

RESURRECTION AND RETALIATION IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

Vimalan. A., Research Scholar, Dept. of English and Foreign Languages, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, TN

Prof. S. Subbiah, Former Professor of English, Dept. of English and Foreign Languages, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, TN

Abstract:

Human life, which is full of expectations, is the combination of good and evil, happiness and sorrow, equality and discrimination. Each and every living being experiences these bundle of contradictions periodically, though for the majority good things turn into farfetched images. Humanity, self-confidence, resurrection and retaliation bear the world against the inhuman atrocities. Alice Walker, the eminent American novelist, captures all these adorable traits in her works and thus distinguishes herself from the majority, who focus only on the dark side. Her works occupy a unique place in literature, as they have been giving pragmatic solutions to the predominant problems, besides highlighting even the unnoticed issues. The study is an endeavour to highlight the resurrection and retaliation portrayed by Alice Walker in her masterpiece, The Color Purple.

Key Words: Resurrection, retaliation, pragmatic solution, inhuman atrocities.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* is praised for the depth of its female characters and for its eloquent use of black English vernacular. ("The Color Purple: Novel by Walker" n.p.) The chosen novel revolves around the sufferings, resurrection and retaliation of two different women, Celie and Sofia, with different mind-sets, fixed and growth (Dweck n.p). People with a fixed mind-set are of the opinion that their skills are limited and grown to the fullest, and therefore cannot be enhanced further. Celie is the best example of this type. She has some fixed negative thoughts which make her a fixed mind-set personality. Sofia stands for the growth mind-set, which allows a person to modify and improve himself or herself, that makes a person adjust with the environment efficiently.

The pains and sufferings faced by Celie are presented to the readers through her epistles addressing God. Her step father, Alphonso, makes her feel inferior in every possible way. Alphonso gives her in marriage to Albert, the lover of Nettie. The reason that Alphonso gives for the marriage illustrates the fixed negative thoughts, which are instilled in Celie: "But I can let you have Celie. She the oldest anyway. She ought to marry first. She ain't fresh tho, but I spect you know that. She spoiled. Twice... She ugly... She ain't smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she'll give away everything you own. But she can work like a man... She tells lies." (Walker 4-5)

Celie's poverty and illiteracy make the condition worse even in her husband's house. Albert, Celie's husband beats her regularly for silly reasons. He treated her more like a slave than like a wife. The timid and submissive Celie, who once tries to swallow all the injustices done to her like a tree, renews her traits, as the narration continues. It is Shug Avery, a popular singer and the beloved of Albert, who consoles and revives Celie at the right time. She is the one who showers true love on Celie, and thereby she aids the protagonist to overcome her fear, inferior thoughts and negativity. It is she who instills the revolutionary, thought-provoking notion of God in Celie: "God is inside you and inside everything else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it" (quoted in Abrams, 30). The rebirth

initiates when Shug Avery acknowledges her name on one of her stage performances. It is the first consideration of her presence that Celie heard in her lifetime. Shug Avery named the song Celie!

Avrey provides Celie with enough space to think and act accordingly. She makes the protagonist speak out her painful past, and aid her to come out of the issues with the new optimistic interpretation of love and sex, as per which Celie, the frightened fourteen years old girl and the most submissive wife, who experienced only void through the forceful, inappropriate physical contacts, is celebrated as a virgin.

The new thinking makes Celie an upright progressive woman, who stands for justice and liberty. The new stand provides her with the essential back up to renew herself and to fight back the offenders in a more mature way. The disclosure of Celie's true history changes her mannerism notably. With the invention of Albert's guilt, he hides the letters of Nettie and makes Celie believe that her sister is dead; Celie begins to be stubborn in nature. She is no longer the muted, submissive wife of Albert. She is, now, a liberated woman with emotional freedom and economical independence. Celie's first few words against Albert makes him awe-struck:

Celie is coming to Memphis with me.
Over my dead body, Mr.??? Say.

...
What wrong now?

