

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consist of five parts. They are background of the study, research questions, the objectives of the study, the significances of the study, scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is a creative work that describes human existence in society in a way that the community may enjoy, understand, and employ. The author will express his or her imagination through literary works. Poem, theatre, novels, and other types of literary works are all examples of literary works. According to several literary scholars, literary works have many diverse interpretations or definitions. Wellek and Warren (1963: 22) say that “also state that the term literature seems best if we limit it to the art of literature, that is, to imaginative literature. Literature is also produced by imagination of the author. Literature is not just a document of facts, it is not just the collection of real events though it may happen in the real life. Literature can create its own world as a product of the unlimited imagination”. And also according to (McFadden 1978:56) says that “I should say, then, that literature is a canon which consists of those works in language by which a community defines itself through the course of its history. It includes works primarily artistic and also those whose aesthetic qualities are only secondary. The self-defining activity of the community is conducted in the light of the works, as its members have come to read them (or concretize them)”.

Find out about the various kinds of literary works after understanding what a literary work is. Two categories of literary works exist: imaginative literary works and noimaginative literary works. In order to help people better understand and respond to the realities of life, imaginative literature aims to clarify, comprehend, open new perspectives, and give meaning to these realities. Put another way, even though the facts or realities of everyday life are not that important in imaginative literature, it still aims to perfect life's reality. Imaginative literature is characterized by its connotative language, imaginative nature, and adherence to the aesthetic standards of art.

Poem is a literary work with distinct features and artistic worth when compared to other works of literature. Every line of a poem or poetry comprises exquisite words, diction, and rhythm. Poems are made up of solid words, but they are inventive and full of meaning. Poem can also be defined as an outpouring of one's emotions or contents in the form of beautiful words. According to Wayne Shumaker (1965: 10), poem is an idea or thought poet who uses words to describe perceptions, feelings, and specific concepts. Poem according to Laurence Perrine (1969), is a universal language and the oldest rich in diction.

Poems are a type of spoken poetry that beautifully and imaginatively express human experiences while arousing emotions and reflecting thoughts. This article will examine poetry in a methodical and comprehensible way, providing definitions as well as examples that highlight its traits, forms, and genres. Poems are works of art in which human emotions, ideas, or experiences are expressed through the thoughtful and creative arrangement of words. Poetry offers the richness of language and makes use of literary devices like metaphors, images, symbols, and comparisons in addition to ordinary language to produce a deeply beautiful experience.

In this study, the writer chooses poem from various other literary works because of the different character of the poem, which is unique and has its own meaning in each word, also has more meaning and imagination than the reader thinks. In this case, the writer will look at one of the most talented female poets, Maya Angelou, and her poem “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird”. Many poems are created now a days that use the experience of discrimination as an object owing to varied societal contexts. Aside from that, there are numerous female poets that write poem from a feminist perspective, for example the image of women in society, their status among men, and several other forms of discrimination that women face.

The writer's reasons for choosing the poem entitled “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird” from the many poems created by Maya Angelou are the determination and persistence of the "I" figure depicted in this poem are so motivating for women, especially me, that as women we must not let others bring us down, our self-respect, degrading our dignity. As women we also have the right to fight against oppression or anything that threatens our lives. Each choice of words and diction seems to provide its own spirit for the reader. Another reason for Maya Angelou's choice of “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird” is that her poems are talking about women. The writer, who

identifies as a woman, is curious to know how Angelou perceives women in her poem. In addition, the movement's discussion of how racism and segregation harm black women involved in the women's movement and civil rights movement makes black feminism a crucial political philosophy to understand.

