

Sisterhood: A remedy for violence against woman- A special reference from 'The Color Purple' by

Alice Walker

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Abstract

Violence against women, the term makes the sense of pain that is more painful than any other pain which includes the sense of fear also. There are many ways in which women suffer and are made to suffer. In behavioural terms, violence against women ranges from simple suppression to abuse, aggression, exploitation and severe oppression. It includes rape, wife beating and denial of education to girls, harassment physically as well as mentally. Thus all such kinds make the term more terrible. This paper has a function to illuminate the aspects of racial social and domestic violence against women and to demonstrate how these social paradigms of black existence actually present in the society and get fictionalized in the novel 'The Color Purple' of Alice Walker.

Keywords: Sisterhood, Violence against woman, Child Abuse, The Color Purple, Alice Walker

Introduction

Violence against women, the term makes the sense of pain that is more painful than any other pain which includes the sense of fear also. There are many ways in which women suffer and are made to suffer. In behavioural terms, violence against women ranges from simple suppression to abuse, aggression, exploitation and severe oppression. It includes rape, wife beating and denial of education to girls, harassment physically as well as mentally. Thus all such kinds make the term more terrible. According to SNDT University's Research Centre for Women's Studies:

Violence, in general is a coercive mechanism to assert one's will over another, in order to prove or feel a sense of a power. Those in power against the powerless can perpetuate it. It is often not even necessary to actually use physical force or inflict severe injury for the main threat of coercion or being disciplined to act in a manner required by another individual or group, it subjects to violence. This is not necessarily confined to physical violence but the creation of an atmosphere of terror, a situation of threat and reprisal.... A hierarchical social structure has violence built into it.

The two themes of racial and social violence are allied and have a parallel existence. Gloria Wade Gayles depicts this phenomenon through the imager of circles:

There are three major circles of reality in American Society which reflect degrees of power and powerless. There is a large circle in which white people most of them men, experience influence and power. Faraway from it. There is a smaller circle, a narrow space in which black people, regardless of sex, experience uncertainly exploitation in this second circle is third, a small dark enclosure in which black women experience pain, isolation and vulnerability.

These are the distinguishing marks of black womanhood In white America.

The black woman faced the reality of double violence of both race and society. She was a doubly burdened, doubly jeopardized person Paula Giddings says:

...(in)the experience of Black women, (there) is the relationship between sexism and racism. Because both are motivated by similar economic, social and psychological forces it is only logical that those who sought to undermine Blacks were also the most virulent antifeminists. The means of oppression differed across race and sex lines. However the well spring of that oppression was the same.

Racial and social violence coexists in a traumatic alliance within the life of black woman racial discrimination together with social violence proves to be a lethal combination. Women in general have to follow the roles defined for them by the society. And who else but men comprise the society which lays down different norms for men and women. Any woman who refuses to follow these rules is immediately condemned. The women in the novel are very heavily dependent on men in different ways. Men is still the focal point around which the women's world recoils.

Walker's vision however is disturbing one, for she relies much upon sexual violence and physical abuse to portray black generation. Typically, she brings to her work a terrible observance of black self-hatred and destruction.

This study speculates the related issue the racial and social violence in walker's prize-winning novel "The Color Purple" male domination coupled with racial discrimination engenders a diabolic power, which crushes ever stouthearted Sofia. Sofia's plights stand testimony to the fact that no amount of strength of an individual can effectively atar the coordinate violence. Racial violence can be directly seen through the incidents happened to Sofia as she refuses to serve mayor's wife as maid.

The single negative answer made her life worse than hell. As she is black, she has no right to say 'no' to white man and when he is a Mayor. Though in so many inscriptions the common lines have been written that blacks and whites have an equal right yet in mundane life they acquaint with reality.

When she came back from prison and told her experiences expressing the violent treatment of whites against blacks she said, "They got me in a little store room up under the house, hardly bigger than ode Sosa's porch and just about as warm in the winter time. I'm at the beck and call all night and all day. They won't let me see my children. They won't let me see no men. Well after five years they let me see you once a year - I'm a slave she say"

Such a heart touching description gives us a real sense of slavery. When she started learning driving, Mayor's wife felt awkward that a black lady was teaching her. Not only this that she is being taught by sofia a black women, the discrimination of gender dominates to that much extent that they cannot sit together.

Walker says that racism is a cage. We could even say that the jail that Sofia is held is a metaphor for all black people caged by racism. For others, they do not serve time in a literal prison and instead are confined to servitude and domesticity whin their own homes. Thus Walker's women characters are not mere fictional characters rather they are representatives of racist society. Her characters show the dual suffering s of women in general. How women suffer from the violence imposed on them by the society and how it si doubled by the racist society.

The novel "The Color Purple" begins with the note of violence and we are presented with a girl who is writing to God because she feels that she has nobody else to turn to, she cannot even pray for fear of somebody hearing her. As 'pa' instruct her "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mummy".

Celie's awakens from the act of rape, effecting her bifurcation into a subject made object to itself. Rape here also intensifies the negation that grows from the ongoing patriarchal subjugation of women within the family.

This gender oppression is the main factor operating in the oppressive paternal ideology, in which father's control of the family's private resources effectively gives him license to violate his women. It is the story that reveals the family's private or internal structure. How weak is this structure in African-American families that a girl child is not safe in her own family?

Alphonso, hungry for sex begins to have his eyes on Nettie, Celie's younger sister. Luck favours her. Soon, his second wife came and rescued her. Mr. _____ returns and wishes to marry Nettie. Alphonso refuses but as a replacement, offers Celie. Her father treated her as a commodity and sold her. Although that was an end of violence on part of her father but it is a new beginning of violence against Celie this time by the hands of her husband whom she denotes as Mr. _____.

Celie does not happy in her pa's' house and still she feels unhappy in Mr. _____'s house. Celie over run and beaten by both Mr. _____ physically and his children emotionally. Subjugates herself to the wishes of both Nettie Suggests her "You got to fight" but her softening makes Celie too weak that she says, "But I don't know how to fight. All I know is stay alive".

Mr. _____'s son Harpoasks his father, "Why he beat Celie?" Mr. _____ answers, "Cause she may wife". That is the concept of wife in the mind of him. The patriarchal society gives the right to a husband that he can use his wife as he wants, and he

can beat her as his is the husband of his wife. The word wife is meant for beating. This causes the psychological violence against Celie. Even at the time of Celie's illness, she is wanted to serve all the time. When Sofia asks Celie about her tolerance and question as it disturbs the inner cords of her heart and she starts burshing our her anger that how much violence she has suffered during her life time.

She says,

I can't ever remember the last time I felt mad. I say, I use to get mad at my mammy cause she put a lot of work on me. Then I see how sick. She is could't stay mad at her, couldn't be mad my daddy cause no matter whatsometimes Mr. _____ get on me pretty hand. I have to talk to old makes. But he my husband, I shrug my shoulder. This life soon be over, I say. Heaven last all ways". Really, through out her life Celie suffered either from physical, sexual, emotional or religious violence. As religion does not allow her to raise her voice against father and mother, no matter what they are.

Thus, the novel's representations of intimate familial violence, in so diminishing the centrality of Alphonoso's the sept father's rapes of Celie, the text abandons its demystification of male behaviour in the family to focus on a reconstruction of the family. In "The Color Purple" the identify crisis that grows from the violence within the family.

The Black male who does not and cannot withstand with oppression turns his frustration on his wife and children. The male with no identity of his own indulges in violence. Harpo and Albert both lack identify of their own. They imitate their father in taming their wives. Mr. _____ reflects typical male of the society who is the cause of wife's sufferings and his wife crushed by the power structure.

The color purple is not merely the story of the characters in the family rather it is intended to democratize the American literary voice to the voiceless. The color purple is to recognize the suffering s of those who are caught in both inter-cultural and intra-cultural conflicts. Walker creates a fiction wherein an oppressed black woman can experience self-recoveries and victory over violence without a dialectical process, without collective political efforts, without radical change in society.

During her period, the feminist movement emerged as a resistance against the dominant patriarchal system during the 1960s. The goal of feminism, according to Faye powell" became to eliminate, sexist oppression, imposed by patriarchal society..... and discriminations against women on the job, in the home and in all areas of women's lives".

From this feminism comes the awakening in black women section also. They realized that being a victim of differences based on race and gender they have been suppressed for an interminable time. Black female discourse whether creative or critical now tries to give a voice to these long silenced women, but it is still defensive, trying to prove its legitimacy in a world which determines their status by their blackness and womanhood.

Womanism as a journey against violence is truer in the case of black women writers than feminists, who are mainly interested in the rights of individual women. Since, walker has given that word womanism to show the spirit of black women against violence. This concept promotes walker to play for a female community's journey against violence which can benefit all the women.

Walker made the black woman struggle her primary concern and it has become her special identifying mark. The motivation behind seems to be a crawl for same personal identification. In

her interview with John O'Brien, She says, "I believe in listening...to a person the wind, the trees, but especially to say black women whose rocky road. I am still travelling" she shares their burden of oppression and their empathy is evident in all her writings.

Walker finds that just as womanism is different from feminism. To overcome the mountain of sexism and racism the women need to come together as a group, this is strongly advocated by her in the "The Color Purple". Though vivid account of domination and oppressed women are shown to be treated as mere play things by men in the beginning liberation comes only after the great struggle and her sister's strength and wisdom. Celie is not alone but with her sister, she is victor in the color purple."

Walker's message seems to be clear enough unless women come forward to help their own sex, they cannot get out of the self they are forced in. Like Alice Walker's women, Celie has the capacity the patience, to endure. However, the act which completely makes Celie winner is Shug's standing up for her against almighty Mr. _____.

Celie feels revulsion for her own body as well as for sex because of horrible experiences of rape in the past and loveless marriage in the present. She is fragmented both emotionally and physically. To become a self-possessing person Celie must overcome her sexual revulsion and learn to love her own self. Once again Shug helps her by showing her how lovemaking could be a beautifully shared act.

Her recovered self-esteem awakens her lost desires and this in turn makes Celie aware of the deficiencies in her marriage. This recovery of her voice underlies a further stage in Celie's development of woman who stands against violence. The new Celie stutters and mutters to herself like Sofia. This comparison shows that Celie is in a new light. Celie revolts against violence because Shug becomes the mother. Shug gives Celie the essential knowledge of her body and spiritual strength of God.

From this Walker has a message to convey through Shug. She articulates Walker's thought and brings all women together in a shared sisterhood.

Thus the sisterhood is the phenomenon suggested by the womanist Alice Walker, for the women of present century. The bond between the women will strengthen their power to raise their voice against violence. However, Walker's womanist vision or sisterhood phenomenon is not confined to the world of woman only rather she believes in wholeness of the entire people, male or female. Thus sisterhood as a remedy of violence is the universal phenomenon. This strengthens woman community as well as given proper regards to man-woman relationship.

Alice Walker examines in her fiction the black women's search for selfhood through an analysis of the individual's relationship to the community. In walker's novels, the black women's struggle to claim their selves, in order to change their lives and secure a rightful place within the social network of relationship they themselves constitute, usually absorbs the psychic pain involved in such a struggle and shatters the iron bars of gender which limit self-empowerment. For Alice walker writing is a tool of revolutions. It is modes of expression of her own self as well as the black women in general. Though it shows the horrendous and shocking nature of violence, child abuse, infanticide yet the aim of the study is not to present a totally negative picture, projecting women as victims. Rather the purpose of the study gets fulfillment in the second half part while witnessing the determined struggle of women themselves

against such violence, their efforts to support and rescue their victimized sister.

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