

Chapter I: Introduction

Alice Walker and Her Fictional World

Alice Walker(1944 -), was the eighth and youngest child of Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker and Willie Lee Walker. Her parents were poor sharecroppers. Alice grew up in an environment of violent racism which, along with her family's poverty, left a permanent impression on her writing. In the summer of 1952, Alice Walker was blinded in her right eye by a BB gun pellet while playing cowboys and Indians with her brother. She suffered permanent eye damage and slight facial disfigurement. When she was 14, her brother Bill had the cataract removed by a Boston doctor, but her vision in that eye never returned.

After graduating from high school in 1961 as the school's valedictorian and prom queen, Walker entered Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, on a scholarship. At Spelman she participated in civil rights demonstrations. She was invited to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s home in 1962 at the end of her freshman year, another invitation to attend the Youth World Peace Festival in Helsinki, Finland. She attended the conference and then traveled throughout Europe over the summer. In August 1963 Walker participated in The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, where she heard King's "I Have A Dream" speech.

After two years at Spelman, Walker received a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College in New York, which she accepted. She became one of very few young blacks to attend the prestigious school. Walker received mentoring from poet Muriel Rukeyser and writer Jane Cooper. Her mentors helped stimulate her interest and talent in writing, inspiring her to write poems that eventually appeared in her first volume of poetry, *Once*

(1968).

By her senior year, Walker was suffering from extreme depression, most likely related to her having become pregnant. She considered committing suicide and at times kept a razor blade under her pillow. She also wrote several volumes of poetry in efforts to explain her feelings. With a friend's help, she procured a safe abortion. While recovering, Walker wrote a short story aptly titled "To Hell With Dying." Ruykeyser sent the story to publishers as well as to poet Langston Hughes. The story was published, and Walker received a handwritten note of encouragement from Hughes.

Always an activist, she participated in the civil rights movement following her graduation in 1965. She first went door-to-door in Georgia and encouraged voter registration, but she soon moved to New York City and worked in the city's welfare department. While there she won a coveted writing fellowship to the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference. In the summer of 1966 she returned to Mississippi, where she met a Jewish civil rights law student named Mel Leventhal. They soon married and moved back to Mississippi. Even while pursuing civil rights, Alice found time to write. Her essay "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" won first place in the annual essay contest of *The American Scholar*. Encouraged by this award, she applied for and won a writing fellowship to the prestigious MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire.

Walker subsequently accepted a teaching position at Jackson State University. While there she published *Once*. Her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, was published the same week that her daughter Rebecca Grant was born. The novel received great literary praise. It also received criticism from many African-American critics, who claimed that her book dealt too harshly with the black male characters. Walker disputed

such claims, but her subsequent writing continued to dramatize the oppression of women.

Walker's career took off when she moved from Tougaloo College and accepted a fellowship from the Radcliffe Institute. In 1972 she accepted a teaching position at Wellesley College, where she created one of the first women's studies courses in the nation, a women's literature course. In 1976 she published her second novel, *Meridian*, which chronicles a young woman's struggles during the civil rights movement. Around the same time, she divorced Leventhal. Reflecting on the divorce in 2000, her daughter Rebecca published a frank memoir criticizing the self-absorption of both of her parents at that time.

Meridian received such acclaim that Walker accepted a Guggenheim Fellowship to concentrate full-time on her writing. She moved to San Francisco, and in California she fell in love with Robert Allen, the editor of *Black Scholar*. They moved to a home in Mendocino, where she wrote full-time and soon published her second book of short stories, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*.

In 1982 she completed *The Color Purple*, an epistolary novel about the life of a poor black woman named Celie. For this book, easily her most popular novel, Walker won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983 and the American Book Award. Critics again accused her of portraying black men too harshly. *The Color Purple* was soon made into a motion picture produced by Quincy Jones and directed by Steven Spielberg. When the film premiered in her hometown of Eatonton, Walker received a parade in her honor. Her sister Ruth even created The Color Purple Foundation to promote charitable work for education. In 1984 Walker published her third volume of poetry, *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*. In 1988, her second book of essays, *Living By the Word*, was published, and in

1989 she published her epic novel *The Temple of My Familiar*.

A later novel, *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult* (1996), deals with her budding realization that she might be bisexual. Walker soon became more politically active in her writings. Her nonfiction book *Anything We Love Can Be Saved: A Writer's Activism* (1997) contains many essays inspired by her political activism. This includes activities in the civil rights movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the environmental movement, the women's movement, and the movement to protect indigenous peoples.

In 1998, Walker published *By the Light of My Father's Smile*, which examines the connections between sexuality and spirituality. The story is a multi-narrated account of several generations and explores the relationships of fathers and daughters. Her later work has been accused of being self-indulgent and vapid. In 2004, her novel *Now Is The Time To Open Your Heart*, received the following infamous review from *New York Times* critic Michiko Kakutani: "If this novel did not boast the name of Alice Walker, who won acclaim some two decades ago with *The Color Purple*, it's hard to imagine how it could have been published...[it is] a remarkably awful compendium of inanities" (25). Others maintain that while she probably will be remembered for most for her earlier works, Walker's writing is still pertinent and fresh. Her work still powerfully articulates many contemporary issues involving gender and race relations in the United States.

A significant feature of Alice Walker's writing is her openness to exposing personal experiences. Many connections can be made between Walker's own life and her characters, and her emotional intimacy with her creations breathes life into her work for each new reader. Alice Walker, an African-American novelist is recognized as one of the leading voices among black American writers. Alice Walker has produced an acclaimed

and varied body of works, including poetry, novels, short stories, essays and criticism. Her writings portray the struggle of black people throughout history and are praised for their insightful and riveting portraits of black life, in particular, the black women in a sexist and racist society. In her writing, she explores the “issue of the spiritual survival of black people, in particular black women” (150). In her essay, she writes, “I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival whole of my people ... I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women” (192). Walker sees writing as a way to correct wrong that she observes in the world and has dedicated herself to delineating the unique dual oppression from which black women suffer: racism and sexism. Her work is an exploration of the individual identity of black women and how embracing her identity and bonding with other women affects the health of her community at large. Walker describes this kinship among women as “womanism” as opposed to feminism. Walker focuses on the saving of lives through change and redemption. The redemptive quality in Walker’s works goes beyond the thematic to the very heart of her aesthetics. Even when she writes passionately about problems that ravage the land and the lives of people, Alice Walker emphasizes the healing power of love and the possibility of change: change personal, change in society.

Walker’s works are known for their portrayals of the African American women’s life. She depicts vividly the sexism, racism and poverty that make the life often a struggle. But she also portrays as part of that life, the strength of family, community, self-worth, spirituality. A theme throughout her works is the presentation of black culture and her women character forge important links to maintain continuity in both personal relationship and communities. According to Barbara T. Christian in Dictionary of

Literary Biography, Walker is concerned with “heritage”, which Walker “is not so much the grand sweep of history or artifacts created as it is the relations of people to each other” (125). Similarly, Alma Freeman calls Walker’s work is occupied with “unveiling the soul of the black women” (121), as Hurtson endeavored before her. Another theme in Walker’s fiction is the way in which the black woman’s attempt to be whole relates to the health of her community. The attempt at wholeness comes from remaining true to her and fighting against the constraints of society, as in the stories from Walker’s collection *In Love and Trouble*.

Her most famous work *The Color Purple* was published in 1982 and brought Walker overnight success and recognition as an important American writer. For the novel which chronicles the struggle of several black women in rural Georgia in the first half of the twentieth century, Walker won Pulitzer Prize and the American book Award. The novel is about being a woman and black, living in the frame of male civilization, racist and sexist by definition, being subject to all possible forms of oppression. It chronicles the life of a poor and abused southern black woman who eventually triumphs over oppression through affirming female relationship.

Response on *The Color Purple*

As the themes of Alice Walker are generally revolutionary and confront the contemporary experiences of black Americans, particularly those of black American women and their cultural, social and political history, her works especially *The Color Purple* began to elicit a host of criticisms. Walker has earned the high praise for *The Color Purple*, particularly for her accurate rendering of the black folk idioms and her characterization of Celie. 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” (31). Peter S. Prescott also finds the work “an American novel of permanent importance” (67). Charles Johnson has said about *The Color Purple*:

It is *The Color Purple* beyond all doubt, that stands at the crest of black Woman’s fiction in the 1980s.... She provides ruminations on the nature of God that opens into the five millennia-old vision of the deity as a being without attributes. (105-106)

He also gives a revisionist standpoint of *The Color Purple* in the sense that this novel questions the nature of God. In the same line, Stacie Lynn Hankinson examines an oppressed woman’s conversion from a monotheistic view of God to a more pantheistic outlook in Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple*. Celie frees herself from the oppressive man-God figure and emerges into a distinctly non-Christian discovery of God that she finally attains liberation from patriarchy. She says:

Celie’s conversion from a monotheistic view of God (or traditional Christianity) to a more pantheistic outlook represents and parallels her movement from feelings of oppression under the domination of patriarchy into a sense of connectedness with others and self-acceptance at which she ultimately arrives by the novel’s end. (320)

Like other black novelists Walker depicts reality of black people in her novels. Her purpose is to foreground the dreams and failures of those people who have been pushed at the margin and make them visible. Kathryn Vanspanckeren places Walker on the line of other women writers whose works focus on the quest for dignity in human life, when she says:

Like Toni Morrison, Jamaica Kincaid, Toni Cade Bambara, and other accomplished contemporary black novelists Walker uses heightened, lyrical realism to center on the dreams and failures of accessible, credible people. Her work underscores the quest for dignity in human life. (108)

Carl Rollyson sees *The Color Purple* as "a riveting story of Celie, who overcomes rapes and the oppression of African American men" (268). Walker has been praised for inventing particular form suited to the black content rather than using borrowed forms. In the literary Biography of Alice Walker, Janet Gray writes about what Henry Louis Gates sees in *The Color Purple* as "a breakthrough in contemporary African American fiction in that Walker turns to Black literature for a foundation of both form and content rather than putting black content into a form borrowed from white literary tradition." (536).

Several critics focus upon Celie's personal growth through the act of writing itself and Walker's task of what Alma Freeman calls "unveiling the soul of the black woman" (38). At the end of the novel, Celie is revealed as a complete woman capable of making choices and expressing herself eloquently. She gains power to fight back. She becomes violent against the oppressors. But her instinct to destroy turns into creative instinct. And that creative instinct leads to the formation of the self. By comparing *The Color Purple* and *The Women Warrior*, King- kok Cheung says:

Inspired by female figures, Celie and Maxine transform themselves from victims to victors by throwing angry words at their voluble oppressors.

