
Woman Role And The Eagerness In The Woman Work By Maya Angelou

Introduction

Maya Angelou, born with the name Marguerite Annie Johnson 4 April 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri, A.S, she died 28 May 2014 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, A.S. she is a famous American poet, activist, storyteller, and autobiographer. She has a lot of famous work such as "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" which published in 1969. This autobiography focusing on her early life where the one of the story is she was raped by her mother's boyfriend when she was not yet 8 years old. Before being known and famous she worked as a shake dancer in night clubs, fry cook in hamburger joints, she also once had a job in mechanic's shop, as she wrote in her third autobiography 'Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry like Christmas' in 1976 and also she is the first African American and first female street car conductor in San Francisco. For what she has done to the society especially for her fighting for rights of the black people against racism Maya Angelou was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011. She made a poem "His Day is Done" in 2013 for Nelson Mandela the leader of South Africa after his death to eulogize him, also she made a poem "A Brave and Startling Truth" in 1995 for celebrating the 50th United Nations Anniversary. Her literary works are mainly about the strength of women, social critics, economics, human spirits, and racial issues. What she wrote perhaps be affected by her past and the conditions around her. Her poems are collected in many books such as "Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Die" in 1971, "And Still I Rise" in 1978, "Now Sheba Sings the Song" in 1987, and "I Shall Not Be Moved" in 1990. One of her works which talking about the condition of women showed in the one of the poem she wrote entitled 'Woman Work'. The poem 'Woman Work' mainly showing the condition of the women life and the desire in their mind. However it is not really clear whether the woman in the poem is Maya Angelou herself or another woman which inspiring Maya Angelou to write the poem about it. This poem consist of 5 stanza which the first stanza being the longest stanza between the others. The first stanza showing about what the woman do in her life then the second stanza, the third stanza, the fourth stanza, and the fifth stanza showing the willingness of the woman or showing what the woman actually want in her life. This could be said that the second stanza until the last stanza showing the contradiction to the first stanza, the contradiction is between the reality of the first stanza and the expectation of the another stanzas. this analysis aims to know the feminism value or spirit in the woman work by Maya Angelou.

Discussion

The poem Woman Work by Maya Angelou is talking about the works a woman should do everyday in her life as a mother and also as a housewife. this poem also showing the feeling of a woman that feels tired and caged with the things she has to do over and over. Maya Angelou as the writer brings us to the atmosphere where we could barely understand how the feeling of this woman. the desire to be free from that and how she imagine the life where she can get enough time to rest herself. Maya Angelou as the writer brings us to the atmosphere when it is happen.

I've got the children to tend

The clothes to mend

The floor to mop

The food to shop

Then the chicken to fry

The baby to dry

I got company to feed

The garden to weed

I've got shirts to press

The tots to dress

The cane to be cut

I gotta clean up this hut

Then see about the sick

And the cotton to pick.

This first stanza showing about the woman condition or what the woman do everyday in her life. we could see that what this woman in this poem do is regularly or generally done by almost every women in this world and the thing that they do suprisingly so much if it is mentioned one by one. from take care of the children, cleaning the house, cleaning the clothes, untill cleaning the entire garden. Well, could you imagine that so much works done by a woman, how could she able to do those all. In fact, yeah she did that, perfectly. how strong this woman shown in this stanza. although she could finish all that tasks, she is not a machine that could do it all without break or refreshing. As you could read in the entire stanzas after this one she is wondering about how to be free from all of this.

Shine on me, sunshine

Rain on me, rain

Fall softly, dewdrops

And cool my brow again.

The word sunshine and rain represent freedom because we can only see or feel rain and sunshine if we are outside the house. on the line 1 and 2 where she said she "Shine on me" and "Rain on me", and also the line 3 and 4 strengthen the meaning that she want to feel the

sunshine and the rain. this is doesn't mean literally sunshine and rain, the real meaning is she want to feel free and enjoying the outside world. she was too long in a house doing those things in the first stanza regularly everyday in her life. she feel caged in her own house without something new or something to refresh her feeling.

