Chapter – 2

CELEBRATION OF SELF
I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
I loaf and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

These celebrating lines of the representative American poet Walt Whitman’s famous poem “Songs of Myself” may be assumed as the echo of the characters of Alice Walker, who know how to celebrate their self worth and reborn even after being uprooted by the twice jeopardy of racism and sexism. This is the song of celebration of all those black fighters, who fought and destroyed but never accepted defeat. At every step of their lives, they not only celebrated their triumphs and spring days but also had the courage to celebrate every blow, sigh and trauma. They revealed the secret that, only by recognizing their self-identity, they can overcome every hardship and transform the autumn into spring.

Self-means consciousness or one’s own unique identity. In Jungian theory, the self is one of archetypes. It signifies the coherent whole, unified consciousness and unconsciousness of a person. There are many aspects of self. It has a sense of unity
despite the multitude of sense impressions and beliefs. In addition it has a sense of continuity in time, of being in control of its actions, of being anchored in a body, a sense of its worth, dignity and morality. Each of these aspects of self may be meditated by different centers in different parts of the brain and it’s only for convenience that we lump them together in a single word and that is ‘self’.

If we talk about Celebration, it is an honoring and reverence for the gifts of life. Celebration often marks a time of birth and completion. To feel complete is an ultimate expression of gratitude that opens doorways to the new world. In this way, by celebrating ourselves we honor the path we are on, we welcome the new creative possibilities in, and we open the doorways to manifestation. As we celebrate we tap in to the raw creative energy that the universe is made of, and here we allow grander potentials to come dancing in our life. Basically, celebrating loosens the constraints when we are feeling stuck or becoming too serious about life. It releases us from the bondage of our own self-created prison and reminds us of the joy to be experienced through playful discovery, ease of expression, and the enjoyment of the being. Celebrating relaxes us in to our self, while creating the space for natural and joyous expression. Celebration at its core is about discovering meaning, and counting our blessings, not our woes. And the characters of the novels of Walker know that celebration has less to do with circumstances than approach to life. It does not happen to them, they make it happen. They know that each of them is the creator of his own thought and state of mind. This does not mean ignoring the often-painful reality of what happens, but understanding that they can choose their response to something at any given moment. And this is the reason that they celebrate themselves even in the worst conditions of life.
Celebration of self basically is a state of mind, a feeling of liberty, sublimity and empowerment as a famous American poet Gretchen Roth beautifully describes this state of mind in his Internet poem, “Celebration of Self”

_Chain me and I’ll feel free;_

_My thoughts will not feel the steel links._

_Cage me and put me at the mercy of onlookers_

_And I will feel peace; I’ve claimed myself._

_Send me sailing the world_

_And sink my ship at the end,_

_And I will accept; I have Been._

Thus celebration of self is a consciousness. It is the nature of creation coming alive inside us. It is the realization that we are grand and powerful creators and life is our canvas for creating. Celebration of self is about authentic expression. It is about expressing our inner beauty and essence through our creations in a joyful and colorful celebration. It is radiance of self and acceptance of self into abundance overflowing. Actually celebration of self is a giving and receiving, the all life dance of our soul, an expression of love to us, and our compassion for all life. Coupled with a feeling of heartfelt gratitude or many blessings of life, for all of the richness and variety of colors in our life. It is about living our joys and sharing those joys with others. It is about opening up and experiencing our unlimited creative potential. It is an ever-expanding journey of self-discovery through our creations and an allowing our true self to shine through.
This fest of self-celebration exists in every novel of Walker, and presents a strong reply to every attack based on discriminations of color and sex. This hope, strength and celebration in the novels of Walker leaves us with the golden rays of new dawn after a dark and stormy night and affirms our faith in ourselves, in God and in every part of this creation. Thus Walker’s novels narrate black heroism, spirit and will to face, fight and overcome every thunder of white cultural hegemony. To save their culture, tradition and existence, which was subjugated but couldn’t be uprooted became a kind of celebration for these Afro-American people. And this very celebration transformed them from victims to fighters, defeated to winners and suppressed to ideal role models of coming black generations. And when the readers begin to realize with these characters that; “…it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don’t notice it,” (The Color Purple 203) they also become the part of this celebration unknowingly. Walker concludes her novels with a celebration of life and transformation of characters in new incarnations as people who love to embrace and salute life, a beautiful life provided by the supreme power to the human beings.

This saga of survival and liberation from a cultural hegemony and patriarchal system begins to reflect from the very first novel of Walker, The Third Life of Grange Copeland. Mainly in this novel she describes the economic oppression black people faced under the sharecropping system and its tragic effects on black family and black community. Here Walker seems to put a question, that to what degree blacks themselves have been responsible for their own victimization by the white power structures, which destroyed their dignity and dreams. She also explores the intersection of racism and sexism in the oppression of Afro-American families, depicting black men who vent their
anger and frustration not on whites who exploited them, but on their helpless wives and children. Here both male characters Grange and Brownfield Copeland try to prove their manliness through methods endorsed by white patriarchy, through assertion of power on women, in the form of sexual conquest and wife abuse.

Basically this is a story of Grange Copeland, a man who lives a life full of degradation and oppression by accepting it as a natural state. However because of some extraordinary changes, he made in his life, he is able to break out of the rut of socially and personally accepted oppression, and changes his life for the better. Walker’s message, shown through the progression of Grange’s thought and action, is that, it is possible for human beings to lift themselves out of their constraints to make a change so drastic that they become seemingly different people and thus celebrate their existence.