But Just as their earlier dependence on masculine idols kept them in thrall, their appropriation of patriarchal rhetoric and codes of behavior could bind rather than liberate them. The two women go beyond the violent behavior

and abusive language of the tyrants to become truly themselves; their murderous impulses give way to artistic acts. (168)

By breaking imposed silence, Celie makes a way from speechlessness to eloquence. She develops personal choices and is able to make decisions. At the end of the novel, she rejects the conventional definition of good and bad. She develops rules suited to herself. There is complete change in her life. Similarly commenting upon the novel, Madhumalati Adhikari also focuses upon the similar kind of change in Celie when she says:

The Color Purple is a story of a girl Celie, who ultimately manages to overturn the conventional definition of good and evil in relation to women by emphasizing that she exists primarily as and for herself and not merely, to be a mother or the lover of man. (241)

But Barbara T. Christian is not content only with Walker's task of depicting the personal growth of her characters like Celie. In her essay, she discusses the interdependence of individual and societal change in Walker's novels. Walker is a writer with political intent who, like other black women writers, wants her works to affect something in the world. She says:

In changing herself, Celie helps to change her entire community. Political change in *The Color Purple* occurs because of life affirmation. From my point of view then one of the most important political statements of *Color Purple* is its emphasis on the right to happiness for even the most oppressed of us all, for poor black women, and that our happiness can be imagined, pursued, achieved through the growing strength of the

community of black women. (25)

Linda Abbandonato argues in her reading of the novel, *The Color Purple* rewrites canonical male texts that it is important to consider how a woman can “define herself differently, disengage herself from the cultural scripts of sexuality and gender that produces her as feminine subject” (117). She has found that *The Color Purple* is an erotic symbol, “a sign,” she says, “of indomitable female spirit.” She also associates the purple color with the color of “female genitalia” (113) referring to the specifically feminine joy. The joy in the pleurability of persons and things, is what makes life worth living – and is, Walker is convinced the birthright of all. Savoring, exulting, and prospering are expressions of health and freedom throughout Walker’s writing.

Walker believes that the language we speak gives authenticity to our life. Rather than following white man’s language she writes in black vernacular English. Jan Pilditch points out the style of Walker and the important she places on language. He writes:

In terms of style Walker seems committed to creating works which attempt to fuse form and content into a seamless whole.... It is, Walker says, language more than anything else that reveals and validates one’s existence and if the language we speak is denied us, then the form we are permitted to assume historically will be of caricature (917)

Many critics have praised the novel, especially for its use of a black dialect that reviewers laud in terms as “positively poetic”, “eloquent”, and “masterful”. A reviewer in the New Yorker leveled the novel “fiction of the highest order”. Mel Watkins regards the novels as “striking and consummately well written”; and Dinita Smith believes that “at least half of the book is superb, it places... in the company of Faulkner.” Despite the

nearly unanimous praise, there are several widely debated aspects of Walker's writing. One such aspect is her portrayal of black male characters as archetypes of black men in modern society. She received criticism from some in the African-American community who thought her novel portrayed black men in negative stereotypical fashion as abusers and rapists. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, in spite of its overwhelming success, has been criticized for possessing a rather superficial, fairy tale-styled ending. Among several criticisms passed on works, an African American feminist scholar Trudier Harris has been a dominant one. In her essay, Harris reveals her unease with the way that Walker's text participates in racist mischaracterizations of black intimate life. She says:

The book simply adds freshness to many of the ideas circulating in the popular culture and captured in racist literature that suggested that black people have no morality when it comes to sexuality, that the black family structure is weak if existent at all. . . . The novel gives validity to all the white racist's notions of pathology in black communities. . . . Black males and females form units without the benefits of marriage, or they dissolve marriages in order to formless structured, more promiscuous relationships. (157)

Similarly, Mel Watkins criticizes Walker for violating the unwritten law of ethics of black literature that is – “the agreement on the desire to present positive images of blacks” (36). Watkins blames Walker for ignoring those ethics by “exposing aspects of inner- community life that might reinforce damaging racial stereotypes already proffered by racist antagonists” (36). Their attacks seem more centered on the initial presentation of the male and female characters. But as the novel progresses, these characters develop into

complex and fully human characters capable of improving themselves and growing. J. Charles Washington helps to put to rest the controversy over Walker's portraits of black men with an essay on positive black male images in her works. In response to such criticism, he asserts that Walker does present some positive black male characters in her works who have "the potential for growth, development and change" (24).

Chapter II: Feminist Criticism

Feminist Approaches: Background and Context

The word 'female' since the initiation of human civilization retains its validity and conception as a biological contrast to male 'sex'. Certainly the natural biological contrast imbues each individual sex with distinctive features, bodily qualities and assertions which are supposed to be vital to sustain the true nature of human evolution and civilization. Despite this biological or physical construction, the sex is created by nature. Some social and cultural differences lie in terms of their behavior, education and the attitude of society towards them. However these variations are apparently based on society. This is how some certain bias definitions, along with physical assertions are attached to each sex and they are bound to be identified with asymmetrical, hierarchical socio-cultural beliefs called 'gender'.

Thus the time changes 'nature based male and female sexual relation' into a society based 'men and women's, feminine and masculine relation.' It exists as a hierarchical power relation where man dominates women in every social, economic, cultural and religious milieu of human life. The partiality, historically exist, sustains itself in the form of male domination against female subordination through ideological practices. The patriarchy fosters the gender based inequalities that decides man as superior and women as inferior, man as powerful and the woman as powerless. one of the leading American feminist Kate Millett sees: "patriarchy as grotesque, increasingly militaristic, increasingly greedy, colonialist, imperialistic, brutal, with a terrible disregard of civil liberties, of democratic forms" (511).

As time changes, consciousness that gradually evolves among women makes

them realize the inhuman fault of patriarchal system. Since antiquity women are gradually felt to launch a united effort against these injustices, inequalities and violence so as to eliminate and avert the hierarchy between sex, as Millett believes: "You don't have any oppressive system without its continuance being assured by members of the oppressed groups, that's true of oppressed people" (511) led to a birth of a movement feminism.

Feminism is concerned with the marginalization of all women; that is, with their being relegated to a secondary position. It represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolution of modern times. Abrams Writes:

Feminism is a political movement which has become successful in giving due place to writing of non-canonical women writers. Feminism comes into practice as an attack against female marginalization as our society and civilization is pervasively patriarchal, that is, it is male-centered and controlled and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic (Abrams 89).

It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature- which is described as feminine. By this cultural process the masculine in our culture has come to be widely defined as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative, the feminine by systematic opposition to such traits has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional. (Abrams 89)

Feminism conjures up various images and ideas regarding the women's issues. In spite of diversity feminism is often represented as a single entity and some how

concerned with gender equality and freedom. The penguin dictionary of sociology defines feminism as a doctrine suggesting that women are systematically disadvantaged in modern society and advocating equal opportunities for men and women (Beasley 27). The penguin dictionary of politics considers the main common theoretical assumption as shared by all branches of the movement that "there has been an historical tradition of male exploitation of woman" (Beasley 27).

Feminism refers to all those who seek to end women's subordination. It is an aggressive conscious feeling of women who begin to reject their passivity. Feminism came into existence for the sake of women rights and human equality. The main aim of the feminist movement was to develop women's personalities. It, therefore, studied women as people who were either oppressed or suppressed or rejected the freedom of personal expression. All women writers who struggle against patriarchy to contain their womanhood were generally considered feminist. Men may also be feminist but they can not be pure feminist because of lack of femininity. That's why, unlike ancient women, today feminists are proud of their femaleness and have made a vital tool to femininity to perceive their existence. In this relation Toril Moi, a feminist has defined in this way: "the word feminist or feminism are political labels indicating support for the aim of the new women's movement."

To sum up the objective of feminism is to end sexism, though because of its relation to other forms of oppression, it will require efforts to end other forms of oppression as well.

Overview of Feminist Criticism

Feminist Criticism, enunciated as a movement in literary criticism since 1960,

emphasizes a different kind of reading to literature breaking the traditional monolithic way of examining literature from feminist point of view. Feminist literary criticism establishes its relation to the movement of political feminists for social, economic, and cultural freedom and equality as it emerged as an out put of the two centuries old struggles for women's rights. In the concern of feminist criticism Toril Moi says: "Feminist criticism then is specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice, committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature" (204).

She has indicated the advantage of recognition of feminist criticism and theory which are useful to learn social institutional and personal power relation between the sexes. Likewise, Elaine Showalter has said:

"Feminist criticism has demanded not just the recognition of women's writing but a radical thinking of the conceptual of literary study ---- feminist criticism is international in its sources and feminist critics criss-cross national boundaries" (181).

However feminism is a recent political ideology, if we look back many female writers were found conscious about their sexes and they all had the same echo that women should also secure the chance of human right. Liberty, right to liberty and different kinds of books are most necessary to increase knowledge in several fields. Before feminism many women writers were related to feminist concern. They were Madame de Steil, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Margaret Hiller, Rebeca West, Sarah Stickney Ellis, Virginia Wolf and Simon de Beauvoir among others. Feminist movement is the result of male domination over the females. In our ancient and medieval literature

we find that women's status was lower than that of the slaves. In the course of defining, showing the poor status of women Roman Sheldon says: "In pre-mendellian days men regarded their sperm as the active seeds which give form to the waiting ovum which lacks identity till it receives the male's impress" (134).

In this way, they underestimated females by comparing them with waiting ovum. They argue that males are something superior and definite having separate identity and history. As pointed above male members of the society continued to dominate the society to their best. Females were behaved as the second sex. That is why directly or indirectly females started revolting against this kind of suppression and patriarchy. In the same way feminist criticism sometimes raises the anger against the patriarchy to create a less oppressive environment for women writers and readers. Likewise, feminist critics, sometimes use wit to deconstruct the male dominated ways of behaving and seeing. Although, numerous writers were raising question against patriarchy yet some of the outstanding feminist writers of the 20th century are Virginia Wolf, Elaine Showalter, Mary Ellman, Helene Cixious, Juliet Mitchell, Toril Moi, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Feminine is a second and cultural constructive form of women. When women reach a certain age and understand their gender, they are of cultural norms reversed for the female. Society considered anything unfeminine and unnatural, if she tried to disobey the social norm. In this concern, Toril Moi has presented Beauvoir's view in *Feminist Literary Criticism*: "Femininity is a cultural construct. One's not born women, one becomes one." (Jefferson and Robey, modern literary Theory 209). The role of women in the society are cultural constructs because female infants don't know what they are, they are just like clay and it is the society which shapes them as a female. Power is an

essential weapon in human society. Likewise Kate Millet has said in *Sexual Politics* (1969): “The essence of politics is power” (205).

Feminist criticism is a politically powerful tool whose main task is to make the patriarchal society realize that their rigid rules and regulation and to make women conscious of the age. Millet reminds that faultfinding primary condition of feminism. Feminism accepting Foucauldian theory, thus see power being exercised by men who pretend to have knowledge about everything including women. A power relation vary according to circumstance the power of men no longer holds constancy. They envisage a crumbling of male power which will pave way to several alternatives. Jane Flax argues that feminist theory is necessarily postmodern in that it challenges the fixed and universal definition of gender relations. From post–modernist, post - structurelist stream developed gynocritics, post colonial feminism, queer theory and the like. To set out in literary field with pluralistic choice of literary methods and theories, the feminists had to act as a socialist with a great patience. Thus, Millet emphasizes pure pluralistic feminist to determine in their field by coming out from the marginalized position.

The feminist movement emerged to raise the women’s status to keep them alive in literature. During the period women writers became more exited and valued their sexes. They did their best to be recognized through their writing. The central point in Simon de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* is that both man and women are perfect human beings. There shouldn’t be any matter of superiority and inferiority. They are themselves a singular, separate individual. Caroline Bird in the cover page of the book *Born Female* has inscribed that the females are exploited, brainwashed, under privileged being by birth (1961). Another American journalist, Betty Frieden challenged the femininity of women

of feminine natured in her book in the *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) that all women were happy as housewives. German Greer has shown the women's compulsion to bear man's cruelties in her book *The Female Enoch*, (1970). Thus, it is clear that all feminist call for changes in the social, economic, political or cultural order to reduce and eventually overcome this discrimination against women. The bottom line of all this subordination is the lack of freedom. Of course several writers, theorists and scholars have underlined this issue from varied perspectives. Marriage has become one of the bondage that restricts women from realizing her independent self. It has been defined by men as a legal authority over women. Feminist addresses these issues to instill a sense of human existence which is devoid of sexual biasness.

Though issues for the rights of women had been raised by some male writers as well as women writers earlier, behind feminist criticism lies two centuries of struggle for women's right. This struggle was marked by such books as John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) and Margaret Fuller's *Women in Nineteenth Century* (1845). These writers in their books present very important lines of woman's thoughts. The first dominant women's voice for the right of women had come from Mary Wollstonecraft, British political thinker through her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in which she proves how essential it is for women to acquire rights. Wollstonecraft argues that women are characterized as vulnerable to sensuality and passion but men also fall victim to love and passion. Wollstonecraft points out malpractice of men i. e. to confine women to trifling employment. Jane Freedman notes Wollstonecraft as saying "I shall think that women a working machine" (23). Another precursor who plays significant role on claiming for the women right in the modern

context is Virginia Woolf. Her *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and other fiction and prose works as women authors and on the cultural, economical and educational disabilities raised women's consciousness against what she called the "patriarch" society.

Another existentialist feminist critic and writer from France is Simon de Beauvoir strongly opposed the tendency of treating women as Second Sex born to assist their male guardians. She believes that existence always precedes essence. She says 'one is not born, rather becomes'. Beauvoir strongly objects to man's attitude of discriminating between sexes as 'self' and 'other', men being the former and women the latter. Men writers have described women as 'flesh' the one related to 'nature'. In the feminist world a subtle and radical critical mode was launched by Simon de Beauvoir, her book entitled *The Second Sex* (1949) is very important on this ground. Through this book Beauvoir established the principles of modern feminism. She focuses upon pitiable condition of women in patriarchal society stating that where a woman tries to define herself, she starts by saying "I am a woman. No man would do so..... man defines the human, not women" (Seldon134). It reveals the fundamental asymmetry between the term masculine and feminine. "Man defines the human, not woman. Woman is riveted into a lopsided relation with man, he is the one, she is the other" (Seldon 135). According to her, all the male writers assume that the females as a negative "object or other to man who is supposed to be the dominating and defining subject". Here man is assumed to present humanity in general.

In the book, the problem Beauvoir emphasizes that women to perceive man as self (as subject) and themselves as other. And she explicitly exposes the condition of women so that they could realize their existence. She says:

Women have been essential as the one born to be a wife or a mother. But she is stripped off motherly rights because motherly rights are also overpowered by fatherly rights. A wife's duty is to be in the bed to gratify the husband's lust but the husband is not aware whether he is gratifying the lust of his wife. (*The Second Sex* 145)

Myth for Beauvoir is explained by its usefulness to man. She defines myth as one of those snares of false objectivity into which the man who depend on ready-made valuation rushes headlong. Women, therefore is inessential in the eyes of men who want her to accept as 'other'. Further, she admits that "it is not nature that defines women; it is she who defines herself dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional life". In 1960s, with the advent of post-modernism and post-structuralism feminist study also found a significant place in literary theoretical front besides its political and cultural alignment several streams emerged to define women's studies and it received a notable form of a theory named 'feminism' which is such an elusive, elaborate and diversified a field. After 1960s, feminist literary criticism is closely interrelated with the movement called political feminism which denotes social, economic and cultural freedom and equality between males and females. In this connection, feminist criticism denotes a revolt against the male order or patriarchy.

Many writers started writing in the line of feminism after the 1960s. But some of the critics argue that feminists can not be successful in this direction in that even if they revolt against patriarchy, they are bound to use the male dominated language since they don't have their own language in writing. They somehow are bound to express the male values. Thus whether they speak or keep silent. They suffer. The main interest of feminist

critics has been to reconstitute all the ways we deal with literature so that we can do justice to female point of view, images of women. Today at the end of 20th century women's conditions are still critical. Still such questions as "Are there women, really?" "Women are like man" human beings are raised about women. These are real in real abstract declaration, which are disliked by feminist critics. Today feminists proudly defines her "I am a women." Beauvoir also agrees with this saying and recognizes to a certain sex, no fixed, sex no novelty. It is a goal to alert the society to be a women writer, she prefers womanhood. Beauvoir's attitude that each human has an ideology which directs human beings to a goal. Likewise, it seems her femininity has influenced her to revolt against patriarchy. Dorothy parker can be counted in as an ideal and humanitarian writer whose excellent idea that all human beings should be regarded equal. She dislikes the interpretation of particular sex. She writes in her book *The Lost Sex* "I can not be just to books which is clear that she ignores the woman's physical formation and honors on what is she?"

Feminists are always struggle against antifeminist's view which they claim are of narrow and conservative disposition. However life is a gift of nature. Human culture and religion also agree with this truth. But the man of society only conceives of anatomy as destiny. Even the great thinker and philosopher from Plato, Aristotle, and St. Augustine to Aquinas, Hobbes and Roseau have also depicted women as inferior and immature in their intellectual potential. Plato went to the extent of disallowing women and servants to take part in politics and philosophy. He labeled women as grade three citizens quite incompetent in any important and serious matters that needed deep contemplation. The Greek critic Aristotle declares that the female was female by virtue of certain lack of

qualities. This stands as a dehumanizing and demoralizing tendency of a philosopher like him. He said the rational soul is not present at all in a slave, in a female it is imperative, and in a child underdeveloped. This statement has demonstrated that a significant philosopher blundered in reasoning owing to his prejudices toward male centrism. St. Augustine asserted that daily man was in the image of God and woman was a partial being.

The similar types of saying has put by other male writers as the female is half male. St. Thomas Aquinas thought woman to be an imperfect men. He says that form was masculine and matter feminine: the superior godlike male intellect impressed its form upon the malleable inert female matter. Rousseau considered that women should be educated to please and complement men. This was not, of course, an accidental opposition. It contains a long history of gender discrimination since mythical and biblical ages. Most of the societies since the remote past have been built upon the patriarchal foundation that therefore have invigorated and unduly authorized men folk to define the world and society. They defined every aspect of society and culture from their perspective and depicted that in the works of art and literature.

The ancient mythologies of the west have attributed some peculiar characteristics to women in the form of goddesses. Apollo represents wisdom, knowledge and supremacy while Venus and Eros represent beauty, sensuality and jealousy respectively. There is no God representing man's handsomeness nor is there a Goddess representing qualities of Apollo. Goddesses have inferior position; Bible is one of the most discriminating holy books as it portrays women as credulous, deceiving and mediocre. Women are described as to have been created from a rib of man. This description has

pushed woman into a degenerate and subordinate position. Mary Daly says the power of naming was confessed by God on Adam but not on Eve, and in naming the animals Adam took domination over them. In Daly's term, women will remain powerless until they exercise the power of naming (3).

Elaine Showalter, a prominent American feminist has entitled women's writing and culture in which she says that women has their own type of cultures, they have their own type of body, the speaking style, the languages, the capacity of thinking and believing, the psyche all are their own sorts and males have their own. Therefore, they are naturally different. In the discussion of women languages Showalter asserts that feminist criticism is the wilderness. In *A Literature of their Own*, Showalter formulates three categories to adjust British women writers in the past and present according to their intensity of female voice. They are feminine, feminist and female. The first phase dating from 1840 to 1880 and marked the female voice raising in literature though buried in so-called feminine substance and got immensely affected by male pedagogy. In this phase, women writers like G. Eliot and Bronte sisters imitated and internalized the dominant male aesthetic tradition and standards, which require that women writers remain gentlemen. The main area of their work was their immediate domestic and social circle. The second phase dated from 1880 to 1920 clearly demonstrated the determined efforts for political and social equality and women's literature was able to advocate minority rights and protested against the unjust treatment of women. This includes writers like Elizabeth Robins; Olive Schreiner Who however remained dependent upon the prominent masculine aesthetic. The third phase dated from 1920 onward, dawned with Dorothy Richardson, Katharine Mansfield and Virginia Wolf who ventured to counterbalance the

male dominated literary sphere and realized the historically ex-polarized tendency in literature. In this phase the dependency on opposition is being replaced by a rediscovery of women's text and aesthetics. However they couldn't dispose the blames put upon them by male writers nor could they explore the actual physical experience of women. It was only with the coming of postwar novelists such as Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, Doris Lessing etc that we see female aesthetic and the distinct female view of life. They have countercharged men for their taboos stamped on women and have focused on all areas of female experience

Showalter divided feminist criticism into two distinct modes. The first mode is ideological which she terms 'feminist critique'. It is concerned with the feminist as reader and it offers feminist reading of text which considers the images and stereotypes of women in literature. The exclusion and misconception about women in criticism and women assign in semiotic system. The second mode of feminist criticism, according to Showalter is the study of women as writers. She calls it 'gynocritics' and provide the subjects, the history, style, themes, genres, and structure of writing by women, the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career and the devolution and laws of a female embraces different aspect of humanity despite its focus on the entire issues of women, several dimensions have been shown ranging from liberal attitude and the demand for equal rights for sexes to the radical one voicing out the extreme ideology that tends to theoretically turn the patriarchy upside down. Liberal and radical feminism are distinguished in terms of their intensity of demand and the arrogance. While alongside them, other feminists have developed with their affiliation to certain theoretical backgrounds. They include political feminism,

Marxist/Socialist feminism, Psychoanalytic, French feminist, Bio-Feminism, Post-modernist/post- structuralist feminism and others.

Modern feminist writing in the United States took their impetus from the civil rights, peace and other protest movements. Kate Millets' *Sexual Politics* (1977) signifies a significant stage in political feminist writing on literature, Seldon considers Millet's use of the term 'patriarchy' described the cause of women. The feminist analysis of politics therefore rose from the fact women have been excluded from the exercise of political power. Feminist criticism is always aware of the suppression of women in society and literature as well. But several books about women experience by women writer are marginalized one way or the other. Millet argues that the books of female writers are marginalized because of man-shaped literacy values and conventions. During the eighties, a major text on feminism *The Mad Women on the Attic* (1979), by Gilbert and Gubar appeared, concentrating on the figure of the suppressed female connotes to the realization of female identity. Gilbert and Gubar locate the female territory in its larger context and examine the boarder in which women writers defined themselves as free as men writers.

Feminist criticism establishes the historical relativity of gender definition, the concept of patriarchy revealed as man-made idea for the interest of masculine purpose. Women who by now are well aware of patriarchy as male domination over female expose the true identity of patriarchy and realize the significance of their own identity. The three French feminists: Julia Kristeva, Helen Cixous and Irigary challenge the inherited world view of patriarchal structures. They believe that western thought has been based on a systematic repression of women's experience. They also tried to deconstruct the language,

philosophy, psychoanalysis, social practices and the culture. They claim that not only culture and religion support the male-domination but it is the language also which supports patriarchal domination.

Helene Cixous argues that when the females can express their sexuality in their language, they can overcome the phallogentric approach. She described the psychoanalysis of female. In her essay "Sortories" she raises questions like 'where is she?' Then she gives a sharp blow to the male-oriented differentiation between the sexes putting forward the binary opposition between the sexes rooted in the side of passivity. Ontologically women have no place in society since authority goes directly to the side of the father and it's passed from father to son but mother is excluded even though father and mother are the source of the son and they have equal participation in begetting a son. This is so because in the extreme, the world of being can function to the exclusion of mother. She, being influenced by Derridian Deconstruction, deconstruct the binary opposition between male and female e.g. Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Man/Woman, Active/Passive, etc. which are deeply rooted in patriarchal society. In these sense that the active partner is always the richer, she suggests male is the victor and female has always been marginalized by the cultural, traditional values of contemporary society. With the impression of Jaques Derrida's philosophy, she regarded women as the source of energy because women used new language for their writing.

Helene Cixous is modern feminist critic like Showalter and Beauvoir, also gives importance to woman's body. She says: "More body, hence more writing" "Write yourself, your body must be heard, only then will the immense resource of the conscious spring forths." She continues elsewhere, "I write women, women must write woman and

man, man". She further expresses her experience of a woman who is a unique being. In her famous essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa", Cixous calls for women to put their bodies into their writing. She says, "A woman's body with its thousand and one threshold of order--- will make the old single-grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language" (Seldon 151). Her total advice to women is to be aware of their own pleasure, libido, identity and existence. She views that women must be free to feel themselves as independent. H. Cixous argues the subordinating practices exercised by man upon women are like a functioning machine (Lodge 289). The modern feminist writers and theorists have been very vocal to the issues of women and thus have brought several changes in the society.

Survival and Change in Black Feminism

In 1970s and 80s, several black women writers rose to the literary and critical forum and started voicing out their agonies as marginalized, doubly oppressed (as black women) in their works. Black feminists have challenged white women's ability and Eurocentric and essentialist nature of some feminisms. bell hook's *Ain't I a woman* (1981) relates the history of black women in the United States and their relationship to feminism, Hooks argues that the rape and brutal assaults on black women during the period of slavery in the United States led to a devaluation of black womanhood that permeated the psyches of all Americans, even now US society still perceives and represents black women as "fallen women, whores and prostitute that racism has taken precedence over sexism which is evident in the behavior of white woman who turn their deaf ear to severe assaults upon black women."

Black feminists, majority of 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, while black women have been marginalized within a paradigm in which, “they are ignored, romanticized or ghettoized” (Beasley108). Although the black feminists were as conscious of the problems of women as white feminists, their situation remained the same. Being black and women they were doubly suppressed. They were victimized by blacks as well as the white society. The black female experience is characterized by the interlocking oppressors of race, class and gender. These oppressors are interwoven into social structures and work together to define the history of the lives of black woman of color. According to writers like Bell Hooks, the history of these cultural oppressors can be traced back to slavery. Within her book, *Ain't I A Woman: black woman and feminism*, Hooks asserts that, "as far as black slavery, white people established a social hierarchy based on race and sex, that ranked white men first, white women second, though some times equal to black men who ranked third, and black woman last" (53). Black women have been defined and categorized in dehumanizing term, term employed to attack the essence of black women's sense of personal integrity and self worth.

Various writers argue that historically black women have been stereotyped as sex objects and breeders. Black women's personal growth has been impeded by the continuing myths of the black matriarchy, a myth occurring black woman of emasculating both black and white men. Black women have also been stereotyped by both black and white as the 'bad' women. The white women were also oppressing black women. They always viewed black women as sexual temptress of white men and prostitute. These stereotypes and myth have helped control black women's characters in

the society from the time of slavery black women have always been exploited as the object of white male sexual assault. White men take pride in seducing black women. They often become the victim of rape because sexism of white male was socially legitimized. Bell Hooks says “Rape was a method used to terrorize, de-humanized and . . . to trip the female slave of dignity” (*Ain’t I a woman* 36). Black men can no longer protect them because they themselves are in dehumanized situation.

Under white domination a black man finds that his male ego is wounded. So he starts his endless cruelty on his women finding no other role model than that of the white man. White women and black men both act as oppressors or are oppressed. White women may be victimized by sexism but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as an exploiters and oppressors of women. But black women have no such "other" upon which they could act as oppressor (hooks, *Black Women Shaping Black Feminist Thought* 15). It was the long term silence of the oppressed and the continual devaluation of black womanhood that paved a way towards Black feminism. In addition to the sexual violence and cultural stereotyping black women faced, various authors suggested that women of color have been excluded from the women’s movement.

The modern women’s movement has also been accused of concentrating only on the perspective and concerns on white middle-class women. Women of color concerns and struggles have been marginalized, slighted and even ignored within the agenda of the white women’s movement. Therefore, black and women of color expressed their reluctance in aligning themselves with it. Hooks, in the book *Ain’t I A woman*, concludes that, “the women’s movement had drawn black and white women closer together, instead

it exposed the fact that white women were not willing to relinquish their support of white supremacy to support the issues of all women” (136). White women were accused of refusing to let go of their white privilege in order to align themselves with the struggles of all women. They focused on oppression in term of gender while ignoring issues of race, class and sexuality. In defining all women’s experiences in terms of their own, this movement excluded issues concerning the interlocking oppressors of race, class and gender. In resistance to this marginalization, theories of black feminism and womanism were forged. These two theoretical concepts were developed to call attention the multiple oppression experienced by women of color, reflecting and defining their everyday experiences in their own terms.

Black women developed a distinct perspective and understanding that helped them resist the mainstream culture. The basis of black feminist thought focused on the related issues that define the black female experience that had been previously disregarded by the women’s movement. Black women come together to form their own organization, these organization focused on the issues related exclusively to black women and their lives. They established agendas dealing with several themes. According to Gloria T. Hall and Barbara Smith, these themes included the necessity of “black feminism’s total commitment to the liberation of black women and it’s recognition of black women as valuable and complex human beings” (xxi). Other important tenets of black feminist thought include the political awareness of how race, class and gender work together as oppressive forces. Barbara Smith states in the articles, “Some Home truths of the contemporary Black feminist movement”, that “the concept of the simultaneity of oppression is the crux of a black feminist thought consists of the personal and political

awareness of how race, class and gender work simultaneously as oppressors. Therefore, black feminist is comprised of theories created by and for black women and women of color. Black feminist theory provides space for black women and women of color to express their concerns in validating surroundings. Black feminist's thought addresses the aspects according to authors like Hill-Collins and hooks that have been marginalized and excluded within the white women's movement, links them to personal experience.

Many black women viewed feminism as a movement that was exclusively for women and dedicated to attacking or eliminating men. The author and theorist Alice Walker coins a new word 'womanism' to this new movement. Walker's definition provides guidance where she notes that womanists are "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (In Search xi). Rather than supporting separatism, womanism promotes universalism. Moreover, womanism appears to provide an avenue for the growth of stronger relationship between black women and black men, another very important political perspective.

Walker universalizes what are typically seen as individual struggles while simultaneously allowing space for autonomous movement of self-determination. In her book *In Search of Mother's Garden* she defines a womanist as a black feminist or feminist of color, an outrageous and audacious woman who loves other women both sexually and non-sexually, a woman who appreciates and prefers women's culture, strength and emotional flexibility. bell hooks's analysis of feminism also adds another critical dimension that must be considered:

To me feminism is not simply a struggle 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 so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires. (hooks 194)

As a result of this struggle, African-American women's ideas and experiences have achieved a visibility unthinkable in the past. So the major breakthrough in the women's liberation movement is the humanist vision reflected in the works of contemporary African-American women intellectual.

