

## CELIE'S CHARACTERISTIC IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

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### **Abstract**

*This study is related to the characteristics and character development of the main character in Alice Walker's The Color Purple, Celie. There are two objectives of the study namely, (1) to find out Celie's characteristics, (2) to explain Celie's character development in the novel. It is a descriptive research with the novel The Color Purple as the main source of data. The data were collected through library study and internet browsing. This research made use of the theories of character, characterization, psychology, personality, and personality development. Moreover, sociological and psychological approaches were applied to analyze the data. The data analysis shows as follows: (1) Celie's characteristics include weakness, patience, obedience, and lovability, (2) Celie's character development causes Celie to be a cheerful, brave, and hard worker woman.*

**Key Words :** Characteristic, character development

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

People like to imagine something as if it were real. By reading, people usually imagine the story to catch the message. Reading literary works, for instance, gives them some advantages. It can make their brain try to imagine the setting, character and situation that happen in the story. Besides, reading literary works not only can make them know about thing that happen but also can make them know about life that they have never known before.

Literature is a process of understanding the life itself as literature is the imitation of life. Furthermore, Hudson (1965: 10) strengthens the opinion in his book; *An Introduction to the Study of Literature* says as a follow:

literature is the vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us.

Literature is closely related to life because it is the work of human being and enjoyed by human being too. It is also important point in their life, because it makes the people who read it happy, satisfied, and it may trigger their desire, emotion, ambition, and imagination. Literature can be said as the imagination of feeling that arise lives through experience to fill desires. Literature can be divided into three groups namely drama, prose, and poetry. The researcher uses a novel as the material of analysis. Novel is one of the most interesting and popular forms of literature. It entertains the reader who reads the story. Kettle in *An Introduction to the English Novel* says, "A novel is living thing, all once and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think in each of the parts there is something of the parts" (1951: 12).

The researcher is interested in analyzing Alice Walker's novel entitled *The Color Purple* which was firstly published in 1982. The story of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* tells about an ugly, uneducated, stupid and poor young girl named Celie. She always gets bad treatment from the people surrounding her, especially from her step father who rapes her and her husband who continually hits her. Domestic violence and sexual abuse influence the development of Celie's character. Furthermore, the researcher wants to analyze more about the kinds of Celie's characteristic as the main character in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

The researcher uses some theories that are related to this research. The theory of character is used to analyze the character toward the novel. Moreover, Holman and Harmon in *A Handbook to Literature* state that:

A Character is complicated term that includes the idea of the moral constitution of the human personality, the presence of moral uprightness and the simpler nature of the presence of creatures that in art seem to be human beings of one sort or another (1986: 81).

The definition implies that the author creates the character in his literary work resembling the real people personality. Thus, character is a kind of personality which is characterized by the author in a play. It creates the role spirit of a play and it makes the story alive. The theory of characterization is applied to characterize Celie's characteristic and her character development, Jones (1968:84) in *An Outline of Literature* says as follows:

“The characterization is the depicting of clear images of person. There are two methods of characterization: The dramatic and the analytic. In the dramatic we form our opinions of the characters from what they do and say, from their environment, and from other characters think of them. In the analytic method the author comments upon the characters, explaining their motives, their appearance, and their thoughts”.

Characterization means that the process when the reader or the author deliver their opinion upon the character. The theory of psychology is used to discuss psychological development toward the main character's characteristic. Crow D in *General Psychology* states that psychology is scientific study of human and animal behaviour (1973:3). It means that psychology has close relationship with human life. Furthermore, the theory of personality is applied in this research. According to Woodworth (Hurlock, 1976: 6) in *Personality Development* defines that “personality is the quality of individual's total behaviour”. It means that, one's behaviour is one of the picture of the personality him or her selves. While, the theory of personality development is applied in this research to explain the development of Celie's character development. Hurlock in *Personality Development* states that the desire to change the personality for the better, “improve” it, usually develops late children become aware, from what parents, teacher, and peers say to him, that they dislike some of his behaviour (1974: 119). It means that the development of person's personality is the process of improvement of person's personality itself which is influenced by environment.

