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ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Quest for Home: A Reading Travel Texts of Maya Angelou's *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoe*

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Article History: Submitted-22/10/2023, Revised-21/12/2023, Accepted-25/12/2023, Published-31/12/2023.

Abstract:

The contemporary philosophical, intellectual, and literary battle highlights the fact that travel literature is also concerned with identity discourse. Travel keeps track of our development in both time and space. It clarifies how one is defined and recognized. The voyage in the outside world is shown as a metaphor for the journey in the interior world, and it is an explicit attempt to study the uncanny character of the journey. Furthermore, travel allows one to immerse oneself in a foreign culture and environment, prompting the subject to contemplate and reflect on oneself. The writer's reactions to such a confrontation are varied and contradictory. Multiple factors influence such responses, including race, class, nationality, gender, and many other. This paper will attempt to examine how African American women travel writers explore and redefine themselves by negotiating with their multiple identities in their sites of travel. The travel text chosen for this research is Maya Angelou's *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* (1986). An effort will also be made to analyze how she explored the transcendental world of the journey of the human self.

Keywords: Metaphor of the self, travel writing, race, gender, nationality.

Maya Angelou's book *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* is the sixth in a series of engrossing narrative memoirs. It mostly centers on her time in Africa, which she spent attempting to locate as her "home." It's the story of Maya and her seventeen-year-old son, Guy, whom she brings to Africa to begin his studies at the University of Ghana following his twist of fate depicted in a previous film. Angelou's travel writing helps her reclaim her feeling of self-worth, which she lost in the course of the divorce process.

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes is a travelogue and the title comes from a Negro spiritual. It takes place in Ghana, West Africa, in the 1960s, when Angelou arrives from the United States. The author visits the capital city of Accra, the University of Ghana, and Keta in her stay in Ghana. The novel opens with a sorrowful scene depicting a mother's lengthy watch for her son's recuperation from an automobile twist of fate, and her hopes had been dwindling because of the possibility of Guy's death, as expressed inside the following statement:

"July and August of 1962 stretched out like fat men yawning after a sumptuous dinner. They had every right to gloat, for they had eaten me up. Gobbled me down. Consumed my spirit, not in a wild rush, but slowly, with the obscene patience of certain victors. I became a shadow walking in the white-hot streets, and a dark specter in the hospital" (Angelou, 1986: 4).

Angelou's quest for home is documented in *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*. Traveling is recommended as a method of survival due to the fact every person reports equal pain, fear, hope, and happiness. Her look for an area is ingrained within the human brain. People of all races aspire to go back domestic; for African-Americans, Africa is Zion, while Jews yearn to go back to Israel. Anglo-Saxons appear to England; however African-Americans crave for Africa as their idealized domestic.

"Our people had always longed for home. For centuries we had sung about a place not built with hands, where the streets were paved with gold, and were washed with honey and milk." (Travelling Shoes 20)

Through this volume, Angelou demonstrates that any woman can achieve this state if she is capable of transcending and transforming herself through all of life's crises. African-American women develop a deep type of strength as a result of surviving the odds they were up against, and this is a dangerous occurrence for the colored male. Despite the fact that blackness and being a woman were forces beyond their control, these women were able to break free and emerge triumphant. The most radical agitations of the majority of Africans are the search for their individual recognition.

Angelou explores essential problems including acceptance, racism, survival, and motherhood in *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*. It makes a specialty of Maya Angelou's growth, development, and training as a lifelong learner. She matures right into a liberated black

girl as well. Angelou matures right into a proud American patriot. She is content material with herself and accepts her identification as an American. This arises from her ride to Ghana, wherein she became capable of advantage a greater open-minded know-how of racism with the aid of using studying that no organization of human beings must be absolutely categorized as racists due to the fact every person may be one. This recognition has helped her reclaim her self confidence and self-esteem, which she had misplaced in her early life. Through her deep ties with black girls and African Americans in Ghana, Angelou develops her twin consciousness: her American and African selves. The American self is dominating as she departs Ghana.

