

CHAPTER I

1.1. Introduction

Alice Walker, Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award winning novelist, has produced varied body of work including poetry, novels, short stories, essay, and criticism. She was born on February 09, 1944 in Eatonton, Georgia. She attended college at Spelman and transferred to Sarah Lawrence, where she graduated and began her writing career. She was influenced by black writer Zora Neale Hurston, who wrote lively folk accounts of the thriving small southern black community where she grew up. Alice Walker is one of the leading black American women writers of the second half of the 20th century. Her writings portray the struggle of black people throughout the history and are praised for their insightful and riveting portraits of black life in particular and experiences of black women in a sexist and racist society. They often deal with friendship, courage and independence. She revolves round the themes of black women's battle with the society for their equal emotional, political and sexual rights. Her women characters display strength endurance and resourcefulness in confronting and over coming the oppression in their lives. Walker has continued to explore the unique problems that black women have to face both in the United States and Africa.

Indeed, much of Walker's work depicts the emotional, spiritual, and physical devastation that occurs when family trust is betrayed. Her focus is on black women, who grow to reside in a larger world and struggle to achieve independent identity beyond male domination. As a womanist writer, Walker gives emphasis to the issue of concern for women and the difficult life they lead in the hand of black men and white people as it has been already a kind of culture in Afro-America society. She is well-known to the society where the female are always dominated by the black man

and white people. So she became interested to explore the difficult and painful life of black women in her novels. Walker had been abused by one of her brother at the age of 14 and also her one eye has permanently blinded to silence her. From the moment afterward, she knew the value of women life and started to write several works of art related to her own experience which seem miserable. In spite of the black women's poor and abused life in the society, Walker gives strength to the black women that they can also be powerful if they are encouraged to struggle against the male body of the society. Walker has been recognized as one of the most celebrated contemporary Afro-American writer and still continued a prolific career in writing novels, poetry, stories and essays.

Walker was an excellent student, and received a scholarship to Spelman College in Atlanta, and later to Sarah Lawrence College in the Bronx, New York. She became politically aware in the civil rights movement and participated in many demonstrations. Her first book of poems, *Once* published in 1968, recounts the despair and isolation of her situation, in addition to her experiences in the Civil Rights Movement and of a trip she had made to Africa. Walker completed her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, published in 1970, which depicts cycles of male violence in three generations of an impoverished Southern black family and displays Walker's interest in social conditions that affect family relationships in addition to her recurring theme of the suffering of black women at the hands of men. Walker's short story collections, *Love and Trouble* (1973) and *You can't Keep a Good Women Down* (1981) expand upon the problems of sexism and racism facing black women. Walker explored similar terrain in her novel *Meridian* (1976), in which she recounts the personal evolution of a young black woman against the backdrop of the politics of the Civil Rights Movement. Her other works of fiction are *The Temple of My Familiar*

(1989), *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1989), *The Color Purple* (1982). '*The Color Purple*' became the Pulitzer prize winner which brought fame and financial success in her life in 1983 and it also won the American Book Award and was made into a successful feature film in 1985.

Alice Walker creates a very powerful black womanist, Celie in her novel *The Color Purple*. The novel chronicles the life of a black girl Celie who despite poverty, illiteracy, physical and mental exploitation, transcends her plight through self-awareness, and attempts to scale the subtle and warm dimensions of womanist consciousness. This epistolary novel explores the real truths of African American life during the early mid 20th century. The novel centers on Celie, a young woman, who at 14 was sexually abused and impregnated by her step father twice. Later she is forced to an unhappy marriage with Mr. - , a widower with several children. She has been physically and sexually abused by her husband Mr. - as she used to get exploited by her step-father Alfonso before her marriage. Celie is not allowed to express her pain with others so she expresses her feelings through letters. She finds solace in her sister Nettie's letters and in the God. She happens to meet Mr. -'s Mistress Shug Avery, an exotic singer and initially gets abused by her. Later Shug Avery learns Celie is living painful life with Mr. - and teaches Celie the real meaning of sexual relation and married life. Celie and Shug Avery sexually get attracted to each other and become lovers. Mr. -'s son Harpo gets married with his lover Sofia who has been presented as an extraordinary woman and she shows Celie the excellent example of how to stand against the tyranny by men and society. Gradually, Celie feels the strength to leave her tyrannical husband, Shug helps her to find Nettie's numerous mysterious letters in Mr -'s trunk that he had hidden from her view for years. The letters indicate that Nettie befriended a missionary couple, Samuel and Corrine, and

traveled with them to Africa. Celie also comes to know from the letters that Olivia and Adam, her biological children are living with Samuel and Corrine. As Corrine dies, Samuel and Nettie get married and Celie knows that Alfonso is her step-father who wanted to inherit the house and property that once belonged to her mother. After revealing the truth, Summel and Corrine manage to return to America with Celie's biological Children.

Celie gets power to raise voice against the male violence and leave Mr. - to live free and independent life in Memphis where she gets physically, mentally and economically powerful with her sewing business. The self-actualization Celie achieves transforms her into happy, successful, independent women. Celie takes the act of sewing as her profession, which is traditionally thought of as a mere chore for women who are confined to a domestic role, and turns it into an outlet for creative self-expression and a profitable business. After being voiceless for so many years, she is finally content, fulfilled and self-sufficient. At the end, she gets her children back home and even her sister Nettie to celebrate their happy reunion. Celie emerges as an empowered woman in her own right, through both financial and sexual emancipation.

In fact, Walker's *The Color Purple* has been analyzed by different critics in different ways. Most of the female character have been abused by male body of the novel in different way and are also silence as they would not express their pain with others. In *The Color Purple* most of the female character has been silenced and they are forced to do whatever the male guide. In the very beginning of the novel, Celie, at 14 has been sexually abused by her step-father and also silenced her with his cruel words as "You better not ever tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (1). This very beginning of the beast like habit of Alfonso proves that he has not any kind of human heart. Alfonso not only rapes Celie without understanding her desire but also

silences her and never takes care of her pain and feelings. Alfonso hates Celie for being black and ugly. When Alfonso finds out that Celie's mother doesn't respond to his sexual advances, he tries to find out a substitute. Consequently, he makes brutal sexual attacks on Celie. She is subjected to rape. As a result she becomes pregnant. Motherhood may be pleasure to some women but for Celie, like Meridian, Mem, Josie and Margaret, it is a burden. Celie is not allowed to love for her own kids as they were taken away by her father. In this context, Celie has not only been sexually and physically abused but she has been far away from her Kids and even cannot express the love of motherhood, and again gets silence from Alfonso.

While Celie gets into an unhappy marriage with Mr. - again she has been silenced. Mr. - is similar to Alfonso having brutal and tyranny heart. Though Celie gets marriage with Mr. - but she never achieves the real sexual, mental and physical pleasure from her husband. Mr. - use Celie like an object to satisfy his tyrannical sexual desire without understanding her desire. Though she has been abused, she has nobody to share her pain before meeting with Shug Avery. So in this part also, Celie has been silenced socially. Celie suffers at the hands of Mr. Albert. To be wife for her means to be submissive, to be subordinate and to be a punch bag for the man. As being wife of Mr. Albert, Celie never pronounce the name of her husband to which it seem as if she has followed the traditional culture where the female are bound to speak the name of their husband. Celie may be afraid of Mr. Albert himself that he holds the habit of animal and follows the traditional rules and regulation in which he believes that female should be under the control of their husband as he does with Celie. Here, Celie never receives the love from her husband but only gets trouble and has nobody to express her pain. So, in this situation she chooses the best medium God to share her feelings in the form of letter. Celie's relation with God also seems as if

she has been silenced because of being female in the male dominated society. Celie expresses her pain with God as "My mamma die ... my sister Nettie run away. Mr - Come git me to take care of his rotten children. He never ask me nothing bout myself. He clam on top of me and fucks and fucks, even when my head bandaged. Nobody ever love me, I say "(109).

Celie at first writes letter to Nettie but when she doesn't receive letter from Nettie she believes that she has been dead. In fact, Nettie has written bundles of letters to her sister, Celie but the cold and inhuman heart Mr. Albert has hidden all the letters in a trunk. In this sense, Nettie has been silenced by Mr. Albert, not physically but mentally. As hiding the letters of Nettie refers that all the activities related to Nettie has been silenced and they never reach in time to Celie. Mr. - wants to break the relation of sisters and shows the male violence. In the other hand, Harpo the eldest son of Mr. - who thinks female, should always be under the feet of male. Many of Harpo's actions overturn stereotypical gender roles. He marries an independent woman, Sofia. However, Mr. -'s expectation of stereotypical male dominance convince Harpo that he needs to beat Sofia. As his father, Harpo also likes to dominate his wife and of course tries to raise hand against Sofia and silence her but his efforts at abusing Sofia fail, since she is much stronger than he is.

