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A critical analysis of Alice walker's *The Color Purple*

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Abstract

Alice Walker as a writer wishes to throw light upon the cruelty of the real world instead of creating something imaginary, one that cannot be felt by people around the world. She is a African-American novelist and poet most famous for authoring *The Color Purple*. This particular study parades this fact through scrutinising her work; *The Color Purple* (1983). Born to sharecropper parents in Eatonton, Georgia, in 1944, Walker was raised up to turn into an extremely applauded novelist, essayist and poet and similarly acknowledged for her work as an activist. The novel reconnoitres the female African-American experience through the life and scuffles of its narrator, Celie who agonises dreadful mishandling at the hands of her father, and later, from her husband. The compelling work won Walker both the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award for Fiction in 1983. She addresses issues which concern people all around the world; therefore, make no error about the predominant themes. This study can be an example of a work that principally focuses on the achievements of a creative writer irrespective of his/her background.

Keywords: Character, study, analysis, deterioration, angst, racism, identity, submission and self-discovery

Introduction

For many readers, then, *The Color Purple* was quintessential the flagship text of difference, the literary embodiment of the new 'identity politics' par excellence. (179)

The above extract is taken from the critical work *Contemporary Women's Writing from the Golden Notebook to The Color Purple*, a chapter entitled "To *The Color Purple*" highlights the significance of the book. Alice Walker expounds the lives of black women through their misery, resolution, and just plain quirkiness with spiritual survival and with exploring the oppressions, insanities, loyalties, and triumphs of black women. The protagonist Celie, and other women characters such as Shug, Sofia, and Nettie are the complex characters, in contrast to the leaden presence offered by their menfolk, individually and collectively.

The novel is measured to be the subject to domestic violence that Walker has projected with the characterization of Celie. The character's mistreatment at the hands of her stepfather and husband. However, there was a powerful progress and also the development of character, who were oppressed and can associate with camaraderie to overcome their oppressors. Walker's projection of female characters who were enriched by the considerate historical magnitudes as she offers alternatives to rigid gender roles. The multiple themes in this novel that deal with the decimation against by the white community, mistreatment, oppression, submission, patriarchal, violence and abusing. The present study attempts to make a full described comprehensive critical interpretation on the themes of Alice Walker's novel.

Alice Walker was born on 9th February, 1944, an outstanding Afro-American novelist, short story writer, poet, and activist. Her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* published in 1970 is a story of Grange, his wife, their son Brownfield, and granddaughter Ruth. The story plot is taken from the journey of Grange's life that is initially at a minimal stage, both in terms of moral value and economic stability. The protagonist's initial life treatment was abusive, irresponsible sharecropper that gradually improves from economic support to moral firmness is the focal point of the story. The novel preponderantly apprehends black men; although women are essential element and always positioned the secondary position in the novel.

The next novel, *Meridian* published in 1960, is an appreciating and progressive story of a courageous young black woman who joins the Civil Rights Movement events that meticulously corresponding same as Walker's own involvements. However, *The Color Purple*, the best-known work that exhibits a young, troubled black woman struggling her manners to overcome not only with racist white culture but also patriarchal black culture as well. The book acclaimed a bestseller and was successively adapted into a critically movie directed by Steven Spielberg, featuring Oprah Winfrey and Whoopi Goldberg in 2005. The novel's richness remain in the concentration of subtle interactions among the characters nor the penetrating emotional impact.

During the year 1982-1983 was considered as progressive era of literary canon, flourishing by women writers mostly. The majority awards for the fiction writers were dominated by female writers. The PEN Hemingway was won by Bobbie Ann Mason for the year's best first fiction. The academic discipline had been shaped by women writers. These women writers were giving competition to their male counterpart. The nomination for the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award four out of the five nominees were women during the abovementioned era. However, the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize in 1983 won by Alice Walker for novel *The Color Purple*. Without a doubt women novelist were emphasising a distinct category of notable recognition and predominantly Alice Walker, congregated remarkable appreciation. In an interview "A Conversation with Alice Walker" asked about her passion for literature by Donna Seaman on 28th May 2013, she replies:

If literature didn't inspire empathy and compassion, it would be virtually useless. The reason I absolutely do love and treasure literature is that it has taken me out of myself. Out of the narrow self, the little self, in which I could easily be stuck, and it has opened up the world to me. (American libraries).

