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## **ALICE WALKER- THE CHAMPION OF AFRO AMERICAN CAUSE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**The decade of 1970s emerged as an era of black renaissance in black literature. Several Afro- American womanist writers framed a body of literature which were canonized and got universality in its approach. Black women uttered their differences with the nationalistic program in several essays, manifestoes and anthologies published later on. The themes of their writing reflect everyday lives of black women and aspects such as motherhood, female sexuality, work family, female bonding and love. They have ultimately proved the concept of “We shall overcome one day” because they had got a voice by the reputed black feminist of the contemporary time. YES..Alice walker has given them chance to bloom..through her several novels.As a writer she has liberated all those black women who were “born to blush unseen”**

Key words--- motherhood, female sexuality, family, female bonding ,injustice and love.

Small Hamlet of poverty stricken people situated in (33°19' 35' N) (83° 23'16' W) Putnam, County, Georgia, one of the most black populated states of United States of America, gives birth to a girl child in the family of Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker and Willie Lee Walker. The city quietly boasts its presence as the birth place of many famous faces like Alice Walker (author of *The Color Purple*), Joel Chandler Harris (Journalist and author of the *Uncle Remus Stories*) and Henry Grady Weaver (author of *Mainspring of Human Progress*).

When the whole world was engulfed in world war, a black woman of seven children was wreathing in pain to deliver the youngest of eight child called Alice. She grew up to enlighten the whole world of feminist society with her scathing, piercing sword like views. She attacks on factors responsible for Black Woman's life, tortured triply with racism, sexism and classicism in American society particularly, and oppressed women of the world under patriarchal hegemonic culture in general. She became the torch-bearer to her own sisters like mute black women who were physically and psychologically abused and enslaved by black and white society. These women were caught in the mire of confused identity.

The period of 1944 holds great historical importance. The American warships and plane were thundering and were fighting the Japanese onslaught under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt against Hitler led forces. Nazis were on fire in their imperialist motif. It seems the whole world was under great turmoil. At home, my country India at that time under the banner of 'Bharat Choro Andolan' was also trying to liberate from the clutches of British rules of 300 old slavery under the able and committed leadership of man of the century, Mahatma Gandhi, whom, the world, later knows as 'Bapu'. It was Feb. 9, 1944 which holds much relevance and importance as it marks and gives birth to an era of freedom (birth of the author) from imperialist forces and thoughts. On one side the Americans were fighting for their survival as well as the survival for the humanity and on the other side, the town of Eatonton, which was facing acute hardship and were acutely discriminated against their eastern counterparts on human resources index such as education, health facility, roads, power and many other things, was predictably going to change the fate of Afro American women, for the years to come, through Alice Walker's revolutionized ideas.

Alice, the child, slowly grew up in rich abundance of her numerical brothers and sisters but equally devoid of nutrition, education, proper clothing, sanitation, healthy food, medication and other day-do-day facilities. Alice, at the age of four, was very happy and outgoing "something of a whiz" (*ISM364*). She loved to be in society especially reciting speeches at church. She had deep inquisitiveness to know the world and explore the hidden truth. Walker says in an interview to

Sharon Wilson “I was quite different .I was quieter and I needed more space .I needed more time on my own” (323). As a tomboy she spent fun time while playing with her older brothers. Nevertheless, the seeds of decidedly female point of view were shown in a household where boys were unfettered and girls tied to domestic duties

Alice Walker was very sensitive since childhood. Her mother Minnie walker was a homemaker and seamstress and her father Willie Lee Walker was a share cropper. During childhood Alice assisted her father as responsible daughter who earned 300 dollars a year and was economically exploited and mistreated by white landlord (owner) “evil greedy men”. Education was the only route to escape. But recalling her mother’s “Negroes” or “real state” position, she feels offended. In one of her essays entitled “*The civil Rights Movement: What good was it?*” She herself recounts her mother, who was a woman of heavybody and swollen feet, raised eight children. She also served the white men to make her both ends meet besides share-cropping. Walker gets deeply hurt for her mother’s slave identity and her deep yearning for a better life: “**My mother**, a truly great woman who raised eight children of her own and half a dozen of neighbors” (Washington 38)