Whereas on one hand, this is the saga of the journey of Grange Copeland from powerlessness to empowerment, on the other hand this shows us a mirror to the struggle of the black community as a whole under the racist and sexist society. And the worst sufferers in this colonization are the triply burdened and disadvantaged black women. They are black, female and economically underprivileged. Triple burden restricts them from a fuller and meaningful participation in American society. As a result they suffer as blacks amongst the blacks, slaves of the slaves and are forced to occupy a very demeaning place in the American social life. Their humanity and the black female identity are denied not only by whites but also by their own people. This makes them feel insignificant, faceless, subservient and helpless. The main reason for their sexual exploitation is the racial exploitation of their male counterparts. Once the white man established his domination over the black through his ideology of race superiority,
cultural hegemony, the black man’s notion of his own ‘self’ got completely eroded. This loss of selfhood traumatically affected his psyche, and this very feeling of insecurity forced him to colonize his helpless women in order to show his male superiority.

In spite of facing twofold affliction these women of Walker, display strength, endurance and resourcefulness in confronting and overcoming oppressions in their lives. This very spirit of survival, victory and liberation of black women is reflected in this novel from Margret to Ruth Copeland. Margret tries to revolt against the tyranny of Grange by establishing relationship with the white master. But she couldn’t continue it for long and was suppressed to the point of suicide. The humiliation of Grange at the hands of his white master, and his feeling of insecurity does not allow him to bow to his wife, the only creature to tolerate his domination. Margret and her son Brownfield are forced to play submissive roles to make up for Grange’s feeling of lack of manhood, around Shipley in particular and whites in general. Brownfield states that, “his mother was like their dog in some ways. She didn’t have a thing to say that did not … show her submission to his father”(6). But deep down like every black man Grange knows, that abusing his family only hurts him and his family. When the things become impossible to bear for him, he flees to North in search of peace, love and self-identity.

Quiet different from Margaret, Mem next victim of male brutality, does not commit suicide. She tries hard to help her family out of poverty, but she is forced by her husband to move from one shack to another. She is a self-conscious black woman, who fights like a lioness to keep her family intact. It is only the spirit of self-recognition and dignity, which does not allow her to be submissive neither to male nor to white supremacy. With the changing behavior of her lover cum husband Brownfield, she also
begins to penetrate in to her womanish consciousness. Consequently survival of the whole became important to her; she tries to grab power from Brownfield as the head of the family and decides to raise the standard of family according to her own planning. But whenever she makes an effort to register a voice, her husband crushes it because he has the power of a man, as he says to her “...I may not be able to read and write but I am still the man that wears the pants in this outfit”(87). Mem reveals the agony and anger of every black woman, when suffering becomes intolerable for her as she answers to the ego of her husband:

“Let me tell you something, man...I have worked hard all my life, first trying to be something and then just trying to be. It’s over for me now, but if you think I wont hardly then ever before to support these children, you ain’t only mean and evil and lazy as the devil, but you are a fool”(125).

Mem is the representative of every victim of race and sex, who faced every thunder with brave hearts; who fought, were destroyed but never accepted defeat. Thus Mem unconsciously becomes a pioneer of black female community, a revealer and a messenger to show a ray of hope to the black women at the cost of her own annihilation.

Josie is yet another black woman, who creates her own world and celebrates her life in her own way. After being driven out from her own house by her father, an example of male domination; Josie becomes her own guide and torchbearer to enlighten her path amid the dark sea of racism and sexism. She works hard, earns money to buy a piece of land and to establish her in this male made society. It is very ironical that Josie, the victim of male brutality provides shelter to both leading male characters of the novel Grange Copeland and Brownfield Copeland. She creates economic security for herself and her daughter Lorene. However, once she is involved with Grange, she begins to lose
everything including her Dew Drop Inn. She is reduced to washing clothes for whites and blacks to earn her food. She loses her self worth and becomes vulnerable and dependent on others. Thus, like all other Copeland women, she too becomes a victim. However all of them do fight valiantly against their operative circumstances. They fight not only for themselves but also for their families, which indicate their womanish consciousness. These women characters of Walker present before us a picture of black woman, who discovers her self worth in spite of so many odds.

While Brownfield is a terrifying example of how, South can physically enslave and spiritually cripple black people, his daughter Ruth’s story offers another picture of considerable hope. She is able to leave the South, rejecting the racist world that destroyed her father. She moves towards a larger freer world that offers her fresh possibilities. Even though, Ruth spends her formative years in the same environment that poisoned her father, she is able to protect herself with a number of antidotes. Whereas Brownfield’s life travels a deterministic circle of futility (all his efforts to gain physical and emotional distance from racist South fail), Ruth is existential in outlook. It involves a process of awakening and liberation. Like the slave narratives, which Walker has described as a part of a literary tradition where “escape for the body and freedom for the soul went together” *(ISMG 5)*, Ruth’s is a flight from twentieth century form of Southern bondage. Her consciousness distilled all that is good in her Southern black traditions and allows her to imagine a broader world beyond the South. As a result, she is able to create “a way out of no way” and thus to celebrate her existence.

A crucial part of her liberation is contained in the fact that she does not grow up in the kind of spiritual and emotional vacuum that blighted Brownfield’s life. The main
cause behind the celebration of Ruth is her mother whom she comes to regard as a saint, someone who makes heroic efforts to meet her human needs. Mem provides Ruth a powerful role model, for she is a woman who maintains her human dignity in a dehumanizing environment. And this triumph, transition and celebration are not of Ruth alone but in real sense it is the celebration and empowerment of Mem, and of every black woman, who was once crushed under the heavy feet of gender superiority.

