

Search for sorority – in the color purple

Savita Shishodia*

Research Scholar, Department of English, C.C.S. University, Meerut (U.P.)

Abstract - “Don’t wait around for other people to be happy for you, And happiness you get you’ve got to make yourself” (Alice Walker) This study explains that women bonding or sorority can help women to get happiness. If they want to raise themselves from their oppressed condition, they must come together. They should not wait for men to come and help them. Women sorority or bonding only can liberate them and make them comfortable in male dominated society. It is with Shug that Celie first consummates a satisfying and reciprocally loving relationship. It is the support of Shug that Celie becomes an independent woman at peace with herself, able to combat the conditions that oppressed her, made her “wood”.

Keywords - Sorority, Dominated, Reciprocally, Oppressed, Consummates

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

The Color Purple shows Alice Walker growth as a writer and in this masterpiece that exceeds its limits as a work of fiction, she elevates Black Women to the height of sovereignty.

“I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people, she explains her thematical concerns to an interviewer. “But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the operations, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women....For me, black women are the most fascinating creations in the world. Next to them, I place the old people-male and female-who persist in their beauty in spite of everything.”

The most appealing characteristic of The Color Purple is its treatment of the gender within a framework that is women centered. “Gender” in the novel involves not only identities of individuals but also issues embracing the whole community.

Walker unveils in The Color Purple the predicament of the “double negative” in the US society. It is not that her characters are disadvantaged as women and as members of minority groups, which is what the term conventionally denotes.

What Walker shows through The Color Purple is that her female characters have to fight on the one hand the patriarchal cultural order, so to speak of the main stream white, traditionally tending to subordinate them as women as “ethnics”; and on the other hand, the patriarchal cultural order of the black community itself.

Walker’s aim in The Color Purple is to expose how through ill inflicted on women by males the whole community suffers, and to demonstrate how the ill inflicted on the blacks by the white go much deeper

than the ill inflicted during slavery, or post slavery acts such as lynching. It is almost as if the black psyche has been impregnated by the behaviour of the whites towards them. The white masters use to separate black and slave families, and mothers and their children; the blacks now have no morals duplicating that practice. Most women do not nurture their own children and find it natural; and most women nurture other women’s children and find it just as natural. The white masters use to mistreat physically; the black males now duplicate the same behaviour. The solution Walker proposes in The Color Purple is for women of the black community to bond, and if this entails a relationship that is of a lesbian nature. The characters in The Color Purple specially the Celie and Shug succeed in creating a bond among themselves which engenders individual expression while providing mutual support. Such a relationship provides protection from male violence and cruelty while also allowing women to apprise the world through a perspective beyond that imposed upon them in heterosexual relationship/nuclear family units. The lesbian relationships as a bonding between women is in reality mutual, mothering. Women reach this point because they need other women’s company. The lesbian relationship as a homosexual affective bond between women that perforce eliminates the presence of men, is an act of rebellion against the patriarchal cultural order, and also the sole means, for women scarred by men to find someone who will love and cherish them and whom they will love and cherish.

The relationships between the protagonist and the women her husband brings home, although the two ends up as friends rather than lovers when the story closes, is the most important part of the novel, because it brings the major developments in the protagonist. But the significance of the lesbian relationships has to be seen from a two-fold angle ;

one, as a relationship between the individuals; and two, as a symbolical relationships that involves and concerns the whole community. Therefore this attachment can be called “Women connection”.

The novel makes it clear that if men threaten women so despicably, it goes without saying that women will put off men. The lesbian relationship in the novel also demonstrates that unlike a heterosexual relationship which inheres male hegemony that leads to female subordination and arrested development “Lesbianism is the rite of passage to selfhood, sisterhood and brotherhood” as it is seen to be for Celie (Bell 263). The lesbian relationships allow Celie to develop as an individual, allow her personality to blossom and bloom.