Alice Walker's novel displays an exceptional theme of obsession that transcend from endurance reconnoitring the persecutions to absurdities and loyalties, and accomplishments of black women. The autobiographical and spiritual narratives are the strongest factors that ruled the genre during the 19th century.

The writers like Walker and Ernest Gaines, the contemporary black novelists who have focused on the descriptions of people who had commonly absconded from oppression, about their expeditions to self-determination and ways they demanded their lives. Walker's worldwide recognition as writer, activist that present all aspects of the life of her black characters, it gets direct attention in the novel. As Harold Bloom in his critical work on *Bloom's Modern Critical Views Alice Walker*, published in 2007, the Introduction chapter that he writes about Walker:

A contemporary writer who calls herself "author and medium" is by no means idiosyncratic, and Alice Walker certainly seems to me a wholly representative writer of and for our current era. The success of *The Color Purple* is deserved; Walker's sensibility is very close to the Spirit of the Age. (1)

The Color Purple throws light on Celie's painful life who is a victim of rape and impregnation of by a man whom she thinks is her father. Her life was full of suffering not only with one respect but many. She was also removed from school in spite of her full interests towards studies. The consequences of her life makes her submissive and weak. The treatment of life was extremely ruthless not only before marriage but also after her marriage in a most disappointing way. She got married to a father of three children who as well treats her shabbily same as her father. She has nobody to share her grief as she writes letters to god. She expresses all incidents of her life to god.

Celie calls her husband Mr. --- who beats her, and feels superior with his male ego, when his son Harpo asks him why he beats Celie, he answers, "Cause She my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for-he don't finish." (23) Walker's presentation of her female she brings out the voices of the weak. As Mary Donnelly in a critical work *Writers and Their Works Alice Walker: The Color Purple and Other works* states in her Introduction chapter:

Walker's heroines nevertheless articulate clear visions not just of the wrongs they face, but also of the hope and strength that cannot be quenched within them. Not every Walker heroine works up the courage to say, as Celie in *The Color Purple* does to her abusive husband... (8)

Learning to follow the same footsteps followed by father, Harpo also endeavour to repeat the same practice with his wife Sophia. The deep impact on both the abused women in the novel, formulate a profound connection; their anguish carries them together in strong solidarity. There was no initial support provided by Celie to Sophia but gradually Celie progressed on her characterisation. One can consider that the male domination explicitly adopted from the supremacy that ascends from the oppression the black man experiences in a world controlled by the whites.

Another woman character who plays an important role in the novel is Shug Avery, who respects the value of women's solidarity. The novel exclusively concentrate on the black world that vehemently represents the significances of this circumstances for black women. Men hold an undesirable quality in Walker's novel, as "there is an absence of love in their lives which leads them to abuse their wives and children."(Pratt 10)

The two optimistic persons that Celie owns from the initial stage of her life is focused out ward in two directions, one is God and other she is inclined towards her sister, Nettie. Walker's concerned with the theme of spiritual transformation in the novel begins virtually from Celie's letters, initially written to God. In association with spiritual evolvment, that focuses on the effect the author's personal interpretation of the divine. From the beginning of the novel, Celie's father words "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (3).

Virtually the combination of the spirituality and creativity are always unified in Walker's life and her novels predominantly. The phenomenal exploration, so ineradicably touching at the optimal account style that dominates without interruption perhaps one of the striking features of Walker's themes. The development in Celie's character is through another female character Shug. Celie's exchange of conversations with Shug that ultimately makes her a strong believe in herself. Their correspondence with

each other serves as one of the developing factors for self and Celie started celebrating everything that exists as an integrated whole.

The conclusion of the novel brings a spirit of celebration and also the perspectives of Celie, who also comes to joy and ultimately makes her celebrate life turns into pleasures, including *The Color Purple* in her life. The episodic form of the novel also develops in the character's understanding of consciousness that has been raised, and the germs of feminism and liberation have been established.

The major themes in the novel that had plagued and tormented the characters throughout the novel is inside the larger context of the misery inflicted by a racist society that have discriminated against by the white community. Walker's passes a message through *The Color Purple*, for the women to be strong and enjoy their lives.

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