

M THE USE OF THE LETTER FORM AND SATIRE IN THE
TREATMENT OF GENDER ISSUES IN ALICE WALKER'S
THE COLOR PURPLE AND MARIAMA BA'S

SO LONG A LETTER.

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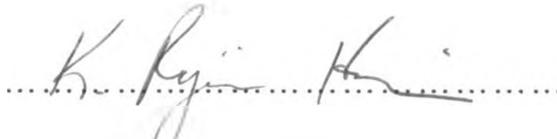
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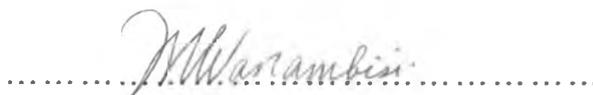
AUGUST 1997.

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.


.....
HORIUCHI - RIJMER KAZUMI.

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.


.....

DR. MONICA WANAMBISI MWESELI.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the lady, Miss Yukie Iijima, who was married to Mr. Yoshihiro Horiuchi in the 1930's in the Japanese context of "marriage" to look after all members of his family, as the marriage was viewed to maintain the house structure and the incoming spouse to a house was counted upon as an additional work force. Mr. Y. Horiuchi made it possible for his wife to be free from the heavily intertwined house obligations when they had two children of their own - my sister was seven and I was three years old then - by finding a new home for his family alone. He was prepared to break with the old traditions which expected a wife to be subservient to all her in-laws. Indeed, my mother could not have been unchained from the rigid wife's role without my father's understanding and support. At this juncture, they were pioneers in the liberation of women from the shackles of familial obligations and duties. It was they, by whom I have been inspired to carry out this research on the universality of gender issues.

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AKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to record my appreciation to my supervisor, Dr Monica Wanambisi Mweseli who tirelessly worked with me even in the most difficult times.

I also want to thank my husband, Mr. R. G. Rijmer, without whose understanding and patience I would not have been able to complete this research. During times when I was too occupied with this study to attend to some family matters, he was always supportive and understanding. At this juncture, I cannot also forget to record my appreciation to my two daughters, Sylvia and Lisa, who not only gave me the motivation from the beginning to the end but also assisted me in getting the necessary material from as far as New York and London.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my colleague, Mr. John Mugabi, who, ever since I started my Masters Course, was always enthusiastic in supporting me to understand African Literature and who gave me all the necessary information.

THESIS ABSTRACT.

This thesis is entitled “THE USE OF THE LETTER FORM AND SATIRE IN THE TREATMENT OF GENDER ISSUES IN ALICE WALKER’S THE COLOR PURPLE AND MARIAMA BA’S SO LONG A LETTER.” It examines gender issues and literary technique of “satire” and “letter form” in relation to the main themes of women’s subjugation.

In this thesis, I assert that although the two texts studied are set in different societies, not only the issues addressed are identical, “gender inequality”, but also the mode of presentation in a “letter form” and the stylistic device of “satire” employed by the two authors are peculiar to both. I have demonstrated that the subjugation of women is a common theme in many societies by showing an additional perception of the Japanese traditions illustrated in Japanese literature, particularly in Japanese poems written by the first feminist poet, Akiko Yosano.

The statement of the research problem is that the images of women in literature are worth critical attention as these images reflect the ideas which society has towards women. Since literature was men’s writing traditionally, it was male writers portraying the women in their writings. Gradually, female writers started to write about women from their point of view and try to tell their own stories. Due to the difference in the social, economic and political status and its implications, it is inevitable that men’s and women’s perceptions of gender roles is different. Therefore, it is my conviction that women’s problems as depicted by female writers will make us understand the plight of women much better than those depicted by male writers. My task has been to discover what the technique of “letter form” and

“satire” of both works portend in relation to the main themes bordering on segregation of women.

The objective of this study is to analyse thematically and stylistically the main texts, Alice Walker’s The Color Purple and Mariama Ba’s So Long a Letter. In a bid to facilitate comprehension of the concept of women’s place, I have tried to look at the societies in which the two books are written, The Color Purple being a product of Christian culture, So Long a Letter being that of Islam.

For the theoretical framework, I have applied the feminist theory; the liberal school of feminism and radical school of feminism, as well as the sociological theory. Both writers are feminist writers who address the gender issues to protest against the ‘male dominating’ interpretation and reflection, where female characters are portrayed so unfavourably as deserving nothing. “Subjugation of women” is a social problem and we can see that the feminist theory and sociological theory are heavily intertwined.

The liberal school of feminism has tended to accept the basic structures of existing political and economic institutions, demanding the need to make them accessible to women. Although Mariama Ba supports the idea that marriage should not hinder any women’s career, she believes in old values as well as marriage and family values. Thus, Mariama Ba is a liberal feminist.

Radical school feminism defines the oppression of women as a fundamental political oppression, wherein women are categorized as an inferior class based upon their biological/sex differences. They see that the liberation of women will ultimately mean the liberation of men from their distinctive role as the oppressor. They claim that the oppression of women is manifested in particular institutions, constituted and maintained to keep women in their place. Such institutions are marriage, motherhood, love and sexual intercourse. Some radical feminists have argued that lesbianism is a natural reaction for the battered women to gain self-respect and love in a misogynic culture. Although Alice Walker approaches this topic, she maintains family values and the heterosexual relationship. Thus, Alice Walker is in between a radical and liberal feminist.

I have dealt with my findings extensively in chapter four under the title “A comparison of theme and style in Alice Walker’s The Color Purple and Mariama Ba’s So Long a Letter” in relation to the themes, as well as to the use of the technique of letter and satire.

Whereas the similarities of the main themes are 1) women as lesser human beings, sex objects and reproductive machines, 2) forced marriage by parents guardians or wife inheritance by islam religion, 3) betrayal by men, 4) fatalists, 5) religion and its role in the perpetuation of the gender related stereo-types, 6) concept of the new woman and the struggle for liberation, the most evident dissimilarities are expressed in 1) racism, 2) violence, in The Color Purple. In the southern state of USA, Georgia, a black woman faces double subjugation being a woman and a black person in a feudal and racial economic system based upon agriculture.

Both works are presented in a letter form which allows the writers total ‘freedom’ of speech, style and expression, creating an eavesdropping speaking voice and narration. Because of this confidential and intimate manner without being castigated, the writers can let out their heart- felt burning issues in total secrecy and their outcry penetrates the readers’ mind so movingly.

Satire is employed by the two writers to criticize wrong human behaviour. Satire is to expose human follies and wickedness to ridicule; with the ultimate intention to reform them. It employs certain elements such as irony, sarcasm, comedy, humour, burlesque and wit.

In conclusion, whilst Alice Walker’s The Color Purple deals with racism, violence, the strength of the black folk’s community which shares the burden of community members, the creativity of black men and women (quilting, sewing), the reunion of lovers, friends and families, and the straightforwardness of Afro-America’s communal folk language, Mariama Ba’s So Long a Letter focuses particularly on the outlook for the future of the country, Senegal. Both writers argue that the success of women’s struggle can only be attained if men are also prepared to be educated on how to change. In addition to the women portrayed in the main texts, I have also brought an example of Japanese women as portrayed in various Japanese

literary works, in order to prove that gender issues are common themes in different societies with different religions.

INTRODUCTION

1. THE COLOUR PURPLE BY ALICE WALKER

The author is an Afro-American female writer, Alice Walker, born in 1944. The Color Purple was written in 1982, won Pulitzer prize in 1983. She was born in a sharecropper's family in the South, Georgia, U.S.A as the eighth child in Eatonton, small town with two streets only. She grew up in a world of poverty and hardship.

The Walker's white landowner said that the Walker's children needed not to attend school and demanded of every child of the Walker's to work in his field. But it was her mother, Minnie, who fought for the right of education for her children. Thus, the author feels that her success as an informed writer goes greatly to her mother's devotion to education and liberation..

Alice Walker was blessed with a love of learning, and upon graduating at the head of her high school class in 1961, she received a scholarship to Spelman College in nearby Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. There, at the heart of the civil rights movement, she took part in student protests against racial discrimination.

After two years at Spelman, Walker transferred to Sarah Lawrence College in New York, where she developed into a highly gifted writer. Her literary reputation rose with the publication of Once (1968) followed by many other works but nothing prepared her readers for the success of The Color Purple (1982) which became a monumental best-seller and won a Pulitzer Prize. Her underlying message is that every soul is to be cherished, that every flower is to bloom.

The Color Purple is written in order to pass on her history as a human record. Walker is very proud of her black heritage, the solidarity spirit of sharing one's burden in community as well as the richness of creativity by both genders, expressed in quilting, sewing, etc. Walker wants to redeem the lives of the past with a new identity, dignity and happiness in The Color Purple. She wants to liberate them from the injustice inflicted upon them by the most rigid, sexual, social and racial gender roles perpetrated in the white dominant patriarchal society.

The protagonist Celie is a transposed figure of her step-grandmother, and Rachel, who was raped by a white landowner at the age of twelve, never knew her husband's name except Mr.,___ and she called him "Sir". And in return, her husband, Mr. ___ called her "oman" (he could not pronounce 'woman'). Because the author respects her past generations and she wants to revive them with "happy lives", she is prepared to reveal the painful past of her ancestors.

This is a novel in the form of letters. The correspondents are two sisters, Celie and Nettie. Nettie becomes a missionary in Africa and sends home beautifully detailed descriptions of her life abroad whilst Celie remains in the southern part of USA, Georgia. Although it is written in a letter form, the words of Celie in the black communal folk language are almost a speaking voice, narration, and are so effective in conveying her harrowing story. When the readers open the book, they are immediately plunged into the nightmarish world of the fourteen years old girl's rape scene.

Dear God. I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me. Last spring after little Lucious come I heard them fussing. He was pulling on her arm. She say it too soon, Fonso, I ain't well....A week go by, he pulling on her arm again. She say Naw, I ain't gonna. Can't you see I'm already half dead, and all of these children... She went to visit her sister doctor over Macon. Left me to see after the others. He never had a kine word to say to me. Just say You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't... When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it. But I don't never git used to it. And now I feel sick every time I be the one to cook. My mama she fuss at me an look at me. She happy, cause he good to her now, But too sick to last long." (p. 1 - 2)

Celie reveals that she is repeatedly beaten and raped by her step father, Alphonso, who sends away (or sells away) the two children she bears him. Alphonso then forces her to marry Albert, a cruel widower who beats and berates Celie so horribly that she does not dare speak his name, instead she fearfully refers to him as Mr. ___ in her letters. Alberto thinks that

“Wives is like children. You have to let’ em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating.” (p.37)

He orders Celie to “git the belt” (p. 23) to beat Celie.

“The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That’s how come I know trees fear man” (p.23)

Alone and afraid, Celie brings herself to write about her ordeal solely to God. In her letter, she laments that Harpo (Albert’s son) asks his father why he beats Celie, for which he answers that because Celie is his wife and she is stubborn. Harpo asks him why Celie is stubborn but it does not occur to him to question why Celie has become to be his wife.

Life slowly improves for Celie when Shug Avery, a dazzling singer and Albert’s former mistress, arrives in town and moves into their house. Celie takes care of Shug ailing from a sexually transmitted disease, cooking for her, brushing her hair and making sure she rests. Shug in return protects Celie from being abused from Albert. Shug also introduces her to the simple pleasures in life, such as that it angers God “if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and you do not notice”. (p.203) The color purple symbolizes the author’s mother who was always working in the field for her white landowner, and who, however little time she had, planted beautiful flowers in her own garden which was always covered with many different colors. The major flowers were lavenders which have a significant beautiful purple color. Thus, the color purple for Alice Walker signifies the joy, merriness, happiness and liberation.

The two women become intimate friends instead of rivals. Unlike the men who have subjugated Celie, Shug seeks neither to control nor to possess her. Celie subsequently forms a relationship with Shug which evolves from a maternal, to a sororal, to a physical attachment.

Shug initiates Celie into an awareness of her own sexuality and an appreciation of her body. The recognition of herself as beautiful and loving is the first step toward Celie's independence and self-acceptance. If Celie, however, becomes more self-reliant, Shug becomes more nurturing and caring. In the course of their friendship, both women are transformed. The author is prepared to approach the forbidden topic of lesbianism to underline the liberating power of the black woman and to show that this is the inevitable process for the woman who has been silenced under the male dominance far too long.

When Celie discovers that Albert intercepted all the letters from her dear sister Nettie from West Africa over the years, she realizes that this is the time for her to go away from him.

Mr. ___ starts up from his seat. He look over at me I thought you was finally happy, he say. What wrong now? You low down 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. (p.207)

Conjuration gives powerful testimony to its destructive possibilities which springs out from her mouth as if "the air rush in and shape words" (p.213) Albert complains that he should have locked up Celie, for which Celie retaliates "The jail you plan for me is the one in which you will rot". (p.213)

The words have a transformative effect on Celie, as well as the power to change the hostility and negativity emanating from an ill-wisher. Celie not only has the power to free herself from unjust oppression but also has the potential to release Albert from the burden of his own oppressiveness. Ultimately, it is Celie's sewing which saves Albert's life. With a needle and not a razor in hand, Celie channels her anger and violence into the creativity of quilting. Later in Memphis, she sews pants, from which she earns economic independence and many friends. She writes to Nettie,

I am so happy. I got love, got work, I got money,
 friends and time. And you alive and be home
 soon. With our children". (p.222)
 "Every stitch I sew will be a kiss. Amen" (p.221)

After the span of thirty years, finally Celie is united with her lost sister Nettie and her children, Olivia and Adam, who all come back from West Africa.

When Nettie's foot come down on the porch I almost die. I stand swaying, tween Albert and Shug. Nettie stand swaying tween Samuel and I reckon it must be Adam. Then us both start to moan and cry. Us totter toward one nother like us use to do when us was babies. Then us feel so weak when us touch, us knock each other porch inside each other's arms..." (p.293)
 I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy.
 Matter of fact, I think this is the youngest us ever felt. (P.295)

The novel ends on a theme of reunion between lovers, family and friends, the reconciliation of gender differences. Whereas Celie has found the courage to become independent; Albert has developed a grudging admiration for his wife. Celie finishes her last letter to God, "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God". (p.292) Her letter is not only a private prayer of thanks for the reunion of her family, but a liturgical lection affirming the rites, rituals and experiences of the black community. Walker celebrated the centrality of black women in the reclamation of the past and the transformation of the notion of community.

2. SO LONG A LETTER BY MARIAMA BA

The author is a Senegalese, female writer, Mariama Ba, born in 1929. She was brought up as a Muslim by her maternal grandparents. She attended the French School in Dakar at the Ecole Normale in Rufisque; during school holidays she studied the Koran under the tutelage of the present Imam of the main mosque in Dakar. She was a primary school teacher married to a former Senegalese Minister of Information and a mother of nine. She was active in international women's organizations and the feminist movement in Senegal. She was also one of the founders of the new, post-independence society in Senegal.

She died in 1981, at the age of 52, after a long illness. This was shortly after the publication of her first and only published novel, So Long a Letter, which won the first Noma Award for publishing in Africa in 1980.

So Long a Letter was first written in French, entitled Une Si Longue Lettre, and has now been published in English translation by Modupe Bode Thomas, a Nigerian lecturer at Ibadan Polytechnic, Nigeria. Judging from the available biographical information on her, So Long a Letter can be said to be a personal testimony, her autobiography.

This is a novel set in Dakar about twenty years after Senegal's independence from France. Its world is that of Dakar's professional middle class, the members of which, in their student days, were in the vanguard of the nationalist and feminist movements of the 1950's. Ba evaluates the outcome of these movements from a contemporary perspective, revealing the betrayal of the hopes and aspirations of both by this same privileged elite: the undermining of the nationalist's socialist ideals by bourgeois materialism, and the compromising of the feminist ideal of gender equality, through adherence to imported western and indigenous islamic patriarchal values and practices.

The novel is written in the form of letters. The correspondents are Ramatoulaye, recently widowed, and her bosom friend Aissatou, a divorcee who succeeds to establish her life in total freedom after the separation from her husband.

Ramatoulaye writes letters to Aissatou, who now lives abroad, about her grief when her husband, Modou Fall abruptly decides to marry a very young girl, Binetou, the best friend of Daba, the daughter of Ramatoulaye and Modou. She is hurt by his betrayal. Modou takes his action in top secrecy on one Sunday morning saying to his wife, Ramatoulaye, “don’t expect me for lunch”. On the same Sunday afternoon, Ramatoulaye is visited by three men, Mawdo, ex-husband of Aisattou; Imam, elder of the Islam church and Tamsir, elder brother of Modou, who say “All he had done is to marry a second wife today. We have just come from the mosque in grand Dakar where the marriage took place”. (p. 37) Modou deserts his family, Ramatoulaye’s twenty five years’ devotion to him and twelve children she has borne him and inflicts upon Ramatoulaye all domestic burdens including severe financial problems.

In addition to the five years’ mental torture perpetrated by Modou’s second marriage and his desertion, Ramatoulaye suddenly has to encounter Modou’s death. This is the time that she experiences more disgraceful acts in Muslim society which brings women down to a status of a mere property. Wife inheritance is a prevailing custom in Muslim society. Proposals start coming, even during the period of mourning. Tamsir asks her hand for marriage, who has already three wives and numerous children and who can hardly afford to support extra family in his household.

“You forget that I have a heart and mind, that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand. You do not know what marriage means to me. It is an act of faith and love and total surrender to a person one has chosen and who has chosen you”. (p. 56)

Ramatoulaye declines another proposal from her former suitor, Daouda Dieng, a deputy of parliament, for whom she still has feelings, but she knows what polygamy did to her marriage and she does not wish to make another woman and children suffer the way she suffered. She laments:

“After Tamsir, Daouda Dieng..... (p. 59).. To be a woman! To live the life of a woman! Ah, Aissatou!”.
(p. 64)

This is the time that the author makes her stance very clear about polygamy. In Muslim society, marriage is regarded as an official civil contract concluded by an offer and acceptance between the responsible parties. The dowry is paid by a man to the bride's family. Islam Law prescribed in the Koran teaches that men are in charge of women because Allah has endowed the one with more. By virtue of men's total financial responsibility for his family, women are his subordinates, thus, to be obedient to men". The author questions; "What about women's feelings?" "What about women's dignity?" "Do women have no say in his choice?" The author wants to go out of this tradition. She opts to maintain her dignity and she vows her eternal love to the deceased husband despite his betrayal, who after all is the father of her twelve children.

Through this process of questioning, the author is awakened. The protagonist, Ramatoulaye speaks out the author's ideological position. She presses hard on the need of accessibility to women of education, voting, equal opportunities for employment and political decision making. She not only looks at family values but also at concerns about the future of her country.

"The success of the family is born of a couple's harmony. The nation is made up of all the families, rich or poor, united or separated, aware or unaware. The success of a nation, therefore, depends inevitably on the family". (p. 89)

She sees a positive future in the young generation, such as her daughter, Daba and her husband who helps Daba in every aspect of the domestic area. He says that Daba is his wife, neither his servant nor his slave.

The novel ends on a note of hope with a strong recognition of old values addressing Ramatoulaye's last letter to Aissatou,

".....will I see you tomorrow in a tailored suit or a long dress? I've taken a bet with Daba: tailored suit.....I will not let you have your way. I will spread out a mat. On it there will be the big, steaming bowl into which you will have to accept that other hands dip.... Hope still lives on within me. It is from the dirty and nauseating humus that the green plant sprouts into life, and I can feel new buds springing up in me. The word 'happiness' does

indeed have meaning, doesn't it? I shall go out in search of it. Too bad for me if once again I have to write you so long a letter.....Ramatoulaye"(P.89)

Indeed, this novel is another record of a muslim woman how she suffers in a polygamous and patriarchal muslim society where men are placed as superior to women. The Sharia Law, the Koran is the word of the Lord of the world, Allah, and permits men to take up to four women as his wives and "There is nothing one can do when Allah the almighty puts two people side by side,"(p.36) The protagonist's grief begins from her husband's second marriage which he justifies "God intended him to have a second wife, there is nothing he can do about it" (p.37). This raises the issue of indoctrination as a result of wilful misreading, misinterpretation and mal-practice of religion, under which both men and women are chained into a cocoon of traditional thinking and values.

Although Ramatouyale laments the present situation in a muslim society where women live in social milieux dominated by attitudes and values that deny them their proper place, the author still believes in the family values as well as old African values. She hopes for a better future in the younger generations. Through this approach, one can see that she is a liberal feminist.

3. MIDAREGAMI (TANGLED HAIR) BY AKIKO YOSANO (1878-1942)

Akiko Yosano was born in 1878 in Sakai City, Japan, as the third daughter of Sooshichi Hoo, owner of a famous confectionery shop used by the Imperial Household. Akiko was born two months after a boy in the family had died in an accident, despite her father's strong belief that the new infant would be a boy. His disappointment turned into a hatred for the infant girl which forced Akiko's mother to ask her younger sister to bring up the child. Akiko, consequently, was raised by her aunt. When a third son was eventually born, Akiko's mother felt justified in bringing Akiko back home. At first her father disliked her, but she was so bright that he gradually became fond of her. Later his admiration increased, and recognizing her literary talents, he gave her the highest education possible for a woman in that district.

Akiko graduated from an all girls' high school in 1882 and completed the supplementary course offered by the school. It became frustrating for Akiko to undergo the restraints imposed by her domineering father who believed in the feudalistic morality of the time that would not permit Akiko to go out alone even during the day, without a member of the family or a servant was always accompanying her. For Akiko, who had even in those early days radical ideas on the emancipation of women, to be so confined was an outrage. And to further complicate the situation, her father ignored his daughters and showed his partiality towards the son. Akiko's father had acted along typical lines as a member of the well-to-do merchant class, but Akiko found the atmosphere in her home hateful and oppressive. Later she was to give vent to her feelings in the unconventional collection of tanka - poems (in thirty-one syllables arranged in the 5-7-5-7-7-) of Midaregami (Tangled Hair), published in 1901. Akiko took the title from the poem that her husband, Tekkan had written to her;

To you I present

This name

Suited to autumn

Lady of the restless mind,
Of the tangled hair.

Midaregami is a collection of poems of protest of love, of emancipation for women, of the glorification of the flesh. The connotations behind the term Midaregami (tangled hair, dishevelled hair) should be clarified. In the early 1900's Japanese women took pride in long, black, straight hair. It was considered a disgrace for a woman to let others see her dishevelled hair, part of female virtue being to have meticulously neat hair. Akiko contributes through her poems in Midaregami to the emancipation on women, sexual freedom, self-glorification, rebellion and anti-social establishment.

Apart from the poems in Midaregami, her other poems appear in "Wondering Thoughts" (Sozorogoto) in the premier issue of Raichoo's journal Seito. One of them is entitled "The Day the Mountains Move" - assuring Akiko's voice in the women's movement in Japan and retaining its appeal to international feminism today - which was read at the 1985 meeting in Nairobi, Kenya commemorating the United Nations' International Year of Women.

The day the mountains move has come.

I speak, but no one believes me.

For a time the mountains have been asleep,

But long ago they all danced with fire.

It doesn't matter if you believe this,

My friends, as long as you believe:

All the sleeping women

Are now awake and moving.

METHODOLOGY

This study has mainly been a library research which involved extensive reading on gender issues with a bias toward the presentation of female characters in literature. This was followed by an analysis of Mariam Ba's So Long A Letter and Alice Walker's The Color Purple. Firstly, I began by analyzing the gender related themes followed by the analysis on the style, satire and letter form used in both works and tried to verify how the style is related to the main themes.