Some of the black feminists writers like Alice Walker, Maya Angelou and Tony Morrison etc. protest the 'massive silence' of feminist criticism about black and third-world women writers and call for a black feminist aesthetic that would deal with both racial and sexual politics. They celebrate black culture, tradition and their genesis and believe that they possess rich cultural and sexual properties as black and as female. They try to situate the study of black women's writing in the context of black history and culture and explore its thematic and stylistic correspondence with the literature of black men as well as investigate its special use of language and imagery. These feminist writers have revolutionized the role of women in society and forged the concept of "the emergent women" (Washington 214).

These writers have also recognized the self-expression of the black women writers is important because this reflects the expansion of American literary sensibility and offers the possibility for studying black women's lives in depth. Alice Walker also believes that the act of writing itself is a powerful tool for bringing about change in the

lives of women. She describes how this sense of purpose affects her work:

In my own I write not only what I want to read understanding fully and indelibly that if I don't do it no one is so vitally interested or enable of doing it to my satisfaction. I write all the things I should have been able to read (*In Search of Our Mother's Garden* 13)

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* also centers on the concept of "the emergent woman" who empowers herself through the act of writing in the community of women. There is a gradual transformation of the black woman, which gives her an inkling of her true identity and endows meaning to her life. The above mentioned feminist discourse has helped us to generate arguments and justify the protagonist of Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, the protagonist Celie's behavior amidst male-dominated society. The discourse has given us a perspective to observe and analyze the novel in a meticulous and a scrupulous manner.

Chapter III: Textual Analysis

Liberation of Celie and Patriarchy

The female protagonist, Celie is totally alienated, dominated and unaware about her female identity actually who she is and what her position is in the society? She remains mute as mule accepting social norms of patriarchal society being oppressed and suppressed her humanly desires. Celie is forced into silence by her closest patriarchal authority, the man she believes is her father. She's told that the act of speaking, revealing her inner self will literally kill her mother. She can't say I am good because she is fallen, "spoiled" as her father says. Patriarchal authority dictates that she must repress all anger, no matter what the cost to her own personhood. As a result she can't feel anger with her brutal husband, Mr ___ because she has been taught to accept any behaviour from her husband as her lot on earth. But Mr.___ undergoes a transformation by the conclusion of the novel, from hand of household wielding near – absolute power to a more subdued and philosophical friend and companion to Shug and Celie. In other words, Mr.___ is displaced as patriarch divested of his former dominance. Ironically enough, this transformation takes place in part because of Celie, who puts a curse on Mr.___ as she leaves his house with Shug. While Mr.___'s initial response is quintessentially patriarchal asserting Celie's low status on the white patriarchal scale. "Who you think you is? You can't curse nobody. Look at you. You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Godden - --- you nothing at all" (196). It is the nature God that literally enables her to speak and fight.

In the male dominated society woman is not supposed to develop her own interest; she should rather enjoy what her husband enjoys. There has always been the relationship of

power between man and woman in which women are sometimes idolized but most of the time oppressed and exploited. They have often been the target of male sexual violence. They are taken as mere object of sexual pleasure. The term “patriarchy” as defined by feminist scholars is “the rule of the father, including the rule of older men over younger men and of fathers over daughters, as well as husbands over wives” (251). It is a historical process formed by men and women with patriarchal family serving as a basic unit of organization. As Kate Millet emphasizes in *Sexual Politics* that patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male increasing self-realization and gaining empowerment. This concept, so defined, seems to be precisely the prevailing system of male-female interaction in the beginning of the novel. Certainly Mr.____ functions as a traditional patriarch in early portion of the novel, dominating both Celie and his grown children. As suggested, it is only as Celie diverges from the patriarchal family structure and perspective of God that she acquires her first sense of self- acceptance. She resists the imposed negative self-image and develops previously unprecedented confidence. It is only through her consistent effort by resisting against patriarchal society and struggling hard to attain her self she becomes successful in identifying herself in the society. Namely, she starts her own clothing business, learns to accept Shug’s affirmation with a man and maintains assurance that Nettie is alive, in spite of her letter’s mention of her sunken boat. Most notably, Celie begins for the first time to refer to her nameless oppressor, Mr.____ by his first name “Albert”. This change in name reference is indicative of Celie’s developing realization of her equality with men, in contrast to her prior feeling of subservience toward them. Now, she is separated from her husband Albert thinking he is equal to her status in searching

her own separate female identity. By finally, referring to her husband as Albert, Celie demonstrates her rejection of the fearful reverence that the former title Mr.____ commands and places her husband on a level more par with herself.

The new emerging philosophy concerning God that positions Celie as “being part of everything , not separated at all” (203), fortifies her with self acceptance and leads her to reject male mastery. As Celie curses Mr.____, She feels the strength. “Seem to come to me from the tree” (197). As Mr.____ attempts to reassert his dominance, Celie continues to be spurred on by the air (197) then by the dirt (214). Now, she defends herself by asserting Mr.____’s domination upon her: “Every lick you hit me you will suffer twice, I open my mouth the air rush in and shape words”. These lines clarify Celie’s increasing self-realization and gaining empowerment Celie seems courageous. Though in the past, Celie wouldn’t have ever tried to confront Mr.____ and stand up to him. But now, she found the courage and did what she thinks was best for her.

The novel, also articulates personal and historical transition on the concluding part, there is a transformation in male character. Albert who discovers, in the first of many reversals in his life that the person he had assumed to be most powerless is in fact the one most capable of transforming his existence. Indeed, by the time Celie returns, Mr.____ is a different person performing all household activities to maintain his own household. Later, he begins to sew alongside Celie, helping her to assemble her pants; sewing becomes an activity that the two share as friends: “Now us sit sewing and talking and smoking our pipes” (249). Mr.____ is content with sewing pants alongside Celie. He tells her: “I am satisfied this the first time I ever lived on Earth as a natural man. It feels like a new experience” (221). This shift of focus from Mr.____ to the people, largely

women, who surround him is a part of a larger pattern of family reconfiguration in the novel, which decentralizes the patriarchal and calls for a more democratic distribution of kinship ties. Ultimately, Celie gets freedom, happiness being physically, spiritually, financially free from male dominance. Celie's life rises to such heights that she writes to Nettie: "I am so happy I got love, I got work, and I got money, friends and time." (203).

All these indicate that Celie's freedom, happiness emerges from 'within' only through her strong desire to search her own identity which had been lost earlier in oblivion. It is only through her continuous effort and hard struggle with awakening conscience she becomes successful standing as 'identified female'. This is how her female identity is emerged. Now, she is a self dignified, autonomous, liberated being and free to live humanly. In this way Celie, the black lesbian regains custody of her children and regains her long last sister, Nettie in both body and spirit. Harpo and Mr.____, now Albert – who were polarized in the extremes of the masculine, are now able to abandon their efforts to control and subjugate women by whatever means possible. Celie, who was polarized in the extremes of the feminine, now wears pants, which symbolized that she has finally got what Shug has got. Celie arrives at wholeness at the price of a great struggle, facilitated her continuous written recording of how she perceives herself and her situation in life. Celie's final character is a culmination of what Cixous terms;

The intense and passionate work of knowing that is recognizing, acknowledging, taking the risk of other, of difference, without feeling threatened by the existence of otherness, rather delighting to increase through the unknown that is there to discover, to respect, to avor, to cherish. (68)

Celie is a whole women – a whole made up of parts that are wholes, not simple, partial objects but varied entirely, moving and boundless change, a cosmos where eros never traveling, vast astral space. Celie is a new woman. Towards the last part of the novel the separation between men and women is destroyed.

All the women characters choose their works as they truly want to do, regardless of the sex-role stereotypes. The novel achieves a recognition of the hierarchy so that blacks may free themselves from exploitation of white women. Women may free themselves from the dominance of males and oral expression is no longer subjugated by written expression. Under the masculine violence Celie is made to endure, a survival of the fittest perspective had been implanted in her which pitted her against, rather than aligning her with, other women. For example when Harpo asks Celie “what to do to make Sophia mind” (235), Celie flatly advises him to beat her, resorting to a familiar hierarchical order system as justification: “Women are like children. You have to let them know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating” (37).

This hostile relationship with Sophia by Celie shows that stereotypical vision of the society toward women is deeply instilled in her mentality that had set Celie in opposition to Sophia. In spite of this external hostility towards other women, internally Celie is magnetized towards them particularly towards Shug. In addition, believing in this new God that accepts alternative lifestyle and who “don’t think it dirty” (203), Celie is free to venture into a lesbian relationship with Shug that for the first time merges sex and love for her. This relationship evokes so profound an erotic awakening that Celie believes she was “still a virgin prior to it” (81). Shug totally challenges Celie’s ideas about God.

For her God is all creation: "God is everything" (202). This new philosophy that positions Celie as "being part of everything, not separate at all" (203) fortifies her with self acceptance and leads her to reject male mastery.

The novel's conclusion emphasizes Celie's discovery that God is in everything and therefore everything is holy, a concept that defies any sense of hierarchical structure as Celie's final letter is addressed; "Dear God. Dear star, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear everything. Dear God" (210). Shug extends the realm of the sacred to include all of creation and she provides Celie with a bridge to new spirituality free from the domination of an angry, white male God. This reimagining of God on her own terms symbolizes Celie's move from an object of some body else's care to an independent woman. It also indicates that her voice is no sufficiently empowered to create her own narrative. Thus Celie's movement from monotheism to pantheism parallels her movement from feelings of isolation and inferiority under male authority into a new sense of bonding with other women and appreciation of herself. Although Shug is often credited as the sole source of Celie's newfound physical and emotional nourishment, Celie may not have been receptive to Shug's advances of not for her spiritual reorientation. All these illustrations clarify that Celie's inner desire to stand as an independent being evokes her mentality and achieves success. As such throughout the novel Walker emphasizes that the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings is crucial in developing a sense of self.

The novel charts Celie's resistance to the oppression surrounding her and the liberation of her existence through positive and supportive relations with other women. Christian notes that "perhaps even more than Walker's other works, *The Color Purple*

especially affirms that the most abused of the abused can transform herself." As many other novels written by Afro-African female writers like Morrison's *Beloved*, the motif of liberation through one's sister is to be found and Walker insists on the possibility of black woman's empowerment through a community of sisters. Walker appears to demonstrate that the protagonist rises from the condition of nothingness to the position of self-empowerment. The transformation in Celie is not miraculous change coming suddenly but a gradual reorganization of the broken threads. It brings out a pattern that is meaningful and worthwhile. Women's self-empowerment is made possible by their creator's intense desire to construct organized lives of women free from all forms of liminality- physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social. In the novel, all women triumph in the battle. Walker seems to be emphasized that women need to reorganize their lives to develop and promote new attitude towards the women's question.

Similarly, like other African-American writing in the novel Walker focuses on the theme of double repression of black women in the American experience. Walker contends that black women suffer from discrimination by the white community and from a second repression from black males who impose the double standard of white on women. There is the violent relationship that exists between black and white men in the novel's southern rural setting. It is evident, for instance, in Celie's stepfather, Alphonse's statement "you got to give whites something. Either your money, your land, your woman, or your ass" (188) and this particular collocational set presents disturbing, though hardly surprising, correlation between black (female) bodies and property that are consistent with the patriarchal tyranny otherwise expressed by Alphonso throughout the novel. The appellation "Mister" is perhaps a more subtle reminder of white controls over

black life. As Marriot suggests every southern white man is “Mister” and every black man “boy”. The black men in Walker’s text are scripted into a pattern naming that even without direct reference to whiteness is informed by racial hierarchies. This scripting takes place through Celie’s narration, Celie describes almost all the men in the text as Mr.____. Such attitudes towards all the men in the text demonstrates Celie as subordinated character in early portion of the novel.

The protagonist Celie in the novel is doubly repressed being black and female. Male domination appears in a variety of forms such as sexual subordination, financial limitation and emotional domination are included as male tool of restraint. Walker sets into the narrative framework who are bound physically, legally, psychologically and socially by male codes. By presenting this book Walker challenges the very structure of the black community, in as much as that community is considered a kind of black patriarchal family writ-large.

The novel revolves around the domination of black women, almost all the major characters are oppressed black women who suffer oppression from the men, their families and furthermore their husband. The white men in society oppress the black men in turns. Instead of coming home and rejoicing in the wonders of family life, the black men depicted in the story come home and physically, mentally, verbally, and spiritually abuse their women. This is the vicious circle, Which goes on throughout most of the story. Male’s abuse and oppression on black women can be seen on starting of the novel as main character Celie suffer physically, sexually and mentally. Walker depicts the male characters in the context of the exploitation of Celie. As for the men, with a few exception, they are brutal because they are impoverished. They are pitiless and are not

self-pitying. They can be called as misogynists. Pa and Mr. ___ are pretty, spiteful, harmful and they are also arrogant, complacent, insensitive, incompetent, inartistic, contemptuous of women, but quick to take credit for their work.

Above all, they are lechers and mechanical monsters of sexual appetite. We are never learned that what makes men so awful. The male characters in this novel are all black, are not as we might think. They are made awful by this mistreatment in the hands of the whites. As a result of this they turn violent towards black women, for example Albert had a difficult life and took out his frustration on Celie. Thus black women are victim of racial as well sexual oppression. Nettie, Celie's sister had run away to Africa, in order to escape from the sexual tyranny of Pa and Mr. ___. Nettie's letters from Africa depicts men as awful and precisely make the point that where there's men there's trouble. We learn that Mr. ___ is awful to, because that is what father forced him to be. Harpo, left to himself, would have been happy cooking, watching the kids, doing the house work for his Amazonian wife. Even the formidable Mr. ___ says: "Use to try to sew along with Mama cause that's what and he was always doing. But everybody laughed at me. But you know, I liked it" (198). Celie, in short, redeems these men by giving them the courage to be women by releasing the women, already in them. But masculinity is radical evil and irreducible the causeless cause of all is wrong in the world.

Walker presents Celie as the incarnation of "Feminine mystique" against the massive male domination. Celie resists through her sufferings. As she grows to understand and value herself, she conducts and pursues a revolution which affirms the personal integrity and respect for life. She becomes a great pursuer of liberation. Her self-identity is her hard-won triumph. From her experiences, she gains the knowledge and

strength to achieve a new birth of the self. She blends appearance and reality in herself and becomes a mortal feminist. She is the culmination of ideal womanhood. This is what the novel boldly asserts.

Celie's Transformation

As various works of Walker, Walker's *The Color Purple* focuses on particularly the theme-domination of powerless women by equally powerless men. In the novel, Walker seems to be preoccupied with the task of overcoming black male sexist exploitation of black women as the central theme of the novel focuses on the triumph of good over evil as the protagonist Celie undergoes the harshest conditions and finally she becomes successful gaining self-recognition by hard struggle. There is transformation in Celie's life from a passive female to an independent women. Walker's most recent novel explores basic tenets of the women's movement of 1970s.

Thus, Walker protests violence against women and racist violence against among women. While bonding that women must develop in their struggles to achieve selfhood. Same thing happen in the novel *The Color Purple* in which Celie, the protagonist and narrator is a poor, uneducated, 14 years old black girl living in rural Georgia having no identity at all as a female she is suppressed, dominated and oppressed by male members at first by her step father Alphonso and later on by her husband Albert to whom she calls Mr.___. Out of such severe physical as well as psychological oppression by male counterparts Celie starts to write letter to God because she has nobody to listen anything. Writing becomes a means for her to define herself against patriarchy thus allows her to describe those traces and wounds upon her body, inflicted and imprinted by others as Celie writes to God in the opening part of the novel;

"Dear God,

I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl. May be you can see me a sign letting me know what is happening to me" (1).

Writing becomes Celie's path to freedom, or "an underground railroad to freedom," to draw an analogy from the slave narrative. Cixous observes:

Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me – the other that I am and am not, that don't know how to be but I feel passing, that makes me live – that tears me apart, disturb me, change me, who? --- a feminine one, a masculine one, some? -----several, some unknown, which is indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life sours. (86)

According to Cixous, a woman's coming to writing enables her to reclaim her own body; in fact the act of writing is inseparable from the body. She says: "More body, hence more writing." Celie writes against the imposed silence and in order to understand violation that has threatened her identity. In short, Celie's language exists through much of the book without a self or identity. It is only through her own writing Celie escapes from the old hierarchical structure and discovers a new world in which she as a liberated being is free to live humanly gaining truly a matter of choice for human sexuality. Celie may be viewed as the archetype of all oppressed women who are dominated, subjugated in male oriented society. In the outset of the novel Celie is a poor, uneducated black, powerless and very confused black girl lives in American south treated as slave, an object or animal to be used by male. For instance, Celie is repeatedly raped by her stepfather Alphonso, her children are stolen and killed and she is sold into a loveless marriage to a physically

brute man and only one person who truly loves her is her sister Nettie is driven away from as well. An escape from these harsh horribly degrading circumstances to the small black women is almost impossible. Through her consistent effort and hard struggle make her successful to achieve humanity.

Out of such helplessness writings become a means of relief through which she expresses her feelings and finally she comes to realize that as human beings she also has a separate identity female which makes her different from male as a result her transformation from slave like condition to independent, free girl she miraculously escape to a larger freedom. During the course of the novel, Celie learns to reshape the forces of oppression and to define herself through the letters. Writing her letters becomes for Celie a means of structuring her identity, her sense of self. Celie's letters, her growing ability to express her thoughts and feelings show her spiritual development, mark the way she goes to her independence. The novel's narrative structure has everything to do with the novel's main thematic motif of gaining an identity, of rebirth, of survival. The progress of *The Color Purple* can easily be seen as the process of Celie's writing herself into being and conscious, of her growing power and control as a writer.

Bobb Valerie observes the changes that writing brings in Celie's life: As she creates her own writing form, she also becomes more artistically expressive. She is no longer of experience in terms of nature. As she describes her husband, she makes an analogy between her experience and nature. "I make myself wood, I say to myself, Celie you a tree. That is how I know trees fear" (III).

By writing about her rape, Celie also externalizes her experiences so that they do not destroy her. She takes writing as a way to escape from mental contortions and lessen

loneliness and pain. The more she is suppressed the more irrepressible her urge to cry out, though on paper. She writes to God for share the burden of knowing that her father got her with child twice and sold her babies that her husband chose her the way he chose her dowry cow. Vallery Babb points out, "writing is the tool often used for racial and sexual dominance" (101) but here Celie is not seeking that type of power: she is seeking to understand her position in life. As the novel progresses, Celie becomes more powerful especially through the act of writing. The more she writes the more she is able to analyze her experience and subsequently herself. She uses writing to fix the events of her life, hereby lending them coherence and making their review and understanding possible.

An illustration of Celie's increasing capacity to understand her situation can be found in her confrontation with Sophia, her stepson's wife. After advising Harpo to beat Sophia in order to gain control over her, her mind is troubled and she has a hard time sleeping. She begins to question what she might have done to cause her unrest. Significantly, a little voice from inside, not the booming, thunderous voice of God Almighty, tells her that she has sinned against Sophia's spirit. She hopes that Sophia will not find out, but she does acknowledge: "I say it cause I'm a fool, I say. Fight, I say" (42). In the process of Celie's transformation it is only through act of writing Celie develops a sense of her self being which at first is self-effacing, but eventually becomes strong and independent. Ultimately Celie is an independent business woman and Albert is her asistent. Transformed Celie is finally able to forgive Albert and take him in as a helper reflects Walker's insistence on the redeeming quality of the human heart. In the same way Celie has also learned to speak up for herself, claiming her house when her stepfather dies.

Moreover, the story challenges the traditional, stereotype roles of passive women and dominant men as there is sexual relationship between Celie and Shug. Similarly, Celie's growing realization increases as she transforms her traditional views upon God, whom she knows to be distinctly male, as she remarks to Shug: "The God I been praying and writing is to a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful, and lowdown" (199). This iron fisted God keeps Celie in constant fear of being punished, bringing her into subordination; because Celie has been discarded by this "old white man" (201). She is left at the bottom of the traditional world's pecking order, as she is black, poor and unattractive. Her resulting low self-esteem paralyses her, making her a pawn or as Charles Proudfit puts it, "a passive victim" (13) to the ubiquitous patriarchy that manifests itself both familially and spiritually.

As such Celie's transformation from a young passive girl who is the object of violence and cruelty from her stepfather and her husband into an independent women with self-esteem is at the heart of the novel, *The Color Purple*.

Theme of *the Color Purple*

The novel, *The Color Purple* begins with female protagonist, Celie's remembering that her father told her to never tell anyone about the abuse that was occurring as he threatens her: "You better not never not tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (1). Walker uses the form of letter in the life of Celie in creating a woman centered focus of her novel. The letters span thirty years in the life of Celie, a poor southern black woman who is victimized physically and emotionally by her stepfather who repeatedly rapes her and takes her children away from her husband, an older widower who sees her more as a mule than as a wife. Celie's stepfather Alphonso has

used just about every means to silence Celie, short of cutting out her tongue: intimidation, deprivation, and false accusation. At her cry during the first rape he snaps and says: "You better shut up and get used to it" (1). He ensures Celie's submission by depriving her of schooling: "You too dumb to keep going to school, pa say" (11). Prevented both from speaking and from being believed, Celie accepts domestic violence without a whimper throughout the early part of her life. Told repeatedly that she is ugly and stupid, she hardly knows better.

