

A Journey from Slavery to Liberty in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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Alice Walker is an American novelist, short story writer, poet, essayist and an activist. Her novel, *The Color Purple* won Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the National Book Award in 1983. The *Color Purple* is a novel about a fourteen year's old uneducated woman's struggle for empowerment. The novel is set in a highly patriarchal society, where woman being oppressed economically, socially and psychologically. It is not just a feminist novel conventional to the analysis of sexual oppression. It is about the rebirth of self and establishment of female identity.

KEYWORDS: Activist, uneducated, feminist, struggle, empowerment, patriarchal, sexual oppression, psychologically.

Celie the protagonist represents the most marginalized woman in the black society. She was mercilessly abused by her stepfather Alphonso, forced to live an unhappy married life with Albert and separated from her sister, Nettie. Her life seems to be feeling worse and worse in the form of poverty, racism, and sexism. This paper is an attempt to have a close look at the suffering and humiliation meted out to women. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, deals with the woman's struggle, sex-slavery and lack of opportunity at home.

Celie a poor black girl of fourteen suffers from lifetime pain, hurt, torn down by physical and mental tortures. The novel begins as Celie stop talking and starts writing, after she has been raped by her father and threatened that, she "better not never tell anybody but God". She is not allowed to communicate her problems with anyone except God. So she documents her feeling and struggles to God through letters. Writing is the only form to express her disappointment and to medicine her innermost sufferings. According to Alice Walker, literacy helps women to survive in spite of all oppressive situations. Many women in the world find a silent solution to their suffering in the form of writing. Celie symbolically mirrors the majority of women in the world, who remain speechless to all the social tortures. In most parts of the world, women are treated like

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an object where there is a total missing of female identity by the social constraints of the patriarchal mindset.

Alice Walker unfolds contrasting women characters and the problem and obstacles faced in their everyday lives. Celie is submissive and frightened to rebel against the patriarchy, because of fear of losing her shelter and her life. She remains passive, without power to assert herself and she is dehumanized by all male characters in the novel. *The Color Purple* is a vehicle to bring out the grounded sufferings in the minds of the woman, who were suppressed for decades to voice their inner self.

There are other woman characters in the novel, Shug friend of Celie is a very opposite of Celie's character. She is spiritually liberated. She plays a vital role in transforming Celie's life and in establishing her identity. Sofia the toughest woman independent in her thoughts. Unlike Celie, she refuses to be submissive and won't let anyone dominate her physically. Nettie sister of Celie had to fight against the man in their family. In order to escape from the male-dominated tortures, she escapes to Africa with a missionary.

Celie's poverty makes her to suffer from odd situations. She is forbidden to enjoy economic freedom because her husband won't pay for her. Fortunately, Shug identifies Celie's talents in making pants. Celie starts to earn money by making pants. Celie at the end of the novel becomes a totally independent woman. She frees herself physically and emotionally.

Nettie, Shug, and Sofia serve as the turning point in Celie's life. They channelise her in a correct way. Under their influence, she restores her dignity and self-respect. Celie attains transcendence. She starts loving herself and finds God in nature and in all creations. Like Celie, there are hundreds of thousands of women around the world tormented, by depriving the basic freedom and inflicting unspeakable physical and emotional harms.

Walker encounters a multidimensional approach by showing the hardship, of women, such as rape, abuse, sexism through the character of Celie on the one end. On the other side, there is hope, strength, resistance, love through the character of Sofia, Shug, Nettie. The novel examines women struggle to find love, self-esteem despite harsh setbacks. According to Walker if women are educated, they are far less likely to fall victims to violence and poverty. Women who have control over their economic asserts may escape from the abusive relationship. *The Color Purples* aims at bringing awareness to women and to empower them, against the domestic acts of violence. In short, *The Color Purple* is a journey from slavery to liberation.

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