



QUEST FOR IDENTITY: ALICE WALKER'S MERIDIAN AND THE COLOR PURPLE

B. Bhagya Laxmi

Research Scholar, Department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

Abstract

The quest for identification in Alice Walker's Meridian and the Color Purple was the subject of this paper. Alice Walker's work has influenced the development of contemporary African American literature and philosophy. She is well-known for her writings on the nexus of race, class, and gender. Her writing prompts readers to consider how society generates differences. Alice Walker is an Afro-American author best known for "The Color Purple," a critically acclaimed novel. Walker unflinchingly addresses the emotional toll of racism and sexism in her book about two sisters, one of whom is based on her own family's experiences. Her poetic words and strong insights into African-American culture have been appreciated throughout her work. Walker is a passionate campaigner for social justice causes in addition to her work. Meridian is a short novel that follows Walker's title character, Meridian Hill, through his moral and psychological maturation. She was born into a middle-class black family in the South. Meridian is indoctrinated to tolerate the 1950s' racist and sexist culture. She is not encouraged to challenge segregationist rules, sexist customs, or her own sexual illiteracy, all of which rob her of her liberty. Alice Walker's fame stems from her novel the Color Purple, published in 1982, and its later film adaptation. This novel is widely regarded as a literary masterpiece in the United States.

Key Words: Racism and Sexism, Social Justice, Segregationist Policies, And Sexual Ignorance.

Introduction

Alice Walker is an Afro-American author best known for "The Color Purple," a critically acclaimed novel. Walker unflinchingly addresses the emotional toll of racism and sexism in her book about two sisters, one of whom is based on her own family's experiences. Her poetic words and strong insights into African-American culture have been appreciated throughout her work. Walker is a passionate campaigner for social justice causes in addition to her work. She has worked in public schools as a teacher and administrator, and she now gives talks about race, gender, and art all around the world. Walker has received various medals and plaudits for her contributions to writing, including the Pulitzer Prize in 1983. She is without a doubt one of America's most influential writers. Alice Walker is an Afro-American author who has penned a number of notable works throughout the course of her career. The Color Purple, one of her most famous books, was made into a film in 1985 and earned an Academy Award for best screenplay adaptation. In this paper, we looked at Alice Walker's life and work. We talked about her writing style and how it had changed over time. Finally, we talked about some of her most well-known works and what makes them so unique.

Alice Walker is an Afro-American author who has won numerous awards. She was born in Eatonton, Georgia, in 1944. Walker wrote her first story when she was eight years old and published her first book of poetry when she was nineteen years old. Walker has authored novels, short stories, essays, and children's books throughout her lengthy career. She has also received various accolades for her work, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1983. We looked at Alice Walker's life and work as a writer in this paper. We would also talk about some of her most well-known works, such as Meridian and The Color Purple. The themes of identification run through both Alice Walker's Meridian and The Color Purple. They do, however, approach the subject in different ways. Celie struggles to determine



her identity in *The Color Purple* because she is continually told who she is by others. We follow Meridian's journey as she attempts to comprehend her identity and find her place in the world. Both books are significant in terms of addressing the topic of identity and assisting readers in better comprehending it. *Meridian* by Alice Walker and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker are two works that explore African American identity. The characters in both works seek an identity that is not bound by conventional rules. This search for self-identity leads to a better understanding of one's self and role in the world. Walker attempts to explore the identity of black women in America in both *Meridian* and *The Color Purple*.

The Self in Bloom- Alice Walker's Meridian

Meridian is a short novel that follows Walker's title character, Meridian Hill, through his moral and psychological maturation. She was born into a middle-class black family in the South. Meridian is indoctrinated to tolerate the 1950s' racist and sexist culture. She is not encouraged to challenge segregationist rules, sexist customs, or her own sexual illiteracy, all of which rob her of her liberty. Meridian reminds readers of the Civil Rights Movement and the many connections between racism and sexism, as well as the consequences for individuals and communities. During the political and social upheaval of the 1960s, the novel explores issues of racism, sexual politics, and African American traditional values. Meridian has dedicated her life to achieving black political and social equality. "Meridian ill... a martyr to the resistance to violence...she is raised from the death of interracial existence, and what might be called interracial sexuality of the programmatic kind founded on guilt and grief," writes a learned critic of *Meridian* (Harold Bloom 9).

Meridian is one of the most well-developed and emotionally complex characters in recent American fiction. The novel has been expertly created. Walker wants her readers to consider her character as a symbol of the 1960s, which she sees as the nexus of black consciousness and identity struggle. The Civil Rights Movement reaffirmed the African-American-American bond. It also confirmed their long history of resistance to oppression. *Meridian* is a novel that affirms the Civil Rights Movement's vision of freedom and nonviolence after it was declared dead. In a racist society that has failed to value and continues to destroy black lives, it affirms blackness and African American heritage. The focus of the society is on black women's participation in the Civil Rights Movement. It will not make them any sser than they already are. *Meridian* is a "womanist" novel, as Walker herself describes it (Loberta M. Hendrickson 113). It brings together the black and female consciousness that arose from the Civil Rights Movement.

Meridian Hill, a black lady, is the protagonist of the narrative. She grew up in a Southern nail town. She marries Eddie while she is a teenager and divorces him when she is an adult. She offers her child up for adoption in order to accept a college scholarship. During her college years, she was an enthusiastic participant in the Civil Rights Movement. Buman Held, a black political activist from the North, becomes her love interest. She conceives and gives birth to his child. Truman is then drawn to Lynne Rabinowitz, a Jewish civil rights activist. Meridian learns about the participation, aborts the pregnancy, and gets sterilised, while Buman marries Lynne. The three protagonists' friendship lasts until the Civil Rights Movement gives rise to the thought of violent revolution. Meridian continues to engage in nonviolent resistance in the face of a world that no longer values it. She is on a mission to find answers to questions regarding the connection between change and violence. She goes through a personal metamorphosis and is able to let go of her guilt about her incapacity to be a mother. At the conclusion of her search, she passes on her struggle for wholeness to Truman Held.



The novel's central theme is the legacy of black women in the most seductive and racist America. Meridian follows Meridian's political metamorphosis from a despondent teenage mother frustrated by her lack of options in the South to a committed activist who uses her body as a weapon to resist societal injustices. By expanding her thinking through action, she transforms into a list. She makes use of her ancestors to make a difference in her community. She is not just a character in the novel, but she is also the personification of the novel's central idea: the link between personal and social development. Meridian, Truman, and Lynne are three characters who tell a triangle storey. The plot revolves around their misadventures, as well as their ability to love and forgive one another. They alternate between condemning and feeding one another. Meridian has been madly in love with Truman for a long time. Truman, on the other hand, abandons her in order to pursue Lynne. After that, he abandons Lynne and their daughter Camara. Meridian no longer desires him at the time he wants her due of her commitment in her life. She is dedicated to fighting in the black 'owns of the South, but he dismisses it as futile. He is becoming a more commercial artist. Lynne is unable to return to her roots, nor can she identify as a member of the black community. After the death of her child, Lynne loses her drive to live and becomes obese. Meridian remains her sole companion until she has come to terms with herself and her guilt, recovered from her mystery illness, and moved on to live her own life and complete her own goal.

Female Solidarity in The Color Purple

Alice Walker's fame stems from her novel *The Color Purple*, published in 1982, and its later film adaptation. This novel is widely regarded as a literary masterpiece in the United States. "The novel has become so popular that Alice Walker is almost universally recognised as a spokeswoman for black people, especially for black women, and the novel is more and more touted as a work representative of black communities in this country," writes Harris T in "On The Color Purple, Stereotypes, and Silence" (155). Celie, a fourteen-year-old ugly black girl, is the protagonist of the tale. Pa (Alphonso), whom she believes to be her father, raps her and impregnates her twice while she is very young. He does, however, become her stepfather. She has two children, Olivia and Adam, who are stolen from her by Pa shortly after they are born. Celie will be infertile for the rest of her life. Walker depicts the plight of female slaves whose children are violently taken away from them by their slave lords, who eventually sell them. Molly Hite says of the novel's popularity, "The Color Purple turned Alice Walker from an undeniably serious black writer whose literature belonged to a tradition of gritty, though occasionally "magical," realism into a popular author, with all the benefits and drawbacks that entails." *The Color Purple*, unlike *The Life of Grange Copland* (1970) or *Meridian* (1976), had quick and widespread public acclaim, winning the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for 1982-83. At the same time, though, it sparked widespread criticism due to what appeared to be obvious defects in its construction. This paper begins by critically introducing the novel before moving on to the concept of female solidarity as demonstrated by various female characters throughout the novel.