This very wind of spring, celebration, liberation and empowerment blows in a strong way in the life of Grange Copeland and reminds us a beautiful and optimistic line of the famous Romantic poet P.B. Shelley, that; "if winter comes can spring be far behind"("Ode to The West Wind"). And this spring enters in the life of Grange very strongly after the entry of Ruth his beloved granddaughter in his life. From the moment of her birth, Grange sees Ruth as unique and beautiful, someone who almost magically appears in the midst of an environment, which is harsh and ugly. Marveling at Ruth as a newborn child, he exclaims, “Out of all kinds of shit comes something soft, clean and sweet smellin”(70). From this point on Grange dedicates himself to protect Ruth from the foulness of Southern environment. This transformation from a destroyer to patron happens in his life by committing his self to nurture that, which is sweet and clean in her.

Ruth finds a place in Grange’s heart. Like the women of the past, Ruth is the catalyst of Grange’s transition that leads him to an opposite conclusion from previous one. Grange Copeland’s first life powerfully reinforces the bleak pessimistic vow of the South implicit in Brownfield’s narrative and his second life is very similar in certain ways to Ruth’s story- it is a flight from the slavery of the segregated South. On the other
hand his third life contains an important element missing in the other two narratives; his remarkable return to the South, which regenerates him as a human being.

In returning to Baker country, Grange achieves his “total triumph over life’s failures” (136). Grange creates a new place for him to reborn as other human being by transforming the racist society, which has withered Brownfield in to a genuine home that nurtures Ruth. Thus Grange attains this truly heroic status by a three-part journey, involving the leaving of a settled known world; experiencing the life in an unknown world; and the returning home with a new mode of consciousness, which transforms his life and the life of others. As his name suggests, he is able to cope with his land so that he can make a grange or farm, which will nourish him and others. Whereas early in the book, Grange seems devoid of any emotion except that of bewilderment and later in the middle of the book, turned blind by nearly demonic hatred of the whites, finally becomes a fully developed, even heroic person, because of his recovery of the home in black south.

At this phase of life, he also begins to doubt his hate philosophy. Towards the end of the novel he says to Ruth: “I know the danger of putting all the blame on somebody else for the mess you make out of your life. I felt into trap myself” (288). His acceptance of this love theory indicates his entry into the celebration of life and his transformation from a selfish hated victim of race to a selfless and loving grandfather. Thus Grange’s third life, when fully realized, was selfless and heroic as he wished his other two had been.

Here it is important to consider, what Walker is trying to say in the novel. Grange’s first life is filled with oppression, both on his part and on the part of others, and
it is fully accepted by him and those around him. It takes extraordinary circumstances and a great act of will on his part to overcome it. Grange did not become good in a day, but it was gradual recognition and reestablishments of one’s own self. It took years to reveal the love, humanity and sympathy deeply suppressed in a deep corner of his heart, because of racial discrimination. Thus the story of Grange is the story of every black man, who was a victim of white culture and crushed and beaten but couldn’t be defeated. He took rebirth to launch his ship to the voyage of life and to celebrate every moment of it.

Similar to her first novel, Walker’s next work *Meridian* is also a saga of celebration of one’s own self and recognition of one’s own identity. Meridian is about the female protagonist by the same name who gradually awakens from her subordinate status as a black, female, daughter, wife and mother to her own self and tries to become the maternal provider of the large black community. Every effort of Meridian leads her towards celebration. Because celebration is not the only name of triumph or achieving the destination, but to enjoy every effort and to face every pain bravely in this journey is also a way of celebration.

In fact Meridian’s quest for wholeness and her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement is initiated by her feelings of inadequacy in living up to the standards of black motherhood. She understands what it is to be a mother by knowing her own mother and then again by becoming the mother of Eddie’s child. Unable to forgive those who failed to warn her against procreating the children, Meridian’s pregnancy and birth of Eddie Junior ends up in her giving him up for adoption. After her divorce from Eddie, her adolescent husband, she reveals her guilt for not living up to the high standards of black motherhood, as her mother embodies. She realizes that she is responsible “for shattering
her mother’s emerging self”(51) during her childhood. The feeling that she has been a part of her mother’s slavery coincides with her own feelings as a young mother that motherhood is indeed slavery. Thus Meridian realizes that a mother in this society is often “buried alive, walled away from her own life, brick by brick”(51).

Basically, Meridian does not object to children, or mother’s bearing children, but to the role, a woman is expected to play once by becoming a mother. According to this role, a mother particularly the black mother should sacrifice her individual personality and concerns in order to live for her children. Unfortunately, the only way Meridian can escape from this unwanted role is to leave her child and family, and accepting her own mother’s disapprobation in the process.

Meridian rejects the nice role of the happy mother, recognizing that happiness is merely an empty sign that accompanies the equally empty role of young pregnant wife. In the chapter entitled ‘The Happy Mother’, happiness does not apply in any way to the emotional state but the conventional association of happiness with motherhood and precludes her ability to state otherwise.

When Meridian says no to motherhood, she offends and loses her own mother, her family and her community. She feels guilty for leaving her child, and cannot adequately explain why she must. By shedding her prescribed happy mother role and standing up for her own needs, Meridian takes the first step towards “becoming a revolutionary petunia”(2). She stops living according to the norms established by racial and sexual society, learns to discover her own identity, as she must in order to survive.
And this discovery is her first rebellious step in order to launch her voyage towards self-celebration.

From this very point Meridian begins to ponder on giving some meaning to her life as an individual. More powerfully she is awakened to her true self the moment, she learns about Civil Rights Movement. Trapped in her own lethargy and lack of direction, Meridian had no idea how to break through her state. But by the grace of God a bomb blast does, what the community and family have failed to do. Provoked by this violence, she longs to become a volunteer. She protests along with the other volunteers against the town’s segregated hospital facilities and participates in the freedom march to the church, in singing freedom songs and keeping a midnight vigil. In a melee the police knock her down, and she is trampled by the people running back and forth. The sheriff, representative of both gender and race discrimination grabs her by the hair and someone begins punching her and kicking her in the back. However she does not even scream except very intensely in her own mind.

