Chapter – 5

RESISTANCE AS A VOICE OF PROTEST
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They call her ugly, they call her worthless
She believes them, she thinks they are correct
She walks with her head swung low and her eyes cut toward the floor
Too ashamed to laugh, too scared to be happy
But there is one thing they can’t take
It’s her spirit, her willingness to survive
Her desire to be with her young, to be with her own
And this spirit will not be broken.

(https://rothgretchen.wordpress.com/2010/03/05/american-poetry-theme-Resistance/)

If we talk about resistance and protest in the fiction of Alice Walker, this poem seems quite authentic and applicable to all those women characters of Walker who resisted every blow, trauma and humiliation hurled upon them by racist and sexist society in a powerful manner. Walker basically uses resistance in her novels as a voice of protest and revolt or in true sense a means of self-empowerment.

Basically resistance is the quality of not yielding to force or external pressure; that power of a body which acts in opposition to the impulse or pressure of another, or which prevents the effect of another power; as, the resistance of the air to a body passing through it. But here in the novels of Alice Walker this air is the polluted air of racial and sexual affliction, the germs of which are polluting and spoiling the lives of poor Afro-American people. So in the novels of Walker, resistance is not an ordinary term but it is a key to unfold the path of liberation, self-existence and above all of a beautiful planet established on democratic principles. It is a tool used by the victims of fair color and
powerful sex to save them and in true sense we can say, to make them and their coming
generations free from the long time bounded shackles of slavery and exploitation.

Walker like a true artist uses resistance in its many colors and forms to register
the voice of protest, anger and burning humiliation against those who think them as the
masters and creators of the life of black people and black land.

As a black woman writer Walker is fully aware of the wrongs, the blacks suffered,
especially their women folk, during the days of slavery. It is a past, very few African-
Americans can forget. But while discussing about the racial and sexual perspectives, it
is important that we look not only for the effects of racism and sexism but also on the
ways that those effects are resisted as well. Sometimes resistance is hard to see; other
times it is obvious. What is sure is that although the effects of racism are horrible and
crippling, the power of survival in oppressed communities has maintained traditions and
continuity throughout a history that has been committed to their erasure. Blind
submission of women to men is always considered a virtue in male dominated Afro-
American society. About the traumatic condition of Black woman; Gerda Lerner in her
book “Black Women in White America” says:

“Belonging as they do to two groups, which have traditionally been
treated as inferiors by American society-blacks and women- they have
been doubly invisible. Their records lie buried, unread, infrequently
noticed and even more seldom interpreted. Victimization of the black
woman has extended from life to national mythology and literature. While
in life poverty, racial hatred and sexual violence have been inflicted on
her, in national mythology and literature she has been made to suffer
dehumanization through misconceptions and stereotypes”(167).
But with the passage of time and with the experience of pain and suffering caused by these wounds of racial and sexual discriminations on their bodies these Afro-American women have learnt that submission to wrong is itself wrong, and resistance to wrong is virtue alike in women as in men. And with this awareness they begin to resist every evil attack of their exploiters. These brave warriors of the novels of Walker know that despair and frustration can not shake their belief because they have the tool of resistance with them and that is the only way of their liberation and self empowerment. They know their will power that is capable to resist, fight and at last to be victorious even after so many hurdles of racial and sexual discriminations. Walker in a very artistic manner has used resistance as a voice of protest of the downtrodden and the "African gods of small things." Basically resistance to every kind of tyranny and anarchy is the only way to break the shackles of slavery. The black characters of Walker know the fact that without resisting their enemy, they can’t uproot him from their land and life. Walker has used their anger, protest and resistance as a key to their salvation. She doesn’t want to show them as the biggest loser of this key by not resisting. Once Robert F. Kennedy explained the power and capacity of resistance and said that each time we stand up for an ideal, or act to improve the lot of others, or strike out against injustice, we send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and colonization.

In her works Walker has explored the experience and roles of black women in a racist and male dominated society. In the center of her complex and multi layered narratives is the unique cultural inheritance of African-Americans. And thus Walker achieved success in incorporating spirituality, hope, and the will to survive hard times, making her novels thought provoking and inspiring. About the wretched and painful
condition of black woman a great Nobel Prize winner black author Toni Morrison in her article “What the Black Woman thinks about women’s Liberty”, says: “She (the black woman) has nothing to fall back on, not maleness, not whiteness, not lady hood, not anything”(167).

The characters of Walker fight injustice wherever they find it, no matter how large, or how small, and they fight injustice to preserve their own humanity and to realise their self existance and dignity. Their main object behind this struggle is to save the soul of their mother Africa, their long prevailing glorious culture and traditions. Every woman protagonist of Walker whether she is Celie, Meridian, Fanny, Tashi or Lissie knows that to resist her enemy first she will have to empower herself and resist her own weaknesses. Although Walker has used many colors of resistance, yet the most effective and powerful is the self empowerment. Like Walker her creations, are also aware about this fact that when life descend in to the pit they must become their own candle willingly burning themselves to light up the darkness around them. They know that with hatred, violence and anger they can’t really do their work and resist their enemy properly because hatred is like a poisonous snake that will sap all that strength and energy they need to resist and in true sense to get salvation from the twice affliction of racism and sexism. So prior to all they have to get victory over their fears and make up their inner souls to launch their boats amid the whirlpool of racial and sexual discriminations.

