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The Shine of Pollyannaism in Maya Angelou's Works

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Abstract

The optimism in life is a pleasurable feel. The small key role in a story makes a huge difference in the universe. The hope helps to jump over the depression, failure, marginalization, etc. to reach the healthy balanced life. The Pollyannaism and *Still I Rise* holds the similar techniques for the blooming peaceful life. Thinking hopeful, spreading positivity is the major part of the two titles. Seeking good in bad and likes in dislikes are the drastic change of the upbeat personality.

Keywords: Positivity, Rise, Thoughts, Link, Bias

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”

(GTMN:124)- Maya Angelou

The principle to be optimistic and the bias to be positive are odd to notice. In the early 19th century the unique character in the novel of Eleanor H. Porter gets the attention of Americans

hardly. The role of Pollyanna Whittier in the work *Pollyanna* (1913) reaches the worldwide. The reason behind the fame is her peculiar attitude towards the life. The innovative attitude is to play 'the glad game'. The well liked line of Pollyanna is "...there is something about everything that you can be glad about, if you keep hunting long enough to find it"(P: 69). After reaching the pinnacle of its fame, countless researchers begin to present new term using the word Pollyanna. Some of them are Pollyannaism, The Pollyanna Principle, and The Positivity Bias. It provides similar definition of "The tendency of people to remember pleasant items more accurately than unpleasant ones" (GTMN: 121).

The Pollyanna Principle is also portrayed as The Positivity Bias. Primarily the word bias makes us to think the negative side of the topic, because of the preconceived notions. Bias does not mean only the bad stuff. Every culture feeds positive attitude to their disciples. It is the universal intimation to separate the wheat from the chaff. It proposes to centralize the optimistic words, thoughts and ideas to maintain the healthy balance.

The origin of the Pollyanna principle is from the key role Pollyanna Whittier of Eleanor H. Porter's work *Pollyanna* (1913). She is known for her 'The Glad Game', which she feels gratitude for everything she has. The silver line of her is the reason for the seed to form the principle. In 1970's the Pollyanna Principle was identified by the researchers Martin and Stang. They observed the upbeat and hopeful vibes to spread over, especially while making decisions. They advised to avoid back the worse horse. Our innate tendency is to use our own inner strength. They believe that our feelings of others influence our behavior. It is better to point good in bad and likes in dislikes than to get a heavy heart. The Pollyanna Principle is a complete package of self-encouragement in every drop of the ocean.

Maya Angelou, with the original name Marguerite Annie Johnson (1928 - 2014) was an American Poet, memoirist, and actress. Her major themes are economic, racial and sexual oppression. Her primary work in journey was *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). It comes under autobiographical work that paints with her traumatic childhood experience, which won National Book Award. Some volumes in her autobiographies are *Gather Together in My Name* (1974); *The Heart of a Woman* (1981); *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986); *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002); *Mom and Me and Mom* (2013). Her poetry collections are *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Diiie* (1971); *Still I Rise* (1978); *Now Sheba Sings the Song* (1987); *I Shall Not be Moved* (1990). She was also constructed the books for meditation and the stories for children.

Still I Rise is an inspiring poem by Maya Angelou. It covers with the personal experience of the poet. It is not only about sharing, but also calling others to alternate the attitude to face the obstacles in life. She is ready to provide her heart and soul to get the criticism from others. It reflects her confidence to not make the words of others affect her. The pessimistic idea of others made her to seek the self-encouragement. The result shines in her proud way to show her success. She feels appreciated to get a choice-less life to rise up in her life. From her childhood, she cornered as a racist. She questions the society through her

universal success. Her only choice is to rise than following the discriminating words of others.

The primary philosophy of life is the decision of good and bad, the meaning of success, finding the purpose of life. It is the slow time process. The two choices to choose about life are obstacle or challenge. If we view the life as obstacle, it ends in misery. The view as a challenge meets the heaven each second. The Pollyanna principle provides to visualize the good in everything. A minute colorful perspective turns the entire world to meet peace. Its origin holds an inseparable root with the key character of Pollyanna. The popular dialogue of her was, "And most generally there is something about everything that you can be glad about, if you keep hunting long enough to find it" (P: 69).

The present world centered with an illusions. As it separates human with different perspectives, it leads to misunderstanding and hatredness. The lessons of life are not only from the Institution, but from the family and the society. The world may push one to the pit; the victim should be strong enough to rise. An unpredicted victory might reflect as lies from other's perspective. The words of Maya Angelou follow as,

"You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise." (TCP: 12)

The poet laments her sorrowful experience in her life. The people may blast with bitter words and unpredictable lies. They may push you down to come up. But the poet challenges them to reach the peak and achieve something in her life. The thirst of the poet to succeed reflects her struggle as African American. In her age of four, her parents got divorced and at the age of eight, she was seduced by her mother's boyfriend. The harassment made her uncle to kill him. The murder made her guilty and maintain dumb for some years. After many pushes, she raised to the peak.