The novel *The Color Purple* is written in the form of letters. After being raped and beaten by her stepfather, Celie begins to send letters to God. He threatens her with death if she reveals the secret of her sexual assault to anybody; otherwise, her mother will be murdered. Celie's letters cover a period of forty years in her life. Celie writes the first fifty-one letters to God out of the ninety she receives. The rest of Nettie's letters are addressed to Celie, with a few exceptions when Celie responds to Nettie and others to God. "The Color Purple's letters are often structured by author and recipient: Celie to God, Nettie to Celie, Celie to Nettie," explains Donelley (96). Depending on their educational background, the dialect differs from character to character. Celie speaks and writes in a rural Georgia accent, Nettie



in a more educated and civilised dialect, and Shug in her own dialect. Celie's silent suffering, victimisation, oppression, and horrible treatment by male members of her society such as Pa, Mr.— (Albert), and Harpo, her growing inner strength, and finally her acquisition of identity are reflected in the letters. Celie has a complete makeover as a result of her interactions and bonds with other female characters such as Nettie, Shug Avery, and Sophia. Nonetheless, Celie manages to generate both meaning and community in her own modest manner, according to Donelley. She surrounds herself with a diverse cast of characters who teach her what it means to be strong: Shug Avery, her husband's mistress; Sofia, her stepson Harpo's all-but indestructible wife; and, eventually, long-lost Nettie, whose experiences as a missionary in Africa demonstrate both the promise and limitations of Western religion and civilization. There are so many themes, tactics, and mementos in language throughout *The Color Purple*. Tucker applauds the book, saying, "With this work, Walker has developed a really modernist text; that is, a text that reveals itself as an artistic output in which language is fundamental to the moulding of vision." She has written a text that demonstrates the power of words while also demonstrating the nature of black women's discourse.

Walker's experience with Afro-American women's culture is reflected in the work, which emphasises on oppression and male dominance in black women's existence and independence. The work also depicts women's humiliation, abuse, and tyranny at the hands of their own male counterparts. Alice Walker became the first prominent writer in her black society to criticise the patriarchal system. Perhaps no text more clearly displays how widely distinct communities of readers generate literary meaning than *The Color Purple*, the core of ongoing discussion concerning interwoven systems of oppression and their portrayal in literature, according to Taylor. Even among the most enthusiastic detractors, some have discovered a clear blueprint for organised resistance to oppression, while others have discovered a wish-fulfilling romance. The work is dominated by the theme of lesbianism. Shug Avery and Celie fall in love. Women are positioned as the centre, and they share a feminine link with one another in the face of tyranny, and they assist one another in every manner possible. Racism, sexism, violence, and other issues are addressed in the work. "The *Color Purple*'s major themes are female assertiveness, female narrative, voice, female connections, and violence," says Bates. Walker reshapes traditional Black Aestheticism in *The Color Purple*. In "Reading and Resistance: The *Color Purple*," Bell Hooks discusses the novel's themes of racism, misogyny, exploitation, spiritual salvation, and so on:

Conclusion

Finally, both Walker's *Meridien* and *The Color Purple* might be regarded as a reaction to the racism and sexism that existed at the time they were written. Walker's use of magical realism to address these themes is evident in both of these stories. While the two works share many parallels, they also have some significant variances. The most significant distinction between *Meridien* and *The Color Purple* is that *Meridien* is more obviously political. Despite the fact that Walker's *Meridien* is a fictional work, it offers readers a unique viewpoint on the actual world. Purple is a hue associated with power, and its inclusion in the narrative emphasises its significance. Alice Walker highlighted the power of colour and its potential to generate diverse moods in her novel *The Color Purple*. She also introduces readers to "*Meridien*," a new way of looking at time that she coined. While it is unclear if Walker believes in *Meridien* as a concept or not, the concept itself is intriguing. This concept of a varied view of time has ramifications in a variety of fields, including art and commerce.



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