In town one day, the Mayor's wife, Miss Millie, asks Sofia to work as her maid. Sofia answers with a sassy 'Hell no'. When the mayor slaps Sofia for her insubordination, she returns the blow, knocking the mayor down. Sofia is sent to jail. She is sentenced to work for twelve years as the mayor's maid. In the context, we can find the silencing part of Sofia by Mayor for not only being female but being also black female from the lower class. It means that in the Afro-American society not only female are silenced but the female from the black community are silenced.

Especially black people in the Afro-American society are regarded as ugly and as an object to satisfy the black men and white people.

It is through Nettie's analytical letters that we learn about the wider world of Africa. In Africa, Nettie writes to Celie, education is denied to the native Olinka girls. Women are expected to fulfill a subservient role in their village never looking directly into a man's face. They are defined only in terms of the value they have for their husbands. Nettie is told by one of the Olinka women, "A girl is nothing to herself, only to her husband can she become something", and is told, "The mother of his children" (162). Nettie compares the power the Olinka man has over his wife to the power their step-father had over her and Celie, and the general desire of the African society to keep women uneducated to the desire of American whites to keep the blacks ignorant. Nettie, living in African Society has learned that a woman is nothing at all. African people think giving education to women is worthless and they are only forced to work in their village. Even they are not allowed to look directly in the face of male. A Woman is nothing to them but they can be something to their husband and she is mother of children. It means female has been abused and silenced in the African Society as in American. Almost all the scene related to the African Society seems as if the female are under the domination and are silenced by the male body of the society. Almost all the characters are dominated by the male body of the society, as Squeak, Harpo's lover has been also abused like many of the women in the novel. She demands to be called by her real name, Mary Anges but we find her real name has been silenced and called as Squeak which she doesn't like. It means the women desires are also silenced in the Afro-American society and should do whatever the patriarchal society desire.

In *'The Color Purple'*, almost all the female characters are silenced and sexually abused by the male characters of the society. Celie is the best example of silenced character throughout the novel. The rape, an aggressive sexuality by her father begins her misery that is further heightened by her abusive husband. Her husband takes the marriage as a license to exploit her sexually, physically and psychologically. She later gets strength with encouragement of Shug and Sofia to struggle against male violence and depart from Mr. - to make her new career and independent life in Memphis, where she earn fame and financial success with her sewing business. Thus, Celie celebrates her economic independence, achieved through nurturing sisterhood and communal arts, as a viable made of survival in the institutionalized forms of oppression in America by creating the black womanist consciousness. At last, Celie get financially, socially, economically powerful in her life with sewing business but through this novel *'The Color Purple'* the Feminine subjectivity is silenced and abused by the male body of the society.

1.2 Literature Review

As the themes of Alice Walker are generally revolutionary and confront the contemporary experiences of black Americans, particularly those of black American women and their cultural, social and political history, her works especially *The Color Purple* began to elicit a host of criticisms. Walker has earned the high praise for *The Color Purple*, particularly for her accurate rendering of the black folk idioms and her characterization of Celie. *The Color Purple* chronicles the struggle of several black women in rural Georgia in the first half of the twentieth century. It instigated heated debates about black cultural representation, as a number of male African-American critics complained that the novel reaffirmed old racist stereotypes about pathology in black communities and of black men in particular. Critics also charged Walker with

focusing heavily on sexism at the expense of addressing notions of racism in America. Nonetheless, *The Color Purple* also had its ardent supporters, especially among black women and others who praised the novel as a feminist fable. Shortly after the publication of *The Color Purple*, David Bradley, a male critic discovers that the novel is “a perfect expression of what makes Alice Walker Alice Walker” (31). Peter S. Prescott also finds the work “an American novel of permanent importance” (67). Charles Johnson has said about *The Color Purple*.

It is *The Color Purple* beyond all doubt, that stands at the crest black woman’s fiction in the 1980s... She provides ruminations on the nature of God that opens into the five millennia old vision of the deity as a being without attributes. (105-106)

He also gives a revisionist standpoint of *The Color Purple* in the sense that the novel questions the nature of God. In the same line, Stacie Lynn Hankinson examines an oppressed woman's conversion from a monotheistic view of God to more pantheistic outlook in Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. Celie frees herself from the oppressive man - God figure and emerges into a distinctly non-Christian discovery of God that she finally attains liberation from patriarchy she says:

Celie's conversion from a monotheistic view of God (or traditional Christianity) to a more pantheistic outlook represents and parallels her movement from feelings of oppression under the domination of patriarchy into a sense of connectedness with others and self-acceptance at which she ultimately arrives by the novel's end. (320)

A theme throughout Walker's work is the preservation of black culture, and her women characters forge important links to maintain continuity in both personal relationships and communities.

Walker admires the struggle of black women throughout history to maintain an essential spirituality and creativity in their lives and their achievements serve as an inspiration to others. As Linde Abbandonato argues in her reading of *The Color Purple*, it is important to consider how a woman can "define herself differently, disengage herself from the cultural script of sexuality and gender that produce her as feminine subject" (1107).

Like other black novelists Walker depicts reality of black people in her novels. Her purpose is to foreground the dreams and failures of those people who have been pushed at the margin so as to make them visible. Kathryn Vanspanckeren places Walker on the line of other women writers whose works focus on the quest for dignity in human life, when she says:

Like Toni Morrison, Jamaica Kincaid, Tone Cade Bambara, and other accomplished contemporary black novelists Walker uses heightened, lyrical relish to center on the dreams and failures of accessible, credible people. Her work underscores the quest for dignity in human life.(108)

Walker narrates Celie's violation in order to show how Pa attempts to deny Celie's subjectivity as well as how Celie creates her own spoken and written version of events which emphasizes her cognizance and functions as a counterpoint to her own earlier erasure of body and identity.

Barbare T. Christian, in her essay discusses the interdependence of individual and societal change in Walker's novels. Walker is a writer with political intent who, like other black women writers, wants her works to affect something in the world, she says;

In changing herself, Celie helps to change her entire community. Political change in *The Color Purple* occurs because of life affirmation. From my point of view then one of the most important political statements of color purple is its emphasis on the right to happiness for even the most oppressed of us all, for poor black women, and that our happiness can be imagined, pursued, achieved through the growing strength of the community of black women. (25)

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, in spite of its overwhelming success, has been criticized for possessing a rather superficial, fairy tale - styled ending. Trudeir Harris, in her essay reveals her unease with the way that Walker's text participates in racist mischaracterization of black intimate life. She says:

The book simply adds freshness to many of the ideas circulating in the popular culture and captured in racist literature that suggested that black people have no morality when it comes to sexuality, that the black family structure is weak it existent at all ... black communities. ..Black males and females form units without the benefits of marriage, or they dissolve marriages in order to formless structured, more promiscuous relationships. (on *The Color Purple* 157)

Peggy Sanday has shown that in rape free societies, "There is no symbol system by which male define their gender identity as the antithesis of the feminine" (93), and "Silencing the feminine is not necessary for becoming a proud and independent male" (94). In rape-free societies, there is "sexual equality and complementarities" (93) between the genders (qtd. in cutter 10).

A Critic Ram Badode in his study on *The Color Purple* notes:

Her black womanist consciousness is characterized by sexual, racial, cultural, national, economic and political considerations. Celie's initiation into black womanhood is achieved through her relationship with Shug Avery, an important character in this novel. She thus celebrates her own genuine and real black womanist self by liberation herself from the patriarchal dictatorship. (36)

In this context, Badode notes that black women also can be powerful if she gets strength from the patriarchal society as Celie change her life into powerful self-centered woman in *The Color Purple*.

A number of critics have argued that *The Color Purple* is not infact a realist's novel but rather a fairy tale or romance. "Celie becomes the Ugly duckling who will eventually be redeemed through suffering. This trait links her to all heroines of fairy tales from Linderella of snow white "(Harris 159). At the conclusion Celie find not only her sister but also both of her lost children. In This regard Celie has been found as courageous women who triumphs over impossible odds. The effeminate relation ship between Celie and Shug has been said to play a dept to lesbians. Harri's says: She pays homage to the lesbians by portraying a relationship between two women that reads like a school Girl fairy tale in its ultimate adherence to the contention of the happy resolution. (On *The Color Purple* 160)

Although, different critics analyzed *The Color Purple* in different perspective and they agree and disagree about many aspects of this novel. *The Color Purple* is a story based on Walker's life some how where she expressed the position of women in the patriarchal society and of course they are always under the domination of male body and are born just to satisfy male body in this regard we can read the text as silencing the feminine subjectivity in Alice Walker *The Color Purple*.