The attitude of women differ accord to their challenging experience in life. The confused interrogation holds the courage to move forward. The behavior reflects the confidence and improvement. The unique attire of a woman makes the changes to react. The attitude defines who we are. The feel of satisfaction and confidence towards future raise everyone to the peak. Through the words of the poet Maya Angelou we realize as follows,

"Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room." (TCP: 12)

The attitude of the poet may disturb her enemies and make them feel shock. The industrious act of the poet confuses the competitors as she got the precious and rare well in her home.

The need for great success is the baby pivot strategy. It is which gives full attention to the goal. The work of the sun is to shine, the moon is to chill and the tide is to touch the

shore. The duty of the fighter is to fight against the obstacles to reach the goals. The parroting technique should be used as a boon to taste the success. It is which mean the repeating mode and gathering new concepts to lead. The poet assures that success is not only the goal, but the path to get peace and find the purpose of life. Rising after failure is not a success, but rising after success is an outstanding achievement. In the stanza,

“Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.” (TCP: 12)

The poet expresses her purpose of life and the nature of the path towards success. The duty of the competitor is to fight against the obstacles, but not seeking excuses. The excuses among nature are no more. As we run behind the excuses to procrastinate the deed and blame.

Feeling inferior is common among human beings. But making others inferior by our deed equates with sin. The reason for inferiority complex is only the individual. By gathering more information and developing knowledge one can be confident to lead the step. The lack of confidence in ourselves can be called as the self-doubter. It is the basic type of fear among every human.

“Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?” (TCP: 12)

The poet interrogates her opponent about their expectation. Whether they want her to suffer, struggle, fail, and feel embarrass and cry for her birth. The reasons behind her questions are to know the thought level of her enemies and to challenge them and show her success with pride. The poet does not like to be a common woman who cries, suffers and dies. She seeks her ownself from this competitive and racist world. She loved to be a woman who strives more to achieve the best in this world.

The adamant child makes her surrounding suffer at times. Even at some it is the backbone to achieve her goal. It equates with self-encouragement. The person who enjoys and loves the path with struggle which leads to success definitely tastes it.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard. (TCP: 13)

The strict attitude of the poet may stab their rivals. It will be hard for the opponent to bear. The smile of the poet confuses as she has a gold mines in her backyard. It assures the happiness of an individual disturbs the rivals to think.

The physical attack is curable than an emotional and mental attack. The body language, facial expression, handshakes, standing postures, etc... expresses the psychology of a human.

“You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise.” (TCP: 13)

The poet shows her readiness to listen to others. She is sure that she can tolerate and come up in her life. The bitterness in words: knife in the looks: and rejection in attitude may hurt the poet. But with the help of self-confidence and self-trust she moved forward in her life. The beauty of trust and loyalty expressed only when we are alone. When it got handled properly, the beauty and peace of life can be felt.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I’ve got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs? (TCP: 13)

In this, the poet means sexiness as the jewel of trust and self-confidence. But it won’t grow within a day. She faced many door mats to meet the victory. Self-belief and hard work are enough to get succeed. She changed the meaning of selfishness as self-care and satisfaction.

Every success carries the steps of experiences, which is mistaken as failures. The human have huge options in life like fighting, rising, staying, running, changing, etc... for their goals.

We hold the options, but hesitate to choose correctly the successful person from low background carries the great courage.

“Out of the huts of history’s shame
I rise
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain
I rise
I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.” (TCP: 13)

The poet is from the background of African American. She underwent the sufferings of marginalization and racism. Physically and mentally she tolerated huge tortures and decided to create unique identity. With dignity, she proved herself to the world.

The word - afraid and hesitation is the first venom of the word - thinking. The comfort zone is the rival for challenging character. Past experiences are the mentor for the future days. The people who influence others would have faced many obstacles. The role model or inspiration is not just a word, but to become as one.

“Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.” (TCP: 13)

From marginalization and racism, the poet concentrates more on the development and to create a unique identity and dignity. She feels very confident as she holds the encouraging words of her ancestors tightly. She dreamt to become an inspiration for her future generation to fight for the rights.

Through this poem, Maya Angelou expresses her anger and fighting attitude to get her rights. Pollyannaism is to think hopeful in life to reach their dream.

Still I Rise is an autobiographical poem. It associates with every traumatic experience of the poet Maya Angelou. Her search for her identity made her to realize to see only good in everything. The act of others should not change our attitude for ourselves. Maya Angelou's realization about the importance of self-encouragement tied with the glad game in the Pollyanna principle. Their self-encouragement and thoughts to be optimistic through words, thoughts and actions are similar.

Abbreviation

P – Pollyanna

TCP – *The Complete Poetry*

GTMN – *Gather Together in My Name*

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