They know that once they will empower themselves and determine to go ahead with powerful steps towards freedom, nothing in the world can stop them from reaching their goals. Now they do not suppress their fear but try to understand it and face it by coming directly in contact with it. Most of the characters of Walker use their artistic or
creative potentialities to resist the hazardous situations. They know that all art has the power to heal because it helps us see who we are, and what we resist. The struggle of these characters with the opposite circumstances prove the fact that resistance is the real secret of joy and they possess this secret; their only treasure. Although whites have snatched each and everything from these Afro-American people but they could not snatch this spirit of resistance that is leading them into a new world of agape.

In her novels Walker has paved the path of long suppressed black women by giving them message through her novels that just as African people as a whole must bond together to survive and to progress, so also must African women- the most exploited adult sector in the African community- help one another to live healthy and wholesome lives. Only this united strength of them can bring them out from the dark caves of the humiliation and embarrassment into a new dawn of self-discovery and self-empowerment. Her women characters enhance their way by coming in contact with other black women. Defining themselves through bonding on various levels- physical, intellectual, emotional and psychic- with other black women- these black women seek their own identity. And thus in nurturing each other, every black woman in the novel becomes a mamma for the other and shows her the way of hitting back to every agent of her destruction.

This spark of resistance is present in every character of Walker in less or more measurement. As in her very first novel The Third Life of Grange Copeland, we witness the eruption of the volcano of long suppressed anger in once submissive and docile women like Mem and Margaret. When subjugation becomes horrendous they turn into wild women looking for frivolous things. As Margaret revolts against the colonization of
Grange by indulging herself with other men and thus by choosing a derogatory path of prostitution that a husband can never tolerate. She hits back to the abuses and beatings of Grange by destructing his ego. She also begins to go outside the home in search of the satisfaction that she could never find in the company of her husband. On the weekends now similar to her husband she too becomes a “huntress of soft touches, gentle voice and sex without the argument over the constant and compelling pressures of everyday life” (21). Now she doesn’t cry, frustrate or feel alienated because after the excessive suffering she breaks all the shackles imposed by Grange who himself is in the shackles of racial afflictions. In order to give vent to her anger, frustration and long suppressing desires she adopts the path against the traditional norms and crushes the shell of imposed wifehood and motherhood.

Mem is another revolutionary who tries her best to bring her family out of the mud of slavery and poverty. Although her husband Brownfield who forces her to live a life of slavery, made her efforts unsuccessful by moving her from one sharecroppers shack to another yet he could not damage her strong will power and spirit of struggle and endurance. She despises this disgusting life because she can assume the ruined future of her daughters like their father Brownfield. She is a self-conscious black woman who fights like a lioness to keep her family unbroken. Now she decides to mend the future of her children and resist every ill intention of Brownfield forcefully. She takes the responsibility of her family as a head because she knows that her husband; a long suffering victim of racism is good for nothing. After becoming aware about the conspiracy of Brownfield to break her mentally, physically and emotionally, she is so awakened that nobody can prevent her from taking appropriate action for her family.
Therefore, she declares in a resisting voice; “You do what you want to, Brownfield….You do exactly what you want and go precisely where you please. But me and these childrens going to live in the house I leased. We ain’t living in no more dog patches; we going to have toilets and baths and ‘lectic lights like other people” (87).

To achieve her aspirations and fulfill her dreams, Mem first decides to be economically independent by taking a job. She knows that Brownfield will never allow her to live a standard life like white people because he is habitual of living like downtrodden so she herself takes the responsibility of her family in her hands. However, this step of Mem gives a blow to the male ego of Brownfield who considers woman as good for nothing. He adopts many techniques to crush her spirit and body, as imposed pregnancy is one of them. But in spite of tolerating a lot of abuses and beatings from him Mem never feels any fear and keeps her voyage continued amid the whirlpool of racial and sexual afflictions. When he tries to beat her, Mem resists; “I’m sick and tired of this mess, I’m sick of you.” (90) She adds further: “ I have just about let you play man long enough to find out you ain’t one” (91).

When Brownfield’s feeling of manhood becomes intolerable for Mem, she resists in a powerful way. She takes revenge for every wound, given by the helplessness of Brownfield under the slavery system. She not only hits back physically but also prepares a list of certain rules and regulations, which he will have to follow, if he wants to live with them. He will have to lead a civilized and well-mannered life. Mem makes him take an oath to give proper respect to her and her daughters and not to abuse them. She gives him a threat even not to put a single finger on her daughters otherwise he will be
crucified. She tells him not to blame the family for the mistakes, for which he is responsible.

Although this powerful condition of Mem does not remain for a long time, but in spite of so many hurdles, abuses and opposite circumstances she never let her spirit be broken. Every time Brownfield attacks her, she hits him back in more powerful way. Even in the dark clouds of racism and sexism she never loses the hope for a new dawn. As at one place she protests against the ill-intention of Brownfield of making her ill: “Even in this weather you brought me out, I ain’t going to catch pneumonia. I ‘m going to git well again, and git work again, and when I do I’m going to leave you” (107).