CHAPTER II

2.1 Women Writers and African American Literature.

From the beginning women have played a primary role in the growth of African American Literature. Infact, more works of fiction by black women were published between 1890 and 1910. According to Gerald, the function of Black authors should be to wage psychological war across the color line. Additionally, she feels that Black writers are involved in a Black- white war over the control of one's image: "For to manipulate an image is to control a people hood" (352-353). Gerald advocates "reverse symbolism as a tool for projecting our own image upon the universe" (354). Ironically, at times image excludes more than it embraces, she feels for the nationalism of the sixties, with its clenched fists and Afro hairstyles had a different impact on whites than Blacks. While such militancy and imagery were necessary for Blacks beginning a period of consciousness rising to whites they served as another example of the violent nature of Blacks. Nevertheless the positive imagery defined by the group is always the appropriate tool for understanding and respecting various ethnic groups.

Since the first novel written by a Black Woman, *Our Nig* by Harriet Wilson in 1859, there has been developing a canon of literature to be assessed eventually by Black critics. In the past, there was limited number of Black critics. Some of Black female writers have begun to surge toward this end when expressing their uniqueness as women, and there are more of them. In 1975 Alice Walker, in her quest for the literary bones of Zora Neal Hunston, seemed to open the way for potential critics and writers. Since that time, the market has been with essays and studies on Hurston, and she has been a popular subject for writers associated with the feminist movement. Sonai Sanchez, Aundre Lorde, June Jordon, Barbara Christian, Maya Angelou, Toni

Morrison, and a host of others have continued to write books that express Black Women's lives and their uniqueness. Barbar Christian (1980), in her book, *Black women Novelists: The development of a literary Tradition*, discusses Black female writers from the time of slavery to the current age of Morrison, finding that these women are more concerned than their male counterparts with the community and its inhabitants. Women are generally more likely to examine the feelings, Mores and trends of their respective communities. Toni Cade Bambara, who was interviewed by Claudia Tate (1983) in her book, *black women writers at work*, was asked if she saw differences in the way Black male and female writers handle themes and character situations. Bambara said that women writer focused more on domestic motifs and their representative details, such as cups, saucers and the like, but she also felt that there was a linguistic-sexual distinction: "There is not nearly as large a bulk of geocentric writings as there is phallic obsessive writings . . . we've only just begun I think to fashion a woman's vocabulary to deal with the 'silence' of our lives" (quoted in Tate 1983:20). Silence for the Black women does not necessarily mean that she is unheard, but that she rests more or less in the sub consciousness of others, as a man might have a lover and not remember her name, although he can savor the effects; she was still perhaps in a sense, 'on top.'

The literature by Black women before and during the Reconstruction period had to do with the perils of slavery, such as *Our Nig* by Harriet Wilson and Linda Brent's *Incidents in the life of a slave Girl*. A hiatus of literature by women writers occurred until the early 1900s. It was during the Harlem Renaissance that a Black female consciousness began to speak more succinctly. Hurston remained basically a southerner with a distinctive worldview that was quite contrary to the ideology of her time. Men have always dominated African - American Literature, as well as all

literature, perhaps because of the nature of their writings. Black women often write about their experience with Black men, white men write about their roles as leaders of society. It seems that society has always been more interested in the state of man. Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and James Weldon Johnson were the major poets of those years. Black male writers could not seem to take the black females seriously at that time. The influx of female writers relates to the assertion of Hortense Spillers that "women must seek to become their own historical subject in pursuit of its proper subject, its proper and specific expression in time "(105). As early as the 1800s Frances Harper saw the need for women to use their own resources to effect changes. Gwendolyn Brooks was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1950, which helped to create credibility for Black Females as authors. There were other prominent writers at the time; such as Lorraine Hansberry, Ann Petry, Margaret Walker, Carolyn Rodgers, Pauli Murray, Paule Marshall, and more.

The voice of the female writer is more concerned with the quest for intimacy and with painting a landscape of herself. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* is about a woman named Pilate who has no navel and to whom people of community attribute magical powers. But her role as mother is the most important area of Pilate's life, and her orthodox methods of handling that responsibility and others allow a display of deeply complicated human emotions. There is a woman named Ruth, who is unfulfilled and indulges in a fantasy each day, as she nurses an older son.

She felt him. His restraint, his courtesy, his indifference, all of which pushed her into fantasy. She had the distinct impression that his lips were pulling from her a thread of light . . . the one who sat at night in a straw filled room, thrilled with the secret power Rumpelstkin had given her. (Morrison,:13)

Alice Walker's *Meridian* represents the transitional fiction of social comment and intimacy. The story set in the days of the civil rights struggle; tells of *Meridian* self-abnegation as a prerequisite to maturity. She suffers as a Christ like figure, alone and caring profoundly for others suffering and being good are synonymous to *Meridian* and her mother. The power of language is never more clearly demonstrated than in the many speech of the Black preacher. Sora Webster Fabio describes the language arts within the race:

Black language is direct, creative, intelligent communication between black people based on a shared reality, awareness, understanding, which generates interaction, it ... places premium on imagination renderings, concretizations of abstractions, poetic usages. (pp. 33-37)

African American literature is the body of literature produced in the United States by writers of African descent. Among the themes and issues explored in African American Literature are the role of African American within the larger American society, African- American culture, racism, slavery and equality. Before the American Civil War, African American Literature primarily focused on the issue of slavery, as indicated by the subgenre of slave narratives. Today, African American Literature has become accepted as an integral part of American Literature, with books such as *Roots: the Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison achieving both best selling and award winning status. Lucy-Terrus is the author of the oldest piece of African American Literature known which was *Bars Fight*. Poet Phillis Wheatley (1753-84), published her book *Poems on Various Subjects* in 1773, three years before American independence. Her poetry was praised by many of the leading figures of the American Revolution, including George Washington, who personally thanked her for a poem she wrote in

his honor. Another early African American author was Jupiter Hammon (1711-1806). Hammon, considered the first published Black writer in America, published his poem '*An Evening Thought*' salvation by Christ with penitential cries as a broadside in early 1761. William Wells Brown (1814-84) and Victor Sejour (1817-74) produced the earliest works of fiction by African writers.

Beginning in the 1970's African American Literature reached the mainstream as books by Black Writers continually achieved best selling and award-winning status. A number of scholars and writers are generally credited with helping to promote and define African American Literature including fiction writers Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and poet James Emmanuel. Toni Morrison helped to promote Black literature and authors when she worked as an editor for Random House in the 1960's and 70s, where she edited books by such authors as Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones. Her first novel, *the Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. Among her most famous novels is *Beloved*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988. Another important novel is *Song of Solomon*, a tale about materialism and brotherhood. Morrison is the first African woman to win and poet Alice Walker wrote a famous essay that brought Zora Neale Hurston and her classic Novel, '*Their Eyes were watching God*' back to the attention of the literary world. In 1982, Walker won both the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for her novel *The Color Purple*.

Finally, African American Literature has gained added attention through the work of Oprah Winfrey, who repeatedly has leveraged her fame to promote literature through the medium of her Oprah's Book club. Henry Louis Gates has said: Until we perceive Afro-American Literature as an act of language, we will have missed its complexity and gleaned only a fraction of what it contribute to the larger area of humanistic endeavors. (71)

2.2 Women and Silence

In male dominated society, woman is not supposed to develop her own interest; she should rather enjoy what her husband enjoys. There has always been the relationship of power between man and woman in which women are sometimes idolized but most of the time oppressed and exploited. They have often been the target of male sexual violence. In spite of being hand doll of male, they are also being silenced by the male body of the society. The problem of women and silence has been spread everywhere like the dangerous disease which affects the society. In every social, economical, cultural and religious milieu of human life men dominate women. The partiality exists and sustains itself in the form of male domination against female subordination through ideological practices. The patriarchy fosters the gender based inequalities that decides man as superior and woman as inferior, man as powerful and the woman as powerless. One of the leading American feminist Kate Millet sees; "patriarchy as grotesque, increasingly militaristic, increasingly greedy, colonialist, imperialistic, brutal, with a terrible disregard of civil liberties, of democratic forms"(511).

Before entering into a wide ranging discussion of womanism, it is necessary to talk what woman means as a root word of womanism. The word 'women' since the initiation of human civilization retains its validity and conception as a biological contrast to male 'sex'. Certainly the natural biological contrast imbues each individual sex with distinctive features, bodily qualities and assertions which are supposed to be vital to sustain the true nature of human evolution and civilization. Despite this biological or physical construction, the sex is created by nature. Some social and cultural differences lie in terms of their behavior, education and the attitude of society towards them. However, these variations are apparently based on society. This is how

some certain bias definitions; along with physical assertions are attached to each sex and they are bound to be identified with asymmetrical, hierarchical, socio-cultural beliefs called 'gender'. In our ancient and medieval literature we find that woman's status was lower than that of the slaves. In relation to the poor status of women Roman Sheldon says; "In pre- mendellian days, men regard their sperms as the active seeds which lacks identity till it receives the male's impress" (134).

The first dominant women's voice for the right of women had come from Mary wollstone-craft, British political thinker through her book *a vindication of the rights of women* in which she proves how essential it is for women to acquire rights. Wollstone-craft argues that women are characterized as vulnerable to love and passion. Wollstonecraft points out mal practice of men i.e. to confine women to trifling employment. Jane Freeman notes Wollstonecraft as saying "I shall think that woman a working machine" (23).

