

# Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*: As a Womanist Text

**Dr. Muzifar Yousuf**

Lecturer in Department of English  
Govt. Degree College Shopian

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**Abstract**—Alice Walker is a major Contemporary African American woman novelist. From whatever vantage point one investigates the work of Alice Walker: poet, novelist, short story writer, critic, essayist and apologist for black women; it is clear that the special identifying mark of her writing is her concern for the lives of women in general and the black women in particular.

In *The Color Purple* Walker uses an epistolary form to create a woman-centered approach for her novel. What makes her exploration so indelibly affecting is the choice of this narrative style that, without the infusion of the author forces intimate identification with Celie. Most of the letters that comprise this epistolary novel are written by Celie, although correspondence from Nettie is included in the latter part of the book. Initially, some readers may be put off by Celie's knothole view of the world, particularly since her letters are written in dialect from the perspective of a naive, uneducated adolescent but as the novel progresses, however, and as Celie grows in experience her observations become sharper and more informed. The letters take an authority and the dialect once accepted assumes lyrical cadence of its own.

*The Color Purple* is one of those stories with a lot of self-help potential. Celie loses everything that matters to her, becomes a victim of unthinkable abuse both in her childhood and adulthood. After twenty years of enduring abuse after marriage, Celie finds the strength to engage in a lesbian relationship with Shug, to leave the Church and her home and to start a pant making business.

The brief scenario of the novel traces a remarkable transformation from victimization to entrepreneurship and it all seems wonderfully affirming. The novel really affirms the notion of "Survival and liberation of black women through the wisdom and strength of others".

Walker's Womanism in *The Color Purple* results in the depiction of various women characters. In fact, Celie's development into a strong and independent person became possible because of this sisterhood. Walker portrays a network of women as being the core of African American racial survival. She writes about "Southern black female survival and transcendence". Thus Celie triumphs over brutality, wife beating, incest through her sisters through Nettie, her blood sister who writes letters to her from Africa and whose letters she finally can answer and through Sofia, her sister-in-law who resists her husband as well as white people's attempt to beat her down. The stories of the other black women in the novel provide variations on Celie's story. They also serve as catalysts.

This paper attempts to bring out the affirmation of freedom from subjugation by the marginalized groups of society.

**Keywords:** Contemporary, catalysts epistolary, perspective, marginalized transformation, victimization.