This research focuses in analyzing the kinds of Celie's characteristics and her character development. Celie has more than one characteristics. She also experiences character development which is influenced by people surrounding and her environment.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method that is used in this research is descriptive method. Punch says, “Descriptive study sets out to collect, organize, and summarize information about the matter being studied” (2000: 38). Furthermore, the researcher also uses library research. Library research is used to find the relevant theories based on the problem. Moreover, Punch states that additional possibilities for data in qualitative studies include documents, diaries and journals, other written materials and non written qualitative data such as audio-visual materials or artefacts (2000: 58). It means that the researcher needs some data from written materials and printed media such as articles, some books, and references to support the analysis. Psychological approach and sociological approach are used in this analysis to analyze the problem of statement.

## 3. DISCUSSION

The data analysis includes the kinds of Celie's Characteristic and her character development In Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

## 1. Celie's characteristics

### a. Celie as a Weak Woman

Everyone has more than one personality in his or her life. Personality of someone is the picture of someone itself. Celie is a weak woman, she is just a follower and cannot be independent. Celie often gets violence from her husband named Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, but she cannot fight. She thinks that she is too weak to fight back. Celie feels it is impossible for Celie to resist Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Don't let them run over you, Nettie say. You got to let them know who got the upper hand.

They got it, I say.

But she keep on, You got to fight. You got to fight.

But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive.(TCP, 1982: 11).

The letter written by Celie tells about the conversation between Celie and Nettie. Nettie is Celie's younger sister who really loves her. Nettie does not want her sister to get a bad treatment from people surrounding. Nettie knows that Celie's husband does some violence like hitting, slapping and punching. Nettie asks Celie to fight her husband if he hits her. However, Celie says that she cannot fight back to her husband as Celie never does it in her life before. The suggestion that Nettie gives to Celie is refused directly by Celie because she thinks that being silent is better than being rebellious. Celie's attitude shows that she is a weak woman who follows her husband's roles.

The dominant attributes of Celie's characteristics is a weak woman. From adolescence into adulthood, Celie endures sexual, physical and emotional abuse. However, Celie never complains to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and her stepfather who punch and hit her. It shows that Celie is a weak woman who has no power to resist.

### b. Celie as a Patient Woman

Patience is the picture of the ability of someone who stays calm and accepts something annoying without complaining. It is related to Celie's personality. Celie accepts anything that occurs in her life without complaining.

I spend my wedding day running from the oldest boy. He twelve. 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 my head open. The blood run all down tween my breasts.

His daddy say Don't *do* that! But that's all he say. He got four children, instead of three, two boys and two girls. The girls hair ain't been comb since their mammy died. I tell him I'll just have to shave it off. Start fresh. He say bad luck to cut a woman hair.

So after I bandage my head best I can and cook dinner—they have a spring, not a well, and a wood stove look like a truck—I start trying to untangle hair. They only six and eight and they cry. They scream. They cuse me of murder. By ten o'clock I'm done. They cry theirselves to sleep(TCP, 1982: 9).

Celie becomes a new mother of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s children. The children reject Celie's appearance. They throw away a stone on Celie's head and make her head bleed. It is really bad impression for Celie to live together with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s family. However, Celie's patience makes her stay with her husband. Although the children cannot accept her, Celie shows her patience. Celie cannot give judgment to the children because they are not mature enough. Celie takes care of the children like hers and becomes a good stepmother for them. Celie has done the best for

the children without complaining. Celie cleans the house, washes the clothes and cooks some food for them. She believes that there will be the happiness after the sadness.

Celie's patience is tested when she faces her naughty stepchildren and cruel husband who always make her hurt. Celie proves her patience by staying with her husband and her naughty stepchildren. Although, she is only a stepmother, she has good personality to treat her stepchildren and her husband well and patiently.

### **c. Celie as an Obedient Woman**

Life would be simpler for all of us if we would obey the rule completely. People who have an obedient personality, they never think to forbid the rule, they always follow the rule. The obedience can save a person from punishment. It happens to Celie. She always follows whatever her stepfather wants.

The first time I got big Pa took me out of school. He never care that I love it. Nettie stood there at the gate holding tight to my hand. I was all dress for first day. You too dumb to keep going to school, Pa say. Nettie the clever one in this bunch.

But Pa, Nettie say, crying, Celie smart too. Even Miss Beasley say so. Nettie dote on Miss Beasley. Think nobody like her in the world. (TCP, 1982:8)

Celie's stepfather has many rules for Celie. Celie cannot refuse what her stepfather asks. Celie's father does not allow Celie to get the formal education. He thinks that Celie will be busy with her business. As a result, Celie cannot help her father for taking care of their house. Celie's father asks her to stop studying. He says that Celie is not as smart as her younger sister, Nettie. Actually, Celie is very happy because she can study at school. Unfortunately, her stepfather does not give her permission to study at school. She obeys him. She obeys whatever her stepfather says to her.

