

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Alice Walker as a Black Feminist Writer

Alice Walker (1944) is a famous Afro-American novelist. Walker is widely known as a feminist writer for portraying the experiences of black women in a sexist and racist society in most of her works. Her book, *The Color Purple* (1982) won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for fiction in 1983. Walker has successfully portrayed the experiences of black women in this novel as exploited and maltreated by the males and by the white women. She has given the voice to the voiceless females by making them conscious of their identity crisis, by teaching them to be audacious and by making them autonomous.

First of all, Walker describes herself as, “A rather ardent feminist myself, I would like to spend a lot of time on the subjects of black woman and women’s liberation” (Walker, *In Search* 150). Furthermore, Pamela A. Smith writes about Walker, “From the beginning of her writing life, it seems Walker has seen her role as voice for the voiceless” (Smith 5). Through the character Celie in *The Color Purple*, Walker has shown that it’s the voice of the women that needs to be raised against all the domination, for equality and harmony between all genders in the society. In an interview with blackfilm.com by Monikka Stallworth in March 2003, Alice Walker answered the question, “Do you ever consider *The Color Purple* somewhat a voice for those who have shared a similar experience?” (Stallworth 2) by:

Absolutely. Definitely – I mean, it is totally that. It’s a way to support men and women who are in abusive relationships, you know? Who are trying to figure out how we got into this positions, where after you know, 400 years of slavery, we’re still treating each other like slaves. You know it’s very much that kind of supportive art. (Stallworth 2)

The influence of feminism in her work was mainly due to her ghastly experience as a child. When Alice Walker was eight years old, her brother shot her with his BB gun, leaving her scarred and blind in one eye. This incident was her first encounter with sexism. She writes, “My parents decide to buy my brothers gun. Because I am a girl, I do not get a gun” (Walker, *In Search* 363). The critics Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff write:

From that day she sees life differently. She loses the sight of her right eye. The incident marks her, the wounded eye becomes cloudy, blank, and – to her – grotesque. Though partial, Walker’s blinding shatters her spirit, fragments her world, and delineates the beginning of her reach– through literature for whole sight. Years later Walker explained in an essay entitled “Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self” that, because she was a girl, her parents had not given her a gun. This was her first true encounter with violent manifestations of sexism: what she would later call a patriarchal wound. (Warren 1)

Another critic Bettye Parker Smith observes, “Walker transposes her ‘self’ into her writing to gather up the historical and psychological threads of her own life. As she develops artistically, Walker associates with childhood injury more directly with violence against females in general, and against poor, black, rural women and children in particular” (Smith2).

Such a heartbreaking incident didn’t affect Alice Walker’s thirst of getting educated. Thus, in 1961 she left Eatonton for Spelman College, a prominent school for black women in Atlanta, on a state scholarship. During the two years she attended Spelman, she became active in civil rights movement. After transferring to Sarah Lawrence College in New York, Walker continued her studies as well as her involvement in civil rights. Walker also registered black voters in Liberty County, Georgia, and later worked for the New York City Department of Welfare. (“Alice Walker”, 1)

Two years after receiving her B.A. degree from Sarah Lawrence in 1965, Walker married Melvyn Rosenman Leventhal, a white civil rights attorney. They lived in Jackson, Mississippi, where Walker worked as the black history consultant for a Head State College and Tougaloo College. She completed her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, in 1969, the same year that her daughter Rebecca Grant, was born, when her marriage to Leventhal ended in 1977, Walker moved to northern California, where she lives and writes today. ("Alice Walker", 1)

Alice Walker talks about abortion, rape, love, lesbian relation, nature, god and ancestors in her work. Furthermore, her writings also focus on the role of women of color in culture and history. She says, "I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppression, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women" (Walker, *In Search* 250).

Walker is a respected figure in the liberal political community for her support of unconventional and unpopular views as a matter of principle. She exemplifies the importance for the black woman writer as, "I have felt such a desperate need to know and assimilate the experiences of earlier black women writers...I felt a need to study them and to teach them" (Walker, *In Search* 9). However, of all the writers she introduces, Zora Neale Hurston as, "A writer of courage, and incredible humor, with poetry in every line" (Walker, *In Search* 260) becomes a focal part. She had the impact of many feminist writers from her early life whose work inspired her to create her best works.

As being a black feminist writer Walker personally thinks, black woman writer is not treated fairly in the society. According to Walker:

There are two reasons why the black woman writer is not taken as seriously as the black male writer. One is that she's a woman. Critics seem usually ill-

equipped to discuss and analyze the works of black women intelligently.

Generally, they do not even make the attempt; they prefer, rather, to talk about the lives of black women writers, not about what they write. And, since black women writers are not, it would seem, very likable – until recently they were the least willing worshippers of male supremacy- comments about them tend to be cruel. (Walker, *In Search* 260)

Walker has given to us many important works. She has been raising the problems of the woman issues, their experience and their position in the society through her works.

Among her works *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), *Everyday Use*(1973), *Meridian*(1976), *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Temple by My Familiar* (1989), *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992.), *Once* (1968), *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), *Warrior Marks* (1993) are widely read and liked by the readers for including the subject matter that shows the real problem of black women and their experiences. Jones Johnson Lewis says, "Her works are known for their portrayals of the African American woman's life. She depicts vividly the sexism, racism and poverty that make that life often a struggle. But she also portrays as part of that life, the strengths of family, community, self worth, and spirituality" (Lewis 1).

Walker has not only written about the black women's problem and their experiences she has also coined the term "Womanist" in her book entitled *In Search of Our Mother's Garden*. Her theory about the term "Womanist" has marked an important contribution to the Black feminism. In an interview by Marianne Schnall, Walker elaborates the term "Womanist" to the question, "You came up with the term "Womanist", for the people who may not be familiar with that term, can you describe how that term came to be and its relevance today?" (Schnall 4) by:

Well, first of all it is feminist, but it's feminist from a culture of color. So there's no attempt to evade the name "feminism", which is honorable. It actually means womanism – I mean, it's French in its essence – la femme, so feminism would be womanism, actually. Womanism comes though from Southern African American culture because when you did something really bold and outrageous and audacious as a little girl, our parents would say, "You're acting "womanish". It wasn't like in white culture where that was weak- it was just the opposite. And so, womanism affirms that whole spectrum of being which includes being outrageous and angry and standing up for yourself and speaking your word and all of that. (Schnall 4)

About the Walker's term 'Womanist', the website datehookup.com in the article "Alice Walker: Writer, Feminist, Humanist" writes:

The Color Purple is one of the works of this prolific poet and feminist writer that is best known through the world. Her work as a feminist and in particular a womanist has vaulted her into the public eye. It further states A womanist, as described by Walker, is a feminist of color or a black feminist. This theory of feminism was first introduced in the 1980 by Walker herself. After being excluded by feminist, women of color now insist that feminism addresses different locations and subjectivities on various issues as it relates to women. This is particularly focused on the difference of race and how it affects feminism. (1)

Walker being a black feminist writer did not have the access to read other black female writers work as a student. Either their work was not published or even if they were published it used to be in the limited copies, moreover those books were not kept in library

where she could express it. Thus she tries to write all those things that she and all other black people should have known earlier before the black feminist movement. Walker says, “And I am worried, constantly, about the hatred the black woman encounters within black society. To me, the black woman is our essential mother—the blacker she is the more she is—and to see the hatred that is turned on her is enough to make me despair, almost entirely, of our future as a people” (Walker, *In Search* 291).

To be a black feminist writer, it is difficult in the racist society where their works are not valued. But Walker says that “I would like to call myself revolutionary for I am always changing, and growing, it is hoped for the good of more black people” (Walker, *In Search* 133). Walker as calling herself a revolutionary writer for the good of black people has always tried to talk about the subjects that are taken as taboo subjects in the society. Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff write, “As early as *The Color Purple*, Walker openly discusses female sexual pleasure and the description of those who would deny it. In her later works, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) and *Warrior Marks*, she focuses again upon the clitoris and sexual violence, but now she attacks the ritual of genital mutilation, an act that represents violence toward women in general” (Warren 7).

Even being a revolutionary writer, Walker does not try to blame the racist and the sexist society. She uses her pen to write a voice that can change the conservative thought and create a suitable atmosphere to the black women to live in. Pamela A. Smith observes, “Raising her voice and using loving weapons of resistance are Walker’s ways to Earth saving and people saving” (5).

Alice Walker feels that in the growth and development of her as a black feminist many people has supported her and she will continue her work as long as she is able to return help, support, encouragement and nurture. Walker says:

In my development as a human being and as a writer I have been, it seems to me, extremely blessed, even while complaining. Wherever I have knocked, a door has opened. Wherever I have wandered, a path has appeared. I have been helped, supported, encouraged, and nurtured by people of all races, creeds, colors, and dreams; and I have, to the best of my ability, returned help, support, encouragement, and nurture. This receiving, returning, or passing on has been one of the most amazing, joyous, and continuous experience of my life. (Walker, *In Search* xviii)

Walker thinks that people specially the black woman should be able to escape all kind of torture that they face by raising the voice of protest against all kinds of domination. Walker being a writer of various works has raised her voice to end the violence against the voiceless black women which makes her the Black Feminist writer.

1.2 Critical Response on *The Color Purple*

There is a mixed critical response on *The Color Purple* since its first publication. Some critics have praised Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* for its revolutionary theme and others have blamed Walker for giving false accusation of black men as abuser and having animal like behavior. However *The Color Purple* won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for its extraordinary theme of black experiences of women and men and their cultural, social and political history. Walker has mentioned in her book *In Search of Our*

Mothers' Garden that "I also knew *The Color Purple* would be a historical novel" (Walker, *In Search* 355).

Shortly after the publication of *The Color Purple*, David Bradley, a male critic discovers that the novel is "a perfect expression of what makes Alice Walker Alice Walker" (7). Another critic Peter S. Prescott also finds the work, "an American novel of permanent importance" (67). Another critic Mel Watkins noted that *The Color Purple* is "striking and consummately well written novel" (3). Robyn R. Warhol says about the novel, "Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), an unabashedly sentimental novel, notorious for making readers cry" (184).

