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The Color Purple: Empowering Women through the Journey of Celie

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Abstract:

The Color Purple written by Alice Walker examines the black women's state of life in America and uncovers their self-pursuit process, from the initial awakening to the following fighting and the final independence. Walker received the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for fiction in 1983 for her novel *The Color Purple*. It is also an expression of Walker's coined term 'womanist,' which she invented. A "womanist" appreciates bonds between women and prefers women's culture, emotions, strength, flexibility and maternity. *The Color Purple* deals with the struggle, both in Africa and America, of women to gain recognition as individuals who deserve fair and equal treatment. We have a more profound understanding of the feminine thoughts Alice Walker puts into the novel. Relationships among women form a refuge, providing reciprocal love in a world filled with male violence. Reading *The Color Purple* opens our eyes to the black women's victimization in abusive relationships and what they do to survive and break themselves free of the abusive relationships in Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*.

Key words:feminism, patriarchy, epistolary, racism, purple



The Color Purple: Empowering Women through the Journey of Celie

Introduction

An epistolary novel, written by an African American woman, Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* was first published in 1982. It won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1983 and the National Book Award for Fiction. Walker was the first African woman to win both the prizes. Considered to be a confessional novel, as the protagonist Celie writes letters and confesses her sufferings, it unleashed the storm of controversy with its publication. It instigated heated debates about the cultural representation and the representation of the black men in particular. The novel was charged with being focused heavily on racism and sexism, but nonetheless it had its own ardent proponents, especially the black women who empathized and praised the work as the feminist fable. Alice Walker once told an interviewer:

“The black women is one of America’s greatest heroes.... Not enough credit has been given to the black women who has oppressed beyond recognition.”¹⁶

The novel is set in rural Georgia and revolves around the problems faced by the black women. It discusses in detail the situations where women are treated as mere objects and suppressed their entire life in a male-dominated society. The story is told in the form of letters written by the protagonist Celie, who is forced to deal with her incestuous father, an abusive husband and separation from her sister and children. Celie writes the letters addressing them to GOD, one name which she can spell, in which she has faith and she finds solace in. It reveals the story of many black women going through the same situation through the portrayal of Celie and her family. The setting chosen by Walker being Georgia is obvious as she herself was born and brought up in rural Georgia and had been a part and had witnessed such happenings around her. To put in words of Walker:

The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for white, or women created for men.

She gave voice to what was experienced by many and not spoken by any. The novel not only chronicles Celie’s sufferings, but also paints her journey of discovering her hidden potential and gradually empowering



herself. It is a novel woven with the threads of various relationships and how each relationship had a vibrating effect on the life of Celie. The novel has covered the divergent aspects of social life and thus it appeals universally. The impact of *The Color Purple* is greatly expressed in the critical appreciation by *The Times*:

The Color Purple has been read and reread by millions. Forget lilac, mauve and lavender: this is the royal purple.

The novel has left a lasting impact on the minds of the people and thus making space in the hearts of the people. It encourages all to empower themselves and search for the hidden potential that is possessed by one and all, to uncover the strengths and fights the fears, to journey towards self-awareness and to finally appreciate one for being what they are.

Relationships

Father and Daughter

“It no longer bothers me that I may be constantly searching for father figures; by this time, I have found several and dearly enjoyed knowing them all.” - Alice Walker

Celie, the protagonist of the novel is a live example of sufferings of black women in the 20's. Celie suffers at the hands of her so called father, Fonso. Celie's mother remains constantly sick and so Fonso approaches Celie. She is used to gratify and satisfy the bodily needs of her father. This is suggested by the words,

He never had a kine word to say to me.

Just say Yougonna do what your mammy wouldn't. First he put his thing up against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my titties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying

*You better shut up and git used to it.*¹

As Celie's mother used to be sick, Fonso uses Celie as a substitute to satisfy his physical needs. He warns her to keep quiet and not tell anyone about it. His words reflect that this behaviour of his would be continued and Celie should get used to him. Celie's mother never recovers from her sickness and she dies, leaving Celie alone to face this patriarchal world, full of brutality and degradation of women by men.