The letters are written to God and Celie's sister Nettie who escaped a similar life by becoming a missionary in Africa. Celie overcomes her oppression with the intervention of an unlikely ally, her husband's mistress, Shug Avery who helps Celie to find self-esteem. By the end of the novel, Celie is reunited with her children and her sister Nettie. Celie, a dominated, poor, uneducated, 14 years old black girl triumph over brutality. Gradually, she turns to New women to break all kinds of constraints on her. The turning point of the novel occurs when Celie asserts her freedom from her husband and proclaims her right to exist: "I'm poor, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook - - - \but I'm here" (167).

The very lines explicitly shows that, though Celie is physically abuse and goes through a painful period of healing, ultimately she comes to full bloom in her entire self physically and spiritually. Inspired by female figures, Celie transforms herself from victim to victors by throwing angry words back at her voluble oppressors. Celie speaks and act aggressively to overcome domination and inhibition, but she also learns to channel anger into creativity.

Celie's Identity Crisis and Growing Empowerment

While discussing how Celie becomes successful remaking her individual identity and lives independently, financially, spiritually and emotionally gaining empowerment at last let's analyze the fact. In course of Celie's attaining individuality and increasing consciousness, firstly Celie gets inspiration from Sophia, Harpo's wife who is too strong and independent, self-defensive woman fight against Harpo's attempt to abuse her. When Sophia leaves Harpo to lead an independent life in the society, it gives Celie a sense of liberation. For the first time, she realizes the rights of women in a male dominated society. Similarly, secondly Shug Avery plays a role of catalyst for example Margaret Walsh who refers to Shug as Celie's "Magic helper," declares that through Ms. Avery "the love inside Celie comes forth, breaking the spell that has bound her" (79). And in like manner, Daniel Rose discusses "the crucial role" Shug plays into Celie's development (56).

Previously, Celie is totally ignorant, passive, submissive girl who accepts the situation as male dominated society had laden upon her. The male-bullying and domination begin for Celie at the age of 14 when the man she thinks in "Pa" rapes her on at least two occasions, rendering her unable to ever again bear children. However the trauma of this event remains entrenched in Celie's mind causing her to still cry in her adulthood. She keeps quiet and lies to her when her mother asks where the baby is, Celie replies: "God took it to herself she reflects: the god took it; He took it while I was sleeping, kill it out there in the woods, kill this one too, if he can" (3). Celie's ignorance can be seen in these lines without having own decision and confidence while speaking as she says remembering Alphouso's command that the baby is God's because she doesn't know who else to say . She confesses that God rather than Alphonso killed her baby.

Ignorantly, often she speaks of her experience in terms of nature, an element which, like Celie also has been exploited by man. As she describes her pain and humiliation during the routine beatings administered by her husband, she makes an analogy between her experience and nature's; "I make myself wood, I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear I say to myself Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man" (1).

From early adolescence into adulthood, Celie associates the biblical God with the men she knows – men who have been oppressive and cruelly insensitive to her. Later on she realizes her ignorance and instead of writing letter to addressing God, she addresses to Nettie. Celie is totally under the veil of ignorance and lead a life of slave like condition as exemplified in the novel. She is abused and treated as an object by male firstly, her stepfather Alphonso who beats her time and again claiming her to winking at boy in church and repeatedly rapes her and marries her to a loveless brutal man as an object or slave to look after his children and household act. Again after marriage, her husband Mr.____ behaves her in same way and male brutality to her rises even more as she is beaten by Mr.____ repeatedly, he says Celie, git the belt. While Harpo, her stepson asks Mr.____ why he beats Celie, he replies: "She is my wife, plus she is stubborn" (12). Under such brutal oppression Celie makes no opposition at all as Ross remarks, Celie alternately to ignore and to annihilate her body. Even she is brutalized by Mr.____'s son Harpo. Alphonso's relinquishment of Celie to Mr.____ differs very little from the way one relinquish cattle. As Harris notes:

Pa essentially barter her off (1) since Alphonso tells Mr.____ I can't let you have Nettie. But I can let you have Celie--- she ugly ---- But she ain't no

stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed or cloth it ---- she'd come with her own linen --- she ain't smart either ----- but she can work like a man. (87)

Furthermore, Celie is sexually harassed as Mr. __ repeatedly performs what might be called sanctioned rape. This sex is both in the absence of love and against Celie's will rendering it a vile act. Mr. __ seems to stand as an archetype of brutal male who treats Celie as his slave and hides her sister's letters for several years, he represents to Celie a tyrannical male figure, as Celie's earlier experience demonstrated: "That patriarchal society puts value on woman only to the degree that they serve the purpose of commodities of exchange between men" (63).

Unlike other female characters like Shug and Sophia who are strong, assertive, self-defensive women Celie accepts her degrading situation as she speaks to Nettie –

"You go ahead and get away, Nettie, I'll stay back and let him abuse me. You wouldn't want him to do this awful things to you, we both can see how terrible, it is but one of us must satisfy this male, and I think that I am the one who deserves to, probably because my esteem for myself is low" (39).

Celie is too stupid to protect herself from Alphonso and Albert. All these indicate Celie's ignorance about self-esteem and self-degrading attitude. As such Celie lives the lives of hopelessness even longing for death as relief from life's hardship. Consequently she utters "this life soon be over", she reassures herself. "Heaven lasts all ways" (36).

Celie has been fragmented into pieces which are given away to others, mostly, at the insistence of the men who dominate her (73). However, finally, the story undergoes a climatic turning point. Though earlier, Celie is ignorant, passive and inactive, when she discovers the long obscured truth about her father she declares ----

Dear God,

My daddy lynch. My mama crazy. All my little half-brothers and sisters
no kind to me. My children not my sister and brother. Pa not pa. You must
be sleep (142).

This is an example of Celie's increasing awareness, self-realization. In this 1st step Celie makes in resisting the "big and old and tall gray bearded and white" monotheistic God (191). At this point the story takes on a radically new direction even in terms of the narrative device of letter writing. In a sense, Celie rids herself of her oppressive man-God figure and emerges into a distinctly non-Christian discovery of God that she finally attains liberation from patriarchy. When Shug teaches Celie that God is in everything, including the flowers, wind, water (189) and God is in her and she is inherently connected to everything (190), her sense of fear and being judged dissolves. Now, Celie learns that she should focus on the creation, not the person of God, as Shug directs: "My first step from the old white man was tree. Then air. Then birds. Then other people ---- I know that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed" (203). Celie's newfound religion links God with the power of the universe, a pantheistic notion and often associated with Goddess religious. In Celie's newfound frame work, God is posited as internal, a connecting force at all nature (202) but significantly for her God is no longer a 'He' but

it, erasing the male connotations. She previously connected with God.

Such a way Celie changes her attitude towards God for this transformation on Celie and her awakening is striving for self, Shug plays a vital role. As Shug describes: "(It) Don't look like nothing ---- it ain't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself. I believe God is everything" (189). In course of it, almost all female character helps Celie to recognize her self. Even Mr. ___'s sister Kate feels sorry for Celie and tells her to fight back against Mr. ___ rather than submit to his abuse. This also adds Celie's growing encouragement. Celie begins her first effort at self-expression when she tries to thank Kate for buying her a new dress. She becomes frustrated and flushed, unable to find the words. When Kate tells Celie not to worry and that she deserves more, Celie thinks may be so. Celie's strained attempt to communicate her own feelings and her admission that she feels she deserves more than she has are important 1st step in Celie's process of empowerment. This clarifies that Celie has difficulty in defining, interpreting and speaking about her self. At the same time Celie's inability to convey her feelings of gratitude to Kate demonstrates the depth of her lack of her self-understanding first step toward Celie's empowerment.

As her sense of self develops, Celie begins to perceive weakness and short comings in the men who oppress her. She also begins to react in assertive manner looking at Mr. ___, Celie critically notes that he has a weak chin and wears dirty clothes. Celie also displays assertiveness when Harpo again asks for her advice about Sofia. This time Celie finds words to express her true feelings, and she tells Harpo that abusing Sofia is not the answer. One reason for Celie's increased self-awareness is the sexual awakening that she experiences through Shug's education. Shug declares Celie a virgin and renames her miss

Celie a new identity in both a figurative and a literal sense is also indicative of Celie's self-realization. By redefining virginity in her own term, Shug encourages Celie to take similar control over own situation by interpreting it in a new way.

In course of this growing consciousness, reflecting on herself and on her lot, Celie writes; "I might as well be under the table, for all they care. I hate the way I look, I hate the way I'm dress". Most explicitly Shug awakens Celie's desire for identity, when she sings a song that she has written for Celie. And Celie is grateful to note that it was the "first time somebody make something and name it after me" (75). This act is also a clue for Celie that language need not come under the jurisdiction of male authority. Shug also provides her with a distinctive statement on the male society: "Man corrupt everything He try to make you think he everywhere" (178). Thus, Shug has smashed the image of the little woman. Celie leaves this society. She leaves her husband just as Sophia earlier had left Harpo. She becomes a successful designer of fancy pants, initially for women, but ultimately for both the sexes. Gradually Celie, grows into empowerment, she is "waiting for the feathers to fly" (157). All her conflicts reach a climax with a volcanic eruption as she becomes more assertive to patriarchal authority. When Shug proposes Celie's coming to Memphis, Albert's protest makes Celie assertive of her position in this world. She asserts: "You low down dog is what wrong, I say. It's time to leave you and enter into the creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need" (157).

Additionally, Nettie's letter from Africa also becomes a source of inspiration in Celie's life. It gives the tinge of inspiration in Celie to see the light of the world. She writes: "Oh Celie there are colored people in the world who want us to know! Want us to grow and see the light! They are not men like pa and Albert or beaten down like ma was"

(138).

In other letter, while describing her own experience of Africa, Nettie writes: "The world is changing. I said. It is no longer a world just for boys and men. Out women are respected here" (147). Through Nettie's letter Celie instigates herself resorting courage to resist oppression and dominance. The images in Nettie's letter not only open Celie's eyes to the outside world but also link the personal oppression Celie has felt the broader themes of domination and exploitation on the continent of Africa. Celie, through Nettie is given the means to achieve a greater sense of concealedness with her community world.

