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CELLIE'S JOURNEY: THROUGH THE FEMINIST LENS

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Abstract: This paper attempts to present a details study of the main character 'Cellie' of the novel "The Color Purple". In the novel, it is shown how she is suppressed by the patriarchy, and how she revolts against it and emerges as a winner. Her character serves as an example of a strong woman and this paper will throw light on this aspect. How from being a timid and shy girl she voices her opinion strongly. This study is about the development of her character- the changes brought in her by different experiences in life work towards making her a lady who leads life on her own terms and she comes out as a strong woman.

KEY WORDS- : Womanism, Epistolary, Feminism, Patriarchy

I. METHODOLOGY-: FROM THE FEMINIST POINT OF VIEW, THE CHARACTER OF CELLIE HAS BEEN ANALYSED AND THE VIEWS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED ACCORDINGLY **INTRODUCTION**

INTRODUCTION: Woman" is a very interesting term, especially when we think about its origin. In Bible. God created Man in His own light and made a similar female creature to give Man a companion. This creature He named as Woman, meaning made "out of" Man. Woman was given her presence so that humanity would flourish and together- Man and Woman will make a whole unit. But, the reality has been nothing of this peaceful co-existence as envisioned by God; rather it has been dominated by the gender roles and chains. Such strong chains which have held the "womanhood" in a captive and servile state through ages. This was beyond God's comprehension that the fairer sex will be tormented to such extent by the fellow companions. Thus, centuries after, the term "Womanism " was coined by one of the prominent authors of our times- Alice Walker, but the meaning ascribed to it was completely different this time. It was about raising voice against the injustices suffered by women, especially women of colour and to demand for an equal status in the society.

Womanism acquires importance for the issue it addresses to. It is a known fact that the condition of woman in general is pitiable but the situation worsens when we think about the subaltern groups and people of colour. In such cases, people belonging to the subaltern class or prejudiced on the basis of colour, suffer acute discrimination from the society on a whole but the condition of women here is pathetic. It is like they are twice suppressed, first by the system and then, in their own patriarchal family which seldom takes time to think about the plight of the women. Alice Walker, the popular African- American author, had herself faced discrimination because of her skin tone. She was harassed on account of her race. We find an effective representation of all those sufferings, prejudices, and suppression in the works of Alice Walker. The leading ladies of her novels reflect the persona of the suffering woman we find next door, sometimes across the streets. This paper attempts to examine the character of one of the powerful protagonists portrayed by Alice Walker in her masterpiece The Color Purple.

"They calls me yellow,
Like yellow be my name
They calls me yellow
Like yellow be my name
But if yellow is a name

Why ain't black the same
Well, if I say hey black girl
Lord, she try to ruin my game'

In the above lines it has been slightly justified by the African- American author Alice Walker in her novel 'The Color Purple'. The color purple is an epistolary novel.

'Cellie' is the leading character of the novel "The Color Purple". When the narrative opens, we find Cellie, who is nearly a 14 years old adolescent girl. Throughout the novel we find silly grammatical and spelling mistake which is totally apt to convey the real suppressed status of the black women in the society. She reflects the image of a truly liberated black woman. She never fails to express her true feeling even if it was something as restricted as loving another women(lesbian). We find her taking a stand for herself ,justifying what her needs are. The narrator never takes her husband's name and we find him being addressed as Mr._____. But his real name was Albert. Her husband had a cold attitude towards Cellie. Cellie at the age of 14 became twice pregnant from her father Alphonso, later she came to know that he was her step- father. And her biological father was lynched. Alphonso warned her not to say to anyone except God. After that she started writing what she feels to God. There was no one with whom she can share her feelings and problems.

She is compromised to marry a widower (who already had a son of elder to his new bride) without her wishes. Mr. _____ was interested in marrying Nettie, Cellie's younger sister. But Alphonso was against it. He wants Cellie to marry Mr. _____. He never gave her any respect, either treated her like slaves. By this time she was habituated of merciless beating. He treated her as a maid rather than his bride. He just needed someone who could take care of his house and children in returns of nothing. Cellie was never given respect either by her father, husband or son.

The moment of realization came when she was taught a lesson by her step daughter -in-law 'Sofia', when she raised her voice against the oppression and made Cellie a rebellion from within. There was yet time when this rebellion will exploit. It was a huge realization. She felt bad for herself and even can't take any decision by herself.

Next major thing to happen in Cellie's life was the advent of Shug Avery, who was a glamorous and independent singer by profession and later Cellie's love interest. She was the one who understood her and supported her a lot. And she was the one who explain the importance of freedom. With her help only she came to know that Mr. _____ has been hiding letters that Nettie has sent her. Nettie who works as a mistress in Samuel and Corrine house, who adopted children Adam and Olivia, are actually Cellie's. Also Cellie's opinion had changed towards God. She herself has to do what is good for her. No one will come to help.

After all these predicament we find Cellie's final settled and living a peaceful life in her native. We see her a true feminist who took her own decision rebelled against the society, fought for whatever she thought was right for her, as she exemplifies and all powerful female, who refuses to bow down by the male dominated society. She with the help of Shug Avery started selling tailored pants. And finally we find her reunited long separated sister Nettie and the children.

The pathos, the pain, the struggle, the strife that a woman undergoes on this earthly planet may have been figuratively delineated by other novelists, but in Alice Walker's novels, its presented in such a realistic manner, eschewing all artificiality that moves the mind and touches the heart.

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