Her participation in this movement and her decision to sacrifice her life for her people is also a kind of celebration of black spirit, potentialities and strong will power. She keeps her journey continued and moves further in her life with firm steps on the path of salvation. Her participation in this movement brings to her a scholarship for her further studies at Saxon college, sponsored by a generous and wealthy white family. Here she becomes well familiar with the world and with its ways. At this place she met Truman Held, a black revolutionary. Gradually this unknown person turned into a passionate lover of Meridian only to deceive her. Truman, a staunch supporter of black people’s
right and advocate of protecting the virtue of black women from white men in his actual life, oppresses the black woman as much as the whites do.

Meridian similar to Mem falls in love with a male of her own community in search of some soothing balm but unfortunately in return gets only deception. For these black women of Walker, love makes their life horrible and more painful. About Walker’s concept of love says Pamela Smith in her Internet essay “Green Lap, Brown Embrace, Blue Body: The Eco Spirituality of Alice Walker”, as she writes: “Love as much as Walker celebrates it, is never an uncomplicated garden of earthly delights, mystic, romantic lush. It is rather, learned, often fought for, and birthed in pain.”

Like many other males, Truman gifts to Meridian, her second pregnancy only to leave her for a white girl Lynne. True/man called ‘True’ by Lynne, is in fact quite false; a black would-be revolutionary who loves to dress black and speak French. He paints strong black women, earth, mothers, yet he finds himself attracted to white virgins. Meridian notes that despite his revolutionary slogans and liberal education, Truman wants a quite little helper that will look good, while hanging on his arm. Truman did not want a woman who tried to claim her own life. She knew, Truman would have liked her better as she had been as Eddie’s wife “an attractive woman but asleep.”(110) This humiliation faced by Meridian is the part of every black woman’s life that is cheated and deceived by her own lover, brother husband and father.

But Meridian is not an ordinary girl; she is too independent to be the clinging vine, Truman desires. Her reaction to Truman’s interest in white woman is like that of many young black women in the Civil Rights Movement. Not only did they feel like Meridian they were “less”, many also feel extremely bitter and hostile towards white
women. Like many other revolutionary black women Meridian has managed to escape the symbolic death of being killed by patriarchal standards and petrified into a perfect woman, leaving behind the phrases produced by male domination as ‘Devoted Wife’, ‘Obedient Daughter’ and ‘Adoring Mother’. She even goes a step further and escapes becoming ‘Enchanted Lover’ to Truman’s ‘Conquering Prince’. Meridian not only fights for her celebration but also struggles for the celebration of all her people; victims of the poisonous afflictions of racism and sexism. But her way to struggle with these traumas of color and sex is different from the general norms. Like Walker Meridian is also a follower of weaving a quilt with love, passion and togetherness for all long suffering people. She gives us a message that it is only through love, peace and nonviolence that we can transform the slavery in to liberty, and hell in to heaven. Though, initially Meridian agrees with her friends “nonviolence has failed to Revolution.”(31) She would prefer to die in spite of willingness to kill anybody for freedom. She knows that it may be necessary to kill to free black and poor people but she can’t imagine a society created through bloodsheds and dead bodies and the celebration achieved with violence. Both Walker and her creation Meridian follow Martin Luther King Jr. who says that in using violence a person risks “loosing …(their) soul.”(King 25) About this victory of nonviolence and peace over violence and hatred, a well-known musician of USA, John Denver writes in his Internet poem “Peace”:

“Yes there still is time to turn around
And make all hatred cease
Let's give another name to living
And we can call it peace”.

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Unable to kill, Meridian offers herself as a martyr for her people’s salvation. Shortly after each march that she leads, Meridian loses consciousness and becomes paralyzed. She is ready to die for her people, because she feels unworthy to live like a slave. But gradually transformation takes place in her from victim to a responsible leader. Now she no longer needs to punish herself physically, have fits and go blind because she acts for her people. At this phase of life, she learns to value her own life, and find a community to live with rather than a company of names to be listed among.

Thus Meridian refuses martyrdom and chooses to live when she is able to see her connection with her own counterparts, as famous critic of Walker Thodious M. Davis, remarks about this celebration of Meridian in his essay, “Alice Walker’s Celebration of Self in Southern Generations,”, “By the end of the novel, Meridian’s personal identity has become a collective identity…. In spite of her painful private experiences, Meridian is born anew into a pluralistic cultural self, a “we” that is and must be self-less and without ordinary prerequisites for personal identity”(39-53).

Basically this novel not only chronicles the celebration and the journey of Meridian alone but also of many other characters who celebrate their existence and uplift their souls. As Lynne a white beloved turned wife of Truman, struggles with the racial and sexual prejudices in a very bitter and brutal way. She is raped by Tommy Odds a black friend of her husband, for being white and in order to pay back for the misdeeds of her ancestors. She sacrifices her community, identity and desires to be a part of that black society, which was exploited and made so by her own people. To soothe the burning bosom of these victims, she silently tolerates every abuse and harassment, because she thinks that, by surrendering herself to the anger of these poor black sufferers, she can pay...
compensation to their wounds. In return she only gets humiliation, infamy and loneliness. But it is only the celebrating attitude of Lynne that in spite of facing all these racial and sexual traumas, she does not repent or hate any of her exploiters. This very spirit of love, sacrifice established a bond of sisterhood between Lynne, a white and Meridian, a black woman.

Walker’s next Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Color Purple* in a very extraordinary way registers the plight of black woman and her strive towards acceptance, freedom, independence and self-celebration. Basically this novel is full of various colors, reflecting the color consciousness in a white society. This is a saga of the journey of Celie, a fourteen-year-old poor black and near illiterate girl who faces the physical and psychological exploitation from the very beginning of the story. Celie pours down misery of her pathetic heart or we can say her tears in her letters, first written to God and later to her dear sister Nettie, in the hope of some soothing balm for her burning bosom. Initially, we recognize her as a quite worthless and powerless victim of male dominated society, but from this very worthless and powerless condition, she begins her journey towards full empowerment, and transforms, from self-abnegation to self-recognition and self-celebration.