As a teenager, Celie is constantly raped and beaten by her father, as a result of which she is impregnated. The innocence of Celie is displayed in the words,



She asked me bout the first one Whose it is? I say God's. I don't know no other man or what else to say. When I start to hurt and then my stomach start moving and then that little baby come out my pussy chewing on it fist you could have knock me over with a feather.²

Celie was not allowed to cherish these moments of her motherhood. The child was taken away by Fonso and left in the woods. Celie presumed the child to be dead. Celie gave birth to the second child, a daughter, who was also snatched from her. Celie was left all alone, again in the same grief. Celie was treated as a commodity by her father and not as a living, breathing human being. When Mr. _____, a widower with four children comes to ask for Nettie's hand in marriage, Fonso was reluctant to agree to it. He argues that Nettie is young and would not be able to handle his four kids.

Mr. _____ finally come right out an ast for Nettie hand in marriage. But He won't let her go. He say she too young, no experience. Say Mr. _____ got too many children already.³

He trades Celie instead of Nettie, by saying that Celie was experienced in the matter of taking care of children. Mr. _____, after thinking for some time agrees to the proposal and marries Celie. Celie's life was no better after marriage too.

A father is a figure representing love, compassion and guidance to children. Celie is never able to get such a fatherly figure in her father. She was brutally treated by her father and so was not able to think of a father as a lovable figure.

Husband and Wife

Even after marriage things do not change for Celie. The same brutal behaviour was continued by Mr. _____ and his children. Celie tries her best to fulfil the desires of Mr. _____ and also takes good care of his children. Mr. _____ when asked by his son Harpo the reason he beats Celie, he answer that Celie firstly was his wife and secondly is a stubborn lady who was to be kept under control. Mr. _____ sets a wrong example for his son.

Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me. Mr. _____ say,



*Cause she my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for—he don't finish. He just tuck his chin over the paper like he do. Remind me of Pa.*⁴

Celie was merely a servant and an occasional sexual convenience for Mr. _____. She was exploited by him. Moreover, she was expected to work on the farm, take care of the children and to submit to Mr. _____'s demands without any objection. She was also meant to accept Albert's affair with Shug Avery, which extends even to him sleeping with her under the same roof.

Mother and Son

Celie had never been able to love her own child but tried to pour that love over Mr. _____'s children. Harpo was the son of Mr. _____. Celie is often beaten by Mr. _____. When she sees the repulsive wife of Harpo, she was jealous of her and asks Harpo to beat his wife to keep her under his control. Sofia repels against the injustice of Harpo and slowly Celie develops love and respect for the independent and string headed Sofia. Harpo after seeing the love of Celie asks his father not to beat her, but his father teaches him a wrong lesson that women need to be kept under control.

Sisterhood

Is solace anywhere more comforting than that in the arms of a sister? - Alice Walker

Celie is much attached to her younger and beautiful looking sister Nettie. Celie adores Nettie as Nettie was more beautiful as compared to Celie. Moreover, their bond as sisters was a strong bond, where Celie protects Nettie from the fore coming threats and sufferings. The bond of love between Celie and Nettie displays the struggles faced by the women and how their sisterhood bond helps in gaining power to overcome oppression.

Nettie runs away from Fonso and takes refuge in Celie and Mr. _____'s house. Celie notices that Mr. _____ is still attached to Nettie and makes advances towards her. Celie, as a responsible and loving sister, advises Nettie to run way and save herself.

Soon he stop. He say one night in bed, Well, us done help Nettie all we can. Now she got to go. Where she gon go? I ast.



I don't care, he say.

I tell Nettie the next morning. Stead of being mad, she glad to go.⁵

Nettie also understands the reasons for Celie to ask her to leave. Celie is afraid that Nettie might be angry, when she will ask her to leave, but Nettie is glad to leave. Nettie promises to keep in touch through letters. She even desires that Celie should also be saved from the daily abusive life.

