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**DISCOURSE OF WOMEN MARGINALIZATION AND OPRESSION: A
STUDY OF ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE***

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Abstract:

The research sheds the light on the presence of African American women through The Color Purple novel of a contemporary feminist writer Alice Walker, which supports women-bonding and their combination leads to the self reliance to survive the doubled oppression and humiliation suffered by the Afro-American women. This study shows the excess of oppression suffered by the protagonist, Celie in the novel. This paper also researches the effects of male domination upon Celie's spirit. Patriarchal oppression and gender violence racial discrimination, these subjects shape the core of walker's works. She explores the oppression of black women and She seeks a new identify for them, a self – awareness which will make them self dependent emotionally, socially and spiritually. It was Alice walker who created the term 'Womanism' a form of black feminism that adopts the women's culture, women's flexibility and women's presence. Through her heroines displays a real portrayal and insightful to the reader and sent a message for the entire world by the inhumane treatment, marginalization and multi faced utilization that most of Afro- American women have been suffering for decades.

Keywords: Black Literature, Marginalization, Afro-American Literature, Feminism, etc.

Introduction:

This research study discusses that the concept of oppression creates harm and marginalizes various groups of people, specifically Black women. A social issue that appears to have no end in near future, oppression and marginality maim the very souls of men and women. Although oppression has a long history in the American culture, it appeared to have decreased in oppressive acts in the latter part of the twentieth century. However, in lately years, there has



been an increase in hate crimes, issues of police cruelty, and legal acts made to impose restrictions on marginalized people. These hateful accidents led to an also indicate in how groups of people were being oppressed and disregarded or targeted because of race. Adjacenting the issues of oppression and marginality from a rhetorical view led to Alice Walker's novels, *The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. Both novels were clearly examples of the inequalities in the dealing of Black women, and they interested on the traditional patriarchy, which is fundamentally responsible for a great deal of the social disorder seen in society.

Similarly to many of her female characters, Walker was born to a sharecropping family in Eatonton, Georgia, on February 9, 1944. From a very early age, she was showing signs of extreme brightness and intellect, noticed by both her family members and her teachers. Since her parents had to work hard to support their family, Walker started school one year before she was supposed to, at four years old, and continued to amaze everyone with the knowledge she accumulated by reading book after book. In 1952, an eye injury caused by a BB gun accident while she was playing with her siblings left her with a permanent scar and damaged sight. The injury affected her even more on a mental level, evoking insecurity and shame about the way she looked, as well as anger because of her brothers not being punished for what they did. Her scar was later repaired and scar tissue removed, but the effects of the injury remained on the inside. Nevertheless, Alice Walker continued her success in school and in 1961 graduated from Butler-Baker High School and enrolled at Spellman College. It was about that time that she started to notice the injustice with which her race was being treated, and expressed interest for the Civil Rights Movement, which will later be seen in her writing (White, 14-60).

In both novels, Walker's characters, Celie, Sofia, and Tashi-Evelyn, are oppressed and marginalized. The black women, specifically the three characters in her novel, are oppressed, they can overcome the oppression. This research concludes that Walker's voice solidifies her role as a evangelist although not in the traditional sense of a evangelist and based on her developed ethos, should be considered a rhetor.

The personality of Sofia is the only woman in the novel that decides to fight from the early time. Besides countering her husband's attempts of humiliation her through violence, she also resists to the white people who try to discredit and annoys her. "The voice of sexual and racial presentiment – for instance, she twice expresses a desire to "kill" her sexual and racial oppressors – Sofia is the first woman Celie knows who refuses to accede to both the patriarchal and the racist demand that the black woman demonstrate her abjection to her oppressors. But the mythic test of Sofia's strength takes place in her refusal to enter the servitude of double discourse demanded of blacks by the white culture." (Berlant, 12).

Review of Literature:

Koynucu (2014) acclaims the real value of Walker's works, which usually aspires to give the female their voice in order to stand together against all shapes of offence, violence, cruelty and inhumanity.

Shalini (2014) illustrates that black women keep themselves on the path of literature. They are not a negative thing. Women don't want to deny their dignity; they want to have equal rights in their social, political and economic life. In this novel, Celie is a very



unfortunate daughter, because she was abused twice by her stepfather irrespective of being only fourteen years old. She is obliged to get used to it as she can't withstand it (Padhi, 2015). Padhi indicates Celie, the protagonist in *The Color Purple*, is a black American female who undergoes oppression by her patriarchal family and racism on the hand of whites.

