

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Literary work has relationship with its author. “Literature is a sustained coincidence between imagination and reality mediated by language. Imagination and reality from history, ideology and myth are poured into those epic tones that sell so well into literary works (Saidullah, 2008:1)”. So history, ideology and myth of the author can be source of literary work. Moreover, a literary work is a tool to convey the author’s feeling. Some authors develop their stories based on their personalities and beliefs of their life, especially their emotional reaction towards something in their life at particular time. From their work, the reader can find some information related to the authors. Based on Warren and Wellek (1956:94) “Literature represents life and life is in the large measure of social reality even though the natural world and the inner subjective world and the inner subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation”. It means that reality & social life is reflected by literary work such as poetry, prose, fiction and drama.

One of the popular discussions raised in literature is feminism. Feminism, as social movement, recognizes and criticizes male supremacy and implies strategies to change it. Pawar et al (2012:106) stated that “Feminist argues about women’s equal share in society’s prospects and claim for the equal rights for women. The movement of feminist has been started in 1969 many women have been able to make works as men’s have”. Therefore, their idea becomes the movement of women’s equality, through their writing women are able to gain appreciations and to give contributions to the society and they are able to make achievements. According to Weldon (1994) feminism is a politic, as illustrated below:

It is politics directed at changing of existing power relation between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become (Weldon, 1994:94).

Women sometimes are given secondary status in the society like discrimination between the rights of male and female, sexual assault, restrictions imposed on behavior, separation and so far. Furthermore, men usually keep restrictions on women's political, social and cultural rights. It becomes the fundamental thing to understand the origin of feminism.

According to the feminists, in relation with the contradiction in social context gender is a social construction which conveys that the role relationships placed to men and women vary based on the different social contexts, femininities and the masculinities. Furthermore, Mahler and Pessar (2006) believed that gender cannot be viewed in isolation. It means that gender also matter of the particular domain addressed.

One of significance female authors who had influence in feminist is Maya Angelou. She was born on April 4th, 1928 in St. Louis Missouri. She was an American author, actress, screenwriter, dancer poet and civil rights activist best known for her 1969 memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing* which made literary history as the first nonfiction best-seller by an African- American woman. The novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* describes the diasporan identities of the women of color which are formed by various socially stratifying factors such as class, race, family and kinship ideologies. The book made Angelou an international star. Then, she got achievement as most popular autobiographical author at that time.

Angelou's literary development rests upon her ability to narrate story both as a Black American and a woman in the twentieth century. Angelou gives an expression of black oppression of racism when she experiences sexual harassment from her mother's boyfriend ,

and her journey toward self-affirmation, by remembering her past childhood memories she describe the black past in an American context that provides the readers to realize the Black American experiences. As a woman, Maya Angelou finds out that a woman has a lot of masks which are difficult to take out. She described her political view, her race and her family inside of the novel. It becomes a combination of these responsibilities of a black woman as a mother, as a woman and as an “activist”. Through her work, she shows the movement of black women to fight racism, sexism and class oppression.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing as joyous and painful and memorable, as childhood itself. Maya is black woman in Stamps, Arkansas, which shipped by her father to her grandma. Maya live in grandma store surrounding white people. She should be confirmed herself with their society, in fact Maya was black and mostly people in this society is white. Maya had the oppression from white people in Stamps, Arkansas. However her grandma always preached her to accept what she gave because her grandma had strong belief and belong to the church. It captures the longing of lonely children and the wonder of words that can make the world right.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings as chosen of the object because the issue inside of the novel how Angelou struggles to escape from incarceration of racism and oppression as black woman in faced the problems of her life which have seen feminist issue. The fundamental issue is about the delineation of experiences of black woman in America surface. Blacks largely get subjected to the tripartite force of racism, classism and oppression. Black feminism includes race, class and gender. The issue of black feminism has always been an important discussion since black people still were under oppressed at that time. Therefore, the writer would like to show to the reader and other researchers how to analyze and identify black feminism in literary works, so that later other student from English literature and also other researcher can use this research if they want it to conduct same research. Therefore, the

researcher is interested in analyzing the novel by using Black feminism as the theory to analyze how Angelo produced *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

1.2 Research Question

Regarding to the background of study that has been explained above, the writer formulates the problem as followed:

How did Maya Angelou describe her feminist thoughts through the main character in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing*?

1.3 Research Objective

Concerning to the statement of the problem above, the objectives of study is to explain the description of feminist thought of Maya Angelou through the main character in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing*.

1.4 Uses of the Study

1.4.1 Theoretical Use

Theoretically, this thesis is aimed to give contribution to literary study especially in enriching field about the black feminism issue of social and politics through the main character.

1.4.2 Practical Use

Practically, this thesis is aimed to give more knowledge and brainstorming to the readers who are interested feminist thought of Angelou as the author of the object. Besides, it is compiled as guidance for the next researcher to be able in doing research related to black feminist issue in literature discussion.

1.5 Scope of Study

This explores the revelation on analyzing, concerning the author's identity in society of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing* novel. The writer applies Black Feminism theory of Collins(2000) focuses in social and politics of self-definition through historical background of Angelou seen in main character.