You a lowdown dog is what's wrong, I say. It's time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need.
Say what? He ast.Shock.

...

Mr. ???reach over to slap me. I jap my case knife in his hand.... (Walker 92-93)

Celie starts realizing the indifference in her dress and language. The revival changes her into a growth mind-set personality. She spends her time in designing individual pants. Celie's skills in garment designing steps out gradually, and she starts to earn for her living, and this economic independence makes herself a respected, thoughtful individual with optimism and fixed mind-set. This sudden change that takes place in Celie has its effects on Albert. When Celie comes to Georgia, she finds a new person in Albert. But, she does not accept his proposal as she used to do. She suggests friendship instead. This suggestion of hers illustrates the long lasting change in her mind-set, from fixed to growth.

As Ruth El Saffar states in his "Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*", "Celie has made her journey across the darkness of outer consciousness to an epiphany of Spirit. The lessons have been learned, history overcome, the world redeemed. Alice Walker has brought the novel back to its origins in romance, and we give thanks to her for letting the Spirit, which moved through Celie, move out through the author to us as well." (17)

Sofia, beloved of Harpo, is a wonderful character equipped with strength and courage. From her first meeting with Albert, it becomes evident that Sofia is a strong girl with notable self-respect. Albert tries to stun Sofia with a series of rude questions. But, Sofia makes him awe-stuck with her brilliance and spontaneity: When Albert asks her "Look like you done got yourself in trouble." She makes a quick reply "Naw suh, she says. I ain't in no trouble. Big, though." When he asks the unexpected question "Who the father?" She answers politely as follows, though she gets surprised: "Harpo". To state a few more examples:

How he know that?
He know. She say.

...

Mr.???say, No need to think I'm gon let my boy marry you just cause you in the family way. He young and limited. Pretty gal like you could put anything over on him.

...

She say, What I need to marry Harpo for? He still living here with you. What food and clothes he git, you buy.

He say, Your daddy done throwed you out. Ready to live in the street I guess.

She say, Naw. I ain't living in the street. I'm living with my sister and her husband. They say I can live with them for the rest of my life. She stand up, big, strong, healthy girl, and she say, Well, nice visiting. (Walker 14-15)

She even shatters the notion of gender based vulnerability, when Harpo misuses his physical power to rule his wife. Sofia uses it to show him back her superiority.

As the war of dominance continues, Sofia decides to live with her sister. But, her stubborn nature makes her a long-term prison unexpectedly. Miss. Millie, the mayor's wife asks Sofia to be her maid-servant. Sofia gets a slap from the mayor, as she says "No" to her wife. Driven by her ego, Sofia knocks him down, the illegal act which results in arrest. The crucial sentence makes her a balanced personality with fixed mind-set. Being a strong girl by nature, she endures all the brutalities with her "ready to alter mind". Once she is out, she is invited by Harpo. But, Sofia remains unchanged and refuses the offer. The cruelties could not threaten her brave heart. Her humanity gets highlighted when she willingly steps forward to take the responsibility of Mary Agnes' child, when the latter stands for liberty.

Though the chosen novel revolves around the sufferings of two different women, Celie and Sofia, it equally sheds light on their resurrection and retaliation. The chosen characters, Celie and Sofia stands for different mind-sets, fixed and growth. However, at the end Celie becomes a liberated individual with growth mind-set. Celie is portrayed as the personification of resurrection and Sofia as that of retaliation, though Celie too starts to face and fight back her offenders efficiently.

Works Cited:

Primary Source:

1. Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. New York: Harcourt Publishers, 1992. E-book.

Secondary Sources:

1. Abrams, Patricia Harris. "The Gift of Loneliness: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* 1.2 (1985): 28-32. Web. 15 July 2018.
2. Dweck, Carol S. *Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfill your potential*. London: Little Brown Book Group, 2006. e-book.
3. Saffar, Ruth El. "Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *The International Fiction Review* 12.1 (1985): 11-17. Web. 15 July 2018.
4. "The Color Purple: Novel by Walker". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018. Web. 15 July 2018.