



Becoming Shero: An Exploration of Woman's Sheroship In Alice Walker's The Color Purple

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Abstract: Women are considered as dependent objects for men in this patriarchal society. They dominate her to show their power to the world to maintain their self created status. The word hero is not simply an appellation given to a man, who possesses the only action and kung-fu flicks, rather a hero is someone who expects nothing in return, reckon with their problems as well as endeavors for others too. Hero word is not related to any gender and sex, it can be anyone, a woman, a man even a child can also be a hero. This word concerns with ability, sacrifices, virtuosity, determination, and courage. This paper can be divided into three parts. The first part deals with the circumstances of Celie in which she is forced to live. The second part discusses how she raises her voice after being a voiceless woman for a long period. Finally, in the last part, it presents an example of a Shero who has changed her deplorable circumstances into a prosperous life.

Key words: Suppression, Patriarchy, Sexism, Casteism, Domination, Voice, Self identity.

Any woman can be a heroine and being a heroine is simply life-changing or empowering. It does not matter how ordinary tasks she does. She is Shero for one and others in somewhere. Many believe that she had to wait for her hero in her life who will take care of her, will protect her in life. When she enters the world, somewhere in the patriarchal mindset society, Firstly she depends on her father for her choices and dreams. She is not allowed to dream without her father's permission or orders and later on her husband, son and so on, this system goes on till her pyre. She does not live on her wishes or choices. Their orders and permission become her choices and dream. A male represents his all power and dominates the opposite sex just because she is not he, she is she or not stepping forward. The thought of Making her life deplorable or week in society gives the wing to all He to operate all She. Since childhood, human are being provided many fantasy, filmy stories where the basic plot is that at the end prince or hero will save princes or heroine. End ends with the hero or princess's victory by saving her with their physical or mental strength. Through these stories, these notions had been firmed or established in the society that only hero or prince can save the day. Patriarchal mindset has already put women on secondary position and men or primary to rule the world with their own rules and regulation which never allow women to have equality.

Being a strong species of the world's creation, she should not wait for her life's hero; she should be a hero of her own life. She has to make her position on her own. Hindu mythology has many Sheroes, they are very unique and their stories still inspire all. Their all virtues, firm determination, compassion, love, and respect become the epitome of today's women. Sita Draupadi, Mandodari, and Ahilya. Keeping in mind these qualities, this paper illuminates a Girl who gradually becomes shero for herself as well as for others. This proposed research paper has been written with the primary objective of exploring that how the central character of the novel, Celie who is sexually assaulted or uneducated girl begins to chisel her merits of a shero and

emerges as a shero with courage and skill after facing deplorable or abject circumstances, also desiderates for her existence. In one way or another, she stands for what she believes. Everyone possesses the qualities of a hero and a shero, they only require a chance, motivation, and inner voice to chisel their strength as Celie does in the novel. Many times, a wound shows you where you were and how you overcame it. Confronting those wounds or pain and creating something better, discovering your journey from the wound to recovery helps other women who are also fighting with the same issues and also endeavor to improve them. This protagonist possesses these merits but it takes time to grow cause of the existing male-centric norms.

An African- American black female writer, a shining star in the black literary field, Alice walker Who is a poet, essayist, short story writer, novelist, and well known for novels and essays. The Color Purple (1982), her third novel. With this publication, she earned a reputation as one of America's premier authors. The Color Purple is an epistolary novel, awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1983 and National Book Prize for fiction. This commendable creation is not only a novel; it's a voice of many voiceless black women and women. It has also been rocked the halls in the form of adaptation. From pages to screen with the same name in 1985, was directed by Steven Spielberg. After releasing the film, Walker became more successful and also controversial, on the one hand, she is criticized for portraying the negative phase of males but she is more praised for the powerful portrayal of the black female. African women have been silenced from varying back because of class, race, colour. The presence of this silence is both within and without the black community. This novel fulfills these women's need for a shero. Through this novel walker sets modern parameters for the empowerment of women who liberate themselves from these suppressions, silence, and oppression. In the effort of creating a hero for the African women, the walker has created a shero for everywoman. Celie is not a pa's girl. She is fourteen years old, a victim of physical, verbal, or sexual abuse. She belongs to the underside of social caste. She is black, poor, ugly, female, uneducated, lesbian and dark-skinned; she is not rich, beautiful, male, educated, heterosexual, white-skinned. By fighting back to these adversities, one will crave for own identity, will in dire need to free from suppression and exploitation, or also in search of selfhood, and want to emerge as a hero leaving all patriarchal cruel clutches. It can be a journey from voiceless to voice, from dark to light, from other to self, from a wound to heal, from torture to dignity, from uneducated to the leader, from black to black because black is not bad, it has been made from patriarchs of patriarchal societies.

