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Replica of Victimized Indian Women in Celie in Alice Walker's "The Color Purple"

Abstract:

The title The Colour Purple in the beginning symbolizes Celie's suffering and pain it symbolizes Women's swollen beaten face. As Celie writes in her letter, "He beat me like he beat the children...I make myself wood...I say to myself Celie, you are a tree. That is how I'll know trees fear man." Purple is the colour of Celie's reproductive organs, the site of her sexual violation, as she has been victimized by the man, whom she calls her father. As she writes "He starts to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it. But I don't never git used to it. And now I feel sick every time I be the one to cook" and as she threatened by her father, "You better not never tell nobody; but God: I'd kill your mummy." However towards the end Shug points out to Celie to look at the beauty all around her. Towards the end purple symbolizes the vast capabilities and potentialities in black people. Given a chance they can come up as independent and empowered individuals. They can rule their life with out any support. Walker herself admits that the colour purple is representative of women purple with rage, purple as restored royalty, purple blossoming wild in an open field. Alice Walker's this masterpiece becomes the milestone and it leaves a remarkable impact on Indian literature, specially the marginalized literature. Indian women too unfortunately suffer the same Sexual, Mental, Economical and Physical violence manifested in The Colour Purple". Indian women too think like more or less like Celie when she says, "I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive"

Replica of Victimized Indian Women in Celie in Alice Walker's "The Color Purple"

Indian history and Indian literature abound in women characters, who are known for their knowledge, understanding, patience, valor, and for every noble virtue. Jhansi Ki Rani, Velu Nachchiyaar, Kittoor Chennamma, Rani Mangamma, Indira Gandhi and many others from every region in India can be cited. Within Hindu theology, Sakti worship is much sought after. Lakshmi and Saraswati control money and education. Kali and Durga become symbols of righteous anger to defeat, kill and eliminate evil powers. Current Hindu movements have a number of women leading spiritual resurgence within Hinduism. In every department of life in India, thus, we have women who have demonstrated their skills and understanding in a very admirable manner. And yet millions of women are in great darkness, and suffer from deprivation at every front. Poverty affects women more painfully than men in poor families. Their burden is not recognized as adequately as it should be.

This paper is an attempt to show how Celie the central character in Alice Walker's The Color Purple provides a macrocosm in the microcosm when it comes to representation of the suffering of women and the spirit of women.

In 1982, Walker published her most famous novel, *The Color Purple*. For the novel, which chronicles the struggle of several black women in rural Georgia in the first half of the twentieth century, Walker won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award. In 1985, a Steven Spielberg film based on the novel was released to wide audiences and significant acclaim.

Upon its publication, *The Color Purple* unleashed a storm of controversy. It instigated heated debates about black cultural representation, as a number of male African-American critics complained that the novel reaffirmed old racist stereotypes about pathology in black communities and of black men in particular. Critics also charged Walker with focusing heavily on sexism at the expense of addressing notions of racism in America. Nonetheless, *The Color Purple* also had its ardent supporters, especially among black women and others who praised the novel as a feminist fable. The heated disputes

surrounding *The Color Purple* are a testimony to the resounding effects the work has had on cultural and racial discourse in the United States.

Child Abuse:

Celie's story starts when she is 14, stigmatized from birth for being born in a poor family. She loses her father. Her mother is bogged down in bed giving birth to multiple children in dirt and squalor and she cannot turn her mind on anything else. These ill-fated midnight's children become part of Celie's responsibilities. She herself is deprived of family love, care, attention and the food for the healthy growth of any child. Her worst curse is being a nigger child in a black family where love and care are far away cries especially if she is darkest of the lot and not fortunate to be a good daughter, and under the conspiracy of a step-father.

Celie's moaning can be heard in India. Child abuse in India, according to the NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) report, increased to 763 for 2009-10 from 35 in 2007-08. Child abuse complaints included incidents of rape, trafficking, humiliation, physical and mental torture.

There are millions of Celie here; you just need a sensible heart to explore them here in India. Just few days back on 10th of March 2012, as per the report in The Times of India in the Wadia village situated near Planapur, a village of prostitutes, a village which has not witnessed a single marriage party coming to their village for marrying after Independence. All the females of this village are sold as prostitutes. Doesn't it remind Celie's abuse, her rape by her own step father? Doesn't it remind you the lines?

"He starts to choke me, saying you better shut up and git used to it...You gonna do what your mummy wouldn't....But I don't never git used to it. And now I feel sick every..."

The cases of Child abuse are not new in India, even I feel bad and hurt when I admit. There are lots of Alphonsos here in India saying and that's why we have lots of Celie's also. Celie's abuse is not just an abuse of the character created by Alice Walker but it's an outburst of suffocated and suppressed voices.

Celie presents an image of victimized girl not merely an image of victimized Afro- American girl but image applicable universally and I feel very bad to declare specially it presents the replica of many doomed Indian girls.

Domestic Violence:

Walker's plain and honest narration of the scenes of domestic violence give an extra edge to her writing but the same asset also won her lot of controversy. She was criticized for presenting the naked reality. She created a caricature of the woes. Purple is the colour of royalty, it is the colour of blossoming flower. But purple is also the colour of women's beaten and swollen face. Purple is the colour of her reproductive organs, the very sight of her physical abuse. It symbolizes Celie's beaten face, it symbolises Celie's rape, the abuse which leaves a scar inside for ever, a stigma on the very persona of the victim. As Celie's step father says,

"Well how you spect to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating."

