MARXIST FEMINISM IN ALICE WALKER’S
NOVELS: THE TEMPLE OF MY FAMILIAR,
MERIDIAN AND THE COLOR PURPLE

By

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M.A (English). 2008 National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in English (Literature)

To

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THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of English Studies for acceptance:

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**ABSTRACT**

**Thesis Title:** Marxist Feminism in Alice Walker’s novels: *The Temple of My Familiar, Meridian* and *The Color Purple*

The study aims to delineate the idea that women are exploited due to gender and economic oppression and it is possible to bring about their emancipation by removing the causes of their subjugation. One of the causes of women’s subjugation according to the Marxist Feminist ideology is lack of opportunities for women to earn and own sources of production. Men in the role of husbands subjugate their wives and make them victims of physical punishment. They also engage in sexual and extramarital relationships while they demand strict monogamy from their wives. Therefore the study deals with the application of Marxist Feminist theory upon the fictional works of the African American novelist, Alice Walker. The novels selected for this research are *The Temple of my Familiar, Meridian* and *The Color Purple*. Walker in these
novels highlights the sufferings of the Afro-American community by narrating their oppression due to white and black men at the same time. The female characters in these works belong to the down trodden class. Celie and Sofia in *The Color Purple*, Meridian in the *Meridian*, Zede and Carlota in *The Temple of My Familiar*, are women of the African American community who belong to the working classes. They all struggle for survival and suffer economically as well as physically. Walker depicts the slave-like experiences of Zede and Miss Lissie in *The Temple of My Familiar*, the virtual slavery of Sofia at the white Mayor’s house in *The Color Purple* and the struggle of Meridian during the 1960’s Civil Rights Movement in the *Meridian*.

This study seeks to highlight the miseries of African American women at the hands of patriarchy and capitalism consisting of black male relatives as well as white men. Walker suggests practical solutions to the problems of women. Of these economic stability for women is one way out of this oppression. Walker follows Engels’ theoretical stance of economic independence and emancipates her women characters from poverty, patriarchal influence and capitalism. The women, thus, are able to enjoy the blessings of life when provided with equal opportunities of growth.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis to Dr. Shaheena Ayub Bhatti who is my supervisor and my favorite teacher. I also dedicate this achievement to the women of my family including my dear mother, my caring sisters, my beloved wife and my sweet, sweet daughter, Anabia Ismail.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

English literature has been dominated by white European and American writers for a long time. They depicted the whites as heroic figures and all others as marginalized. For instance E. M. Forster in his novel *A Passage to India* presents a gloomy picture of places where Indians live, such as about the city of Chandrapore, “There is no painting and scarcely any carving in the bazaars. The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil” (Forster 9). Forster presents a gloomy picture of India and Indian people since he considers the places of living of Indians to be dull and tedious. In his view, everything in Chandrapore is to be degraded including the water in the river.

The writers belonging to marginalized societies such as Indian and African American and Asians felt this rejection and began to portray the characters belonging to these subsidiary societies as their central characters. Male writers primarily focused on male characters therefore the women writers started giving voice to female characters. In doing so, they discussed issues related to these oppressed people such as poverty, education and social injustice in discourse, domestic, social and official matters.

