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Image of Women in Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*

Shoukatali Hulagoor

Department of Studies in English
Karnatak University, Dharwad

Abstract:

During the ancient time all over the world, people gave less importance to education. However, now that circumstances have changed, everything has become modern. The women of the contemporary age have an interest in education. Women have become able to, fit to compete with men in every field respectively. The way of leading life has changed, but not the exploitation of women. With the influence of modernity and development, new problems were created for women in modern society and it changed the status of women. As Alice Walker, interprets the theme of women's apprehension in her novel, *The Colour Purple*. In modern society, the status of women has been changing. In this novel, she not only discusses the threat to women in modern society but also gave suggestions to change their lives socially in neglected areas/lands. Feminist like Tony Morrison, Chimamanda Adichie, Margaret Atwood, Virginia Wolfe, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Shahi Despande, Mamata Khalia, Ismat Chughtai, Mahashwetadevi all have contributed their own thoughts and strategies to feminist theory. The main aim of selecting Alice Walker's novel "The Colour Purple", is because, it portrayed and discussed on the exposition of women apprehension in the modern society. This novel mirrors the present society. The story takes place in rural Georgia, and focuses on the life of African American women, their role and status in societies and families too. As we know that African American people were suffering from various kinds of social evils. However, in the case of women, these sufferings would take a new dimension in their lives.

Keywords: African Literature, Feminism, Exploitation of women, Woman status.

Introduction

Alice Walker has born on 19 February 1944, in Patnan country, Georgia. She belongs to a peasant family in which her mother worked Eleven hours a day Seventeen dollars per week, to help to pay Alice to attend college. Because earnings of her father were not sufficient to pay the fees for her college. She had been of African American ancestry and one of the keen observer and activist from her community. She is an American novelist, Short story writer, Poet, and activist she wrote the novel, *The Colour Purple* for which she won the national book award and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1982. She also wrote the novels *Meridian* (1976) and *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) among other works.

In this novel, Alice Walker portrayed the life of a modern woman, and she conveys different kinds of problems in women's life. Through some local characters, Alice Walker exposed the women's apprehension and the consequences of women suffering in society. Alice Walker tried to explain the picture of domestic and Non-domestic violence against women. In addition, she discusses sexual explicitness, explicitly of language, violence, and homosexuality. This novel mainly focuses on the need for education and the role of poverty in the lives of women.

Friedan states that Feminism refers to a diverse variety of beliefs, ideas, movements, and agendas for action. "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is" British author and critic Rebecca West remarks. (Guerin 196) "Feminism is concerned with the marginalization of all women: that is, with their being relegated to a secondary position." (Guerin 196) Described as "a world confined to her own body and beauty, the charming of man, the bearing of babies, and the physical care and serving of husband, children and home" (Millard 155) by Friedan, herself, tried to make over the false feminine mystique and to help the women in their fight for equal rights.

The whole novel gives the picture of Celie's character and her role in the society whom men like Alphonso, and Mister have oppressed throughout the novel. Alice Walker discussed the physical and mental harassment of women in different societies. It also addresses numerous issues including the low position of women in American social culture. In this novel, there is a collection of letters, which were written to God by Celie throughout her life. Celie is a poor, uneducated Fourteen-year-old girl living in South America with her younger sister Nettie and stepfather Alphonso; who beats her harshly and rapes her continuously. It causes her to the birth of two children. However, later on, Alphonso took away those children and sold them. Since her stepfather, Alphonso says, "You better not ever to tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy." (Walker 11) She finds the only solution to express her hopelessness in writing letters to God. This kind of incident is still found in our society. Wherein uneducated and poor people survive their lives with these kinds of evils.

Moreover, sometimes it happens with well-educated people too, because of the people, as Alphonso and Mister, who are always looking for their needs and advantages. There are plenty of examples in our society. When Mister sends a proposal to Nettie, Alphonso accepts it for Celie and not allows Nettie to get marry with Mister. Both were cunning persons because Alphonso had an eye on Nettie and Mister is in search of labor that could fulfill the needs of his and his family.

On one side, after getting married Celie faced many problems in Mister's house; on another side, Alphonso started to seduce Nettie. Mister always abuses Celie until she declares her identity as an independent woman. Meanwhile, Nettie escaped from home and reached Celie's house thinking that it would help her to escape from these demons. Because in one attempt of Alphonso, she understood his cunning plans. However, in Celie's house, Mister was waiting for her as a hunter. One day Nettie faced him one attempt meanwhile Celie understand the intentions of Mister and sends Nettie with a woman called Corrine; whom, Celie had seen in shop with her own money. Celie had never seen any woman at that place

with lots of money. Nettie goes to Africa along with that woman Corrine, Nettie promised Celie to write the letter.