Mem resists every blow of Brownfield in a powerful way. Although she is defeated in the last but she never accepted defeat in her lifetime. For her the only aim of her life is to break up the shackles of heinous racial effects and to give her daughters a beautiful, prosperous and free sky to fly on their own wings out of the reach of their father’s domination. She never fears from death and yields before the wicked plans of her husband. She struggles throughout her life with her savage husband and make many useless efforts to make the brown and barren land of her family fertile and productive. In the last she had to pay for her resistance by giving up her life. But her sacrifice made her a role model for her daughter Ruth, who in her own lifetime led her to resist the odds of her life.

Besides Mem and Margaret, Josie is another black woman who fights like a great warrior with the odds of her life and resists every kind of domination in her life by making her self-dependent. Her first step towards rebellion is the consequence of her father’s biased attitude towards her. Primarily because of her father’s harsh treatment she
goes into “business”. And in order to avoid further degradation by men “she did her job with gusto that denied shame, and demanded her money with an authority that squelched all pity” (41). In order to give herself an identity and a place of her own in this male dominated society she chooses a business that itself is responsible for this bitter choice of Josie.

These are not only the women characters of this novel who resist and transform into empowered ones but also the male characters like Grange Copeland who gradually with the experiences of his life learns to resist the evil present in him and outside.

He had learnt the lesson of resistance and launched his journey towards empowerment from the Central Park incident in Georgia. In his life for the very first time he felt despicable for the whites because this was the point when he felt quite powerless in front of a white woman and came to know about the ugliness of white couples. First time he felt his responsibility for the suicide of his dear wife and felt the birth of a spark of anger, humiliation and resistance in his bosom. As says Walker; “He hated her entire race while she stood……….sympathy between them”(199).

When Grange closely observed white people’s life in Georgia, he found them quite hollow from within and this epiphany turned his mind towards the dignity of his own black culture. From this point of his life, Grange’s only aim became the destruction of white society by empowering the black culture and dignity. He begins to resist white culture and spread hatred against white authority. Now he is aware about this fact that only the hatred against white people can unite them and lead them towards empowerment. He shouts and pours down his anger and hatred against the racial
discrimination, “It (hate) will be the only thing that can do it. Deep in our hearts we hates them anyhow”(204)

Now he resists not only against the evils of white authority but also against the evils presented in his own personality. He began his journey towards self-empowerment and self-dignity. He became aware about his powers and capabilities to hit back to the white anarchy and its racial discriminations. Now he is aware about the fact that these requirements of black men can’t be fulfilled by spreading love and peace but by revolting and hitting back and by telling the white people their right place. At this turn of his life he come to know that he will get nothing on request and demand from white colonizers. They will have to snatch their land, money, peace and dignity from whites by force. This fire of resistance totally transforms him in to a new Grange, the powerful one, who is not a salve but a master of his own life.

Similar to her first novel, Walker’s next novel Meridian reflects the spirit of resistance in the central character Meridian. In the very beginning of the novel Meridian resists against the rule which does not allow the black children to see Marilene O’Shay’ show. In a heroic manner she leads the children towards the circus wagon and makes them enter in the show to reveal the crooked reality of Mariliene’s reality behind the show.

Further Meridian resists the decision of the white authority to prohibit the public swimming pool for the poor black children and to force them to use the ditches behind their houses, where the city without warning flushes the reservoir of excess water. When this decision becomes the cause of the death of a poor innocent black child, it was Meridian who had led them to the mayor's office, bearing in her arms the bloated figure
of a five-year-old boy who had been stuck in the sewer for two days before he was raked out with a grappling hook. To the people who followed Meridian it was as if she carried a large bouquet of long-stemmed roses. The body might have smelled just that sweet, from the serene, set expression on her face. They had followed her into a town meeting over which the white-haired, bespectacled mayor presided, and she had placed the child, whose body was beginning to decompose, beside his gavel.

The revolt of Saxon students against the white authority of the college on their refusal to bury Wild Child’s dead body in the college campus is also noteworthy. All these students marched towards the campus with the coffin of Wild Child in their hands. They are full of hatred and disgust for the white authority of the college, as about the dominating president of the college Anne Marion; a revolutionary friend of Meridian, pours down her anger and abuses him: “He ain’t nothing but a disrarge for those crackers downtown. He can’t stand upon’em no more than piss can fall upward. His mama should’ve drowned him in the commode the minute he was born”(29).

The wild child reveals how alone woman is because of her body. The death of wild child in a road accident and president’s refusal to bury her in the college campus compel the young women at Saxon college to realize that their fate is bound up with hers and this feeling of identification gives birth to a spark of resistance in their bosoms.

This storm of revolution leads them to uproot thousands years old Sojourner tree to register their protest against anarchy in the college campus. Thus the burial ceremony of the Wild Child turns in to a beginning of the revolution, as the students gives her a tearful and heart touching farewell, “God Will Bless You, W.C….Tell God We Ready, Wild One” (36).
In spite of so many struggles they had to bury her in an overgrown corner of a local cemetery but they sang with tears in their eyes and hope in their bosoms,

“We shell overcome…
We shell overcome…
We shell overcome, someday…
Deep in my heart, I do believe
We shell overcome, someday…” (38).

In Saxon college along with her friend Anne Marion, Meridian joined the revolution and Civil Rights Movements against the racial hegemony, because it was not possible for her to study in an atmosphere of racial upheavals. She could not lead a peaceful life while others were being beaten and jailed in their fight for freedom. She never escaped from her responsibilities as a civil rights activist. She and her friend marched together and went to jail with their toothbrushes and books and cigarettes under their arms because they were not at all worried about their imprisonment and enjoyed every moment of their resistance.

