

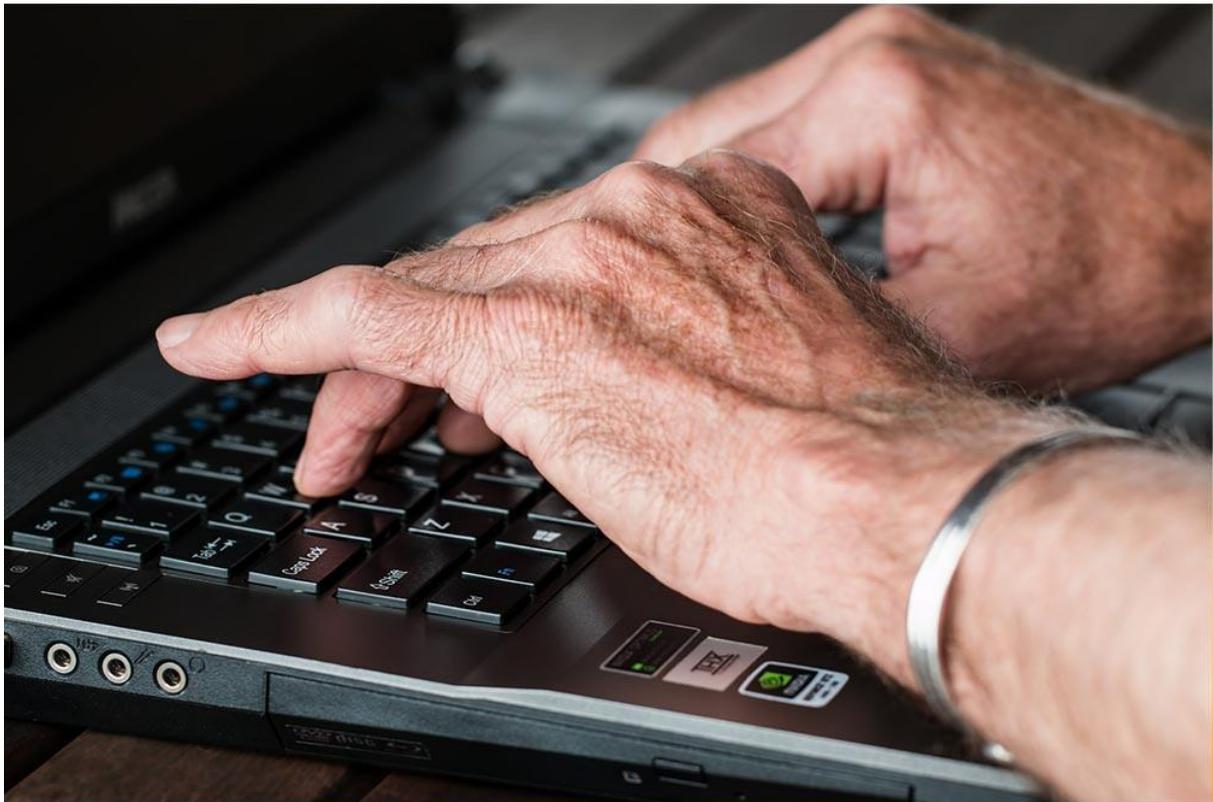
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The Bold and Bright Black Beauties in *The Colour Purple*

Abstract

This article examines black feminism within the literature of second wave of feminism in the American context. It will also focus on how the depiction and function of black feminism has been portrayed in *The Colour Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker. This article has endeavoured to portray the bold and bright side of the black women in *The Colour Purple*. Alice Walker is a well-known pioneer of black feminism. Her writings frequently motivate black women to love themselves, their race, and their culture and not to get obsessed by white superiority or white beauty standards. The attitudes towards black feminism and the black body have always been pervasive in the literature and this text provides a glimpse to the life and attitude of and towards the black women. No matter the perspectives towards black women have been shifting and the attitudes have been changing, but my article calls into question the discourse of black feminism within literature and its intentions in the contemporary society of an America ruled by the superiority of the white. The survival of the black women in the white racist society is explored through the themes of race and gender and the representation of the torture of the black women and their standing against it.

Key words: Black Feminism, blackness ignored/explored, bold black women, white superiority, the colour purple.

Introduction

Literature is the best route for highlighting any issue or reiterating any position. Through constructive contributions made by feminist writers in the field of literature has been unquestionably great and is continuously increasing. Yet there are many more aspects to be unravelled. The origin of feminism, an ideology that seeks equality of sexes and the emancipation of women is in the late 18th century. The term feminism appeared in the late 1880's. Before that the term "women's rights" was usually used in 1792, a feminist work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft, established what would turn into a frequent theme throughout much feminist writing. Wollstonecraft had criticized patriarchal society for the unfair way it confines women's rights, as well as their opportunity for education, self-articulation, and financial independence. One may say feminism begins not with Wollstonecraft but relatively with the diverse Women's Suffrage movements that came into light in the early 1800s.

This social movement has been recognized by three waves of feminism and offers perspectives for critical analysis linking the study of literature with real life contexts. The first wave was from 1830's to early 1900's where women fought for equal bonds and property rights. The second wave was from 1960's to 1980's where the focus was on place of work, sexuality and reproductive rights. And the third wave was from 1990's to the present where micro politics was the major focal point. Earlier women had no political rights and were looked upon as "passive" citizens who were forced to rely on men to decide what was best for them. Changes could be seen dramatically in theory as there were great advances in feminism. The women demanded for the end of male domination and raised their voice for

equality with men. Neil wrote in *A History of Feminism in America* (1976), that although American feminism had flourished since the nineteenth century, economic and ideological events from the previous epoch such as the Industrial, French and American Revolution already underlay the social change related to the end of male domination. These revolutions do not strive for the rights of women, but they do raise questions of equality and lifestyle.

Initially when the term feminism was used, it was in the context of the white women and the women of the west. The black woman was excluded from all kind of discourse. There were some issues of domination in the feminist movements. So many black writers did not regard themselves as a part of white feminism. They felt ostracized. The whites were not concerned about the blacks. After many years of feminist writing, a new feminism of the black woman, “black feminism” came into light where attention was given to the works, authors and books of the black woman. Stasiulis, in *Theorizing Connections*, (1992) had defined black feminism as a growing literature that conveyed and conceptualised the historical circumstances of black women and other women of colour. It is an ideology stating that sexism, racism, gender identity and class oppression are all bound together.

I have tried to explore the survival of the black women, her fight against racism, sexism, gender identity and class oppression in the white racist society. The themes of race and gender and the representation of the torture of the black women have been dealt with.

The women in *The Colour Purple* are victims of aggression and hostility as men are the dominant and overriding ones. This leads to women coming together in a stronger bond of love, support and protection towards each other. The main focal point is on Celie as this naive, unskilled and incompetent little girl who cannot stand up to anybody or anything, even if it intended saving her life. However as time advances, Celie, with the help of a few loved friends down the path of her life becomes a strong , self-determining independent woman who learns to rise up for herself.

Blackness ignored/blackness explored

The second wave was indisputably in favour of women and spelled out loud their problems but the black women felt alienated. The second wave chiefly supported for women's right to work outside the home and development of reproductive rights. The black women had already been working both in and outside the house in order to earn a living. It was not seen as an accomplishment by them. Hence, a new term evolved as a reaction to the second wave of feminism which was known as "black feminism" that conveyed and conceptualised the historical circumstances of black women. The feminist movement did not consider much the racism that was faced by the black women. In 1989 Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality for the very first time. She argues that "the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in terms of being black and of being a woman considered independently, but must include the interactions, which frequently reinforce each other." (Crenshaw, 1989) This meant that sexism, racism, gender identity and class suppression were concepts that were bound together and correlated. And black women had to face this oppression as the issues faced by them had been always overlooked. Black feminism illuminated the concept of intersectionality and Bell Hook stated that such an approach "challenged the notion that 'gender' was the primary factor determining a woman's fate".