Celie never receives the promised letters from Nettie and thus presumes her to be dead. Celie discovers at the end that Nettie had fulfilled her promise but Mr. ____ had hidden all the letters and had never allowed a connection to be built up between the two sisters.

But with the help of Shug, Celie discovers the letters of Nettie, which she had written over a period of time. Celie rejoices on receiving the letters of Nettie and relives the sisterhood love of Nettie. This connection between Celie and Nettie provides her with the strength, the power to stand up against the men that oppressed them and a confidence to live an independent life.

Friendship

One of the most noticeable bonds was that between Shug Avery and Celie. This bond seems to aid Celie to liberation in all aspects of her life. Celie is initially fascinated by the beauty and the different dressing style of Shug. Celie admires how she was self-confident, independent and self-sufficient. Celie strives to be like Shug. Shug formerly mistreats Celie, but gradually develops a soft corner towards Celie. This change of mind occurs because Celie serves Shug in her sickness.

Shug Avery sick and nobody in this town want to take the Queen Honeybee in. Her mammy say She told her so. Her

pappy say, Tramp. A woman at church say she dying— maybe two berkulosis or some kind of nasty woman disease.

What? I want to ast, but don't.⁶

Shug wishes to go away from Mr. ____'s house but decides to stay back when she comes to know that Mr. ____ beats Celie in her absence. Shug has developed a liking for Celie and wishes Celie to become free from her sufferings.

Slowly and gradually Celie is drawn towards Shug. It is Shug who helps Celie realize her needs and



her importance. Shug Avery's pride, independence and appetite for living act as a catalyst for Celie.

*Shugast me could she sleep with me. She cold in her and Grady bed all alone. Us talk bout this and that. Soon talk about making love.*⁷

It is Shug who makes Celie realize the needs of her body. She actually makes Celie experience the essence of true love. Shug loves Celie not just for the sake of loving but also helps Celie realize that a woman can also desire for love.

*Me and Shug sound asleep. Her back to me, my arms round her waist. What it like? Little like sleeping with mama, only I can't hardly remember ever sleeping with her. Little like sleeping with Nettie, only sleeping with Nettie never feel this good. It warm and cushiony, and I feel Shug's big tits sorta flop over my arms like suds. It feel like heaven is what it feel like, not like sleeping with Mr. _____ at all.*⁸

It is Shug with whom Celie first consummates a satisfying and reciprocally loving relationship. The love of Shug for Celie deconstructs the patriarchal ideology of women being dependent on men for every small thing. It was Shug who makes Celie realise sexuality and experience physical love that Celie has not experienced with Mr. _____. Celie gains self-confidence through her relationship with Shug and thus, realizes her self-worth.

"I think that's what Toni Morrison and Alice Walker understand, the secret language of women. That it's not a secret at all; men just don't know how to listen." Marlon James

Shug becomes an empathetic listener and confront Celie with not only mere words but also her support to take a stand for herself. Shug becomes the mother, friend and guide that Celie never had. It is Shug who helps Celie realize her worth.

Relation with God

"I think it pisses God off if you walk by The Color Purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it. People think pleasing God is all God cares about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back." Alice Walker

Celie from the beginning of the novel writes letters to God as she is isolated and has none to talk to. The novel itself starts with the addressing "Dear God". Celie finds that God is the only one who listens to



her constantly. She is victimized and dehumanized, yet she understands that her relationship with God is the key to salvaging her dignity and self-worth. She says that as long as she can spell “G-O-D” she has someone by her side. But over a period of time, she starts losing her hope in God, as God listens to her complaints, but takes no action against it. Celie loses faith in God because her conditions never change. She feels tormented.