To clarify the method and approach pursued in this thesis, a definition of womanhood and woman's place is attempted in different societies such as the southern part of the USA, Senegal in Africa, and Japan. It is evident that both female and male characters are satirised in the two works in relation to the main themes of women's subjugation. Furthermore, both works share the same style of presentation in letter form lamenting the plight of women and reminisce about various occurrences which bring to the fore the real position and fate of woman in societies. My task has therefore been to discover the functions of these artistic devices which border on the suppression of women and what the implication behind it really is.

OBJECTIVES

In order to understand the different societies' perception of women's place, I set as my objectives to look at the presentations of the female characters and the societies in which The Color Purple and So Long A Letter are written, the former

being a product of Christian culture and the latter being that of Islam. Women's segregation appears to be a common theme in different societies, thus, I have occasionally drawn examples from Midaregami (Tangled Hair), a collection of Japanese poems by Akiko Yosano (1878-1942) who is the first feminist poet in Japan whose major religion is Confucianism and Buddhism.

JUSTIFICATION

A justification of this thesis is that as no comparative study has been carried out between the two novels, The Color Purple and So Long A Letter, which I posit to share a lot both thematically and stylistically, we will not be embarking on a beaten track.

Neither comparative study nor critical study equal to substantial and extensive analysis of the aforementioned respective works has been carried out. Although So Long A Letter has attracted critical attention from namely Judith Njage, Ojo-Ade and Oladele Taiwo, these are basically commentaries which do not give in-depth analysis either to the thematic or stylistic wealth of Ba's and Walkers novels. Njage's critical work is a students' guide book intended for high school students. In it, Njage also addresses almost every literary aspect from plot, characterisation, theme and style but in summary form, thus lacking in each of these aspects the more detailed investigation it deserves. On themes, Njage also addresses almost all themes that need to be mentioned but contrary to the best interest for my thesis, the theme bordering on sex inequality and liberation of women takes a tiny position - a single page of the guide book which I feel is rather inadequate to discuss the themes on gender reflected in Ba's novel.

Njage's analysis on style is also insufficient. She only mentions a "letter form" as a particular form of style but neither elaborates nor relates the style to the themes.

While Oladele Taiwo's article on So Long A Letter in Female Novelists of Modern Africa is a balanced article, Taiwo mentions the main themes with less

elaboration which is understandable since she discusses over forty works by several female novelists. Nonetheless, Oladele Taiwo also mentions the theme of female subjugation relating to the main character, Ramatoulaye's plight. Although the article has been important to this study, it has required a lot of "additional flesh" to make the themes more comprehensive.

Olga Kenyon comments widely on Alice Walker's The Color Purple in Writing Women, including the male and female characters, the themes of female subjugation as well as male brutality in a white dominant patriarchal society in the southern part of United States of America. However, Olga Kenyon does neither elaborate on the issue of love between the main female characters, Celie and Shug, nor mentioning the importance of the stylistic device, "satire". I took the liberty therefore, to investigate these issues more in detail and to discover how they relate to the themes of women's subjugation and transformation of both male and female genders.

In the hope to widen our perception of the female gender and to make it possible to draw similarities and dissimilarities among different societies, the additional dimension of Japanese culture portrayed in the collection of Japanese poems, Midaregami (Tangled Hair) should not be ignored.

Lastly, gender related politics is a subject that is currently receiving a lot of concern. Therefore, it is my expressed wish to contribute to the noble cause of emancipation of women by shedding light on the atrocities perpetrated towards women, as reflected in the main texts, The Color Purple and So Long A Letter.

This thesis, therefore, presents a comparative and complementary method that seeks to comprehend the womanhood or women's place in different societies and to witness how both women and men have learned to liberate themselves from the rigid, socio-cultural norms perpetuated by the religions and traditions under which the gender roles have been affirmed for so long.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENDER ISSUES: TOWARDS SELF-EMANCIPATION: RACE, CULTURE AND THE SUBJUGATION OF THE BLACK WOMAN IN COLOR PURPLE - ALICE WALKER.

This work recounts the tribulations of one woman, Celie. In the initial parts of the novel, addressing herself to God, Celie perceives God as the only one who may understand her problems and thus who may assist in assuaging or even eradicating her woes.

While addressing God, Celie is mostly narrating the injustices she has suffered because of one man or another, be it her step-father or her own husband. In the last portion of the novel. Celie addresses herself to her younger sister Nettie who is in Africa, who all along Celie thought had already died. Nettie, like God, again becomes the recipient of recounts of the miseries Celie has undergone. But Celie does not write to Nettie just about the troubles she has undergone, she also narrates the good times since now she has changed and has managed to get the joy she has so much yearned for, the love, in one woman, Shug Avery.

The Color Purple is indeed a reflection of the mental growth of Celie from a docile, subordinated woman who is prepared to be treated like a lesser human being by men and who thus never gets the love and joy she would want to receive as a human being, and from there she changes into a positive, informed woman who is ready to fight for her rights and ready to look for love in her own way.

The Color Purple reflects on the suppression and dehumanization of the woman. Although the book mostly presents the plight of the black woman in America, it also reflects on the woman in Africa not only of black race but also of white race.

In order to be exhaustive on the gender issues as presented in Color Purple, we have dissected this chapter into three sections.

The first section entitled “The woman as a lesser human being, a sex object and a reproductive machine” looks at all forms of atrocities perpetrated against the woman by members of the male gender.

The second section: “Lesbianism as a psychological weapon” reflects on lesbianic inclinations as exhibited in the novel. This section looks at the causes of Lesbianism as presented in the novel and goes on to argue that lesbianism is presented as a psychological arm against male molestation of the woman.

The final section: “The concepts of the New Woman and the liberation of women” looks at ways in which the woman tries to emancipate herself from traditions that put her in chains and also from male chauvinism and domination. This section thus looks at the new image of a woman, who seeks redefinition in terms of status and role.

THE WOMAN AS A LESSER HUMAN BEING, A SEX OBJECT AND REPRODUCTIVE MACHINE.

The novel Color Purple is set in patriarchal society which naturally attempts to set certain norms and values that are discriminatory to the woman while favouring a member of the male gender. Such norms and values may involve indoctrination on such things as gender-specific roles and place in the world. The men presented in this novel are those nurtured on chauvinistic education and who thus try their best to keep the woman in ‘her place’.

Women are presented as vulnerable beings whom, coupled with the indoctrination they have suffered under the male rule are subject to whatever kind of discrimination and oppression. The plight of women in Color Purple is best illustrated through Celie.

At a tender age of fourteen, Celie is raped by her step-father (whom Celie thought was her real father) who believes that since Celie’s mother is ailing and thus cannot play some roles of a wife such as consummation, then Celie should take her place. Celie’s step-father Alphonso, represents men who view women as sex

objects. Celie is even impregnated twice by her own step-father. After Celie's mother's death, Celie takes the role of the beast of burden which had initially been played by her deceased mother. It is also important to note that Celie's mother died as a result of the gender-related dehumanization in that she got very weak as a result of giving birth too frequently and having to care for too many children. She thus died young simply because she had to play her reproductive role in all her life.

Even at the time Celie is carrying her step-father's child, she still has to do all other duties:

I am big. I can't move fast enough. By time I git back from the well, the water be warm. By time I git the tray ready the food be cold. By time I git all the children for school it be dinner time. (p.3)

Celie represents all the women who are treated as beasts of burden. Women are seen as not only reproductive machines but also working machines which are not expected to do anything less than work, whatever the circumstances, rain or shine, whether they are disabled or in conditions which logically necessitates less work such as pregnancy. Such women suffer the patriarchal belief about women - that a woman is 'a woman' whether sick or healthy - she is a working and reproductive machine.

The image of a woman as a reproductive machine was also reflected acutely in the pre-second-world-war Japanese society. For instance, the Meiji Government which came into power in the late nineteenth century instituted regulations in 1898 requiring each prefecture to provide at least one high school for women (prior to this, women were totally denied education). But the high school for women was only aimed at creating "good wives" and "wise mothers". In the official concept, women were to be educated not to exercise power at home, but to better carry out their responsibilities as child bearers and cogs in the patriarchal family system. Official policy in Japan encouraged population growth. Thus, population limitation was associated with socialist ideas. When Shizue Kato (a female Japanese socialist) established a birth control clinic in 1934, she was jailed in 1937 and the clinic was closed in 1938.

The Mother of Dreams and other stories, an anthology of stories which reflect on manifold portrayals of women in modern Japanese fiction also sheds light on the position of woman in the pre-Second World War period. Before the second World War, the Japanese woman was basically perceived in five aspects and nothing more; that is; as a maiden, wife, mistress, mother and a working person (or more appropriately, a working machine) and not a career woman.

The image of a woman as a maiden traditionally focused on purity, innocence and virginal beauty.

As a wife, the Japanese woman was expected to be passive in sexual matters while at the same time, play the role of a sex object. Traditionally in Japanese culture, as in most other cultures, the husband is the initiator and aggressor in the sexual act, in politics, and in business, while the wife is relegated to a more passive, submissive role. The stereotype image of a virtuous wife has been a woman who fulfils that role with devotion, perseverance, and readiness for self-sacrifice.

Japan was also a polygamous society where a wife had to endure seeing her husband dallying with any number of other women. Even in later years after polygamy was no longer sanctioned, a wife, in fact, was even expected to pawn off her wardrobe to finance her husband's amorous pursuits, as the hero's wife does in Chikamatsu Monzaemon's Love Suicide at Amijima (Shinjuu ten no Amijima, 1720; trans.1953). When a wife, somewhat awakened to the value of modern age, refuses to do this in The Family (Ie, 1911: trans.1976), by Shimazaki Toson, she is beaten by her husband until she complies.

What was called "mekake", "naisai" or "naien no tsuma", a woman kept by a man for sexual service, existed from the earliest times in Japanese history, although a clear distinction between such a woman and a wife was often difficult to make during the centuries when polygamy was common.

As working machines, Japanese women were traditionally bound by the rule of segregation and division of labour, confined to domestic drudgery. As in many other countries, opportunities in Japan for women to work outside their homes have been very limited throughout the centuries. The few occupations open to women have been low-paying and usually subservient to men.

Celie in The Color Purple is made to give birth to what one would logically refer to as her own sister and brother by a man who sees women as of no value save for the sensual satisfaction they bring. This is implicit in the fact that Celie's father is somehow ashamed of having Celie's children in the house. He thus goes on to do another unjust act - he denies Celie her children by selling them to one missionary couple.

Celie is then married off by the step-father to a man she does not love, Mr ___ who we later learn is called Albert. Celie's marriage to Mr ___ is thus a marriage without affection as Celie is only forced to marry Albert: "Mr ___ marry me to take care of his children. I marry him cause my daddy made me. I don't love Mr ___ and he don't love me". (p. 66)

Mr ___ had initially expressed willingness to marry Nettie but the step-father refused. In this regard, Mr ___ comes out also as a man who sees women as tools because at that particular time Nettie had been just but a child. Mr ___ thus takes Celie not because he loves her but because after all he needs somebody to look after his children (whose mother had died) and also to satisfy his sexual desires. Celie is thus married to a man she does not have any feelings for, such that she does not only not know love but also, as a result, does not enjoy sex with the husband. When they are making love, she is usually engrossed in thoughts: " I lay there thinking bout Nettie while he on top of me....." (p.13)

While offering Celie for marriage, the step-father exhibits the kind of attitude men have in regard to women. In reference to Celie, the step-father says:

She ugly.... But she ain't no stranger to hard work.
 You can do everything just like you want to and she
 ain't gonna make you feed it or clothe it

But she'll make the better wife. 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.

(p.9)

Celie is married to a man whose wife had died. On moving to her new home she faces hostility from the oldest son of her husband, who does not want a new mother

at least at the beginning of Celie's stay at the new home. Celie is thus even maimed by one of the children but the husband does not try to protect her as his wife:

His mama died in his arms and he don't want
to hear nothing bout no new one. He pick up a
rock and laid by head open. The blood run
down tween my breasts. His daddy say Don't do
that! but that's all he say (p. 13)

Due to the many evils perpetrated against her and due to the patriarchal education she has imbibed, Celie comes to accept her position as a result of fate. Unlike her sister Nettie who believes that one has to keep on fighting in this world, Celie is resigned: "I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive" (p.18). Life is so tough for Celie such that, in God, she sees her only consolation: "I just say, never mine, never mine. Long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody along".

At the beginning of the story, Celie is presented as a docile woman who believes that she occupies a subordinate position in this world. Celie is so old-fashioned that she cannot imagine striking a living thing, let alone engaging in a serious fight with a man. She is so fatalistic and indoctrinated that when she is molested, be it by her step-father or her husband, she believes that is what destiny had in store for her. Although life may be full of woes presently, Celie looks forward to life here-after: "This life soon be over I say heaven last all ways" (p.44)

Celie's docility becomes even alarming in the way she addresses her husband. She calls her husband 'Sir' (p.47). Her relationship to her husband is thus presented as that of a boss and his employee or more appropriately, of a slave-owner and a slave. Although we may blame Celie for such an attitude toward the husband, it is implicit in the book that men might have demanded of women to address them that way. This society is thus presented as one which is suppressive to the woman, the idea of which is also universal since even in Japan, as of today, the word "Shujin" whose literal translation is 'master' is used in the official language in reference to husbands.

Celie is one woman who has been indoctrinated to the extent that she has become old-fashioned. For instance, she keeps on advising Harpo to beat up his wife Sofia in order to make her (Sofia) subjugated to him. But Sofia is one woman who

has witnessed the brutalization of women and thus tries to assert herself in order to avoid the kind of plight the older generation of women underwent. She tells Celie:

You remind me of my mama. She under my daddy thumb. Naw, she under my daddy foot. Anything he say, goes, she never say nothing back. She never stand up for herself. (p.13)

Sofia thus believes that women should change their attitude if they are at all to be recognized as full humans and not sub-humans who deserve to be treated in a slave-like manner.

At Albert's home, Celie has also to undergo one injustice all women have to experience - wife-beating. Women in the novel are indeed presented as punching bags, used as a vehicle for venting out men's frustrations and anger. Celie is beaten quite frequently by Albert until Shug warns him. Even after Shug's warning Celie is beaten all the same except Albert does not beat her as he did initially: "He ain't beat me much since you made him quit, I say, just a slap now and then when he ain't got nothing else to do!" (p.115). Wife-beating thus is not a practice executed only when a woman errs but rather has become some sort of hobby for some men such that they would even engage in the act when they are idle and have nothing else to do. It has become some sort of pastime. The woman's position has thus become a tragic one .

Celie's husband for instance may even beat up Celie simply "cause she my wife" (p.23). Celie claims that Mr ____ beat her up "like he beat the children. Cep't he don't never hardly beat them" (p.23). Celie is thus exposed to physical torture simply because she is a woman. As a woman she is worse than a child. The height of humiliation that Celie undergoes is to be beaten while the children are peeping through the cracks. Celie says to herself. "It all I can do not to cry."

The woman's plight is deplorable because of the male "superiority" and stereotyping that goes with it. Almost all the men presented in the story exude male superiority in one way or another. This has in turn led to the piteous state of women all over the world.

Men such as Celie's step-father, Albert and Harpo, who are the only developed male characters in the novel, are presented as conservative male domineers who believe that the woman is inferior to a man.

Harpo's father, Albert, is revealed as a true male chauvinist not only in the actions he is involved in such as beating up his wife as a pastime and also treating her as a sex object but also in the kind of attitude he demonstrates regarding women. Albert is a man who believes that men are always right. When his son Harpo impregnates Sofia Butler, Albert only blames the girl and not his son:

Who the father? he ast. She look surprise. Harpo, she say.
 How he know that? He know, she say.
 Young women no good these days, he say.
 Got they legs open to every Tom, Dick and Harry. (p.32)

When Sofia is eventually married to Harpo and he finds her assertive and not ready to sing to his tune, the advice Harpo's father gives on this problem of a wife who cannot toe the line is that Harpo ought to thrash his wife:

You ever hit her? Mr _____ ast..... Well how you spect
 to make her mind? Wives like children. You have to
 let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do better
 than a good sound beating. (p.37)

Harpo's father is thus a man who believes that a woman, like a child, is limited in her mental capacity and thus has to be taught by a man what is wrong or right. Just as a child, a woman can only be corrected and managed by use of the cane.

That Mr _____ is full of the archaic concept of gender roles and position makes him treat Celie like a lesser human being, as we have already mentioned how he treats Celie like a punching bag for venting out his frustrations and how he also treats her like only a sex tool from which he derives pleasure. This antiquated mentality is also revealed when Celie decides to leave for Memphis with Shug Avery. His remark: "You bitch..... what will people say, you running off to Memphis like you don't have a house to look after?" (p.207) clearly demonstrates that he still believes that women are only supposed to be care-takers of their husbands' houses and children. Then, according to Albert, women who do not have

houses to take care of (implying that they have no husbands and children) must be immoral. This is the same concept of the Japanese terminology of wife called “Kanai” which literally means “a person - inside - the - house”, signifying nothing but a caretaker of the house.

In admonishing Celie and discouraging her from deserting him and going away to Memphis, Mr _____ makes us get his concept of a woman. He argues that Celie would not be able to do anything worthwhile up north because she is ugly, skinny and has a funny shape. While this may be taken to be an insult to the person of Celie, it also has highly negative connotations to womankind in that it insinuates that women can only make a living by using their looks and nothing else, that is if they do not want to engage in their other purported natural roles such as domestic chores. Mr _____ alleges that the only job Celie might be able to do up north is to serve as Shug’s maid. Yet he insists that even this role would prove difficult for Celie since she is not a good cook (yet she is a woman - a good woman is supposed to know how to cook properly, that is according to Mr _____ and his likes).

He also alleges that Celie does not know how to clean the house properly, yet according to him, that is a role a woman should be excellent in. On this role, he compares Celie to his departed wife: “..... this house ain’t been clean good since my first wife died...”. (p.212/213)

When Mr _____ learns later after Celie has gone to Memphis that she earns a living by making pants that can be worn by any person, he is completely opposed to the idea of having both men and women putting on pants. He argues that men and women are not supposed to wear the same thing. According to him it is only men who would wear pants. Also when Harpo sets up a juke joint in Albert’s compound, Albert does not want Celie to go to the juke point when Shug performs because he believes “wives don’t go places like that...” (p.76) It is only Shug who insists and who indeed ensures that Celie goes.

Since Mr. _____ considers women to be lesser beings, he even has the audacity to humiliate his wife by dallying with other women in Celie’s presence. Mr. _____ is a womanizer who is ready to mess around with his former girl-friend Shug Avery even after he has married Celie. When Shug Avery visits Mr. _____ ,

Celie has to undergo the outrageous humiliation of hosting her husband's lover. When Shug Avery is at Mr.____'s place at the very beginning, she spends the nights with Celie's husband. But Celie is also naïve. Albert still has feelings for Shug Avery, a liberal singer. When Shug Avery falls ill out of purported sexually transmitted disease, Albert takes her to his house claiming that after all he has always loved Shug Avery. During this incident, even Mr____'s father sympathizes with Celie for being just very docile: " Celie....you have my sympathy. Not many women let their husband's whore lay up in their house ". (p.57) Mr____ comes out as a womanizer in all respects, who believes women are just instruments meant to serve the whims and wishes of men.

Another instance is when Mr____ tries to seduce Nettie. He is so persistent yet he is already married to Nettie's sister. He orders for Nettie to leave his house when she refuses to succumb to his lecherous demands. But when Nettie leaves the home, Albert tries to follow her into the woods on his horse. He tries to talk to her but she declines. Then he tries to abuse her by forcefully kissing her and dragging her into the woods. Luckily Nettie is an aggressive and strong woman and she fights back, thus preventing whatever form of abuse Albert might have desired to inflict on her. Albert thus comes out as a conservative male chauvinist.

As the cliché goes, 'like father like son', Harpo is the very replica of his father in deeds and in thoughts. Just like his father he is a wife-beater who believes that a woman can only be made to follow the husband's orders through use of the cane. He thus also tries to beat up his wife Sofia but unfortunately his wife is an aggressive and strong woman who is aware of her rights and who is not ready to succumb to orders that most of the women such as Celie who are ready to jump every time they are called by their husbands. Sofia refuses to be a subservient woman. Whenever Harpo tries to beat her up, she fights back. When Harpo cannot make his wife sing to his tune as every dominant male expects of his wife, he is psychologically traumatized and he takes to over-eating habit as a psychological reaction. He complains that Sofia does not behave like other wives; the docile majority who are ready to be trampled on by their husbands.

Sofia complains that Harpo represents the type of men who only think about making their wives 'mind' : "He don't want a wife, he want a dog".(p.68) She also complains that all that her husband thinks about is making love. Celie also compares Harpo to her husband whose only major interest in her is sexual rather than anything else.

Like his father who hated the idea of allowing Celie to go to the juke point, Harpo is shocked to see his wife Sofia coming to the juke point. He argues: "It just a scandless, a woman with five children hanging out in a juke point".(p.86) It is ironical that such men only see the speck in their wives' eyes while their's are clogged with logs. It is ironical that that while Harpo accuses Sofia for breaching 'moral ethics' expected of a woman with children by going to the juke point, Harpo who is the father of the children is also at the juke point. Harpo is simply an incorrigible man who only believes that "A woman needs to be at home.....". (p.86) But Sofia, an liberal woman believes: "A woman needs a little fun, once in a while...". (p.86)

A life of incessant quarrels with the obdurate husband Harpo makes Sofia seek a man who will treat her much better. A man who will understand her feelings. She gets a man by the name Henry Broadnax who allegedly does not beat her but rather showers her with love and takes her wherever she wants to go.

Finding Sofia very difficult to handle and also because Sofia has left Harpo's house, Harpo gets himself another woman, Mary Agnes, nicknamed 'Squeak'. Squeak is presented at the beginning as a docile woman. The very replica of Celie. Celie alleges: "She do anything Harpo say".(p.86)

After Sofia returns to Harpo after many years of separation, Harpo still holds to his male dominant stance. For instance when Sofia's mother dies, there is a bitter argument between Harpo and his wife simply because Sofia is to be one of the pall-bearers. Harpo's major concern is that women have never been allowed to be pall-bearers:

Whoever heard of women pall-bearers... Peoples use to men doing this sort of thing. Women weaker, he say. People think they weaker, say they weaker anyhow.

Women spose to take it easy. Cry if you want to. Not try to take over. (p.224/225)

The picture of Harpo painted here is that of an incorrigible man who has been fed on patriarchal falsehoods and beliefs such that he has formed a conservative perception of gender-related roles. But Sofia who is a liberated woman decides to go ahead and be her mother's pall-bearer. It is not only Sofia but even her two other sisters, who together with their three brothers carry their mother's coffin.

Celie's step-father Alphonso is also a man who believes that women occupy the lowest echelons in terms of human worth. Such a mentality is explicit in his act of raping Celie when she is just fourteen years old. He thus sees women as sexual instruments. He traumatized Celie further by taking away the babies he has sired with her even when Celie's breasts are full of milk running down. Celie's mother's death also is partly derived from the way she is treated as a sex machine and reproductive gadget by Alphonso. Although she is mentally unstable, Alphonso makes her condition even worse through the frequent pregnancies. He thus accelerates his wife's demise.

The second woman that Celie's step-father marries - May Ellen- is fit to be his own child. Alphonso is thus a child-molester who believes a woman is a woman as long as she can provide the sexual gratification. After some years of staying with Alphonso, May Ellen leaves with the children because of frustrations emanating from the amorous husband messing around with other women. This is implied in Alphonso's answer when Celie asks him why May Ellen left. He answers: "Got too old for me I reckon". (p.187) This is also implicit in the fact that after May Ellen leaves, he gets himself a very young lady, Daisy, who is fit to be his daughter⁵ as she is barely fifteen.