However, life is gift of nature and it should be equal for all human being but women are still dominated and have been used as a working machine and to fulfill male sexual violent desire. Human culture and religion also agree with this truth. But the man of society only conceives of anatomy as destiny. Ever the great thinker and philosopher from Plato, Aristotle and St. Augustine to Aquinas, Hobbes and Roseau have also depicted women as inferior and immature in their intellectual potential.

The ancient mythologies of the west have attributed some peculiar characteristics to women in the form of goddesses. Apollo represents wisdom, knowledge and supremacy while Venus and Eros represents beauty, sensuality and jealousy respectively. There is no god representing man's handsomeness nor is there a goddess representing qualities of Apollo. Goddesses have inferior position. Bible is one of the most discriminating holy books as it portrays women as credulous,

deceiving as to have been created from a rib of man. This description has pushed women into a degenerate and subordinates position. Mary Daly says the power of naming was confessed by god on Adam but not on Eve, and in naming the animals Adam took domination over them. In Daly's term, women will remain powerless until they exercise the power of naming. In this context Bible also proves that women are inferior being and till now the system of dominating has been applied in the society by the male body.

The problem of women and silence has been spread in almost all the society like the dirty pollution. The same problem of women and silence has been presented by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple*. Walker's heroine 'Celie' in this novel is black not white poor not rich, ignorant not educated and also raped, confined and silenced. To make the event real like, Walker has presented the painful situation of Celie in the very beginning of the novel where we can read Celie's pain and threat of brutal step-father after fulfilling his tyrannical sexual desire and says: "you better not ever tell nobody but god. It'd kill your mammy" (1). In this context, Celie is subjected to be raped by her step father, to add injury to insult, her father asks her not to tell about this to any body. Infact, Celie is not only sexually abused but also silenced by Alfonso, her step father.

Celie, not only with her step-father but also with her husband Albert used to be sexually abused and silenced. Celie suffers at the hands of Albert after marriage. To be wife, for her, means to be submissive, to be subordinate and to be a punch bag for the man. Celie expressed her abused life as: "it is I can do not to cry I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man"(23).

The fact that Celie, in moment of extreme physical pain transforms herself into a tree is a telling example of a black women's proximity to the passive suffering

and agony of nature. Albert's inhuman acts of hiding Nettie's letters from Celie also suggest the exploitation of Celie. Celie and Albert have been found as husband and wife but Celie never achieve the truth love and sexual pleasure from her husband. Even though, Celie has been sexually abused in the hands of Alfonso but has nobody to share pain except god in silence way. The graphic description of Celie's rape by her step father forces us to confront the ugliness of child abuse, He never had a kind word to say to me. Just say you gonna do what you many wouldn't . . . when that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying you better to shut up and get used to it.(11)

Celie's narration of her moment of marital sexual involvement with Albert represents a similar dehumanization, one in which the conjugal act assumed the form of rape.

My mamma dies... my sister Nettie rub away. Mr. ...Come it me to take care of his rotten children. He never ask me anything about myself. He calms on top of me and fuck and fuck ever when my head bandaged. Nobody ever love me, I say. (109)

Rape, within or outside marriage is totally demystified and seen as an instrument of oppression. In *The Color Purple* the rapist's law of silence presides over the text and instigates the whole activity of writing and Celie's rape could be understood as her violent initiation to the written word.

Similarly, in Maya Agelou's autobiography, *I know why the caged bird sings* (1969) Mr. Freeman, who rapes the eight-years-old Maya, swears her to silence by threatening to kill her much loved brother. When the crime is nonetheless exposed, Freeman is arrested but subsequently acquitted by the jury- much to his misfortune, because he is immediately murdered by the child's uncles. The little girl then conceives the notion that her testimony caused his death and thus falls dumb for years out of terror that her words can kill.

The connection between rape and women's silence may be traced back to the story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which the barbarous king Tereus rapes his sister-in-law Philomela and cuts out her tongue so that she cannot accuse him of the crime. In the myth of Philomela, rape is concomitant to silencing, "to be raped is to be stripped of voice" (qtd. in Cutter 10).

In this way, women and silence is the problem created by human nature itself and male body frequently makes women the target of sexual violence as it has been already a kind of license to men to exploit against women. Even women are also the same human which are created by God as to men but infact nature has done injustice to women regarding them as working object who are born just to fulfill men sexual desire. Women are not only sexually abused but are also silenced by the male body of the society in order to hide their crime.

2.3 Double Repression

In *The Color Purple*, Walker focuses on the theme of double repression of black women in American experience. Walker presents black women suffer from discrimination by the white community and second repression from black males, who impose the double standard of white society on women. Walker focuses on the struggles of African American women who witness against societies that are racist, sexist and violent. Walker is a respected figure in the liberal political community for her support of unconventional and unpopular views as a matter of principle. Since the publication of *The Color Purple*, both novel and author continue to elicit a wide range of praise and censure from an increasing number of black and white, male and female reviewers, literary critics and general readers. Walker juxtaposed images of rape, incest and other examples of physical and emotional abuse with love, loyalty, pleasurable and empowering sex, parental joy, and the communal bonding of men and women. Her writings tend to emphasize black women's prominence in culture and history. She also continues to write about controversial issues, regardless of criticism. She has said that she writes about controversial issues out of love not hate, a reflection of her belief, as she expresses it in the preface to *The Same River Twice* as, "Art is the mirror, perhaps the only one, in which we can see our true collective face we must honor its sacred function. We must let art help us" (2). Alice Walker writes: "Let's hope people can hear Celie's voice. There are so many people like Celie who make it who come out of nothing. People who triumph" (Anillo and Abramson 67).

This novel is about the experience of young African American women. It explores the theme of 'double repression' of black women in American culture- repression by white society in general and then again by black men. Various writers argue that historically black women have been stereotyped as sex objects and

breeders. Black women's personal growth has been impeded by the continuing myths of the black matriarchy, a myth occurring black women of emasculating both black and white men. Black women have also been stereotyped by both black and white as the 'bad' women. The white women are also oppressing black women. They always viewed black women as sexual temptress of white men and prostitute. These stereotypes and myths have helped control black women's characters in the society. From the time of slavery black women have always been exploited as an objects of white male sexual assault. White men take pride in seducing black women. They often become the victim of rape because sexism of white male was socially legitimized. Bell Hooks says: "Rape was a method used to terrorize, dehumanized and [...] to trip the female slave of dignity" (*Ain't I a women* 36). Black men can no longer protect them because they themselves are in dehumanized situation.

The female protagonist, Celie is totally alienated, dominated and unaware about her female identity. She remains mute although social norms of patriarchal society oppress and suppress her humanly desires. Celie is forced into silence by her closet patriarchal authority. She is told that the act of speaking, revealing her inner self will literally kill her mother. Patriarchal authority dictates that she must repress all anger, no matter what the cost to her own personhood. As a result she can't feel anger with her brutal husband, Mr._ because she has been taught to accept any behavior from her husband as her luck on earth. But Mr._ undergoes a transformation by the conclusion of the novel, from hand of household wielding near absolute power to a more subdued and philosophical friend and companion to Shug and Celie. In other words, Mr._ is displaced as patriarch divested of his former dominance. Ironically enough, this transformation takes place in part because of Celie, who puts a curse on Mr. _ as she leaves his house with Shug. Celie feels used, and she feels that

she is a victim, and she doesn't understand why all this has happened to her. She doesn't complain; she simply wonders why. Infact, so many bad things have happened to Celie that she feels worthless. She has very little self- worth and self- esteem. She doesn't even sign her letters to God. Normally, most people take pride in signing their names; one's name is one of the first things he/she learn to write. This is not true of Celie. Her self worth is so miniscule that she does not even sign her own name. Many critics of the novel have been annoyed and repelled by the content of the book's opening letter to God. The idea of beginning a novel with the fact of rape is repugnant to the point. Walker writes: "This is the country in which a woman is raped every three minutes", she says, "Where one out of three women will be raped during their life time and a quarter of those are children under twelve"(13). The same case of abuse has been presented in this novel through the character Celie who before marriage has been sexually abused by her step-father and after marriage by her tyranny husband to whom she can only refer Mr. _____. Celie is more a slave to her husband than she is wife. Infact, this book isn't about rape. It is about what happens after rape.