Meridian’s revolutionary spirit and a thirst to achieve her destination never allowed her to enjoy the bliss of motherhood and wifehood. Because of the heinous effect of male dominated society both these blessing turned into curse for her. She got married to Eddie in order to save her from the lusty eyes of other boys but here also she could not save her from male made rituals. This unwanted responsibility of motherhood never allowed her to love her children and bounded her in the shackles of society: “Rebelling she begin to dream each night, just before her baby sent out his cries, of ways to murder him” (65).
Gradually from this particular feeling of oppression by the conventions established by the male dominated society, the seeds of resistance sprout in the heart of Meridian. As after becoming an unwanted mother of Eddie’s child Meridian understands that she has lost her frail independence to the pressures of motherhood and learns that she is entrapped and “her personal life was over” (50). This understanding enables her to instinctively interpret a look in the eyes of other women who are living just for their children and are really dead for themselves. By overseeing her mother’s experiences of enslavement as a mother, Meridian comes to the conclusion that motherhood is slavery. She finds motherhood unfulfilling: "This is what slavery is like”(114), and because of this intuition of hers, she resists against the pre -decided norms of motherhood. Motherhood and wifehood are considered two glorious and essential crowns, for every woman to get proper respect in this patriarchal society. But this male dominated society has turned these crowns into two imposed burdens that have bounded the woman into the shackles of men made rules and customs. For black woman, who is a victim of being born with female gender these essential factors for perfection turn in to medium of her destruction. Adrienne Rich emphasizes the absurdity of the situation by pointing out that “though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males” (Of Women Born 65). This glorious motherhood imposed on women, conditions their entire life. Ironically, this experience of motherhood unique to women is interpreted for them through male authorities and structures, through religion, myths, science, politics, and economics. And when women begin to interpret and articulate their experience, they are
condemned as reactionaries out to destabilize society. This revolt of women never goes unpunished.

Basically Meridian is a woman who learns to revolt from her oppression, humiliations and discarding out. Meridian resisted not only against motherhood but also against the typical male thinking of Truman by leaving him and his love behind because Truman wanted a woman perfect in all the eyes of the world, not a savage. He wanted only a puppet to satisfy his physical and mental hunger not a general or a revolutionary spirit. After becoming aware about the hollowness of his love Meridian makes a protest because she knows that for him she would not even have existed as a woman he might love. She notes that, despite his revolutionary slogans and liberal education, Truman really wants a quiet little helper that would look good while hanging on his arm. Meridian gives him a proper reply on his reproach to her for marriage: “In Lynne you captured your ideal, a virgin who was eager for sex and well to do enough to have had worldly experiences”(156).

In Meridian Walker describes a life that is most certainly far from perfection but in its imperfection found the peace that eludes most. Meridian’s revolution within has reached its decisive point and she emerged even surer of herself and her beliefs. But her life has not ceased to be a struggle as she continues to walk down the road. In the later part of the novel, Meridian becomes aware of herself as an adventurer. Moreover, she is thrilled to think that she belongs to the people who produced Harriet Tubeman, the only American woman who had led troops in battle. Thus, Meridian, a woman who feels guilty of being a black woman, starts reclaiming the black woman’s history and tries to associate herself with that positive and inspiring history of black women. However, she
also realizes that this awakening would keep her and Truman apart because
“Truman…did not want a general beside him. He did not want a woman who tried,
however encumbered by guilts and fears and remorse, to claim her own life” (110).
Consequently, Meridian realizes that she can be happy with a man only if he can allow
her to be free.

After aborting the child of Truman, Meridian strictly resists the advancements of
Truman as she tells him boldly: “It’s over. Let it stay” (115). Although she loves Truman,
she realizes that he cannot accept her for who she is, and therefore she rejects his
proposal of marriage. Hence she becomes committed to the cause of the civil rights
movement and starts registering the voters much more vigorously than in the past. She
transforms herself in her own image and not a preconceived one. She realizes that she
must overcome the idea of “a woman’s place” and, to fulfill this mission, tears herself
away from the two institutions, the family and the church, which have traditionally
sheltered the women. At times, these institutions have offered comfort and guidance; they
have contributed to a restrictive belief in the proper role and proper sphere of women.
Though the journey of self-discovery is a lonely one, Meridian undertakes it with courage
and dignity and tries to become a mother of black community by her revolutionary spirit.