The journey of Celie starts as a child with the dark shadows of sexual harassment at the hand of her stepfather who uses her to satisfy his physical hunger. As a child every time, she keeps on receiving the fear, trauma and hallucination of those horrible moments when her later revealed step ‘pa’ repeatedly made her victim of his lust. She tolerates every blow mutely even without sharing it with her mother because of the threat of her
father, “You’d better tell nobody but God; it’d kill your Mammy”(2). This sentence foregrounds a dominant patriarchal oppression that every black woman faces in her own home. And this very discrimination and abuse of gender, alienates black women from other women. Same thing happens in the life of poor Celie, who finds herself quiet alone because no one is there to soothe, pacify and to show her the rays of new sun after dark night of sexism and recalls us the bitter but true saying of Walker that “…how alone woman is because of her body”(ISMG 248). But similar to Meridian she has strength, stamina and tolerating power to bear every thunder without making a complaint, and turns herself into wood.

This is only the celebration of suffering and pain that provides her the strength to survive and to bloom even amid the thrones. Her father works like an agent of male domination and sexual abuse who sells Celie like an object to Mr. Albert another agent of patriarchal society to maintain his household and his uncivilized children. To get rid of Celie, her father trades her off to Mr. Albert, a widower with five children. Her father introduced her to this man in the way a cow dealer would introduce a cow. He informs him: “She ugly… But she is not any stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her .You can do every thing just like you want to and she is not goanna make you feed it or clothe it”(9).

Celie accepts her bargaining, to save her dear sister Nettie from the evil eye of Albert and to escape her self from her the sexual abuses. But, this is the irony of her life that the marriage, which was a way to escape from her cruel father, has thrown her in to another ditch of male brutality. Her husband treats her as a slave. He thinks that, “Wives
is like children. You have let’em know, who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating”(37).

To be a wife means for him is to be submissive, subordinate, and obedient, and a punch bag for the man. Celie turns herself into wood and bears every blow passively. She does not know, how to fight and hit back, but only thing she knows is to stay alive, which is sufficient for her. On the advise of Kate, sister of Mr. Albert, “You got to fight them, Celie…I can’t do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself”, Celie questions the validity of fighting and reveals her strategy of life, “I don’t fight, I stay where I am told, but I am alive” (22).

If we minutely study this strategy of Celie, we shall find that even to stay alive; to survive in worst conditions is not less then a triumph for Celie. She is beaten, destroyed but not defeated at the hands of circumstances. She not even a single time thinks about giving up her life in order to escape from the harsh realities of the life because she is not a coward. She has the sense of belongingness with every part of this Universe and decides to live with it.

It is said that time never remains the same, it keeps on fleeting rapidly like the flow of water and undoubtedly after every night comes a day and every tear is followed by a smile. This rising of a new sun also takes place in the life of Celie, with the arrival of Sofia, the wife of her step son Harpo and specially Shug, the beloved of her husband who becomes a pole star for Celie’s wandering bark amid the whirlpool of racial and sexual hallucinations.

These are the women who bring her out of her shell and help her to turn from shy withdrawn woman to someone who is free to speak her mind and lead her own
independent life. Thus Celie enters into her celebration by establishing a bond of sisterhood with her counterparts like Sofia, Nettie, Shug, Squeak and others.

Basically, through Celie Walker conveys the importance of being united and to create a bond among the victims to fight with the tyranny. Walker assumes the possibility of celebration and empowerment of the black women only in their bond of sisterhood. And we can also observe that triumph, victory and joy in the life of the women characters in the novel is the result of this womanish theory of Walker, in which a woman of color loves, supports and leads others by becoming a part of her sisters pains, sorrows and as well as of their celebration. In this way celebration of one becomes directly or indirectly the cause of the celebration of others. First of all Celie sees in Sofia, a woman, who is not a slave to anybody and who does not depend on a man for maintaining her existence in this world, not a victim of circumstances but a controller of circumstances. Sofia’s hitting back to racial and sexual tyranny, unknowingly convinces Celie that black women suffer not because of any inbuilt disability and faults in them but because of their being women not men, being black not white and overall a lack of the will to fight for their own life. When Celie says to Sofia: “This life soon be over, I say. Heaven last always”, Sofia, replies: “You aught to bash Mr. head open …think about Heaven later”(47). This spirit of revolt may be assumed and defined as the celebration of a woman’s self existence and self-respect.

This celebration in the life of Sofia Butler never takes a holiday even in the dark shadows of twice yoked burden of racism and sexism. She celebrates her black identity by hitting back the white Mayor’s wife who treats her like a slave. Although as a
consequence, she suffers a lot and her pathetic condition in the prison makes us identify with the sufferings of poor black women discriminated on the base of their dark color.

No doubt, the Mayor and his men defeat Sofia, but she represents the black woman, who is ready to face any battle for the protection of her dignity. Sofia’s revolution is thus the celebration of the black spirit and enthusiasm. Though she does not succeed in her struggle, it provides her an opportunity to display her fortitude and ability to transcend her racist and sexist circumstances. Her varying responses to her environment illustrate the need for the development of black society, which allows for an individual to define one’s meaningful existence. Her tit for tat attitude towards her husband Harpoe, teaches Celie a lesson not to submit to the jeopardy of male domination.