It is truly said there is heaven in all mother’s lap. There is a timeless and classic quotation about Janani in Sanskrit *Janani Janma Bhumisch/ Swarga Dapi Gareeyashi*. Walker gets nostalgic and her heart becomes heavy, her eyes gets swollen whenever she remembers her mother’s life of servitude and her heartiest yearning for better life. However, to overcome the harshness of situation, like poverty, her blackness and ugliness in a form of transcending her personal quality, Walker says “My mother adorned with flowers whatever house we were forced to live in,” and whatever rocky soil she landed on, she turned into a garden.”(ISMG, 241)Alice the child has faced a major setback at her age of eight, which has brought drastic and contrasted change in her own personal life. Her right eye gets badly injured causing her to lose the sight when one of her older brothers shoots her, by accident, with a BB gun. In the essay *Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self*-Walker recollects her first feeling with male aggression:

I am eight years old and a tomboy; I have a cowboy hat, cowboy boots, checkered shirt and pants all red. My playmates are my brothers, two and four years older than I. Their colors are black and green. On Saturday nights we all go to the picture show, even my mother, westerns are her favorite.... Back home. ... We pretend that we are.. [Cowboys]; we chase each other for hours, rustling cattle being outlaws, delivering damsels in distress.( ISMG,386)

Alice Walker became budding writer simultaneous to her studies. She walked on this planet to spread her message of oneness on the canvas of eternity. So, she never left her art of writing in her past time besides studies and social activism. She put all her energy into writing even at the most suicidal and depressing time of her life which obviously made her mentally strong to overcome the barriers. On account of her penetrating and thought provoking writing, she received a three hundred dollar award for her essay entitled “*The Civil Rights movement what good was it?*” In 1967, her essays were sent to the annual American Scholar magazine essay contest and won first prize. Walker served as teacher in between 1968 and 1971. She wrote her first short-story *To Hell with Dying* highlighting the redemptive **power of love** which is also Walker’s recurrent fictional ideas. While writing essay entitled *The Civil Right movement: What Good Was It?*

In order to challenge injustice, Walker adopts a radical vision. More than any other black author at work today, Alice Walker, who calls herself author and medium, is a wholly representative writer of and for the current era. As a writer, she has chosen the existence of black women in 20<sup>th</sup> century as vital area of her literary focus in the context of contemporarian white female. Her novels search solution of gender discrimination. She is also a taboo-breaker. In an interview given to Krista Brewer in 1981, Walker explains why she writes and sees the world as per her own angle:

Because I’m black and I’m a woman and because I was brought up poor and because I’m a Southerner, [...] the way I see the world is quite different from the way many people see it. I could not help but have a radical vision of society [...] The way I see things can help people see what needs to be changed. [...] I think that growing up in the South, I have a very keen sense of injustice—a very prompt response to it. (12-15)

Walker’s sensibility is deeply grounded in a matrilineal tradition of black writing, paying particular homage to the exuberant imagination of Zora Neale Hurston, who is popularly known as first black Afro-American feminist writer and the ideal and role model of Alice Walker in literary field. She further shows her anger over injustice on black women in the following lines—“I wanted to explore the relationship between men and women, and why women are always condemned for doing what men does an expression of their masculinity. Why are women so easily “tramps” and “traitors” when men are heroes for engaging in the same activity? Why do women stand for this? (O’Brien, 197)

Walker has published five novels, and it is her novels that have secured her reputation for the larger public. *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) *Meridian* (1976) *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989) and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* 1992), Her short stories have been collected in two volumes *In Love and Trouble* (1973) and *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (1982).

Indeed *Color Purple* is Alice Walker's award winning novel that it is so much a book of our time, imaginatively evoking the promise of a world in which one can have it all; a world in which sexual exploitation can be easily overcome; a world of unlimited access to material well being; a world where evils of racism are tempered by the positive gestures of concerned and caring white folks; a world where sexual boundaries can be transgressed at will without negative consequences; a world where spiritual salvation is the lot of the elect. This illusory magic is sustained by Walker's literary technique, . . . auto biographical narrative. (291)

Thus to conclude it must be declared that Alice Walker and her literature is certainly a green-pasture for the readers to announce that Walker does not only write about womanist issue but also employs the womanist process by discovering a choiced- life for the completeness as a whole. The graph of growth is traceable from Walker's own stories, who leaves the shell of rural black folks to the life style of new women and from women who believe abortion and murder are sins, to women who commit (her own unmarried abortion) both deliberately and without guilt. Her ways and means of creating self-awareness, a new concept of identity with the complete saturation of ancestral heritage among her black women and with full readiness of sacrifice for others, establishes Walker as a proponent of black feminism.

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