The Color Purple is written in the epistolary form which gives the unique taste in novel. The epistolary form in this novel has clearly shown the story through the eyes of female protagonist Celie and her sister Nettie. Mel Watkins observes, "Alice Walker's choice and effective handling of the epistolary style has enabled her to tell a poignant tale of women's struggle for equality and independence" (3). Another critic Lindsey Tucker writes:

In *The Color Purple* Walker seems to embody this concept in a text which actually moves from suspension and assimilation through to emergence. The two sisters, separated for years, first write in a vacuum; yet in spite of their letters – those Celie writes to God, those Nettie writes to Celie (withheld by Albert), those Celie writes to Nettie (returned from Africa unopened).- eventually comprise on emerging black woman's text containing within it several voices. (83)

Robyn R. Warhol praises Walker's experiment with the epistolary form in the novel, he notes, "Epistolary fiction (the form of *The Color Purple*), with its shifts in narrative voice and in temporal perspective, brings the affective mechanics of focalization into especially vivid relief" (184). Another critic Harold Hellenbrand writes, "In *The Color Purple*, Celie's letters to God and to Nettie- her own words embody her growing self awareness and confidence as a sexual and capable woman" (116).

David Bradley praising the epistolary form of the novel says, "The epistolary form is perfectly suited to her experience and expertise with short forms- what in another book would have been chopiness is short and sweet. There is plenty of political consciousness, but it emerges naturally from the characters, instead of being thrust upon them" (7).

Walker believes that the language we speak gives authenticity to our life. She is more concentrated on showing the black women's discourse. Lindsey Tucker points out *The Color Purple* as, "With this work, Walker has created a truly modernist text; that is, a text that manifests itself as an artistic production in which language is essential to the shaping of vision" (82). She further notes, "She has created a text that shows language as power and has also demonstrated through this work what the nature of black women's discourse might be" (82).

The womanist writer Alice Walker is no doubt an active black feminist writer whose work is based on the black experience. Cynthia Hamilton writes about *The Color Purple* as a novel that, "takes us back into the black psyche, a return visit to the cultural poverty, where families pass on the pathologies of life to successive generation" (380). Talking about the characters in Walker's novel she mentions, "Many characters in *The Color Purple* are real for many readers. The facts of life today allow us to identify completely with a

lonely isolated, alienated young woman, a woman left without a family because of the meanness of the significant men in her life – stepfather, father, and husband” (381).

Molly Hite compares the novel with the pastoral form of fiction and says, “*The Color Purple* is clearly pastoral in these respects, for in it Walker makes a group of black farmers the central social unit and uses this community as a vantage point from which to deliver a blistering critique of the surrounding white culture” (261).

Walker has shown the lesbian relationship among the female characters in her novel. Her female characters love each other as sisters and as lovers; they are woman oppressed by their male characters but in the support and care of sisterhood they find themselves strong and ready to move towards the self development. Roberta M. Hendrickson writes, “In *The Color Purple* (1982), Walker suggests that lesbianism or bisexuality may be more compatible with self realization for women than heterosexuality” (119). Similarly another critic Philip M. Royseter writes, “Walker’s accepting attitude towards lesbianism apparently influences her depiction of the affair between Celie and Shug in *The Color Purple*” (360). Keith Byerman says, “In *The Color Purple*, a crucial moment in Celie’s transformation comes when she perceives the beauty of her genitalia” (321).

Womanist Walker has shown that the power of sisterhood is stronger than the male -female relationship. All black women have same problem, same color and similar struggle to face. Dianne F. Sadoff notes, “Owned, beaten, and degraded by her husband’s “climbing on top” of her, Celie survives only by learning her sister-in-law’s lesson: fight back against the gender system based on male dominance and female submission that breeds violence against women and wives” (24). Pamela A. Smith comments on the novel as, “. . . the blues singer Shug is the sassy, sensual, bounteous woman who awakens the brutalized and

silenced Celie to her own strength and sexuality. . . Alice Walker's womanist credo seems exemplified in the words and the passion of Shug" (1).

Walker in her womanist definition she has mentioned that womanist are those woman who "Loves music. Loves dance" (Walker, *In Search* xii). By the music she means the Blues. Maria V. Johnson states that in *The Color Purple*:

Walker employs the character, language, structure and perspective of the blues to celebrate the lives and works of blues women, to articulate the complexity of their struggles, and to expose and confront the oppressive forces facing Black women in America. In her portraits of blues women, Walker shows us the vitality, resiliency, creativity, and spirituality of African American women, illuminating the core aesthetic concepts which have been crucial to their survival in a society that has largely used and abused them for its own purpose. (221)

Walker when she was eight years old she accidentally loses her right eye. Some critics comparing with her real life incident say that this accident has marked a great effect in her writing. Nagueyalti Warren and Sally Wolff write, "Sofia's loss of sight in one eye in *The Color Purple* carries forward Walker's autobiographical reference and solders together her themes of violence, racism, sexism, and blindness" (7).

Comparing the two novels of Walker *The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* Lynn Pifer and Tricia Slusser write, "Their protagonists, Celie in *Purple* and Tashi in *Joy*, are women who experience epiphany – like moments that lead to a fuller, more coherent

sense of self. In these moments . . . the protagonist moves from an experience of fragmentation to a vision of a more unified state of self – possession” (47).

Another critic Marcellus Blount in his article “Review: A Woman Speaks” writes, “In writing what might be called “a womanly text”” Alice Walker assembles the conventions of black women's fiction. In particular, she has chosen to dramatize the process whereby a female character comes into her own and acquires a voice she can use to define and express her identity” (119).

Talking about the negative criticism on *The Color Purple* Philip M. Royster points out, “Some women have found it difficult to lay the book down unfinished, some men have bellowed with rage while reading it (as well as afterwards).It appears that Walker’s depiction of violent black men who physically and psychologically abuse their wives and children are one of the poles of the controversy and that her depiction of lesbianism is another” (347).

Similarly another critic Pepper Worthington negatively says, “The subject matter of *The Color Purple* includes incest, rape, wife-beating, adultery, hints of lesbianism, drugs, alcoholism, African tribal customs, and murder” (48). He also negatively marks, “The grammar of the narrator, Celie, is substandard. Her incorrect subject – verb agreement, spelling, and phrasing may create an outrage among censors who wish students to read only correct grammar” (48). Worthington is also dissatisfied with the epistolary form of the novel and he criticizes as, “The epistolary form of the novel may be said to be out-of-date who wants to read letters as a story anyway? This is not the eighteenth- century market; this is the modern market” (48).

But disagreeing with the negative criticism Linda Selzer states, "Through its embedded narrative line and carefully elaborated kinship trope for race relations, *The Color Purple* offers a critique of race that explores the possibility of treating all people as "one mother's children" - while remaining unremittingly sensitive to the distance that often separates even the best of human ideals from real historical conditions" (18). Unlike the negative criticism of the novel, David Bradley writes, "No matter what polemical byways Alice Walker might have strayed into, she had, in the process of creating "*The Color Purple*", become a writer far more powerful than she had been. Before she had touched me and inspired me. This time, along about page 75, she made me cry" (8).

Without the criticism the value of the work is not known. Moreover, the positive number of critics who have commented well on Walker's *The Color Purple* show that it is definitely one of the most widely read and loved novel. Alice Walker is a black feminist writer struggling to raise the voice for the Black people specially the black women in the racist and sexist society of America.

Based on the present knowledge and research on Alice Walker and her novel *The Color Purple*, this thesis aims to analyze the gradual process of the protagonist Celie's self-consciousness from indifference to awaking. This research contends that Walker actively constructs the female protagonists as weak gender in their patriarchal society because they are amateurish, demoralized and suppressed. However, the female protagonists finally know who they are, where they are, and what can they be only through the proper guidance from other independent female characters, through the knowledge that they are equally important in the society as other male are and through the self knowledge. This thesis seeks to revive the raising of female through her skills, through her sisterhood and through the

knowledge that all gender is equal. This study takes a feminist critical perspective by highlighting the female character's agency as it emerges in *The Color Purple*.

Altogether this thesis is divided into four chapters with its sub-chapters. First of all, chapter one briefly introduces Alice Walker as a feminist writer of the novel *The Color Purple* and the literature review on the novel. Then, chapter two focuses on the historical survey of feminism and differences between the white and the black feminism. The next chapter then deals with the patriarchal domination and racism in the novel, and how the female character protest by raising their voice against all the suppression. Finally part four concludes by summarizing the contents mentioned above; concludes that Celie and other female character liberates themselves from the patriarchal domination and obtain freedom and independence by raising their voice. Alice Walker's true intention of writing this novel is to point out a bright way for the freedom and liberation of black women as well as the other oppressed women all over the world by raising the voice of protest and equality.

Chapter 2: Historical Survey of Feminism

2.1 Feminist Approaches: Background and Context

The word 'female' is a root word of feminism. The word 'female' is taken as a biological contrast to 'male sex' in the society. The term 'feminism' was first used to denote the support for women's equal legal and political rights with men. Now the feminism also refers to any theory which sees the relationship between sexes as one of inequality, subordination or oppression. It also takes into account the circumstances of most women's lives as mothers, household workers, and caregivers, in addition to the pervasive misconception that women are genetically inferior to men. Thus, the aim of feminism seems to identify and remedy the sources of all kinds of oppression and subordination.

The term 'feminism' emerged as a reaction and resistance to patriarchal society. Feminism is mainly focused on women's issues and it seeks gender equality. Almost all feminist theories emerged from the feminist movement which aimed at defining and establishing equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women. These theories included general theories about the reason of female suppression in society and the cure to it through the active participation of the female in raising their voice collectively against such oppressions. Feminist are persons whose beliefs and behaviors are based on feminism. Feminist activists concern how women ought to be viewed and treated and draw in a background conception of justice. Moreover, they have campaigned for women's rights such as equal patriarchal property, right to suffrage, reproductive rights and other women empowerment issues like opportunities for career, workplace rights, equal pay and right to start their own business like other males. In the same time, feminists strongly oppose violence against women, including rape, sexual harassment and domestic

violence, as well as other forms of oppression like negative stereotypes and violence against women in film, television and advertising.