In this way, we can say that strong female ties among women are responsible to uplift women. The cause behind Celie's independence is the support she gets from women. Throughout the novel, there is a strong female relationship, out of their support Celie gets redemption, freedom, resisting oppression and domination against patriarchal society and ultimately there is a remarkable transformation of Celie into a successful propertied entrepreneur who delights in her own sexuality and is enmeshed in a support living community as she utters that though her generation is growing older she feels still young ever before. In this connection, Walker begins to develop the idea that people can attain power by strengthening their own voices. Though, Celie completely lacks power, totally alienated, dominated having no identity at all actually who is she? earlier and stand as passive object especially those with men. Now she is aware that others sees her as passive, powerless object. Everything changes with the coming of Shug who proves to be a strong and independent women, with a career of her own. Shug teaches Celie to stand up for herself robbing all the innocent acceptance from Celie's mind. Through the closeness of Shug , Celie becomes assertive and revengeful against the tyranny of her

husband. With Shug's encouragement Celie defies Mr. __ , eventually cursing him when she discovers that she has kept Nettie's letter. She speaks out as: "I think, I feel better if I kill him" (112).

Under the guidance of Shug , Celie discovers her own identity struggling hard against the patriarchal domain of society. Shug introduces Celie the mysteries of the body and sexual experience and makes it possible for her to discover speech and her way to the freedom over masculine brutality. A lesbian relationship between Celie and Shug grows. Now, she realizes the difference between sexual abuse and sexual pleasure in order to be independent of Albert. Shug teaches finally to become psychologically and financially independent. Shug's gracious act of dedicating one of her song to Celie as miss Celie's Shug enables Celie to appreciate her own worth as Celie says – "for the first time some body made something and named after me" (75). Celie finds her true identity only when she sheds her old stereotype. All the exploitation of her innocence makes her to be a New Woman. Now, she turns to aggressive against all the convention of her selfish husband. She protests against the villainy of the black male. She asserts: "I never as you for nothing. Not even for your sorry hard in marriage (152). And a little latter: "The jail you plan for me is the one in which you will rest" (150).

Perhaps had Celie been allowed to leave her husband and struggle to pursue a career as an individual, or a lesbian relationship with Shug she could have been successful in figuring out her place in the world earlier. Her realization is like awakening from slumber that identity is not acquired through the ages of other but in ones perception of one's self. From the movement on she withdraws from the society which imposed restraints on her identity. She has created her own world inside where she can freely play

and make the world of her own. Thus Walker's Celie comes close to liberation through the community of her black sisters and unitedly they resurrect themselves from the death of their selfhood. Shug teaches her to sew pants and wear them for and gradually she turns to be a New Woman to break all kinds of constraints on her. The turning point of the novel occurs when Celie asserts her freedom from her husband and proclaims her rights to exist: "I'm black, I'm poor, I may be ugly, and can't cook --- But I'm here" (147). Here Celie's sense of self is strong enough that she is no longer a helpless object. Celie's claim is startling, because throughout her life she has been subjected to a cruel form of male dominance. At this point, Celie has reorganized her life, achieved economic liberty gathered the knowledge of meaningful thing and relationship to create a new Celie.

Thus Walker presents different stages of Celie's life to pinpoint the various factors that finally creates Celie as a whole and confident, self-awareness woman with an identity. An equally important component of Celie's empowerment is her newfound economic independence. Celie's clothing design is a form of creative-expression but it is also a form of entrepreneurship and a means to self-sufficiency. Celie has taken sewing, traditionally a domestic chore and turned it into an instrument of independence.

Walker implies that such economic independence is crucial for women to free themselves from oppressive situations. When she inherits her family's old property, Celie completes her independence, becoming a fully autonomous woman with her own money, business, story and circle of friends. She believes artistic expression (sewing and knitting) is the key to unlocking her identity. In general, sewing symbolizes the power women can gain from productively channeling their creative energy. The quilt, composed of diverse

patterns sewn together, symbolizes diverse people coming together in unity. Like a patchwork quilt, the community of love that surrounds Celie at the end of the novel incorporates men and women who are bonded by family and friendship and who have different gender roles, sexual orientation, talents. As Celie and Sophia continue to work on the quilt, it becomes an emblem of unity among the women. Judy Elsley declares, "Celie's quilt becomes a celebration of fragments, a recognition and reverence for pieces" (56).

As such Walker's Celie comes close to liberation through the community of her black sisters; Nettie, Sophia and Shug. In the beginning all the women characters are responsible for their exploitation. When they are united they resurrect themselves from the death of their selfhood. When Sophia leaves Harpo, he takes up a girl, named Squeak, and a fight occurs between the two women, over him so Walker presents numerous instances, of woman in competition with one another, frequently, because of man. But it is accepted more important because they have dominant social code which affirms that women should define themselves through their relationship with men. They should overcome their jealousy and come together in order to be free. Though, the relationship between Celie and Shug, Sophia and Squeak begin in jealousy and violence, but gradually they become independent. They help and support each other and make a kind of community through which they assert their quality, against patriarchal male domination. As a result they become, "an extended matriachal community."

Chapter IV: Conclusion

In post-modern world surrounded by multiplicity of theories in the field of literature and social sciences, identity has become a crucial aspect of life. Everyone likes to be 'identified' in one way or other. Identity is not a fixed term. It is associated with the desire of human beings: the desire for recognition in the society. It is not necessary to be identified in traditional culture if one likes to assume different ideas. In society when a new idea appears, the powerful authority always tries to suppress it with the forces of power. But identity is often raised when it suppressed. In a sense identity is a grand term that encompasses multitude of meaning from person's individual name to social, political, psychological, economic, political, ethnic gender as well as culture ones. Everyone one way or other strive for identity though unknown about the causes and consequences of the presence or absence of it. Identity implies a situation of an individual who finds himself or herself occupying a space with certain effect.

Right from the presence of human beings on earth, the search for identity has been persisting in varied ways. Human distinction from other species was the initial struggle of human being and that forged certain attitudes which evolved and developed in the course of human history since the greater civilizations that dawned and flourished in different parts of the world. Human beings have been persistently endeavoring to explore new things regarding identity. Thus most of the human condition involves finding one's Identity so that life and love may be experienced to the fullest. It doesn't belong exclusively to one gender or another, for both sexes struggle to maintain their own identity in ever changing society. However, society does place restrictions on the search for self on the basis of gender, which can leave the quest frustrating, and oftentimes

unfulfilling. The certain orientation of feminism is to empower women in search of their identity in the hazardous patriarchal system. Since long time in human history, woman's identity remained submerged, covered and pressurized under various colorful guises. Some veils may be culture, religion in society. As literature is socio-cultural product, the impression of culture is always present in literature and art. The position of a woman is taken lowly, inferior, uncertain and unrefined. She is supposed to be a sub-human being. Woman's consciousness of identity makes them define human in equal term and stress on self-dependence. As a result of women's awakening consciousness, they always find their identity in crisis in this male dominated society.

In the patriarchal society marriage is one of the complexities which some times minimizes the effect of a self-identity of female. In the novel *The Color Purple*, Walker presents the situation in which female characters search their identity but are beaten down and kept aside by the patriarchal society. It is the society and its tyrannical behavior that made the female identity submerged, subordinated. *The Color Purple* presents a women's search for identity. Celie, the woman protagonist of the novel, a poor southern black woman who is victimized physically and emotionally by male characters and through her consistent effort female identity is regained ultimately. The novel depicts a black woman Celie struggling for spiritual and physical survival. Celie begins her life as a physically and psychologically oppressed young girl who is unknown about her self. A male character like Alphonso rapes her and threatens her not to tell about it to anybody. This paternal threat completely silences Celie. He uses every means to silence her. Later on she becomes the wife of Mr. __ another male figure in her life, who also continues to exploit her in different ways. There too she becomes the victim of sexual violence. For

Celie the sex with Mr.____ is like rape.

Though completely silenced by patriarchal authority, she manages to tell about her dehumanizing situation by writing and finds hope in act of writing. She takes writing as a means to define herself against patriarchy. The whole novel is presented in letter writing form; firstly by Celie to God and then to her sister Nettie and Nettie's letter to Celie. Writing allows her to analyze herself. Later, when she knows that God is white man, she stops writing to God and starts writing to Nettie. Writing appears as a means which empower Celie and she realizes her 'self'. But she develops a sense of self in the company of other woman. The first woman she encounters is Sophia, a big and bold woman who encourages Celie to react against Mr.____. But Shug Avery, a blues singer is a major contributor in the transformation of Celie from a passive victim to a confident woman. Shug teaches Celie to think God in a new way as a force that all people carry inside them. For Shug, God is in everything and to discover God, one must look inward.

As a result with the help of Shug, Celie develops a new conception of God. It is nature-God that enables Celie to speak and fight back. The novel's conclusion emphasizes Celie's discovery that God is in everything and therefore everything is holy, a concept that defines traditional theological belief. Shug provides Celie a new religion free from monotheism to pantheism parallels her movement from the feeling of inferiority to a new sense of self. Another feature relevant for Celie's transformation is her initiation into eroticism. Celie never realizes the pleasure that she can get from her body. For her, sex with Albert is like rape. But with the help of Shug, Celie is able to realize the mysteries of her body. She teaches Celie to admire her body and get pleasure from it without any sense of guilt or repression. Shug defines Celie as a victim. A lesbian relationship grows

between them and for the first time Celie experiences orgasm. In this relationship Celie becomes a desiring subject. It is a kind of Celie's rebirth. For Shug, God wants people to appreciate the good things of the world including sexual pleasure, music, dancing, the wonders of nature like the color purple in the field. Shug associates sexual arousal with spiritual awakening which for Celie is quite strange. At the end, Celie adopts a new religion, which is very different from the religion preached by the male priests to limit women.

Similarly, she adopts homosexuality as a means to challenge compulsory heterosexuality, which subjugates Celie and erases her subjectivity. Shug also leads Celie towards creation. She enters into the pant-making business and makes a way toward economic independence. At the end, there is complete transformation of Celie like that of Philomela. She emerges from silence imposed upon her by the patriarchal society to a distinct voice. She speaks her own language, follows her own religion and enjoys lesbian relationship. Thus, Celie's metamorphosis questions the validity of patriarchal discourse and suggests an alternative possibility for women at the same time.

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