The impact of western feminist theories has been witnessed in these recent years put forward by many theorists. Under these influences, the feminist writers are striving to create a brave new world for women by challenging the domination of patriarchal thoughts. The woman they portray has come beyond the four walls of domestic pursuits.

As Mary Wollstonecraft asserted in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, (1792)

It is plain from the history of all nations, that women cannot be confined to merely domestic pursuits, for they will not fulfil family

duties, unless their minds take a wider range, and whilst they are kept in ignorance they become in the same proportion the slaves of pleasure as they are the slaves of man.(Wollstonecraft,1792, p.185)

Nonetheless, this ideology was also only for the white woman, the black woman was nowhere in the picture. The identity of the black woman had a dual curse- one that she was a woman and the other that she was a black. . Black women remained in outsider-within locations, individuals whose idiosyncrasy provided a unique approach of visualisation on these intellectual and political entities. The Black women had always been oppressed and suppressed and had no identity. As Bell Hooks stated in *Ain't I a Woman*,

At a time in American history when black women in every area of the country might have joined together to demand social equality for women and recognition of the impact of sexism on our social status, we were by and large silent. Our silence was not merely a reaction against white women liberationists or a gesture of solidarity with black male patriarchs. It was the silence of the oppressed—that profound silence engendered by resignation and acceptance of one's lot. Contemporary black women could not join together to fight for women's rights because we did not see "womanhood" as an important aspect of our identity. (Hooks, 1981, p. 11)

As Davis states, "Black women experience a triple oppression." (Davis, 1981, p. 17). These three oppressions are racism, classism and sexism. The Combahee River Collective states that because the black women are able to acknowledge these issues, they are "committed to working on those struggles in which race, sex and class are simultaneously factors in oppression."(CRC, p. 272).

Keeping in mind the female characters of *The colour Purple* it is lucid that the blacks had a different life in the white dominated world. Poor Sophia had to face imprisonment and be a slave to the mayor just because she had 'talked back' to him. According to Ray "the jail

that Sofia is held is a metaphor for all black people caged by racism. For others, though they do not serve in a literal prison and instead and confined to servitude and domesticity within their homes” (Ray 62) Not only Sophia, the other female characters, Celie, Nettie, Marie Agnes, had to face some or the other kind of oppression.

It is the society which constructs the interrelated racial binary in order to impose white dominance. White law professor Martha R. Mahoney argues in —*Racial Construction and Women as Differentiated Actors* (1997) that race is —a concept that had no natural truth, no truth separate from historical development, and possibly no truth comprehensible apart from domination. She also claimed that race as a socially constructed concept was partly about culture and partly about skin colour, but —insistently about domination. Therefore, the idea of race can be conceptualized as a hierarchy of power between groups, where white is constructed as the superior group and non white, especially black, is constructed as the inferior group within the racial hierarchy.

The contemporary terminology used to explain the history of feminist movements is questionably racist. Kimberly Springer elucidates in her article —

“Third Wave Black Feminism?” that the “wave” model excludes black feminists by obscuring the role of race in feminist history. According to Springer, the fluctuations of feminist activity that the three waves represent recount the work of white women but fail to account for the endeavours of women of colour (Springer, 2002)

There was another article by Kimberle Crenshaw in the University of Chicago legal forum where she states,

Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women’s experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with black men. Yet often they experience double-discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race and on the basis of sex. And sometimes they

experience discrimination as black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as black women. (Crenshaw, 1989)

Black Feminist Thought (2000) by Patricia Hill very clearly brought out the plight of the black woman. One of the reviews by Black Enterprise in the praise of the book stated, “The book argues convincingly that black feminists be given, in the words immortalised by Aretha Franklin, a little more R-E-S-P-E-C-T. . . .”(Collins, 2000, p. 2). Patricia Hill argued that the Black woman has to be empowered in order to make a place for herself in the existing scenario.

The existence of black feminist thought suggests that there is always choice, and power to act, no matter how bleak the situation may appear to be.

