

# The Focus of Maya Angelou's Work is the Exploration of Racism

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**Abstract:** *Maya Angelou's poetry portrays racism, which is a significant issue in this study. The goal of this study is to see how Maya Angelou's poetry represents racism. This study focuses on Maya Angelou's poetry, particularly those concerning racism. This study makes use of two types of data: primary and secondary data. Secondary data sources include Maya Angelou's biography, websites about her on the internet, and other resources that aid in the analysis. The researcher finds that Maya Angelou's poetry expressed racism based on the poem text and expression in the poem, using a sociological method. Segregation, slavery, Hegemony, discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes and class conflict are all mentioned in Maya Angelou's poetry.*

**Keywords:** Racism, poetry

## I. INTRODUCTION

Maya Angelou is one of our generation's most well-known and important figures. Angelou is a renowned poet, memoirist, writer, educator, playwright, producer, actor, historian, filmmaker, and civil rights activist who have been dubbed a "global renaissance lady." Angelou was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on April 4th, 1928, and reared in St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas.

In Stamps, Angelou saw racial discrimination's harshness, but she also absorbed the unwavering faith and ideals of traditional African-American family, community, and culture. Using structural analysis and a sociological perspective, the researcher shows how Maya Angelou's poems against racism, the critique against different kinds of racism, and why racism became an important topic in Maya Angelou's poetry. To explore the link between racism in Maya Angelou's poetry and Maya Angelou's history, the researcher used Rene Wellek's viewpoint.

According to Wellek, there are three types of sociological approaches. The first is writer sociology, which is concerned with the writer's social background and ideology, which is reflected in his or her other activities aside from literature. Because the writer is a member of society, he or she can learn as a social person. Second, through the substance of their literary works, it is linked to the literary work's goal and other aspects of the literary work that reflect on the social issue. Finally, there is the issue of the reader and the literary work's social effect. It is about the extent to which literary works determine or are defined by social context, social change, and social growth.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study falls under the category of descriptive qualitative research, which relates to studies that use qualitative data from Maya Angelou's poetry. The research's object is made up of two parts: a formal object and a material object. The formal goal of this study is an optimistic outlook on life, whereas the material object is Maya Angelou's poetry. This study's data sources are split into two categories: primary data sources and secondary data sources. The poem itself, from Maya Angelou's Collection of Poems, served as the study's main data source. Secondary data sources include Maya Angelou's biography, websites about Maya Angelou on the internet, and other resources that aid in the analysis. Document analysis is the technique of data gathering, which involves collecting, noting, and choosing both primary and secondary data. The writer's data analysis method is the descriptive technique, in which the writer analyses the language and material related to the main character's psychological state. Angelou's poem reflected racism as an action, specifically the action of white people (Caucasian) toward black people (African-American), not only as an idea but as

an action that has been documented in American history as slavery, discrimination, segregation, hegemony, prejudice, and stereotype, as well as class struggle, specifically class conflict.

### **Racism Expression**

According to the text of Maya Angelou's poetry, the researcher discovers that the poem has racist elements, as shown by diction, imagery, and symbolism. The choice of words, or diction, becomes one of the most significant indications in determining whether Angelou's poetry represented racism. Borrowing diction, for example, is a kind of diction that involves the usage of several language terms to achieve a certain meaning and impact in a literary work. The second element of diction is dialect. It's also intended to make judging a literary work based on dialect simple. One of the most significant aspects of Angelou's poetry is his unique expression.

### **Criticism against type of Racism**

Angelou's poem becomes one of the most important literary works for tracing the history of racism in America from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Additionally, the poem expressed emotional feelings, since she is an African-American; she accurately described white people's ignorance toward her race.

In her poem, Angelou attempts to define racism and the institutions that perpetuate it against Black African-Americans, including enslavement, discrimination, segregation, hegemony, prejudice, and stereotypes. Maya Angelou's poetry are often rhythmic in nature. There are usually a few stanzas that include the same lines as the poem's chorus. Some refer to her works as lyric poetry due to their similar structure to song lyrics. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970), *Alone* (1975), and *Still I Rise* (1976) are three of her poems (1978). These were released concurrently, in the 1970s, and reflect black perceptions of racial injustice.

According to Greenblatt, human perception is critical for comprehending the intricate symbolic patterns of society within a given time, since individuals tend to have common beliefs about what occurs in their society. Thus, this study employs Stephen Greenblatt's new historicism views to determine how racial discrimination is shown in Maya Angelou's chosen poems as a picture of social life in America in the 1970s and how racial discrimination is explicitly portrayed in the poems.

According to Ramey (2008), the 1970s marked the beginning of the scholars' enthusiasm for slave songs (poems and lyrics produced by blacks) related to civil rights concerns and African-American self-archiving. Black authors become increasingly active in terms of writing and publishing. Maya Angelou is one of the black authors. She has been honoured with many honours for her works, including the Presidential Medal of Art (2010) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honour. Additionally, she was chosen to deliver her poem at Bill Clinton's inaugural ceremony (Cox, 2006). Her ability to write poetry that stir and touch people's feelings about humanity has earned her the moniker "Doctor Soul Maya Angelou"

### **Maya Angelou's Poems on Racial Discrimination**

Maya Angelou's chosen poetry is to get a detailed description (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2000). Thick description refers to a description that is sufficiently detailed to explain the poet's purpose as well as the complex life patterns shown in the poetry. As a result, the poems portray two key events linked to racial discrimination.

### **The White as the Power Controller**

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970), *Alone* (1975), and *Still I Rise* (1978), the white person is the agent of racism, the ideology that subdues and controls their minds. This power demonstrates that the highest position provides them with wealth and the ability to do anything they desire. As a result, as agents of racism, all they have to do is maintain the social, historical, and institutional inequalities between white and black people. In terms of social life, the whites want to live apart from the blacks. As *I Know Why the Caged Bird*

*Sings* illustrates, various living places imply different amenities. The whites have no trouble meeting their requirements, while the blacks spend their time being tortured and dreaming of being free. By creating racist discourse in American history, the white also attempts to keep the black believing that they are inferior. Greenblatt believes that there is no history, just a depiction of history manufactured by white people to achieve their objectives. The history



### III. CONCLUSION

To begin, the researcher collected evidence of racism from the text of Maya Angelou's poetry, such as symbol, diction, and imagery, in order to determine how racism was represented in her poem. In diction, the dialect, unique word, special emotion, and borrowing that Angelou chose to include in her poem are all appropriate with the suggestion that her poetry represented racism. By comprehending the content of the poetry, the kinds of racism represented in Maya Angelou's poem may be identified. Maya Angelou's poetry explicitly describes racism in a personal, nostalgic, and emotional manner in order to remind the reader of racism.

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