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ALICE WALKER AND THE THEMES OF *THE COLOR PURPLE*

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ABSTRACT

This study is prompted to understand the effective usage of the themes by Alice Walker in her novel *THE COLOR PURPLE*. She has handled in a beautiful way when the women were not held in high esteem. Alice Walker is much celebrated personality of African American literature. The study is branched into two chapters. The first chapter peeks into Alice Walker's life and African American literature. The second one deals with the important themes in the novel, "*The COLOR purple*" like Racism, Religion and Womanism which has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize. The novel is honest, poignant, vibrant and defiant. The colour purple is a story of heroic lives, love, and the nature of God.

Keywords: African American literature, racism, womanism, Alice Walker

INTRODUCTION

Alice walker a novelist, essayist, poet, literary critic and activist was greatly influenced by Russian Novelists such as Dostoyevsky, Gogoland and Tolstoy. Walker was born in Eatonton, Georgia, where she learned the value of looking within the hidden spaces of human experience and exploring them creatively. At the age of eight, a BB gun accident blinded and scarred her right eye. The experience of this disfigurement profoundly influenced Walker's life, leading her into a self-imposed isolation that has open only to her thirst for reading and her love of poetry.

African American literature

African American literature is the sub-category of American literature that includes works produced in the United States by writers of African descent and directly pertains to the experiences and viewpoints of African-Americans.

African American literature - its salient features and writer

African American literature grew out of the tradition of spirituals and telling of stories. The African American literature grew with several units which includes the Oral tradition; the Literature of Slavery; Reconstruction to the new Negro Renaissance Movement; Harlem Renaissance; Realism, Naturalism and Modernism; Black Arts; and the Contemporary period. The African American literature subsumed several rhetorical such as Metaphor, Metonymy, Synecdoche, irony etc.. The African American literature can be divided into three eras where many poets gained prominence in different eras. The first era had eminent writers such as Philip Wheatley and Jupiter Harmon. The second era can be called as Slavery genre and the eminent writers of the era were Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frederick Douglas. The third era can be called as Post - slavery era and it had writers such as Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

Racism

Racism is defined as a belief that members of one race gain superiority over members of different races. In 'THE COLOR PURPLE', racism is defined as a White antagonist against a helpless black person. To much awe, it is understood that none in the novel is purely one-sided evil beings. To the contrary, it is understood that they usually fall victims to some form of abuse. For instance.. Mr. —'s son Harpo thrashes his wife Sofia after Mr.— implies that he is less of a man due to Sofia's resistance. In her novel Walker makes a strong confession and clarifies that 'The Bright skin' which is regarded as better than the dark skin, also gives much of the troubles.

For ex. Mr.—'s criticizes his ex-wife for being too black and she was killed for being too black.

Womanism

The term womanism has been derived from an old expressionism of black mothers which they meant for their daughters. They expressed it as "Young acting Womanism". So it can be well defined as a term which proliferates the qualities of a woman as being outrageous, courageous and prudent in a matured way. Alice Walker made use of the word Womanism as she strongly believed that it spoke about women beyond their COLOR. However THECOLOR PURPLE is considered a feminist novel about a powerful character. Towards the end of the novel, when Celie returns to live in Georgia, She is no more inferior and rather becomes powerful who stands on her own legs. This is the ultimate feminism named by walker as WOMANISM.

Religion

In most of the novel *The Color Purple*, she seeks the help of GOD as a listener and thinks that HE is totally different. So she doesn't understand how GOD will be. In the mid-part of the novel she believes that God is a WHITE MAN as she has heard others saying that God will be White and Patriarch. But Shug tells "God is inside you and inside everybody else". But at one point of time she forgets the Patriarchal image and starts writing Dear Celie, Dear Stars, and Dear Pond and so on. This re-imagining points out clearly that the Religion doesn't stop with God and Alice has an independent

imagination, where the women even had no power of self-imagination.

Conclusion

Throughout the entire study, we have had an outline of African American literature, its history, and its different eras with authors belonging to different eras. When one reads and finishes THE COLOR PURPLE, he / she clearly understands how Alice Walker made the best use of the themes of womanism, racism and religion. We also understood how Alice Walker came into the history of writing novels.. The entire study tries to convey the reflection of racism and how black women had suffered from the same in a lighter way.

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