Walker’s next novel The Color Purple explores the resistance, struggle and
development of black woman through the story of its heroine, Celie, who leads her life
from the ditch of racism and sexism to the peak of self-celebration. The process of
struggle for change is revealed through Celie's complex relationships with her stepfather
Alphonso, God, Mr. Albert, Harpoe, Sofia, Nettie and above all Shug Avery. In feeling
the pride of being black women who do not submit to oppression, Sofia and Shug offer
her the strength of self-definition, and resistance while again Shug and later Nettie provide her with self-knowledge and a sense of self-empowerment. Thus, re-connecting with her owns self and with God through the female network system, Celie learns to become her own person. Celie resists her depression, and loneliness from the very beginning of the novel by addressing God or by sharing her pains, sufferings and oppression with God. It is her intense desire to be friend with some one. She needs some one who can be a listener of the painful saga of her life because in her real life nobody is there to share her pain. Celie doesn’t allow her oppressors to crush her inner soul, and to snatch away her spiritual power. These wolves of male dominated society became successful to rape her body but they could not rape her soul. And this very unconquerable spirit of Celie shows her the way to come out from the dark and stormy night into a new dawn of empowerment. Walker herself describes this resisting spirit of Celie in her preface to the tenth anniversary issue of *The Color Purple* that her main intention in this book is to explore the difficult path of Celie who starts out in life already a spiritual captive, but who, through her own courage and the help of others, breaks free into the realization that she, like Nature itself, is a radiant expression of the heretofore perceived as quite distant Divine.

Celie resists the evil intention of her Pa of using Nettie by sacrificing her own life for the sake of Nettie. She fixes herself in place of Nettie by wearing the horsehair, feathers and a pair of her new mammy’s shoes so that she can divert the mind of her step pa from Nettie. This was one of the many colors of resistance that Celie used to secure the future of her dear sister.
In her further life after her marriage to Albert she resists every abuse, misfortune and attack of her husband on her soul and body by keeping mum like Alice the female protagonist of James Osborn’s play *Look Back in Anger*. She resists the anarchy of her husband by turning herself into wood, and only by staying alive in the mud of emotional, physical and sexual exploitation. Some times not to give up the hope of new light even in the impenetrable forest of despair turn into a kind of resistance.

On the revelation of the letters of Nettie hidden by Albert to take revenge and to maintain the assumption in the mind of Celie about the death of her dear sister, Celie’s long restrained anger becomes boundless and begins to reflect in her revolting speeches not only against her main exploiter Albert but also against God whom she was considering her true supporter and torchbearer. As for the very first time she makes a protest against God, with whom up till now she was sharing each and everything. At this transformation of Celie we become surprised when she pours down her deep hidden restricting anger: “…and he gave me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of a step pa and a sister I probably won’t ever seen again. Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown. ….If he ever listened to poor colored women the world would be a different place” (173).

Celie considers God as her dear and only buddy, as a pole star in the light of which she always tries to come out of the ditch of her life. But the revelation of Nettie’s letters brings an epiphany in her life and she now resists and protests that God who in himself is ‘he’ can’t understand her feelings, as here like her creator she says “I have spent all my life in rebellion against the church and the people’s interpretations of what
religion is- the truth is probably that I don’t believe there is a God, although I would like to believe there is a God beyond nature. The world is God. Man is God. So is a leaf or snake” (265). Celie’s step of resistance liberates her from hurt, alienation and fragmentation; and with the strength of this resistance she builds a community, which radiates this love to redeem others, especially the men.

At this stage of her life God is not different from any other males. Now the image of God is totally changed in her eyes from a supporter to an exploiter and as the representative of whites as well as of males. Thus Celie’s resistance begins with the support of three strong women of black community: Shug, Nettie and Sophia. These three women teach her the lesson of resistance and self-celebration. Sofia acts as a catalyst for Celie’s transformation. Despite all odds, she refuses to succumb to Harpoe’s beating. In fact, she stands alone to pay him back. Celie the weak woman cannot but admire her and it is from her daughter-in-law that she learns the language of revolt and successful resistance. This is Sofia who instructs her “to bash Mr._head open…”(44). Sofia presents the best example of resistance and protest by hitting back the white Mayor. Like every victim of race discrimination there is also a spark of anger and revolt in the heart of Sofia and because of this long suppressed anger, all the time she thinks about killing somebody. After coming from jail asks Celie, “Why we ain’t already kill them off”(93). She not only resists the white anarchist but also the weakness of her own people that is the main cause of slavery. Now she is aware about the fact that to some extent black people themselves are responsible because they don’t know how to handle the mules from their wheat.

Here with the plight of Sofia in revolt against the ill intention of the white mayor, Walker reveals the fact that the path chosen by these black warriors is not a bed of roses.
Sofia represents all those black women who have fought all through their life, right from their childhood to death or until they got victory. She is put in prison for fighting back, when slapped by the Mayor. She is tortured and turned into another Celie by the heartless caretakers of the society. As at one place Sofia tells Celie, “Every time they ask me to do something, Miss Celie, I act like I’m you. I jump right up and do just what they say” (93). Sofia’s struggle for a meaningful existence displays her strong will power and ability to transcend the racist and sexist society. She struggles for self-respect and dignity, in spite of her defeat and mutilation. In the end Sofia even resists her feeling of hatred for the whites; a weakness of her character by bringing up the white girl Eleanor Jane with love and affection and teaches others a lesson of love, peace and integration.

Sofia is not one of those black women who would like to become a white man’s housemaid. When the Mayor’s wife asks her: “Sofia,…would you like to work for me, be my maid?” Sofia declines the offer: “Hell no”(96). For every white man, every black woman is a girl and his woman is a lady. When the Mayor listens to the way Sofia replies, he slaps her. As Sofia is a spirited lady, she promptly retaliates. The Mayor however takes revenge by ordering the police to use third degree methods to torture and mutilate Sofia.

