

# SOCIAL ISSUES OF WOMEN IN WALKER'S THE COLOUR PURPLE

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## **Abstract**

A woman should be considered as a queen, as a partner of the man in all the fields of life, as a person who should be respected by all members of society because she is mother, sister, wife etc. Moreover, this paper tried to convey the gender differentiation in Walker's The Color Purple novel and her defence of a woman to challenge the traditions in her society during the period of her time. This paper aims at trying to explain the view of Alice Walker about the woman in her novel, The Color Purple. Really Alice Walker in her novel tried to concern with women's rights and campaigned to provide women with more independence in different areas, for example in politics, social life, the household, and so forth. Furthermore, this paper exposes the social issues of Afro American in general and black woman in particular.

**Keywords:** Alice Walker, The colour purple, Summary of The Color Purple in brief, Social issues in the novel, The Use of symbolism.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Alice Walker is one of the most famous and beloved writers of our times because of the fame of her novel The Color Purple. Walker was born on 9 February 1944, she was youngest of eight children and the daughter of sharecroppers. Walker was active in the social events in her times, speaking out against injustice during civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s. The Color Purple is the third novel, written in 1982. Her novel received Pulitzer prize for literature in 1983 and an American Book Award. Walker highlights are that the change in a person is linked with the change of society. The novel deals with the social issues of black in general and black women in particular such as racial violence, gender roles, oppression, plights and the relationship between males and females are important in The Color Purple. Men are seen as weak and thought to be helpless. Women are forced to live under the dominance of Me. The most important theme of Walker's well-known novel The Color Purple; abuse of women in terms of Feminist Criticism.

## **II. SUMMARY OF THE COLOR PURPLE IN BRIEF**

The Color Purple is the foremost story of Celie, a poor, barely literate southern black woman who struggles to escape the brutally and degradation of her treatment by men. The tale is told primarily through her own letters, which out of isolation and despair, she initially addresses to god. As a teenager, she is repeatedly raped and beaten by her stepfather Alphonso. Then, forced by him to a loveless marriage with Mr Albert, a widower of four children. Albert is in love with a vivacious independent blue singer named Shug Avery, Celie is merely a servant and an occasional sexual convenience. When his oldest son asks Albert why he beats Celie, he says simply, "Cause she, my wife. For a time Celie accepts the abuses stoically. He says Celiegit the belt, it all I can do not to Cry. I make myself wood. I say myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I come know trees fair men." (Walker, Alice, 1982). Celie faced suffering and pain when she was living with her father who raped her in the age of 14. Then he sells her to an old man to work in his house as a servant and in his farm as an animal. Celie is isolated from her little sister. Then Celie wrote letters first to her God then to her sister in order to narrate her tragic events.

“the letter form technique makes the structure: of the novel rather complex. The author has to resort numerous times to flashbacks. A letter is inherently very personal. Therefore by deciding to write a missive to God and also to her sister Nettie, the letter at once indicates that what Celie is writing or what Nettie is writing when the latter also writes to Celie is very personal Alice Walker is allowed to look at contentious matters on a very personal basis through the letter form technique and she delves into them to the greatest depth and brings out her innermost feelings.” Kazumi

After that, she meets lady Shug Avery then Celie travels with her friend to see the world. Celie creates her personality by having independent work. Finally, she leaves her husband to be a free and pleasant life.

### III. SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE NOVEL

In general, white Americans developed notions in their minds about blacks. They understood that the blacks could be used as animals not as human beings. They were considered as savage creatures, wild human beings and soulless slaves. The black women were exploited by the white American who used to force them to surrender their bodies as they wanted. The condition of the black women was worse than the women of defeated men who taken as prisoners. The black women were treated as naked savages and beasts. Therefore, "...their main struggle to seek for a definition of themselves according to positive characteristics and according to what they lack."(Shukla, S. &Banerji, N., 2012).

They were made to work more and paid less. The women were constantly exploited and used as toys and playthings. They had to work on the farms of the whites. The situation became worse when some black women struggled to keep their chastity and dignity by refusing to submit their bodies, they were publicly punished and even more burnt alive. They were the victims of the whites and the blacks, doubly oppressed, the colour and gender, racism and sexism poverty and powerlessness. The double slavery imposed upon them was horrible. They became the slaves of their husbands. And they asked, `And I ain't a woman? Look at me! Look at my arms! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't a woman? I could work as much as a man. Walker through *The Color Purple* portrays the themes of estrangement and reconciliation, redemption through love, sisterhood, racism and sexism, oppression and suppression, political and economic emancipation status of women, the relation between men and women, gender discrimination, etc.

### IV. THE USE OF SYMBOLISM

"Symbolism is another style that Alice Walker uses in the novel, Pants represent independence, individuality, and strength to Celie as she liberates herself from Mr. \_\_\_'s control. They help her to breach gender lines when she decides to wear them; they bring her economic freedom when she begins making them as a business. Just as the idiom "wearing the pants in the family" is used to describe someone who is in control, pants help to define and shape Celie's control over her own life." Obure Mark P.P 15

Alice Walker freely uses symbols. Symbolism in her work has a special significance. Symbols coupled with the folk dialect add tremendously to the implication. The black American woman is a universal symbol representing one's hope and resurrection through her female character. Walker advocates the importance of bonds between women who contend with negative social mechanisms. One of the most important symbols is the symbol of a tree. Here Celie is implicitly contrasted and compared to a tree. The symbol signifies the pathetic state of Celie. Celie like a tree sustains all external abuses, aggression and blows but remains steadfast, dreaming of better season. Thus tree becomes a symbol of hope, optimism, emancipation and endurance. Walker's work abounds with beautiful images; images are taken from rural and urban areas, to denote the plight of black women and impending calamities with the advent of colonization. Celie is also a victim of poverty and powerlessness. Her plight on account of her poverty and her powerlessness on account of her exploitation and violence is perceived through her family members, her father and her husband subside their anger by beating her constantly. Alice Walker strongly asserts that women were exploited by men and ill-treated. The root cause of them is male's greed for a position and they can possess them because men are strong and women are weak.

It is the biological fact that cannot be denied. The Color Purple has brought her an important place among contemporary Americans novelists. Walker's novels highlight women's struggle for survival. The Color Purple more particularly provides an insight into the predicament of women on the domestic front. The story revolves around an unfortunate, abused woman Celie and other women characters and brings home the predicament perpetrated against black women. The predicament as the history bears testimony is the result of the racial victimization, oppression, physical exploitation and violence. The women in the Color Purple live in an unpleasant, and difficult perplexing and dangerous situation. They are always in a dilemma. The women are treated like a slave. They are deprived of freedom and social position. Alice Walker depicts these multifaceted problems and predicament of women quite realistically and naturally in this novel. The novel provides the tragic picture of sufferings and pains in a new light.

## V. CONCLUSION

Alice Walker's novel, The Color Purple presents a good example in terms of Feminist Criticism. We see the male domination over the women in every part of life, but over time, women want to release themselves from the abuses of man and be independent. Powerfully Alice walker uses the symbolism as technic to show the social issues of black women in American society and to provide us with the real image of the black community to discuss their social issues and try to solve it. In short Walker in The Color Purple presents that females are forced to live under the dominance of a man, either father or husband. A courageous woman can create a better life for herself. Celie is one good example of these brave women who can able to build a new life for herself and to declare her identity as working and self-confident woman. In fact, the story of Celie is engraved in the mind of readers and touch their hearts.

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