With reference to the survival of the black society, some problems like abuse of women and gender inequality are entirely addressed by the womanism rather than feminism.

All throughout Meridian, Walker stands out the universality of the human expertise and proposes that there is no one who cornered the bazaar on suffering. Some individuals may belong to different backgrounds, but they may share a common history of exploitation, guilt, misery, violence, and eventually, liberty, triumph and acceptance, arrogance and uppishness (Amrutha, 2017).

The most critical issue of this novel is the oppression infected on the protagonist, Celie, because of the patriarchal system represented by her husband and stepfather and offers the acts that protagonist adopts to set herself free from all the destructive results of sexism and racism.

The Color Purple describes the extreme poverty of the black family in the early 20 century and the inhumane dealing of black Americans. Here this novel concentrates on how the women establish their identity depending on feminist theories Independent person. This study also explores the importance of writing letters for celie.

This study will answer how does Celie set herself free from the patriarchal system? And Do Celie's sister and other characters have a role her liberation? And what the importance of writing in obtaining freedom?

Patriarchal Oppression System and Gender Racism in Alice walker's *The Color Purple*:

The current study focuses on the presence of African American women through selected novel of a modern feminist writer Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*. This study aims to create a new identity and give a voice for black women in American society in the contemporary era and make them self-confidence socially, emotionally and spiritual. Racial discrimination, patriarchal oppression, gender violence, the Civil Right Movement and slavery, these themes form the core of Walker's works. Walker was the first female who coined 'Womanism' a term of black feminism which affricates women's culture, women's power, and women's flexibility. Alice walker presents her themes through her heroines in order to show the reader a real portrayal and insightful and sent a message for the entire world by the bad dealing, marginalization, and multi-faced exploitation that most of Afro-American women have being suffered. Furthermore, to expose the progressive development and social changes in the life of her protagonists from self- abnegation, silence and powerless to self-acceptance, opposition, and empowerment.

Nadu (2017) depicts the extent to which women suffered oppression by referring to Walker's protagonist Meridian, and other practices like divorce, abortions, slavery and lack of successful marriage. Meridian made her camp among the poor black woman.. Truman came searching for her as he had used to do in the past ten years. She protests against the continuing racial discrimination even after the legal abolition of segregation. This first glimpse of Meridian reveals her social commitment to the black community, her belief in nonviolent



resistance and her link with children finds that degeneration is a disease in the lives of blacks and they really have to be encouraged to overcome it. Hence, her characters became revived with the help of hope, and those revived characters became models for the whole universe.

Regarding to aforementioned, it is evident that the public awareness towards issues related to gender equity had increased during and after the period of the 18th century. This makes one wonder why this awareness did not show that the female condition has improved in our time, particularly when we have more advancements in education, living conditions, and technological progress than those in old times (Srisermbhok, 2016).

Racial Oppression and Prevalent Vehemence in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*:

Alice Walker, the Famous American writer and activist, has showed themes of racial persecution and general violence in many of her works. These themes are predominant in her most renowned novel, *The Color Purple*, and in her essays, poetry, and other writings.

The Color Purple, published in 1982, includes the story of African American women in the provincial South during the early 20th century. The novel describes the lives of characters that face several forms of racial oppression, involving systemic racism, violence, and discrimination. The protagonist, Celie, suffers physical and sexual insult, reflecting the tough realities experienced by many African American women at that period.

By her writing, Walker focuses on the intersectionality of oppression, as the characters in *The Color Purple* also face dislike of women and sexism. Walker indicates the themes of gender violence and the patriarchal power forms that share to the suffering of women of color. Walker's work goes beyond describing racial oppression and general violence; she also declaims the resilience and strength of marginalized communities. Her characters often have methods to combat and defeat their circumstances, showing the power of self-empowerment, love, and solidarity.

In addition to "*The Color Purple*," Walker's writings tackle issues related to racial oppression and general violence. She has written comprehensively on civil rights, feminism, and the African American experience. Her writings discuss the history of racial violence and its impact on generations of African Americans. In that novel, she lays a particular stress on the double oppression of black women in America. She depicts black women in their relationships with Whites as well as with their fellow black men. Her particular angle of vision is black women's experience in southern America where they were enslaved. Her works portray the pain and struggle of black people's history. In articulating that vision, she finds that the creativity of black women, the extent to which they were permitted to exercise it, is a measure of the health of the entire society. She insists on the relationships between black women and the white society on the one hand, and between black women and the black community on the other hand. In this double relation, black women are oppressed.

