PREFACE

It was while attending a Refresher Course in English for College Teachers organized by the University Grants Commission at the Department of English, Mysore University, Mysore, I was introduced to the Afro-American women writers and in particular to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The plight of black women and their struggle to voice their sufferings drew me to Alice Walker's other works. I was particularly impressed by her 'womanism' and concern for Southern heritage. Her protagonists try to seek self-identity and they emerge from the context of oppression to asserting their rights. A clear picture of the plight and growth of the Afro-American women emerges from her writings. From the position of 'objects' the black women strive to reach the level of 'subjects'. It is a challenging proposition to trace the evolution of the black women's growth from their being treated as 'mules' to Maya Angelou reciting her stirring verses at the Clinton Inaugural and Toni Morrison receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature. The result is this study which traces the journey of the black women towards wholeness.
I am thankful to a number of people who have helped me in seeing this work to completion. I wish to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Sujatha Vijayaraghavan whose patience, sense of commitment, encouragement and motivation have been invaluable to me in the completion of my work.

To Dr. P. Marudanayagam, Professor and Head of the Department of English, Pondicherry University, I am no less grateful for his valuable insights and kind cooperation in all matters. His gentleness and quiet constraint have very much influenced my work.

To all the other faculty members, my fellow Ph.D. Scholars and members of the Research Club, I owe a debt. They gave a forum to assay my thesis and helped me with their questions, suggestions and constructive criticism.

I acknowledge with thanks the help rendered by the secretarial and office staff of the department. I thank the Librarians of the Pondicherry University and Bharathidasan Government College For Women, Pondicherry.

I place on record my sincere thanks to Department of Education, Government of Pondicherry for sanctioning my study leave for two years from July 1992. I am grateful to the Principal, Arignar Anna Government Arts College, Karaikal for
all his support and help and I thank my dear colleagues in
the Department of English of the same college, who cheerfully
shared my departmental work during the period of my study
leave. I am also equally grateful to Mr. P.V.Bindu Madhava
Rao, Principal, Tagore Arts College, Pondicherry for all his
support and help.

I am all praise for the Director and Library Staff of
the American Studies Research Center whose all-out
cooperation has enriched my research experience. I am
thankful to them for awarding me the Teachers Research Grant.

To Mr. Murali Natarajan, M.Tech., M.B.A. in States for
sending periodically materials on Alice Walker, I am extreme-
ly indebted.

To Mrs. Dra. Ny. S. Partiwi Arianto Djuneo Pusponeeoro
of Jakarta for having sent the latest novel of Alice Walker,
I am extremely grateful.

My special thanks to Miss. C.P.Prasitha, Miss. Anju
Nair and Mr. C.J.Davees for sharing my burden and helping me
in the final count down days before the submission of this
thesis.
I thank Dr. R. Alalasundaram of CITY COMPUTERS, Pondicherry for his unstinted co-operation and for carefully typing the draft night and day, thus helping me finish my work in time.

Finally, I thank the members of my family whose love and affection have been my forte.

(C.V. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN)