

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Survival and Change in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "**Survival and Change in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple***," submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, by Bishal Shrestha, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to study the identity crisis of female characters mainly Celie and Nettie. Awakening of the identity comes from the domination of male characters. This novel shows that in the patriarchal society marriage is one of the complexities which sometimes minimize the effect of a self-identity of female. *The Color Purple* presents the situation in which female characters search their identity but are beaten down and kept aside by the patriarchal society. It is the society and its tyrannical behavior that made the female identity submerged, subordinated. The novel presents a women's search for identity. Celie, the woman protagonist of the novel, a poor southern black woman who is victimized physically and emotionally by male characters and through her consistent effort female identity is regained ultimately. The novel depicts a black woman Celie struggling for spiritual and physical survival. Celie begins her life as a physically and psychologically oppressed young girl who is unknown about herself. A male character like Alphonso rapes her and threatens her not to tell about it to anybody. This paternal threat completely silences Celie. He uses every means to silence her. Later on she becomes the wife of Mr. __ another male figure in her life, who also continues to exploit her in different ways. There too she becomes the victim of sexual violence. For Celie the sex with Mr. __ is like rape.

Though completely silenced by patriarchal authority, she manages to tell about her dehumanizing situation by writing and finds hope in act of writing. She takes writing as a means to define herself against patriarchy. The whole novel is presented in letter writing form; firstly by Celie to God and then to her sister Nettie and Nettie's letter to Celie. Writing allows her to analyze herself. Later, when she knows that God is white man, she stops writing to God and starts writing to Nettie. Writing appears as a means which empower Celie and she realizes her 'self'. But she develops a sense of self in the company of other woman. The first woman she

encounters is Sophia, a big and bold woman who encourages Celie to react against Mr.____. But Shug Avery, a blues singer is a major contributor in the transformation of Celie from a passive victim to a confident woman. Shug teaches Celie to think God in a new way as a force that all people carry inside them. For Shug, God is in everything and to discover God, one must look inward.

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