Additionally, her stepfather asks her to marry Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, a widower who has four children. As the oldest child in her family Celie must get married first although she is still young.

But I can let you have Celie. She the oldest anyway. She ought to marry first. She ain't fresh tho, but I spect you know that. She spoiled. Twice. But you don't need a fresh woman no how. I got a fresh one in there myself and she sick all the time. He spit, over the railing. The children git on her nerve, she not much of a cook. And she big already.

She ugly. He say. But she ain't no stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed it or clothe it.

Fact is, he say, I got to git rid of her. She too old to be living here at home. And she a bad influence on my other girls.

She'd come with her own linen. She can take that cow she raise down there back of the crib. (TCP, 1982: 7)

Celie's stepfather tries to introduce Celie to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, a widower who needs a wife to take care of him and his children. Her stepfather tells Celie's strength to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, so Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is interested in Celie. Celie is mature enough because she can cook and handle house work. Actually, Celie does not want to marry with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, but she must obey her stepfather's rule. If she refuses what her stepfather asks, she will get punishment from her stepfather. Obeying her stepfather is the right way for Celie. Finally, she accepts Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ to be her

husband. Celie is a good daughter. Obeying her father's rules is a good attitude to make him happy.

As an obedient woman, Celie does everything that is asked by the people surrounding her. She is a woman that cannot fight the rules.

#### **d. Celie as a Loveable Woman**

Everyone needs love, it can make life colorful. Love happens in every human being in many kinds of situation. Celie is an ugly, stupid and poor girl. Everyone has weakness and strength. Celie is one of loveable woman eventhough she has some weaknesses. It is not the reason for people to hate Celie.

Nettie is Celie's sister who loves Celie so much. Celie is a good sister for Nettie. Celie gives the best treatment to Nettie. Celie is the oldest daughter who has handled the house because her mother is crazy.

I tell Nettie the next morning. Stead of being mad, she glad to go. Say she hate to leave me is all. Us fall on each other neck  
When she say that.

I sure hate to leave you here with these rotten children, she say.  
Not to mention with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. It's like seeing you buried she  
say.(TCP, 1982: 11)

But God, I miss you, Celie, I think about the tune you laid yourself done for me. I love you with all my heart.(TCP, 1982: 53)

Nettie cannot see Celie's sadness. Nettie wants to replace Celie's kindness by staying together with Celie's family. Nettie loves Celie because she has taken care of Nettie well. Nettie cannot leave her because Nettie loves her sister. She wants to help Celie. Celie's patience is one of Celie's strength to make somebody else love her. Commonly, the people in her surrounding judge her based on Celie's physical performance. As a matter of fact, no one pays attention on her. On the other hand, Nettie is the only one person who cares about Celie. Celie's kindness, patience and honesty make her loveable.

Physical condition is not the reason of someone to hate one another; Good personality can help someone to be loved easily. Celie has good personality that makes someone love her. Having good attitude and personality makes Celie loveable.

## **2. Celie's Character Development**

### **a. Becoming a Cheerful Woman**

Celie gets bad experience that makes her become a weak woman while she is a teenager. Violence and pressure are the treatment that Celie accepts in her life. The effect of the treatment occurring in Celie's life makes her isolated from the society. Then, Celie meets Shug who can make her feel comfortable. Shug really helps Celie to make her life better than before. Therefore, Celie becomes a cheerful woman.

So what is it like in Memphis? Shug's house is big and pink and look sort of like a barn. Cept where you would put hay, she got bedrooms and toilets and a big ballroom where she and her band sometime work. She got plenty grounds round the house and a bunch of monuments and a fountain out front. She got statues of folks I never heard

bunch of elephants and turtles everywhere. Some big, some little, of and never hope to

see. She got a whole some in the fountain, some up under the trees. Turtles and elephants. And all over her house. Curtains got elephants, bedspreads got turtles.

Shug give me a big back bedroom overlook the backyard and the bushes down by the creek(TCP, 1982: 76).

Celie shows all her feeling, she is happy to live with Shug in Memphis. Celie looks like living in heaven; she lives in sweet home with her lover. It is the first time for Celie feels the real happiness that she never gets before. Shug is a woman who explains to Celie that everyone has a part to get happiness. Shug succeeds in guiding Celie to make her understand well about the meaning of happiness. It is also one of Celie's successes to change her personality becoming a cheerful woman.