Such a mentality of men who only see women in terms of emotional pleasure they can offer is also exhibited when Mary Agnes (Squak) is raped by her own uncle, the prison warden, when she goes to prison to lobby for Sofia's release. It is as if all that men think about when they see a woman is just sex.

Through using Nettie who has to travel to Africa as a missionary, Alice Walker is able to tell us that male superiority and discrimination and oppression of

women is not just an issue affecting black women and men in America, but women of all races all over the world. For example Africa is not spared of this injustice against women.

When Nettie and her hosts Samuel and Corrine travel to Africa for missionary duties, they also experience female discrimination. For instance although the missionaries had introduced education, the Olinka tribe in West Africa did not believe that girls should be educated. Even the women themselves have been indoctrinated to believe likewise. Such is the tragedy of the African situation. When Nettie asks one mother why she thinks girls should not be educated, she answers: “A girl is nothing to herself; only to her husband can she become something”. (p.162) Such a woman sees the motherhood of women as the only valuable thing about women. She believes the best role a woman can play is that of being a mother of some man’s children. This woman thus sees Nettie who is not married as “not much” (p. 162) in terms of worth as she is not the mother of anybody’s children. A girl like Tashi is thus denied education simply because she is a woman. It only takes Olivia’s aggressiveness and foresightedness that she secretly teaches Tashi all that she (Olivia) has learned in school.

Just like in many other traditional societies, Japanese women were also denied education. Education was only for the boys Akiko Yosano, not only the author of many literary creative works but also the famous poet whose poems celebrate and vouch for female emancipation in all regards in a collection known as Midaregami, translated into English as Tangled Hair, was educated by her father simply because her father saw her as a reincarnation of his first born deceased son. (Initially her father was very disappointed when the infant girl, Akiko was born against his belief that the expected infant would surely be a boy as it had to be a reincarnation of the deceased son . However, after three years’ exile, Akiko was allowed to be brought home as he had accepted Akiko as his child).

In order to ensure the perpetuation of the inferior position of the woman even in professional life, Makoto Ueda, the editor of The Mothers of Dreams argues that one prominent eighteenth century statesman whom Ueda does not name, even

taught: “All women would better be illiterate. A learned woman does nothing but harm”. (Intro. 14)

Tashi’s father and mother in *The Color Purple* get very upset when their daughter spends so much time with Olivia. They allege that maybe Olivia is having a bad influence on Tashi since the latter’s

face is beginning to show the spirits of one of her aunts who was sold to the trader because she no longer fit into village. This aunt refused to marry the man chosen for her. Refused to bow to the chief....(p.166)

Such people as Tashi’s parents who have undergone patriarchal indoctrination perceive defiance in women as evil and only a result of bad company. They believe in a docile woman who is ready to do anything that she is commanded to do by her superiors (men). Yet like Sofia, Tashi’s aunt represents the kind of aggressiveness, awakening and awareness of in one’s inalienable rights which the author of *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker advocates- that is, women should agitate for their liberty in all perspectives of social life.

Although Nettie tries to explain to Tashi’s father that the world is changing a great deal and that thus man and woman ought to fight for a fair share of everything, Tashi’s father rejects such a world conceptualized by Nettie as a world of degenerates, a malformed world. He views with pity a society such as America where women have either liberated themselves or are in the process of agitating for their total emancipation while they have at the same time achieved some form of freedom. Tashi’s father regards such societies which are embedded in liberal thoughts as immoral if not backward:

Our women are respected here, said the father. We would never let them tramp the world as American women do. There is always someone to look after the Olinka woman. A father. An uncle. A brother or nephew. (p.167)

As implied in the quotation, the Olinka tribe men view women as almost child-like if not subhumans who always have to be supervised and taken care of by members of

the 'superior' gender, male. A woman is portrayed as a weakling both physically and psychologically, in essence a foolish person who might easily go astray and thus a person who always has to be under the care of some men, be it a father, an uncle, a brother or a nephew, but at least some men. Olinka men thus perceive women as lesser mortals who always have to be under guard of 'superior' mortals, men.

When Nettie says that Tashi is very intelligent and that she could end up being a nurse or a teacher and help the villagers of she is allowed the chance to pursue education, the father answers: "There is no place here for a women to do those things". (p.168) Tashi's father is simply a male despot who believes that education is of no good to a woman. This is evident where Nettie suggests that since there is no place in Olinka for a woman to do such responsible and philanthropic duties such as teaching or nursing then Nettie and sister Corrine who are women but who are involved in such unwomanly roles should depart from Olinka, Tashi's father says that they should not leave but rather should remain and teach only the boys, In an apparent lop-sided remark, Tashi's father suggests that Nettie should visit Tashi and thus get the opportunity to learn what he purports "woman are for".(p.168)

Tashi is thus denied education simply because her world does not allow women who do things that men can do. Tashi only gets the opportunity to continue with her education when her father dies. Her mother takes advantage of her husband's death to make her feelings about the issue of education of girls known. She makes it clear that Tashi must continue to learn.

In one of her letters to Celie, Nettie narrates the problems women in Olinka undergo. Just like black women in America, women in Olinka are not allowed to choose their own spouses but rather they are married by force to a man of the parents' choice. Worse still, they are even promised to old or middle-aged men at birth. Women in Olinka are also overworked. Nettie says that these "women are unhappy and work like donkeys". (p.163) Yet some of these women who have been gravely indoctrinated think that it is an honour to be the chief's wife, despite the unhappiness and tedious work they have to do. The highest women of such nature can think of simply becoming the Chief's wife. Despite this ambition, the chief

treats his wives like real beasts of burden. They work all day while “he walks around all day holding his belly up and talking and drinking palm-wine...”(p.162)

The women cannot do anything about the suffering they have to take under the men because among the Olinka, a man has life and death power over his wife. Such is the awkwardness of the woman’s position. If a man accuses one of his wives of witchcraft or infidelity , she is killed . This is the height of gender injustice - where one gender has the right to extinguish the life of a member of another gender.

The men discussed in this section all exude real patriarchal ideas and dogmatism. They are very enmeshed in the patriarchal thinking that they cannot allow a woman to surpass them or even be with them at par. This mentality is even exhibited in today’s men. In 1985, a researcher Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira and her assistant interviewed a man whose views demonstrate that men are still far from believing that women are their equals and not their inferiors. The man expressed the following sentiments:

We need to find out what was the position of women in different societies and order the women to go back there. We should go back to the origin of the world and see where God kept women. What position God gave women. Even the Bible says that men should love their wives but they must keep them in position and make them obey. Nothing will go wrong this way. If a woman wants anything she should live in the olden days, ask her husband in humility and submission. If women obey, we men shall love them and provide for them and they can only obey if they know their place..... Long ago before the women started demanding all those things like freedom, account books, title deeds, equality, etc. from men and wanting to leave their place, we had many blessings. Let everybody keep to this tradition. Women should stop ‘mwangango’ and ‘muhunguiko’ (i.e. restlessness, nervousness, aimlessness). They have everything except authority. Do not mix up traditions. Let the women go back to their tradition and we shall have a lot of blessings. (Kabira, W.M. & W. Njau’s “Barriers to women’s contribution to economic development: A case study of Kiambu district” Nairobi, 1985, unpublished, (p.72)

Such themes demonstrate that the myths of male rule are still in force in the contemporary society and are the reason behind the suppression and subjugation of women.

Through Nettie, Walker also manages to demonstrate that white women are also subject to this kind of male dominance. Nettie mentions a white missionary woman called Doris Baine who had lived in Africa for twenty years. She has even learned to speak the native languages. She is described as having been successful in her missionary work in all respects. Despite the achievements of such a female figure, she is not appreciated nor acknowledged as somebody who requires recognition similar to that of her male counterparts. Nettie is bitter about this fact:

My spirits sort of dropped after being at the society.
One very wall there was a picture of a white man.
Somebody called Speke, somebody called Livingstone.
Somebody called Daly, or was it Stanley? I looked for
a picture of the white woman but didn't see one.....(p.143)

When Shug and Celie are discussing the portraits on stamps, it is also apparently clear that white women are seldom recognized by their men. Although because the society is enmeshed in racism only the portraits of whites appear on stamps, these stamps have only white men on them. Celie says "Stamps look like stamps round here. White men with long hair" (p.123) When therefore Shug sees a stamp with a "little fat white woman" (p.123) - the queen, that is the greatest exception; unique in all perspectives.

Physical dehumanization of the human being be it on the basis of race, tribe, class or gender, definitely has psychological repercussions. On the aspect of race, among other effects, a member of the suppressed race may develop deep animosity towards any member of the oppressing group. This may also apply in the case of gender. Owing to the kind of injustices women are subjected to by their male counterparts which reduce women to lesser human beings or mere things, some women may develop enormous antipathy towards the male gender in general. This acute hatred for men may even give rise to inverted behaviour on the part of the woman. This is because such women develop a totally negative attitude towards the male gender and they would even seek emotional satisfaction from fellow women

and have nothing to do with men. Inversion may also be a deliberate strategy by the radical women to counter-attack male subjugation of the woman. The next section looks at lesbianism as a radical women's psychological weapon.

LESBIANISM AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL WEAPON

In The Color Purple, Alice Walker portrays those who indulge in perverted mannerisms such as lesbianism, as women whose perception of normalcy especially in male/female relationships has been inverted by the wickedness of the members of the female gender who perceive their lot to be suppressed subjected to by members of the male gender. Lesbianism as presented in The Color Purple is thus perceived as a psychological weapon against male suppression of the female and male dictatorship that goes with such suppression.

Celie has always been treated as an underdog and an inferior by the men she has encountered in her life. Celie has thus come to conclude that all men are the same. This could be one of the causes of her later inclinations towards lesbianism. When Celie is told by Reverend ____'s wife that the man she (Celie) is married to (Albert) is a fine looking , man, her feeling is that "Most times men look pretty much alike to me" (p.16); which harbours other connotations about the conditioned characteristics of men.

When Shug Avery makes her first visit to Albert's house, this is the beginning of Celie's lesbian inclinations. This time Shug Avery is ailing and Celie is the one who has to do almost everything for her. For instance Celie is the one who has to give Shug Avery her daily bath. It is during the first time she gives Shug a bath that Celie's lesbian emotions start to strengthen:

First time I got full sight of Shug Avery long black body
with its black nipples look like her mouth, I thought I
had turned into a man. (p.51)

Shug Avery's prolonged stay at Albert's house aggravates Celie's lesbianic inclinations. It is during such a time that Celie becomes totally anti-men in terms of

emotional relations. Celie derives emotional satisfaction from Shug, something she had never derived from any member of the male gender.

Celie's sexual life with Albert has been one devoid of satisfaction. She confesses to Shug Avery:

I don't like it at allHe git up on you heist your night gown round you 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. (p.81)

Sleeping with Shug Avery, Celie for the first time in her life starts to feel genuine sexual urges but in this case unique or perverted in that they are directed towards a fellow woman, Shug Avery: "Only time I feel something stirring down there is when I think about Shug. And that like running to the end of the road and it turn back on itself" (p.69).

Celie becomes very obsessed with Shug Avery such that she believes that her life "...stop with Mr ____ but start up again with Shug" (p.85). Looking at Shug Avery's bosom one day, Celie confesses that "I feel my nipples harden under my dress. My little button sort of perk up too" (p.85).

Celie comes to believe so much in Shug Avery that she sees the latter as the person who did the impossible in her (Celie's) life by making her feel emotional arousal and pleasure which she had never experienced before. Such obsession of Celie in Shug Avery makes Celie become possessive of Shug. Her possessiveness makes her jealous of anybody who might try to be close to Shug. The second time Shug Avery comes to Albert's house over Christmas, she has with her a man called Grady whom she introduces as her husband. When Celie hears that, she becomes greatly offended due to overwhelming jealousy on her part.:

The minute she say it I know I don't like Grady.
I don't like his shape, I don't like his teef, I dont
like his clothes. Seem like to me he smell
(p.113)

In later years when Shug puts up with a nineteen years' old boy, Germaine, in Arizona, Celie becomes almost totally disoriented and hurt because of the love she has for Shug. Celie becomes worried that Shug might not be loving her any more.

Shug's relationship with Germaine starts when Celie goes to fix the house after her step-father's death. Celie is bitter because of the fact that Shug is in love with a man while she (Celie) hates men.

Although Celie considers lesbianism to be a normal thing and not perverted as many people put it, other people perceived lesbianism as accidental and behaviour that is out of place. Sofia and Harpo for instance always try to get Celie up with some man: "They know I love Shug but they think womens love just by accident, anybody handy likely to do.....(p.267)

Celie's lesbianic inclinations in her later life are therefore to be seen as a result of psychological deprivation. She develops a negative attitude towards men and heterosexual relationships because of the kind of mistreatment she has been exposed to under men. Her lesbian inclinations are thus a result of psychological trauma. She was raped by her own step-father. When she was later taken by Albert, she was only to act as a caretaker of his children and as a sex object. Celie believes: "Nobody ever love me....."(p.117)

Celie therefore seems to find more understanding in Shug Avery. Shug comprehends Celie's feelings and, naturally, that is the start of a lesbian relationship between Celie and Shug. Celie confesses that sleeping with Shug Avery "feel like heaven is what it feel like, not like sleeping with Mr ____ at all" (p.119)

If her body has been devalued by the men in her life, Celie not only discovers her own sexuality in the relationship with Shug, but she also learns how to love another person. The recognition of herself as beautiful and loving is the first step toward Celie's independence and self acceptance. Thus, Walker's intention on the issue of lesbianism is nothing but to give the battered woman, Celie self-assurance. Whereas Celie learns how to become more self-reliant, Shug learns how to care and narture the others. Through this process of establishing a friendship between the two, both women become transformed.

Although there is no such issue as lesbianism in the works of Akiko Yosano, she was the first to glorify the female body. Against the critical world of the Meiji era (1852-1912) where the topic of the male/female body was the ultimate taboo, she defended sexuality, seeing the heterosexual union of lovers is as natural. Self-glorification had always been un-Japanese, yet Akiko proudly sang of her own body, “Submerged like some graceful lily/At the bottom of a spring.” Breasts had never been mentioned in tanka poems before Akiko’s heroine refers to them:

Softly I pushed open
That door
We call a mystery
These full breasts
Held in both my hands

In the tanka - poem No 16 of Midaregami, as another example, Akiko reads:
(The literal translation from Japanese to English)

Yuami suru.....Bathing
Izumi no soko noAt the bottom of the spring strong and
graceful
Sayuri bana.....lilies
hatachi no natsu o..... In the summer of the age of twenty
years
Utsukushi to miru.....Seeing so beautiful

The poetic translation in English otherwise is read:

In my bath
Submerged like some graceful lily
At the bottom of a spring
How beautiful
This body of twenty summers

Although, as we have demonstrated, lesbianism may be one way of fighting male dominance and patriarchal traditions, women are not just resorting to inversion as a means of protest but are becoming more actively involved even in actions that would literally assure them of their freedom. Women are asserting their humanity and are challenging the world order with regard to gender relations. They argue that the world order ought to change. These women exude a new image of woman. Women are breaking away from the shell of tradition in which they had been imprisoned. The following section looks at the new image of woman and consequently the notion of liberation as expressed in The Color Purple.

THE CONCEPT OF THE NEW WOMAN AND LIBERATION OF WOMEN

Although Alice Walker presents women as an oppressed lot, she demonstrates that despite the inclination and subjugation women have undergone in order to make them easy prey for men, women are nonetheless making efforts at liberating themselves. Although at the beginning most of these efforts are thwarted, with the perpetuation of such gallant efforts, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel when some of the despotic and conservative men begin to change their stand.

Sofia has been used in the novel as a symbol of defiance in women. She represents the new woman. Unlike her fellow docile womenfolk, Sofia does things her own way. Harpo complains that: "I tell her one thing, she do another. Never do what I say" (p,37).

Sofia is considered a rebellious woman. Even Celie notices that "she don't act like me at all. If she talking when Harpo and Mr ___ come in the room, she keep right on. When they ast her where something at, she say she don't know. Keep talking" (p.38). Sofia pities Celie who has to jump every time Mr ___ calls her. Thus Celie also believes that Harpo should beat Sofia if she is at all to become a good wife. At the beginning of the novel, Celie represents the obdurate women who

value even retrogressive traditions. Sofia represents a new crop of women who are ready to fight for their rights. For instance when Harpo decides to take Mr ____'s and Celie's advice that he flogs his wife, the contrary of every one's expectations happens. Sofia, a strong woman, beats up Harpo: "Next time us see Harpo his face a mess of bruises. His lip cut. One of his eyes shut like a fist. He walk stiff and say his teeth ache"(p.38)

Harpo is so ashamed of having been maimed by his defiant wife that he cheats that his bruises were as a result of not only having been maimed by a crazy mule in the field but also as a result of other forms of accidents such as hitting his eyes and also shutting the window down on his hand.

Sofia refuses to be a docile woman. Whenever Harpo tries to beat her up, she fights back. One of their fighting scenes is described thus:

They fighting like two mens. Every piece of furniture they got is turned over. Every plate look like it broke. The looking glass hang crooked, the curtains torn. The bed look like the stuffing pulled out. They don't notice. They fight. He try to slap her. She reach down and grab a piece of stove wood and whack him cross his eyes. He punch her in the stomach, she double over groaning but come up. He fall bam up gainst the stove. (p.39) with both hands lick right under his privates. He roll on the floor. He grab her dress tail and pull. She stand there in her slip. She never blink an eye. He jump up to put a hammer lock under her chin; she throw him over back. He fall bam up gainst the stove.(p.39)

Celie perceives Sofia as an epitome of a revolutionary women. She confesses to Sofia that she told Harpo to beat her (Sofia) because she (Celie) is "a fool..... I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't"(p.42). That is Sofia goes as far as fighting her husband and exhibit other defiant behaviour not expected of women, while Celie cannot do such things.

Sofia has been revolutionised and hardened by the hard life she experiences since childhood:

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 ain't safe in a family of men". (p.42)

Although she acknowledges that she loves her husband Harpo, Sofia cannot accept to be battered. Although she had to fight all through her life, Sofia never thought she would have to fight in her house. She is assertive. She swears she would kill her husband if he ever tries to beat her up.

She has witnessed the brutalization of women and she tries to assert herself in order to avoid the kind of plight the older generation of women faced. Sofia thus believes that women should change their attitude if at all they are to be recognized as full humans and not sub-humans who only deserve to be treated in a slave-like manner.

Sofia is perceived to be unwomanly such that she even does purposely masculine jobs like repairing a leaking roof. She is so 'unwomanly' that she makes her husband wish she were like any other docile woman. Harpo is satirized since his wife's unwomanliness even makes him cry. When Celie finds him crying one morning, Harpo confesses that Sofia is the cause:

I want her to do what I say, like you do for
pa..... When pa tell you to do
something, you do it, he say. When he say not
to, you don't. You don't do what he say, he
beat you..... But not Sofia. She do what
she want, don't pay me no mind at all. I try
to beat her, she black my eye. (P.66)

Sofia fathoms her rights and goes to any lengths to ensure that no one infringes on them.

When Harpo finds it impossible to make his wife sing to his tune, he is psychologically molested so he begins to over-eat as a psychological reaction.

Sofia is a no-nonsense woman. When the Mayor's wife, Miss Millie suggested that she (Sofia) would make a good maid for her, Sofia declined rudely. The Mayor then intervened and rebuked Sofia for being rude to his wife. When Sofia repeated the same rude remark "Hell no" that she had given in response to Miss Millie's request, the Mayor slapped her. In retaliation Sofia knocked the Mayor down. Sofia is seen to be a woman who will always retaliate to any physical

or verbal assault no matter from whom. The Mayor's wife is a white woman who is embedded in racial dominance. She thinks that every lowly woman of the purportedly inferior race deserves to be only a maid.

As a result of assaulting the Mayor and his wife, Sofia is jailed. The Sheriff calls her "a crazy woman" (p.91) simply because she knows her rights and is ready to fight for them. Harpo's father also supports the Sheriff in that not only does Sofia come from a family of crazy people but she is also bound to behave the way she did because she is after all a woman.

In prison, Sofia is tortured mercilessly. Celie says:

They crack her skull, they crack her ribs.
They tear nose loose on one side. They blind
her one eye. She swole from head to foot.
Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out
tween her teef like a piece of rubber. She
can't talk. And she just about the color of an
egg plant. (p.91/92)

Sofia is arrested and subjected to inhuman torture simply because she is a black person who had had the audacity to assault a white person. Worse than that, she is a woman who had assaulted not only a woman of a purported superior race but also a man of a superior race. In prison, Sofia is also overworked. She washed prison clothes; that is, dirty convict uniforms, sheets and blankets from five to eight; for fifteen hours daily.

It is only in prison that Sofia is forced to act like an obedient woman: "Every time they ast me to do something, Miss Celie, I act like I'm you. I jump right up and do just what they say"(p.93).

Sofia is imprisoned for twelve years for a crime that is objectively speaking not too serious. But to the whites this is one of the greatest crimes, as it involves the humiliation of not only a superior (a white woman) but a superior-superior (a white man) by an alleged inferior (a black woman)

Sofia is defiant against the whites. Whatever job she is told to do in Miz Millie's house, she calls it 'slaving'. While she is working at the Mayor's house,

Sofia has to work all day. She is hardly allowed to see her children. She is only allowed to see her children once after five years of total denial!

Sofia is an informed woman who believes that her way is as good as anybody else's, plus it is her's. She demonstrates her defiance and emancipation from outdated traditions when she insists on being a pall-bearer of her mother's coffin when the mother dies. Sofia comes from a family where the younger family members are mentally liberated. Celie claims that Sofia's brothers always stood by their purported 'crazy sisters' (p.228) thus they also support them in the issue of pall-bearing.

Sofia's revolutionary nature eventually changes her husband to the extent that Harpo not only consents to washing dishes, cooking and doing little things around the house but even comes to like such domestic chores labelled womanly.

Despite the fact that Sofia is presented from the beginning as symbolizing defiance and the theme of the new woman, the latter theme is revealed mostly through Celie and her gradual awakening albeit through the influence of such defiant female characters as Sofia, who is instrumental in the moulding of Celie into what she (Celie) exudes in the later parts of the novel, and Shug Avery.

At the beginning Celie is the very epitome of docility as was expected of a woman by the men. Celie is so traditional and indoctrinated that she keeps on advising Harpo to beat up his wife. Celie is so conditioned that she believes that her mistreatment by members of the male gender is God-ordained and that although life on earth may abound with molestation and woes of all kinds, she anticipates joy and merry in the life-here-after. So she is a fatalist who believes that the man-made woes she is made to undergo are her destiny. To such an attitude the defiant Sofia tells her "You ought to bash Mr ___ head open.....Think about heaven later"(p.44)

Celie is so subjugated that she calls her husband 'sir', implying that she sees her husband to be well above her. Her relationship with her husband is like that of an employee to a boss, or more appropriately, of a slave to a slave-driver.

By watching aggressive women such as Sofia, Celie comes to understand that sometimes she is oppressed for no good reason. Telling Harpo about Mr ___ Celie

says: “sometime beat me any howly, I say, whether I do what he say or not” (p.66). Celie thus undergoes some awakening which grows into a transformation.