“I'm poor, black, I may even be ugly; but dear God, I'm here! I'm here!” - Alice Walker

It is Shug who redefines the concept of God in the mind of Celie and helps her regain her lost faith in God. Celie's initial infatuation and eventual love for Shug enables Shug to win her trust and direct her to a broader understanding of God. Celie gains a friend, a lover, protector, and confidant from Shug. Shug defines God in a better way for Celie. She says,

“God ain't a he or a she, but a It”¹³

This understanding of God leads to the metamorphosis of Celie. She had always imagined God to be a male as she had been made to believe that only men are capable of taking decisions. The redefining of God leads to the awakening of Celie's sexuality, self-esteem, independence, and ultimate liberation

Portrayal of Characters

CELIE:

“I am fourteen years old. I am I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me.”⁹

The protagonist in Alice Walker's novel is Celie. She was a fourteen year old black girl. As she was poor-education was denied. She was expected to stay at home and care for Fonso, her step-father and house. Celie had been repeatedly raped by her step-father and was suppressed. She was warned not to tell anyone anything except god. Celie is persistently subjected to abuse and told she is ugly. Celie has been exploited by men her whole life. And the only way she pours her emotion out was her letter to god. These letters are expression of the miserable condition of her life.

As an adolescent she was assaulted by her father and soon thereafter gives birth to two children that are



taken away from her. Celie loves others more than she loves herself. In order to save her mother and then Nettie from the cruelty of Fonso, she quietly takes her own maltreatment. Celie was a sufferer of the male dominant society. An image of Celie, an innocent girl who was ill-treated in her own home creates an image of a girl who was suppressed relentlessly. Loses her self- esteem and was feeling unaided about situation in her life. Celie unburden your heart to in God about her struggles. For a very long time, God was the only being she had to talk to. Even as a downtrodden victim of her step father, Celie sacrifices herself and offers herself to her father so that he keeps his hands off of Nettie, her younger sister.

She was sold into marriage to yet another abuser Mr. ----- who had two children. She's stuck in a bad marriage in which her husband considers her a servant not fit for of love, and her stepchildren are "rotten children.". Celia exemplifies a common case in which a woman lacks the self-confidence to escape her husband's physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. The emotional, mental and physical agony continues. This evokes image of a woman hunched in a corner, crying as her husband slaps and yells at her. And Celie remains silent and avoids eye contact to avoid further abuse.

"Just do his business, get off, go to sleep" As Shug remarks, Celie "make it sound like he going to the toilet on you."

When the couple engages in sexual intercourse, Celie holds her breath, clenches her teeth, closes her eyes, and lets him *"do his business"*. This relation prolongs in this manner for quite a few years. She shows signs of melancholy and abandonment.

Celie seems desensitized to the violence. Celie advises her stepson Harpo to hit his wife (Sofia) to make her behave. When the beaten wife confronts her, Celie says, "This life will be over soon. Heaven lasts always, "proving obliterated her hope of escape.

Celie's steady exploration for the truth may be the most amazing characteristic of this beautiful character. Celie was at the base of the social hierarchy in the South because she was underprivileged, she was black, and she was female. She resides in a patriarchal social system that does not value a female except as a sexual object and a labourer.

In the end, Celie leaves her victimhood behind. It was Shug who teaches her about her own sense of worth, making her trust in herself. As a result, she at last leaves Mr. ---- (Albert), her abusive husband, and goes away with Shug to compose a life of her own. By the end of the novel, she had established a booming business, chiefly because she never gave in to the reality of her life, but searched for the truth beyond it.

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."



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-Martin Luther King, Jr.

NETTIE:

“Don’t let them run over you, Nettie say. You got to let them know who got the upper hand.”¹⁰