Another example of woman empowerment in this novel is Shug Avery, the procreator of real happiness and celebration in the life of Celie. Shug is the perfect example of Walker’s womanish theory. In her life, neither she bows to patriarchy nor to the racial superiority. She becomes her own path maker and leads her life in her own way. It is Shug, who celebrates every moment of her life and also encourage others to do so. The arrival of Shug in the house of Mr. Albert is allegorically the arrival of color purple: the color of love, happiness and triumph in the life of Celie. It is through Shug that Celie learns to see the world differently, as well as to redefine God and traditional religion that she has grown up with. Initially Celie has bitterness for God for not listening to her and says that, “The God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other men I know. Trifling, forgetful and low down”(199). But it is Shug who changes her definition of God and makes her familiar with a new God, who does not require church going, singing in the choir or feeding the preacher. The God is ‘it’ not
‘he’, ‘not one but many’, in fact “everything that is or ever was or ever will be. And when you can feel that or be happy to feel that, you have found it”(202). She further tells that, this is the God that is inside you and inside everybody else. Knowing him brings the feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all.

Besides this, Shug also assumes the role of Celie’s protector when she hears about the bitter experiences of Celie’s married life, as says Celie; “He beats me when you not there…for being me not you”(78-79). Celie also discovers the wonders of her body, the very body that was once a cause of her plight, loneliness and helplessness, under the guidance of her dear friend Shug. Her love and warm affection works as a soothing balm for the burning bosom of long suffering Celie, always deprived of love, support and compassion.

So all these bonds of Celie with her counterparts like Sofia, Shug and her sister Nettie make her feel that now she is not a slave to anybody. She is capable to lead her life and hit back to her exploiters in order to empower and celebrate her self in a true sense. And this strength of new incarnation of Celie reflects in her encounter with her husband after the revelation of her dear sister Nettie’s letters. To suppress her voice and to humiliate her, Albert tries to bluff out his anger by using his earlier tactic, as he says to her, “You can’t curse nobody. Look at you, you black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam he says you nothing at all.” At this Celie more emphatically and powerfully reply; “I’m pore, I am black, I may be ugly and can’t cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I am here”(214).

This reply of Celie completely reflects her celebration of self. She launches her ship amid the stormy waves of racism and sexism and comes out as a victorious woman.
She leaves behind every trauma, every blow and every bitter experience to create her new horizon. In the end of the novel, she returns to her home not as a domestic slave and an object of sexual gratification but as a whole woman, wise, resourceful, caring, sensitive and sensual. Here one thing to be noticed is that this rebirth and regeneration not only happens in the life of Celie but it also transforms the life of her husband Mr. Albert. Towards the end of the novel we see that he has revised his attitude for woman, gender roles and human beings in general. His experiences teach him new wisdom as he says; “The more I wonder, the more I love. And people start to love you back”(284). Celie writes of this new Albert: “I know when you talk to him now he really listen, and one time, out of nowhere in the conversation us was having, he said, Celie, I’m satisfied, this the first time I ever lived on Earth as a natural man. It feels like a new experience” (259). This satisfaction, self-affirmation and transformation are the indication of celebration in the life of Mr. Albert. Thus Walker’s final paradigm is that rebirth and reformation happens in the life of every person, we just need to pay a close attention to it.

Walker’s next novel The Temple of My Familiar is a celebration of every day life and every day emotions. It is not a novel of observation or of meditation, it is a story of transformation, and the essence of transformation is that it keeps on going. It is not a matter of conflict and resolution as in the laboratory novel but of urging, asserting and recording change. Every character in the book bears witness that if we don’t change, we perish. The novel explodes with imagination and presents past, present and future at the same time. This celebration in the form of an optimistic view of the world is presented through the memories of Miss Lissie, a woman, who has experienced several incarnations; Zeda and Carlotta, a mother and daughter who share the intimate affections
and love of one man; Fanny Nizingha, granddaughter of Celie from *The Color Purple*; Suwello, an American History professor and an array of other characters.

Basically this novel centers on the celebration of very minor incidents of the lives of these characters; mainly divided in to three couples Suwelo and Fanny, Carlotta and her husband Arveyda, a famous musician who live in Oakland Hills and third one is older and most important couple of Hal and Lissie that enters in the story when their friend Rafe dies and his nephew Suwelo comes to Baltimore to meet them. The young people’s marriages have temporarily broken down while each of them follows perilous and surprising paths of self-discovery. Fanny becomes a masseuse and eventually travels to Africa to find her father, a mysterious figure that turns out to be a controversial playwright in the independent nation of the Olinka. Arveyda abandons Carlotta and accompanies her mother Zeda to her South America homeland. Left alone Suwelo and Carlotta pursue a turbulent affair.

In this novel all characters of Walker are busy in discovering and establishing their own ways even amid so many hurdles. This fight for self respect and attempt for self-recognition becomes the celebration of these black people and they begin to see the ray of hope for a new dawn of freedom and liberty after the dark and terrified night of slavery.

Similar to Nettie’s African part in *The Color Purple*, this novel also bears a message from Africa, but this time in a far more determined manner. This message reaches us via Miss. Lissie, an ancient goddess who has been incarnated hundred times, usually as a woman, sometimes as a man, once even as a lion. Lissie enables us to
analyze the journey of woman from its very beginning to the present day, by providing flashbacks of the past history.

As the novel unfolds and Lissie’s story multiplies, she expands in to a kind of womanish consciousness that finally attains aspects of Universal consciousness. Her relationship with Mr. Hal presents the example of mutual understanding and thus celebration of their two souls on equal space. Both live their life in their own ways according to their own strategies, but without hurting or interfering with the other. Both are quite satisfied to live fully every moment of their life. Lissie also makes us familiar with the slave tradition and the worst condition of woman in this slave trade because of her dark skin and female gender. In her life in Africa, when she was two years old her mother along with her children as per the custom, became her uncle’s responsibility, who sells them out as slaves. The plight of Lissie and her mother is the plight of every black woman.

