Student’s Name

Professor’s Name

Course

Date

Uncle Tom's Cabin as a feminist novel

Stowe's novel “Uncle Tom's Cabin” addressed the moral and physical strength of women covertly. The female characters of the novel like Eliza Harris, Evangeline St. Clare, Mrs. Shelby, and Aunt Chloe showed the strong role of goodness prevailing over evilness as compared to the male characters of the novel. Similarly, the malicious, Mrs. St. Claire immoral actions were holistically in her control. The women of the novel depicted the emotional strength; it accentuates their equality to men, which was quite uncommon in the literature of the nineteenth century.

“Uncle Tom's Cabin” is the novel which revolves around the slavery, race, religion, feminism, love, suffering, violence, and contrasting regions respectively. In this tragic novel, Arthur Shelby is a Kentucky farmer living with his wife Emily Shelby. Both were kind and compassionate towards their slaves. But Mr. Shelby overwhelmed with debts and decided to sell his two slaves to the slave trader, Mr. Haley. One slave was the middle-aged person, uncle Tom and the other was Harry, the son of his wife maid named Eliza. Her maid ran away with his son and husband George with the hope of getting freedom in Canada. However, Mr. Haley followed him and hired slave hunter for catching them. On the other hand, Uncle Tom transported to Mississippi leaving his family in despair. On the way, he saved a little girl, Eva, from falling into the river and her father Augustine St. Clare bought him for the protection of her daughter. Uncle Tom got the good master; however, the master's wife was cruel. Uncle Tom shared the devout Christianity with the little girl, Eva. On the other hand, salve hunter got injured in his fight with George. However, they brought him to the next settlement for his recovery. St. Clare cousin, Ophelia had a deep prejudice for blacks; however, he objected the existence of the institution of slavery greatly. So, Mr. Clare bought the hapless, paranoid, and abuse-suffering black girl, Topsy, for Ophelia so that he could educate her. Meanwhile, Eva fell ill and died, which saddened everyone.

However, Ophelia stopped hating blacks and Topsy started trusting people. And St. Calare decided to free Mr. Tom but got stabbed to death. And his wife sold him to the atrocious plantation, Simon Legree. Uncle Tom was taken to Louisiana with other slaves: Emmeline and Cassy. He got brutally beaten for not following the order of his master to whip the fellow slave. On the other hand, the slave hunter becomes the better man after recovery and Eliza, George and Harry continued their way to Canada for attaining freedom. Meanwhile, Uncle Tom encouraged the Emmeline and Cassy to run away. He withstood all the torments of Legree when he denied telling his master about the escaped slaves. Mr. Shelby arrived at Louisiana to free uncle Tom, but he witnessed his death as a martyr. On the way to Canada, Cassy and Emmeline met with the George sister on boat and Cassy realized that Eliza was her lost daughter. The reunited family started living together happily and decided to live in Liberia. Mr. Shelby set all his slaves free in the honor of Uncle Tom and urged them to ponder about the sacrifices of Tom whenever they see his cabin. Also, he motivated them to live a pious Christian life as Uncle Tom did so (Carey).

The novel demonstrated the character of the Eliza, who exerted all her strength to protect her son despite the setbacks. She ran her way from Kentucky to Ohio, Northern United States, and finally to Canada via the Underground Railway. Meanwhile, she suffered all the emotional and physical agony, yet she never quitted to protect his son.

“...she vaulted sheer over the turbid current by the shore, on to the raft of ice beyond…. The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came on it, but she stayed there not a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy, she leaped to another and still another cake; --stumbling—leaping—slipping—springing upwards again! Her shoes are gone—her stockings cut from her feet—while blood marked every step, but she saw nothing, felt nothing...” (Stowe 94).

In the novel, Eliza continuous jumped from one ice block to another ice block enduring all the physical hardships. Even the three accompanying her and the two hunters avoided to jump over the ice blocks, yet Eliza spirit was highly commendable (Fuller). Similarly, the character of Eva was highly strong. As a little girl, she was so compassionate and kind-hearted. She had the great devout for Christianity, which strengthens her bond with uncle Tom. She knew that Uncle Tom was the slave bought by her father, yet she never nagged or treated her badly. She was as pious as flower and even at her deathbed, she gave her hair locks to every slave as her remembrance. She was unlike her mother and treated the slaves with love and kindness. She showered her special attention to the abused black slave, Topsy.

