



Lesbianism: A Bulwark against sexism and racism in the Novel “Color Purple”.

Khan Muzzafar Ahmad

PHD Research Scholar,

Department of English, Mewar University, Rajasthan (India)

The history of Black literary tradition began in the Eighteenth Century with Autobiographies and Salve narratives. African American Women played a significant role in shaping African American Women’s fiction. Alice Walker’s “The Color Purple” (1982) is one of the milestones which talks about how black women’s lives were affected by sexism and racism. The article aims to show how lesbianism is an important characteristic in Alice Walker’s Novel “The Color Purple”. The Article also highlights how lesbianism acts as positive force in women folk in building a powerful women community to defend themselves against Racism and Sexuality.

The theme of lesbianism is important in Alice Walker’s ‘Color Purple’ because it nourishes her concept of womanism. She believes that women should bond with each other and love each other even sexually if they feel like it. This is also an appendage of radical feminism which advocated lesbianism as a solution of oppressive, heterosexual, patriarchal relationships. Although women are universally oppressed in “The Color Purple” all of them learn to stick up for themselves ultimately. In this novel sexuality is not about loving one gender or the other – it’s about loving individual people. And in Celie’s case she just happens to love women. The theme of lesbianism is best expressed in the relationship between Celie and Shug. In fact Celie has no identity at all before she falls in love with Shug Avery. It is the most beautiful relationship she considers. Celie explicitly comments that Shug made her feel a sexual bliss that no man had ever bothered to try to help her express. There are many love making scenes between Celie and Shug. Celie is feeling human and accepted in the company of Shug. Through Shug’s love Celie, begins to realise her own self. She embodies the strength of the human spirit. We see her transform from a wounded, beaten woman to a strong, independent and loving individual. Shug’s love acts as a powerful force strengthening her to stand up and transform her from a silent object to speaking subject.

Alice Walker through various examples describes black in relation to beauty. She does it as a reaction against white racist culture which excluded blacks from their definition of beauty. Alice Walker repeatedly emphasizes the notion that black is beautiful in the novel. Alice Walker emerging from the influences of the counter cultural revolutions of the sixties in America is drawn to black pride. The white bourgeois notion of beauty is shunned in the novel and that is instead foregrounded is that black is very beautiful. Celie’s description of Shug – the blues singer – in the novel saying, “First time I got the full sight of Shug Avery long black body with it black plum nipples, look like her mouth, I thought I had turned into a man. (P.50) also Shugs description of Annie Julia to Celie when she says, “she was pretty, man. Black as anything, and skin Ust as smooth. Big Black eyes look like moons” (P. 126).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1.] Black feminist criticism: Perspectives on Black Women writers, 187-203.
- [2.] Christina Barbara, Alice Walker, Dictionary of literary Biography.
- [3.] Susan Willis, Black Women writers: Taking a critical perspective, in making a difference. Feminist literary criticism.
- [4.] Walker Alice – “The Color Purple” (1982) Orion publishing group.