Her husband raped her. Silenced and sold, in to a marital slavery by the man, Celie begins to doubt her humanity. She writes...

"He beat me like he beat the children...I make myself wood...I say to myself Celie, you are a tree. That is how I'll know trees fear man."

"Bride tortured to death for dowry", "School going girl succumbs to his injuries after beaten by father", "A seventy year old woman killed over property dispute by her own husband", All these and what not, turn to any newspaper at random and you would find the reports of such kind of violence all over the country. These are all what we come to know through different forms of media. There are more such cases which go unreported every day. In fact, include the cases which we our self indulge in, or the ones which we witness in the neighborhood but are hesitant in taking even a single step to

reduce their occurrences. In our society, violence is bursting. It is present almost everywhere and nowhere is this eruption more intense than right behind the doors of our homes. Behind closed doors of homes all across our country, people are being tortured, beaten and killed. It is happening in rural areas, towns, cities and in metropolitans as well. It is crossing all social classes, genders, racial lines and age groups. It is becoming a legacy being passed on from one generation to another. As per the data of National Crime Record Bureau, on an average every year 3 lakh cases of domestic violence get registered in India. It is the stigma for our so called civilized society. So it will not be an exaggeration to say Celie in some or more way pictures our own reality. She becomes the mirror of our society.

Celie's Submission:

Celie's submission in front of her father, her husband and her children also replicate Indian women. Indian women generally submits and Celie's voice clearly replicates the psyche of Indian women when she says, **"I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive."**

Yes it is all about to stay alive. Many women in India endure everything without any resistance at all. Her submission, her dehumanizing herself, her every bit of actions and reactions reflect Indian women inside her African body. May be Indian women has accepted that they are mere supplement. In every field they are competing with men and rubbing the shoulder but they tend to be quite submissive in their own house. They are always ready to sacrifice, compromise and appetizers their own humiliations. As if this is what for she has been made. Celie's submission shows her weakness the weakness we see in many Indian women. They know they are ill treated, they are humiliated, but they never raise their voices.

The Basic Psyche:

Celie's this temperament clearly replicates Indian spirit of the women, who is presented most of the time as a symbol of Endurance. As it is expected from the hypocritical society that women should be always ready to endure and compromise. In spite of her hardships Celie endures, she maintains a beautiful spirit of perseverance and love. It took years of pain for Celie to realize that she can be self sufficient and happy without depending on anyone but herself. She recovers enough voice and self esteem to defy Albert. She asserts

"I'm pure, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook...but I'm here"

She also attains the economical and sexual freedom and start making pants as she says to Shug, *"I am making some pants for you to beat the heat in Africa. Soft, white, thin. Drawstring waist. You won't ever have to feel too hot and overdress again. I plan to make them by hand. Every stitch I sew will be a kiss."*

She forgives all, who maimed her, sold her in to slavery, beaten her like beast.

Her Relation with God:

Maimed physically through rape, scarred psychologically through inhuman and beastly treatment, Celie has no one in her life except her sister and friend, Nettie and perhaps also God in whom she can confide and disclose all her emotion. As she writes to god in the very beginning

"Dear God...

I am fourteen years old. I've always been a good girl. May be you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me?"

In spite of being a good girl, she was oppressed by her step father. When her mother didn't allow the old man to have sex, the step father forcibly raped Celie and threatened not to tell about it to anyone.

"You better not never tell nobody; but God; I'd kill your mummy."

Here in India also, Indian women also seek the comfort by telling their sufferings to God if no one else is available to listen. Walker focuses on the theme of double repression of black women in the American society. Walker contends that black women suffer from discrimination by the white

community and from a second repression from black males, who impose the double standard of white society on women. It is similar for the Indian woman, who is repressed on Social, Economical and Political fronts. Faith brought Alice Walker and her characters safely to the land of psychic freedom after a perilous journey fraught with fear, self hate and guilt. In an interview she defined subject of her creative imaginations:

"I'm committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, they loyalties and the triumphs of black woman...the most fascinating creation in the word".

Thus I can conclude, the character of Celie emphasizes the point that economic independence is of paramount importance. In the course of searching for her identity, she makes are people around her accept her as a human being. She substantiates the view that empowerment begins at home and that family is an instrument which empowers women. This further makes her understand herself and improve her skills and creative abilities.

In the progress of the story, we travel through Celie's intense trauma and inflicted scars and reach to the bedrock of her suffering. We get the slice of her life. Celie is the representative of several women as found not only in Afro-American literature but also in literature of all other climes and if I am to expand the horizon she pictures the naked truth of uncountable oppressed women in several uncivilized societies. Her picture represents not merely a particular territory but is a universal story of all the oppressed women of the world.

At the end we can sum up that Celie- in *The Color purple* becomes The Common Factor between Black women of Africa and Brown women on India. Going through the novel and turning the page, nothing seems alien. It's all seen, read and experinced here offshore in India. Thus truely Celie becomes the macrocosm, the replica of victimized women.

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