Our purpose is to find how gender and racial oppression is deployed in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*? To develop this theme, we will use as theoretical angle, gender study because many characters in the novel break the boundaries of traditional male or female gender roles. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, responsibilities, identities and expectations assigned to men and women. The idea of gender among African-American



women is focused on the abilities of the husband to care for the wife and family. The normative roles by men are viewed as the source of oppressive behavior.

To analyze the double oppression, we will first show the impact of the white society on black women. Racism that prevailed in the United States of America from slavery to the civil rights movements has set black women apart from American society. They are victims of any kind of violence and injustice. Secondly, we will deal with the crises internal to the black community which prevent women from exercising their full rights. They were not only abused sexually by their husbands, but they are also victims of mistreatments which make them suffer from both physical and psychological pain.

In general, Alice Walker's writings face the harsh facts of racial oppression and general violence while also shed lighting the beauty and strength of marginalized communities. Through her working, she adopts sympathy and understanding, inspiring readers to resist and confront systemic injustices.

Oppression and Humiliation in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*:

In Alice Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, oppression and humiliation are central themes that are discussed through the experiences of the African-American women Figures. The novel happens in the early 20th century in rural Georgia, a time and place marked by systemic racism, sexism, and violence.

One of the main figures, Celie, is undergone to difference forms of oppression and humiliation during the novels. She suffers physical and sexual oppress from her stepfather and later from her husband, Mister. Celie is dealt as an object, forbidden of her autonomy and voice. She is constantly reminded of her low social status as a poor, uneducated black woman. Celie's letters are written in non-standard English dialect, what Walker has called black folk language. In fact, Celie writes as many as 50 letters to God in a simple broken language which symbolizes the broken heart of Celie. Her communication with God through her letters confirms her very existence and asserts that she is still alive. "The actual language of the letters, which are written in Celie's folk speech without any attempt at editorializing on Walker's part, is similarly reaffirming; something essential to her personality" (Trudier Harris, 16).

Furthermore, Celie's experiences show the larger societal oppression faced by African-American women during that time. The novel indicates the intersecting forms of discrimination based on race, gender, and class. African-American women like Celie are marginalized and oppressed by both white society and black men. Celie is constantly humiliated by making mention of her physical ugliness which makes her feel inferior in her own eyes and she ignores her own body which has been put to repeated sexual and physical assaults. Celie is forced to accept that she is ugly in the society standards because her step father stresses on this. "She ugly, don't even look like she kin to Nettie" (Walker, *TCP*, 8). Time and again Celie is called ugly and worthless by both her Pa and her husband, and eventually she comes to accept their judgment. She simply endures the humiliation and drastically curtails her emotional life.

The theme of oppression is further developed through the character of Sofia, who faces traditional gender roles and severe consequences for doing so. Sofia is strong-willed and turns



down to be dependent, which leads to her being physically abused and imprisoned. Her story sheds light on the ways in which black women who combat societal tradition and expectations face severe punishment.

Humiliation is also a repeating theme in the novel. Characters such as Celie and Shug Avery are humiliated and shamed for their sexuality and non-conforming behavior. They are judged and ostracized by their societies because they do not adapt to the particular roles of women. This humiliation is a tool used to support social control and protect the existing power structures.

In spite of the pervasive oppression and humiliation, the novel also depicts the resilience and strength of the characters. Celie, Sofia, and Shug, among others, find ways to resist and assert their agency. Through their personal relationships and self-discovery, they challenge the oppressive forces and find empowerment.

The Color Purple explores the complex dynamics of power, oppression, and resilience in the lives of African-American women. It highlights the deep impact of systemic discrimination and the ways in which individuals overpass and resist oppressive structures.

To conclude, the clarity of female oppression in *The Color Purple* is undeniably perpetuated by men and it drives the silencing of women as well as constructs the roles they are expected to fulfill. The abusive treatment enforced by patriarchy in the name of female submission does not only give males the scepter of injustice but also prevents women from becoming mothers and wives as the patriarchal system expects. It also destroys the emotional connection between families at large. Injustice is the scepter of unrighteousness and a spear that pierces the souls of life carriers.

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