The central focuses of the book is on Celie's mental and emotional rebirth. Hate and Violence have almost killed Celie. She meets Shug, a woman who is able to kindle feelings of sexual love and self love within Celie for the first time. In the same way, Celie becomes friends with her daughter-in-law, who teaches how to struggle against male violence. Under white domination a black man finds that his male ego is wounded. So he starts his endless cruelty on his women finding no other role model than that of the white man. White women and black men both act as oppressor or are oppressed. White women may be victimized by sexism but racism enables them to act as exploiter and oppressors of black people. Black men may be victimized by racism,

but sexism allows them to act as an exploiters and oppressor of women. But black women have no such others upon which they could act as oppressor. It was the long term silence of the oppressed and the continual devaluation of black womanhood that paved a way towards Black feminism. In addition to the sexual violence and cultural stereotyping black women faced, various authors suggested that women of color have been excluded from the women's movement. The modern women's movement has also been accused of concentrating only on the perspective and concerns on white middle- class women. Women of color concerns and struggles have been marginalized, slighted and even ignored within the agenda of the white women's movement. Therefore, black and women of color expressed their reluctance in aligning themselves with it. Hooks, in the book *Ain't I A Woman*, concludes that "the women's had drawn black and white women closer together, instead it exposed the fact that white women were not willing to relinquish their support of white supremacy to support the issues of all women" (136). White women were accused of refusing to let go of their white privilege in order to align themselves with the struggle of all women. They focused on oppression in term of gender while ignoring issues of race, class and sexuality. In defining all women's experiences in terms of their own, this movement excludes issues concerning the interlocking oppressors of race, class and gender. In resistance to this marginalization, theories of black feminism and womanism were forged. These two theoretical concepts were developed to call attention the multiple oppression experienced by women of color, reflecting and defining their everyday experiences in their own terms.

Walker admired the struggle of black women throughout history to maintain an essential spirituality and creativity in their lives, and their achievements serve as an inspiration to others. Previously, Celie is totally ignorant, passive, submissive girl

who accepts the situation as male dominated society had laden upon her. The male-bullying and domination begin for Celie at the age of 14 when the man she thinks Pa rapes her on at least two occasions, rendering her unable to ever again bear children. However, the trauma of this event remains entrenched in Celie's mind causing her to kill cry in her adulthood. She keeps quiet and lies to her mother when she asks where the baby is, Celie replies: "God took it to herself she reflects: the god took it; He took it while I was sleeping, kill it out there in the woods, kill this one to, if he can" (3). Celie's ignorance can be seen in these lines without having own decision and confidence while speaking as she says remembering Alfonso's command that the baby is God's because she doesn't know who else to say. She confesses that God rather than Alfonso killed her baby. Ignorantly often she speaks of her experience in forms of nature, an element which like Celie also has been exploited by man. As she describes her pain and humiliation during the routine beatings administered by her husband, she makes an analogy between her experience and nature; "I make myself wood, I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man" (11). Even though Celie gives birth to her child but she never feels and gains love for her children instead she only gets threatens from Alfonso that she should keep quiet for the crime he has done over her. Alfonso the cruel heart person again repressed Celie in the case of expressing her love to her children and she regard herself as she can be nothing valuable than tree which can't express their feelings.

Celie has been repressed by Albert at first and he brutally abused her but instead of Celie being powerful she doesn't punish Albert. Infact, Celie can punish Albert but her kind heart never does so. In a sense, Celie has repressed her own luck by ownself to which we can refer double repression. Other women character also has been repressed by the male character. Harpo has also tried to repress his wife sofia but

she was not the weak hearted women, she has got the courage to struggle against male violence. Nettie, living in African society has expressed the repression of women and children in the African society. Nettie really finds the painful life of women in African society where they are regarded as a mere working object and are expected to fulfill a subservient role in their village, never looking directly into a man's face. They are defined only in terms of the value they have for their husbands. One of the Olinka women, "A girl is nothing to herself, only to her husband can she become something and is told the mother of his children"(162). Children are mistreated in Africa. Nettie analyses economic ill treatment as," Children of eight and over are already workers in the fields. In order to pay rent for the barracks, taxes on the land and to buy water, food and wood, everyone must work" (205). In this way we can see the repression of women and children in African culture through the letter of Nettie which we can regard as double repression over their life and are living life like working machines. This problem of double repression over women and children is not only in one society but it has been spread in almost every part of the world which Alice Walker has presented in *The Color Purple*.

CHAPTER III

3.1 Violence

Alice Walker uses the form of letter in the life of Celie in creating a woman centered focus of the novel. Celie, a young girl is constantly subjected to abuse at first by her step father Alfonso and the violence starts to occur in her life. When Celie is 14, her step- father begins to rape her causing the birth of two children which he gives away to a missionary couple. Celie's letters to God are her only outlet and means of self- expression. To Celie, God is a distant figure who cares about her concerns. Celie has been frequently attacked by Alfonso to take the sexual advantage of her loneliness. Though Celie has been brutally abused within her own house but there was nobody to care about her pain and suffering, so she finds solace in writing letter to God and her sister Nettie. At her cry during the first rape, he snaps her and says: "You better shut up and get used to it" (11). He ensures Celie's submission by depriving her of schooling: "You too dumb to keep going to school, pa say" (19). Prevented both from speaking and from being believed, Celie accepts domestic violence without a whimper throughout the early part of her life. Told repeatedly that she is ugly and stupid, she hardly knows better.

The very first letter Celie writes to God indicates the miserable way in which she feels a victim to sexual advances and atrocities of her step- father:

Last spring after little luscious came I heard them fussing. She say it too soon, Fonso, I an't well. Finally, he leaves her alone. A week go by, pulling on her arm again. She say Naw, I an't gonna can't you see. I am already half dead, an' all of these childreenn .(53)

The father described in Celie's letter appears to be a virile and strong man who is like a walking phallus. When he finds out that Celie's mother does not respond to his

sexual advances, he tries to find out a substitute. Consequently, he makes brutal sexual attack on Celie. As a result of their sexual relationship, Celie gives birth to two babies and Alfonso violently takes them away from Celie in order to hide his brutal crime. Infact, Alfonso not only abused Celie but also done great violence against the relation of mother and her babies. As being mother, Celie is not allowed to love her babies to whom we can refer the violence up on the motherhood. As Winnicott described the mother and her child relation:

The "Mother" is the infants "Primary caretaker", and the "infants" refers to that phase of life prior to word presentation and the use of word symbols. The corollary is that [infants] refers to a phase in which the infant depends on maternal care that is based on maternal empathy rather than on [the] understanding of what is or could be verbally expressed .(40)

Infact, motherhood means a kind of pleasure in the life of women which Celie lacks in her life because of violence. Herman says threats and forced secrecy are usual parts of incest (88). The style of the letters mirrors Celie's traumatized cognitive process and depressed emotional state. We learn that Celie's depression is partly caused by her repressed rage when later in the novel Sofia asks her what she does when she gets mad:

I think I can't even remember the last time I felt mad, I say. I used to get mad at my mammy because she put a lot of work on me. Then I see how sick she is couldn't stay mad at her. Couldn't be mad at my daddy cause he my daddy. Bible say, Honor father and mother no matter what. The after while every time I got mad, or start to feel mad, I got

sick. Felt like throwing up. Terrible feeling. Then I start to feel nothing at all. (47)

Indeed, Celie's life is full of violence that even her own father and mother never believe her and she lacks faith upon her luck though she honors them who gave her birth in this world which she learns from bible. When Celie's mother dies, Alfonso married another black woman and passes Celie onto Albert that cold and inhuman heart that again starts violence against the luck of Celie. Mr. Albert married Celie just to look after his rotten children and to fulfill his sexual tyrannical desire. Mr. Albert never had a kind word to Celie instead he only tried his best to create violence upon Celie. As to describe her pain and suffering, Celie says: "If all I can do not cry I make myself, Celie you a tree: That's how I come to now trees fear man" (23). The fact that Celie, in moments of extreme physical pain, transforms herself in to a tree as an example of a black woman's proximity to the passive suffering and agony of nature. Though Mr. Albert has abused Celie in different ways and tortured her at his best. Celie couldn't respond to his crime and she herself regarded her body with tree which can't express its pain even though it is chopped.

Infact, violence over Celie starts when Celie's mother goes "to visit her sister doctor over Macon" (11), Alfonso rapes her and begins to use her as a sexual replacement for his exhausted wife—"a not uncommon situation in actual cases of father- daughter incest" (Herman 47-49). Alice Walker writes: "Let's hope people can hear Celie's voice. There are so many people like Celie who make it who come out of nothing. People who triumph" (Anillo and Abramson 67).