Feminism is a reform movement aiming at the social, educational, and political equality of women with men, which arose during the late 18th century. The first great document of feminism was *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), by the English author Mary Wollstonecraft. Her treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) outlines the complaints and paths for social equality that has been emulated around the world. Feminists and scholars have divided the movement's history into three "waves" ("Feminism", 1). The first wave refers mainly to women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century's. "First Wave" feminism came to the United States in the late 1800s. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony tirelessly worked for the right to vote until it was won in 1920. In the 1950s to 1980s, "Second Wave" feminism worked toward cultural integration and was led by activists such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem in America and Simone de Beauvoir in France. The second wave refers to the ideas and actions associated with the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s (which campaigned for legal and social equality for women). The third wave refers to a continuation of and a reaction to, the perceived failures of second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1990s ("Feminism", 1). Although many gains have been made, feminists still strive today toward the goal of complete social equality.

Feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms. However, there are many different kinds of feminism like Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, Anarchic – feminism, Anti pornography feminism, Separatist feminism,

Conservative feminism, Libertarian Feminism, Individualist feminism, Eco- feminism, Cultural feminism, Chicana feminism, Womanism, Black feminism, Standpoint feminism, Postcolonial feminism, Third-world feminism, Transnational feminism, Post-structural feminism, French feminism, Lipstick feminism, Christian feminism, Islamic feminism, Jewish feminism, Atheist feminists, Anti-feminism and many more. Although there are many kinds of feminism, feminist are concerned about the female rights; and feminist writers and theorists have been very vocal to the issues of women and this has brought several changes in the society.

2.2 Black Feminism

The term black feminism emerged from the black women's movement in 1970s. It is considered that the Black Feminism is different from the white women's feminism. What most clearly distinguishes Black Feminism from the politics of mainstream European American feminism is its focus upon the simultaneity of oppressions that affect black and other women of color, especially racism, sexism and class oppression. Black Feminism is a broad statement for a single movement to deal with all of the issues listed required multi-focused, strategic action, which is exactly what was needed for Black and Third World women. It was important for Black feminism to address the ways that racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism all worked to perpetuate each other.

Alice Walker and other black feminist critically thought that black women experienced a different and more intense kind of oppression from that of white women in respect of identity, social security, job, motherhood and right to freedom. Alice Walker also faced a racial and sexist discrimination by the white women. The moment is described as:

When I left Eatonton, Georgia, to go off to Spelman College in Atlanta (where I stayed, uneasily for two and a half years), I deliberately sat in the front section of the Greyhound bus. A white woman complained to the driver. He – big and red and ugly – ordered me to move. I moved. But in those seconds of moving, everything changed. I was eager to bring an end to the south that permitted my humiliation. (Walker, *In Search* 253)

Therefore Black feminism emerged as a protest to the racism, sexism and classism against the males and white females. Jacquelyn Grant observes, “Black Feminism grows out of Black women’s tridimensional reality of race/ sex/ class” (Grant202). Black Feminism also grew out of the protest to the white society where black women artist were being oppressed. Walker writes “What does it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers’ time? In our great-grandmothers’ day? It is a question with an answer cruel enough to stop the blood” (Walker, *In Search* 233). This clearly shows that the black feminism emerged to secure the identity of the marginalized black women where there voice was suppressed not only by the male dominated society but the women of high class white society too.

Patricia Hill Collins defines Black feminism, in *Black Feminist Thought* (1991), as including, “women who theorize experiences and ideas shared by ordinary black women that provide a unique angle of vision on self, community, and society” (“Black Feminism”, 1). Black feminism is the term that defines the experiences of all the black women collectively. Black feminist Bell Hook’s analysis of feminism also adds another critical dimension, she says:

To me feminism is not simply to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels –sex, race, and class, to name a few and a commitment to reorganizing U.S. society as that the self development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic, expansion, and material desires.

(194)

Black feminist voices the liberation of black women which entails freedom for all people, since it would require the end of racism, sexism, and class oppression. There is a long- standing and important alliance between Post-colonial Feminist, which overlaps with transnational feminism and Black Feminists. Both have struggled for recognition, not only from men in their own culture, but also from Western Feminists (“Black Feminism”, 1).Majority of the Black feminists want to be counted as men and share the bounties of the dominant society such as equal wages, child care and other accepted social rights. But “the struggle to pass the Fifteen Amendment, which extends the voting franchise to Black Males (at least on paper) caused splits between Black and white women” (Danto 1). Although Black women faced the same struggles as white women; however they had to face the issues of diversity on top of inequality.

Therefore, African American women began to express concern publicly in the 19th century. Since black women faced a multifaceted oppression that is manifested in racism, sexism and classism; they found it especially important to define and express the particularity of their experience. Elizabeth Rorfs writes, “Every black person concerned about our collective survival must acknowledge that sexism is a destructive force in Black

life that cannot be effectively addressed without an organized political movement to change consciousness, behavior and institutions. What we need is a feminist revolution in Black life” (Rorfs 16). Black feminist desperately needed an organized political movement to change the way people thought about their black skin, their helplessness and their rights to live equally as other whites in the society.

In the early 1800s, most black women were enslaved, but free Black women participated in the abolitionist cause. Some like Maria Stewart, Frances E. W Harper, and Sojourner Truth, spoke out about Black women’s rights. Sojourner Truth was active in the women’s rights movement and her oft- quoted 1851 “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech nevertheless illustrates how gender oppression has unique repercussions for Black women living under a racist, economically exploitative system. Bell Hooks writes about Sojourner:

More than a hundred years have passed since the day Sojourner Truth stood before an assembled body of white women and men at an anti- slavery rally in Indiana and bared her breasts to prove that she was indeed a woman. Yet the white man who yelled at Sojourner, ‘I don’t believe you really are a woman,’ unwittingly voiced America’s contempt and disrespect for black womanhood. In the eyes of the nineteenth century white public, the black female was a creature unworthy of the title woman; she was mere chattel, a thing, an animal. (Hooks 60)

Hooks further says, "Unlike most white women’s rights advocates, Sojourner Truth could refer to her own personal life experience as evidence of woman’s ability to function as a parent; to be the work equal of man, to undergo persecution, physical abuse, rape, torture, and to not only, survive but emerge triumphant” (Hooks 60).

Many Black Feminist organizations were established to raise the awareness to make women that they have to rise above the patriarchal domination and liberate themselves from the household task to the outer world. The National Feminist Organization was found in 1973. These women focused on the interconnectedness of the many prejudices that was faced by African American women such as racism, sexism, and homophobia. (“Black Feminism”, 3)

In 1974, The Combahee River Collective was formed which was a black feminist and lesbian organization; that began meeting in Boston. Its founder was Barbara Smith. The members of this organization consisted of many refugees from other political movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, Anti- war Movement, Labor Movement, and others. Founder of the Combahee River Collective Barbara Smith claims, “The specific issues worked on in the Black Feminist Movement are : reproductive rights, sterilization abuse, equal access to abortion, health care, child care, the rights of the disabled, violence against women, rape, battering, sexual harassment, welfare rights, lesbian and gay rights, ageing, police brutality, labor organizing, anti-imperialist struggles, anti-racist organizing, nuclear disarmament and preserving the environment” (“But Some of us are Brave”, 3).

Black Feminist organizations had to overcome three different challenges from the beginning of its establishment: 1) create awareness to other black women that feminism was not only for the white women, 2) fight the misogynist tendencies in their own black population and 3)fight for equal share of rights as white women and black men.

In 1969 Mary Ann Weathers published one of the foundation texts of Black Feminism *An Argument for Black Women’s Liberation as a Revolutionary Force* where she states that “Women’s liberation should be considered as a strategy for an eventual tie-up with the

entire revolutionary movement consisting of women, men, and children. “We women must start this thing rolling” because all women suffer oppression, even white women, particularly poor white women, and especially Indian, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Oriental and Black American women whose oppression is tripled by any of the above- mentioned. But we do have females’ oppression in common. This means that we can begin to talk to other women with this common factor and start building links with them and thereby build and transform the revolutionary force we are now beginning to amass” (“Black Feminism”, 3).

The Black Feminist movement grew out of and in response to the Black Liberation Movement and the Women’s Movement. Black women faced constant sexism in the Black liberation Movement like the Civil Rights Movement, Black Nationalism, The Black Panthers, Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee and others. In an effort to meet the needs of black women who felt they were being racially oppressed in those Movements, the Black Feminist Movement was formed. According to Walker who was active in the Black liberation movement felt, “Who will secure from neglect and slander those women who have kept our image as black women clean and strong for us? And at the conference, I met women who are eager to do this job” (Walker, *In Search* 275).

All too often, ‘black’ was equated with black men and ‘woman’ was equated with white women. As a result, black women were an invisible group whose existence and needs were ignored. The purpose of the movement was to develop a theory which could adequately address the way race, gender, and class were interconnected in their lives and to take action to stop racist, sexist and classist discrimination. Walker writes about her experience as:

I realized at the National Black Feminist Organization conference that it had been much too long since I sat in a room full of black women and unafraid of being made to feel peculiar, spoke about things that matter to me. We sat together and talked and knew no one would think, or say, “Your thoughts are dangerous to black unity and a threat to black men” Instead, all the women understood that we gathered together to assure understanding among black women; and that understanding among women is not a threat to anyone who intends to treat women fairly. (Walker, *In Search* 273)

The Black Women protested for the ill treatment of their sex and race by the society and they propagated their thoughts and idea through books, lectures and films to raise their voice to end the segregation. Before the black women’s movement there were no books, no articles where the subjects on black women’s experiences and needs were written. Black Feminist writer Barbara Smith states, “I think of the thousands of books, magazines, and articles which have been devoted, by this time, to the subject of women’s writing and I am filled with rage at the fraction of those pages that mention Black and other Third World women”(Smith20). Alice Walker being disappointed on the books being not taught in school and colleges by black women writers says, “When I mentioned these two books to my audience, I was not surprised to learn that only one person, a young black poet in the first row had ever heard of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, primarily because it was written by a black woman, whose experience-in love and life- was apparently assumed to be unimportant” (Walker, *In Search*6). Black feminist writer therefore were actively participated in writing their works where they could mention their unheard voice to the male society and it could be accessible to all the community where black women’s voices

were being suppressed. Bell Hooks maintains, “My goal as a feminist thinker and theorist is to take that abstraction and articulate it in a language that renders it accessible—not less complex or rigorous—but simply more accessible” (9).

