

# BLAZING TORCHES

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# PORTRAYAL OF VIOLENCE THROUGH ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

R.SELVARANI

The novel '*THE COLOR PURPLE*' is of letters to God by Celie, who is the protagonist. The title 'The Color Purple' has immense significance in the novel. The symbolism of colour has been effectively used by Alice Walker in the novel. The colour Purple symbolises happiness and independence which was like a day dream that never comes true in her life. Celie's simple narrative brings us into her world that reveals both pain and detached numbness.

Celie is largely uneducated. The letters which she has written to God is in black folk language which is raw, honest and strong. The letters which Celie has written picturises the innocence of a fourteen year old girl. She writes to God because she has no one else to help her overcome the situation. Celie is afraid of talking or sharing her issues with anyone. Of course, she has a sister named Nettie, but she is too young to understand what terrible things have happened to Celie. Only to God Celie can talk honestly and openly about the hell that she has suffered. She is not complaining to God. She needs to talk to someone she trusts and who she feels loves her.

The very first page of the novel gives us a distinct picture of Celie's sexual abuse that too, by a man, who is supposed to be her father. Celie cannot share her trauma with the other members of her family. Her stepfather denies her the benefit of education, rapes her repeatedly and shatters her self-confidence. Women in general are encouraged to include a timid diffidence in their behavior, being black further intensifies their condemnation as passive and vulnerable beings. Celie too is benumbed with the sexual violence committed by her step-father and accepts her worthlessness as a statement of fact,

"who you think you is?..... you black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman" (213 letter)

The tone of reporting in her letters portrays the inner sufferings and pictures her oppressions. She cannot even gather up courage to share her trauma with her mother. When her mother is bedbound, and Celie who is just in her teens she gives birth to two children. Even while her children are taken away from her she watches in mute helplessness instead of taking her mother into confidence.

"she ast me about the first one whose it is? I God's .....finally she ast where it is?

I say God took it." (03 letter)

Once Alphonso's lust is fulfilled, he marries her off to another man. Celie has to accept for the marriage. Because Celie wants to protect her younger sister from her father who also had an eye on Nettie. After marriage Celie is abused as a slave and whore, mistreated by her husband whose name is mentioned only as 'Mr.\_\_\_\_\_'. She tolerates the merciless brutal behavior of her husband, as at this stage she is unaware of any other form of behavior. She is beaten, humiliated, cursed and belted, simply because she is a wife. The male dominated societal norms which are of pertaining to impart certain rights to husbands. Celie has almost lost the sense of her individuality.

Celie prefers to surrender in this hell but she has always had her doubts and wants to analyze the reasons or her sufferings. Celie's very first letter to God is the evident of this.

"May be you (God) can give a sign letting me know what is happening to me" (01 letter)

Her continued exploitation represses and suffocates her inner strength and resigns herself to the male brutalities. The firm reason why she has to tolerate her life with a stoic patience is, she felt that open conflict may put Nettie to death. She saves Nettie from this hell, and endures for thirty long years of torture, harassment and repression.



Later Celie finds a new desire to live because of three women who play vital roles throughout different stages of her life. Sofia, Harpo's wife and her step daughter-in-law, is her first acquaintance who brought changes in a woman's life. Sofia is strong physically and psychologically and is a perpetual reminder to Celie of what she has always lacked in her life. At first she is jealous of Sofia. However she soon overcomes her jealousy and develops a relationship of sisterhood with her. Celie finds pleasure and satisfaction in Sofia's active repellence. Sofia's victory satisfies Celie's suppressed desires to find individuality and equality within marriage and other relationships. Sofia's protest against sexual and racial exploitation is articulately presented in the novel. Sofia is victimized for her confident zeal towards life. Sofia acts as a tool in Celie's understanding of her own plight.

Celie's self realization is further emancipated by Shug Avery. Shug Avery is the mistress of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. At first she doesn't have big interest in Celie. But Celie's nursing slowly wins her over and a relationship develops between them. Celie gains a gradual grip over her life through her association with two strong women who can speak out their mind and are ready to fight for what they consider is right. Celie draws strength and starts to reciprocate by helping other women. With the help of the other women she transforms her interest in stitching into a business. She starts to sell and learns to manage her own life.

In the face of life's cruelties, her perception of God changes gradually even when she is on the path of recovering her identity. She starts to address her letters to Nettie because she realizes that the God she has been writing to is a man. Celie's internal development starts when she turns away from structured religion. Nettie is the sister of Celie and she is the one that Celie tries to shelter, from the physical and sexual abuse that she has experienced in her life. Nettie has an inner desire and determination to change her society. Through the letters of Nettie

the inner strength of Celie is gradually moulded and she becomes more stronger and more independent.

Women in 'The Color Purple' are continuously marginalized by men, yet with the help of other women they are able to overcome from the sexual harassment and oppression, and emerge as independent emancipated beings.

Through different stages of Celie's life, Walker has pinned the truth that despite torture and oppression women are able to raise their voice against male chauvinism. Through the women characters of this novel, Walker has registered and the realities in the lives of women, who suffer a lot under racism, sexism and abuse.

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"Alice Walker Garden" [www.alicewalkergarden.com](http://www.alicewalkergarden.com) web. 2 Feb. 20016.

They burst into blaze and the Flames  
roar with a sudden blast of enthusiasm...



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