Viewing the world as one in the making raises the issue of individual responsibility for bringing about change. It also shows that while individual empowerment is key, only collective action can effectively generate the lasting institutional transformation required for social justice. (Collins, 2000, p. 290)

It is through the works of Black feminists that the women of colour can be inspired towards empowerment and recognition. In Preface to the Second edition of *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins states,

“I initially wrote *Black Feminist Thought* in order to help empower African American women. I knew that when individual black women’s consciousness concerning how she understands her everyday life undergoes change, she can become empowered. Such consciousness may stimulate her to embark on a path of personal freedom, even if it exists initially primarily in her own mind. If she is lucky enough to meet others who are undergoing similar journeys she and they can change the world around them.” (Collins, 2000)

The ideas of Black women are not known to anyone, they are not believed by anyone. In 1905 Fannie Barrier Williams expressed grief on the predicament of the coloured women: “The coloured girl..... is not known and hence not believed in; she belongs to a race that is best designated by the term “problem” and she lives beneath the shadow of that problem which envelopes and obscures her.” (Williams, 1987, 150). The Black woman lies unknown somewhere. Her ideas are not acknowledged or believed in. As Scott states,

“The shadow obscuring this complex Black women’s intellectual tradition is neither accidental nor benign. Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that the subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization.” (Scott, 1985).

The Black women have been facing suppression since the very early days of slavery. The slave system was the most callous and merciless system where the Black people were characterized as chattel. The women were treated ruthlessly irrespective of their gender. Angela Davis quoted a scholar in *Women, Race and Class*, “The Slave women were first a full time worker for her owner, and only incidentally a wife, mother and homemaker.” (Davis, 1981, p.9) The women were not spared even if they were pregnant, feeding babies or had little infants to look after. They had to toil the fields from sunrise to sunset. It was a tough labour in the fields for them. They endured a sexual impartiality at work and at home too, they were responsible for all the household chores. The Black women have always carried the twofold burden and yet never respected or given any appreciation. W.E.B. Du Bois examined,

“Some few women are born free, and some amid insult and scarlet letters achieve freedom; but our women in Black had freedom thrust contemptuously upon them. With that freedom they are buying an untrammelled independence and deal as is the

price they pay for it, it will in the end be worth every taunt and groan.” (Bois, 1920, p.185)

The Black women were not dependent on their husbands for economic security, like their white sisters, as they were not just mothers or wives but also workers. But they could not become experts at household chores as they never had the time and vigour for doing so. Certainly, the White working class women too carried the dual burden of working for a livelihood and ministering to the needs of their husbands and children. But the black women had needed release from such a suppressive situation for a very long time. In the paper-*Women and the Subversion of the community*, Dalla Costa and James insisted,

“The housewife only appears to be ministering to the private needs of her husband and children, for the real beneficiaries of her services are her husband’s present employer and the future employers of her children. The woman has been isolated in the home, forced to carry out work that is considered unskilled, the work of giving birth to, raising, disciplining, and servicing the worker for production. Her role in the cycle of production remained invisible because only the product of her labour, the labourer, was visible. (Dalla Costa & James, 1971, p.28)

A woman has always suffered. And when I talk about the black woman, who was also a slave, her living conditions were hardly human. Angela Davis elucidated the plight of the black women very lucidly. She writes,

“But women suffered in different ways as well, for they were victims of sexual abuse and the barbarous mistreatment that could only be inflicted on women. Expediency governed the slave holders’ posture toward female slaves. When it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, they were regarded, in effect, as genderless, but when they could be exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women, they were locked into their excessively female roles.” (Davis, 1981, p.9)

The black slave women had to face the most ruthless and cruel attitude from their employers. Not only had they had to work of long hours in the fields but also treated like logs. Their children could be snatched away from them and sold away without their consent. They were punishments for every little error. They were flogged, mutilated and raped mercilessly. This kind of treatment gave the white employers some sadistic satisfaction to prove their superiority and domination over the Black.