When writing to her sister Nettie, Celie states: “I don’t write to God no more, I write to you” (p.199). It is because Celie feels that God does not understand her plight - he is a blind and deaf god. Celie feels that God is an unfair God who has given her a lynched father, a crazy mother, a low down dog of a step-father and a sister she probably would never see again. Celie is also becoming sensitized on gender matters, she feels God is an unjust God because he is a male God who behaves like all other men:

(. the God I have been praying and writing
to is a man. And act just like all other mens I
know. Trifling, forgetful and low down. (p.199)

Celie argues that if “God ever listened to poor colored women the world would be a different place”.(p.200) Both Celie and Shug Avery tend to think that had God been female, ‘she’ might have been considerate and loving; and ready to solve the many woes of this world.

Apart from Sofia, Shug Avery and Celie’s sister Nettie sensitize Celie on her rights to such extent that eventually Celie decides to leave Albert’s home for Shug’s . Albert cannot believe his ears when Celie says she wants to leave his house. He takes it as a womanly joke but when Celie demonstrates her seriousness on that matter, Albert decides to use his masculine ‘superiority’ to intimidate Celie. But when he says Celie will only leave his house over his dead body and that Celie should be happy and indeed rejoice over being in that home, Celie answers rudely: “You a low down dog is what’s wrong. It’s time to leave you and enter into the creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need” (p.207). Mr ___ cannot believe his ears - he cannot believe getting such a remark from a wife he has known to be very soft-spoken, timid and docile.

Celie goes on to accuse Harpo of being over-bearing to his wife causing her the problem she had had with the Mayor: Celie tells Harpo that if he had not tried to rule over Sofia, the white folks would never have caught her and mistreated her the way they did.

In a moment of fury Celie speaks her mind. Talking about the children she was made to take care of by Albert, Celie says: “you was all rotten children..... You made my life a hell on earth. And your daddy here ain’t dead horse’s shit”(p.207). This remark infuriates Mr ____ so much so that he tries to stop Celie. But Celie is now a changed Celie who is ready to defend her rights. She jabs a knife into Albert’s hand.

After Celie insists on leaving Albert’s house, Albert still tries to use all means to blackmail her. For instance he tells her that she would not get even a penny or a dime from him. To this Celie answers: “Did I ever ast you for money? I say I never ast you for nothing. Not even for your sorry hand in marriage ” (p.209). Such remarks from Celie reflects on her transformation. This is not the Celie we have always known. She has undergone a kind of metamorphosis, some kind of mental growth.

When Celie leaves for Memphis with Shug Avery, her lesbian inclination blossoms fully such that she sees lesbianism as a way of fighting male dominance and discrimination of women. In Memphis Celie learns how to make a living for herself by making pants. Like Shug, she becomes a woman who does not depend on any man for a livelihood.

Celie is indeed different in Memphis. She is a far cry from the Celie who was at Mr ____’s house. She acknowledges: “I am so happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time.....” (p.222)

Celie enunciates bitterly the kind of frustrations she undergoes as a woman. It is through Celie that the meaning of the title The Color Purple becomes clear. With her eventual awakening, to her, the color purple becomes the colour of liberation. The purple flowers in the field signify joy and freedom just like Walker’s mother who loved to create her garden full of purple lavender for her emotional relief from the harsh labour for the white land owner. She battled with the white landlord who suggested that her children did not need to go to school. For Walker, her mother is the image of a freedom fighter and the color purple is the symbol of emancipation.

While in Memphis and involved in the business of making pants, Celie says: "I'm busy making pants for Sofia now. One leg be purple, one leg be red. I dream Sofia wearing these pants, one day she was jumping over the moon." (p.223)

That Celie dreams of Sofia jumping over the moon reflects on not just people doing the impossible, but women doing the impossible. It reflects on a new era of liberated women who are ready to engage in enterprises or undertakings in order to gain economic and social independence which were considered impossible or even masculine and unwomanly.

That Celie dreams about Sofia doing the impossible also reflects on the fact that Celie sees Sofia as her mentor towards emancipation from male bondage. Sofia indeed plays a major role in making Celie what she is at the end of the novel. Sofia not only contributes greatly in the awakening of Celie but in the latter's eventual total emancipation from the manacles of male dominance and subjugation..

Another key metaphor in The Color Purple is "quilt making". As the color purple is used as a symbol of awakening of a feminist, Walker expresses through "quilt making" a group activity and creativity of black women making something new and beautiful from pieces discarded by others. Quilt making is represented as peace-making with the disturbed Sofia: "Let's make quilt pieces out of these messed up curtains, Sofia say. And I run git my pattern book . I sleep like a baby now" (p.44). Not only does the shared sewing bring peace to Celie, it helps women to be united and they no longer allow their men to divide them. When Shug recovers slowly, she even asks Celie "How do you sew this damn thing?"(p.59) and she joins in quilt making: "I hand her the square I am working on, start another one, she sew long crooked stitches, remind me of that little crooked tune she sing" (p.59), stressing communal work allowing parallels of different art forms. Shug soon donates her yellow dress and Celie decides to call it a "sisters choice" (p.61) which symbolizes the emerging understanding and love to transform discarded pieces into beauty as Walker's metaphors transform her message into art.

When Celie leaves Albert's house, this serves as a kind of lesson for him in that when Celie visits him later during Sofia's mother's funeral, he has really

changed. He now works very hard and even engages in duties which were considered feminine:

He out there is the fields from sun-up to sun-down.
And clean that house just like a woman,
Even cook..... And what more, wash the
dishes when he finish. (p.229)

This draws a picture of a man who is a far cry from the Albert we knew initially. He has come to realize the mistakes he made in life and is beginning to shed some of his male dominant mental attitudes. Albert begins to realize that all along he was mistaken. Thus Albert begins to see the light in terms of matters related to gender roles and position.

Unlike in the beginning when Albert used to treat Celie like his slave or maid, when Celie visits him later after having left for Memphis, Albert is actually scared of her. Celie feels good about this new attitude Albert has developed towards her since he has realized his mistakes -: "Let him feel what I felt" (p.230).

When Celie left Albert, the latter was psychologically traumatized for a long time. Alice Walker employs this scenario to disapprove the myth that men are tough and that matters related to human emotions such as the breaking off of a love relationship cannot affect them much.

Celie started realizing that her rights were being infringed while at Albert's house. With that realization she developed a strong dislike for Albert even before she left for Memphis. Celie reveals this fact when she tells this to Albert in later years when she visits Henrietta. She tells Albert that she started making pants not in Memphis but right there in Albert's house: "I really started it right here in your house to keep from killing you" (p.261).

With time Celie becomes bold. Celie comes to hate men and all that is associated with men. For instance she even comes to hate the idea of any woman getting pregnant: "I tried to work on some new pants I,m trying to make for pregnant women but just the thought of anybody getting pregnant make me want to cry" (p.261).

Celie has thus become revolutionised. She is the embodiment of a new woman who has reached the apex of psychological growth. The psychological

strength and maturity which Celie exudes towards the end of the novel even influences members of the male gender such as Albert. Albert for instance even agrees to be taught by Celie how to sew, an activity which as a male dominator he had always associated with members of the female gender.

Apparently, although Celie is presented as docile at the beginning of the novel, her daughter Olivia who is growing up under the care of a missionary couple is her very opposite. She is stubborn and is always where boys are doing "boy" (p.162) things. At a tender age, Olivia sees the similarity between the denial of education for the girls among the Olinka and the denial of education for the colored people in America. Olivia is bitter that a girl like Tashi could be denied education simply because she is a woman. She thus secretly teaches Tashi all that she (Olivia) has learned at school. Olivia thus like Tashi's aunt and like Sofia represents the kind of aggressiveness and awareness of one's inalienable rights which the author of The Color Purple cherishes..

The presence of Corrine and Nettie, informed women, in Africa indeed enables and facilitates the sensitization of not only young women whom they reach such as Tashi or Corrine's foster daughter Olivia, but even the sensitization of boys and men to accept girls such as Olivia and Tashi in class and the education of women in general. The presence of Corrine and Nettie eventually helps more mothers to send their daughters to school. Nonetheless men demonstrate obduracy in terms of acceptance of education of girls. Men do not like the idea of educating girls simply because they argue that it is not wise to have a woman who knows everything her husband knows.

In one of her letters to Celie, Nettie writes about a white missionary woman who symbolizes the liberated women. Nettie met this woman in a ship on their way to England. At sixty-five she had never been married. Although she had been born in the splendour and glamour of a wealthy family, she always wanted to be free-minded. For instance she wants to write books but her family was totally opposed to it. They hoped that she would get married but she refused to be chained to such traditions that always insist that women must be married:

They did every thing to convince me, she

said..... I never saw so many milk fed young men in all my life as when I was nineteen and twenty. Each one more boring than the last. Can anything be more boring than the last. Can anything be more boring than an upper class English man?.....They remind me of bloody mushroom. (p.235)

This is a woman who demonstrated mental liberation. She decides to pursue her interest - writing - by all means she could. Thus she joined the missionary society not because she liked it, but simply in order to get the opportunity to get far away from her family and thus continue with her interest. She thus: "Fooled her parents, fooled the missionary society, who were so taken by her quick command of languages they sent her to Africa..... where she began writing novels about everything under the sun" (p.236). She uses a pet name (Jared Hunt) and spends most of her time shooting wild game.

Doris Baines is one woman who has achieved a lot. As a missionary she assisted the heathens in many ways and also built a hospital, a grammar school, a college and other infrastructure.

Doris appeared so eccentric to the Africans who were suspicious that she might not be a woman after all and that the chief even presented her with a couple of wives. She was a mystery to the villagers. What she did to the two wives given to her is to educate them to the highest level possible. She sent them to England to learn medicine and agriculture. When they returned home she gave them away in marriage and became the grandmother of their children. Doris thus demonstrated awakening and development-mind in terms of women's progress in all facets. This is because by educating the two women, they would in return help the village. The Agriculturist would help the village improving their farming methods. Harold's mother, the doctor, would help curb such hazardous and inhumane traditions as female circumcision which were practised by the Akweans.

Shug Avery is presented as a liberated woman who does things her own way. She has broken away from traditions. Albert alleges that Shug acts more manly than most men. She is outrightly honest and speaks her mind. Albert compares Shug to

Sofia who will always fight for what is her's and "she is bound to live her life and be herself no matter what" (p.276).

The author also reflects on the theme of women liberation through other characters who are only mentioned in the novel. For Samuel's aunt Althea and Corrine's aunt Theodosia join a Seminary that was started by two coloured women who were interested in the education of girls. The two women who started the Seminary indeed promoted the emancipation of girls in that the Seminary later developed into a place where girls were taught everything; reading, writing, sewing, cleaning, cooking etc.. This Seminary helped women as Celie puts it:

No sooner had a young woman got through Spelman Seminary than she began to put her hand to whatever work she could do for her people, anywhere in the world.(p.241)

In a sense then, the Seminary helped women in grasping their potential and in breaking away from the male oppression that had always glued them to particular roles and places in the society.

Thus, Alice Walker in The Color Purple just like in her other work In Search Of Our Mother's Garden screams out her defiance to the portrayal of meek and submissive Black women characters in Black literature. She recognizes that Black women through out the world are human life-recorders and educators as they reflect the urgency of sharing their talent. Walker questions the tenacious need by Black writers, male and female, to confine Black women in stereotypes of negativity. Walker explains in In Search of Our Mother's Garden:

Black women are called in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, "the mule of the world" because we have been handed the burden that everyone else refused to carry. We have also been called "Matriarch", "Super woman", and "mean and evil bitches"..... When we have pleaded for understanding, our character has been distorted..... To be an artist and a black woman even today, lowers our status in many respects rather than rises it Therefore we must fearlessly put out of

ourselves and look at and identify with our lives and living creativity some of our great-grandmothers were not allowed to know. (p.237).

Alice Walker allows her Black women characters to have such creativity. This creativity is seen most poignantly in her novel The Color Purple. Celie, who seems like a typical beast of burden is discussed so dramatically. She grows each consecutive day and eventually becomes a radiant, powerful Black female figure who uses her voice to tell her story and reserve the right for other Black women to be heard. Celie, a young, seemingly plain woman is raped and impregnated by her step-father. Her children are sold to another Black family, and Celie is quickly married off to a ruthless farmer named Mr _____. In this relationship Celie is stifled. She loses all ambition to be a woman to demand the freedom of her own life. Only through the hands and guidance of another Black woman, Sofia does Celie evolve into a powerful, thoughtful Black female character. She accepts and blossoms into full "womanliness". Celie's recognition has been negated for so long as a worthwhile human being that she has been initiated back into life. She was stripped of all aspects of her femininity - she was violated, robbed of her children and then forced into a life of servitude and silence by the men in her life. Walker graciously gives the life back to Celie as she regains her self-respect and grows in her friendship with other women. She also reunites with her children, triumphantly showing Walker to successfully develop the character of Celie, not just showing her weaknesses, but her ability to turn these weaknesses into positive and affirmative personal characteristics.

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CHAPTER TWO

GENDER, CULTURE AND FREEDOM: THE POSITION OF THE WOMAN IN A MUSLIM SOCIETY AS IN MARIAMA BA'S SO LONG A LETTER.

So Long a Letter is a novel which adopts the form of a long letter written by a recently widowed Ramatoulaye to her bosom and childhood friend Aissatou who has also undergone marital woes that are similar to the former's. Ramatoulaye demonstrates how she is able to persevere the indignity perpetrated against her by her husband Modou Fall. Having been married to Modou Fall for twenty-five years and borne him twelve children, Ramatoulaye recounts her grief when her husband later decides to marry a second wife, Binetou, who is not only the age-mate of, but also the best friend of their daughter Daba. After marrying Binetou, Modou rejects Ramatoulaye and her children and thus the latter is forced to bring up the children on her own.

Although Modou Fall gravely betrays Ramatoulaye by marrying a second wife who is just a child, Ramatoulaye still confesses her love for him. Therefore, unlike her friend Aissatou who, faced with a similar situation, opted for divorce, Ramatoulaye still prefers to remain as Modou's wife despite the fact that Modou does not assist her and the children in any way.

When Modou Fall dies, Ramatoulaye has to do all the rituals expected of a widowed Muslim woman. It is after the husband's death that Ramatoulaye reflects on the wicked nature of Muslim men who are out to compete for her even during the mourning period.

THE PREDICAMENT OF A MUSLIM WOMAN

In many societies all over the world, religion and "what is right" have been inextricably linked with traditions, and the religious leaders tend to trumpet the old ways as the only ones compatible with religion and virtue. And indeed, like any

other religion-oriented society, innovation is traditionally evil in the Muslim world so that people are likely to heed their religious leaders. What is special about Islam nonetheless in relation to women, is the degree to which matters relating to women's status have either been legislated by the Koran, which believing Muslims regard as the literal word of God as revealed to the Prophet, or by subsequent legislation - derived from interpretations, balanced or lopsided - of the Koran and the traditional sayings of the prophet. Thus, innovators in these, as in many other matters, have to deal not merely with some customary belief that may be relatively easily replaced by another, once the newer belief becomes more functional, but also with the heart of religion, which is the holy law or "Sharia". It is this Sharia law that has been the yardstick by which the Muslim women such as Ramatoulaye or Aissatou have been subjugated.

In Islamic law, for example, women have male guardians. A woman's testimony is considered to be worth half that of a man. Women are considered to have less reason than men. Most importantly, injunctions of obedience of women to men and the legitimacy of marrying up to four wives are enshrined in the Koran. It is against this background that the predicament of the female characters in So Long A Letter should be seen.

Ramatoulaye asserts that her problem as a wife were rooted in Modou, her husband. Modou is depicted as a womanizer. He was even seducing his own daughter's (Daba) best friend, Binetou behind the back of Ramatoulaye. He never even mentioned to Ramatoulaye his eventual decision to marry Binetou. Even the wedding was done in secrecy and to add insult to injury, Modou only sent his brothers and the Imam (who represents religion) to break the news to Ramatoulaye. The news came as a great shock to Ramatoulaye.

Binetou is married to Modou when she is simply an adolescent. Modou uses his wealth to win Binetou. He buys her very expensive off-the-peg dresses. When Modou proposes to marry Binetou, the latter's parents hastily withdraw her from school. As a daughter, a woman is thus seen as a victim that can be used even to serve the whims of her ill-intentioned or self-centred parents.

Binetou represents many Muslim women who traditionally lack freedom of choice regarding basic life decisions. In most cases, a girl's parents decide whether and for how long she goes to school. Most Muslim girls sent to modern schools even in the second half of the twentieth century are pulled from school soon before or upon puberty, secluded more closely than before, and married off to men with whom they may not have been acquainted (the latter part compares well with young Nabou's marriage to Mawdo; discussed later in this chapter), with childhood freedom and career plans crushed. Such girls return to a traditional pattern of subordination to husband and mother-in-law, breeding and child-care, and experience strict limits on outside activities.

Binetou's mother represents the old-fashioned woman who believes that a woman should make maximum use of her good looks during her youth. She is a woman who desires to escape from mediocrity and who regrets so much the fading of her past beauty that she greatly envies Daba, daughter of rich Modou. Binetou is thus encouraged to marry her "Sugar Daddy" so that her ambitious mother gets a proper house from the son-in-law and thus has a life with a happy ending. Binetou is a lamb sacrificed at the altar of mere material pursuit. The parents do not care about Binetou's true feelings for Modou and they do not care that their son-in-law-to-be is in fact fit to be Binetou's father. All they care about is their perverted ambition of getting rich quickly.

The irony of the whole scenario is that even Daba, Binetou's friend and classmate does not know that the "Sugar Daddy" Binetou always talks about is her (Daba's) own father. So when Daba explains to her mother Ramatoulaye about the problem her (Daba's) friend Binetou has in connection with a certain Sugar Daddy not even Ramatoulaye bears the slightest suspicion that he could as well be her husband Modou!

The outrageous fact is that Ramatoulaye is informed of Modou's marriage to Binetou after the wedding ceremony had already taken place. Those who come to inform her are: Modou's brother Tamsir, Mawdo(ex-husband of Aissatou) and the local Imam (elder of Muslim church). When these three come to the house, Ramatoulaye's supposition is that they have merely come to look for Modou to carry

out an important task that one of them had been charged with; but later when they start making preliminary talks that can precede the announcement of either a happy event or an unhappy one and Ramatoulaye asks about Modou, it is then that the Imam first breaks the news very hastily; in Ramatoulaye's words; as if the words were glowing embers in her mouth:

Yes, Modou Fall, but, happily, he is alive for you, for all of us, thanks be to God. All he had done is to marry a second wife today. We have just come from the Mosque in Grand Dakar where the marriage took place. (p.37)

The Imam talks in a manner that suggests that marrying a second wife without the knowledge of the first wife is just a very trivial matter with no cause for alarm. It is as casual as buying oneself a second pair of shoes in order to replace the old and worn-out first pair of shoes. This may be because polygamy is sanctioned by the Koran. Tamsir even goes on to justify Modou's second marriage as God's plan:

Modou sends his thanks. He says it is fate that decides men and things: God intended him to have a second wife, there is nothing he can do about it. He praises you for the quarter of a century marriage in which you gave him all the happiness a wife owes her husband....
(p.37)

This only demonstrates how men can misuse the name of God to justify their wicked deeds. To argue that God totally controls ones deeds that one may not escape from eventuality, is to argue that the rational faculty bestowed upon man by God to use in order to make good judgement is of no consequence. This can never be true.

The way Modou married Binetou without giving Ramatoulaye the slightest hint reflects on utter ingratitude on the part of Modou for what Ramatoulaye had done for him for a full twenty-five years. Tamsir, Mawdo and Imam try to assure Ramatoulaye and assuage her fear by arguing that no matter how many wives Modou marries, being the first wife, Ramatoulaye is a mother and a friend for Modou. But Ramatoulaye feels betrayed by a husband in whom she had bestowed her faith for a quarter of a century. Even if Modou had intended to marry a second wife, he should

have informed Ramatoulaye just as a matter of courtesy. Instead, he only left the house saying that he should not be expected for lunch..... Ramatoulaye thought that her husband was engaged in a very serious business venture yet, Modou was only going to the mosque to get married to Binetou. Modou thus represents the type of men who believe in male superiority and who therefore think that a woman is just a mere non-entity who should have no say in anything concerning her husband. Such men view women as inferior who would be better off by accepting their lowly position and not questioning anything to do with their male superiors.

Ramatoulaye laments about the traditions she has been suffering, unsuspected that all she did enabled Modou to please his second wife-to-be:

Every night when he went out he would unfold
and try on several of this suits before settling
on one. The others, impatiently rejected, would
slip to the floor. I would have to fold them again
and put them back in their places; and this extra-work,
I discovered, I was doing only to help him in his effort
to be elegant in his seduction of another woman. (p.38)

Even after the news of her husband's second marriage has been broken to her, Ramatoulaye does not have the foggiest idea as to who her rival could be. Ramatoulaye's greatest disappointment enamates from the fact that she is henceforth to share a husband with a girl the age of her own daughter.

When Daba learns that Binetou's "Sugar Daddy" was after all Modou, her (Daba's) real father, she is infuriated, her pride wounded.

As Ramatoulaye argues, Binetou, like many other girls was a sacrificial lamb, that is, she had to get married to a man the age of her father in order to elevate her parents from their poverty. Modou had promised Binetou's parents a villa, a monthly allowance and had also offered a future trip to Mecca.

Traditionally, many Muslim women faced an eventuality similar to Binetou's. For example under the customary law existing in Arabia after the advent of Islam, women as a general rule had virtually no legal status. They were sold into marriage by their guardians for a price paid to the guardians.

On learning that Binetou, her classmate and best friend is now her own step-mother, Daba in great anger, advises her mother to separate from Modou. Daba sees her father's action as the worst kind of insult not only her mother Ramatoulaye but also she (Daba) could be accorded the same by Modou:

Break with him, mother, send this man way.
He has respected neither you nor me.... I can't
see you fighting over a man with a girl my age. (p.39)

Ramatoulaye's neighbour, Farmata also shares Daba's sentiments although in a way that reeks of patriarchal thinking:

There is a saying that discord here may be luck
elsewhere. Why are you afraid to make the break?
A woman is like a ball; once a ball is thrown,
no one can predict where it will bounce.
You have no control over where it rolls, and even
less over who gets it. Often it is grabbed
by an unexpected hand.....(p.40)

Farmata is a woman who having been fed on patriarchal thinking, perceives fate as the controller of women's lives in respect to the man they will get for marriage. By comparing a woman to a ball she indeed brings out the negative effect of comparing a woman to a mere tool, an object which should not worry itself over who will use it. In that regard Farmata also shares some archaic beliefs. She might have undergone some form of indoctrination. Her attitude towards issues pertaining to the female gender such as the one mentioned only go a long way to demonstrate the kind of effect patriarchal education has had on female minds with relation to females themselves.

Although Ramatoulaye is advised to quit her marital home and divorce her husband, Ramatoulaye considers her age and her looks and it is apparent that youth was deserting her body. Ramatoulaye complains that whereas women accept the situation when youth has already left them, their male counterparts on the other hand do not accept that they too have grown old. Thus when women grow old, their male partners who see themselves as young, look for other younger women:

Whereas a woman draws from the passing years
the force of her devotion despite the ageing of her
companion, a man on the other hand, restricts his

field of tenderness. His egoisting eye looks over his partner's shoulder. He compares what he had with what he no longer has, what he has with what he could have. (p.41)

Men thus view women as mere objects which could outlive their usefulness at one time.