Lesbianism in *The Color Purple* is for Celie and Shug the expression of a self directly in conflict with a man-made, man-dominated society. The characters’ lesbianism is not an end in itself but an expression of being, a philosophical attitude based on the individual’s rapport with their physical and moral environment. Shug Avery, in her bi-sexualism, may be symbolic of an absolute being who is struggling to resolve the gender and social limitations imposed upon her by society’s definition of normal, natural beings. The problem is less a sexual one than an existential one. It is obvious that in her relationship with Shug Celie finds warmth and protection but there is also something else she is able to obtain; the possibility of being a different person from the one she has been so far. It is Shug and not Albert who instructs and guides Celie in sexual matters and represses her sexuality. It is again Shug who is responsible for Celie’s eventual blossoming and self-realisation. That this is achieved by means of an initial lesbian association seems almost beside the point. Albert was much bent on dominating and oppressing Celie, and to self-centered, ever to bring out such an outcome.

As the recounting of a symbolical relationship involving the whole community. The novel is advancing that bonding among women is beneficial for the whole community. It is beneficial for the whole community because it is a fruitful relationship that renders productive and functioning members of society. It takes them out of their isolation. Consoles them, nurtures them, mothers them, tells them what is right and what is wrong and steers them on the right path. Tant pis if this means that men will have to have second place or no place at all in women’s lives. The latter are too happy and too busy to think about that.

The “women’s sorority” in *The Color Purple* has to be examined from three points: one, men’s behaviour; two, the absence of normal mothering and sibling-relationship and three, the way friendship among women makes up for and remedies the lack of a satisfactory emotional and affective

As the reader starts reading the novel, it is clear on the very first page that the fourteen-year-old Celie’s first

encounter with heterosexual sex—there is of course no question of love—is in the following manner:

He (her “Pa”) never had a kind word to say to me. Just say you gonna

do what your Mammy – Wouldn’t. First he put thing up against my hip

and sort of wiggle it around then he grab hold my titties then he push

his thing inside pussy when that hurt I cry. He start to choke me, saying

*you better shut up...(Walker, *The Color Purple*, 1-2)*

She cannot talk about this experience of what to all appearance is incest and can only write about it to God, in fact needs to write about it for emotional relief. She will find the courage to talk about it and relate the remainder of the story much later to a sympathetic ear (i.e. Shug)

As she reminisces:

Seem like it all come back to me...how it hurt and how much I was

surprise. How it stung while I finish trimming his hair. How the blood

drip down my legs and mesh up my stocking. How he don’t never look

at me straight after that. (117)

To add insult to injury, Alphonso tells Celie’s mother that Celie has a boyfriend whom he saw “sneaking out the back door” (117)

The two babies she gives birth to as a result of the “relationship” are taken away from her: “I got breasts full of milk running down myself (4). Pa Alphonso has, she thinks, killed the first one and sold the second one. To add even more insult to even more injury pretty soon Alphonso appears to be fed up with Celie and starts eyeing her younger sisters Nettie: “He acts like he cannot stand me no more. Say I’m evil and always up to no good...I see him looking at my little sister. She scared. But I say I will take care of you with God help”(4).

When Celie’s mother dies, Alphonso remarries but that does not stop him from continuing to desire Nettie. Celie writes to God:

I ast him to take instead of Nettie while our new Mammy sick. But he just ast me what I’m taking about. I tell him I can fix myself up for him. I duck into my room and came out wearing horse hair, feathers

and a pair of new Mammy high heel shoes. He beat me for dressing trampy but he do it to me any way.(8)

When a widower from the Perish (Mr---Albert) asks for Nettie's hand, Alphonso as the presumed father refuses under the pretext that he want's to "Make a school teacher out of her"(8). He suggests instead the no more fresh Celie(9), as he puts it whom he want's to get rid of. She would bring along as trousseau-oh bargain of bargains-a cow, which is what eventually decides Albert. That he inspect her as if she were on a cattle show-as she herself were a cow: in other words, as if she were as a slave market – before he makes up his mind is not lost on the reader. Then a Celie will later relate:

Mr.---come git me to take care his rotten children. He never ast me nothing bout myself. He clam on top of me and fuck and fuck, even when my head bandaged. Nobody ever love me...(117).

hat the "fuck and fuck" never provides any pleasure to Celie is obvious not only from the above passage but her disclosure on a different occasion that

I don't like it at all. what is it like? he git upon you, heist your nightgown round your waist, plunge in. Most times I pretend I ain't there. He never know the difference. Never ast me how I feel, nothing. Just do his business, get off, go to sleep(81).

Yet that is not all:

He beat me like he beat the children.....He say, Celie, git the belt....It all I can do not cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie you are a tree. That's how com I know trees fear man(23).

Mr. -----Albert will push his offensive behaviour to the point of bringing home his mistress for his wife to attend to. What ever the consequences, that is how the act appears at first. It is no surprising that Celie is drawn away from men. "I don't even look st men" as she herself puts it early on(6).

Parenthetically, what a pity of course is the fact is that, as a women in the neighbourhood (Corrine) put it, Albert is "a fine looking man....Not a finer looking one in the country. White or black"(16). Another women, Shug Avery, has lived a great passion with him. Celie's mother dies when she is yet a teenager, so Celie remains devoid of any maternal support from then on. But her mother proves unable to be of much help while is alive either. She never provides the nurturing her children require of her as she has been too much oppressed by Alphonso. She has been crushed by her condition-too many children, relative poverty, not to speak of the fact which we learn much later, that she had become mentally deranged as a result of her first husband, Celie and Nattie's father's murdered by the whites. She was not a caretaker, she was a victim. In Celie's laconic definition of her mother as "Too sick to last long" (2)

One senses a suicidal attitude: the mother decided to end her life rather than fight back her illness or the martial coercion. Her only act of will, that of refuging to sleep with her husband "Too Soon" (1) After a confinement, indirectly leading to his raping Celie, also precipitates her death-suicide, "screaming and cussing" her daughter who "can't move fast enough." It is impossible that she would not have guest by whom Celie was "Big" ...(3).

Not adequately mothered, Celie is devoid a sense of self and therefor lack a sense of belonging. To further delay Celie's selfhood, she is removed from the only other person she loves Nettie. A short while after Celie and Albert get married, Nattie come to live with them, taking refuse in her sister's home as she had to leave her step father's home to escape his raping her but she is now bothered by Albert whom she rejects. Albert then send her away. He knows very well that she has nowhere to go but he wants, not only to punish her refusing his advances, but even more, to break the ties between the two sisters which she sees as a threat to himself and his marries (3). If Celie were allowed to see Nettie or to correspond with her, she would have, not only a perspective on the world and on him other then the one he is able to provide, but also, what he does not have, love and a sense of belonging. By depriving Celie of Nettie's companionship and /or letters, he can make her as emotionally bereft as he. She would then replicate her mother's life, "stumbling blinding" through life, lacking will to combat him and the setup he imposes upon her. The only way to resuscitate life back into Celie is through love, primarily with a mothering influence who could inculcate in Celie what her own mother could not. That is where the alliance with Shug the "Woman connection" comes in.