Basically, here Walker draws our attention on the replacement of mothers by fathers, and on the deterioration in the position of woman in this man made society. As a result of the hundreds of years of war trade in Africa; this religion of mother worship was finally destroyed. The status of woman was invaded, raids on the women’s temples, which existed in the sacred grove of trees, were carried out and women and children were dragged out by the hair and forced to marry in to male dominated tribes. Here Walker’s attack on man in this novel reveals the bitter reality, as she says:

“The men had decided they would be creators, and they went about dethroning women systematically. To sell women and children for whom you no longer wished to assume responsibility or to sell those who were
mentally infirm or who had in some ways offended you, because a new tradition and accepted way of life” (64).

Lissie further makes us familiar with some horrifying truths about the ways women were treated. Men like any other commodity possessed them. They were forcibly pushed in to slavery and branded with their master’s names. Lissie tells us that she, along with other slaves, was dragged to a ship. At the plank that led up on to the deck, their last remaining garment, the strip of cotton around their hips snatched away and they were forced on to the ship bald, branded and naked as they came in to the world.

Before this dark period, Lissie takes us to the glorious history of mother worship, when woman was honoured like goddess. Like Lissie another character Zeda, a seamstress from South also reveals the history of the celebration of women’s self-identity, in spite of so many efforts of men to suppress them. They have beaten her, sold her and crushed her body to fulfill their sexual hunger repeatedly but in reality they could not touch her undaunted spirit, sublime soul and her will of celebration. In her present life Zeda and Arveyda, husband of her daughter Carlotta establish a kind of spiritual bond between them. They celebrate this relationship without any fear of social and ethical norms.

The impact of Lissie’s revelation upon modern black consciousness is traced in the lives of Fanny and her ex husband Suwello, a middle class academic. Suwello finds his authentic self by absorbing Lissie’s message; Fanny finds hers by opening herself to her dreams, her archetypal memories and by journeying back to meet her African kinfolk. Fanny is in love with Suwello, but she is not in love with marriage. Her craving for freedom and her revolt against marriage is the voice of every long suppressed black
woman, who was deceived sexually, emotionally and physically under the disguise of marriage. Her declaration like Meridian, to be free from the chains of marriage, seems to be the echo of every married woman, who was forced to lose her self-recognition and existence. As Fanny cries, “I have never felt free, never in my life. And I want to.” To Fanny “freedom must mean never having to embarrass any body”. She is convinced of the enslavement through marriage like Meridian so much that she hates the very institution of marriage. She believes that the “wedding ring people bear on their fingers is nothing but a remnant of chain” (240) and chains have always been an enemy of freedom. She neither prefers to be in chains nor prefers to chain or bind Suwelo with her. She desires to celebrate a free and fair relationship with Suwelo. She feels insulted by the hypocrisy of social rituals and revolts against them. For her divorce from Suwelo is just like a solution to break up the shackles of this imposed marriage a hypocritical, social institution, that compels two people for living together unwillingly. Gradually she achieves this by making the mind of her husband to understand the value of real salvation and empowerment as says Suwelo:

“Neither of us wanted to over shade the other. Yet we wanted a degree of stability, a degree of coziness. We wanted to be the forest and the tree. Separate development that enhanced whatever we were creating separately and together in our journey; that is what we were after” (284).

Fanny’s temperament is purely womanish. She has a quest for creating her own sky to fly beyond the reach of man supremacy. With her inconsistent efforts Fanny achieves this freedom and in other words provides a free and creative life to Suwelo. He celebrates this freedom by establishing a reciprocal relationship with Carlotta and enjoys the sexual and spiritual pleasure with her.
Thus in this novel, all characters celebrate themselves by becoming their own guide and enlighten their own path towards self-designated horizons. Walker has specially depicted here, the black women as risk takers and adventurers, while men are passive and diffident in this novel. Women force instructs and prevents men from colonizing them. Naturally by the end of the novel, Carlotta and Fanny invent less constricting forms of marriage and lovers achieve oppression free happiness. Actually here Walker’s project is to present her own vision of a more complete, harmonious and healthy human being, healthy in body and expansive in soul.

Walker’s next novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* more emphatically represents the image of exotic black African Woman that is in revised and recontextualized form. Through the barbaric exoticism of such practices as clitoridectomy and infibulations, she makes us familiar with the real sufferings and unwillingness of their very victims. Walker presents these rituals as not merely something exotic but as a projection of the familiar Western male dominance and the white men’s hunger for colonial conquest. Through these sexist rituals, the female nature is penetrated, conquered and manipulated.

Here, pivotal character Tashi, shows how in the process of forging female selfhood, the struggler forces the need to change the ritual of genital mutilation. She struggles to claim her identity, in order to change her life and secure a rightful place within the social network of relationships. She herself constitutes usually absorbs the psychic pain involved in such a struggle and shatters the iron bars of gender which limit self empowerment like her author Walker, who explains:

“I believe in …a willing acceptance of responsibility for one’s thoughts, behavior and actions, that makes it powerful. The white man’s oppression
of me will not excuse my oppression of you, whether you are man, woman, child...because the self I prizes refuse to be owned by him or by anyone” (Third Life of Grange Copeland 345).

In this novel Walker examines the soul of her protagonist Tashi/ Evelyn Johnson, and a ritual of female circumcision, prevailed in African society, the vehicle for this examination. Walker views the practice as a means through which black African women are rendered joyless and spiritually dead, and struggles to reconcile the two warring culture consciousness like Tashi partially American and partially deeply rooted African soul. Actually this is a story of two kinds of women, those who were forbidden this possession, the right to own their bodies in natural totality, and those who forbid others this right. Walker constructs both archetypes-“the mother who betrays” and “the daughter so betrayed” (Warriors, 21). The conflict is embodied in the relationship of Tashi, the victim of the ritual and M’Lissa, the agent of the ritual. Both destroy themselves as well as each other because of their beliefs in and questioning the ritual of female circumcision.