Ramatoulaye nonetheless refuses to be enveloped with bitterness as she realizes that doing so would only worsen the situation by bringing her a nervous breakdown. Ramatoulaye compares her situation with that of Jacqueline, an Ivorian christian who married Samba Diack, a Senegalese Muslim against her parents' wishes. Jacqueline suffered a nervous breakdown as she was only coldly welcomed in her new home. Her husband made her frustrations worsen by chasing after Senegalese women. Among Diack's personal belongings, Jacqueline would find love notes, check stubs bearing names of the payees, bill for restaurants and for hotel rooms; definitely a proof of his misconduct. Jacqueline lost weight and often complained of a lump in her chest, under her left breast. Many doctors tried to see the cause of the lump and whatever medicine was prescribed, the pain in her heart remained. She had to be admitted in a hospital and all kinds of tests were done on her. Finally one of the doctors in the neurology department discovered that Jacqueline was only suffering from a nervous breakdown, depression and that there was nothing wrong with her. Moreover, since like many other societies where women are only viewed as reproductive gadgets, in order to fulfil this duty, Jacqueline had had her babies too soon after each other. Every birth of a child is argued to have the effect of sapping a woman's vital energy. Frequent births thus have the negative effect of leading to a nervous breakdown as the vital source of energy has not had time to be replaced.

When Jacqueline discovered the cause of her suffering, she was morally uplifted and she refused to be a victim of depression. Likewise, Ramatoulaye refuses to heed the advice of those who feel that she should break with Modou. She decides to stay. To Ramatoulaye, breaking with Modou will be an acknowledgement of

defeat. Ramatoulaye takes this decision against her children's wish. The children wanted her to leave Modou and they were really angered when she took a decision which was contrary to her desire.

Although Ramatoulaye decided to stay at Modou's place after the latter's second marriage, Modou avoided her. He decided to stay with his new wife at a separate residence. He valued his new wife more than Ramatoulaye. Besides, he feared that by visiting his children and Ramatoulaye, he might easily have made his new wife run away. So he decided to ignore Ramatoulaye and the children: "He never came again; his new found happiness gradually swallowed up his memory of us. He forgot about us." (p.46)

After Modou deserts his first family, Ramatoulaye has to undertake all the burden for her family including the financial problems. Although Ramatoulaye did not opt for a break with Modou, the latter loses complete interest in her and cuts off all contact. Ramatoulaye thus gets a solution the children wanted ---a break without having taken the initiative.

Ramatoulaye tries to fight fleeting moments of loneliness. At one time she wishes another man could replace Modou in her life. Ramatoulaye is sustained by not only her love for the children but the love with which the children show her. Ramatoulaye is forced to lead a rather lowly life, unlike before. For example she and her children have to use the crowded public means of transportation while Modou owned a fleet of cars. Nonetheless Aissatou, Ramatoulaye's long term friend, gets her out of this problem by purchasing her a car. Ironically, although Modou is no longer interested in Ramatoulaye, when he gets to hear that the latter owns a car, he is very inquisitive. Unbelieving, he inquires into the source of the car.

Although, as we had argued before, Binetou is merely a sacrificial lamb for the sake of her parents' selfish ambitions, she however is, to blame in accepting to be Modou's second wife. It is Binetou's mother who initiated the relationship out of her own volition before he decided to take advantage of the status of their daughter's patron. Binetou therefore in a way represents the type of women who see themselves as mere tools, gadgets, flowers which could use their attractiveness to make ends meet. Like items at the auction, they should go to the highest bidder.

Modou on the other hand uses his immense affluence to keep Binetou but although the latter is happy that she got married to a rich man, she is however embarrassed and thus not satisfied. She envies younger couples who might not be rich but still very happy:

... She was showing off to the young people and wanted to impress them with her form of success....
But when the moment of admiration passed, she was the one who lowered her head at the sight of couples graced with nothing but their youth and rich in their happiness alone.(p.50)

By watching her friends, the image of Binetou's life which she had killed, broke her heart.

After Modou's death, other repulsive traditions in respect to women are revealed. Ramatoulaye asserts that a muslim woman is like a thing to her family-in-law. While undergoing the funeral rites during Modou's funeral, Ramatoulaye confesses that:

This is the moment dreaded by every Senegalese woman, the moment when she sacrifices her possessions as gifts to her family-in-law ; and worse still, beyond her possessions she gives up her personality, her dignity, becoming a thing in the service of the man who has married her, his grandfather, his grandmother, his father, his mother, his brother, his sister, his uncle, his aunt, his male and female cousins, his friend.
Her behaviour is conditioned.....(p.4)

Women are also viewed as mere accessories that could be passed from one hand to the other. For example Tamsir, Modou's younger brother and Daouda Dieng, Ramatoulaye's former suitor do not wait until the mourning period is over before they declare their desire to marry Ramatoulaye. This society is embedded on traditions such as wife-inheritance which reduces a woman to a mere property which can move from one person to the other. The society does not care about the woman's feelings on such a matter. Ramatoulaye rejects both Tamsir's and Daouda Dieng's proposals.

Before Daouda Dieng tells Ramatoulaye about his intention to marry her, the encounter between the two brings out an elaborate discussion on the position of women in this particular society. Daouda Dieng is a deputy at the National Assembly which allowed only four women as members. She thus calls it a “male assembly.” (p.60) Daouda Dieng’s answer as to why it is important to have fewer women in the Assembly reeks of male superiority. He argues that a woman can never be trusted with anything: “But you women, you are like mortar shells. You demolish. You destroy. Imagine a large number of women in the Assembly. Why, everything would explode, go up in flames.” (p.60) Women are thus seen as child-like in behaviour. The more they are around anything or anywhere, the more destruction is to occur.

Ramatoulaye laments that after twenty years of independence there is yet to be a female minister. With relation to national leadership, women have virtually been marginalised. Ramatoulaye also laments that when it comes to education, male children are given priority before the female children are considered.

Aissatou is also another woman who undergoes experiences that are similar to Ramatoulaye’s. Aissatou’s husband Mawdo is pressurised, actually blackmailed by his mother into marrying a second wife against his wish. Mawdo’s mother, old Nabou, had never loved Aissatou as her daughter-in-law simply because she was a goldsmith’s daughter while she (Nabou) was of royal birth - a princess. Old Nabou thus always thought of a way of dislodging Aissatou from her wifehood to Mawdo. Young Nabou becomes the object for old Nabou’s revenge. Like Binetou therefore, young Nabou becomes a mere victim of circumstances who is used in order to satisfy old Nabou’s wicked desires. Forced marriages such as that of young Nabou to Mawdo or Binetou to Modou were also part and parcel of the traditional Japanese culture. In Midaregami (Tangled Hair), Akiko Yosano reflects on such a scenario while referring to her own experience. During the Meiji period, young people were forced to conceal their real feelings. “To love” was considered a kind of crime. The youth were therefore obliged to look calm even if they were madly in love. It was of no consequence even if a young man and woman loved each other since at the end of everything, a spouse for the young person was selected by the parents of the couple.

Tekkan, who later came to marry Akiko experienced such a marriage. Tomiko, Tekkan's first wife was obligated by her parents to marry him simply because Tekkan was a businessman and Tomiko's father like many other parents at that time, was materialistic. Tomiko did not love Tekkan but had to obey. Akiko's tanka-poem, thirty one syllables arranged in the 5 - 7 - 5 - 7 - 7 - pattern, No. 89 is a protest against this tradition. Akiko herself does not succumb to this tradition which she considers backward. Therefore, she goes for Tekkan, a man whom she loves rather than the one whom tradition expects her to love. It reads as follows:

Omowazuya.....Don't you think (about love)?
 Yeme negawazu yaDon't you want love?
 Wakoodo yo.....You, young men
 Moyuru kuchibiru.....These red lips
 Kimi nito you
 Utsurazuya.....unreflected?

The above is the literal translation from Japanese to English which otherwise poetically means:

You, young men!
 Don't you think about love?
 (Don't you) want love?
 Are you blind
 To these red lips ?

In tanka-poem 7, "Michi wo Toku Kimi, (One who preaches morality), Akiko expresses her feelings for Tekkan suggesting that she is a young woman with a beautiful body:

Yawahada no.....Soft flesh
 Atsuki chishio niThrobbing blood
 furemo mide.....Yet to be touched
 Sabishikarazuya.....Not lonely?
 Michi wo toku kimi.....You, expounder of the Way (Morality of
 Confucianism)

The poetical translation otherwise reads as follows:

You have yet to touch
 This soft flesh
 This throbbing blood—
 Are you not lonely
 Expounder of the Way?

In tanka 121, Akiko mentions another injustice against women inherent in the traditions. The tradition sanctioned men's amorous adventures yet it was very rigid and hostile towards women who may have harboured similar intentions. Akiko argues that it was even expected of a wife not to be jealous of her husband's affairs. Because of such a tradition, some wives were even on friendly terms with their husbands concubines. It is alleged that such a wife and concubine were well spoken of, however in tanka 121, Akiko bravely declares that she is simply jealous, revealing her own feelings when her husband, when her husband, Tekkan tells her the stories of his pleasure he had with his mistress when he was in Kyoto city whilst Akiko was living alone and awaiting his return in the summer heat. Tanka 121 reads as follows:

Natsuyase no..... Wilting summer
 Ware ya netami no..... I am jealous
 Hatachi zuma The wife of twenty years of age
 Satoi no natsu ni In the village heat
 Kyo wo toku kimi You taunt me with Kyoto
 pleasures

The above literal translation which otherwise means:

At twenty, I am jealous
 In this wilting summer
 In the village heat
 I listen to my husband
 Taunting me with his pleasures!

Japanese women as Takie Sigiyama Lebra correctly argues in JAPANESE WOMEN: CONSTRAINT AND FULFILLMENT, were traditionally depicted as extreme examples of sexual dichotomy. The Japanese woman was strictly bound by the rule of segregation and division of labour, confined to domestic drudgery, and pitifully deprived in status, power and opportunities. The Japanese woman was expected to be demurely submissive, coquettishly feminine, but as a consequence, hopelessly removed from the attainment of self-fulfilment. Akiko Yosano, like Ramatoulaye and Aissatou represents those dissenting and revolutionary women, who are out to change the traditions and the inferior position that women have been occupying for quite a long time.

In So Long a Letter, conservative women such as old Nabou, are seen as contributing to the perpetuation of the oppression of their fellow women. Apart from using young Nabou as a weapon in her vengeance against Aissatou, old Nabou also teaches young Nabou to be a docile woman presumably in order to be a good wife. Being a conservative woman with out-dated beliefs nourished on patriarchal traditions, old Nabou teaches young Nabou the secret of making delicious sauces, of using an iron and wielding a pestle - as if a woman ought to know these more than anything else. It is also mentioned that old Nabou taught young Nabou “that the first quality in a woman is docility” (p.29).

After obtaining her primary school certificate, and after a few years in secondary school, young Nabou is advised by old Nabou to sit the entrance examination for the State school of midwifery. In her conservative thinking, old Nabou sees certain professions as essentially feminine. This is further confirmed when she goes on to argue: “To tell the truth, a woman does not need too much education” (p.30). Young Nabou thus becomes a midwife.

After bringing up young Nabou, old Nabou later gets her chance of revenge against Aissatou. One day he says to Mawdo:

My brother Farba has given you young Nabou to be your wife, to thank me for the worthy ways in which I have taken her as you brought her up. I will never get over it if you don't take her as your wife. Shame kills faster than disease. (p.30)

Mawdo is thus blackmailed into marrying a second wife. He believes that since his mother is old and the knocks and disappointments of life have weakened her heart, if he spurns young Nabou, his mother would die. So it was simply so as not to see his mother die of shame and disappointment that Mawdo agreed to go to the wedding night. Mawdo never made any resistance.

Mawdo's mother may also have sought for her son a docile wife, the real reflection of the traditional expectations because like in any other Muslim society, this society may have valued a scenario where the wife is socially controlled by two people- her husband and mother-in-law. This was the same in Japan like Kae's life in Doctor's Wife by Sawako Ariyoshi, which was always controlled by someone either a father, or mother-in-law, or husband. Women did not have an individual existence outside the strict family system. Marriage meant marriage into the husband's family rather than simply to the husband. And to a certain extent, this is still the case in Japan today. Aissatou's mother-in-law may thus have been driven into selecting a second wife for Mawdo because Aissatou was not the kind of woman she (old Nabou) could control, but young Nabou was.

Aissatou, however, could not understand how a man could marry a woman just to please his mother while he had no affection for the woman enforced on him. Aissatou thus decides to leave Mawdo's home with her four sons.

After Aissatou has left, Mawdo finds it impossible to compare Nabou to his first wife. The former is unclean and negligent, the very opposite of what Aissatou had been.

What Ramatoulaye satirizes about Mawdo is that despite his complaints about young Nabou, he still continued to make her pregnant - implying that maybe some men such as Mawdo see women as only sex tools or reproductive machines whereby, whether they agree or disagree with their wives, as long as they are assured of satisfaction of the flesh and subsequent procreation, that is all that matters to them:

But his disillusioned air, the bitter criticisms
of his home, his wit, which railed led at everything,
did not in the least prevent the periodic swelling

of Young Nabou's belly. Two boys had already been born. (p.33)

When faced with proof of his intimate relations with young Nabou, Mawdo angrily argues that a man cannot be expected to remain a stone when he is constantly in contact with the woman who runs his house. He adds as an illustration that he saw a film in which the survivors of an air crash survived by eating the flesh of the corpses.

Mawdo further uses this illustration to argue about the force of the instincts that dominate him, regardless of his level of intelligence. Indeed Mawdo reduces a man to the level of a beast which is merely controlled by instincts rather than reason:

You can't resist the imperious laws that demand food and clothing for man. These same laws compel the "male" in other respects. I say "male" to emphasize the bestiality of instincts..... You understand.....
 A wife must understand, once and for all, and must forgive; she must not worry herself about "betrayal of the flesh". The important thing is what there is in the heart; that's what unites two beings inside (he struck at his chest, at the point where the heart lies).
 Driven to the limits of my resistance, I satisfy myself with what is within reach. Its a terrible thing to say. Truth is ugly when one analyzes it. (p.34).

To justify himself hence, Mawdo reduced young Nabou to a "plate of food". Thus Ramatoulaye argues that for the sake of variety, men are unfaithful to their wives. Like his friend Aissagou, Ramatoulaye refuses to understand Mawdo:

I was irritated. He was asking me to understand. But to understand what? The supremacy of instinct? The right to betray? The justification of the desire for variety? I could not be an ally to polygamic instincts. What then was I to understand?(p.34)

Ramatoulaye presents Aissatou as more calm and settled since leaving Mawdo, unlike the way she used to suffer after Mawdo decided to bow to the demands of his mother and got himself a second wife.

Like Femi Ojo-Ade correctly argues in African Literature Today, vol.12, women as presented in So Long a Letter are the victims, the slave-driven at times to the point of mental exhaustion. On the other hand man is the victimizer, the slave master and ruler of this hell on earth. Women such as Ramatoulaye, Aissatou, Binetou, Jacqueline, Nabou are all presented as victims while men such as Modou, Mawdo, Tamsir and Samba Diack are presented as monsters who will do anything for personal fulfilment. The narrator makes plenty of generalizations about men. That all men are essentially polygamous by nature. All men are traitors and sexual animals. All men are victimizers, thus, they must be victimized. Hence Ramatoulaye sets out to hurt all men.

The next section, hence, looks in detail at how the Muslim woman such as Ramatoulaye or Aissatou tries to battle with the shackles of tradition in a bid to emancipate herself from a culture that makes her the perpetual victim, subject to the whims of the slave-driving men.

THE NEW ISLAM WOMAN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

The desire for and attempt at self-emancipation is mostly demonstrated through Ramatoulaye and Aissatou.

When Modou dies, the traditional expectations is that Ramatoulaye should be inherited by another man, usually, the deceased husband's brother. Ramatoulaye refuses to bow to such traditions which she considers repugnant and outdated. Ramatoulaye refuses to betray her true feelings just in order to fulfil tradition. When Tamsir, Modou's elder brother, proposes to her, she rejects the proposal and tells him off in a manner that demonstrated that she is informed and not ready to succumb to every tradition. She has realized that some traditions reduce a woman to mere property:

You forget that I have a heart, a mind, that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand. You don't know what marriage means to me. It is an act of faith and of love, the total surrender of oneself to the person one has chosen and who has chosen you.(p.56)

Ramatoulaye thus refuses to be taken for granted. She refuses Patriarchal traditions which reduce a woman to a lesser human being or a mere object.

Ironically, while Tamsir desires Ramatoulaye's hand in marriage, he already has three wives and numerous children whose financial obligations he is not able to meet. Tamsir represents the type of man who not only takes women for mere sex instruments and reproductive gadgets but also as their beast of burden. Ramatoulaye refuses to be just another addition to the voiceless, dehumanized women that are Tamsir's lot:

What of your wives, Tamsir? Your income can meet neither their needs nor those of your numerous children. To help you out with your financial obligations, one of your wives dyes, another sells fruits, the third untiringly turns the handle of her sewing machine. You, the revered lord, you take it easy, obeyed at the crook of a finger. I shall never be the one to complete your collection. My house shall never be for you the coveted Oasis: No extra burden; my "turn" every day; cleanliness and luxury, abundance and calm! No Tamsir!.....I shall never be your wife (p.58)

Daouda Dieng is another man who seeks Ramatoulaye's hand in marriage following Modou's death. Daouda Dieng was Ramatoulaye's former suitor who married his first wife out of his duty as a citizen and not out of love. Ramatoulaye also rejects Daouda's marriage proposal. Ramatoulaye is against polygamy. She abhors it. She understands what polygamy did to her marriage with Modou and does not wish to make another woman and children suffer the way she did. Ramatoulaye is also honest. She refuses to betray her conscience which is not accommodating enough to enable her to marry Daouda. Although Ramatoulaye still has feelings for

Daouda Dieng, she refuses to play the destructive role played by the likes of Binetou and little Nabou.

Conservative traditionalists such as Farmata, scold Ramatoulaye for refusing Daouda Dieng's offer. They argue that that was a golden chance. An opportunity which even a girl of Ramatoulaye's daughter's age would clamour for with glee. Ramatoulaye prefers loneliness to being a second wife.

Apart from Tamsir and Daouda, other men, young and old, try to win Ramatoulaye but she refuses their advances. Henceforth she is christened a lioness or a mad woman. A lioness and a lunatic simply because Ramatoulaye acts contrary to what the society expects. This is a patriarchal society which would conclude it is insanity that would drive a woman away from her traditions. It thus christens a woman a lunatic when she understands her rights and makes bold steps.

Although Ramatoulaye is a fervent Muslim who accepts the teachings of Islam, she is opposed to polygamy which is sanctioned by Islam simply because she is concerned with the rights of women and the need for each woman to retain her individuality and establish an acceptable personal code of conduct. She sets the examples in her own life. Ramatoulaye accepts all her problems with a calm mind and successfully wards off all kinds of social pressures put on her by groups and individuals who would like to see her re-married following the death of Modou. She rejects Daouda Dieng, Tamsir and scores of other men who present themselves as suitors who would like to inherit her because as Oladele Taiwo puts it, she is concerned with the "dignity of man, the need to keep the human mind inviolate and conceive of love more as a metaphysical than a physical activity" (p.19). It is only then that women will be able to fulfil in honour and dignity the duty assigned to them by not only society but also nature.

An encounter between Daouda Dieng and Ramatoulaye also brings out the mental liberation of Ramatoulaye. Although Daouda argues that it would not be appropriate to have many women in parliament as they will only cause harm to the Assembly, Ramatoulaye argues that women have a lot to offer to society, hence, any form of discrimination of the woman is morally wrong and unjustifiable:

But we are not incendiaries; rather we are stimulants
 In many fields, and without skirmishes, we have taken
 advantage of the notable achievements that have
 reached us from elsewhere, the gains wrested
 from the lessons of history. We have a right, just as
 you have, to education, which we ought to be able
 of pursue to the furthest limits of our intellectual capacities.
 We have a right to equal well paid employment,
 to equal opportunities. The right to vote is an
 important weapon (p.60/61)

Ramatoulaye laments that women who do the drudgery of domestic work do not receive their share of praise and gratitude which they deserve. She argues that domestic work such as washing, ironing, adorning of the house, managing the family budget is an arduous task. Thus women should be complimented for their hand work.

That Ramatoulaye does not divorce her husband Modou like her friend Aissatou did, is used by the author, Mariama Ba to demonstrate her liberal kind of feminism. Although Ba is a feminist, she does not believe in extremes. She argues that feminism as much as it is important to the emancipation of the woman, cannot rid the woman of her femininity. Ramatoulaye loves to be married to the man she has chosen, that is why even after Modou deserts her, she still loves him and is only saved from loneliness by her love for her children and the affection her children direct towards her.

Ramatoulaye is caught in a dilemma. She has either to choose between A) tradition B) female emancipation in totality, and consequently development of the woman. Although her declared choice is the latter, her lived experiences prove her attachment to traditions. She cannot envisage life without marriage. She perceives such a scenario as reeking of death. She thus affirms the inevitable and imperative complementarity of man and woman.

Ramatoulaye is a revolutionary woman who epitomizes dignity in a woman. She is gifted with enormous physical and mental strength, which she utilizes appropriately as a female revolutionary. She remains mentally alert and undertakes and fulfils so much, even in the unhappy situation in which she finds herself

following her husband's second marriage and consequently his desertion of his first family. *Ramatoulaye* is indeed an epitome of what a woman can achieve when the use of her mental and physical endowments are not obstructed by restrictions emanating from traditions and taboos. It is by such constructive actions rather than empty talk that women can prove their mettle and win dignity for themselves in a patriarchal world.

Ramatoulaye is certainly used by Mariama Ba to express the author's views in relation to the status of women in society. Ba is interested in the elevation of the woman and of the unchaining of the female person from patriarchal traditions that pin her down such that she is not able to develop her full potential. Ba views education of girls as of paramount importance to the issue of women emancipation. *Ramatoulaye* and *Aissatou* are both educated and at one time both are teachers. Education is also viewed as a means of achieving a rapid social climb and of contributing maximally to the good of society.

Ramatoulaye's friend *Aissatou* is also a symbol of mental emancipation. Through her education which enables her to get a well-paying job, *Aissatou* is of necessity economically liberated, but when her rights as a wife are trampled on by her husband *Mawdo* who agrees to marry a second wife just in order to please his mother, *Aissatou* demonstrates her mental liberation by seeking for divorce. She cannot understand how a man can betray his own heart just in order to please somebody else, when he has no affection towards the object of betrayal. The letter which *Aissatou* leaves for *Mawdo* is such a scathing one. It attacks some patriarchal patterns and it is also positively illuminating on the pride *Aissatou* has in herself as an educated woman who believes in her worth:

Mawdo,

Princes master their feelings to fulfil their duties.
 'Others' bend their heads and, in silence, accept
 a destiny that oppresses them. You want to draw
 a line between heartfelt love and physical love.
 I say there can be no union of bodies without the
 heart's acceptance, however little that may be.
 Your reasoning which makes a distinction, is
 unacceptable to me: on one side, me, 'your life,
 your love, your choice', on the other, 'young

Nabou to be tolerated for reasons of duty'.
 I am stripping myself of your love, your name.
 Clothed in my dignity, the only worthy garments,
 I go my own way (p.31/32)

Aissatou decides to rent her own house and live on her own. Later she leaves Dakar for New York with her four children. Unlike Ramatoulaye who is somehow mild in approaching her marital problems brought about by marriage of a second wife, Aissatou has a more radical approach. She perceives polygamy as a vice which is to be dealt with not by any kind of procrastination but by divorce.