To start from the very beginning of the novel, the first woman, besides Nettie, to show Celie any compassion is her sister-in-law Kate who criticizes her own brother for his behaviour towards his wife. This starts as mild reproach: "Buy Celie some clothes" (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 21). But the disapprobation becomes stronger as she objects to Celie's being "The one bring (ing) all the water" and ask Albert's son, the by now young man Harpo, to do the job instead. For this Kate gets reprimanded by her brother and leaves in tears:

Mr.—— call his sister. She stay our on the porch talking a little while, then she come back in, shaking Got to go, Celie, she say.

she so mad tears be flying every which way while she pack. You got to fight them, Celie, she say. I can't do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself. The "bonding" is left at that. (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 22) But the idea that female bonding and fighting them for yourself" are interconnected is thus foreground in the novel and takes root in Celie's mind. Therefore, it is only natural that Celie's next "encounters" with a woman is with Sofia, Harpo's "Amazon" wife. More than Kate or Nettie, and much

before Shug, Sofia is the first woman who teaches Celie to rebel. "Before Shug's arrival, Sophia was Celie's only model of the idomitable woman," Write Christopher (105).

However, the relationship is an intricate one. For Christophe, Celie's "quest" starts with what he calls her "initial hatred" for Sofia (104). According to Christophe, when Celie tells Harpo to beat his wife like she herself is often beaten by Albert, she does so actually not out of meanness or simple evilness but because she envies Sophia's will and freedom. By telling Harpo to beat Sophia, for perhaps the first time in her life Celie expresses her own will and through Harpo, attempts to impress her will upon another being.

Things do not turn out the way Celie envisages. Sofia proves to be physically stronger than her husband. She fights back and beat Harpo. Later the two women become friends. While Celie confesses to Sofia: "I'm jealous of you." Sofia in turn confesses to Celie that "All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and uncles. A girl child isn't safe in a family of men." (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 42)

"More than Shug, perhaps," write Christopher, "Sofia struggle against Harpo's will was the catalytic moment which made Celie aware of the existence of alternative rapport between male and female." (105)

Ayse Lahur Kirtunc also deems Sofia responsible for initiating her step mother in law's emancipation (44). For Kirtunc,

To sew a quilt by assembling small pieces of cloth takes the form of self-creation and provides immense relief for her . . . Quilt making is a form of sharing that comprises a sense of solidarity beyhond spiritual relief . . . By giving to Sofia the quilt they made together, Celia demonstrates to her friend her affection and support. The quilt will protect them (Sofia and her children) from the cold and remind them of the resistance the two women put up by assembling the pieces of cloth. (45- Translation Mine)

"We find the origin of Celie's lesbianism in her contact with sofia," advances Christopher (105), who explains that Celie considers the freedom Sofia displays as a Masculine trait reflecting power and is attracted to it—and to her— as any weak person behaves in front of power. Later, celie will interpret more so, and be even more attracted to her.

Yet Sofia is too much of a free spirit either to stay in her marriage, or as far as Celie is concerned, to provide the companionship and nurturing/mothering that Celie is in need of It will be Shug who will provide that.

On first look, Shug Avery, a professional blue singer full of charm and an unmarried mother publicly

conducting an affair with a married man, appears to be the last person capable of providing the nurturing/mothering Celie requires. One needs only to consider the image that she project in the photograph with which the reader and Celie are first introduced to her as a character.

The most beautiful woman I ever seen. She more pretty than my mama. She bout ten thousand times more prettier than me. I see her there in furs. Her face rouge. Her hair to like something tall. She grinning with her foot up on somebody motorcar. Her eyes serious too Sad some. (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 7)

On the contrary, she can easily be described as a woman whose virtue may be questioned, on does the local preacher who calls her "a strumpet in short skirts, smoking cigarettes, drinking girl." (Walker, *The Color Purpe*, 46), which of course would not prevent a woman from being a good mother, something that probably men may not understand.

However, while Celie's mother was weak or weakened as a result of the White's murdering her husband and more generally by tradition and the gendered position that this required, Shug is free of the fetters of marriage (until quite sometime in the novel), and those of tradition. This has in turn allowed her the freedom to create herself, to acquire a profession that gives her a distinct identity, differentiating her from the masses of ordinary black women. As a successful professional singer she has been able to earn her living without having to depend on a man, which has given her strength—the kind of strength Celie's mother never possessed. But Shug has evidently also displayed strength when giving birth to the three children she has had by Albert while being refused the position of lawful spouse, bestowed on two other women who can in no way match her. Her greatest strength stems of course from having retained her joie de vivre in spite of such adverse circumstances and preserved the ability to love, a great contrast to Colie's mother, dying in dejection, we encounter at the beginning of the novel.

