Chapter 1: Introduction

According to Encyclopedia Heritage is something which inherited from the ancestor.\(^1\) This word has many different meaning, including, natural Heritage, an inheritance of trees and plants and forest, ecology, landscape and farms, and various natural resources then there comes cultural heritage, the inheritance of physical artificial product and untouchable ascribes of a society or group and another significant Heritage is man-made Heritage of the tangible or non-physical things inherited, ancestral, biological inheritance of physical characteristics, Birth, something inherited because of the circumstances, time, or place of someone’s birth, the relationship between two separate entities that share a biological origin. People show their identity by their color and tradition, and ancestral heritage.\(^2\) This is best depicted in novels of Alice Walker, ‘The Color Purple’ Where Celie’s characters, Nettie’s character and of Shug Avery are visualized different skills, philosophies, and qualities on life. While penetrating in the novels of Alice Walker we come across the theme of heritage and human identity almost at every phase throughout the novels. Taking into consideration her novels visualize the picture of dominant American white society and white people because of them blacks have been depraved from their own identities and this is major barrier in the path of the progress of blacks or African-American people. Thus, all these following chapters represent the significant of the title of the thesis and pursue the theme of heritage and human identity.
1.1 Biography

On 9 February, 1944 Alice Malsenior Walker novelist, story writer, poet and feminist born, in Eatonton, Georgia. Alice Walker is praised writers in literature of African-American. Alice Walker studied at Spelman College, Sarah Lawrence College and Atlanta, New York, then. She worked as a teacher, social worker and lecturer and also participated in the 1960s civil rights movement in Mississippi. She’s also an acclaimed essayist and poet.

The book was later made into a successful film, which describes the story of two black sisters in the segregated world of Deep South.

1.2 Authors Chronology

Later novels of Alice Walker’s are possessed, similarly she wrote and The Temple of My Familiar. Walker also wrote volumes of essays and short stories, which also shows her art of writing.

Alice Walker, the youngest child of Minnie and Willie Lee Walker of eighth children. Walker parents were very poor and in extreme penury and sharecroppers. Alice brought up in such circumstances of racial discrimination.

In the summer of 1952, in that Walker had to suffer permanent eye damage and bit facial disfigurement. She was 14, but her vision in that eye could never be recovered.

In 1961 after completion her graduation, where she could get a scholarship in Atlanta. At Spelman she took part in civil rights
demonstrations. Walker was called on Martin Luther King and Jr.'s home in 1962 at the time of her ending freshman year, with gaining the other recognition of another invitation she had got opportunity to attend Helsinki, Finland Youth World Peace Festival in Helsinki, Finland. After attending the conference she then roamed throughout Europe over the summer. Walker participated in The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August 1963 where she heard King's I Have A Dream speech.⁴

After passing two years at Spelman, Walker again gained a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College in New York, which she did accept it. She was one of very few young blacks got to attend the prestigious school. Walker has got guidance from poet Muriel Rukeyser as well as writer Jane Cooper.⁵ Her mentors helped her a lot to stimulate her interest and talent in writing, encouraging her to write poems that eventually published in her first volume of poetry, Once (1968). In her later year, Alice Walker was suffering from extreme disappointment and depression, most as concerned to her having become pregnant. She decided to commit suicide and at that time she kept a razor blade under her pillow. Walker has also written several volumes of poetry in attempts to explain her thoughts, feelings.⁶ With one of her friends help, she made a safe abortion. While getting recover, Walker wrote a short story aptly titled To Hell with dying these short stories Rukeyser sent the story to publishers as well as to poet Langston Hughes. That the story was published, and Alice Walker got a note which was in the form of handwritten of encouragement from Hughes.

Always as a creative activist, Alice Walker 1965 following her graduation participated in the civil rights movement. She first started door-to-door campaigning in Georgia and encouraged the people for voter registration, but later very soon she went to New York City and started working in the department of city welfare. At that time she won a coveted writing fellowship to the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference.
After returning to Mississippi in the summer of 1966, there she met Mel Eventual a Jewish civil rights law student named. They got married soon then and moved back to Mississippi. They might be the first interracial couple in Mississippi and consequently, had to deal with incessant flow of violence and murderous threats from the Ku Klux Klan. Alice again got pregnant (which saved Leventhal from the Vietnam draft) but sadly lost the child. 7

Though she was for civil rights, Alice sought time to write. Her essay The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It? Getting inspiration from winning this award, she applied for and won a writing fellowship to the prestigious MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire.

Thereafter Walker accepted a teacher profession at Jackson University. While there she published once her first novel The Third Life of Grange Copeland, it was published in the same week in which her daughter Rebecca Grant was born. This work of Walker received great literary praise and also got criticism from many African American critics, who considered that her book influenced too harshly with the black male characters. 8 Walker disputed these sorts of claims, but she continued to subsequent writing to dramatize the suppression of women.