Angela Davis remarks,

It would be a mistake to regard the institutionalized pattern of rape during slavery as an expression of white men's sexual urges, otherwise stifled by the spectre of white men's sexual urges, otherwise stifled by the spectre of white womanhood's chastity. That would be far too simplistic an explanation. Rape was a weapon of domination, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist, and in the process, to demoralize their men. (Davis, 1981, p. 19)

There were many white women who joined the abolitionist movement were unable to understand their black sisters' predicament as it was so complex. The white women made a remarkable contribution in the movement as they were infuriated by the sexual assaults on their black sisters. No matter whatever efforts were made by the white women, the black women found themselves alienated from them.

Black women were women indeed, but their experiences during slavery- hard work with their men, equality within the family, resistance, floggings and rape, had encouraged them to develop certain personality traits which set them apart from most white women. (Davis, 1981, p. 20-21)

While analysing *The Colour Purple*, it is quite evident that the women like Celie, Shug Avery, Mary Agnes, Sophia or Nettie, all of them in some way or the other symbolises the black community and each one of them had proved that if a woman is strong no male can dominate her. They need not be dependent on the men.

Feminists talk about women liberation, especially liberation of the blacks. Even Hill was of this view in her work *Black Sexual Politics* (2005) where she proposes liberatory politics for all black Americans. She asserts “Black sexual politics consists of a set of ideas and social practices shaped by gender, race, and sexuality that frame black men and women’s treatment of one another, as well as how African Americans are perceived and treated by others.”(Collins, 2005, p. 7). In, *From Black Power to Hip Hop* (2006), Collins investigates how nationalism has re-emerged in the present-day globalization and offers an elucidation of how Black Nationalism works today in the wake of changing black youth identity. *Radical Sisters* (2010) by Valk is a fresh exploration of the ways that 1960s political movements shaped local, grassroots feminism in Washington, D.C. rejecting notions of a universal sisterhood. In *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*, (2011) Melissa had tried to understand black women's political and emotional responses to persistent negative race and gender images. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor writes on black politics, social movements, and racial inequality in the United States. *The Combahee River Collective* (2017) is a collection of essays and interviews, which talk about black feminism and its impact on today’s struggles. In *This Will Be My Undoing* (2018), Jerkins too, has exposed the social, cultural, and historical story of black female oppression that influences the black community.

The black woman has been openly talked about, her distress is empathised and sympathised in various works. The mosaic of womanhood as presented by Walker makes a fascinating study. The complexity of woman’s biological nature and the conditioning that

socio- cultural environment has put upon her made the black woman characters symbolic of the problems faced by them in today's world. The characters presented are not mere statues made of wood or stone. But they are living figures who strike a resemblance with the women folk. She has juxtaposed strong with feeble personality as a literary modus operandi to develop her characters. The black female characters are depicted as an epitome of strength and valour and it presents their will to fight.

Alice walker is one of the foremost fictional grandees in America and is known for her radical and deep seated fiction. Through her novels she is successful in identifying the – negative and depressing images existing regarding black women. Walker has depicted them as competent of comprehending their potentials and when given an opportunity they emerge as liberated and enlightened individuals. *The Colour Purple* expresses the complexity and intricacy of the struggles of black women in America and enlightens their indomitable and unconquerable willpower which permits them to proliferate as individuals, defying the manipulative and exploitative restraints of a society subjugated and conditioned by white people and black men. It is an applauded novel in which the predicament of African American women in the 1930s is examined. Women's main errands were related to the domestic sphere: They nurtured the children, ran the family and home, cooked, washed, cleaned the house as well as toiled in the field when required. Nonetheless, they still found themselves in a submissive role to men and had to face the domestic abuse.