Ironically the black women’s movement was not supported by the black males. Black men in the Black Liberation Movement often made sexist statements which were largely accepted without criticism. Amiri Baraka stated, it is natural that male and female should be treated differently because biologically they are made different by the nature. He said there could not be equality between man and woman because woman is sub part of her man.

Baraka said,

And so this separation (of black men and women) is the cause of our need for self consciousness, and eventual healing. But we must erase the separation by providing ourselves with healthy African identities. By embracing a value system that knows of no separation but only of the divine complement the black women is for her man. For instance, we do not believe in the “equality” of men and women. We cannot understand what the devils and the devilishly influenced mean when they say equality for women. We could never be equals...Nature has not provided thus. (“But Some of Us are Brave”, 3)

Faced with the sexism of black men and the racism of white women, black women in their respective movements had two choices: they could remain in the movements and try to educate non- black or non- female comrades about their needs, or they could form a movement of their own. The first alternative, thought noble in its intent, was not a viable option. While it is true that black men needed to be educated about the effects of sexism

and white women about the effects of racism on black women's lives, it was not solely the responsibility of black women to educate them. Audre Loude says:

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. Now we have heard it is the task of women of color to educate white women- in the face of tremendous resistance- as to our existence, our difference, and our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought. ("But Some of Us are Brave", 2)

Having decided to form a movement of their own, black women needed to define the goals of the Black Feminist Movement and to determine its focus. Several authors have put forth definitions of Black Feminist movement. Among the most notable are Alice Walker's definition and the Combahee River Collective Statement. The Combahee River Collective statement sets forth a more specific, political definition:

The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of this oppression creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black Feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppression that all women of color face. ("But Some of Us are Brave", 3)

Black feminist and the feminist of color are still struggling today in every sector more than the white feminist. Their work is not valued rather their color and sex is judged. Like Simone de Beauvoir who was born in Paris into a bourgeois family 100 years ago had said earlier, "One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine"(279), people need to understand that black people are human beings that needs equal treatment in respect of sex and color. Black feminist are positive that once day they will get the equal opportunity in all the sectors, they will get the respect and will be treated as the human beings. However Black feminist workers and writers are working till this date for the upliftment of the voiceless black women, either through the novels, songs, films, soap opera, drama, news articles, and TV programs or through the protest campaigns. They are raising their voice and creating awareness to the black society and to the white world to end the racism and sexism and to stop the patriarchal domination to the voiceless black women.

2.3 Alice Walker's term "Womanist"

In 1983 Alice Walker introduced concept of "womanist" in a collection of essays entitled *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden*. Walker says in this book that, "I am stuck with the suspicion that, as with black people, there must be for women a new and self- given definition. I fear that many people, including many women, do not know, in fact, what woman is" (Walker, *In Search* 150). She regarded this concept as a more vital and accurate description of black American women's ethos in contrast to feminism, which was and is a predominantly white middle class women's perspective. "Walker's womanist notion

suggests not 'the feminist', but the active struggle of Black women that makes them who they are" (Grant 205).

Alice Walker has defined 'womanist' in four different sections. The first definition according to Walker is:

1. From womanish. [Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.] A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e. like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown- up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown". Responsible. In charge. Serious. (Walker, *In Search* xi)

From the above definition Walker tries to show that feminist who are black in color, having black origin, history, religion and culture are womanist. They are outrageous, audacious, courageous and grown up. According to Walker in this definition, black women are womanish who have the nature of being audacious i.e. brave, courageous to fight, outrageous who can raise the voice, and willful to change her condition. She thinks that black women must have these qualities because "If she is black and coming out into the world she must be doubly armed, doubly prepared"(Walker, *In Search* 36). Another critic Gretchen E. Ziegenhals writes, "A womanist is one "who speaks out, speaks up, speaks against or in defense of something- a woman who loves herself, her culture, and who is committed to survival" (105).

Walker's second definition of "Womanist" is:

2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and / or nonsexually.

Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility

(values tears as natural counter- balance of laughter), and women's strength.

Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and / or nonsexually. Committed to

survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist,

except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why

are we brown, pink and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?"

Ans: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every

color flower represented. Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to

Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me". Reply: "It

wouldn't be the first time". (Walker, *In Search* xi)

In this definition Walker says that Womanist are those women of color and women other than the white, who loves other women as sister or lover, enjoys women's company and women's strength. Womanist according to Walker is woman of different colors other than the white who has faced the same oppression like slavery and patriarchal domination. Delores S. Williams writes, "According to Walker, homophobia has no place nor does "colorism" which often separates black women from other. Rather, Walker's womanist claim is that color variety is the substance of universality. Color, like birth and death, is common to all people. Like the navel, it is a badge of humanity connecting people with people" (Williams³). For her one woman is always providing strength to another as being a role model or as teaching other how to develop one's strength.

Walker in her second definition of womanist has clearly stated that womanist is the people of race other than white, she finds all the non white women as her own people. Walker says, "Cuban women with whom I had personal contact were, in almost every instance, like women I already knew at home, so that by the time I left Cuba, it seemed entirely natural to be happy to see them each morning, and to be pleased that they appeared to feel the same"(Walker, *In Search* 218).Furthermore, she also writes, "There is a close, often unspoken bond between Jewish and black women that grows out of their awareness many gentile women simply do not have" (Walker, *In Search* 347).

Womanist love men equally and are committed to survival of both the male and female race. Womanist does not discriminate between male and female but tries to convey that both male and female should be treated equally for the existence of the human race in harmony. Delores S. Williams writes:

The intimations about community provided by Walker's definition suggest no genuine community building is possible when men are excluded (except when women's health is at stake). Neither can it occur when black women's self- love, culture, are love for each other are not affirmed and are not considered vital for the community's self- understanding. And it is thwarted if black women are expected to bear "the lion's share" of the work and to sacrifice their well being for the good of the group. (Williams 3)

Walker says that Womanist are the colored race, either brown, black or yellow that face the same oppression like slavery, patriarchal domination, racism and sexism. The womanist term or the womanist movement also gives black women a means of speaking on gender issues without attacking black men. Agnieszka Lobodziec writes, "Womanist's are

not only concerned with self- growth and individual spiritual development, but they engage themselves in the struggle for the betterment of the black community” (41).

Walker in her definition has shown the relationship between a mother and a female child who face the same domination like other woman of the same community. They were made slaves; their children are living the same life like their slave mothers. Delores S. Williams writes, “It seems then, the clues about community from Walker’s definition of a womanist suggest that the mothering and nurturing dimension of Afro- American history can provide resources for shaping criteria to measure the quality of justice in the community” (Williams 4).

Walker also defines ‘Womanist’ third time as, “3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless” (Walker, *In Search* xii).

Walker in this definition shows that womanists are those who love to dance; dancing is also the form of expressing one’s happiness and one’s freedom. Music has always been a means to show the sorrow and happiness. Walker says that womanist love the nature because it is the nature that human beings are bound to. They do not love the artificial man made things but they love the nature. Nature provides human being with all the basic needs and the warmth. Womanist are people with love who forgive others, who love people as they love themselves. Womanist are woman who knows to struggle for the existence. Agnieszka Lobodziec writes, “In addition to their concern with the situation if Black America, womanists focus on other people’s pain, suffering and tribulations. They assist the broken hearted in their process of self discovery and help to raise their awareness of social injustice” (42).

Womanist love folk i.e. the root of their creation, their culture and the society that defines them. Walker says, “We must cherish our old men. We must revere their wisdom, appreciate their insight, and love the humanity of their words. They may not all have been heroes of the kind we think of today, but generally it takes but a single reading of their work to know that they were all men of sensitivity and soul” (Walker, *In Search* 135). According to her definition, Womanist love food and roundness. Delores S. Williams writes, “Her reference to black women’s love of food and roundness points to customs of female care in the black community (including the church) associated with hospitality and nurture” (Williams, 2).

Walker’s last definition of “Womanist” is “4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to Lavender” (Walker, *In Search* xii).

This definition of Walker clearly shows, womanist and feminist is the same thing but defined differently. David Bradley writes about this definition as, “But womanism, in Alice Walker’s definition, is not just different from feminism, it is better” (10).

Madhu Dubey, in addressing Walker’s full definition, concludes, “womanism . . . may be interpreted as an attempt to integrate Black Nationalism into feminism, to articulate a distinctively black feminism that shares some of the objectives of Black Nationalist ideology. Taking the term ‘womanist’ from a black folk expression, Walker distinguishes her ideology from white feminism” (107).

Similarly, Gerri Bates writes, “Through womanist theory Walker explores the oppressions, insanities, loyalties, creativity, and triumphs of African American women and women of color” (37). This is true that Walker through her womanist theory explores the

oppressions, insanities, loyalties, creativity and triumphs of African American women of color. Walker defines the womanist theory as a voice for those black women, who have the feelings to be free from the racism and sexism. Walker defines the Womanist term to show that black woman want to live in their own community sharing equal rights with the black men and securing the future of their children who should not face the same slavery as they and their grandparents had to face. Walker says black women did not have the opportunity to pursue their dreams because they were given the main responsibility of raising children, obeying their husbands, and maintaining the household. She says, “Or was she required to bake biscuits for a lazy backwater tramp, when she cried out in her soul to paint watercolors of sunsets, or the rain falling on the green and peaceful pasturelands? Or was her body broken and forced to bear children” (Walker, *In Search*223).

Thus, Walker speaks for the black woman, who are audacious, who loves their folks, who wants to share equal opportunity as their men in the society. She tries to show that the sisterhood among the black women and non-white women is strong, who provide help in need and are role model for each other. Walker’s main aim to produce this theory was to ensure the equality among men and women in the society where they face many challenges and made silenced by the racism and sexism. She wants to aware people that love can make the world a better place only if people can come out of their hatred and love each other, love the nature, love the past that represents them and raise the voice for their rights and for their equal treatment in the society.