Like her friend Ramatoulaye, Aissatou is an intellectual, a rare group among women. As educated women, they set out to be pioneers in the emancipation of women. Aissatou and Ramatoulaye were also educated by a white headmistress who was really concerned that they be involved in the civilizing mission of emancipation without renouncing the African values.

We were true sisters, destined for the same mission
 of emancipation To lift us out of the bog of
 tradition, superstition and custom....
 Cultivate our personalities, strengthen our qualities,
 to make up for our inadequacies
 these were the aims of our admirable headmistress. (p.15/16)

After Aissatou divorces Mawdo, her career keeps her going and indeed she gets the opportunity to develop her skill and utilize her intelligence. Aissatou's career affords her upward mobility. She makes good money, enough to purchase a brand new car for Ramatoulaye whose husband denies her access to his fleet of cars and only allows his second wife.

By using Aissatou, who goes on to succeed further after the divorce, the researcher and critic argue that Ba's feminism may also border mildly on extremism. To Aissatou, the traditional marriage becomes a deterrent to a woman's promise, therefore she concludes that in order for a woman to succeed, she should not be involved in any marriage or an attachment of whatever nature. She should be her own master. The emphasis should be on the female self rather than anything else. However, through her conservative outlook on the values of marriage of Ramatoulaye, Ba still holds her feminist stance as a Liberal Feminist.

Women may be fighting for their own emancipation, this struggle however cannot be won unless men are also educated on how to change according with the times. This seems to be Ba's contention. The struggle therefore can be fruitful if it is supported by men who also believe in the woman's cause. Thus, although Ba presents men as wicked, victimizers and unsympathetic beings all through, she allows a little opportunity for balance by acknowledging that, having caused injustice towards women which is inherent in the patriarchal tradition, some men are loosening their grip on their initial stance and becoming more accommodating to women, even getting involved in activities that were initially branded the preserves of women. For example, although Daouda Dieng believes in male superiority to a certain degree, as we had initially demonstrated, he shows that he is also a champion of women's rights.

He has come to realize that women have a significant contribution to give to the world:

Women should no longer be decorative accessories, objects to be moved about companions to be flattered or calmed with promises. Women are the nation's primary fundamental root, from which all else grows and blossoms. Women must be encouraged to take a keener interest in the destiny of the country. (p.61/62)

By demonstrating such a stand, Daouda Dieng is even branded a feminist by his fellow male parliamentarians.

Daba's husband also represents awakened men who have realized that some cultural practices are only unfavourably disposed to the woman. Daba's husband assists his wife in her household duties, therefore unlike other womenfolk, Daba does not find domestic chores a burden:

Her husband cooks rice as well as she does; her husband who claims, when I tell him he 'spoils' his wife:
'Daba is my wife. She is not my slave, nor my servant'. (p.73)

This extra-ordinary husband represents men who have come to understand that men and women ought to share their responsibilities equally as neither of the genders is superior to the other. Mariama Ba presents this young couple as the ideal

couple, as not only do they assist each other in domestic chores, but they also “identify with each other and discuss everything so as to find a compromise” (p.74).

Ibrahim Sall, a young university student who impregnates young Aissatou, Ramatoulaye’s daughter, is also a far cry from the ‘ordinary’ men where ordinary refers to the male stereotype which is reflected in the novel in respect to the patriarchal traditions. Like Daba’s husband, Ibrahim or Iba is not a male dominator nor deceitful like other men. He is honest and ready to marry Aissatou.

Mariama Ba therefore tries to point out that women’s liberation will also mean men’s liberation. A man who cannot succumb to common sense based gender equality and who must maintain a despotic image surrounded by the requirements and taboos of masculine behaviour is surely less free and has a less rich life than someone with freer, logical choices. Thus, Mariama Ba bravely challenged this and she successfully let the husband of Daba, and Iba, the husband of young Aissatou, be reborn from this pinnacle of superiority.

It is clear from Mariama Ba’s novel that the discrimination of women that is perpetrated by men and even the concept of polygamy is based on the inequality of men and women which is sanctioned by the Koran. Women thus have no liberty within the most strict cultural confines. However, women are making attempts at changing all that. We see women fighting against the idea that a woman is a mere object to be passed from hand to hand. Ramatoulaye refuses to be inherited after Modou’s death. When Mawdo decides to marry a second wife in order to please his mother, Aissatou, his first wife, refuses to succumb to a secondary and subordinated role in her home. Aissatou even opts for divorce in order not to be controlled by a man who like any other misconceived men, thinks that he should have the power even to determine his wives destiny.

At the end of the novel, women through Ramatoulaye and Aissatou have raised their voice in so many respects. Their conviction is that parents have no right to choose a husband for a girl nor determining the right to education. Marriage of a girl should not be pinned down to dowry but rather on true feelings between the couple concerned. Another idea brought out by the women revolutionaries is that polygamy is not acceptable under any circumstances as it only promotes the further

dehumanization of the woman. Women are also encouraged to come out of their traditional roles and participate in decision-making by being involved in politics.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE LETTER FORM TECHNIQUE AND SATIRE IN ALICE WALKER'S COLOR PURPLE AND MARIAMA BA'S SO LONG A LETTER.

A.F Scott in Current Literary Terms defines Satire as the holding up of vice or folly to ridicule. It often makes use of irony and sarcasm. H.W. Fowler says that its motive is amendment, its province morals and manners, its method accentuation and its audience the self-satisfied. Discussing satire in relation to Jonathan Swift's works, Bullit argues that even in the classical days the concern of the satirist was the vice, and especially the affection, which attended men in their daily active lives; the Satirist, accordingly, considered himself as a practical rather than a speculative of abstruse moralist.

Satire makes fun of human follies and wickedness. It is a mask, under which the truths are hidden. It is an indirect device for communicating with the audience the hidden truths. The various literary forms such as monologues, poetry, drama and narratives can set out to amuse and entertain the audience through this stylistic device or a literary genre, satire, to fill the gap between how things and how they ought to be.

Satire is seldom honest in the sense of forthright expression of emotion or opinion. It has an aim, a preconceived purpose: to instil a given set of emotions or opinions into its reader. In order to be successful, it must practice the art of persuasion and become proficient with the tools of that art.

In order to be persuasive while still masking itself lest it turn into a blatant and personal criticism, Satire employs certain elements. These include irony, sarcasm, comedy, humour, burlesque and wit. It is through the use of these elements that satire is able to ridicule and condemn foolish or wicked characters.

The content of Satire is criticism and criticism may be uttered as a direct rebuke or as impersonal logic. However, satirist invective as David Worcester

correctly argues, shows detachment, indirection and complexity in the author's attitude unlike gross invective where abuse is direct and has intense sincerity of expression.

Sarcasm, an important element of Satire is derived from a Greek word that mean "flesh-tearing". Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony produced by an inversion of meaning. It may be distinguished from the more literary kinds of irony by the fact that it never deceives its victim. It carried its sting exposed. Satire is thus an expression that carries bitterness with it. It is always aimed at maiming its objects by making bitter remarks and thus assists satire in seriously attacking them. Sarcasm also uses a mask as employing figurative expression as metaphors or similes to hide its real meaning. Satire ridicules and laughs at social affections and follies from behind a mask. John Dryden puts it this way:

The best and finest manner of satire appears in laughing a fool out of countenance. The laughter of good satire arises from that "fine raillery" which attacks its object from the flank with wit and technical skill, rather than crudely and brutally from the front. (p.313)

Good Satire requires that the author be detached from emotions such as anger. David Worcester says:

A satire may be inspired by rage; it may produce rage in its readers; but ninety-nine times out of a hundred, rhetorical analysis of its language will reveal the wide difference between its style of attack and the style of a rattling good set-to between man and wife, or between a communist lecturer and a member of the American legion.(p.120)

The satirist's attitude towards the object should have the sound moral viewpoints to reform the wrong doings and should not to be too personal or emotional such as hatred, cynicism and contempt. If a good satirist deals with the social problems with an honest portrayal and moral ability to judge what is right and wrong, and if the subject is appropriate, the audience will be moved to reforming the problems through the satire presented

In its most serious function, satire is a mediator between two perceptions -the unillusioned perception of man as he actually is, and the ideal perception or vision of

man as he ought to be. The unillusioned perception of man as he actually is can go beyond the mere noting of abuses and customs that have only topical interest, and can expose weaknesses or vices that are a perennial danger. Also the value and ideals by which man is weighed and found wanting can have only enough range and flexibility to be of persisting importance.

Satire uses a moral standpoint as a basis from which it launches any attack. A moral standpoint is a viewpoint from where a writer judges what is right and what is not right in human behavior. Criticizing from a moral standpoint hence, satire attempts to reform corrupt human values. Although it could hurt and wound individuals and groups but it is inevitable to reveal the true face of criticism in order to benefit the society as a whole.

A satirist, however, does not just aim at reforming those he considers wicked or crooked but also tries to seek the support of the readers in his task of pointing out and castigating behaviour and people he considers vicious.

1. **THE LETTER-FORM TECHNIQUE AND SATIRE IN
ALICE WALKER'S THE COLOUR PURPLE**

The Color Purple is written in a letter diary form. At the beginning Celie's addressee is God whom she sees as the only source of redemption at a time when she is distressed by a number of factors mostly those bordering on injustices perpetrated by men against her. Towards the end of the novel Celie's addressee is her younger sister Nettie. After deciding to change her addressee, Celie ceases to write any missives to God. This is because Celie sees God to be a patriarchal God who like all other men does not seem to understand nor is 'he' sympathetic to women's plight. Celie concludes that this God is an unjust God since he is male and who therefore acts like all other men. At this juncture, Celie has undergone an evolution of sorts. She becomes awakened.

Style in a given piece of literary work can be said to encompass all the devices that contribute to the beauty and effectiveness, and hence the success, of a

piece of art. These devices include structure, language, mode of writing, description and symbolism. However, as I had initially indicated, my major interest in the aspect of style is the 'letter form technique' and 'satire' in both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter.

The letter form technique makes the structure of the novel rather complex. The author has to resort numerous times to flashbacks. A letter is inherently very personal. Therefore by deciding to write a missive to God and also to her sister Nettie, the letter at once indicates that what Celie is writing or what Nettie is writing when the latter also writes to Celie is very personal. Alice Walker is allowed to look at contentious matters on a very personal basis through the letter form technique and she delves into them to the greatest depth and brings out her innermost feelings.

The letter form allows Alice Walker all freedom of expression and speech in that she is not curtailed or constrained to write in a particular style but is free to write in any style she finds suitable. This also includes the language she uses to express herself. The language in The Color Purple ranges from deep slang to average formal English due to the characters' levels of education. Celie's language is black American's communal folk English bordering on heavy slang with grammatical errors because she is semi-literate. But her rural idiomatic language gives straight forwardness and directness. Nettie's English is formal and grammatically sound because she has had the advantage of more education while staying with her missionary hosts.

Although Walker has all the freedom of expressing herself, what comes out is not haphazard as one would expect, rather there is consistence and a definite pattern.

The author uses Celie very well in order to bring a balanced picture of the different characters. Alice Walker is able to show both the strengths and weaknesses of the characters including the persona herself through Celie's eyes, drawing round characters and thus giving them credibility. Such a style has been employed by other authors such as Mariama Ba in So Long a Letter.

Although it is a collection of letters, the author is able to develop the plots and themes fully by the end of the novel and nothing is left hanging. What really appears at the surface as a simple letter or a collection of simple letters reveals a

compact and detailed account and criticism thereof of an feudal, racial and patriarchal American society in the 1930's where women were regarded nothing but a sex object and workforce.

She ugly. But she ain't no stranger to hard work.
 You can do anything just like you want to.
 She will make the better wife. She can work like a man. (p.9)

The letter form indeed gives an alert, direct and passionately involved account of the life of semi-literate African-American women. It shows painstaking honesty and is written with an intensity of feeling.

Satire has been effectively employed in The Color Purple without rendering some characters flat as we would expect of a work whose viewpoint depends on the sentiments of one character. Celie castigates men who are imprisoned in the cocoon of male-supremacy without sounding harsh and unjust to the male gender. The author attempts to justify the castigation.

Most male characters in the novel have been satirized to a great extent. These are mostly conservative men who believe that the woman is sub-human and thus occupies a lower position in terms of human worth. Mr.____ 's son Harpo is one male character who has been exposed to ridicule due to his dominant yet sometimes blatantly foolish convictions.

Harpo is a diehard male dominant character owing to the kind of upbringing he has had under the care of his similarly male chauvinistic father Mr____.

But unlike Mr____ who may attempt once in a while to reason out, however illogically, when asked to justify his sentiments, Harpo is a person who may not even understand why he holds to certain stances of male dominance. His argument is that things have never been otherwise and so they ought to remain the way they are.

When Harpo gets married to Sofia, he wants to treat her the way he sees his father treating his wife, Celie , that is with beatings and all. But Sofia is a unique breed of a woman. She is assertive, aggressive and would never allow anyone, not even her husband to step on her toe. She believes in 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' regardless of who committed evil to her. When Harpo one day beats up Sofia

in an attempt to make her obey all his orders, Sofia fights back and the amusing fact is that contrary to what Harpo was used to - a man beating up a woman without any resistance or challenge - Harpo is beaten up by Sofia until his face is just a mass of bruises and his lip gets cut. His teeth also ache.

Harpo is hence brought to ridicule by the author in that although he defined himself as a man, who should always be above the woman (that is according to Harpo and his likes) in all regards, the truth is that he is even weaker than what he describes as the weaker sex.

Following the aftermath of the fight, Harpo is so ashamed of having been bruised by a woman that he blatantly lies that his bruises were a result of not only having been injured by a crazy mule in the field but also of having suffered other accidents such as hitting his eye and shutting the window down on his hand.

Sofia's man-like stature scares off her husband such that Harpo eventually concludes that marrying Sofia was the worst blunder on his part.

Harpo is frustrated by the fact that he cannot tame his wild wife. He becomes psychologically tortured to the point that he develops into an over-eating habit as a psychological reaction. He remains skinny but his stomach starts to show: "He still skinny, bout half Sofia size, but I see a little pot beginning under his overalls."

(p.63)

No matter what happening now. No matter who come.

No matter what they say or do, Harpo eat through it.

Food on his mind morning, noon and night. His belly grow and grow but the rest of him don't. He begin to look like he big.

When it due? Us ast.

Harpo don't say nothing. Reach for another piece of pie. (p.64)

Harpo is simply reduced to a laughing figure in his frustrating attempts of making his wife obey him.

...Harpo start to cry again. Then he start to be sick.

He lean over the edge of the step and vomit and vomit.

Look like every piece of pie for the last year come up.

When he empty I put him in the bed next to Shug's little room.

He fall right off to sleep. (p.67)

Harpo's behaviour after the scene where he was beaten by Sofia; with his over-eating and perpetual crying makes him look infant-like, thus ridiculous. It takes mostly Celie to soothe him out of his now continuous infantile weeping. Celie acts like a nurse who soothes him to stop crying and lulls him to sleep. Harpo comes out here as an over-grown baby.

The writer satirizes Harpo by trying to show that contrary to what he thinks of himself, he is not just effeminate but is simply childish in his thoughts and deeds.

Sofia is described as unwoman-like and Harpo regrets that he ever married her. Harpo wishes that Sofia was as obedient and submissive as all other women. Harpo is satirized since his wife's masculine stature and behaviour make him cry. Sofia does not respect him and listens to his orders the way other stereotype women do, and if Harpo tries to beat her up, instead, she blackens his eyes.

Sofia does numerous things that Harpo would not expect from a woman. When Harpo sees his wife coming to the juke-point, he is very upset. He says it is very scandalous for a woman with five children to go to a juke-point. To Harpo, a married woman's place is at home. But Sofia believes that there is no such place where only men can go and not women.

When Sofia proves to be intolerable, Harpo seeks another woman and he gets married to Mary Agnes, nick-named Squeak.

Squeak represents the stereotype squeamish woman. Squeak may have been nick-named so by Harpo because she is nagging and noisy - all attributes which Harpo considers inherently feminine. Like the stereotype woman, Squeak would even fight over a man. When Squeak sees Sofia going to Harpo's juke-point to watch Shug Avery's performance, Squeak has the audacity to warn Sofia against going anywhere close to Harpo, whereas Harpo is Sofia's husband too. This later on develops into a bitter exchange of words, a physical confrontation ensues and Squeak is seriously beaten by Sofia.

Like his son Harpo, Mr _____ has been used to represent other men. He is satirized by his traits that border on a grotesque, unqualified male dictator. Albert, as Mr _____ is named, is repeatedly referred to as simply Mr _____ to show that the dash could be filled with a name of any other man and it would still be the same

thing. Such a style has also been employed by other writers of African origin. Most effectively it was used by the famous late celebrated South African writer, Alex La Guma in his powerful novel In the Fog of the Season's End. In the prologue of this novel, La Guma simply refers to the prisoner as 'he' to signify that it could be any other black South African. Any black person in South Africa was liable to the kind of torture and awe-striking ordeal that the prisoner in the prologue underwent at the hands of the racist white prison officer. It is only later in the novel that we learn that the prisoner referred to in the prologue is none other than Elias Tekwane, a black revolutionary leader. The style of only using 'he' instead of giving the name, while generalizing the experiences of blacks has also the powerful effect of creating suspense in this novel. The readers would crave to know who the prisoner really is.

Likewise, in The Color Purple, the use of Mr ____ while having the effect of generalizing the attributes of men creates suspense. We would like to know who this Mr ____ really is and what he really stands for. Like all other male dictators, Harpo's father believes that men are ever right while women are ever wrong. Albert has been used to the idea of women prostrating themselves before him that he takes it as a joke when Celie talks of leaving his house. He has known Celie to be very submissive but when Celie goes as far as exchanging harsh words with Albert, Albert becomes the object of laughter. It is ironical that what he believes to be true is not necessarily the case. Mr ____ tries even to blackmail Celie by saying that if she leaves the house, she would not get a single penny from him. He believes that Celie cannot do without him, and most importantly, his money. However, contrary to his expectations, Celie goes ahead and leaves the house, to Memphis, where she starts a pants-making business and earns a living without any assistance, and not depending on any man.

Mr ____ alleges that Celie has no future away from him because she has essentially four major defects ; she is black, poor, ugly and a woman .(p.213) Albert thus sees womanhood as disadvantageous.

Contrary to the negative attitude Mr ____ had towards Celie, when Celie decides to go on her own, that is when life becomes smooth and tolerable for her. Unlike when she was at Mr ____'s , Celie becomes happy and complacent while on

her own. This ironical situation therefore makes Albert's convictions laughable as they are all proved wrong.

To complete Mr ____'s satire, while we would not expect Mr ____ to care at all when Celie decides to leave but to expect some second thinking on Celie's part, it is the opposite that happens. Mr ____ can not bear the idea of Celie leaving him. He is psychologically tortured when Celie goes away which Sofia confirms:

... after I (Celie) left, Mr ____ live like a pig.
 Shut up in the house so much it stunk.
 Wouldn't let nobody in until finally Harpo force his way in.
 Clean the house, got food. Give his daddy a bath.
 Mr ____ too weak to fight back. Plus, too far gone to care. (p.231)

Satire on male characters as represented by Harpo and Mr ____ therefore is geared towards deflation of the male gender. This style is what J.M. Bullit refers to as diminution. (p.45) Diminution is a technique of rendering somebody flabby, who is either rightly larger in status or who only believes so. Diminution is a common literary device which was discussed in Rhetorical handbooks under the Greek title "Meiosis", meaning literally "belittling". Diminution can be described briefly as the use of any ugly, negative images which are meant to diminish the dignity of an object.

Diminution is any kind of speech which tends, either by the force of law or vulgar imagery or by other suggestion, to depress an object below its usually accepted status. A similarity may be drawn between an object and one which is universally acknowledged to be inferior; the comparison results, of course in the primary object absorbing the contemptibility of the second object.....Diminution may also be expressed in innumerable other forms; it may appear as direct abuse, irony, litotes, and so on. (Bullit, J.M. 45/46)

Although Harpo and his father are used in order to reflect on the stereotype man, Alice Walker does not allow herself to fall to the level of a female dictator. She offers a balanced picture which makes all her characters plausible. Walker allows her characters to change on realizing that they were mistaken. This is because some unanimity, considered as both rational and permanent, is necessarily a precondition of any great satiric effort. If indeed, these standards are broadly conceived and

reflect a high idealism, almost every human action may be viewed as a departure from the established norm; and these departures constantly tempt and provoke a desire to criticise them. But satire ought not to be idealistic in its judgement but rather border on what is realistic and thus try to transform the characters to what is achievable. Walker's satire is of that kind.

Both Harpo and Mr ____ are allowed to change . Harpo begins to accept to do some domestic chores such as washing dishes which he had always considered feminine. After Celie leaves for Memphis, Mr ____ starts to change his outlook on life. He does the farm work, cleans the house , cooks and washes dishes by himself and when Celie visits him one day, he consents to Celie teaching him how to sew, whereas all along he had always avoided things such as sewing which he considered womanly. He confesses that although he always liked to sew alongside his mother, he feared being laughed at.

Through Nettie, Alice Walker also satirizes men in Africa whose argument borders on irony. The men in Olinka do not want their daughters to be educated, but their sons. However, the ones imparting the education are women: Corrine and Nettie. These men argue that there is no place for an educated woman in Olinka. These men see education as of no good to a woman; but when Nettie suggests that Corrine and Nettie herself should leave Olinka for another place since an educated woman is like a curse in Olinka (that is according to the male supremacists), these men reject the idea and rather proposed that Nettie and Corrine should continue staying, but only to teach the boys. The irony is that these men consent to their sons being taught manly things which they allege go with education, not by fellow men, but women. The humorous part is that these ardent male chauvinists allow themselves to stoop as low as to allow beings they consider outcasts to educate their sons. Tashi's father regards liberated women such as those in America as immoral. He even says: "Our people pity women such as you who are cast our" (p.167). Tashi's father all the same goes ahead to support the education of their own sons by immoral and outcast beings. If Nettie and Corrine are immoral and outcasts, are they not going to impart the same negative attitudes to the children of the male dictators? They, however, seem not to look at it that way. They are intoxicated by

their blind belief of superiority that they seem not to be able to argue anything out sensibly.

Alice Walker also satirizes women in Africa who are so indoctrinated that they clamour for a chance to become a chief's wife even when that chance means being subjected to all forms of humiliation and brutalization. These are women who seem not to reason. Nettie also blames the women for encouraging their oppression by men:

They indulge their husbands, if anything. You should just see how they make admiration over them. Praise their smallest accomplishments. Stuff them with palm wine and sweets. No wonder the men are often childish. (p.172)

The presence of Nettie and Corrine in Olinka thus enables such indoctrinated women to undergo some awakening. They are sensitized about their rights as women and even the boys are gender-sensitized in order to allow girls in class without any ill feeling. Alice Walker thus does not satirize these women just for the sake of it but also provides an avenue through which they may undergo some transformation. The avenue is Nettie and Corrine.

Alice Walker also satirizes women who are so enveloped by their womanhood that they believe that motherhood is the highest achievement they could ever attain. Although Walker satirizes such women, this satirizing is not blistering and vitriolic but rather is sombre, since although Walker believes that motherhood is not all that a woman should believe in, she acknowledges the importance of maternity to posterity. Corrine is a woman who is embittered by the fact that she cannot get children of her own. When villagers notice the resemblance between Nettie and Corrine's adopted children, Olivia and Adam and start gossiping to the effect that Nettie looks like being their mother rather than Corrine, Corrine even warns Nettie against allowing the children to call her "Mama Nettie", even in play. Corrine is a bitter and jealous woman simply because she has never had her own children and is scared about the secret of her barrenness being discovered by the villagers.