No doubt the Mayor and his men defeat Sofia, but she represents the black woman who has enough courage to fight for her dignity. Sofia’s struggle is for dignity as an individual who is both black and female. Though her struggle is not always successful, it provides her an opportunity to display her fortitude and ability to transcend her racist and sexist circumstances.
If Sophia provides Celie a spark of protest against every evil attack and inspire her to rewrite her story it is Shug Avery who finally teaches her to become psychologically and financially independent. Here Walker suggests clearly that a woman should learn to respect the self before she can demand respect from others or we can say that before launching a voyage towards her struggle with the external enemies she should resist her own weaknesses. Gradually Celie has recognized her life, achieved economic liberty, and gathered the knowledge of meaningful things and relationships to create a new Celie. Walker takes us through different stages of Celie’s life to pinpoint the various factors that finally recreate Celie as a whole, confident, self-aware woman with her own identity. Walker depicts Celie as a daring woman and a warrior who struggles throughout her life to regenerate into an empowered woman. Even when she has accepted her meaningless existence with Albert and his children: she never misses any opportunity to demonstrate her dislike for him: “I say, and men look like frogs to me. No matter how you kiss’em, as far as I’m concern, frogs is what they stay”(224). Celie gradually liberates herself from the fear, pressure and imposition of her husband Albert. When Albert tries to prevent Celie from moving to Memphis along with Shug, Celie explodes and reveals that she is no more the old cow like Celie and roars: “you a lowdown dog is what’s wrong, I say. It’s time to leave you and enter in to the creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I nee” (207). Thus Celie a poor, black ugly and sexually abused girl, moves from her helplessness towards the state of complete independence and establishes her own world which is full with black womanish consciousness. Now this black girl who suffered from self-scorn, learns to love her and other black men and women and worries for the black community as a whole.
In this novel, Walker shows her heroine trapped in the whole range of possible oppression. Celie’s struggle is to create a self through language, to break free from the network of class, racial, sexual and gender ideologies to which she is subjected. By letting the silent voice speak in her own language, Walker has enriched our knowledge of black American women and paid homage to the lasting beauty and magic of the black oral tradition, that helped them a lot in their resistance.

Through different stages of Celie’s life, Walker represents the competence of black women to fight with the odious circumstances. The most attractive quality of these black women is that despite this poisonous atmosphere around them, they are able to raise their collective voice against the patriarchal order and establish their own horizon to fly with full freedom without any fear of cutting their wings. They conquer the adverse circumstances of their lives through courageous actions and self-education. Sofia and Shug are the embodiments of resistance and woman empowerment against the destructive afflictions of gender and color. Celie is not the only character who finds her path under the guidance of Shug and Sofia but there is another character Squeak is also; second wife of Harpoe, who transforms herself from shy and timid Squeak into self reliant Mary Agnes. All these women gradually redefine themselves somehow with their own efforts and somehow with the help of other women. Through these characters, Walker has epitomized the realities of the lives of black women and registered a vociferous protest against the debilitating sexism of the patriarchal society.

Mary Agnes represents the example of sacrifice that is essential to establish a bond of sisterhood among all the suffering women, in order to make a united protest against this male dominated society. In her effort to save Sofia from the imprisonment
she is get raped by her own uncle. She, the victim of sexism emerges from this encounter with a new power over men in general. Though she comes with a limp, her dress torn, a heel from her shoe missing, she repudiates her derogatory name and demands that she be called by her real name. Not only does Mary Agnes no longer “Squeak” but she also begins to sing. Although Celie reports that “She got the kind of voice you never think of trying to sing a song” (103). Like other victims of sexism, she also learns to fight, hit back and to meditate about her self-existence after facing the cruel face of male domination. Now she begins to contemplate about her empowerment by making singing her career so that she can resist every blow and attack in a powerful way.

Walker emphasizes the imprisonment of black women, the interior colonization they suffer from because of their dependence on men for everything. But at the point when they recognize the strength of womanism and sisterhood they no longer need men. Now they resist their colonizers by empowering them and making them free from the dependency of men. They struggle not only for physical liberty but also for economic and mental freedom from the shackles of racial and sexual discriminations. Walker portrays the character of Celie with great stamina, vitality and enthusiasm. She becomes a professional seamstress and designs pants; the symbol of her accepting and being accepted as the economic power and moving up on the higher step of class hierarchy.

This dedication underlines the fact that the novel, through its women characters, like Celie, Shug, Sofia, Nettie and Mary Agnes quintessentially represents the collective consciousness of the black women. Their moments of pain and misery, fear and fortitude, experience and hope are cleverly woven in to the thematic pattern of the novel.
While Celie resists the evil intention of her step Pa of having an evil eye on her dear sister Nettie resists her adverse circumstances and the hellish matrix of color and gender by becoming her own torchbearer in the dark forest of colonization. She has an inner desire and determination to transcend her hostile surroundings, and that’s why in order to make her intellectually powerful, “All day she read, she study, she practice her handwriting and try to git us to think” (17).

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In her next novel *The Temple of my Familiar*, Fanny resists against the male made institution of marriage. She is in love with Suwelo, but she is not in love with marriage. Hence she proposes to divorce her husband and compels him to live in a separate part of the house. She lays down the condition that they could see each other as and when they choose. Marriage for her means slavery. Hence she declares: “I’ve never felt free never in my life. And I want to” and to her “Freedom must mean never having( or being able) to embarrass anybody”(138). She is convinced of the enslavement through marriage, so much so that she hates the very institution of marriage. She believes that the wedding ring people wear on their fingers is nothing but a remnant of chain and chains have always been an enemy of freedom.