Nettie was Celie's younger sister, whom Celie saves from living the terrible life that she had to endure. Unlike Celie, Nettie was educated and self-governing of all men. In many ways, Nettie was the woman that she was as a result of Celie's sacrifices. Because Nettie was prettier than Celie, who had been considered ugly, Mr. ___ was originally interested in Nettie as a wife, but resolves for Celie. Nettie runs away from home to be with Celie, but was incapable to stay with Celie as Mr. ___ assays to get physically attached to her again. As a result Nettie leaves home and before leaving she gives her word to write to Celie and tells her that only death can keep them apart. Nettie was eventually taken in by Samuel and Corrine, a missionary couple, with whom she travels to Africa as a missionary. While in Africa, Nettie becomes the caregiver of Samuel and Corrine's children and faithfully writes to Celie for decades. Nettie espouses Samuel after Corrine's demise and moves back to America with Celie's children. Nettie doesn't actually walk down the aisle until she feels that she was a whole human being in herself. As a result, she had a contented and unwavering marriage with Samuel. Through explaining her experiences to Celie, Nettie encourages Celie to be more passionate and sanguine about life. Nettie finds that while there was not racial disparity in Africa, gender disparity exists. The women of the tribe are not treated as equals, and are not permitted to attend school. As an educated, intelligent woman, Nettie was quite self-contained. Spinster for the greater part of the book, Nettie by no means pronounces her individual worth in relation to men. Nettie was imperative to the novel, for the information she gives Celie about Olivia and Adam help keep the children alive in Celie's heart. Her enlightenments of African life and philosophies also aid in Celie's escalation. Nettie's come back at the end of the novel brings the plot of the tale complete cycle, allowing for an overall cheerful ending.

SOFIA:

“She not quite as tall as Harpo but much bigger, and strong and ruddy looking, like her mama brought her up on pork.”¹¹

Sofia was another strong female character. Sofia gets hitched with one of Albert's children; Harpo and this couple play a considerable part in the story, especially in the development of the subject of equality



in marriage and racial prejudice. As husband and wife, she and Harpo had conflict for years, for she declines to trail the expectations of the patriarchal way of life. The conventional way Harpo and other men like him has been raised makes him sure that he should beat Sofia for not being submissive. In the only intimidating act Celie performs against a woman, she advises Harpo to do that to Sofia, but he comes off very badly, being crushed by Sofia quite awfully in return. She rejects to be tied only to housework and child rearing and works in the fields, like a man; she also anticipates Harpo to lend a hand with the household responsibilities. When Harpo tries to criticize or punish her autonomous ways, she regularly gives him a beating, since she was larger and well-built than he. In the end, she ultimately leaves him, tired of his mistreatment.

Sofia was then badly treated by the white power structure. When the mayor's wife suggests that she come to work for her as a maid, Sofia tells her "hell, no." For her disrespectful conduct, the mayor whacks her. In turn, Sofia smacks the mayor, blowing him down. She was then beaten, taken into custody, and put in reformatory, where she was constantly ill-treated by the white staff. During her years of detention, both in prison and in the home of the mayor, Sofia survives on abhorrence, even thinking of slay. In spite of her rage, she was a good nanny to Miz Millie's children.

After she was freed from her servitude at the mayor's home, Sofia quickly returns to her old self, demonstrating that the white power system does not have to shatter the fortitude of blacks.

SHUG:

*"You've got to fight and get away from Albert. He ain't no good."*¹²

Her real name is Lillie, but she was known as Shug, short for sugar, throughout the novel. She was a blues singer - very successful and wealthy. Unlike other black women, she was well travelled and quite urbane. Our first impression of Shug is negative. We learn she had a reputation as a woman of dubious morals who dresses scantily, had some sort of "nasty woman disease," and was rejected by her own parents. Celie immediately sees something more in Shug. When Celie looks at Shug's photograph, not only does Shug's glamorous appearance amaze her, but Shug also reminds Celie of her "mama." Celie compares Shug to her mother throughout the novel. Unlike Celie's natural mother, who was oppressed by traditional gender roles, Shug refuses to allow herself to be dominated by anyone. Shug had fashioned her identity from her many experiences, instead of subjecting her will to others and allowing them to impose an identity upon her.

Though Shug's sexy style, sharp tongue, and many worldly experiences make her appear jaded, Shug



was actually warm and compassionate at heart. When Shug falls ill, she not only appreciates, but also reciprocates the care and attention Celie lavishes upon her. As Shug's relationship with Celie develops, Shug fills the roles of mother, confidant, lover, sister, teacher, and friend. Shug's many roles make her an unpredictable and dynamic character that moves through a whirlwind of different cities, trysts, and late-night blues clubs. Despite her unpredictable nature and shifting roles, Shug remains Celie's most constant friend and companion throughout the novel.