It must also be remarked that Shug enters the novel at a period of time in her life when experiences she has gone through must have matured her. She is furthermore sick and has time for reflection. Thus she is able to look beyond superficiality, past Celie's "sure... Ugly"ness (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 48), which she may not done had have she younger. (When young, she had enjoyed making Albert's first wife suffer) She must also be disappointed in Albert. In fact, it is with Shug's. introduction into the novel and Celie's life that Albert emerges as less than the unwavering macho who beats wife and children alike he had seemed so far he had not married Shug because his father had objected to her, and Albert had not had the guts to stand up to his father. Shug also demytnifies and demotes Mr. —, as Celie,

reverentially called him until then, to plain "Albert" when she calls him by his first name.

In fact, it is at that point that the tables start turning for Celie and Albert— and that Celie's is inaugurated. Portrayed as weak individual who was not manly enough to brave his father and marry the woman he loved— a woman who is the mother of three children by him— he will lose his aura more and more him again until he becomes a deserted husband, and later is the one going after Celie, asking her to Celie, on the other hand with Shug's entering her marry life, sets forth on the path that will make her an independent, fulfilled woman.

The complicity between Albert and Shug – that had made him running give her the three children, keep into arms while married to his first wife, and, when she falls ill, bring her to the home he shares with his second wife Celie – gives way to complicity between Celie and Shug. Albert loses in Shug's eyes when she mistreats learns that he Celie by beating her and has hidden the letters Nettie has been sending Celie. But he also loses much of his worldly charm when she sees him in his everyday setting; and, living, under the same roof with him finds that he appears no more tempting as the inaccessible man married to someone else when Shug recounts to Celie how her own mother failed her (just as Celie's did, after all), which sent her into Albert arms, she also finds herself summing up the whole love story between him and herself:

She (Shug's mother) never love to do nothing to do with touching nobody... had anything kiss her, she turn her mouth away say, cut that out....

So when I met Albert, and once I got in his arms, nothing could git me out. It was good, too.... You know for me to have three babies by Albert and Albert weak as he is, it had to be good.

.....

I loved me some Albert ———.

.....

Nobody dance like Albert when he was young. Sometime us did the moochie for a hour. After that nothing to do but go somewhere and lay down. And funny, Albert was so funny. He kept me laughing How come he ain't funny more?.... How come he never hardly laugh? How come don't dance?.... Good God, Celie.... what happen to the man I love?

I was so surprise when I heard he was going to marry Annie Julia.... Too surprise to be hurt. I didn't believe it. After all, Albert knew as well as me that love would have to go some to be better than ours. Us had the kind of love I'm Couldn't be improve. That's what I thought.

But he weak.... His daddy told him I'm trash, my mama trash before me... Albert try to stand up for us, git

knock down. One reason they give him for not marrying me is cause I have children.

But they his, I told old Mr. ———.

How us know? He ast.(Walker, The Color Purple, 125-127)

Shug then reminisces how she made life hell for Annie Julia, Albert's first wife, by conspicuously continuing her affair with Albert: "Us fuck so much in the open us give fucking a bad name" (Walker, The Color Purple, 27), continuing to tell Celie that:

"And when I come here....I treated you so mean. Like you was a Servant. And all be— cause Albert married you. And I didn't even want him for a husband.... I never really wanted Albert for a husband. But just to choose me you know, cause nature had already done it.... Nature said, You two folks, hook up, cause you a good example of how it sposed to go. I didn't want nothing to be able to go against that. But what was good tween us must have been nothing but bodies.... Cause I don't know the Albert that don't dance, Can't hardly laugh, never talk bout beat nothing, you and hid your sister Nettie's letters. Who he? (Walker, The Color Purple, 127-128)

"Who he?" Obviously no more the man of her will give dreams. It is that Shug herself is no in need of an effective bond that will give her the fulfillment that her association with Albert has failed to provide her.