Chapter 3: Voice of the Voiceless in *The Color Purple*

3.1 Patriarchal Domination in *The Color Purple*

The novel *The Color Purple* is a novel based on a story which moves from the patriarchal dominated characters, their oppression to a story of finally liberating themselves through self-empowerment and self-identity. In male dominated society, there is always the rule of a father over his daughter, as well as husband over his wife. It is a trend, it is a culture and it is how the society has been formed from the time immemorial. The woman in such society is frequently oppressed, exploited and silenced. Walker has presented such context in her novel *The Color Purple*, where there is patriarchal domination in both the black and the white society.

In *The Color Purple*, female protagonist Celie is totally alienated, dominated and suppressed character. The novel begins with the suppressing statement of Celie's father to her, he says, "*You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd Kill your mammy*" (3). This threatening sentence is used to silence Celie who is raped by her father whom she calls 'Pa'. Celie is forced into silence by telling that the act of speaking, revealing her inner self will literally kill her mother. It's because she cannot raise her voice to tell her mother the truth about her father's sexual abuse to her and the pregnancy caused by the forceful rape by her father, Celie's mother dies cursing her. Celie's children are forcefully taken away from her by her father so that the truth about his raping to his daughter could be buried away. "He took it. He took it while I was sleeping. Kilt it out there in the woods. Kill this one too, if he can" (4).

In the patriarchal society, to show who has got the upper hand man beat woman; his daughter, his wife or his daughter-in-law. Celie who has to work day and night is beaten repeatedly by her father without any specific reason. "He beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church...I may have got something in my eye but I didn't wink" (7). She is again beaten by her father for dressing other than her normal clothes. "He beat me for dressing trampy but he do it to me anyway" (9). Not only father beat his daughter but the women are beaten by their son's and husbands too. It is the male's way of showing superiority to the female. They find it as an audacious act. In Walker's novel too, when Harpo stoned Celie "He pick up a rock and laid my head open" (14). Mr — does not punish his son for such inhuman action because he himself had been beating Celie and when Harpo ask his father why he beats her Mr — replies "Cause she my wife" (23).

Mr — also beat Celie because he didn't find in her anything like Shug Avery whom he loves. When Shug asks Celie "What he beat you for?" (72)., Celie replies, "For being me and not you" (72). Mel Watkins writes, "To Albert, who is in love with vivacious and determinedly independent blues singer named Shug Avery, Celie is merely as servant and an occasional sexual convenience" (1).

Woman's decision is not thought important in the patriarchal society. It's the head of the family, the man to take every decision. Women are not allowed to make any decision at all. They are always expected to remain silent and behave as a voiceless creature. Woman has to live in her father's decision before marriage, and she has to live in her husband's and son's decision after the marriage. Celie wanted to continue her education going to school but her father's restriction confines her to her home only. "You too dumb to keep going to school, Pa say" (11). Similarly when Nettie asks Tashi's father that he should send Tashi too

in school like his other sons he says, “We understand that there are places in the world where women live differently from the way our women do, but we do not approve of this different way for our children” (140).

Woman’s character is not made by her hard work and devotion to her family rather than it’s the male of the society who determine her character if she can be characterized good or bad. Celie is good to everyone, has never hurt anyone nor she is lazy. “I am fourteen years old . . . I have always been a good girl” (3). But her character is destroyed by her rapist father who raped her at the age of fourteen, who made her pregnant twice, took her both children away from her and then by making the false accusation on her. Her character is described falsely to Mr — as, “She ugly . . . she a bad influence on my other girls . . . she ain’t smart either . . . And another thing. She tell lies” (10). She is also described as, “She aint fresh tho, but I specs you know that. She spoiled. Twice. But you don’t need a fresh woman no how” (9).

Marriage is an important decision in everyone’s life. To get married means to choose a life partner with whom you can spend life with in love and harmony. But in the patriarchal society a girl is not allowed to decide for her own marriage. She has to acquiesce to her parent’s decision. Similarly in the novel, Celie was just handed over to Mr — , so that he could get rid of her, Mr — agrees to marry Celie after knowing from her Pa that “She ain’t no stranger to hard work. And she is 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 . . . She can work like a man” (10). Moreover, Mr — marries Celie not of loving her but he needed a mother to look after his children whose mother was dead, “Mr — say, well you know, my poor little ones sure could use a mother” (9). Also because he was getting a cow as a dowry he

accepted Celie to be his second wife. But Celie did not married Mr — because she liked him or she wanted to escape from the brutality of her father. “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” (61).

Walker clearly presents how the black society works. The males are always out of the home to work, to earn money, whereas the females are always bounded in the home and in the field work. Women have to work whole day in the field, look after her children, cook food, clean house, wash their clothes and do all the household works alone. She is never provided any help from her male members of her family. When asked to Celie’s step son Harpo to help Celie bring the water by Mr —’s sister Kate Harpo replies “Women work. I’m a man” (22).

Walker shows vividly how her characters are being muted. Celie being black and woman at the same time is suppressed, silenced beaten is not self conscious of her identity crisis. She is not aware of the fact that there is no law in nature that woman shouldn’t protest of such oppression. She fails to raise her voice to live happily. Celie thinks that being alive is important than fighting for one’s right. She says “I don’t say nothing. I think about Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don’t fight, I stay where I’m told. But I’m alive” She constantly suppresses her anger, her feelings and her sadness whenever she is tortured by her husband Mr —. “He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don’t never hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt . . . 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” (23). Nettie describes the Olivian society in her letter to Celie that they were not only the one to face the male domination but it is prevalant in the Olivian society too as:

There is a way that the men speak to women that reminds me too much of Pa. They listen just long enough to issue instructions. They don't even look at women when women are speaking. They look at the ground and bend their heads toward the ground. The women also do not 'look in a man's face' as they say. To 'look in a man's face' is a brazen thing to do. They look instead at his feet or his knees. (147)

In *The Color Purple* the males of the patriarchal society held the conviction that women should be tamed and should be controlled by the men in any respect. "The men do not like it: who wants a wife who knows everything her husbands knows?" (154). Jane Tompkins writes, "What enrages me is the way women are used as extensions of men mirrors of men, devices for showing men off, devices for men get what they want. They are never there in their own right, or rarely. The world of Western contains no women" (49). Celie also felt the same restriction on her. "Mr —— mutter, putting on his clothes. My wife can't do this. My wife can't do that. No wife of mine . . . He goes on and on" (69). Mr —— used to stay out of home to hear Shug singing, but when Celie wanted to go to hear Shug sing Mr —— objected. "Mr —— didn't want me to come. Wives don't go to places like that, he say" (69).

It is the member of male society that passes their ideology to the future generation, whether it is property or the dominant nature against women. Mr —— , a female suppressor teach his son how to tame a wife. He teaches Harpo to use his physical strength. "You ever hit her? Mr ——ast. Harpo look down at his hands. Naw suh, he say low embarrass. Well how you specs to make her mind? 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" (35).

It is not only male's fault to make his wife silence. Women too are responsible for it. From their birth they are taught to respect their husband no matter how tyrannical he turns out to be, to agree what her husband says, and to develop the resistance enough to resist the beatings. Women fail to raise their voice against such suppression, they fail to teach their sons not to be like their father and their grandfather, and they fail to make their son respect other woman. Celie also suggest Harpo to punish Sofia if she does not do what her son wants from her. "Beat her. I say" (36). Celie being oppressed by her son and husband wants to see her daughter-in-law face the same violence. Why? Its because she does not know how to struggle against the patriarchal society and their dominance. She is afraid. She is jealous of Sofia who knows how to fight. Celie told Harpo to do so because "I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't . . . Fight. I say" (39).

Weakness and passive nature are two terms that female are thought to have. They are weak and passive because they cannot raise their voice to be strong and active. Before they could raise the voice their voice is silenced forever. They are trained to build the resistance power to resist all kinds of torture. Sofia says to Celie:

To tell the truth, 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. Try to make a little half stand sometime for the children but that always backfire. More she stands up for us, the harder time he give her. (39)

Woman in the patriarchal society don't have their identity. They are known as somebody's daughter, sister, wife and mother. Tashi's mother tells Nettie that Olinka's people do not believe girls should be educated because "A girl is nothing to herself; only to

her husband can she become something . . . the mother of his children” (140). Even their real name does not matter to the men. In *The Color Purple*, Mary Agnes, Harpo’s second wife is called Squeak. “He gave her a little nickname too, call her Squeak” (78).

Practice of Polygamy is acceptable in the patriarchal society whereas polyandry is thought to be a sin. If a man rapes a woman, man is forgiven by the society, he can marry as much fresh girl as he wants, but the girl who had to face rape is thought to be characterless and the child born from such mother is treated as bastard child, no fresh man marries such women. In the novel Alphonso marries three women; Celie’s mother, May Ellen and Daisy. Harpo marries two women; Sofia and Mary Agnes. Mr — marries two women; Annie Julia and Celie, but also keeps affair with Shug at the same time. Mr — also tried to marry Nettie before Celie. Samuel marries two women; Corrine and Nettie. Polygamy exists in the novel due to the death of the previous wife and due to the abandon of husband by the wife because they could not stay happy with their abusive husband. Such practice of polygamy destroys the children psychology and their innocence. They do not get the enough love from their biological parents. The most pathetic condition for a wife comes at the moment when a wife has to face her husband having affair with someone else. Celie had to accept his husband’s mistress Shug Avery in her house; she had to let her in because if she didn’t do so his husband would give her much severe beatings.

It’s not only the black woman who suffers from the patriarchal domination but the white women also suffer the same thing. Miss Eleanor Jane, daughter of the mayor is ignored by her parents for being a girl; her husband does not treat her equally to him. Miss Eleanor Jane says to Sofia, “I feel like you the only person love me, . . . Mama only love Junior, . . . Cause that’s who daddy really love” (241). When Sofia says her that she has

husband to love her. Jane replies “Look like he don’t love nothing but that cotton gin. My brother see a lot more of Stanley Earl than I do” (241).