“*O, Topsy, poor child, I love you!” said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling, and laying her little thin, white hand on Topsy’s shoulder; “I love you, because you haven’t had any father, or mother, or friends; – because you’ve been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good.*” (Stowey 48).

She was an incredible child who instructed her father on her deathbed to free all the slaves and become the activist for the abolition movement. Her last words were “*O! love, – joy, – peace!*” (Stowey 62).

Mrs. Shelby was very sympathetic and compassionate towards his slaves. She exerted her utmost effort to protect her slaves from selling. She even went to the extent that she helped her maid Eliza to run away with her family to protect her son from the vicious circle of selling. She was the staunch believer that slavery must be abolished. The author described the character of Mrs. Shelby as:

“Mrs. Shelby was a woman of high class, both intellectually and morally. To that natural magnanimity and generosity of mind which one often marks as characteristic of the women of Kentucky, she added high moral and religious sensibility and principle, carried out with great energy and ability into practical results. Her husband, who made no professions to any religious character, nevertheless reverenced and respected the consistency of hers, and stood, perhaps, a little in awe of her opinion. […] he really seemed somehow or other to fancy that his wife had piety and benevolence enough for two – to indulge a shadowy expectation of getting into heaven through her superabundance of qualities to which he made no particular pretension” (Stowey 78).

Aunt Chloe was another character of strength, resilience, and courage. She was terribly upset that her husband Tom was sold, yet she did not lose her hope to get him back. She started work in Louisville as a baker to buy back her husband. So, she kept saving her wages and finally, she collected the considerable amount to free her husband. It was the heart-wrenching scene of the story that at that point of buying her husband freedom, he got died mercilessly on the estate of Legree (Stowey).

Indeed, Stowe wrote the novel in such an incredible way that it was best-selling book of the age. It was so famous that during the Civil War, she met with President Lincoln and he said that it was her who caused the beginning of the great war of the century (Burkette). Stowe associated the slavery with the economy and capitalism; whereas, she linked the slaves with the domestic sphere of feminism and religion. Stowe emphasized the characteristics of women as impeccable in the manner of purity, piousness, domestication, and submission respectively. She blueprinted her novel in the way that mothers and Christians are the best people around the globe. She used them both interchangeably as Christ was the great epitome of motherhood. Stowe exquisitely described that how slavery separates the mother from their children and wives from their husbands. In both the cases, the women suffer but they never lost the string of hope. As Mrs. Tom struggled for her husband freedom and Mrs. George escaped from Kentucky to protect her son. Furthermore, she incredibly sketched the role of Miss Ophelia who was against slavery but resented the black people. Stowe demonstrated the dubiousness of Northern who supports the Fugitive Slave Law but wanted the Blacks at distance (Sower).

The feminism of the twenty-first century is courageous, determined, and supportive at the same time. The woman role is highly important in the contemporary century that they not only working the household stuff but also working outside (Adichie). Furthermore, “Uncle Tom's Cabin” novel was surprisingly amusing. Tom's life was described as astonishingly sacred. He was being embodied as the symbol of Christianity prefigure and the untiring desire for freedom and liberty. As Mrs. Shelby stated: *“think of your freedom every time you see uncle Tom's Cabin and let it be a memorial to put you all in mind to follow in his steps and be as honest and faithful and Christian as he was”* (Stowey 437). The author of the novel presented the unusual scripture in the manner that he showed the slave cabin as the sign of generic household icons demonstrating the similarity between American slave and American citizen. Nonetheless, the readers found the significant disparity between the slaves and the common citizen's lives (Riss).

Stowe novel is the rarest literary piece of work. It depicts the cultural sensation. It is highly unpredictable and profound in its all forms and manifestations. It exhibits the latent learning for the readers and establishes the unrealistic expectations for the future generation subsequently. It rigorously ensues into social change for bringing the positive outcomes in the society. It is being concluded that this novel remains uncategorized and elusive in its significance and impacts on society.

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