Yet the complicity between Celie and Shug in turn gives way eventually to complicity between Celie and Albert, when both have acknowledged that they love Shug being the person that she is, Shug cannot tied down for long to either one of them and after first marrying a no-good man who lives off her money, has an affair with a nineteen-year old youth. Celie wryly comments that she and Albert are now "two old tools left over from love, keeping each other company under the stars." (Walker, The Color Purple, 278)

Celie is fascinated by shug's photograph before she sees her, not at all suspecting that she is soon to meet her in person It may be said that the fascination has to do more with Celie than with shag that Celie needed such sparkle in her life This may also be an intimation, a foregrounding. That Celie will no more be content to make do with the aridity that had characterized her affective life so far. However, when Albert brings the sick Shug to the home he shares with Celie, the latter is at first more bewildered than I anything else Albert has already given her so many blows that she is not shocked or hurt as she is bewildered - both by his audacity and

by Shug's presence. She her nurses husband's mistress, partly as a result of the strange attraction jealously brings about and Partly as one black woman caring for another In other words, she does not love Shug yet. The feelings on both sides come later, As Celie tends to the sick woman as an affective bond develops between them.

The relationship that ensues between the two women impresses them both. When Shug settles into Albert's home and Celie life, Celie experiences for the first time a feeling of connectedness: "Then I myself sitting see there quilting tween Shug Avery and Mr.——. For the first time in my life, I feel just right (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 60) Kirtunc also points to that scene as one of felicity for Celle (45). (The Angle – type of nuclear family set-up obviously doesn't agree with the black temperament). Interestingly it is the quilt motif that re-emerges, foreshadowing that the served ties of the black community will be patched up, mended. I suggest that it is in turn through her love for Celie that Shug is cured of Albert and is able to look elsewhere, much to Celie's distress. The fact is that Snug also needs the mothering that she receives from Celie.

Yet of course the greater beneficiary of the relationship is Celie. It is with Shug that Celie first consummates a satisfying and reciprocally loving relationship. It is thanks to Shug and her mothering that Celie becomes an independent women at peace with herself able to combat the conditions that oppressed her made her "wood" Shug initially becomes friend to Celie, then briefly a lover, a then 'family', but always acts a "mother" influencing and guiding her. Barker finds that "While Shug does not give literal birth to Celie, she does give her spiritual birth, freeing her" (55). When Shug dedicates a song to Celie, "Miss Celie's Song," it is not only the first time somebody make something and name it after (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 77) Celie, but also the first time anybody has done anything for Celie, other than for money.

Once cured of Albert thanks to her love for Celie, Shug proves able to protect Celie from him. To illustrate, when Celie admits that Albert beats her, "for beat being me and not you," Shug rows to stay until Albert gives up the practice. "I won't leave, she say, until I know Albert won't even think about beating you." (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 79)

"I don't surprise me you love shung Avery," Albert will tell Celie, adding,

I have love told Shug Avery all my life.... I told Shug it was true that I beat you cause you was you and not her.... Some women would have just love to her they man say he beat his wife cause she wasn't them.... But Shug spoke right up for you, Celie.... she say Albert, you been mistreating somebody I love. So far as you concern, I'm gone. (Walker. *The Color Purple*, 277)

After Shug discovers the letters Letter Albert has hidden from Celie, the two women realize from reading the letters that "Pa" was not Celie's biological father. This means that her children were not the product of incest. This revelation throws Celie into a psychological mess. Shug's immediate reaction is to protect Celie, by taking her away so that she can sole reflect in peace and quiet. "That's it, say Shug. Pack your stuff. You coming back to Tennessee with me." (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 183)