Fanny’s protest or resistance against the institution of marriage is the long suppressed desire of the heart of black women for freedom and self-discovery and for creating her own horizon out of the reach of male domination. It doesn’t mean that she is not in love with Suwelo but her love can’t bloom in the shackles of marriage. She demands for free and fair relationship with Suwelo. When we contemplate about the purpose of Walker behind creating the character of Fanny, it seems that Fanny is the symbol of unconscious desire for freedom and resistance against male made chains, in the heart of every black woman, the freedom that was never given to her. She wishes to establish a spiritual relationship with her husband, the bond in which both of them will be free to celebrate their self-existence. In spite of being one they will have their distinctive identity and space. That’s why she says about their divorce to Suwelo: “It is not about not loving you. I will always love you. But I don’t want to be married.” (138)
In doing so she does not have any hatred or bitterness towards anybody but she just wants to break the chains of marriage because she knows that true love and true bond does not need any kind of chains or restrictions to keep it alive. So she says to Suwelo, “I don’t want to end our relationship; I want to change it. I don’t want to be married. Not to you, not to anybody. But I don’t want to lose you either” (139). Finally she says, “I don’t feel free” (139). This intense desire for freedom may be in the consequences of the fables of the submission and exploitation of her great grandmother Celie in the name of marriage by her husband Albert. As she says to Suwelo in the voice of every black woman, “I’ve never felt free, never in my life. And I want to.” (140)

This resistance of Fanny and her demand for her own identity is quite opposite from her great grandmother Celie’s submission to every kind of anarchy. And this development and transformation shows the black woman’s journey from powerlessness to empowerment. Another character Olivia teaches us about the power of blue and the dark colors in the lives of dark people, and tells that how with the help of these dark colors they resist the nakedness of white colonizers. This was blue that gave off energy, or to use her word, “power”. A person wearing this blue was suddenly more confident, stronger, more present and intense than ever before.

The mystery behind the name of Fanny Nzingha is also an effort of Walker to reveal the resistance and anger suppressed deep in the hearts of blacks specially women. As Fanny says, “…for her, it had something mildly scandalous, rebellious, in it”(264). Even in the name of Fanny reflects the feeling of resistance. About the name of Fanny says Olivia that her mother Celie, named her daughter Fanny because it was a name apparently she’d always wanted for herself. “She’d hated “Celie” (153).
Here Walker not only presented the prejudice of whites against the black but also the racial prejudice of blacks against their white masters. Lissie, Hale and Rafe are the characters, which in spite of facing so much abuse and betrayal at the hands of whites enjoy their difference from them and resist the racial tension in their own way. They don’t feel them inferior for their blackness. For them their dark color is the color of love, togetherness and smile that’s why they laugh at the skinny white color of the whites and call them caricatures. In one incident as Hell tells to Suwelo, we can see the reflection of black pride. Uncle Rafe bought the big and gorgeous house, at the place where blacks were not expected to live with dignity. So this was a kind of protest against the white oppression, a kind of making face to the ego of white and to prove that a black, a slave can amid them with proper dignity. As Hall says: “They didn’t like us either—we were dark compared to them— but we said to hell with them and began to be able to relax a little bit”(115).

In this novel, Walker depicts the resistance of black people not against the whites but also against their own anarchist government. Earlier black people were revolting against the white colonization but later they were forced to revolt and protest against their own people because of the lack of even basic needs like food for their stomach and roof on their heads. Ola, the father of Fanny is a great struggler who fights and resists against the wrong policies of the ministry. Here the point to be noticed is that every character almost in all the novels of the Walker registers his or her protest in an artistic way. Every character seems to be a born artist. This art is also a way of resisting the frustration, sufferings and traumas caused by the discriminations like racism and sexism. And with the help of this art and creativity they become successful in self-discovery and self-
celebration. With the help of this art they empower them as Ola resists every odd of his life with his writing. Ola chooses writing as a tool to protest against every kind of oppression and exploitation. About the fearlessness of Ola Nzingha says: “Our father made many, many blunders, out of ignorance, mainly but in his heart of hearts he was fearless” (264). The play of Ola about his wife brought a revolution and completely dissolved the government’s confidence in him and separated the people from the government. This play was dedicated to his wife and was written about that woman. In this play he resisted the policy of male made society against women.

She was named after the name of Anne Nzingha, the ruler of Angola, who fought the Portuguese for forty years; the woman who refused the title Queen and required that her subjects call her “King”, the woman who like Joan of Arc, always dressed as a man and led her troops in battle. At once she played many roles like a woman, man, king, queen, master, strategist and fighter, daughter, mother, pagan and catholic, supreme ruler and wily female.