Women such as Corrine believe that the greatest fulfilment of womanhood is in having children. They value themselves in terms of their fertility, which should not be the case. The friendship between Nettie and Corrine dwindles each day because of jealousy on the part of Corrine.

That most of the novel is told through Celie's perspective does not deny the persona the chance to criticize herself. This is one aspect that makes the book successful as it reflects a balanced view of a woman who sees much not only in others but also in herself to criticize.

Celie paints a picture of herself as of an ignorant almost imbecile-like person in the initial stages. Like a robot she gives in to all the demands of her step-father who is out to use her as a sex object. One may argue that she was only fourteen and she could not do anything about it. She is a great contrast from her young sister Nettie who refuses the advances of Mr _____ at a very early age. Nettie is rebellious and assertive but Celie submits to the demands of any one. She comes out as pitifully foolish. When she is married to Mr _____, Celie submits not only to the injustices of her husband but also unflinchingly and without any resistance accepts the animosity from Mr _____'s children. For example one of the children stones her until she bleeds but she does not say anything.

Due to the many evils committed against her, Celie has come to acknowledge her position as attributable to fate. Unlike her sister Nettie who believes one has to keep on fighting in this world, Celie is resigned. Celie is so fatalistic that she views God as her only consolation in a troubled world and she sees redemption in the world-here-after. She is convinced that that is her destiny.

In Albert's house Celie does not only fail to defend her rights in her capacity as a woman; but worse, she becomes defiant against women's rights when she goes on to betray Sofia (a symbol of women's emancipation) to her (Sofia's) husband Harpo. Celie is so old-fashioned that she advises Harpo to thrash his wife.

Celie comes out as accepting kindly all atrocities inflicted on her referring to her husband as "Sir" and to Shug Avery as "Maam". (p. 51) because she thinks that Shug is superior to her. It only takes Shug Avery herself to stop her from referring to her in such a slave/master kind of manner.

Celie is submissive to such an extent her father-in-law expresses pity for her. Even though Celie has never loved Albert, she accepts the humiliation of hosting her own husband's lover, Shug Avery. While Shug Avery is around, Celie lets her share a bed with her husband; Mr _____. Celie is foolishly docile to such an extent that when Shug asks if Celie would mind if Albert sleeps with her (Shug), Celie answers "I don't care if you sleep with him" (p. 82). Although Celie does not love Mr ___ and does not care whether he visits other women, how can she entertain the idea of her husband messing around with his mistress under her own roof? That is the height of her extreme docility, mindlessness and resignation!

Celie is initially so foolishly presented that she borders on grotesque satire since she is even idealistic in her thinking. When people are thinking of possible ways of rescuing Sofia from prison for example, she is so idealistic that she only thinks of heaven. Yet, the irony of it all is that the only heaven she has in mind is a white heaven.

I think bout angels, God coming down by chariot,
swinging down real low and carrying ole Sofia home.
I see 'em all as clear as day. Angels all in white,
white hair and white eyes, look like albinos.
God all white too, looking like some stout white man
work at the bank. Angels strike they cymbals,
one of 'em blow his horn, God blow out breath of
fire and suddenly Sofia free..... (p. 96)

Celie is therefore not only docile as a woman but also as a black person. Hence, hers is a double-tragedy. She feels inferior both as a woman and as a black person.

Although Celie is initially presented as a person being indoctrinated in all respects, like other satirized characters, she is allowed the opportunity to realize her mistakes and consequently to undergo the process of transformation. Celie therefore goes through some awakening.

Through watching Sofia's rebellious nature and through the influence of Shug Avery and Nettie, Celie becomes sensitized to her rights and eventually she starts to have a different view of things. Celie grows to such a level that she overcomes her initial docility to the extent that she decides to leave Albert's house

since she had never loved him. She also becomes bold even in her talk. For example when Albert says that she would only leave the house over his dead body. Celie has the courage to answer back that she has never been happy in Mr _____'s house and that Mr ___ is a low down dog and his dead body would be the "welcome mat" (pg. 207) that Celie would need to step on while entering into the creation. Albert cannot believe his ears. When Celie insists on leaving, Mr _____ tries to blackmail her by saying that she would not receive a penny from him. Celie, however, answers him that she did not ask for his money nor his "sorry hand in marriage" (p. 209). This is a different Celie from the one Albert has known for many years.

While Celie had always tried to prevail upon Harpo to beat up his wife in order to domesticate her, after her awakening Celie even goes on to accuse Harpo of being over-bearing to his wife, hence aggravating the temper of his wife "if you hadn't tried to rule over Sofia, the white folks never would have caught her" (p 207).

After undergoing a certain form of mental growth, Celie decides to leave Albert's house and goes on the Memphis where she fends for herself. Unlike before when she used to rely totally on Mr _____, Celie starts her own pants-making business and makes a living out of it. Celie makes enough money, gets a lot of friends and becomes happy.

Satire in The Colour Purple is not just aimed at criticizing but also at transforming. The author first evolves a criticism of conduct, ordinary human conduct, but once in a while, divine. Then she contrives ways of making not only her characters but also her readers comprehend and remember that criticism and adopt it as their own. As I had initially briefly mentioned, Satire does not just aim at criticizing from a moral standpoint but is ultimately geared towards reforming human values.

2. THE LETTER FORM TECHNIQUE AND SATIRE
IN MARIAMA BA'S SO LONG A LETTER.

So Long a Letter is a letter diary like The Color Purple and therefore this novel also has a personal touch. Ramatoulaye uses her long letter to Aissatou only as a medium of putting forward her liberal views on several issues, many of them related to the elevation of the status of women in society. Even so, she succeeds through her style of direct narration, in retaining the intimacy which a private letter from one friend to another demands. She frequently emphasizes the bond between her and her friend. Ramatoulaye argues that although her husband may disappoint her, the friendship between her and Aissatou is reassuring. This is why she is, as it were, emptying her heart to her friend in the hopes that she will get some comfort and pleasure by doing so. Thus, the novelist has hence used the letter form to carry out both a public obligation and also a private duty. This is the unique achievement of this work.

Being in a letter form, in So Long a Letter one could only learn about the characters through the eyes of the letter writer. It is the writer's point of view. One, essentially, cannot rely on this method and since the characters have been left at the mercy of the writer, it is only natural if not logical, that views presented could be biased whereby some characters are favoured at the expense of others. The letter form technique, being mostly personal allows the author to be favourably disposed between one side without being castigated for it. However, as Njage correctly points out, Mariama Ba must be commended for being able to present characters who are rounded rather than lopsided, therefore making them plausible. For example while one would expect Ramatoulaye to paint Binetou negatively having ruined her marriage, she instead sympathizes with her and blames her actions on her immaturity and innocent youth. She also castigates Modou Fall's pride and Binetou's mother's greed in relation to the same.

Therefore, although the author tells the story through the consciousness and sensibility of one person, the story reflects on sensibilities and consciousness of other people. In that regard, therefore, even the satire is balanced rather than

lopsided as one would expect although we ought to acknowledge that Satire as a style is not as strong in So Long a Letter as it is in The Color Purple.

Modou Fall, Ramatoulaye's amorous husband is one character which Ramatoulaye satirizes. Although Modou Fall is rich, he still lives beyond his means in that he is forced to get loans due to his exorbitant expenditures, which are brought about by his amorous adventures with young girls.

Modou Fall chases after girls who even have the age of his own daughters. Binetou for example, is the age-mate and classmate of Modou Fall's daughter, Daba. Modou totally represents moral degeneration. He is referred to by people as a "cradle snatcher". In his amorous adventures, Modou goes to discos and tries to dance like the young people. In order to look young, he dyes his hair. He refuses to accept that age has caught up with him and that he ought to denounce some activities as not suiting his age-group. Modou Fall is sarcastically presented as an elderly person instead of being the one to teach the youth on good morals, he copies the youth and even takes the lead in the perpetuation of moral erosion.

Modou is therefore presented pathetically as he tries to live and act young. He is selfish and draws no sympathy for the way he has been ungrateful to Ramatoulaye. Modou rejects her totally after marrying his second wife Binetou.

It is ironical that Modou rose to the top rank in the trade union organization because of his understanding of people and issues, which endeared him to both employers and workers. He is said to be a practical man who sought practical improvement in the workers' condition. The irony is that, such a man who has won acclaim because of his concern and understanding at work fails to exercise this simple art at home. It is said that charity begins at home but for Modou Fall that is not the case. Instead of demonstrating virtues such as kindness and understanding at home, Modou, a hypocrite in all respects, only exercises these virtues outside his home, that is at his work place, and socially with his string of girlfriends. He is thus portrayed as an egoist in all aspects as he only cares about himself and no one else.

Mawdo Ba is also another character who has been satirized. At the beginning, Mawdo is presented as a strong-willed man who goes against his mother's wishes and society at large, to marry a goldsmith's daughter, Aissatou. Mawdo

refuses to be pushed around and his mother's rejection of Aissatou does not frighten him. However, he cannot be excused for consenting to marry young Nabou simply to please his mother.

Although Mawdo claims he does not love young Nabou but for his mother and that he is unhappy with her, Mawdo is satirized by the fact that he is ruled by his flesh since young Nabou still gets pregnant periodically. Mawdo simply satisfies himself with what is within reach, therefore cheapening the act of love. He is pathetically presented as a selfish man who wants the best out of everything. He wants Aissatou for her love and maturity and Nabou for her youth.

Tamsir, Modou Fall's elder brother has also been satirized. Although he has three wives whom he cannot even afford to feed, he would still like to have Ramatoulaye as a fourth wife when Modou Fall passes away. He declares:

I shall marry you. You suit me as a wife, and further,
you will continue to live here, just as if Modou were not dead.
You are my good luck. You are my good luck.
I shall marry you. I prefer you to the other one,
too frivolous, too young. (p.57)

His enormous pride is deflated when Ramatoulaye declines to marry him. She replies:

What of your wives, Tamsir? Your income can meet
neither their needs nor those of your numerous children.
To help you out with your financial obligations,
one of your wives dyes, another sells fruit, the third
untiringly turns the handle of her sewing machine.
You the revered lord, you take it easy, obeyed at the
crook of a finger. I shall never be the one to
complete your collection. My house shall never be
for you the coveted oasis: no extra burden; my "turn"
every day ... No, Tamsir! (p.58)

Although she is just a minor character who is not so developed, the lady mother-in-law is satirized for her wrong attitude and selfishness. She is presented as overwhelmingly selfish such that she literally sells her daughter Binetou to Modou at a very high price, for her own selfish individualistic gains. Lady mother-in-law marries her daughter off to a wealthy man simply so that she (Lady mother-in-law)

can gain financially. She does not care about the tender age of her daughter and that she is still attending school. Instead, Lady mother-in-law takes advantage of Binetou's innocence and withdraws her from school.

After marriage, Lady mother-in-law's selfish dreams come true as she is able to live in an expensive house, makes a trip to Mecca, and is driven in a car (Modou's). Having been extremely poor, these are things which the lady mother-in-law never thought would ever be possible. She is therefore very happy when she achieves what she considered impossible. However, her happiness is short-lived since, on Modou's death, Daba, Modou's daughter inherits her house forcing her to move out. When she pleads with Daba to show pity on her, one feels no sympathy for her but instead pities the young Binetou whose youth was wasted because of her mother's greed for money.

Aunty Nabou, Mawdo's mother, is also satirized as a betrayer of fellow women. She is so obsessed with her royal background that she is unhappy when her son Mawdo married Aissatou, a goldsmith's daughter. Aunty Nabou, full of revenge, refuses to accept Aissatou as her daughter-in-law but instead grooms her brother's daughter, Nabou for marriage to Mawdo. Aunty Nabou is an extremely selfish woman who will stop at nothing to get what she wants, not taking anybody's feelings into consideration. She ruins Nabou's youth and ruins Aissatou's marriage for her own selfish satisfaction. She is the archetypal betrayer of women's rights.

Ramatoulaye's neighbour Farmata, the griot woman, the seer who divines the future using her cowries, has also been satirized. She is used to present the old-fashioned conservative women. Farmata is also like Celie in The Color Purple in the initial stages, a fatalist. She believes that a woman can not decide her own destiny. As a seer, Farmata is not taken seriously. The author draws the implication that her trade depend mostly on guess work and that whenever there was a semblance of agreement between her predictions and reality, she was very thrilled (p. 65). Farmata is also satirized for her great obsession with money. She seems to be very money-minded in whatever she does. For example she would like Ramatoulaye to marry Daouda Dieng because he is rich and has even given her five thousand francs. Farmata is always dreaming of the generous tips due to her as a go-between.

Ramatoulaye does not spare herself from criticism. She makes it sound satirical the way she has to suffer a lot of trouble in order to make sure that her husband is properly dressed when going to meet “business people” who only happens to be Ramatoulaye’s rival Binetou. Ramatoulaye had never been suspicious that all her suffering enabled Modou to please his young second wife-to-be. Ramatoulaye however blames her ignorance about her husband’s adventures on her husband’s discreet nature. Thus, she makes herself ridiculous in order to call the attention from the readers to the restricted life of women in a Muslim society, whereas men are allowed to please their whims and wishes.

As seen, Alice Walkers and Ba’s satires are characterized by a penetrating if at times) corrosive realism, and may therefore be described as a genuine exposure of things as they are or too often tend to be. As long as Ba and Walker could find vices and follies which were not ingrained in man by nature and which could therefore possibly be shamed out of existence, their satire had a place.

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CHAPTER FOUR

A COMPARISON OF THEME AND STYLE IN ALICE WALKER'S THE COLOR PURPLE AND MARIAMA BA'S SO LONG A LETTER

Both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter are written in a letter form which is really unique way of writing a novel. As letters, both novels are therefore written from the personal perspective of the letter writer. The letter form allows Walker and Ba all freedom to express the burning issues they need to raise without being curtailed in what ever way.

Both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter also look at themes that are related in one way or another. These themes are such as: The woman as a lesser human being, a sex object and a reproductive machine; forced marriage; betrayal; fatalism; religion and its role in the perpetuation of the gender-related stereotypes; injustice against womenfolk, and most importantly, the concept of the new woman and the struggle for liberation of women.

Religion in both works, Christianity in The Color Purple and Islam in So Long a Letter, has been used as a justification for the inferior-female, superior-male framework that has been in existence in many societies for a very long time. In many societies over the years, religion and what is considered appropriate behaviour have been inter-linked with tradition. Religion is basically archaic and conservative as the word of God is final and unalterable. In the same vein, the religious leaders have emphasized the old ways as the only ones compatible with religion and virtue. Whilst conservative Christians have used the Bible to justify why a woman should remain submissive, Islam has used the "Sharia" law in the Koran to determine the place of the woman.

In the first epistle of Peter in the new Testament while advising women, Peter says:

Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands.... for after the manner in the old time the holy women who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own

husbands. (Vs. 5)

In the old testament, the woman was portrayed as part of a man's body; woman is also portrayed as the one who brought us into the world by accepting to eat the fruit offered by the serpent and then giving it to Adam to eat. Because of this sin God punished both man and woman by giving man sweat and struggle for life and by giving Eve hard labour and pain in child-bearing. The other punishment for woman was being under the man or husband.

As for Muslims, women are regarded unclean, therefore they are prohibited to pray at the same place in the mosque where men pray. Muslim women are also not allowed to enter the cemetery because they are considered unclean preventing the deceased to enter paradise. The word of the Lord of the worlds, Allah, is recorded in the Koran which is the law of a complex legal and social system, called Sharia Law as the sacred law of Islam. Sharia Law prescribes not only religious duties but covers every aspect of the life of Muslim covering marriage, divorce and inheritance and forbidding the depiction of living beings, the drinking of alcohol, the eating of pork, etc and prescribing penalties and punishment for crimes.

D.A. Spellberg states in Politics, Gender and the Islamic Past that the prophet said on hearing that a woman ruled sasanian Iran (A.D. 224-651):

“A people who place women in charge of their affairs will never prosper.”(p 139)

David Waines refers in An Introduction to Islam that

By virtue of the husband's total financial responsibility for the family, the wife is regarded as his subordinate and obedience and care of the home are expected by the husband” (p. 94-95)

In both cases, the Koran and the Bible are regarded by Muslims and Christians respectively as the literal word of God as revealed to the prophets. Therefore, any form of innovation in what people regard as unquestionable has been met with acute resistance and those concerned called anarchists. It is the religious law compounded with the traditional law that has been the yard-stick through which women, both in The Color Purple and So Long a Letter have been dehumanised.

Celie, a descendant of Black slaves like other slaves is religiously indoctrinated and she sees God as everything and her only source of salvation even in situations that need only a rational attitude for greater things to be achieved. In So Long a Letter, the Imam justifies Modou's second marriage as God's wish.

In Islamic law and Christianity, women have male guardians. Also in both cases, women are considered to have less reason than men. Injunctions of obedience of women to men are in both religions. It is against such an unfavourable background that the dire predicaments of the female characters in both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter should be seen.

The theme of women as reproductive machines and sex objects or mere things is reflected in the way men treat members of the female gender in the two works. In The Color Purple, just because Celie's mother is ill and therefore cannot perform all her duties as a wife, Alphonso decides to use this as an excuse to turn his step-daughter Celie into some sort of sex object from where he can attain sexual satisfaction. Alphonso thus demonstrated the attitude that to a man, a woman is a woman as long as she can provide satisfaction. It does not matter even if the woman is a mere child or is one's next of kin. This explains why Harpo's second wife, Mary Agnes is raped by her own uncle.

Alphonso goes further than just defiling his own step-daughter as he even marries off Celie to a Mr _____, whom Celie does not have any feeling for. This brings in the theme of parents and their responsibility to their children. Both writers assert that parents have no right at all to decide whom their daughters should get married to. When Modou in So Long a Letter proposes to marry Binetou, a mere child, the girl's parents hastily withdraw her from school. Young Nabou's parents also consent to their daughter being married off by her aunt old Nabou to Mawdo; a man she does not love, just so as to fulfil old Nabou's ill motives. As a daughter, a woman is therefore seen as an object; she is a victim that can be used to serve the aims of her ill-intentioned or self-centred parents.

Both Walker and Ba however acknowledge that there has come a generation of young people who will not succumb to such old-fashioned traditions as forced marriages. For example Sofia and Harpo in The Color Purple marry for love despite

what the parents feel about the relationship. Shug Avery, a liberal woman, also chooses her own lovers. In So Long a Letter, Aissatou and Mawdo also defied Mawdo's mother's objection to their relationship and went ahead and got married. Ramatoulaye also got married for love. Although these two women were later betrayed by their husbands, all the same they have no regret for whom they chose as their lovers. The new generation of youth is also different in that they are not only going for love but they are enjoying a very different relationship where both spouses act as equals. This is illuminated through Daba's marriage to a man who accepts to do menial domestic chores.

Celie and Binetou represent the women of archaic Christian and Muslim societies who culturally lacked the freedom to make their own decisions even if it concerned the most basic things in life. In the archaic Christian as well as Muslim societies, a parent could have all the mandate to decide whether a daughter was to go to school or not, and if yes, up to what stage. Most African and Arab girls sent to modern schools not only in early this century but even currently in some parts of the world, are pulled out of school and married off to men with whom they may not have been acquainted. This practice has recently been reported in the media severally with reference to the Maasai community. Having been forced into marriage against their wish, the childhood freedom and educational ambitions of such girls are shattered. Like Binetou, Celie is forced to quit school in order to marry Mr _____. Young Nabou in So Long a Letter is also a victim of such wickedness as she is also married off to Mawdo and is not even allowed her opinion on the matter. On the other hand she may have had other career plans which were crushed by the fact that she was not allowed to pursue a career of her choice (she was forced to take midwifery) whilst also marriage, as early as it is, with all the responsibilities that go with it, may not allow her the opportunity to pursue other goals.

Lady mother-in-law, old Nabou and Farmata in So Long a Letter are the ones who believe in male superiority like the men in The Color Purple who believe that a woman should not choose a husband but rather go for the one who can offer good living. Like Binetou, Celie is the innocent lamb sacrificed at the altar of sheer affluence. Celie's step-father like Binetou's parents does not care about Celie's

feelings for Albert and he does not care that Albert has big children one of whom, Harpo, is old enough to be Celie's younger brother. Binetou's parents also do not care that Modou, their son-in-law, could be Binetou's father. What the parents in both cases care about is what they will gain as a result of marrying off their daughters.

The assertion that men in both works see women as mere things is also seen in The Color Purple where Albert does not have any feelings for Celie as he has for Nettie, he accepts to marry Celie all the same, simply because Celie would not only provide care for his children whose mother died, but would also provide sexual satisfaction. Like Mawdo in So Long a Letter, Albert sees a woman as a mere reproductive tool and a sexual object. Mawdo does not have any feelings for young Nabou as he has for Aissatou. Still, he succumbs to his mother's pressure and blackmail and goes ahead to marry Nabou. Although he claims not to love Nabou, this does not stop him from seeking sexual satisfaction from her, thus the periodic swellings of Nabou's meaning periodic pregnancy. Albert and Mawdo therefore represent men who see women only in terms of the emotional satisfaction they can offer and only rarely do they care even about the product of their sexual endeavours: children. This is demonstrated very clearly in both books. Alphonso in The Color Purple, for example, after realizing that he has twice impregnated his step-daughter Celie, decides to sell off the children to a childless missionary couple and he does not care at all how the children do after he has sold them. It is also clear that men in So Long a Letter do not care much less about the welfare of the children than about their own emotional gratification. This is true where after marrying Binetou, Modou discards Ramatoulaye and her twelve children. Although Mawdo regrets that Aissatou has left with their four sons, he marries young Nabou just for his gratification. Modou's brother Tamsir also is a man who is only interested in having many women but he does not care at all how the children are doing and what they eat and drink. He lets his wives solely struggle for the upbringing of the children. In The Color Purple it is indicated that Sofia's father hated his children yet like Modou he had twelve of them. He therefore saw women as just sex objects.

Celie's father also got six children by Celie's mother before she died and he had four more through the new wife, May Ellen.

Men are therefore presented in both works as reckless, selfish people who only care about their own feelings. This is also implied in the way a man like Madou goes ahead to marry a second wife even without giving the slightest hint to his first wife. The men who come to break the news to Ramatoulaye also reflect the same mentality seeing a woman as a mere sex thing. The Imam, a religious leader, tells Ramatoulaye that all that Modou did was to marry a second wife in a manner that suggests that marrying another woman without at least informing the first wife is as trivial as buying a second pair of shoes. Alphonso in The Color Purple also keeps marrying one woman after another and very young women, young enough to be his daughters. Such men therefore believe in variety and they see women as mere tools which they can keep on changing to satisfy their hunger for variety.

In both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter, women are therefore represented as victims while men, their victimizers.