Once in Tennessee, Shug will tell Celie that "I brought you here to love you and help you get on your feet" (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 218), as she helps her launch what will turn into the pants : making business. As Celie becomes successful, Shug will exclaim with pride, "Girl, you on your way." (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 221)

It is her love for Shug that enables Celie to bury her sad double narrative of paternal origins and construct a new identity with a feminine domain. "The "unifying bond between black women (Bakrer, 55), forged "through their friendship, their love, their shared oppression (Smith 20), allows them collectively to free themselves from their shackles and create for themselves and their loved ones a worthwhile and blissful existence. It is a bond that involves primarily nurturing and mothering. "It is not just the love that exists between these black women as friends—or occasionally as lovers— that engenders a sense of self, but it is also though their relationship with their mothers," writes Barker (55). The mothering relationship transcends biological maternity Shug's mother takes care of Shug's children, Sofia's sister Odessa takes care of Sofia's children. Celie takes care of Julia's children, not to mention that Sofia takes care of the white children of the Mayor. It is not the real, maternity, that comes from giving birth that is in question It is the women connection cementing society and raising its members, as well as curing them when need be. And that is how the lesbian protecting and nature of the relationship should be seen: as an association concerning the whole community.

Thus in *The Color Purple*, white patriarchy is coercive and cruel and ethnic patriarchy, native to the land, is a reenactment of the white patriarchy. Squeezed between the two, the women have no way out except to bond among themselves, rejecting the white culture and refusing to learn its language properly. They also shun their men and find solace in same-sex relationships that are social than they are ecotic.

In the novel, the protagonist Celie symbolises the black everywoman, proclaiming "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and Can't cook.... But I'm here" (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 214), assuming herself and her life. She finds her salvation through the "Woman connection", bonding with another woman to free herself from the shackles of patriarchy that has long

kept her captive and prevented her from realizing herself, by tearing her, to start with, from school where she was good at. This is a cultural order that has allowed her being raped by her step father while yet fourteen and have her children, boon of the continued molestation, seen as incestuous at the time, taken away from her, and married off to a man she has barely seen who turns out to be a brute who beats her, extending the misbehaviour to the point of bring home, for Celie to attend to, the woman he has an affair with.

Pa-Alfonso and Mr. ——— Alberts symbolize and represent patriarchy in the novel. They both collaborate with the whites and replicate the behaviour of the whites in the way they treat their women, "recapturing their) masculinity through the oppression of the "female" Christophe puts it (102).

They are both owners of property. Pa turns out not to be the real owner— Celie's own father is, and his having kept the fact from Celie and Nettie, making them believe they were "pore, as Celie defines herself, is all the more to be berated. Celie's father was murdered by the whites who resented the success of his store, as Nettie explains in her letter (180-182). or as Alfonso puts it, because, the father, didn't know how to git along (with the whites). (So,).... white folks lynch him (Walker, *The Color Purple*). He then gives his own recipe to "git along.":

*Take me... I know how they is. The Key to all of 'em is money. The trouble with our people is as soon they got out of slavery they didn't want to give the white man nothing else. But the fact is, you got to give em something. Either your money, your land, your woman your ass. So what I did was just right off offer to give em money. Galker, *The color Purple* 188).*

This of course reflects primarily on the whites, on Their greediness and corruption. However, it shows Alfonso just as corrupted; as a collaborator" accepting his subservient parition and bribing this way to success. This stands in direct opposition to Celie's own father's prosperity based solely on hard work Achievement through industry seemed an affront to the whites as much as it created rivalry. This will be under scored with the events ensuing from Sofia's (initial) refusal to be a maidservant. The whites in the novel seem to have tacitly assumed that the black cannot stand on his or her own as a person in his or her own right, equal in terms of society. That is what both achievement on one's own (i.e. without the "benevolent" help of the whites) and the creation of rivalry signifies. That is also what answering back as an equal to reject the job of domestic help signifies in Sofia's case. These acts, even though they meaning are not at all aggressive or intentionally menacing, appear nonetheless to the whites to be sources of threat. The black has to know his or her place and willingly remain within the confines of the subordinate position assigned to him or her by the whites. The

subaltern has to abide by the guiles imposed by the superior party, or else "superior" feels at a loss and would start having identity problems.