The bold and bright black women

The Colour Purple exposes the plethora of aggression and brutality in the form of callous and insensitive monetary, societal and emotional catastrophe faced by the blacks, particularly women in the rural South all through the first half of the twentieth century. This novel is about the perceptiveness and receptiveness of black community towards the white superiority. The black woman has always been a subject to double subjugation and

exploitation; one she is a black and the other that she is a woman. Walker has explicitly brought out the plight of the black woman who is severely exploited and objectified by the patriarchal society. Almost all the women are dominated by the men folk in the novel. There is pervasiveness of domestic violence in homes all over the world and the overwhelming and shocking aspect of violence on women universally. The well-known cause of domestic abuse and gender prejudice is the consequence of the fury of black males oppressed and subjugated by white society. The *Colour Purple* lays down the aura of sexual abuse which pervades the novel. The women are abused; especially Celie, who is the protagonist, is a very fine example of this abuse. She was forced by her father who rapes her continuously, to obey him and let him assault her, or else he beat her. "He start 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 feels sick every time I be the one to cook." (Walker, 982: 1). She was even impregnated twice but could not even keep her children. She was forced to quit school and manage the household chores, labour in the fields and look after her siblings. She was forced to marry Albert, who had a fancy for her sister Nettie. But her stepfather made a bargain with Albert by offering him a cow as well in marriage. He told him that Celie would be the perfect wife for him as she would not only manage his house but also his children. Celie was abused not only physically but also psychologically. She is raped by her step-father and also by her own husband. The black woman has also been a subject to victimisation and Celie is an unquestionable example for this victimisation. Shelby Steel stated, "to be black was to be a victim; therefore not to be a victim was not to be a black." (Steel, 1989, p.58)

The story of *The Colour Purple* is in the form of an epistolary letter where Celie, tells every experience in minutiae in the form of letter written first to God and later to her sister Nettie. The portrayal of her oppression exhibits the gender issues dominant and prevailing in the society which make the women hopeless and desperate. As a consequence of

the male supremacy Celie experiences since her very childhood, she could handle the domestic violence. In order to defy this inferior position, Celie structures a union of sisterhood with her role models Shug and Nettie. The power and might of Celie's camaraderie is developed concerning the power that Nettie demonstrates her in her letters. At first, Celie does not rise up for herself: "I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive." (Walker, 1970, p. 22) But she is stimulated and encouraged by women around her those do stand up for themselves. She realizes her value, stands against the abuses and declares her identity as powerful women in the society. She is suppressed and oppressed, but she stands against all evil. The credit goes to Shug Avery who is wholly and solely the hero in my eyes. She is also black and a woman, but she knew how to stand for self and the other women. The change in Celie's character is seen gradually during the course of the novel. In the beginning she is timid and a terrified woman who is under the deep impact of male dominance and hence she is scared of all the men that surround her. She finds solace in writing letters to God who is her only saviour. The language is also apologetic when she writes her letters. But as the novel advances further, Celie can be observed as a different woman who had learnt to live boldly in this male dominated society and has also grown in experience where she could judge people well. But she continued to write letters which had also taken the authoritative tone and were written from the experiences of a mature and motivated woman. She had encountered innumerable problems in the course of her growing up, which had undoubtedly had a great impact on Celie's psychological and emotional development. She had reached a state where she could have a better insight of her problems. This was evident and could be understood well from her letters that she later addressed to her sister Nettie.

Celie had matured to become a bold and bright woman of *The Colour Purple*. Her inspiration was Shug Avery, who had taught Celie to stand upright and not be suppressed.

She was the one to make Celie realize that she was a beautiful person; she loved her like a sister and also a lover. Celie, who had been physically assaulted by both her father and husband, finds strength to rise and fight back against the male dominance. She gives her the power to start her own business and be an independent entrepreneur because financial security has always been the most powerful weapon of women in order to fight the oppression. Celie rediscovered her own identity as a sister, friend and lover with the support and love of Shug Avery and evolved as an independent and confident woman.