Women are also dominated by the patriarchal society by forcing them to have female initiation ceremony, where the small parts of the skin is removed from the woman’s cheek or genital, which is painful and which destroys the woman’s body for ever. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has written about the process of genital mutilation in Egypt and Sudan. She writes, “In Egypt it is only the clitoris which is amputated, and usually not completely. But in the Sudan, the operation consists in the complete removal of all the external genital organs. They cut off the clitoris, the two major outer lips (labia majora) and the two minor inner lips (labia minora). Then the wound is repaired . . .” (51).

Tashi didn’t want to have the female initiation ceremony but “to make her people feel better, she resigned” (216). But if she had not readily accepted such practices she would have been made to do it forcefully. “This is what the villagers are doing to the young women and even the men. Carving their identification as a people into their children’s faces. But the children think of scarification as backward, something from their grandparents’ generation, and often resist so the carving is done by force, under the most appalling conditions” (219). Thus she undergoes through “the facial scarification ceremony and the rite of female initiation” (218). This makes her lost a considerable amount of weight, lifeless and tired. More than that she loses her confidence throughout her life “Tashi is, unfortunately ashamed of this scars on her face, and now hardly ever raises her head” (219).

Patriarchal dominated society lets the rapist free to walk whereas the victimized person has to suffer all her life. Rape is done by a male to a female forcefully, either it be a husband and wife. Women have full right to say her husband ‘No’ if she does not want him

to touch her. But the patriarchal society will never understand it. In the novel *The Color Purple*, the story begins with the rape of the fourteen years old girl Celie by her father, “He never had a kine word to say to me. Just say you gonna do what your mamy wouldn’t” (3). Alphonso raped Celie because her mother was too sick to fulfill his lust. Women are taken as sex fulfilling device by males. Celie was suppressed and threatened by her father, made pregnant twice and damaged her soul and body. Celie was not loved by her husband but he used to rape her whenever he could. “He git up on you, heist your nightgown round your 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” (74). Sofia also had the same torture from her husband “The worst part is I don’t think he notice. He git up there and enjoy himself just the same. No matter what I’m thinking. No matter what I feel. It just him . . . The fact he can do it like that make me want to kill him” (63). Mr — even after marrying Celie keeps an evil eye on his own sister-in-law Nettie. When he couldn’t get her easily he tries to rape her. Nettie describes, “When I left you all’s house, walking, he followed me on his horse...I tried to ignore him and try to walk faster . . . when he got down from his horse and started to try to kiss me, and drag me back in the woods” (114).

Walker through her novel *The Color Purple* has tried to show the real picture of the patriarchal domination in the black and non white community. Such domination has made the women voiceless and this suppression is the main reason for the emergence of all kinds of feminist liberal movements.

3.2 Racism in *The Color Purple*

The novel is mainly the story about Celie and her sister Nettie who are women and black at the same time. But Walker has also clearly shown how racism has affected the life

of poor black people. First of all, racism does not favor male and it does not victimize the female only. Racism is a belief in the superiority of the particular race. Moreover, in the world, black people are segregated by racist whites. Slavery in America and other parts of the world started as racial prejudice. The cruelty of the racism has destroyed many lives, many homes and has made the children orphan at the small age. Moreover, racism has also victimized the women, destroying their innocence and marriage. This novel shows the cruelty of the racist society to the people not favoring to any particular sex. "Have you seen a white person and a colored sitting side by side in a car, when one of 'em wasn't showing the other one how to drive it or clean it?" (97). This is spoken by white mayor's wife to black woman Sofia. The mentality of white female character in this line shows how inhuman the black people were thought by the whites in the slavery system in America.

In the novel *Sofia*, Olinka's people, Celie's parents, Squeak and the community of the south had to go through the racial prejudices. Sofia had to go jail and face severe mal treatment due to racism. People of Olinka had to lose their ancestral home and land, live the life of refugees in their own land, paying for the water and land to live. Celie's father was brutally killed by the whites for competing with them in their business. Squeak was raped by her own white uncle as the result of the racism.

The implication throughout the text is that Georgia was a difficult place to live for the black people, due to the widely-held prejudice amongst the white population. Slavery was not abolished even after the black liberation movements. Alphonso sees that the slavery has not ended practically in the America, "The trouble with our people is as soon as they get out of slavery they didn't want to give the white man nothing else. But the fact is, you got to give 'em something. Either your money, your land, your woman" (164). Due to the

mistreatment of black people at the hands of the white people, the characters believed that their children are doomed to grow up in the racist society, with no hope for the improvement. The black characters had difficulties accepting this condition, yet they saw no hope for the change in the future. The inequality between the poor and the rich, the inequality of color between the whites and the blacks create pathetic scene in the novel. Nettie who goes to Africa writes to Celie about the evil that the slavery has done in the African people's life; destroying their lives, tradition and good future:

Hard times is a phrase the English love to use, when speaking of Africa. And it is easy to forget that Africa's 'hard times' were made harder by them.

Millions and millions of Africans were captured and sold into slavery – you and me, Celie! And whole cities were destroyed by slave catching wars. Today the people of Africa- having murdered or sold into slavery their strongest folks – are riddled by disease and sunk in spiritual and physical confusion.

They believe in the devil and worship the dead. Nor can they read or write.

(124).

In this novel, racism has made children unaware of their real parent's identity. Celie and her sister Nettie didn't know the real parents till they were young. Celie comes to know from her sister Nettie that her father was not her father. "Pa is not our pa!" (159). This creates the frustration in their life. The truth about Celie's real father makes her more sad. "My daddy lynch. My mama crazy. All my little half-brothers and sisters no kin to me. My children not my sister and brother. a not pa" (160). It was the racist society that destroyed her parent's happy life. Her father was brutally killed leaving her mother to be crazy and burdened with her father less children.

Celie's father was a well to do farmer who owned his own property near the town they were living in. He did well farming and everything he turned his hand to prosper. Then he decided to open a store, and try his luck selling dry goods as well. Well, his store did so well that he talked two of his brothers into helping him to run it, and, as the months went by, they were doing better and better. "Then the white merchants began to get together and complain that this store was taking all the black business away from them, and the man's blacksmith shop that he set up behind the store, was taking some of the white. This would not do" (157). Celie's father was then hated by the whites who could not see him progressing better than them. They took the grudge and planned to stop everything that he was doing. "And so one night, the man's store was burned down, his smithy destroyed, and the man and his two brothers dragged out of their homes in the middle of the night and hanged" (157). The people soaked up with racial hatred couldn't see the blacks enjoying progressing their business. This act destroyed the conjugal married life of Celie's father and mother. "The man had a wife whom he adored, they had a little girl, barely two old. She was also pregnant with another child. When the neighbors brought her husband's body home, it had been mutilated and burnt. The sight of it nearly killed her . . . Although the widow's body recovered, her mind was never the same" (157).

Walker's character Sofia also faced racism. She had to stay away from her children for twelve years. She was put in jail for "sassing the mayor's wife" (81). Sofia when rejected the offer to be mayors wife she had to face the brutality of the racist soaked people. When the mayor's wife asked her "All your children so clean, she say, would you like to work for me, be my maid?" (81). Sofia rejects to be so. Sofia being mentally and physically strong never wanted to be working for anyone nor did she do what Harpo used to order her to do

being his wife. She had been fighting with all kinds of domination since her childhood. Thus she rejects to be mayor's maid and she says "Hell no" (81), when Mayor's wife asks her to be her maid.

Sofia is slapped by mayor for answering 'No' to his wife. The black people who were thought as the minor people in the white racist society could never raise their voice to the white because if they try to do so their voice used to be made silenced forever. When Sofia knocked the mayor down she was physically punished making the sight of her condition unbearable. Celie describes "When I see Sofia I don't know why she still alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in 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 a eggplant" (82). This was not enough for the racist people, they treat Sofia even bad. In the eyes of Sofia "Everything is nasty here, she say, even the air. Food bad enough to kill you with it. Roaches here, mice, flies, lice and even a snake or two. If you say anything they strip you, make you sleep on a cement floor without a light" (83).

Racism makes the life of the oppressed people harder. Even if one does the things that the oppressor wants him to do for them, the oppressor makes his life harder. Sofia did everything they asked to do while staying in jail, "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" (83). Sofia is kept away from her children, "They won't let me see my children" (96). She lost her weight and freedom; more than that she grew the hatred for the racist society up to the point that she dreamed of murdering them. "Good behavior ain't good enough for them, say Sofia.

Nothing less than sliding on your belly with your tongue on the boots can get their attention. I dream of murder, she says, I dream of murder sleep or wake" (84).

Sofia is later made to work in the mayor's house where she was treated badly even by the small white boy. "Don't you hear me talking to you, he shouts. He may be six years old . . . He comes steaming up to where we sit, hauls off and kicks Sofia's leg" (93). But in the eyes of Sofia, no matter how much power the whites showed off, they were hollow from inside. Sofia says that "They have the nerve to try to make us think. Slavery fell through because of us, says Sofia. Like we didn't have sense enough to handle it. All the time breaking hoe handles and letting the mules loose in the wheat . . . They backward, she says. Clumsy, and unlucky" (95).

Women even after the Slavery didn't escape from the worst treatment like rape. The white society where they were living in was no good to be safe. Squeak was raped by her own uncle who was white. "He says if he was my uncle he wouldn't do it to me. That be a sin. But this is just little fornication. Everybody guilty of that" (90).

The people of Olinka had to go through betrayal from the white people. The people of Olinka a place in Africa were uneducated, living on the old traditional values and simple life welcomed the white. They thought that the whites were building roads for the people of Olinka but they were cheated. The whites backstabbed them; the people of Olinka couldn't raise their voice due to helplessness. They were illiterate and powerless people who could not defend themselves and to make the whites return on their own land where they had come from.