The Color Purple is a story based on male violence created upon the main protagonist Celie, who before marriage has already faced the violence created by her step- father and after marriage by Mr. Albert. Mr. Albert neither likes to make link of

Celie with outer world that he hides all the letter which has sent by Nettie, sister of Celie. Actually, in this case, he had done violence by blocking the way of message between two sisters. In the letter of Nettie, we can learn the wider world of African society where female and children have very poor and painful situation and the society of course has done great violence over them. Nettie analyses economic ill treatment of African society as "children of eight and over are already workers in the field. In order to pay rent for the barracks, taxes on the land and to buy water, food and wood, everyone must work" (205). It means that violence upon women and children is not only in one place but it is pervasive all over the world. Similarly, women are not allowed to gain education and thought are nothing and it is against the rule of nature to give them freedom and education. One of the Olinka girl explain the condition of women as "A girl is nothing to herself, only for her husband can she become something, and is told, The mother of his children" (162). It means that in African society the husband has full authority upon their wife and it is similar to the desire of American whites to keep the blacks ignorant. In the relationship between Celie and Nettie, letters reveal forms of self- revelation that occurs in the ordinary course of their everyday lives, yet they relate two very different bodies of experiences which eventually intersect to produce discourse on the plight of black women. Celie's letters are generally focused on self- narration and representation while Nettie's are largely ethnographic reading of African culture. The graphic description of Celie's rape by her step- father forces us to confront the ugliness of child- abuse,

He never had a kind word to say to me. Just say you gonna do what your mammy wouldn't... when that hurt, I cry. He start choke me, saying you better shut up and get used to it. (11)

In this context, Celie's step father has done great violence against Celie's desire and has committed a great crime which is against the rule of nature. Celie's narration of her moments of marital sexual involvement with Albert represents a similar dehumanization, one in which the conjugal act assumes the form of rape.

My mamma dies... my sister Nettie run away. Mr. ___ come git me to take care of his rotten children. He never ask me anything about myself. He calm on top of me and fuck, even when my head bandaged. Nobody ever love me, I say. (109)

Rape, within or outside marriage, is totally demystified and seen as an instrument of oppression. The crudeness of the language and graphic nature of the description reinforce the dehumanizing aspect of the act. Celie has been bound within the circle of violence committed by her husband without knowing her internal desire but just engage in fulfilling his tyrannical desire instead she is sick which seems as if it is the violence created by her luck over her physical body.

Infact, Celie never gains the pleasure of married life which one married women should gain instead she starts to hate her body which has been used violently by Mr. Albert according to his needs. Celie understands the meaning of life and starts to love her physical body after she meets Shug Avery who teaches her how to enjoy life. With the help of Shug Avery, Celie's life starts to shine with the light of new life. As being the close friend of Shug Avery, Celie tells each and every happening with Shug and when Shug asks Celie what she feels when Albert loves her Celie replies: "I don't like it at all. What is it like? He git up on you in. Most time I pretend I an't there. He never knows the difference. Never ask me how I feel nothing. Just do his business, get off, go to sleep (81). In his case too, we find that Mr. Albert has violently used Celie's body with out knowing how she feels but he just fulfills his sexual desire with

her body as if it is the machine which works silently. Of course, Mr. Albert has committed a great violence on the life of Celie which is similar to beast's activities.

Mr. Albert not only creates violence upon Celie's life but also thinks that all the men should have full authority towards their wives and they can use women according to their desire as he does with Celie. While once Harpo asked to Mr. Albert about the way to keep his wife Sofia under his control as Mr. Albert does with Celie, in this case to add violence he advice Harpo as, "well how you to make her mind? Wives are like children. You have to let'em known who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating" (42). Mr. Albert believes that beating a wife is a manly and husbandly duty. Though Harpo wants to create violence in the life of Sofia, she is not an ordinary women but a woman with strong heart who can struggle against the male violence. In the other hand, Celie thinks that women are born just to face difficulty and trouble created by male body of the society so she also wants similar violence in the life of other women. All the women characters choose their works as they truely want to do, regardless of the sex- role stereotypes. Women may free themselves from the dominance of males and oral expression is no longer subjugated by written expression.

Violence against women is from the very beginning of this world as it seems that god himself has created the system of dominating women by the male body of the society. It has been believed that wife is the property of husband and has the full authority over her as if they are the private property born for the needs of men. Men treat women as child producing machines. Servility should flow in their veins and sincerity be a part of social behavior. The revolutionary feelings against man and his suppression get aborted due to virus of patriarchy. In many societies, a husband is permissible to correct his wife by means of physical violence. Men enjoy the

patriarchal law as a license to drive their women whichever direction they like.

Michael P. Johnson opines that "violence within intimate relationship is systematic, escalating and primarily instigated by men to control women" (290). This assumption incorporates with Harpo's appalling exhibition of brutality. It is always Harpo to start the scuffle with Sofia. First, "He tries to slap her" (36) and then "punch her in the stomach" (36). The wings of male domination are spread rampantly and women are always deprived of sharpening their skills. Tashi's father in Olinka doesn't want his daughter to be educated. He asserts: "There is no place here for a woman..." to do social service holding high position. He says "yes" in response to Nettie's question "Teach only the boys?" (137). Women are always lacking the equal opportunities as men to which we can assert that it is the violence of women by the male dominated society itself. The men try to maintain consistent level of power relative to women. They fear that education enlightens women about their crippling condition in social reality. It is Olinka tribe which adopts violent traditions involving severe cutting, bleeding and possible death. Tashi's father ironically boasts "Our women are respected here" (136). He adds:

We would never let them tramp the world as American women do.

There is always someone to look after the Olinka woman. A father, An uncle, A brother or nephew. Do not be offended, sister Nettie, but our people pity women such as you who are cast out, we know not from where, into a world unknown to you, where you must struggle all alone for yourself. (136/37)

In this way, Olinka women are bound with in the social rules and regulation created by male dominated society where women are often rejected to look directly upon the other and if they do so, it is against the rule of human nature. In African

society, women are regarded as a working machine to fulfill desire of their husband. The male dominated society thinks that giving them education means to go against the rule of society. Not only women; the children are also ruled by the violence of the criminal society. Instead going to school and gaining knowledge, they are forced to work in the field to fulfill their economic ill treatment. Thus, the novel is based on the violence created upon the main protagonist Celie and the women and children of African community because of which we come to know the truth running over the faith of women and poor people of this world.

3.2 Transformation

The Color Purple is about the transforming power of love. Celie, Shug, and many of the other characters grow and change after being loved and learning to love in return. There is transformation in Celie's life from a passive female to an independent woman. In the very beginning part of the novel, we find that Celie's life is full of injury and has no one to listen her painful situation. She starts writing letters to God that letter writing for Celie begins when her rapist stepfather tells her, "You'd better not ever tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (11). Soon there after, Celie's mother dies, Alfonso marries Celie off to Albert, a widower with four children, whom Celie can only call Mr. ___. As stepmother to Albert's four unruly and disrespected children, as housekeeper, a house maker, and sexual object, Celie enters into a life of drudgery and abuse.

Walker's *The Color Purple* focuses on particularly the domination over powerless women by equally powerless man. In the novel, Walker seems to be preoccupied with the task of overcoming black male sexist exploitation of black women. The concept of the regenerative power of love and the murderous effects of meanness is manifested in Alice Walker's works. Celie's story is a transcription of her

psychological and spiritual growth. Her transfiguration into a joyful soul proves that redemption is possible for all people to human kindness and love.

The novel is the story of Celie's changing fortunes, and its central pattern displays a kinship to Victorian novels as Celie gradually overcomes the oppressive conditions of her despised situation. She has longed for violence against women and racist violence against women. Celie, the protagonist and narrator, is a poor, uneducated, 14 years old black girl living in rural Georgia having no identity at all as a female. She is suppressed, dominated, and oppressed by male members, at first by her step father Alfonso and later on by her husband Albert to whom she calls Mr. __. Out of such severe physical as well as psychological oppression by male counterparts, Celie starts to write letters to God because she has nobody to listen anything. Writing becomes a means for her to define herself against patriarchy thus allows her to describe those traces and wounds upon her body, inflicted and imprinted by others. As Celie writes to God in the opening part of the novel "Dear God, I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl, May be you can see me a sign letting me know what is happening to me" (1). Writing becomes Celie's path to freedom, or 'an underground railroad to freedom', to draw an analogy from the slave narrative Cixous observes:

Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me- the other that I am and am not, that don't know how to be but I feel passing, that makes me live - that tears me apart, disturb me,... a feminine one, a masculine one,...Several, some unknown, which is needed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life sours. (86)

According to Cixous, writing enables a woman to reclaim her own body. Celie writes against the imposed silence and in order to understand violation that has

threatened her identity. In short, Celie's language exits the book without herself or identity. It is only through her own writing, Celie escapes from the old hierarchical structure and discovers a new world in which she becomes liberated being free to live as human being gaining truly a matter of choice for human sexuality. Celie may be viewed as the archetype of all oppressed women who are dominated, subjugated in male oriented society. In the outset of the novel, Celie is a poor, uneducated, black, powerless and very confused black girl who is treated as a slave, an object or animal to be used by male. For instance, Celie is repeatedly raped by her stepfather Alfonso, her children are stolen and killed and she is sold into a loveless marriage to a physically brute man. Only one person who truly loves her is her sister Nettie. Celie's consistent effort and hard struggle make her successful to achieve humanity. Writings become a means of relief through which she expresses her feelings and finally she comes to realize that as human being, she also has a separate identity different from male. As a result she transforms herself from slave like women to independent girl. She miraculously escapes to a larger freedom. Celie learns to reshape the forces of oppression and to define herself through the letters. Writing her letters becomes for Celie a means of structuring her identity, her sense of self. Celie's letter and her growing ability to express her thoughts and feelings show her spiritual development. The novel's narrative structure has everything to do with the novel's main thematic motif of gaining an identity of rebirth and survival.