After accepting a fellowship from the Radcliffe Walker took off from career when she moved from Tougaloo College Institute. Again she adopted a teaching position at Wellesley College in 1972, where she found a women’s literature course, one of the first women’s studies courses in the nation,. Then in 1976 she published her second novel, Meridian, which narrates struggles of a young woman during the civil rights movement.

Around the same time, she took divorce from Leventhal. Reflecting on the divorce in 2000, her daughter Rebecca published a candid memoir criticizing the self-absorption of both of her parents at that time.
Novel Meridian earned such acclaim that Walker adopted a Guggenheim Fellowship to focus full-time on her work of writing. She left to San Francisco, and when she came California she fell in love with Robert Allen, who was the editor of Black Scholar. Then they moved in Mendocino to the home, where she spent her full-time in writing and soon published You Can’t Keep a Good Woman Down her second book of short stories.\(^9\)

In 1982 she wrote an epistolary novel, The Color Purple about the life of a poor black woman named Celie. Her most popular novel for this book, Walker won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983 and the American Book Award. Critics again alleged Alice Walker of portraying black men too harshly. Subsequently The Color Purple was soon made into a picture which produced by Quincy Jones and director of that picture was Steven Spielberg. When the film on her novel premiered in her hometown of Eatonton, she received a parade in her honor. Even her elder sister Ruth created The Color Purple Foundation to give an inspiration charitable task for education.

Walker later published her third volume of poetry in 1984, Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful. Similarly in 1988 her second book of essays, Living By the Word, also was published, and in 1989 Alice Walker published her epic novel The Temple of My Familiar.

The later novel, The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult of Alice Walker, deals with her growing apprehension that she might be bisexual. Later, in a 2006 interview conducted by The Guardian, Walker exposed her affair with Tracy Chapman in the mid-1990s, depicting it as delicious and lovely and wonderful...but [it was] not anybody’s business but ours.\(^{10}\)

Walker soon started to write about politics as she became more politically active in her writings. Her nonfiction book ‘Anything we Love
Can Be Saved, It was her Activism (1997) which contains number of essays inspired by her political activism. This also contains her activities in the civil rights movement as well as the anti-nuclear movement similarly the environmental movement, bringing awareness in women the women’s movement, and lastly the movement to protect indigenous peoples.

The most vital characteristic of Alice Walker's work is her own experiences. Many evidences can be made between Walker’s personal life and her characters, and her sentimental intimacy with her mesmerizing creation breathes life into her work for each and new reader.

1.3 Objectives

1) To explore and analyze Heritage and Human Identity in the novels of Alice Walker who received an unprecedented attention at the black men and women in birth, race, sex, class, creed and color.

2) To analyze how the humans get identity due to birth, color, race runs strongly through the novels, and how it has a multilayered scheme and various kinds of levels.

3) Another important objective is to show how the works under study not only reinforce opposition to dominant ideologies of gender, class, race, nation, religion, but also gives gestures of defiance and subversion.

4) To discuss the relationship between individual quests for identity in Alice Walker’s novels.
5) To analyze the connections between postmodern and pre-modern in the novels of Alice Walker.

6) To show how Alice Walker used human communities in her Novels.

7) To define postmodern narrative, transgendered identity, and Heritage in all of Alice Walker’s novels.

8) To analyze how Alice Walker tried to separate myths about womanhood from lived realities.

1.4 Research and Methodology

The proposed research work for Ph. D would follow the methodology for the thesis, to find Heritage and Human Identity in the characters and theme in Alice Walker’s novels.

The analysis of the novels would be done step by step:

- Understanding of the novels
- Interpretation of the novels.
- Personal analysis and responses addressing the topic – Heritage and Human Identity.
- A search for the universal nature of problems experienced by woman.
A search to find traces of autobiographical elements in the novels.

A search for similar or different approaches to Heritage and Human Identity in characters in the novels of Alice Walker and emergence of a different symbolism in the same.

1.5 Scope


1.6 Limitations

On the first hand we can see that though In her entire career along with novels she wrote many articles, short stories, children literature, plays, short fiction, nonfiction etc. In these works I have selected some novels
Significance:

Heritage is an important part of a person’s life. It tells the person where it came and helps the person reach its destiny. In the novels of Alice Walker we see Heritage and Identity in real sense and her openness in revealing personal experiences. People identify themselves by their color, language or religion. The identity goes back to generations and it doesn’t start or change within the individual. It is an evolutionary process each person brings upon some changes. This is best described in Alice Walker’s works throughout her novels.
REFERENCES


9) Saunders, Robert James,1988 Womanism as the Key to Understanding Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God and Alice Walker’s The Color