Fanny’s sister Nzingha also has a spark of anger in her bosom against the white professors who create wrong image of mother Africa and in resistance she leaves the university to avoid the derogatory environment. This anger of Nzingha and Fanny’s love of it presents the deep suppressed anger of every black woman who was crushed, robbed and tortured by the white supremacists. This black anger and resistance does not oppose the white race blindly, but it loves them, who are able to give and take love. As Nzingha here praises the white nuns who are the symbol of God, and religion.
In the very opening of Walker’s next novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* there is a quote of Walker; “There are those who believe Black people possess the secret of joy and that it is this that will sustain through any spiritual or moral or physical devastation.” And this secret of joy is nothing else but the power of resistance, revolt and struggle with the boundaries of racial and sexual matrix. In beginning of this novel Walker has proved the power of resistance and self celebration by depicting the story of Lara; a lioness who finds this secret of joy in resistance of her husband, Baba and his other mistress Lala’s misconduct with her. She protests against them in her own way by falling in love with her own self, and by empowering her own existence. Being neutral from Baba and Lala she makes a self discovery of her beauty, potentialities and inner soul, as Walker writes; “Lara, who by now was quite different to them both, leaned over and kissed her own serene reflection in the water and held the kiss all thy way to the bottom of the stream.”(5) Basically this is a symbolic story of the journey of woman from powerlessness to empowerment and from humiliation to dignity. *Possessing the Secret of Joy* acts as a revolutionary manifesto for dismantling systems of domination.

The protagonist of this novel Tashi finds herself unable to deal with the horror that genital mutilation evokes in her. She resists this pain by painting cocks, a huge peacock on the wall, exhausting the space available and forcing open the boundaries of imagination. Her psychological tension, which she expresses as “Emotions that had frightened me insane” (83), has reached such an enormous proportion that she cannot control it: once repressed pain and fear rise to the surface of her conscious mind, Tashi, conditioned by the taboo not to verbalize pain, and yet compelled to vent open her...
feelings, can only protest against them with the non-verbal medium and like many other characters of Walker uses art as her weapon.

Long suppressing fire of Tashi’s bosom gets spark from the male made myths prevailing in African society as if women are not circumcised clitoral erection would render them "masculine" (121) and that, therefore, vagina lips and clitoris should be cut off to "kill" the male instinct in the woman. However, circumcision leaves its life-long impact on women; mutilated, they will never be able to have full orgasm. Tashi’s plight emphasizes, "the connection between mutilation and enslavement that is at the root of the domination of women in the world" (139). Tashi, in order to make a protest against the heinous ritual chooses the way to murder M’Lissa, the agent of this ritual. Similar to Meridian, in this novel Tashi sacrifices her life in order to give fire to the resistance long hidden in the bosoms of African-American woman. She was crucified by this biased society, and here we find her near Jesus. In her farewell from this world she wears a red dress, the color of fire, resistance, anger, victory, celebration and in the last empowerment. In fact red is the color of the earlier African woman’s sacred blood, to inherit her freedom, makes her re-connect with a past, devoid of racial /gender oppression—a protest, but also a celebration that men are never capable to realize. Tashi re-defines and celebrates the true secret of black people's joy with the words written on the banner: "RESISTANCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY!" (281). Tashi’s joy in celebrating her resistance is also 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)
At last to conclude this chapter we can say that, in her novels Walker celebrates the strength of black women to resist and revolt against the heavy odds of racism, sexism and classicism. Walker’s development of the women characters in her novels parallels the way in which most black women writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison and Paul Marshall combine their concern for feminism and ethnicity. Though her women characters do not have a societal support system that pays them well or appreciates their beauty and the dual role as house maker and provider they assume in their families, they keep their vision and their energies focused on that which is worthwhile and sustaining. Walker’s emphasis on their selflessness and their strength is not to romanticize their limited opportunity for adventure or fulfillment outside the boundaries of their own communities. Instead it is to show the value and the difficulty of the role that they play. Walker observed to highlight the sustaining power of the blacks, to recognize and rescue those qualities of resistance, excellence and integrity. These black women of Walker adopt resistance to preserve their self-esteem and dignity. As Claudia Tate, stresses this factor in her work *Alice Walker: Black Woman writer at Work* by saying: that “women must assume responsibility for strengthen their self esteem by learning to love and appreciate themselves- in short to celebrate their womanhood” (23).

Basically the chief mission of Walker’s writing is to explode all myths and stereotypes surrounding Celie, and represent her as an individual of flesh and blood, who feels, thinks and has her own desires; as an individual strolling toward freedom and selfhood. Here resistance becomes a tool; a bond among black women, their culture and their spirit to fight for identity, wholeness and independence. The novels of Walker reveal not only the hellish effects of sexism but also the black women’s strong will
power, her capacity and potentialities to overcome these barriers and emerge intact and whole ultimately. As in *The Color Purple*, all the women characters demonstrate this determination and attain a state of autonomous self esteem, resisting and overcoming all the hurdles and puddles of their life in order to live a self governed and self existed life in which without any resistance they can celebrate their body, mind and soul.

In fact the characters of Walker are the mouthpieces of their creator and reveal the deep suppressed layers of resistance and protest of the heart of Walker. The thinking of the writer behind writing the novels like *The Color Purple* is to register her protest against the long prevailing discriminations of racism and sexism which are spoiling black beauty, culture and spirit. And because of this spirit of resistance Walker has dedicated this novel to the spirits of all those martyrs who have sacrificed their life in the effort to save their African land, spirit, culture and tradition; these are the spirits without whose assistance, neither this book nor others that she has written would have been written.
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(http://rothgretchen.wordpress.com/2010/03/05/american-poetry-theme-Resistance)