Mister comes under the influence of ex-lover Shug Avery, took her to his home to take care of her health. Celie provides good hospitality to Shug, because she is the favourite figure of Celie from the music world. Shug shows concern over Celie's condition because in her presence Misters behave well with Celie. Walker designed a triangular love affair through Celie, Albert and Shug. Shug Avery is the focus; Celie is married to Albert, Albert is in love with Shug. Moreover, she is the friend of Celie, and it's Shug Avery who forces Albert to stop brutalizing Celie and supports Celie's struggle to be free from the abuses. In addition, it is Shug with whom Celie first constitutes a satisfying, loving relationship. Time passes both started to share their feelings between one another; Shug helps to Celie to find letters of Nettie, which have been hidden by Mister. Through the letters, she got news of her children Adam and Olivia and Adam's marriage with Tashi, who is an African girl from another tribe. In African society or any other society of the world, women have been examined with different types of bad actions and tests. First of all, women doesn't have any freedom in society and in the family, if she did anything against of society or tribal rules, surrounded people will fill their whole life with Hellenic problems.

When his oldest son, Harpo, asks Albert why he beats Celie, he says simply "Cause she my wife." (Walker, 30) He thinks he has the right to beat and abuse Celie merely because she is his wife. Harpo married Sophia but their married life was full of influenced by misters life and Harpo also started to control her quarreling with her like mister. Sophia injures to Harpo. Then they get separates after having three children. Harpo fell in love with squeak. Sophia was sentenced to Twelve-year prison because she refused to mayor's proposal to work as house cleaner at his house. In this incident reflected the outcome of the patriarchal society and class systems.

If men had a class in society and he would get support in his evil deeds in one or another way. Sophia released after some time with the help of squeak; she took care of Sophia children in her absence. In the meanwhile, Celie and Shug, Sophia and squeak build too close relation between them Nettie get married to Samuel. Celie got legacy of Alphonso after his death when Celie becomes rich and had relationship with Shug. Mister woke up behaves like good person towards Celie. He disclosed his name and told her, call me as Albert, but it was too late. She left him and goes to her childhood home. At the end to the novel Samuel, Nettie, Olivia, Squeak, Sophia and Shug, all gathers in Celie's childhood house. In the Adam and Tashi's absences Justifies that, Tashi and Adam are from different tribes, Tashi has been facing different ill-treatments of her society Adam knows it is well because that's all the result of their marriage. Before Shugs influence on Celie, she doesn't have any identity and colour in her life. When she was in control of Alphonso and Mister, she has forgotten about her identity. They only used her according to their needs they never show any kind of respect and human value towards her. Even they never tried to care about her. That is the Shug, who, taught her about importance of colour in human life and relation between god and human being.

In a deeper study of the novel, it is easy to see that almost all the women are under the domination of men. Women were abused especially Celie is raped, beaten and abused by all the men around her, firstly by her stepfather and by her husband. Celie symbolizes a good housewife who tries to look after her husband and his children. Simone de Beauvoir, in his book *The Second Sex* says that “one is not born a woman; rather one becomes a woman”, and Celie is the most suitable example to prove this paper. It is Shug Avery, Albert's mistress, who supports Celie to be independent and she gives Celie insight to free herself from the domination of her husband Albert.

Christian Froula writes as “The abusive or seductive father does serious harm to the daughter's mind as well as to her body, damaging her sense of her own identity and depriving her voice of authority and strength” (635). We see the male domination over the women in every part of life, but in the course of time, women want to release themselves from the abuses of man and be independent.

Conclusion:

No doubt we have been called developed, but still somewhere, women are facing these problems. For example, Mahashweta Devi's “Draupadi”, wherein police officers encounters on Draupadi, but failed to control her and become shame on their deeds. This kind of incidents happens with any cast, class. Some are not ready to come out from this kind of incident; if they tried to come out our society is not allowing them to build their personality and status. With the use of this kind of incidents and advantages, patriarchal society always try to have authority over women. In another incident girl child was sells for fifteen thousand rupees by her parents. It is a kind of new way of surviving which is changed by poverty. As per the UN (United Nation's) report, Dalit woman live 14 years less than upper-caste woman. This report shows the effect of poverty on women and the need of education.

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