Thus, everyone has a right to have happiness. Celie's happiness is shown by her cheerfulness. She is also happy to live with Shug in her big house. House, love and job are the things which make Celie happy. Those conditions influence Celie to be a cheerful woman.

### **b. Becoming a Brave Woman**

"Brave" has a large definition. The discussion focuses in the power of Celie as a brave woman. "Brave" means doing something dangerous or painful.

Well, you know wherever there's a man, there's trouble. And it seem like, going to Memphis, Grady was all over the car.

No matter which way us change up, he want to sit next to Squeak.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ try to act like he don't care I'm going.

You'll be back, he say. Nothing up North for nobody like you

Until you do right by me, I say, everything you even dream about will fail. I give it to him straight, just like it come to me.

And it seem to come to me from the trees.

Whoever heard of such a thing, say Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. I probably didn't whup your ass enough.

Every lick you hit me you will suffer twice, I say. Then I say, You better stop talking because all I'm telling you ain't coming just from me. Look like when I open my mouth the air rush in and shape words(TCP, 1982: 75).

Celie's writing tells her emotion. She reveals all her terrible feeling toward Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Celie shows all her expectation to leave Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ because she cannot stay anymore. Celie just keeps silent to accept Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s treatment, although she is abused by him. The violence that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ does to Celie makes her hate him. Finally, Celie decides to leave Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ alone. It is one of Celie's bravery to confront her husband.

The changing of Celie's personality makes Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ feeling worried. He does not believe in Celie's changes. Celie fights him and tries to kill him.

Say what? he ast. Shock.

All round the table folkses mouths be dropping open.

You took my sister Nettie away from me, I say. And she was the only person love me in the world.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ start to sputter. ButButButButBut. Sound like some kind of motor

You was all rotten children, I say. You made my life a hell on earth. And your daddy here ain't dead horse's shit.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ reach over to slap me. I jab my case knife in his hand.

You bitch, he say. What will people say, you running off to Memphis like you don't have a house to look after?

Shug say, Albert. Try to think like you got some sense. Why any woman give a shit what people think is a mystery to me(TCP, 1982: 74)

Celie becomes a wild woman. Celie is really angry with Mr. \_\_\_ because of his violence over her. Celie is bored to follow all Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s roles. Celie tries to stop her sorrow by leaving Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. One of Celie's ways is by jabbing Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ hand to make him realize that she is not a weak woman anymore.

Celie's effort to develop her personality is successful. She becomes a brave woman. She must study hard and improve her personality. She needs someone to help her. Nowadays, Celie can save her life and never be afraid of her husband anymore.

### **c. Becoming a Hard Worker**

One of the effects of Celie's character developmet is that Celie becomes a hard worker. The causes of Celie becoming a hard worker begins when she gets the heritage from her parents, Celie gets new spirit to work hard. She use the wealth for opening the business.

The death of Celie's stepfather reveals Celie's life condition. Celie calls her stepfather "Pa". Celie considers her stepfather as her real father. Now, Celie knows that the man who is called Celie "Pa" is not Celie's real father. He is just Celie's stepfather.

Anyhow, his little wife, Daisy, call me up on the telephone in the middle of the night.

Miss Celie, she say, I got bad news. Alphonso dead.

Who? I ast.

Alphonso, she say. Your stepdaddy.

How he die? I ast. I think of killing, being hit by a truck, struck by lightening, lingering disease. But she say, Naw, he died in his sleep. Well, not quite in his sleep, she say. Us was spending a little time in bed together, you know, before us drop off.

Well, I say, you have my sympathy.

Yes ma'am, she say, and I thought I had this house too, but look like it belong to your sister Nettie and(TCP, 1982: 82)

Your stepdaddy been dead over a week, she say. When us went to town to hear the will read yesterday, you could have

knock me over with a feather. Your real daddy owned the land and the house and the store. He left it to your mama.

When your mama died, it passed on to you and your sister Nettie. I don't know why Alphonso never told you that

Well, I say, anything coming from him, I don't want it (TCP, 1982: 82)

The real Celie's father is a successful business man who is killed by white merchant as the opponent of Celie's father in business. The effect of Celie's father death is Celie's mother becomes crazy when Celie was child. Thus, no one knows the inheritance belongs to her. Furthermore, Alphonso or Celie's stepfather gets married to Celie's mother, so the wealth of Celie's family is controlled by Celie's stepfather. After Alphonso dies, the wealth of Celie's family belongs to Celie and Nettie as the children of her parents. The heritage is used to develop Celie's business. As a hard worker Celie uses the wealth for the good thing such as

developing her pant business. Celie can do what she wants and spends her money for her needs. Celie is not a poor woman anymore and now she is a rich woman. Celie's sufferings change into happiness after she gets the heritage from her parents. It makes her become a very rich woman.