Storm, blow me from here

With your fiercest wind

Let me float across the sky

'Til I can rest again.

In this stanza her feeling to be free from all of the things that trapped her is becoming bigger. she wish the storm blow her from there and fly her across the sky and let her rest. the line "Storm, blow me from here" strengthen the assumption that she is really want to go out from her own house, since she feels the house is limiting her own desire. the line "Til I can rest again" showing how tired she is doing those things that have to be done. she want to rest again, which mean she miss her life while she is not yet being a mother and being a wife, where she has not to do those works or at least the works she has to do is not as much as she is being a wife and also a mother. Her freedom is taken from her without no one helping her, maybe that's why she feels so tired and want to atleast get a rest from all of this.

Fall gently, snowflakes

Cover me with white

Cold icy kisses and

Let me rest tonight.

This stanza still showing her desire to feel the outside world. she want to covered with snow and feels how icy is the snow. she trully showing how she want to get out from her circumtances which place her under the pressure and forced her to do the wotks without enough rest. this is shown from the last line in this stanza "Let me rest tonight" she said again how she want to rest, and from that line we also know that even in the night she got not enough rest of the works she do regularly. this line showing more about the power of this woman, how strong she is doing all of the things even in the night she still have to do the tasks.

Sun, rain, curving sky

Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone

Star shine, moon glow

You're all that I can call my own.

In this stanza she mention sun, rain, sky, mountain, ocean, leaf, stone, stars, moon, and in the last line she calls all of that her own. this showing how she missed the life outside the house

where she do her homeworks. She just want to enjoy all of that things she mentioned and get enough rest for her self. she imagining being free and watching all of those with no burden over her shoulder. It could be assumed why she chooses those things that we could relate with nature, it is because nature represents freedomness, no boundaries and you are free to do everything you want without any burden that you have to carry.

Conclusion

The poem Woman Work by Maya Angelou represent the life condition of a woman who live as a mother and a housewife. this takes us back to remember the era in America when the man goes to work and the woman doing the home things. she has to do a lot of things in the house since she wakes up untill she get rest, even she is not getting enough rest because there are too many things to do. as a housewife she has to do the house works like cleaning the room, washing the clothes, make some meals, untill weeding the garden like what she said in the poem. as a mother she has to take care of her child from showering the child untill naping the child, she has to take care of it all day long while she also has to do the homeworks. Moreover there is "children" that she said in the poem which means she has to take care not only one child but children. Imagine how tired doing those busy and hard works and there are no rest day since she is a housewife and a mother not an employee where she could take the weekend to rest. From the first stanza of this poem we have to admit that this woman or maybe women that doing the same thing like her is not weak at all. we can considered that they are actually strong.

Her willingnes to be free and get a rest from all of this becoming a normal feeling that everyone would feel the same way if they have to do the same works as the woman in this poem. She wants her rights also as a human that need a rest and refresh her mind from a busy and boring situation in her life. Eventhough I said that women are strong they need a rest to, even the men need a rest. The refreshing and the rest they want is simple too, according to when Maya Angelou wrote this poem which is in the era when shopping and another things to refresh the minds of women exist like nowadays, what that woman need for refreshing is just simple she just want to feel the nature and just want to take a reguler rest that enough for her.

The women movement to get the same rights and equality apparently happen with reasons, one of the simple reason is the condition that this woman in this poem have. we could say that her husband going to work after he wakes up and going home an then sleep again. We can assume that he got enough rest everyday in his life without has to take care about the house and his children, while the woman has to take care the children and take care the house untill she has to do that in the night. Again, according to the era when Maya Angelou wrote this poem that is the common situation in every house in that time. However the woman movement getting bigger and bigger after that era untill now the women in this era mostly not having the same experience like what the woman in this poem had. They have freedom to do what they want and don't have to stay at home only doing home things like that woman did. Eventhough there are still conditions that seems unfavorable for women so the movement still continue.

References

1. <https://allpoetry.com/Woman-Work>
2. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/maya-angelou>