It is an epistolary novel of series of 90 letters that are addressed to God by Celie. She writes letters to God in which she reveals her miserable life or her role as a mother, sister, daughter, and wife. Writing is not just only a record of life it is about the source of personal growth. In enhances human's inner self in words. She writes to God because she does not have anyone with whom she can share her feeling and this spiritual connection helps to harmonize her from the external sufferings. By writing to god or later to her sister helps her for her personal growth which leads her towards becoming a shero. Writing plays a vital role in the emancipation of Celie's life. Through writing she questions about the abusing or suppressive behavior which is being done with towards her since long back with questions on her existence and identity.

She did many struggles to find her own identity which had never given to her. She is silenced during her half life. Many challenges and patriarchal domination had hindrance in the establishment of her identity. Woman are suppressed and mocked for being the Other but a black woman faces double suppression; one for being a woman and second for being a black woman. Racism and sexism kills women's existence and never allows establishing their identity. These patriarchal norms keep women very far from their identity to make them miserable and lower. They cannot construct their own identity because of men's domination over their identity, mind and body. Women are regulated through men's power. Self- definition plays a vital role in establishing a woman's position in patriarchal society. To search own identity, women should be self defined, not by other's belief, rules and values. A woman is a real woman who can define her own existence and identity without referring to opposite sex.

Writing makes her understand that how much she is facing as a black, uneducated girl and how it is very difficult for women to survive in patriarchal society. She pours her emotions and thoughts in her letters to God and later to her sister Nittie. Her best companion in her abject circumstances was pen and paper which never left her togetherness and always present there to listen or absorb the inner feeling of Celie's heart and mind. Her harsh experience of past life gives her a record of her submissive condition which powers her

present day by giving self confidence to fight with upcoming painful situation. Shug, Nittie Sofia and writing, all are equally participated for emancipating her life. Celie is able to understand herself through their strength and boldness. She feels freedom in writing because here she can write or speak about her core emotions or feelings which are unheard. Her voiceless voice can be heard in her letters. She had voice; she had words, feelings, pain or emotions but lack of courage, self confidence, strength and her submissive condition never pushed her to raise her voice against the exploitation of her existence.

Celie is raped at a tender age by her so-called stepfather Alphonso and she gets pregnant. When she bears a baby, her stepfather snatches her baby and threatens her not to tell anyone and says, "You better never tell anybody but God. It'd kill your mummy" (Walker 3). This novel begins with a man's harsh word who is a father as well as a rapist. Her father marries her with an abusive widower, Albert. He always grinds down her. She is only a sex object for him and a caretaker for his children. She is not given any value at Albert's home except as a worker or sex toy. She spends her life in fear of a sex who controls the society or women's life. Once when Albert was beating Celie, his son Harpo asks him why he beats Celie, he answers that he beats her because she is a wife, a female. Men are of the thought that women exist only for them, to please them, or as relax booster. Beating women represents their superiority in society, these kinds of evil notion in their mind never stops them to abuse women physically, mentally, or psychologically.

Women's deplorable conditions have been discussed or still being done in literature. Essayist, novelists, poets, dramatists or writers have opted women's condition as their choice to represent their situations in the society but they are being presented in reference to men. Men are considered as superior or women as other or inferior. Women are not happy or not opted this position by their own but existing or imposed social or cultural rules forces them to opt. They had come into contact with many difficulties in their life. Facing domestic violence under Albert, she pretends and imagines herself as unfeeling wood, or a tree, and she does not protest and says that she can only cry and cry and feel herself like wood. Celie's condition is so grubby and is tortured by all sources of suppression. Throughout the whole life, she is subjected to a cruel form of male dominance. Celie's condition is deplorable. She is abused physically, sexually, emotionally, and socially. She becomes pregnant at a very young age. Cultural norms condemn her though she is faultless. Her forced physical degradation inculcates a feeling of inferiority in her that exiles her from the traditional camp of "good girls" (Arikan 3). Celie is under such a silencing brutal act and she doesn't have rest to articulate herself, only she does to write letters to her sister Nettie and God and the whole nature is the witness as well as the fellow that accompanies Celie in her story. Heroic female selfhood is a subjectivity set by the literary scholar Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope whose paradigm delineates three stages of the traditional female bildungsroman. The first one is the call to adventures, second is the journey and the last stage is the return. They say that the stages do not occur in the same order but sometimes they may occur simultaneously within the course of one event and the quest is not always linear. Each stage of the quest is comprised of trials and obstacles that may spoil the successful completion of the female protagonist's quest. Celie's psychological and moral growth is set in dynamics by a warning from the man whom she believes her father. "You better never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mummy"(Walker 1). This caution bars her to be silent; whatever is happening in her life is the cause of her so called father. A father from whom children expect guidance and protection but Celie's father's maltreatment towards her and her sister disconnects her from familial dynamics.