Maya Angelou's survival on the African continent is remarkable in that she manages to reclaim her right to freedom. She transforms the social and economic conditions imposed on her by colonialism into something desirable. She hasn't cut off any of her parts, but she is continuously highlighting and expressing her self-individuality.

Maya joins a political circle in Ghana, where she meets a group of African Americans who name themselves the "Revolutionary Returnees." Maya dresses in traditional African garb, braids her hair in an ethnic style, and learns a few African languages as part of her goal to "become natural." However, even in her (imagined) homeland, her quest for identification and unification with the "soul of Africa" is met with a painful awareness of her "otherness"—an acute sense that the African Americans "had not come home, but had left one familiar place of painful memory for another strange place with none" (Angelou, 1986: 40). Maya does, however, feel accepted and unified in the greater African collective on two occasions: first, by the tribal inhabitants, and second, by the traders of Keta market. "At that moment, I didn't want to recall that I was an American," Maya recounts of being labelled as a "Bambara" and says "at that moment I didn't want to remember that I was an American. For the first time since my arrival, I was very nearly home. Not a Ghanaian, but at least accepted as an African" (Angelou, 1986:102).

Where the American flag, which they otherwise scorned and "jeered at," was a piercing reminder that the Black American identity is derived from this particular flag and not from Africa (Angelou, 1986: 207) In the minds of self-exiled subjects, America never ceases to be the primary point of reference:

"Many of us had only begun to realize in Africa that the Stars and Stripes was our flag and our only flag, and that knowledge was almost too painful to bear. We could physically return to Africa, find jobs, learn languages, even marry and remain on the African soil all our lives, but we were born in the United States and it was the United States which had rejected, enslaved, exploited, then denied us...I shudder to think that while we wanted that flag dragged into the mud and sullied beyond repair, we also wanted it pristine, its white stripes, summer cloud white. Watching it wave in the breeze of a distance made us nearly choke with emotion. It lifted us up with its promise and broke our hearts with its denial" (Angelou, 1986:207).

In Ghana, Angelou and Guy felt comfortable. Angelou is captivated by Ghana, its people, traditions, and culture. Ghana's culture was strikingly similar to her own South American Black culture, which she grew up with in Arkansas and California. She feels at ease in Ghana since there are no problems based on race, and everyone treats everyone equally.

Every step of the journey reveals this fearlessness. As she begins her sojourn in Ghana, Angelou sees the future as "plump with promise," despite of the fact that she has no job and no house and despite her son Guy's being injured in an automobile accident on the third day of their stay in Ghana. Specific episodes that would frustrate, if not paralyze, others do not daunt her. She argues with a group of people at the university who make demeaning remarks about African Americans; she works through her son's rejection of her following an argument they have about his dating an older woman; and she deals with the displacement she feels as she travels from Ghana to Germany and Egypt. In all these experiences, she continues to think and speak boldly, fearlessly, and hopefully.

In the meantime, Angelou understands the limits of her partnership with Guy. Guy is an adult, she tells herself, and although though he is in need of her help right now and is vulnerable, he is still a grown man at the end of the day. She tries hard to accept Guy as an adult who is in charge of making his own decisions. She promises to do everything in her power to love and support him, but she also deliberately backs off to foster his development and independence as a self-sufficient human being.

According to Angelou, the title of *Traveling Shoes* comes from a spiritual. African American scholar Lyman B. Hagen reports that the title comes from the spiritual "All God's

Chillun Got Wings" (Hagen, 1997). Dolly McPherson writes that, Angelou's "clever reference" to her ongoing search for a home while being aware of "our ultimate home", is very symbolic (McPherson, 1990: 107). The title demonstrates Angelou's love of African American spirituals and the deep sense of religion that appears in all her works. Critic Mary Jane Lupton finds the appearance of the word "traveling" purposeful, since it emphasizes the journey theme, one of Angelou's most important themes of the book. Like Angelou's previous volumes in her series, the title contributes to its plot and thematic impact (Lupton, 1998: 140).