In America as Adam’s wife, Tashi reminisces on her African experience. Even though Olivia tells her not to go through the ritual, she wants to undergo genital mutilation and have a scar (tribal sign) marked on her face. Both are painful but they are the signifiers of her idiosyncratic African identity-the only thing that whites failed to erase from their African lives. As Tashi says: “We have been stripped of everything but our black skins. Here and there a defiant cheek bore the mark of our withered tribe. These marks gave me courage. I wanted such a mark for myself”(15).

Because of her staunch belief in African tradition, she turns to America, after this horrific ritual that left her in to a physical and emotional wreck; barely able to walk, hardly able to urinate and stinking of the decaying menstrual blood trapped inside her
body. Tashi’s attempt to preserve, through the ritual, what is African in her destroyed her sexuality. Lissette, Adam’s friend and mistress seems to have kept what Tashi has lost in pain, since she enjoys her womanhood without physical/ emotional pain. Lisette’s joy of womanhood and motherhood is something Tashi is doomed never to have with Adam, who was unable to penetrate her for three months because of her circumcision, as she says, “Each time he touched me I bled…. There was nothing that he could do to me that did not hurt”(60). Tashi ends up experiencing a very difficult pregnancy and having an equally difficult time in giving birth to Benny. This hell like condition of Tashi; never let her forget, her favorite sister Dura’s screams who bled to death during the ritual, without even having the right to voice her agony, since the dictum determines, “You must not cry!”(24).

Tashi’s psychological tensions and her failure to save Dura lead her to the point of murdering M’Lissa: the aged circumciser of the Olinka village. She determines to kill the agent of this ritual so that she may register her resistance against that very ritual which is shaped and forced by man made society in order to snatch away the womanhood, happiness and celebration from the women.

Here, Walker also reveals the shrewdness of patriarchal society that very cleverly and systematically uses one woman to destroy the other and exploit her twice, one for being black and other for being a woman. As M’Lissa explains before her murder that she was destroyed by this ritual and limped throughout her life. She herself is as much a victim of the male provided trauma as Tashi and Dura are, but inspite of this she still believes in its validity, convinced that it is performed, “…in service to tradition, to what makes us a people, in service of the country and what makes us who we are” (226).
Behind M’Lissa’s fame and national recognition as a survivor of African culture, are the tears of someone who seems to possess the secret of joy. M’Lissa is conscious of the sexist patriarchal system they live in, and criticizes it in her conversation with Tashi. Her deep-rooted disagreement and the agony of what she does make our hearts melt for her. Undoubtedly by M’Lissa’s exposure of this long suppressed hatred for this hellish ritual, the determination of Tashi to murder her was delayed but not avoided. With this murder, she brings about her own death, as that is her sentence after the trial. There is a parallelism between M’Lissa and Tashi as both possess their secrets of joy and have their different ways to celebrate themselves. This celebration can be observed in their deaths when they achieve a kind of Metaphysical salvation, one because, she is liberated from her emotional burden of silence and the other because, her choice gives her a sense of identity, she did not have before, for from saying, “I am nobody” (275) Tashi moves on to the reaffirmation of the self exactly before her signing a letter as she writes, “Tashi Evelyn Johnson Reborn soon to be Deceased” (279).

Yet what differentiates the two is the fact that one remains silent to the outer world and seems to be happy with her situation, condoning the sexist action of which she is a victim, while the other decides to speak out against misogyny and oppression and knows that “If you lie to yourself about your own pain, you will be killed by those, who will claim you enjoyed it” (108).

Thus, Tashi achieves the apex of celebration in her execution when by wearing red dress she indicates the joy, the sublimity that men can never feel. This is not only the celebration of Tashi, but of whole black woman community that was tortured, humiliated and deprived of existence by so-called male dominators. Tashi’s bliss in celebrating her
resistance is marked in her refusal to be blindfolded during the moment of execution, for she wants to look at the sky, the symbol of freedom, to capture “that moment (as) eternity” (279).

To conclude this chapter, we can say that Walker is the pioneer of black community. Her works are committed to exposing the racist and sexist tragedy of black Afro-American people and their protest against ongoing degradation. She in a very moving way exposes the vices, hidden under the patriarchal power structure and celebrates the black women’s intellectual capabilities and revolutionary vision. In her novels she portrays black man as exploiter of his own wife, sisters and daughters. It is he, the black man, who is responsible for the plight of the black woman as Grange Copeland, Brownfield Copeland, Mr. Albert and Truman. However the black woman, who decides to live an independent life becomes self conscious at the right time and develops love for her own self, and from this self love she begin to love others, especially her own sisters.

Though Walker reveals the dark side of race and gender discriminated society, but she does not leave us with pains, sufferings and humiliations. She shows us the ray of hope in the disguise of the possibility of the transformation of the exploiters as well as the exploited, as happens in the life of Grange Copeland, Mr. Albert, Harpo and Truman. Her female characters Mem Copeland, Josie, Ruth, Meridian, Celie, Shug, Fanny, Carlotta and Tashi do reject the atrocious black men but the moment these men change their way of life and their attitude towards women they are welcomed by these once tortured women because they know that forgiveness is greater than vengeance. In fact Walker in her novels, creates such a world of black men and women, which is based on equality, mutual understanding and peaceful existence and is filled with prosperity, love, happiness
and celebration for all. Because celebration is simply about saying “Yes” to all of life; to more positive emotions, to more engagement, to more meaning and purpose and to more caring relationship.

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