Shug was dominant, powerful and takes charge of relationships. Celie notices *"how Shug talk and act sometimes like a man"* and her lover Albert comments that she *"act more manly than most men"*. This was not seen as a handicap, but as more of an enhancement of her femininity. In fact Shug was a truly liberated woman in many ways, holding down a prosperous career; owning her own home; directing her affairs with men and women to her own liking; travelling as she pleases and enjoying a prominent place in artistic society as an accomplished musician. Significantly also, she was less handicapped than many of the other women by her color, although she does come in for some criticism from her fellow blacks in church because of her "sinful" lifestyle.

Self-Awareness Leads To Self-Empowerment

The Color Purple is a novel by Alice Walker. Alice by the medium of her novel artistically puts forward a way in which the misery of women could come to an end – by being self-aware. It was Celie who should decide what she was and what was her worth and not any tom, dick or harry. While we embark the novel it was difficult to envision Celie in any empowered emplacement in her life but towards the end of the novel we witness the old yet youthful Celie who has discovered herself. The complete process of transformation from the almost numb Celie to the self-reliant Celie was difficult withal edifying. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* aims to accomplish the aspiration of absolute freedom and equality between men and women, embracing all aspects in life.

Finding the Inner Voice

"It's our own small voice within that is our oppressor; it says we are not worthy and not powerful enough. Our limited beliefs are the real foes we need to fight and conquer."

-Yehuda Berg

The novel consists of number of letters – to god, to Nettie. These letters become the mode through which Celie pours out her feeling of being oppressed, being abused. In major portion of the novel we witness her being the victim, the silent and the invisible Celie. She was so unaccustomed to articulating her



experience that she felt helpless; hopeless as putting down her feelings in letter was of no good as the suffering continues.

In mid of her mundane life she find Shug. Shug, a strong female character lends her ear, listens to her with empathy infuses her with the thought to believe in her own worth. This was the first time in the novel where Celie truly expresses her feeling which for long time seemed to be doomed. Gradually Celie begins to flesh out more about her miserable life to Shug. Shug renamed her as “virgin”. Shug inculcates Celie to have her own understanding of herself and her god, not what was enforced on her to believe by the society and its people. To believe in her inner voice and walk with head held high. She was slowly discovering the new energy and power that she felt. However it become more evident when she found out that Mr. -----for all these years was hiding Nettie letters. Celie who had been silent all her life, began to curse Mr. ----- for making her life hell, this is the climax of the novel. During the novel a number of characters regain their voices and their own expression - Shug recovers from her illness and continues singing, Mary Agnes starts singing and writing songs, Celie and Sofia start off by making quilts, and Celie eventually runs her own business making pants. Walker emphasizes that the ability to express one’s thought and feeling is the most crucial development of self. One should avow selfhood and defy oppression.

Engaging In Education

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

– Nelson Mandela

Education certainly can lead one from darkness to light. We realize the fact during the novel *The Color Purple* through the characters. We observe the protagonist Celie deprived of formal education whereas Nettie who was fortunate enough to make her way out of the misery with the powerful weapon of education. Celie was very much keen to acquire knowledge when she gets an opportunity. Nettie tries to home school her elder sister, Celie. We also observe Nettie in the latter half of the novel begins to write regularly to Celie, she not only educates her from firsthand experience the ways of Africa and its people, but in doing so she broadens Celie’s horizons.

Education can undeniably help girls and women to know their rights and to gain self-confidence to claim them and this is where empowering women come. As we watch in case of Nettie who was an educated, intelligent woman. She was quite self-contained. Spinster for the greater part of the book, Nettie by no means pronounces her individual worth in relation to men. Secondly, Shug was a powerful spirit who snubs



to be brought down by men, ever cautious to maintain the upper hand. Celie was a victim of male abuse who has closed herself off from the possibility of trusting men but was much dependent on them. Shug teaches her about her sense of worth, trusting not others but oneself. She also assists her to imagine her god in a new way.

Celie learns lessons from life the hard way through experience. While, it is true that education plays a vital, it is still important that you get the best education. Confidence is something that no one can give you; it is something that you need to earn yourself and women's education is a way for women's empowerment.