In that vein, home beckons upon Angelou and becomes a central motif throughout both her travels and her narrative. Throughout the book, from the dedication to the final page when Angelou says she "was not sad departing Ghana," this self-portrait is a hymn of praise and a song of hope. At the end of her essay, Angelou portrays a grief that gives rise to both hope and praise: "I had not come to Ghana consciously to find the roots of my beginnings, but I had continually and unintentionally tripped over them or fallen upon them in my everyday life."

Her tripping and falling enlightens Angelou, allowing her to see that her ancestors, though taken by force from Africa, had not completely left that country. Like them, she is experiencing a leave-taking, and like them she will carry Africa with her.

Thus, Traveling is advocated as a strategy of survival because everyone experiences the same pain, fear, hope, and happiness. Her search for a place is ingrained in the human brain. Humanity, regardless of color, yearns to return home. For African Americans, Africa is Zion, whereas Jews wish to return to Israel, Anglo Saxons yearn for England, and African Americans yearn for Africa as their idealized home.

Angelou is aware that her growing bond with Guy is being replaced by her relationship with Kojo. In an effort to set healthy boundaries and distance themselves from one another, she and Guy frequently butt heads. He begins a romantic engagement with an older woman later in the book, much to Angelou's disapproval, and runs into problems when attempting to be admitted to the University of Ghana. Angelou has the chance to take a backseat in both of these situations and let Guy make his own choices—and mistakes.

It's an unpredictable procedure set in a shattered universe that stimulates the imagination in the real world. A high road is a manifestation of this process of growth. It mirrors vision; the

muddy puddles at your feet one moment, and the beautiful skies the next. The most beautiful way to describe reality is through autobiography. As she continues her quest for that safe haven, Angelou, who is always perceptive and perceptive, observes and absorbs a variety of situations, including one in which university staff members dramatically express their views regarding Ghana. This multinational group—an Englishman, a Yugoslav, a Canadian, a German, and an African—converses about black Americans in the senior common room, which then turns into a discussion about Ghana. The climactic moment occurs when the Englishman announces that democracy was never intended for the masses, as exemplified by Ghana. The scorn with which this native of Ghana treats Angelou is a sobering experience, alerting the exiled American that she has not yet found home. The African responds, agrees, and makes light of the whole issue.

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes is a search book for Angelou's quest for home. Travelling is recommended as a means of survival, where everyone shares the same emotions of sadness, anxiety, hope and happiness. Her quest for homeland burns deep within the human psyche. Irrespective of race, mankind yearns to go back home. Africa is the Zion for the Blacks, whereas Jews longed to go back to Israel, Anglo Saxons look upon England, but on the other hand African Americans yearn for Africa as their idealized home. "Our people had always longed for home. For centuries we had sung about a place not built with hands, where the streets were paved with gold, and were washed with honey and milk" (Angelou, 1986 :19-20).

CONCLUSION

Novel *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* portrays an adventurous voyage within a journey. Angelou's point of view in describing her historic journey is that of an aware and articulate black lady who internalizes her experience. Maya Angelou's work and the writings of female black writers are characterized by this introspective searching. She is aware of both the outward and internal realities. The self, she says, is the model she holds up to black women, and it is the unacknowledged story of actualization that she wants to include in the canon of black American literature. It is the actual Song of Myself and Ourselves for her.

Ultimately, Angelou believes her time in Africa is drawing to an end. Guy makes the decision to stay behind while she decides to go back to America. He drops her off at the airport with a number of her newfound friends from Ghana. Angelou is reminded as she departs of her

African ancestors' centuries-old flight from their homes—they did it while being held captive and in chains.

This inn-ness sign connects her to the eternal universe of immortality. She takes the reader on a never-ending journey in which she makes it plain that we, the children of God, are not here to stay. We must continue to move on with the breath and vitality. On this eternal path, spiritual wealth from within is essential. To arrive at the land of immortality regularly, securely, and safely, we must pack our belongings and wear appropriate travel shoes. The necessary tools must be gathered long in advance of the last bell being run by the rod of time. We must return to our Homeland, which belongs to all of us, well-padded and quite well.

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