Shug Avery, according to me should have been the hero of the novel. She was a successful singer and had a blooming career. Her power is very effectual and helpful to the strength of Celie as Shug symbolises black women's liberty and autonomy. She is free and preserves and maintains her freedom. She has command on her conduct and demeanour and also on her life. She is financially and psychologically liberated from any kind of dependence on male provision: Men like Albert did not dominate her but were dominated by her. She had shaped her uniqueness and individuality from her many experiences; instead of subjecting her will to others. She never let anyone impose any identity upon her. She stopped believing in God as she thought that he was a man, and he was white, why would he ever listen to poor black women. She tells Shug Avery, "Ain't no way to read the bible and not think God white, she say. Then she sigh. When I found out I thought God was white, and a man, I lost interest. You mad cause he don't seem to listen to your prayers. Humph! Do the mayor listen to anything colored say?" (Walker, 1982, p. 175) In fact her belief was that God was inside each and every person. One has to find him. "The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it." (Walker, 1982, p.176)

She had been an inspiration for many women who wanted to be like her. And Celie of course, the protagonist of the novel had made a place for herself in this male conquered and white dominated society with her loving support.

Mary Agnes, too was a strong and independent woman. Her journey was a journey of transformation from 'Squeak' to 'Mary Agnes.' From a quiet, submissive and ineffectual character she transformed into a strong headed, career oriented independent woman who was appreciated by everyone. She was Harpo's girl who tried to oppress her as a man dominated a woman. 'Squeak' was obsessed for her lover 'Harpo' and could not help crying when she is ignored (Walker, 1982, p.84) She knew that Harpo was with her because she was light skinned and she was not too sure whether he loved her or not. "Do you really love me, or just my colour?"(Walker, 1982:97). In order to please Harpo, she went to the prison to plead for Sophia's release, she was raped. This was an incident that transformed her completely. She realised her worth and left Harpo to pursue a career in singing with a voice that was "high, sort of mewling". (Walker, 1982, p. 98)

Sophia is another female character who retaliates against the male supremacy. "All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I loves Harpo, she say. God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me." (Walker, 1982, p.39) She loves her husband Harpo a lot but she never let herself to be subservient to the whims and fancies of her husband and did not tolerate his beatings. She was happy to quit her marriage rather be a puppet to her husband who could shower his anger and frustration on her whenever he desired to do so. Her boldness could be seen when she beat her husband back and walked out of his house. Sophia was quite courageous as she could not tolerate the nonsense and so she

talked back to the white mayor. As a result she was imprisoned and in order to escape the prison she was imprisoned as a servant to the Mayor and his wife.

Nettie, who was Celie's sister, is one strong headed character in the novel who did not give in to the advances of men like her father and Albert. In fact she was focused towards education and knew the worth of being educated. She too acted as a protector of Celie who was the more vulnerable of the two sisters. She was quite intellectual and travelled the world in pursuit of "the uplift of black people everywhere," She was independent and did not seek the support of any man. Though later she married to the man who cared for her.

The black women in the novel have close knit relationships with one another that they tend to form strong bonds. These connections of mutual sympathy and understanding help them sustain against the oppression of both black and white males.

Conclusion

A woman has always suffered. And when I talk about the black woman, her living conditions were hardly human. She had been facing suppression since the very early days of slavery. She was treated like a piece of utility and not shown any mercy at all. Be it at home or work. Not only was she required to fulfil all her duties but was also a sexual toy at the hand of the men folk who could sexually abuse her according to their needs and desires.

A woman needs to be educated and be aware of her strengths and capabilities so that she can survive in this male dominated world as an independent being. To some extent it was true in the case of Nettie, Shug Avery and Mary Agnes in *The Colour Purple*. They were not dependent on the men. Nettie was educated and she even worked for the uplift of the blacks. On the other hand women like Celie, symbolize those women, who are fighters and can evolve as independent women with the support of other women.

The Colour Purple gives us a clear picture of the nuances of the black women. We are able to see strong as well as weak women. There is a clear contrast between the suppressed

and dominated as well as independent and self determining women. Walker has been able to arouse concern and empathy towards women who are treated as objects and dehumanized to fulfil the requirements of male chauvinist society. The colour Purple helps the women to recognize their oppression and overcome their problems.

At the same time *The Colour Purple* also scrutinizes violence and brutality and its probability to act as a destabilising cause of individuality, prejudice and selfhood and it also depicts how the lines of segregation between performers, victims and spectators are distorted in the facade of violence.

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