Two strongest characters for generating self confidence in Celie are Sofia and Shug. They both are very self-confident, speak against suppression, and raise their voice. They are actual role models of Celie's life who altered her life from passive to active. She used to be passive or submissive and become victim of all oppression. Very soon she understands that she's important worth to be loved. She can think freely, self-confident girl. Her mutism had exploited her life but her raised voice changed her life as well as the lives of women around her. Celie befriends with Shug Avery, her husband's mistress, and very well known and a good singer. Further, Celie and Shug had a sexual relationship. With the help of Shug, Celie discovers herself and reclaims both, her body and spirit. She is described in Shug's word as "My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then Birds. Then other people" (Walker 176). Walker depicts bisexuality by depicting Celie and Shug's character. They both had a sisterhood relation. Celie is taught to embrace her body to understand or to feel it to grow her self confidence or awareness to get a life which she deserves. Women should get what she deserves not what her closed men want. She is the person in Celie's life who helps her to

build her confidence, voice, or also helps her financially, sexually, and even psychologically. She is that who expounds to her that God is not he or she but it, as nobody has seen God. Walker asks in the novel to women to take a form of an authoritative tool to change inappropriate things for themselves, for earth, planet and future generation. Celie wishes to be as feeling less, emotionless as a tree but in reality, her empathy and powers of sensitivity that enable her to be loving and friendly to people like Shug and Sofia. After becoming self-reliant, Celie becomes firmly rooted like a tree and offers employment to many women. Walker says that human suffering and nature exploitation can be controlled when the toxicity of mind and body are removed completely, in this way the whole novel is profusely laden with vivid description. Through the novel, Walker promotes this concept that the reclamation of the body and spirit is important for a woman to comply with her and nature. Novel encounters with two or many heroes, Celie, Shug, Harpo's wife Sofia and Nettie.

Celie's first disobedient and disrespect acts let her to realize that without being rebellion women cannot survive in the patriarchal society. She dilutes her spittle in her father's water. She does different or disrespect act which should not have done in a world where women are expected to bow and respect men whether women never get it in return. By spitting in his water, she feels that since long back she is living in condition of victim actually she is victim of men's tyranny. Novel demonstrates that interlinked connection of oppression to other female character of the novel as Nettie, Shug and Sofia but Celie was not as active or self-sufficient as they were. The solidarity of these women develops a great self-sufficient or pro-active quality in Celie through which she stands for herself as well as for others. They all have faced suppression somewhere but they gathered courage and raised voice against it and stood like a hero for their lives and for their right. Shug gives her a ticket to fly in her sky. Celie setups an enterprise named folkspants on Shug's words. Two wings of pant is actual the wings of Celie's freedom and self-identity. Celie's pants were not only clothes or a costume but it is a symbol of her liberation, her own choice, her first penny. She begins to feel liberated, independent, a hero who can now help others giving a job to unemployed women and can inspire others with her own gradually selfhood emergence story. The pair of pants gives her earning and independence. The transformation from an ugly uneducated, suppressed girl into a confident, beautiful and empower woman is remarkable and this transformation also diverted the suppressive or exploited condition towards empowerment and self-identity or self-confident. When she enters in the world of her own, she blooms with her inner existence without any fear of men and also challenges to those societal expectation which put women in a condition that they can would grow. Existing societal expectations have been made in a way to put women in secondary or suppressive position so that men can rule or can run society and world on their own terms and condition. But Celie gets some helpful hands which supports her falling life. It's Shug who encourages Celie to investigate her body and to know that her body and its organs are for herself not for men, her husband and father. Celie's meeting to her body makes her capable in realizing her existence and worth. She understands that she is not born to be a tool or any kind of toy for men; she is a woman, a real woman who liberates herself from the patriarchal bondages which had ruined her life with any relation to men in her past. She had only been used mentally, physically or psychologically.

Towards the end of the novel, Celie recreates her life by entering into a creation, a creation of new world of her own identity and her individual existence in the society with the help of Nettie, Shug and Sofia. At the end, on table, no one is quite now and don't even care about the presence of any patriarch among them. They all are now self-confident, self-created and independent women who can't face any exploitation by any patriarch. Squeak decides to be a singer; Sofia now starts to speak again after many silent years. Celie who used to be silent in her life in front of every man who had come across in her life, she expresses everything what she feels about her existence or identity after gaining self-esteem and confidence. She also reveals about her own thought and feeling for Mr. Albert without any man fear or hesitation. She presents his position in her life, and addresses him a dirty dog. An unheard girl is being heard with loud or heavy words full of confidence and firm determination.

Conclusion:

Women must stand up against the unfair treatment they receive from the hands of males and they must do this with one another. In this novel, the women band together to support or sustain one another through the novel. Walker asks all women to come and raise their voice against the tyranny of patriarchal power. By dismantling

these existing male oriented rules and practices, woman can achieve the place which she deserves. Any woman can be a heroine when she successfully subverts those conventions of the established social orders which oppress and subordinate her. Her newly created community of equal elements promises her survival along with other suffering women of the society. Using these strategies walker has succeeded in writing her protagonist Celie from tragic heroine to shero, from miserable to happy life. Celie's heroic potential or strength of her central consciousness is visible in her first letter to god. First time, revolution begins in mind then it transfers into action with firm determination as Celie starts after having many torturous phases of life. To achieve own position, rights, identity, physically or mentally independence, women need to fight back against the prejudices. Their struggle or effort will definitely offer them what they deserve.

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