“The people felt so betrayed! They stood by helplessly – they really don’t know how to fight, and rarely think of it since the old days of tribal wars – as their crops and then their very homes were destroyed” (153). Nettie further describes:

As the road appears their homes were destroyed leaving them homeless and landless. “Every hut that lay in the proposed road path was leveled. And, Celie, our church, our school, my hut, all went down in a matter of hours. Fortunately we were able to save all our things, but with a tarmac road running straight through the middle of it, the village itself seems gutted. (153)

The racism made the life of villagers hard. Their tradition was destroyed. Their ancestral land was destroyed. The nature they were living in was destroyed. “The ancient giant mahogany trees, all the trees, the game, everything of the forest was being flat, he said, and bare as the palm of his hand” (153). The people had to pay now the rent for the land and water which their ancestors belonged to. The whites captured their land, making them slaves on their own country. “Since the Olinka no longer own their village, they must pay rent for it, and in order to use the water, which also no longer belongs to them, they must pay a water tax” (154).

Due to racist effect the people of the Olinka has to face struggle. Their way of life completely changed. “The Olinka hunting territory has already been destroyed, and the men must go farther and farther away to find game” (156). Now the people after losing everything had to do what the whites told them to do, they had to live where the white wanted them to live and they had to pay what whites had snatched from them. “Protesting and driven, the Olinka, along with their missionaries, were placed on a barren stretch of

land that has no water at all for six months of the year. During that time, they must buy water from the planters” (204). “We had to *pay* for the tin. Which exhausted what meager savings the Olinka had” (205).

Racist society is hard to live in, one lose their peace and have to live always in pain and uncertainty. “As they struggled to put up roofs of this cold, hard, glittery, ugly metal the women raised a deafening ululation of sorrow that echoed off the cavern walls for miles around. It was on this day that the Olinka acknowledged at least temporary defeat” (205). The weak people cannot raise their voice nor can they do anything to get back their freedom. The God whom the people worship as almighty and protector is also helpless because the whites are more powerful than their gods and only hope is to fight back by refusing to be slave in owns one land, “They can see how powerless we and our God are – Samuel and I decided we must do something about this latest outrage, even as many of the people to whom we felt close ran away to join the *mbeles* or forest people, who live deep in the jungle, refusing to work for whites or be ruled by them” (205).

Racism suppresses the freedom of the people who are voiceless. They lose their confidence, their identity and become invisible in the eyes of the white world. The only escape to the racism is to fight back, by raising the voice of protest.

3.3 Voice of the Voiceless in *The Color Purple*

Alice Walker gives the voice to her voiceless characters in the form of protest and self improvement. Dominated, silenced female characters in the novel raise their voice after the self awareness, self consciousness and in the presence of other women who believed in helping each other. In the traditional social structure in Walker’s novel, the female is a

“second class” being and thereby silenced, which makes Walker’s use of a woman narrator, telling the story in an autobiographical way, important in gaining a voice for the female in Georgian society. This voice proclaims Celie and other female characters as “a conscious being capable of independent thought and action” and not requiring a male for self-definition.

Women in this novel are typically depicted in two ways: in the role of mother or wife, or shown as a rebellious woman. They have no real voice; therefore the rise of female characters (and therefore the female voice) is significant. Celie the main protagonist changes her attitude, her lifestyle, and transforms herself to independent woman. Sofia leaves her dominating husband to liberate herself, Tashi joins the school, Nettie develops herself educationally and learns the way of the world, Mary Agnes becomes what she had always wanted to be i.e. a singer. The changes in the oppressed characters come only after they raise their voice collectively.

Identity crisis is fulfilled by raising the voice by silenced character. Voice of collective women challenges the traditional stereotype roles of passive women and dominant men. Voice also comes from writing as a reaction against the social situation around the oppressor. Celie while writing, it becomes a means of relief to her, through which she expresses her feelings and finally she comes to realize that as a human being she also has a separate female identity which makes her different from male. As a result her transformation from slave like life to independent woman makes her escape the dominant society to the larger freedom.

Celie learns to reshape the forces of oppression and to define herself through the letters. Writing the letters becomes for Celie a means of structuring her identity, her sense

of self and she liberates herself through the writing. Celie's letters, her growing ability to express her thoughts and feelings show her spiritual development mark the way she goes to her independence. First of all, writing brings the changes in the Celie's life; it gives her soul a voice. She expresses her feelings in letters which creates voice for her cry, for her desire to escape present condition. By writing about her rape, Celie externalizes her experiences so that the pain does not destroy her from inside. She takes means of writing as a way to escape from the mental contortions and even loneliness and pain. She writes to God to share the burden of her life. She lets god know that her father raped her, made her pregnant twice and sold her babies. She writes how her husband Mr —— tortured her every day for not being someone else. But as the novel progresses, Celie becomes more powerful, especially through the act of writing. She used writing to fix the events of her life. M. Teresa Tavormina in the chapter of "Dressing the Spirit: Cloth working and Language in *The Color Purple*", writes:

Language is the Clothing of thought, the skin of the soul. The mysterious entity of self is first expressed internally, in thoughts and feelings of various degrees of clarity; yet to give that self external expression; it must be "uttered" -made outward by being dressed in language. Just as clothing protects, adorns, interprets, and helps create the first impression of the body, the outer self, so language displays the inner self, giving shape to thought and feeling, defining yet covering them, significantly influencing other's perceptions of that self. (220)

The social background to the Georgia is one in which women still are expected to fulfill the "traditional image of the 'hardworking, all-enduring, self-sacrificing woman'", but

women in this novel are beginning to find their own 'voices' against male dominance, especially against domestic abuse through writing. Lindsey Tucker writes:

Since a discourse is an enunciation that requires a speaker or narrator, and a listener or reader, the use of the epistolary form is especially effective. First, it sets up within the smaller (con).text two speakers, Celie and Nettie, who are also the addressees. Their texts combine to make a larger text in which we, as readers, view the disruption between speaker and listener (Albert appropriates Nettie's Letters to Celie). and the ways in which patriarchal society appropriates black discourse (Celie can only write to God, who as a white male listener, is ill-equipped to hear what she has to say). The larger text displays the weaving of more than one woman's voice and demonstrates the means by which women have been silenced and their linguistic powers appropriated. (82)

All the female characters suffer from a psychological nervous condition arising from their peculiar circumstance of subjugation by men. The suppressed voice of Celie through writing to God only echos after she comes in contact with other women who were self-respecting and who had the guts to fight the patriarchal domination. First when she encounters Kate, Mr ——'s sister she tells her to fight for the suppressor. "You got to fight them, Celie she say. I can't do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself" (22). This advice Celie takes lightly at first because for her fighting the male of the society will cause problem only. She thinks that Nettie tried to fight, she ran away from home but it didn't do any good to her. She thinks that more than fighting being alive is important.

Walker has given a vivid picture of protest from the suppressed character only after their encounter with other strong characters. Sofia comes in Celie's life as a daughter-in-law of her step son Harpo. Celie is very much intimidated by how Sofia could fight the world to exist in it. Celie feels that "Some women can't be beat, I say. Sofia one of them" (61). Sofia a black woman is opposite of Celie. Sofia is physically and mentally strong. When Mr — refuses to let her marry his son Harpo. She replies to him, "What I need to marry Harpo for? He still living here with you. What food and clothes he git, you buy" (32).

Sofia after marrying Harpo does not agree to be a slave. She thinks she should be treated equal as she treats Harpo. But Harpo being a patriarchal dominated father's son wants her to follow his orders and rules. When she does not, he tries to use physical force. Sofia a strong minded person returns the same treatment to Harpo. Celie describes:

They fight. He try to slap her. What he do that for? She reach down and grab a piece if stove wood and whack him across the eyes. He punch her in the stomach, she double over groaning but come up with both hands lock right under his private... She never blink a eye. He jump up to put a hammer lock under her chin, she throw him over her back. (37)

Sofia who has been seeing Celie accepting all the maltreatments of her husband Mr— tells Celie not to keep quiet. She asks Celie to fight her husband. "You ought to bash Mr— head open, she say. Think bout heaven later" (44). Sofia describes the journey of her life before her marriage and about her experiences that how she never knew to be defeated in her life. She had to fight with everyone to exist. "She say, All my life I had to fight. I had to fight with my daddy. I had to fight with my brothers. I had to fight with my cousins and with my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men" (39). Such inspiration from Sofia

motivates Celie to fight against her husband's domination to her. This makes her confidence strong and makes her able to raise the voice of protest.

Walker also shows that raising voice does not only mean to shout or to yell to someone; to raise voice against domination also means to reject the way of life that is granted to female in the society. Sofia decision to leave Harpo and to live with her sister is a way of raising the voice against the patriarchal domination. Celie observes Sofia's decision as "O'm gitting tired of Harpo, she say. All he think about since us married is how to make me mind. He don't want a wife, he want a dog" (62). Sofia challenges the society norms and values and leaves Harpo to live a better life where she would be appreciated for who she is and what she wants to do. Finally leaving the dominating husband is how she raises her voice for the better life. Sofia also encourages the white girl Miss Eleanor Jane to leave her self-loving husband and be independent. "May be you ought to leave him, say Sofia. You got kin in Atlanta, go stay with some of them. Git a job" (241).

Shug Avery comes in Celie's life as Albert's mistress. But before that she falls in love with Shug's image as an independent woman who could make the world move in her fingers. Celie also appreciates Shug for challenging the patriarchal society. Celie is much impressed by the way how Shug could dominate Mr —, whom Celie is afraid of. She says "Do Shug Avery mind Mr —? I ast. She the woman he wanted to marry. She call him Albert, tell him his drawers stink in a minute. Little as he is, when she git her weight back she can sit on him if he try to bother her" (61). Celie falls for Shug's strong dominating nature, her confidence and how well she can handle the man and be like a man. "Then when I notice how Shug talk and act sometimes like a man" (77). It was Shug who teaches Celie to raise her voice to liberate herself and be an independent free woman. Mel Watkins

writes, “It is Albert’s real love and sometime mistress, Shug Avery, and his rebellious daughter-in-law, Sofia, who provide the emotional support for Celie’s personal evolution” (1).

Celie begins a new journey with Shug. She is happier than before in the presence of Shug. She says “My life stop when I left home, I think. But I think again. It stop with Mr— maybe, but start up again with Shug” (77). It was Shug who threatened Mr— to stop brutalizing Celie. Shug stands like a protective wall between Celie and Mr ——. Celie gets love from Shug just like how she used to get from her sister Nettie. Celie develops her understanding of her sexuality through Shug. Mel Watkins observes, “Miss Walker explores the estrangement of her men and women through a triangular love affair. It is Shug Avery who forces Albert to stop brutalizing Celie, and it is Shug with whom Celie first consummates a satisfying and reciprocally loving relationship” (2).

