

## Nature Vs Nature in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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### Abstract

Black women novelists portrayed in their works the experiences of exploitation. Women currently reap a variety of gains from the pioneering efforts of prior generation of feminists. Driven by an overriding impulse towards self-assertion, it can be traced back to the cultural ethos, they have later succeeded in turning their identity into a source of strength. Today's women do not need to create opportunities for advancement in all fronts. They can use their energies to contribute to continued progress rather than make new beginnings. To struggle and free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinition of the self, art and society is a common female impulse. This paper analysis the womanist concept of nature vs nature in assertion of the indomitable spirit of Alice walker's women characters in her work *The Color Purple*. Like nature we find the women character being highly passive at the beginning and later by nurturing each other they engender creativity, personality, bring about positive relations and they overcome their suppression.

**Keywords:** Nature, Nature, women, cultural

Black women novelists of the twentieth century have openly portrayed in their works those experiences of exploitation. Driven by an overriding impulse towards self-assertion, they can be traced back to the cultural ethos of the 1960s, they have later succeeded in turning their identity into a source of strength. Their works of fiction, published over the last two decades, reflects their version of American experience that was excluded from both black male and white female writings. They strive to present the black woman's quest for total freedom as a human being and as a result some of the black women has risen from passivity to consciousness, from suppression to liberty.

The striking popularity of the Black American Literature is mainly on the scholarly depiction and the sensitivity of the narrative Black male writers who never encourage their women writers for fear of being exposed of their negative qualities. In spite of lacking support, the rising demand to educate the world about the noted realities of the meanness, which they have experienced in the hands of the black man, in the form of rape, sexual violence and oppression and also their different historical experience from that of a dominated group has prompted the black women to write.

The African American novel continues to serve both an ideological and as a social purpose, affirming the need to reflect lived reality across class and gender lines. Black women in America are triply burdened and disadvantaged as they are black, female and economically under – privileged. This triple burden restricted them from all their activities.

Among the many Afro American writers, like Paul Marshall, Zora Neale Hurston, Gloria Naylor, Tony Morrison, Alice Walker has been the most identified with the theory and literary practices of a black woman's renaissance. She writes

celebrating the strength of black women against the heavy odds of racism, sexism claimed by developing the necessary political, social and aesthetic consciousness.

Her most acclaimed work to date is **The Color Purple** (1982) that was awarded both the American Book Award and The Pulitzer Prize, which made her a literary celebrity. This novel is noted for its authentic use of black dialect, explores and expands upon concerns introduced in Walker's earlier works.

**The Color Purple** portrays devastating effects of racial and sexual oppression. Walker, who has said that black women are the only people she respects "collectively and with no reservations", shows an intense empathy for the black women who faces violent subjugation by black men, as well as white racists. She advocates "bonding" between black women as a defense against such oppression. Although grim in many respects, the overriding message of this novel is that "love redeems". While she spares no detail of the violence and painful hardships in the lives she portrays, she has a keen eye for the beauty and grace found in the most ordinary people or objects. Celie the most powerful and the main character of **The Color Purple**, is a woman who is cruelly exploited and lives a confined life.

At the outset she is exploited by her step father and later cursed by her mother on knowing about her father's intention towards her. She undergoes all the sufferings in order to safeguard her sister Nettie. After her mother's death her step father tortures her and thereby both physically and psychologically, she is abused. As Simone de Beauvoir says women feel they are powerless against things volcanoes, police, patrons, men. (613)

Mother Nature which is considered to be feminine gives, produces or sustains and has the regenerative capacity. Nature talks more about the person and its place and also about his personal experience - upbringing. There is a voice in everyone which when suppressed, there is resistance ...women undergo constant struggle in order to preserve their substance and nature in turn strives to keep up its subsistence potential . There is a commonality of gender, creativity, nature....Celie can be considered as an allegorical figure of mother nature whose exploitation was ignored but whose sacrifice enabled the survival of others as well as hers . Celie is found in the beginning of the novel as a totally shattered person ....Celie is pinned underneath a deep rooted dominating force from an inherited theology founded on patriarchy...letters become the surrogate body which serves to reveal her. Her grief is revealed out to the world only through the letters she addresses to God which is her surrogate body. Mary Ann Fergusson observes:

"Throughout history social stereotypes have been reinforced by archetypes. Another way of putting this would be to say that in every age woman has been seen primarily as mother, wife, mistress, sex object – their role in relationship to men." (4-5)

Her emotions being degraded expresses her intensity of pain letters and also depicts her suppressed self which makes her numb to the outward actions. .. Victimization and exploitation bind the sisters, (Celie and Nettie) they fall into a bond of mutual sympathy love and admiration. Her relationship with Shug which though is a lesbian expresses sisterhood, affection and mutual help among themselves:

Shug Avery sit up in the bed a little today.

I wash and comb out her hair. She got the nottiest...

...to pomp up my own hair. (TCP..51)

Shug Avery who is dominant and powerful is considered to be more than a man according to Albert himself, Shug inspires and empowers Celie and asks her to fight back instead of being passive. It is the sisters and not a "Mother" who steps into the role of challenging, nurturing, protecting one another in the most horrible situations...(her sister relationships with Nettie her biological sister, where there is unconditional love and support in spite of the agony they face.)

Celie the victim of patriarchy withstands all the atrocities that took place in her life. Even when her mother was sick, her step father (...Alfonso) pestered her a lot, she had to submit but finely she becomes irritated and starts refusing. Celie thus becomes who becomes his victim. When mama came to know this about Celie, she's screams and curses and finally she dies:

"My mama she fuss at me an look at me. She happy, cause he good to her now. But too sick to last long. My mama dead. She die screaming and cussing. She scream at me. She cuss at me." (TCP 3-4)

Sofia, is the wife of Mr. Harpo, daughter-in-law to Mr.\_\_\_\_ (Albert). Harpo controls his wife by beating her as he feels that, that is how a man must be. His life becomes meaningless when Sofia starts retorting and finally, she leaves. Years later they are united, he no more fights but in turn takes care of the household mutually, while she is away for work:

"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." (TCP 39)

The relationship between Celie and Sophie becomes strained due to certain misunderstandings, in order to save Sophie, Celie is tortured by the warden in order to get Sophie released from the prison cell, but the Celie whom we see in the end is one who has overcome all the oppression, suppression and ultimate freedom. Both nature and nurture influence one another constantly. Sofia unlike Celie had to fight her life right from the childhood, with her daddy, her brother, cousins, uncles as she found that a girl wasn't safe in the house of men:

"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." (TCP 39)

She is finally put in the prison for fighting with the mayor. Circumstances make her another Celie. In spite of the hardships and tortures she struggles for self-respect and dignity. She struggles for meaningful existence which brings out her strong will power and ability in order to transcend the racist and sexist society.

Celie undergoes the burden of slavery, sexual exploitation, loss of her children and economic marginalist. They engender creativity, personality and bring about positive relations all of them by nurturing each other mutually and overcome the victimization.

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