From early adolescence into adulthood, Celie associates the biblical God with the men who have been oppressive and cruelly insensitive to her. Later on, she realizes her ignorance and instead of writing letters addressing to God, she addresses to Nettie. Celie is totally under the veil of ignorance. She is abused and treated as an object by male specially by her stepfather Alfonso who beats her time and again

accusing her of winking at boy in church and repeatedly rapes her and gets her married to a loveless brutal man as an object or slave to look after his children and household work. Again after marriage, her husband Mr. ___ behave her in the same way and male brutality to her rises even more as she is beaten by Mr. ___ repeatedly, he says, "Git the belt, while Harpo, her stepson asks Mr. ___ why he beats Celie, he replies: "she is my wife, plus she is stubborn" (22). Under such brutal oppression, Celie makes no opposition at all to ignore and to annihilate her body. Alphonso's relinquishment of Celie to Mr. ___ differs very little from the way one relinquishes cattle. As Harris notes:

Pa essentially barter her off (1) since Alphonso tells Mr. ___ I can't let you have Nettie. But I let you have Celie...she ugly...But she an't no stranger to hand work and she clean And God alone fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make her own linen...she ain't smart either ...but she can work like a man. (98)

Furthermore, Celie is sexually harassed as Mr. ___ repeatedly performs what might be called sanctioned rape. This sex is both in the absence of love and against Celie's will rendering it a vile act. Mr. ___ seems to stand as an archetype of brutal male who treats Celie as his slave and hides her sister's letters for several years. He stands as tyrannical male figure, as Celie's earlier experience demonstrated: "That patriarchal society puts value-on woman only to the degree that they serve the purpose of commodities of exchange between men" (73).

Infact, Celie's life is full of misery in the hand of Albert who abuses her like an animal that even in the case of love between husband and wife Celie feels as if she has been raped. Mr. ___ never asks the desire of Celie. Celie suffers at the hands of Albert and at her extreme physical pain she transform herself into tree and objects

without any feelings, "If all I do not to try I make myself wood. I say myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man." (23). Celie has nobody to share her feelings and in this miserable condition she says,

My Mamma dies... My sister Nettie runs away. Mr. _ come git me to take care of his rotten children. He never asks me anything about myself. He clam on top of me and fuck and fuck, even when my head bandages. Nobody even loves me, I say. (109)

Of course, her life was dark before she meets Shug Avery but while Shug teaches her the real meaning and pleasure of life, Celie's life transforms into new shining one. Shug plays a vital role to make her know herself. As Shug describes: "(It) don't look like nothing... it an't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at part from any thing else, including yourself. I believe is every thing" (202). In course of it, almost all female character helps Celie to recognize herself. Even Mr. ___'s sister Kate feels sorry for Celie and tells her to fight back against Mr. ___. As her sense of self develops, Celie begins to understand the weakness and shortcomings in the men who oppress her. Celie also displays assertiveness when Harpo again asks for her advice about Sofia. This time, Celie finds words to express her true feelings, and she tells Harpo that abusing Sofia is not the answer. One reason for Celie's increased self-awareness is the sexual awakening that she experiences through Shug's education. Shug describes Celie a virgin and renames her Miss Celie, a new identity in both a figurative and a literal sense. It is also indicative of Celie's self-realization. By redefining virginity in her own term, Shug encourages Celie to take similar control over own situation by interpreting it in a new way.

Most explicitly Shug awakens Celie's desire for identity, when she sings a song that she has written for Celie. And Celie is grateful to note that it was the "first

time somebody make something and name it after me" (75). Shug also provides her with a distinctive statement about the male society "Man corrupt everything...He try to make you think he everywhere" (178). Thus, Shug has smashed the image of the little woman. Celie leaves this society. She leaves her husband just as Sophia earlier had left Harpo. She also becomes a successful designer of fancy pants, initially for women, but ultimately for both sexes. In the process of Celie's transformation, it becomes possible only through act of writing; Celie develops a sense of her self being which at first is self- effacing, but eventually becomes strong and independent. Ultimately, Celie becomes an independent business woman and Albert is her assistant. Transformed Celie is finally able to forgive Albert and take him as a helper. It reflects Walker's insistence on the reduming quality of the human heart. In the same way, Celie has also learnt to speak up for herself and Celie's growing realization increases as she transforms her traditional views upon God, whom she knows to be distinctly male, as she remarks: "The God I been praying and writing is to a man. And act just like all the other means I know. Trifling, forgetful, and lowdown" (199). This iron fisted God keeps Celie in constant fear of being punished, bringing her into subordination because Celie has been discarded by this "old white man" (201). She is left at the bottom of the traditional world's pecking order, as she is black, poor and unattractive.

Thus, Celie succeeds in constituting her essential black womanist self by forming a community of women which facilitates one another's growth . Shug helps her to save herself from the linguistic and sexual abuses she suffers at the hands of her step-father and husband by providing her with the knowledge of body, sisterhood, and artistic creations to struggle against all the forms of patriarchal and sexual oppression. Nettie helps her in breaking the linguistic silence through writing letters and thereby

giving her the knowledge of the world and reality that she lives in. Mary Angles helps her by giving the gift of creativity through designing and marketing pants which could be used by men and women with equal grace and comfort. Sofia, a black woman warrior, provides Celie with a model of resistance against sexual and racial oppression. Writing about Sofia, Shug and Nettie allow Celie to relive, to rehearse their speech or action, thereby composing 'a new self' to enjoy freedom at all levels of her existence. The intimate figure of speech threading together her three creative modes- writing, sewing and loving acquires freshness and distinctiveness by being so much a part of her. Transformed Celie affirms her existence against her husband's alleged, 'nothing' when she reports, "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly ... but I'm here" (187). Celie celebrates her economic independence, achieved through nurturing sisterhood and communal arts, as a viable mode of survival in the institutionalized forms of oppression in America by creating the black womanist consciousness. As such Celie's transformation from a young passive girl who is the object of violence and cruelty from her stepfather and her husband into independent women with self-esteem is at the heart of the novel, *The Color Purple*

3.3. Womanism

'Womanism' is term that author Alice Walker defines as a way for African American women to be feminists in ways relevant to Black People. A woman who loves other women sexually or non sexually, appreciates and prefers womens' culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength, sometimes loves individual men sexually or non sexually, committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female is the best way to define womanism as a whole. Walker presents the concept of womanism to distinguish the struggles African American women have faced from those at the main stream that is, white women's right movement, which has sometimes been oblivious, insensitive or even hostile to African Women's history and concerns. Her main argument

is that African American women have historically been less concerned with entering the workplace, which since they have always been forced to work, because of enslavement or necessity.

Specifically, African American women, at while strong and independent, are not likely to be gender separatists. African American women desire economic independence and mutually beneficial relationships with men. According to Walker, A womanist would understand, for example, that one of her goals is 'to assure understanding among black women, and that understanding among women is not a threat to anyone who intends to treat women fairly'. Walker envisions womanism as she does her other ideal political positions based in grassroots activism and therefore focuses on individual and contingent needs rather than on concerns and strategies strictly circumscribed by ideology. The goal is to eschew hierarchies constructed by men for men, in favor of inclusive pluralities and a pantheism that stands in sharp contradiction to traditional religions. It requires women making full use of their voices and their creative capacities, however they might be manifested. In African American fiction, especially Walker's own such possibilities may be offered either by portraying them in imagined worlds or positing them through the words and actions of pivotal characters.

Analysis of womanism and its role in African American Literature may be found throughout African American Literary criticism since the late 1970s, but a few books and essays have distinguished themselves in their complexity and sensitivity to the subject. Wakers's womanism will gain more recognition as the world isolates third world women who need solidarity in fighting western globalization and colonization. Although the womanist movement started as Praxis for the late 20th century black women's movement, it can be extended to all women who experience oppression regardless of color. It focuses on womanist approaches to religion and society, gives power to women and also offers a methodology for reconciliations between man and woman and between nations. In this

sense womanism means humanism as well as it means 'womanism is revolutionary'.

Womanism is a concept used in Africa to explain women's rights, more specially those of black women. Women have their own rights the rights of black and white women are not the same because most black women do not want to be like man and also are not oppositional to men, as some white women are. Therefore, attention is directed at characteristics of womanism by which an African woman can be identified. . Marchand say that "in many changes and policy shifts African women have not been given adequate attention as major producers of labour and national wealth".(139)

Ignorance is sometimes rendered by the fact that even when female characters can force their voices into male discourse they will not be heard because of their low status. They therefore become voiceless to avoid disappointment.