Walker gives the voice to the voiceless female character by encouraging them to be independent and economically active. This challenge is accepted by Celie and other suppressed female character in the want to change the patriarchal domination upon them and prove the male that female are not passive and field workers only. Shug inspires Celie to think about making pants which she was good at. Shug tells Celie to voice her creativity. She says “You have to git man off, your eyeball, before you can see anything at all” (171). Shug tells Celie not to fear man the one who tries to keep women under his foot, who tries to snatch her freedom and makes her dull enough to die doing nothing. She says, “Man corrupt everything, say Shug. He on your box of grits, in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain’t” (177).

Shug helps Celie to raise her voice by showing her the way to freedom. She says “Celie is coming to Memphis with me”. (180). But Mr — does not allow her to go, he tries to persuade her to change her decision and later tries to use his hand. Celie finally collects all her courage and challenges the world to say that yes I am going on my own way, I don’t need any male to support me and I am not a slave to act like one. She says to Mr — “You a lowdown 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” (180). She also raises her voice for Sofia saying to Harpo “Oh, hold on hell, I say. If you hadn’t tried to rule over Sofia the white folks never would have caught her” (181). She further bursts all her suppressed voice saying, “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” (181). When Mr — tries to slap her she “jab my case knife in his hand” (181). She further raises her voice saying that she does not need money from Mr —, all she needs is her freedom from the hell she was living in, “Did I ever ask you for money? I say. I never ask you for nothing. Not even for your sorry hand in marriage” (182).

Similarly, Squeak also raises her voice to say that she wants to be a singer, “I want to sing” (183). She tells everyone that she wants to go north to be a singer. She speaks up to say that Mary Agnes is her name and Harpo should call her by that name of hers not by that nick name that Harpo gave to her. When Harpo says “Squeak, Mary Agnes, what difference do it make?” (183). She replies “It make a lot . . . When I was Mary Agnes I could sing in public” (183).

Celie raises her voice to her patriarchal dominated husband Mr— in a way that brings evolution in her life. She says, “I curse you . . . Until you do right by me everything you

touch will crumble . . . everything you even dream about will fail . . . every lick you hit me you will suffer twice . . . I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here . . . The jail you plan for me is the one in which you will rot" (187). Finally she liberates herself and starts the new journey of her life. "I sit in the dining room making pants after pants. I get pants now and every color and size under the sun. Since us started making pants down home, I ain't been able to stop" (191). Celie is now independent, "You making your living, Celie, she says. Girl you on your way" (193). Finally she opens her own company and employs other women too.

Raising a voice is also to protest. Protesting also means to say no to the dominating society and to change the orthodox rules of the society. The people of Olinka slowly started to protest, saying "No" to the white's orders by forming an alliance which worked against the white to destroy their slavery in Africa. They formed a society where they helped each other and worked for the eradication of the racism. "Tashi and her mother have run away. They have gone to join the *mbeles* . . . we know is that they are said to live deep in the forest, that they welcome the runaways, and that they harass the white man's plantations and plan his destruction or at least for his removal from their continent" (232). The voiceless people help each other knowing the fact that the pain they have is the same pain all oppressed group has, thus raising their voice collectively in a more convenient way ease their pain.

Celie is free now, happy and liberated because she raised her voice. It was her self-realization of her condition, her determination to change the life in her own way and the help of the sisters who understood the women's needs and who faced the same problem in their life. Celie got the place to live in her own house Mr ——asked her to marry again but

she refuses his proposal. She says, “. . . Mr —— done ast me to marry him again, this time in the spirit as well as in the flesh, and just after I say naw, I still don’t like frogs, but let’s us be friends” (257). Mel Watkins observes that “It is Celie’s new understanding of an acceptance of herself that eventually lead to Albert’s re- evaluation of his own life and a reconciliation among the novel’s major characters” (1).

The voiceless black people in the novel support each other and work for the common goal that is to fight the racist and sexist society. They try to reduce the discrimination between male and female in their society. One who is strong needs to teach the weak how to fight. As Samuel says in the novel “We are not white. We are not Europeans. We are black like the Africans themselves. And that we and the Africans will be working for a common goal: the uplift of black people everywhere” (122). This attitude works against all kind of oppression and make the world live a better place where voicelessness does not exists and one hears another’s voice and respects it.

Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* depicts the voiceless character’s lives having a hard time and continually equating with suffering and pain. In general the male character use their force to suppress the female point of view and to enforce the patriarchal domination, putting restriction in females freedom, assigning passive works to them and imposing their views on them. Due to that, women are reduced to a fixed meaning and forced to endure a tragic life. But after having the self consciousness, support from strong female, and encouragement to start a new life by doing economically active job the voiceless characters finally fight back against the sexism, racism and classism. They protest against patriarchal domination, violence and entrapment by being rebellious to fight for their rights through their collective voices.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

4.1 Raising Voice for Female Identity

At the time she wrote *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker knew that black women had no voice of their own. By creating the novel, Walker was able to give them one. As we read this novel, an important idea linked to finding a voice is that of creating one's own identity in the male dominated society. *The Color Purple* dramatically underscores the oppression Black women have experienced throughout the history in the rural South in America. Oppression consists of patriarchal domination, forceful rape, forceful marriage, confining women to household task, racism, genital mutilation, restricting from the education, physical abuse like beating and killing without any specific reason, sexual abuse, selling of women for money, forceful prostitution, inheritance of family property by the male only, disrespecting women artist, paying women low salary than her male peer, making it inaccessible for women to join the politics and the lack of equal rights in one's country. Such kind of oppression is still prevalent in the modern world. Being woman and black at the same time made black women doubly disadvantaged. Black women of the era were often treated as slaves or as property, even by male members of their own families.

The slavery system was not fully eradicated from America even after the many liberation movements. The hate for the black civilization was never changed in white society. The domination of black woman was more severe among black people. The suppressed voice of black woman had no chance of being raised, if they attempted to raise their voice they were either brutally killed or their character was destroyed. The position of the woman in the racist and sexist society was that of the sub-human being. Woman was taken as the child rearing device and managing the house and fields which they didn't even

owned. What makes the women so inferior and suppressed? Is it the cultural values, society's norms, history or the women themselves? The answer is undeterminable. But yes if the women are self conscious about their situation in their own surroundings the freedom is possible. To be a free race, women have to rise, women have to fight, women have to struggle, women have to empower themselves, women have to educate themselves, women have to say 'stop' to the patriarchal domination; more than that they have to raise their voice, for themselves and for other women too.

First of all, in Walker's novel, it was the knowledge, awakening of the self consciousness, the self empowerment and the sisterhood that helped black women to raise their voice against all kind of oppression. Saying 'No' to confine themselves in the household errands was the first step of raising their voice. Moreover, increasing the boundaries of their life to creativity and money earning task was the second step of raising their voice. Supporting other oppressed black women to come out of their tyrannical family to the world of opportunity and self identity was the third step of raising their voice. The black feminist movement in 1970 made the black women to raise their voice against the oppression from the black male, white male and white female. The movement came as protest against oppression in the road, in the paper, and in the books of the black women. The effecting means of raising the voice is through the act of writing. Though completely silenced by patriarchal authority one can write to protest. Writing needs no sound but once written the words create the sound, the sound of voice.

If the writers like Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone the Beauvoir had not first raise their voice through the means of writing, woman would not have been liberated till now in the conservative society. Feminist movement would not have gone this far. Black feminist movement would certainly not have appeared. Educating oneself also means creating

awareness to others and making the society to live in better. In post- modern world surrounded by multiplicity of theories in the field of literature and social sciences, the voice for identity has become a crucial aspect of life. Everyone wants to be listened rather than following others ideas passively. The desire for the recognition in the society makes human to break all the bondage and create one's voice to be identified individually.

In Walker's *The Color Purple*, Celie is passed on from Pa to Mr. — without any regard for her own desires. She constantly struggles to forge her own self-identity and to not accept the subservient role that society has ascribed to her. In the course of the novel, Sofia becomes Celie's first role model of a Black woman who does not allow the men surrounding her to limit her lifestyle. Additionally, the novel examines themes of sisterhood and methods of sharing among women in their quest for political, sexual, and racial equality. Celie is able to overcome her many hardships because of the love and solidarity she receives from women like Nettie, Sofia, and Shug Avery. They encourage Celie to raise her voice against Mr. —. By seeing herself as a member of a community, Celie develops a sense of identity and realizes new opportunities in her life. When Shug stops Celie from killing Mr. —, Celie is inspired to find a new outlet for her passion and creativity. This leads to the creation of Celie's business, which offers her more personal and financial freedom.

An epistolary form is effective form in this novel to raise the voice for the self identity. Celie manages to tell her dehumanizing situation by writing and finds hope in the act of writing. The novel is presented through the letter writing; firstly by Celie to God and then to her sister Nettie and Nettie's letter to Celie. Writing allows her to analyze herself. When Celie realizes that the God whom she is writing to is white man and like every man he is deaf to her suffering and oppression, she stops writing to god and starts writing to her

sister. Writing also makes her aware about the existence of the continent Africa where her ancestors belonged to.

However Walker has shown that Celie's relationship with other women transformed her from weak, dependent and shy person to the strong, independent and brave person. Walker has shown that a woman, especially one surrounded by a community of nurturing women, can overcome adversity. It is women who help other women to fight the society, rather than being alone raising the voice together against all kinds of suppression makes the difference in the society. The strong one should be the voice for the voiceless people. The weak one should learn to raise the voice against all kinds of domination. But for that voiceless women should be able to bring her up from the silence to the level of fighting the dominating world. Voiceless women and men should evolve the backwardness they have, themselves at first and then collectively all the voiceless people should raise to effect change. Only by raising the voice against the patriarchal domination and desire for change suppressed female character in Walker's novel bring true change in their personal life and eradicate the male dominance in the society, leading to ultimately a highly spiritual free life and self identity in the society.

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