The landowner attitude in Mr. ——— Albert it seen in this incapacity to work the land himself. As Celie puts it, "One good thing bout the way he never do any work sound the place, us him when he gone" (Walker, *The Color Purple*, 46) He also has white blood, one of the factors that prevented this marrying the woman he loved, Shug Avery When Albert's father describes Shug as black as far" even before he mentions other reasons for his having objected to her, it becomes obvious that the consciousness of having white blood is predominant in Albert's family. But they are not light enough for "passing" for white and so have remained on the black side. Thus the relationship with the whites is complicated matter for Albert.

The *Color Purple* demonstrates superbly, through the behaviour of Alfonso and Albert towards their women, how the ill inflicted on the blacks by the whites affect the whole community, and indirectly. The whole society what appears to be merely as issue of gender concerns and involves in reality. The whole society.

Thus in *The Color Purple* Celie gets her identity through Sorority. It is her bond with Shug which drags her from every trauma of life. She learns to value herself. She was quite alone to face everything but it was the Sorority which help her to gain an esteem, freedom and contentment in life. So the novel is quite successful in it's aim of search for Sorority through the character of Celie.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abbandonato, Linda, "Rewriting the heroine's story in *The Color Purple*." Alice Walker Critical Perspective Past and Present Eds Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K.A. Appian. New York Amistad, 1993.
- [2] Allan, Taryline Jita. *Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995.
- [3] Barker, E. Ellen. "Creating Generations: The Relationship Between Celie and Shug in Alice Walker *The Color Purple*," *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*. Ed. Ikenna Kicke. London and Wesport, Connecticut Greenwood press, 1999.
- [4] Bell, Bernard. *The Afro-American novel and its Traditions*. Amherst :University of Massachussets Press, 1987.
- [5] Berlant, Lauren "Rac, Gender and Nation in *The Color Purple*." Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives Past and Present. Eds Henry

Louis Gates, Jr. and K. A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993.

- [6] Christophe, Marc-A. "The Color Purple: An Existential Novel," *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*, Ed. Ikenna Dieke London and Westport, Connecticut: Green Wood Press, 1999.
- [7] Dieke, Ikenna, ed. *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*. London and Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- [8] Gates, Jr., Henry Louis and K.A. Appiah, eds. *Alice Walker : Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. New York : Amistad, 1993.
- [9] Kirtune, Ayse Lahur. *Ignem Ipligin Dikrigim Kimligim*. Izmir. Ege universitesi Edebiyat Fakultesi Yayinlari, 2000.
- [10] Ladner, Joyce. *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman*, New York Anchor Books, 1971.
- [11] Leder, Priscilla. "Alice Walker's American Quilt: The Color Purple and American Literary Tradition." *Critical Essays on Alice Walker*, Ed. Ikenna Dieke. London and Westport, Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1999.
- [12] Millet, Kate. *Sexual Politics*, Garden City, NY Doubleday, 1970.
- [13] Smith, Dinitia. "Review of *The Color Purple*." *Alice Walker Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K.A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993.
- [14] Sollors, Werner. *Neither Black Nor White But Both*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- [15] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak." *The Post colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- [16] St. John de Crevecoeur, J. Hector. *Letters from an American Farmer*, 1782. Edited with an introduction and notes by Susan Manning Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- [17] Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*, 1982. New York: Pocket Books, 1985.
- [18] *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Corresponding Author

Savita Shishodia*

Research Scholar, Department of English, C.C.S. University, Meerut (U.P.)