It is believed that the girl as a minor can be given to any man who has enough cattle for Lobalo. The only difference between women's role as a caretakers in the household also carries over into the labour market where they are considered as helpmates, working as children's teachers and service workers. As a result, they are rewarded less than men because of their presumed commitment to home and heart. The woman does not mind doing housework alone, but the man must realize that it is the responsibility of both parties. A number of common colloquial constructions serve as sexist insults focusing specially on the apparently close bond which exists between a woman and her kitchen. These sexist insult are specifically designed to ensure that women will not stray form their traditional stereotype which demands that they will be house makers, comfortable home bodies, cleaners who breed, obey, serve and satisfy their masters. This means clearly that a woman belongs in the kitchen, preferably barefooted and pregnant.

According to Setswanan culture, a man is the head and the leader of his family. He is the one who according to societal custom, has the right to beat a woman when she

has done something wrong, and he only is allowed to instigate a sexual relationship.

These women seek to convince men that they can be productive in the home and outside the home by their resilience and dynamic drive in economic areas. This is an indication that women are interested in re-humanizing the world by enhancing their roles positively, over considering themselves more suitable for certain roles than men. African women have been involved in fighting for the rights of their societies. African women seek an inclusive basis for action across class and ethnic lines. The women are tired of dominating masters. Women need equality with men and among themselves, in order to be self-assertive and very confident to stand by themselves without the support of men.

The black women have to struggle a great deal, not only from a political angle, she has had to fight male domination in a much more complex sense. For a woman to emerge as an individual and a politician is certainly not easy. African women lack right to own a land, as well as the absolute right to sell and buy in the marketplace without the permission of their husbands. Women in the phase of womanism explain that though they need freedom, they will have to accommodate men in an agreed concerted effort, because men are the heads and leaders of families. This implies that womanism is not antagonistic to African men though it wants to challenge them to realize and change certain salient patriarchal features which oppress women. According to womanism, for example, there are certain household tasks which women cannot do because they need men's effort.

According to Setswana culture, before a girl can get married, she is first sent to school to be taught, how to care for her husband. There, the girl will be instructed on how to cope with family problems, to be submissive and very cold when her husband speaks and to look upon her husband as a hero because he generates the income. This teaching becomes the beginning of oppression of the female because they imply that the girl has no right to voice her feelings. Her role is to passively accept the instructions as they come

from the older women. Thus, in the phase of womanism and the phase of feminism who wish to be liberated from this oppression advocate change involving the whole society.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion

The Color Purple is an epistolary novel about silencing the feminine subjectivity throughout the protagonist Celie whose life proves that women are in very miserable condition where rarely some powerful women can escape from the society and male are guided as superior being of the world. The novel charts Celie's resistance to the oppression surrounding her, and the liberation of her existence through positive and supportive relations with other women. Most of the male characters of the novel seem as if they are the enemies of female freedom and they of course want to capture their happiness. Even though the step-father named Alfonso creates violence in the life of Celie through his cruel activities of rape and of course silenced her through his cruel words, "You'd better not ever tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy"(1) .

In fact, Celie has no one to share her pain and suffering because of which she writes letter in silent way to God, whom she regards to be her close relative. With Celie's first anguished letter to God, Walker enables the reader to enter into the private thoughts and emotional state of Celie's life has been repeatedly raped and impregnated by the man (Alfonso) whom she believes to be her biological father. In this case, Celie has not only been raped but also ordered not to tell about the case to others, so she expresses her pain secretly to God. Obviously it is double repression on silenced woman. Alfonso, after fulfilling his tyrannical desire with Celie, marries off her to a cold and inhuman hearted Mr. Albert who is no less than Alfonso in creating violence in the life of Celie. Mr. Albert just marries Celie to work, look after his rotten children and to fulfill his sexual desire but never tries to understand her desires. Celie never achieves love from Albert as husband but their relation is just for working

purpose but not for loving. Celie never knows the real meaning of husband wife relation but only she gets torture in her life. As a survivor of deprivation in childhood and of over stimulation in adolescence and young adulthood, Celie exhibits several characteristics of those who have experienced 'soul murder' when her husband Albert, whom she addresses as 'Mr._' until the very end of the novel, orders Celie to get his belt to beat. She isolates her feelings and compares her life to a tree. Mr. Albert uses Celie according to his will and even in the extreme pain she can not raise voice but bears any kind of pain caused by him. So, in this case, Celie transfers herself into tree which has no feelings and can't express their pain even though it is tortured like an animal. Celie never pronounces the name of Mr. Albert but she can only say 'Mr._' which proves that their relation is unknown or they are like master and servant.

Indeed, Celie's life has been dominated by her bad luck as before marriage she bears with Alfonso whom she mistakenly believes to be her father who dominated and abused Celie at his best. Though Celie has been impregnated by Alfonso and she gave birth to two children, she cannot express her feelings of love towards her children. Alfonso took them away from her and sold to the missionary couple in Africa. Of course, Celie has been abused sexually and takes profit of her ugliness and loneliness. She was far away from getting education and expressing her feelings with others. It has been noticed that Celie has to bear any kind of difficulty like a silent bearer. The position of a woman is taken inferior, uncertain and unrefined. Celie is supposed to be a sub-human being. Celie begins her life as a physically and psychologically oppressed young girl who is unknown about herself. A male character like Alfonso rapes her and threatens her not to tell about it to any body. This paternal threat completely silences Celie. Her stepfather 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, sex with Mr. ___ is like rape. Ironically, it is the entrance of Albert's beloved Shug Avery into Albert and Celie's household that initiates the change leading to Celie's freedom. Albert brings Shug, who is sick with 'some kind of nasty woman disease,' and orders Celie to nurse her health. Infact, Shug Avery was beautiful and she hates at first Celie but while she understands her painful life, she swears to help Celie at her best. Shug teaches every means to raise voice against the male dominated society.

Though completely silenced by patriarchal authority, Celie manages to express 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, first by Celie to God and then to her sister Nettie and Nettie's letter to Celie. Writing allows her to analyze herself and expose her silence happening. Later, when she knows that God is white man, she stops writing to God and starts writing to Nettie. Celie develops a sense of freedom 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 makes a major contributor in the transformation of Celie from a passive victim to a confident woman. Shug teaches her to think in a new way as a force that all people carry inside them. For Shug, God is every thing and to discover God, one must look inward. Not only Celie, but most of the female characters in the novel seem as if they are made to remain silent in male dominated society. Similarly, other female characters like Sofia, Mary Anges, the women of African tribe are also silenced by the male dominated society. Among the women character of the novel, Sofia has played an extraordinary

role that has courage to struggle against male violence. When Harpo, her husband tries to silence and abuse her, Sofia challenges Harpo not to think her ordinary woman who bears any kind of difficulty created by male like a silent object. The problem of silencing the women is not only in one society but through the letter of Nettie we can read the wider part of African tribe where women are abused and treated badly like a working machine. Though women are the creator of this world they are deprived of every right that they should gain. They are not allowed to look directly into the face of men and are far away from getting education. African people treat women as a minor object as if they are born just to satisfy the male body and are only something for their children.

In fact, Celie has also been silenced at first by the male dominated society but with the help of Shug, Celie develops a new conception of God. It is nature God that enables Celie to speak and fight back. The novel emphasizes Celie's discovery that God is in everything and therefore everything is holy, a concept that defines traditional theological belief. Shug provides Celie a new religion free from monotheism to pantheism parallels her movement from the feelings of inferiority to a new sense of self. For her, sex with Albert is like rape. But with the help of Shug, she learns to admire her body. She knows the meaning of sexual pleasure. Shug defines Celie as a victim. A lesbian relationship grows between them and for the first time Celie experiences orgasm. In this relationship, Celie becomes a desiring subject. It is a kind of Celie's rebirth. For Shug, God wants people to appreciate the good things of the world including sexual pleasure, music, dance etc. like *The Color Purple* in the field. Shug associates sexual arousal with spiritual awakening which for Celie is a quite strange. At the end, Celie adopts a new religion preached by the male priests to limit women.

In this way, Shug leads Celie towards creation. She enters into the pant-making business and makes a way towards economic independence. At the end, there is complete transformation of Celie like that of Philomela. She emerges from silence imposed upon her by the patriarchal society to a distinct voice. She speaks her own language, follows her own religion and enjoys lesbian relationship. At the end of the novel we find Celie enjoying economic independence and leading a happy life. However, the beginning to the mid part of the novel Celie's life is full of miseries. Through her character every oppressed and abused women of the society has been denoted and shown as the best example of physically and sexually abused women in the male dominated society. Celie, the protagonist of the novel and woman with womanist feeling, knows the truth happening to the women of this world. So, we can read the novel as silencing the feminine subjectivity in Alice Walker '*The Color Purple*'

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