The theme of betrayal is also revealed in both works. This is mainly betrayal of women by men. Celie is betrayed by her husband Mr _____ who goes his ex-girlfriend, Shug Avery, in Celie's presence. Celie is also betrayed by a person she had all along considered to be her real father, Alphonso, who not only rapes her but goes ahead to deny her the children she has given birth to as a result of the defilement by Alphonso. Celie is further betrayed by the step-father when he forcefully married her off to Mr _____, a man whom Celie does not have any feelings for. It is this betrayal that Celie faces from various men which drives her into lesbianism. Celie has been treated as an underdog and an inferior by all the men she has encountered in her life. Celie has therefore come to conclude that all men are the same - traitors. Because of men's treacherous nature, coupled with their mistreatment of women, Celie has come to develop a strong resentment towards men and anything heterosexual. Her later lesbian inclinations are therefore a result of psychological trauma. She has not received anything good from men, since already as a child she was raped by her own step-father. When she was forcefully married to Mr _____, she was only to act as his sex tool and ayah for his children.

Like Celie, Ramatoulaye in So Long a Letter is a woman who is betrayed by her husband Modou who decides to write off the twenty-five years they have been together as of no consequence, by marrying a second wife and deciding to neglect Ramatoulaye and the children totally. Modou even denied Ramatoulaye the right to know that she should expect a co-wife. Although it is sanctioned by Koran, the second marriage of Modou came as a great shock to Ramatoulaye. Such men like Modou and Alphonso therefore see women as inferiors, non-entities.

Aissatou, like her friend Ramatoulaye has also been betrayed by a man upon whom she has bestowed her trust and love. Mawdo Ba childishly accepts to be pressurized into a marriage he had never wished by a malicious mother who took revenge against Aissatou, the daughter-in-law she has always considered arrogant. Old Nabou also thought that Aissatou, a daughter of a gold-smith, was not justified to agreeing to Mawdo Ba, another woman just in order to please his evil-minded mother, although he had no affection for the woman imposed on him. Mawdo does not reject young Nabou and even goes ahead impregnating her, proof of his intimate relations with young Nabou, despite his claims to the contrary.

Although she is only mentioned briefly in the novel So Long a Letter, Jacqueline, an Ivorian Christian, defied her parents and married Samba Diack, a Senegalese Muslim, but no sooner had she been married than Samba Diack started chasing after Senegalese women. This drives Jacqueline into a nervous breakdown and she has to be admitted in hospital. Before her admission to hospital, Jacqueline used to find love notes, bills for restaurants and hotel rooms and other proofs of Diack's amorous dalliances.

By getting married to Binetou, Modou betrays the trust of not only Ramatoulaye but also her own daughter Daba. Binetou was the best-friend and class-mate of Daba. What could be more humiliating than one's father getting married to one's class-mate and friend. This is the worst kind of betrayal. This is why when Daba learns that Binetou's "Sugar Daddy" is none other than Modou, she is enraged and psychologically deeply wounded. Binetou who has been Daba's peer, best friend and class-mate, would no longer be just her friend and age-mate but her step-mother. This is why in great anger Daba advises her mother to divorce Modou.

Daba sees her father's marriage to Binetou as the greatest insult by Modou to not only Ramatoulaye but also to Daba herself.

Binetou's parents also betray their daughter by forcing her into marrying her father's age-mate just in order to fulfil their ulterior, selfish motives.

In The Color Purple, betrayal is also seen on another level apart from that of man to wife or man to daughter but betrayal of the women by the male gender. This is brought out very strongly through the white missionary lady who despite having achieved a lot is not credited for her efforts. On page 142 Nettie mentions the white female missionary who, despite having done so much in her missionary works is not recognized like her male counterparts such as Speke, Livingstone and others. This white lady is therefore betrayed by men as her great efforts for positive change in a third world society are not appreciated.

The theme of betrayal is also inter-linked with another theme of "injustice against women". Betrayal as has been discussed at various occasions in the preceding paragraphs is in itself injustice against women who have done so much for their husbands and society at large. When Celie gets married to Mr _____, she is occasionally beaten, sometimes for no good reason apart from the fact that the husband is looking for an avenue for venting out his frustrations. Wife beating is like a sort of hobby for such men.

Injustice is also inherent in the fact that Celie had to be raped. Such actions by a mature man such as Celie's step-father, reduce women to mere playthings. Celie is forcefully married to Albert against her wishes. Furthermore, she is denied access to her two children. It is injustice perpetrated against Ramatoulaye when her husband married a second wife without her consent and knowledge. This is further worsened when Modou deserts his family. Ramatoulaye is therefore both physically and psychologically mistreated. Physically in that she has to take care of all the needs of her children as if she got the children all by herself. Psychologically in that the physical injustices lead to Ramatoulaye having to brood about so many issues related to the welfare of her family.

Injustice is also reflected in the way both Binetou and Nabou, like Celie are not allowed to say anything concerning the men their parents or guardian would like

to marry them off to. Alice Walker tried to argue that such injustices can totally change the perception of women regarding an issue like love. She does this by showing how Celie develops a negative attitude towards men and anything related to men. Alice Walker argues that that is the psychological off-shoot of the patriarchal injustices women are subjected to by men.

Although Binetou is somehow happy to be married to a rich man, she is all the same later on psychologically afflicted as she feels sorry for having wasted her youth by giving it to a man who had nothing in terms of youthfulness but just sheer wealth. We are told that when she went out with Modou to such functions as balls, she felt embarrassed and lowered her head at the sight of couples graced with nothing but their youth and rich in their happiness alone. On watching her friends, the image of her life which she had killed, breaks her heart. Therefore despite the wealth of her husband, Binetou is not psychologically settled. Although she may have given in to Modou's advances, a fact which when her parents got to know and decided to capitalize on by forcing her into marrying Modou, Binetou is, however, not allowed any time by her parents to reflect on her future and what she really aimed for in the days to come. Binetou is only hastily bull-dozed into marrying Modou without being allowed chances to think about it. Like the marriage of young Nabou to Mawdo, this reflects injustice against girls by their parents.

Female discrimination in an African village, Olinka, is presented as part and parcel of the society. The Olinka men like their counterparts in the Afro-American society do not see why girls should be educated. Celie in The Color Purple, for example is withdrawn from school when she is barely in class four and married off to Mr _____. Likewise Olinka men believed that education would be of no good to girls. Indocinated Olinka women also believed the same. When Nettie asks one woman why she thought education was irrelevant to girls, she answers that: "A girl is nothing to herself; only to her husband can she become something" (p.162). Such a society, therefore, like that depicted in both the Afro-American society in the same novel and the African society in So Long a Letter, sees women in terms of the emotional satisfaction they can offer men and their productivity. A girl like Tashi is therefore initially denied education simply because she is a woman.

Indoctrination is therefore seen not only in So Long a Letter but also The Color Purple, for example, where Celie has been indoctrinated to believe that her mistreatment by men in various ways was God-planned since she is a woman.

The word indoctrination meant in its incipient phase the implanting of doctrines. It therefore indicated a liberal concept of implantation. However the concept as it means now mostly assumes the connotations of a coercive type of education and that is the way I use it here. Indoctrination is aimed at an unintelligent way of holding beliefs. Indoctrination aims simply at establishing certain beliefs so that they will be held quite apart from their truth, their explanation, or their foundation in evidence. Indoctrination induces uncritical belief so that an individual is not allowed to develop responsible thinking.

Women all over the world have been subjected to grave indoctrination by their male counterparts in order to perpetuate male hegemony, at the same time ensuring that the woman remains and thinks of herself as an inferior. A woman such as Celie in The Color Purple has been indoctrinated both as a woman and as a black person. Her indoctrination is therefore double-pronged. She sees herself inferior as a black person and inferior as a woman. This double indoctrination has been the cause of Celie's extreme docility at the beginning of the novel. As a form of miseducation, any form of indoctrination is essentially wrong and injustice against the victims.

The content of education that might under certain conditions be referred to as indoctrination are those bodies of belief and knowledge, their methods of acquisition and justification and the consequences in attitude and action entailed by their acceptance which constitute what people see as general view of life. This "view" or "philosophy" of life would be usually, though not necessarily, the official ideology of the society in which the school exists. For example, the Imam in So Long a Letter would like Ramatoulaye to take Modou's second marriage as nothing worth crying about as it is very normal. Ramatoulaye nonetheless is enlightened and therefore does not accept Modou's second marriage just like that. Rather she has many "whys" to ask concerning Modou's marriage to Binetou. Celie in The Color Purple has been indoctrinated to believe that a man is ever right that even when Mr _____ messes around with other women such as Shug Avery in her presence, Celie takes it

very calmly. Celie even accepts submissively the kind of beating she is regularly subjected to by Mr _____. Because of her gross indoctrination, Celie's perception of what is right and normal in its fullness is perverted. She comes to believe in the rightness of what is inherently wrong such as wife-beating to the extent that she even goes on to advise her step-son Harpo to beat up his wife if at all he is to make her submissive. Indoctrination is therefore seen to have had a very appalling effect of Celie. It has to take the efforts of informed and aggressive women as Celie's sister Nettie and step-daughter Sofia to re-educate her. By reflecting on Celie's earlier appalling state, the author tries to show that indoctrination is really in itself criminal. It is injustice against women as it befogs their minds which become inhibited to the extent that they are not able to realize and exploit their full potential, both physically and mentally. This is also reflected in old Nabou who believes that a woman has no business indulging in professions that are masculine. She therefore forces young Nabou to study midwifery, when maybe she would have done better and derived satisfaction in another profession.

Violence against women is also seen as another form of injustice. The Color Purple violence against women is seen in many forms. Firstly there is the physical beating of the woman by the man for whatever reason in both societies; that is the Afro-American and African society, the latter represented by Olinka. Secondly there is violence in other forms such as rape. Celie is raped repeatedly by her step-father yet she cannot do anything. When Squeak (Mary Agnes) goes to prison in order to lobby for the release of Sofia, she is raped by her own uncle, the prison's warden. Such men who can even go as far as committing incest are therefore shown as seeing women, whoever the women may be, in terms of their physical worth.

Brutality against women is also reflected to even worse degrees. Celie's little sister Nettie is said to have gotten a boyfriend whose wife died. The deceased was slain by her boyfriend while coming from the church. Harpo's mother was also murdered by her jealous boyfriend. She was shot in the stomach just because she opted to be with her children rather than submit herself wholly to the boyfriend.

The concept of the new woman and the theme of women's struggle for emancipation is also reflected in both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter. The

new woman strives to break from what she considers old-fashioned traditions which she believes have no place in a modern civilized society. The concept of the new woman is reflected through Aissatou and Ramatoulaye in So Long a Letter and through Sofia Butler, Shug Avery and the new Celie in The Color Purple.

Ramatoulaye is portrayed as a revolutionary who strives for the maintenance of the dignity of women. Ramatoulaye is endowed with both physical and mental strength which she makes use of appropriately. When her husband secretly marries a second wife and subsequently deserts Ramatoulaye and the children, instead of Ramatoulaye being broken down and shaken, she remains mentally alert and vows to fulfil so much despite such an unhappy situation.

When Modou dies, tradition demands that the widow should be inherited by a kin of the deceased. Ramatoulaye, however, refuses to submit to such traditions. Ramatoulaye has come to realize that some beliefs and customs reduce a woman to mere property that can be passed from hand to hand. Ramatoulaye refuses to betray her conscience. Ramatoulaye also opposes polygamy, even though it is a practice sanctioned by her religion ____ Islam. She believes that every woman ought to retain her individuality. Although she is pressurized by various people to accept a second husband, she wards off all these kinds of social pressures and refuses to heed to people's talks.

Ramatoulaye is also a social revolutionary who believes that women have a right to education, employment, equal opportunities and the right to vote. She decries the exploitation of women who do all the drudgery in the house yet they are never complimented.

Education is seen as a means of achieving a rapid social climb for the woman. Both Ramatoulaye and Aissatou are educated. Education has enabled these women to be economically independent but when their rights as social beings are violated, they also demonstrated their mental liberation. Like her friend Ramatoulaye, Aissatou also exudes mental emancipation. When Mawdo succumbs to his mother's pressures and marries a second wife, Aissatou quickly seeks for divorce. She sees Mawdo's action as betrayal of the first order. Mawdo has betrayed his own conscience just to please his mother.

In The Color Purple, Sofia Butler is the first representation of female emancipation that we come across in the novel. From the very beginning, Sofia is presented as a symbol of defiance. Unlike Celie, Sofia does things her own way provoking her husband. Harpo complains that she does not act like other women. All along, Sofia is seen as rebellious. Sofia does not only argue with her husband and let her stand be known, but also when her husband makes the mistake of trying to beat her up, she does not just sit there weakly but instead fights back fiercely.. The funny thing is that when Sofia fights with Harpo, she is always the one who wins, something that drives Harpo into deep depression.

Sofia has seen the injustices perpetrated against docile women and therefore tries as much as possible to be assertive in order not to be taken for granted. Rather than just being assertive, Sofia goes further than this by trying to show the men that what a man can do, a woman can definitely also successfully do. She also demonstrated this by undertaking what had initially been labelled masculine jobs, like repairing a leaking roof.

Sofia is a revolutionary woman who believes that she should not be discriminated against not just as a woman but also as a black person. She demonstrates the latter conviction when she reproaches Miss Millie, the mayor's wife, a white, who contemptuously suggested that Sofia would make a splendid maid for her. When the Mayor himself intervenes, Sofia knocks him down. Although Sofia is jailed as a result of assaulting the mayor and his wife, she has all the same made her stand known. Sofia is imprisoned for twelve years and when she is released, she is forced to work in the Mayor's house. However, she is still defiant and whatever job she is ordered to do in the Mayor's house, she calls it slaving.

When Sofia's mother dies, Sofia demonstrated her defiance by insisting on being a pall-bearer of her mother's coffin, whereas women were not allowed to be pall-bearers. It is Sofia's revolutionary nature which not only changes her husband Harpo who eventually accepts to do even the menial jobs that he had initially considered feminine, but most importantly changes Celie who had been so docile.

The strength of Alice Walker's novel The Color Purple is the provision of a chance for change even the worst characters. One may argue that this is not

plausible since life does not always give a chance for the bad to be transformed to be good but here it is credible, considering the span of time of the events in the novel. The novel starts when Celie is barely fourteen and ends when Celie has grey hair and is an old woman. The novel therefore covers about or over forty years. The change of not only Celie but a staunchly male patriarch such as Harpo and Albert is therefore plausible considering the many events that lead them into being transformed and the amount of time spanned. Alice Walker, however, does not allow everybody to change. For example Celie's step-father, Alphonso, dies without having realised his mistakes. Tashi's father also dies without having changed his conviction about the education of women. He died believing that an educated woman had no place in the Olinka society.

Celie's change is in itself plausible since it is gradual. Certain factors also forced Celie into changing her perceptions. Moreover, she is influenced by Sofia, Shug Avery and Nettie, women who believe in the freedom of womankind.

Celie's awakening comes as a great relief to the reader. This is because she is initially presented as so helplessly submissive and fatalistic. She is initially so docile that she even addresses her husband as "Sir". She succumbs to beatings without any protest. By watching awakened women such as Sofia and Shug Avery and by writing to Nettie and getting her opinion about women's rights, Celie begins to change, whereby having realised that she was mistaken and a fatalist, she stops writing to God and instead writes only to Nettie. Celie realises that wife-beating is morally wrong and becomes aware that all along Sofia had always been right and Harpo, her husband who had always tried to be over-bearing had always been wrong.

Celie also realises that economic independence of the woman is very important if social and economic liberty of the female gender has to be achieved. She therefore starts making pants which she sells and gets money.

Having realised that she did not get any satisfaction from being married to Mr _____, a man she was forced to marry, Celie decides to leave Mr _____'s, house and starts a new life in Memphis. Like Aissatou in So Long a Letter, Celie goes on to succeed further after the separation. Although Walker's stand bears more on extremist feminism than Ba's which is mostly mild, it would be justified to argue

that the fact that both authors allow Celie and Aissatou, - women who having realised the wickedness inherent in men to decide to completely break up with their husbands, and to succeed after obtaining the break, demonstrating that both Walker's and Ba's feminism in variations of Liberal and Radical thoughts of different magnitudes between Aissatou and Celie - the traditional marriage deters women's ambitions. Therefore they conclude that for a woman to succeed, marriage should never be her priority rather, she should strive to be her own master.

After leaving Mr _____'s house, Celie is very happy in Memphis and is doing very well in the pants-making business. Likewise, Aissatou does economically very well abroad and she can even afford to purchase a brand new car for her friend Ramatoulaye.

In both works discussed in this thesis, the change of women brings with it the change of men. Whereas in The Color Purple, it is male protagonists such as Harpo and Albert who change, in So Long a Letter, it is the younger generation of men who demonstrate a new image of man. Therefore, while Mariama Ba sees hope mostly in the youth, Alice Walker argues that with time and the right approach taken, even the most dominant man can change. Alice Walker demonstrated that there is hope not only in the future generation represented by Tashi, Olivia and Adam but even in the present generation. Alice Walker thus argues that no person can be too hard to be transformed.

When Harpo changes, he accepts to cook, wash dishes, clean the house and do many other chores. After Celie leaves for Memphis, Albert also changes. He works in the field, he cleans the house and also cooks and washes dishes. He even allows Celie to teach him how to sew when Celie visits him one time.

In So Long a Letter, Daba's husband representing the younger generation of men assists his wife in domestic chores. He sees his wife as an equal rather than inferior to him. Mariama Ba presents this young couple as the ideal one as not only do they assist each other in domestic work but also identify with each other and talk everything out in order to reach a compromise. Ibrahima Sall, a young university student also represents the changed man. When he impregnates young Aissatou, he does not run away from her but rather accepts all his responsibilities. Daouda Dieng,

a politician, has also realised the contribution women make to the world and he therefore supports the women's cause.

Alice Walker and Mariama Ba therefore both argue that the women's struggle can only be won totally if men are also educated on how to change according with the times. The struggle can bear fruits if men also support the cause. Thus, although both writers present men as wicked and merciless, they allow an opportunity for striking a balance by accepting that having realised that women should be treated as equal human beings and that some traditions are suppressive to women, some men are changing and becoming not only accommodating to women but even engage in activities that were initially considered womanly.

In the end, Alice Walker and Mariama Ba have articulated ideas that are identical in one way or another: that a woman is an equal human being who deserves a place in the world and who should not be treated as a slave or object. Parents have no right to impose a girl on a man she does not love; rather, it should be the girl's choice as to whom she should get married to. Thirdly, a woman should have a right to her individuality, therefore polygamy or infidelity on the part of the man is inherently wrong. These writers argue that practices such as polygamy only help in the further dehumanisation of the woman. Women are also encouraged to fight for their rightful place in the world - outside the house.

In both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter satire has been employed mainly towards men who cling patriarchal stances, yet at times contradict themselves or are humiliated by occurrences that prove their stances wrong. Albert and Harpo in the former work come out as diehard male oppressors yet, like Mawdo in So Long a Letter when their women separate from them, such men are the first to be afflicted by psychological trauma. When their wives leave them, they are mentally deeply troubled, yet as members of the so called perfect and tough gender they have always behaved as if matters related to love do not touch the surface of their hearts let alone the core. Docile and conservative women such as Celie in The Color Purple and Farmata and the Lady-mother-in-law in So Long a Letter are also satirised. Both writers argue that it is such blindness in women that hamper their

liberation from the shackles of male dominance. Ba and Walker, therefore, urge women to wake up and face reality - that they are just as good as men in all ways.

Satire in both works is therefore aimed at criticising, criticism which is consequently aimed at transforming the criticised. In the end, both writers strive to reform human values and this transformation is reflected in a changed world where in The Color Purple, not only the docile Celie changes for her own good but even staunch male patriarchs such as Harpo and Albert change. In So Long a Letter the new generation of men represented by Daba's husband and Ibrahima Sall have learnt from the mistakes of the preceding generation and now accept women as their equals and engage in duties formerly labelled feminine.

It is therefore evident from the comparisons made in this chapter that both The Color Purple and So Long a Letter, although representing different societies and written by two different writers, demonstrate that the problems of women across the world are similar in one way or another. It is also clear that the two works are similar, from the manner of presentation to the very content. I have shown that both have similar modes of presentation, the letter form, and address themes that are interrelated with reference to the female gender. I have also demonstrated that satire exists in both works mostly, in relation to the male supremacy which is faulted in many varied ways, but also satire of the oppressed women who still imprisoned in the cocoon of submissiveness. I have also shown that Satire in both works is aimed at corrective criticism whereby, eventually, the victims and their counterparts change. With this, therefore, the two works end on a note of hope: that with the right approach in the struggle for liberation not only females would liberate themselves from the chains of male dominance but even the men would unchain themselves from the same ugly prison, which has no place in modern progressive society.

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CONCLUSION

Whereas Alice Walker's The Color Purple deals with racism, violence, strength of community, of sharing the burdens of people, creativity of black men and women (quilt making, sewing of pants and shirts), reunion of lovers, friends and families, and the straightforwardness of Afro-America's communal folk language, Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter focuses particularly on the outlook for the future of the country, Senegal.

However, both writers argue that the success in the women's struggle can only be attained if men are also prepared to be educated on how to change. They both portrayed men as wicked, selfish and merciless with the intention to allow them an opportunity to change their attitude and to realize that men and women are equal in society.

Walker and Ba allow Celie and Aissatou to break up with their wicked husbands in order to be independent and to start new lives. They are trying to show that a forced marriage deters a woman's ambitions and therefore marriage should never be the ultimate priority in one's career, rather she should strive to be her own master.

The change of women brings the change of men. In The Color Purple, Celie gains social and economic independence in Memphis after her departure from Mr. _____, as well as Sofia who separates herself from Harpo. In the end, Mr. _____ and Harpo are transformed into caring, nurturing beings, loving to be involved in the domestic arena such as cooking, sewing, etc... In So Long a Letter, the younger generation demonstrates the new image of men such as Daba's husband as well as Ibrahim Sall. Ba sees hope in the youth, proving this through Daba's husband who is always ready to assist his wife and who sees his wife as equal and not inferior to him.

Occasionally I brought an example of Japanese women portrayed in various literary works, in addition to the women depicted in the main texts, with the intention to prove that gender issues are a common theme in different societies with different religious backgrounds and cultural values.

In order to bring the author's message loud and clear, Walker and Ba use the same method of presentation of 'letter form' which is so personal and intimate with painstaking honesty, and their outcry become so poignant and real. Also both authors employ 'satire' as a stylistic device, a mask to hide the true face of criticism, under which all the negative characters are reborn and both works end on a note of hope:

The Color Purple

"Dear God. Dear Stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples.
Dear Everything, Dear God. Thank you for bringing my
sister Nettie and our children home. (P.292) When
Nettie's foot come down on the porch I almost die.
Then us both start to moan and cry. Us totter toward one nother
like us use to do when us was babies. Then us feel so weak
when us touch, us knock each other down.....
But I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy.
Matter of fact, I think this is the youngest us ever felt.
Amen" (p.295)

So Long a Letter

"Hope still lives within me. It is from the dirty and
nauseating humus that the green plant sprout into life,
and I can feel new buds springing up in me. The word
'happiness' does indeed have meaning, doesn't it? I
shall go out in search of it. Too bad for me if once
again I have to write you so long a letter Ramatoulaye" (p. 89)

Both authors emphasise through and through that with the right procedures in the struggle for liberation not only females would liberate themselves from the prison of patriarchal traditions but also males would unchain themselves from the same ugly dungeons, which have no place in the modern society.

Indeed, apart from the literary scene, the women's movement emerged since the 1960s, demanding equal pay, equal education, equal job opportunities, free contraception and abortion on demand and twenty four hour nursery. Several legal reforms have been achieved, but women's groups throughout the world are still actively campaigning for child care, contraception and abortion facilities as well as for refugees for battered wives, rape crises centres and women's health clinics. Gender-equality still has a long way to go, and I hope that this thesis may contribute in a small way to this noble cause.

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