Female Empowerment

“Feminism, unlike almost every other social movement, not a struggle against a distinct oppressor – it's not the ruling, class or the occupiers or the colonizers – it's against a deeply held set of beliefs and assumptions that we women, far too often, hold ourselves.”

- Kavita Ramdas

Throughout *The Color Purple*, Walker depicts female friendships as a means for women to summon the courage to tell stories. In turn, female characters are able to gain the power. Power which aids them to stand up to the men, and resist oppression and dominance.

One of the bonds we encounter initially is the sisterhood bond of Celie and Nettie. Nettie was Celie's younger sister, whom Celie saves from living the terrible life that she had to endure. Nettie was the woman that she was as a result of Celie's sacrifices. Nettie tries to home school Celie and always stood strong by her side. But when troubled by Mr. ----- Nettie leaves home and before leaving she gives her word to write to Celie and tells her that only death can keep them apart. The right people are going to recognize your worth. They are going to respect you, appreciate you, and accept you, without forcing you to compromise who you are.

The strong bond between the sisters can be witnessed – the promise that Nettie would write letters to Celie. Nettie is imperative to the novel, for the information she gives Celie about Olivia and Adam help keep the children alive in Celie's heart. Nettie persisted to do what she wants and not what others want Celie to do. One need not have to be interesting or agreeable or entertaining. Celie need not have to tone yourself down, quiet your voice, or hide your feelings.

The second strong bond witness between Shug and Celie - One of the most amazing things is to find love in the middle of all mess in your life. It's rewarding when you find someone who sees the beauty in



your soul when you are broken and shattered. In the novel *Shug* was a powerful soul who in middle of all the mess in Celie's life brings in a fresh air of hope. Shug renames her – 'virgin', dedicates her - a song, tells her she was beautiful and had a nice smile. Introduces her to a new imagine of god and inspires her to believes in herself. The new bond stimulates her soul and makes her feel complete. She cherishes the time they spend together. Their souls were destined to meet and bind in a timeless bond. The purity of their relationship fills the roles of mother, confidant, lover, sister, teacher, and friend. Shug remains Celie's most constant friend and companion throughout the novel.

Knowledge about self and trust in one's own capabilities will empower her to take the charge of her life. You celebrate your existence and share your happiness instead of just dragging yourself to life. *The Color Purple* affirms the idea that the survival and liberation of women can only come through self-awareness.

Wrapping up:

The Color Purple is Celie's journey of triumph and transformation. The novel is deeply inspirational narrative, coupled with Walker's prodigious talent as a stylist and storyteller, have made the novel a contemporary classic of American letters. In both her writing and her public life, Walker has worked to address problems of injustice, inequality, and poverty.

In the novel *The Color Purple* - Celie, the protagonist of the novel is a live example of sufferings of black women in the 20's. Celie loses everything that matters to her, becomes a victim of unthinkable abuse in her childhood and adulthood. Slowly and gradually Celie is drawn towards Shug. It is Shug who helps Celie realize her needs and her importance. Shug Avery's pride, independence and appetite for living act as a catalyst for Celie. In the end, Celie leaves her victimhood behind. And eventually gets redeemed through suffering when she realized her self-worth. The novel really affirms the notion of "*survival and liberation of black women through the wisdom and strength of others.*"¹⁵

*The novel fulfills African American women's need for a "female hero," an African American "everywoman" whose condition speaks to that of many other African American women and who ultimately masters her world and claims her place within it as an autonomous, courageous and creative self.*¹⁴



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End Notes:

1. Walker, Pg. 8
2. Ibid, Pg. 9
3. Ibid, Pg. 13
4. Ibid, Pg. 22
5. Ibid, Pg. 19
6. Ibid, Pg. 33
7. Ibid, Pg. 65
8. Ibid, Pg. 66
9. Ibid, Pg. 8
10. Ibid, Pg. 19
11. Ibid, Pg. 26
12. Ibid, Pg. 71
13. LaGrone, Pg. 69
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