The discourse on women and their position in social life have always been an interesting topic. In the social structure that develops in society, women are placed in a minority position. Especially in a society that is generally patriarchy which means glorifying men in all aspects of life. This feminist movement is one of the ways and efforts to equalize gender between men and women so that women are no longer a minority. Feminism is often defined as a social, political, ideological movement that has the same goal, namely to achieve gender equality between men and women in all aspects. Because the feminist movement was founded as a response to prejudice against women in the western world, its history can be traced back to that region. Bell hooks offers a brief description of feminism in the book *Feminism is for Everyone: Passionate Politics*, which was published in 2000. Ending sexism, sexual exploitation, and oppression are goals of the feminist movement. Krollokke and Sorensen state that (2005: 24), Three waves can be identified in the development of feminism. Different facets of the same feminist themes are present in each wave.

In this case, the author will examine one of the poems by one of the great women who is known as an influential African-American woman in America, namely Maya Angelou. Maya Angelou is an American poet, novelist, singer, memoir, and civil rights activist. Her poems have been an inspiration for feminist movement fighters, two of them are entitled “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird” which will be discussed by the writer in this study. These poems “Still I Rise” was published by Random House in 1978. It was published during one of the most prolific periods of Maya Angelou's career. The theme of this poem “Still I Rise” focuses on a hopeful determination to overcome adversity and despair. She speaks for her race and gender in many poems, and is again the strength and resilience of her community. The poem, titled “Still I Rise” is at the center of an advertising campaign for the United Negro College Fund. Meanwhile, the poem “Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou published in 1983, contains racism against black people by white people, who consider black people not equal to white people and are ostracized.

These poems “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird” are very interesting to discuss. In this poem, it tells the story of a woman, Maya Angelou who expresses her love for herself as a woman and other women in her area who experience discrimination. She pours all of her feelings into this work of poems, entitled “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird”. So poems “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird” were chosen because the content of the poems discuss about women, explains the background of black discrimination, how feminism combats prejudice against women, and how feminist ideas are mirrored in Maya Angelou's poems. Maya Angelou as the author of these poems wants to see women free, not trampled on, not distinguished between men and women, not distinguished between whites and blacks human. Maya Angelou wants women to get their rights and get justice. That's what Maya Angelou did in fighting for women's rights. The determination and persistence described in this poem motivates women, especially myself, that as women we must not allow other people to lower our self-esteem, demean our dignity. As women, we also have the right to fight against oppression or anything that threatens our lives. Each choice of words and diction seems to provide its own spirit for the reader.

Furthermore, it will be more interesting to analyze this poem using feminism theory because the broad scope of the content of this poem is about social life and human experience that develops from a woman-centered perspective. In addition, the author wants to show that the story of discrimination or differences in treatment of a group exists and can be analyzed to become a literary work like this poem. This poem describes the passion or determination, tenacity, and commitment of a woman who fights for her rights, to bring herself up from bad times, to rise from everything she lacks, a hopeful determination to overcome the difficulties she faces. In this poem, Maya Angelou talks about how she overcomes everything that happens with her pride. She shows that no one can degrade his dignity. Finally, the theory that will be applied to this poem is to understand and eliminate the nature of gender inequality by examining the social roles and life experiences of women.

1.2 Statements of the Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the research questions are:

1. How is discrimination and oppression of rights and freedoms against black women?
2. How is the influence of feminist thought in Maya Angelou's poems?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the objective of the study is to find out:

1. To find out forms of discrimination and oppression of the rights and freedoms of black women
2. To find out the influence of Feminist thought on Maya Angelou's poems

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical benefits.

Theoretically, the results of the study are expected to provide a valuable contribution to the study of feminist and literary studies in literary works, especially poem literature. And this research is expected need to be discussed in literary studies, especially regarding the black feminism movement. For practically, the study results apply the passion, persistence, and commitment shown by a woman who fights for her rights and to change persepective and reinterpreting the world and social life. People must revert to a balanced perspective of the world, which calls for treating all people fairly. Therefore, it is hoped that people will help to enhance racial and gender relations as well as relationships between groups of people.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on feminist and literary studies. The writer find it necessary to limit the topic of the study. The topic of this thesis are discrimination and oppression of black women in the poems “Still I Rise” and “Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou. So this research is limited to speech or every word used in writing this poem that is relevant to the topic of this thesis.