Being a hard worker is one of the keys for someone else to be a successful people. It happens to Celie. She works hard in finding a job to help her familie's financial. Although, Celie is a poor, ugly, stupid and weak woman but she has spirit to improve her life until she becomes a successful woman.

The process of Celie's success begins when she is in Memphis together with Shug Avery. There, Celie tries to open small pants business. Celie is helped by the twin brothers named Jarene and Darlene. They are the profesional tailors who teach Celie how to sew. Darlan also teaches Celie how to be a professional business woman.

Jerene and Darlene come help me with the business. They twins. Never married. Love to sew. Plus, Darlene trying to teach me how to talk. She say US not so hot. A dead country give away

My mind run up on a thought, git confuse, run back and sort of lay down.

You sure this worth it? I ast.

She say Yeah. Bring me a bunch of books. Whitefolks all over them, talking bout apples and dogs.

What I care bout dogs? I think.

Darlene keep trying. Think how much better Shug feel with you educated, she say.

She won't be shame to take you

anywhere.(TCP, 1892: 77).

Jarene and Darlene take part in the process of Celie's changing to be a hard worker. Jarene teaches Celie how to make good pants while Darlene tries to teach Celie how to talk with other people, so that Celie can promote her pants business. Celie increases her knowledge by conducting formal education. As a hard worker, Celie always works hard in studying how to develop her business with her friend's help. Jarene and Darlene show Celie how to be a successful person. They bring a bunch of books that can be read by Celie. She must learn to control and get some profit from her business. Business is a new thing for Celie because she never knows well about it before. Celie gets problem in finding job. She must study how to speak well. Celie's effort goes smoothly. She has good skill in speaking to support her business. In opening pant business, it shows that Celie is a hard worker woman who does not want to depend to her husband any more.

Celie being a hard worker is proved by her effort to have good skill in managing her business. Celie who used to be poor and stupid, she becomes successful woman now. Celie's struggle while being a hard worker can improve her life become better.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This research focuses its discussion on the kinds of Celie's characteristic and her character deveopment. The researcher applies library research including internet browsing to get the relevant data. In order to analyze the data, psychological approach and sociological approach are used. Moreover, the theories in this research are character, characterization, psychology, . personality and personality development.

The researcher is finding some Celie's characteristics in the novel. Celie is the main character in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* who has some characteristics. She is a weak, patient, obedient, and loveable woman. Being a weak woman, she cannot fight her stepfather while he did violence to her. Celie just follows whatever her stepfather wants because Celie is an obedient woman; she cannot refuse her stepfather order. While being a patient woman,



Celie faces the naughty step children. Celie is patient for taking care of her stepchildren. She gives good treatment to them as her own children although they are very naughty. Celie's patience and obedient make her become loveable woman. The researcher finds some of Celie's character development in the novel. The changing of Celie's life starts when she meets Shug Avery who makes Celie happy. As the result, Celie becomes a cheerful woman. It is proven when Celie can live together with her lover happily, named Shug Avery. Moreover, the changing of Celie becomes a brave woman is the beginning of her success. Celie tries to fight people who make her weak. She knows what she must do to save herself. Furthermore, to open pants business is shown that she is a hard worker. Celie always studies how to handle her business. Business is a new thing for Celie but she is really enthusiastic and working hard to develop her business. The heritage from Celie's parents also supports Celie's life to be richer and more successful woman. Finally, Celie gets love, job, and family that make her really happy.

The Changing of Celie's characteristic is proven by her effort to make her dreams come true. Love, job, and family are the important things in Celie's life. Without those factors, Celie cannot live happily.

Finally, after doing this research the researcher learns more about personality. It can be concluded that someone's personality is influenced by the people surrounding. It is characterized whether they take as a good or bad person. Personality is the identity of someone's behaviour. There is a moral message that can be learnt from this research. Everyone has weakness. It can not be an obstacle to reach the dream. Such as Celie's effort, she tries to improve her life to be better than before although she has some weaknesses. By understanding this research, the researcher hopes that the researcher itself and the readers can get a good value about character development.

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