel was gone. He was gone, and a man was dead because I lied. Where was the balance in that? One lie surely wouldn’t be worth a man’s life. Bailey could have explained it all to me, but I didn’t dare ask him.” (p86)***

These lines describe the after-effects of Maya’s trial in the court. The word **‘recording angel’** refers to the person who proves to be an angel for Maya. An angel who brings the news of death, the death of the rapist, Mr. Freeman. That is why the narrator regarded him as a recording angel. But it is Maya who indirectly finds herself blamed and guilty. The reason that Maya gives is that she lied, as the victim didn’t lie rather than confessing that Mr. Freeman had already exploited her before the rape scene but this fact is only enclosed in Maya’s heart and mind. As a pure human being, she feels that it is not the justice, a man who is dead just for a single lie that Maya didn’t reveal for her honour in the court because she is not responsible for the molestation before her rape, it is done by Mr. Freeman. But, the narrator shows that her character Maya possesses the androgynous mind i.e. the mind that agrees for the equality between man and woman. Maya wants to tell that her silence was a lie; she wants to tell that she was molested, it was not the first touch by Mr. Freeman, but it is not the fault of Maya. Summit to the readers that the rapist must be droop and fling because doing the rape of any child, girl or woman does not occur, due to the reason of slip-up. It is always a pre-planned activity by the immoral, impious, and sinful mind. As in the case of Mr. Freeman, who rapes Maya with the well-knitted conspiracy and finally he achieved his sexual desire and pleasure while neglecting the law and orders. So, Maya is not responsible for the death of Mr. Freeman though Maya blames herself. Nevertheless, in reality, she is not responsible for all this because Mr. Freeman has no right to molest her and rape is equal to the murder of the person. Maya 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 a response about the chronological events of her time. In *“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”*, she has sketched her early age until her adulthood when she became a 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 Maya Angelou’s struggle. Maya defended and guarded herself against the unfavorable circumstances. Nevertheless, Mr. Freeman raped her. As Maya, confesses:

***“I knew as much as they did. I was eight, and grown. Even the nurses in the hospital had told me that now I had nothing to fear.” (p84)***

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 the educational field led 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. 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 fulfil her ambition and finally achieved it. There is the transformation of a feeble, raped black girl into the strong and independent woman through the reflection of Maya Angelou in Marguerite's character.

#### IV. FINDINGS

In an expression of the first investigated question, I have also found that the **probability of pain, sufferings, and woes ascend for the black African American girl**. The tragedies are expected not to be an 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 facets of her life that were tough. At 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 the black woman has to not only suffer from racism, sexism, gender discrimination, but she has also to face the challenges set by nature. Maya's upheaval trials continue even when she is grown up. But, Maya has the potential to cope with the hard and bitter storms laid down by the whites.

To find out the reason behind the feminist' issues, this dissertation traces the fact that **the longings for fatherly and motherly affection transformed into lass and schoolboy's love and warmth**. When a child is deprived of fatherly and motherly affection, he/she craves for it. This dissertation explores that Maya's cravings for her father misinterpreted her feelings for Mr. Freeman. She always missed the fatherly warmth, and when she found it in Mr. Freeman, he exploits her. Likewise, Bailey's relationship with Lucy is due to the deprivation of his mother's love. Its mean that when the child is ignored in the society and home, he/she longs for parentally affection and ultimately tries to fulfill it through the children of his age as well. The relationship of Maya with a schoolboy and Bailey's with Lucy truly proves it.

Another remarkable finding of this dissertation is that certain family names allied with males but females are ragged through their nicknames. As Bailey Johnson is called as Bailey Junior let me remind Big Bailey is also the name of Daddy Bailey. Therefore, it means that the son has a right to own the name of his father but this right deprives the woman. Maya is called as Marguerite, Rite, Mya Sister, My, Maya and finally Mary. The same case is with Mrs. Henderson; she is also called as Momma. Children also called Vivian Baxter as 'Mother Dear'.

Last but not the least; the researcher has probed very deeply to find out the **shifting of responsibilities from the black man to black woman**. Marital issues are found in this autobiography. Due to this, the burden of disintegrated children of the broken family laid on the grandmother or mother's shoulder. The black woman has to struggle even after her marriage. The males are expected to work in fields; women are projected to breed children and brought them up in the imperialistic society.

#### V. 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 *'feminism to Womanism'*. To explain the mission of my life is to empower women while reminding that Womanism is not the movement but it is the characteristic that laid deeply insight into you. In the light of other researches, articles, and feminists movement, I intentionally put into practice defining the same rights as men and women while discriminating the boundaries drawn between whites and blacks. Hence, it aims to free the black women from the attached labels of- racism, gender discrimination, sexism, lack of motherhood and so-called gender stereotypical roles of African American society through the power of literature.

As a researcher, I dedicate my aspirations to Dr. Maya Angelou, who is the asset of Afro-American literature. Still, there is much work to execute, and it is essential for all of us to challenge ourselves in order to perform the upheaval task especially for the black woman authoresses.

## Recommendations:

As far as my knowledge is concerned, as a researcher, I believe promising areas for promoting research including black feminism must be the focus of further research policy. Black female writers must be acknowledged by the researchers, practitioners and scholars so that we can educate and preach the moral and enthusiastic lesson to our younger generation that life is the continuity of struggles the best thing that we can do is how to cope up with it.

Secondly, the course through HEC must implement the text of "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings", as without further research into the black female writers' literary works it will not be possible to expand the opportunities for scholars.

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