The body of African American literature created by the literary writers residing on American soil records the aspirations and deprivation of African community in America. Of these writings there emerged a class of women that not only gained international acclaim but also won many significant literary awards. Black women writers focus on lives of black female characters who remain deprived on almost all fronts. Alice Walker is one such writer who documents the situation of black people in America. Being black herself, Walker portrays situations of her fellow black characters in different time periods of American history. Therefore, Walker is mostly viewed as a writer of racism who brings to limelight the atrocities inflicted upon blacks by the dominant white racists. In this study, I intend to
depart from such understanding of Walker’s writings that delimit her merely to a writer of
racism and I aim to move beyond racial discrimination. My goal in this study is to see the
validity of economy as a significant determinant in shaping the social roles of human beings,
bestowing power to one class while relegating others to be subjugated. Economic
deprivation leads to marginalization whereas financial stability paves path for emancipation
from shackles of powerful hierarchies in the shape of elite class, oppressing institutes,
patriarchy and domestic violence. In this regard I intend to apply the theoretical foundations
of Marxist and Marxist Feminist ideologies on Walker’s selected novels.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels’ theory of economic determinism sees economy to be the controlling factor of all the other realities in the shape of culture, class, creed,
education, race and religion etc. Both these philosophers view human societies divided in
different groups on the basis of possession of material goods. The capitalist class that owns
and controls the means and sources of production also controls the waged labor class or
proletariats. Thus, Marxism highlights the plight of working class people and suggests
some workable solution for empowerment of this underprivileged class. Frederick Engels
adds a new dimension in Marxism, by highlighting the condition of women in different
time periods of history. Engels establishes the theory of Marxist Feminism with intention
to emancipate women from the burden of unpaid domestic duties, patriarchy and economic
deprivation. In this research project I plan to apply theory of Marxist Feminism formulated
by Frederick Engels and developed further by many of his followers. For my textual
analysis, I aim to apply the selected theory upon the works of Alice Walker, and the
objective of my study is to see the portrayal of struggle by female character in the presence
of capitalism and patriarchy. Women of Afro-American origin have been victim of male
domination, economic deprivation, physical exploitation both at home and workplace,
demand of strict monogamy and practice of open polygamy, and exclusion of women from
property ownership. In marginalization of women of Afro-American community both black
and white men play significant role. Blacks oppress these women in domestic level while
the whites marginalize them at work place by giving them low wages and keeping them in
enforced captivity. Besides financial discrimination, both white and black patriarchs exploit
black women physically and sexually. Thus, women of Afro-American society remain
victim of double marginalization, owing to their gender and skin color. Engels and his
followers bring to limelight the problems of women in the capitalist system working at
social as well as domestic level. The way out of such discrimination in Marxist Feminist
philosophy is, financial stability, the last objective of this study. Economic emancipation,
according to Marx-Feminism leads to stability, happiness and harmony by removal of
oppression of women in domestic and social environment, thus it paves the way to a
conducive environment for women as well as for men.

1.1 Women’s Oppression: A Social Construct

Women oppression has not been eternal according to Frederick Engels, rather it was
created at a specific time in history. The nature of affiliation between men and women in
term of marital contract has been different in different time periods. The relationship of
marriage has passed through many stages in the development of civilization with the
authority and status that woman was bestowed with being in different stages. At the time
of ‘savagery’ and ‘barbarism’ woman had a powerful and respectable position in domestic
and social life because of her household work. She had the right to own children and
household items and was respected and obeyed by all including the husband.

Usually the female portion ruled the house; the stores were in common,… No
matter how many children or whatever good he might have in the house, he might
at any time be ordered to pack up his blanket and budge; and after such orders it
would not be healthful for him to attempt to disobey. The house would be too hot
for him. (Engels 60)

Engels points out the fact that woman possessed authority and respect in the age of
Barbarism. She performed the domestic household works and enjoyed privileges. Man had
to be cooperative towards the woman of the house. The strong tribal system of ‘gens’ at
that time protected women’s rights and bestowed them deserving value. Mother was the
central deciding figure in all the domestic affairs.
In the oppression of women, patriarchy played a crucial role. “It was not history itself that excluded the majority of women but the patriarchal forces and structures of society that excluded women’s participation in several large-scale social processes” (Lokaneeta 1406). Thus patriarchy established such social structures that caused women exclusion in social circles. Such socially oppressive structures came to forefront with the age of civilization. With the start of civilization man started dictating to women in all walks of life. Man started owning the means of production such as farming and cattle business and took the right of ownership of the house and children from women. Man did not share the surplus income with her and she was not given share in the new modes of production. “The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production” (Engels 80). In order to gain their basic rights, women started a struggle to put a stop to male hegemony in a patriarchal social setup. This struggle for rights and survival later on adopted the shape of a movement that became known as Feminism. Feminism is divided into different categories depending upon the issues it highlights; Psychoanalytical Feminism deals with women’s identity crisis and the psychology of women, Amazon Feminism sees the stereotypical portrayal of female characters in literature and art, and Ecofeminism seeks interconnection between the exploitation of natural resources and women by patriarchy.

1.2 Introduction to Marxist Feminism

Engels further extended the Marxist theory towards Marxist Feminism where he highlights the struggle of women throughout history. Engels’ Marxist Feminism focuses on the economic dispossession of women and sees man as a dominant capitalist. The web page of University of Idaho’s Journal of Popular Culture, POP defines it in these words. “Feminism in which the domination of women by men is seen as a consequence of capital’s domination over labor (capitalism is the true oppressor); applies Marxist theories regarding the relationship between materials and modes of production to women’s status and class in, say, the role of family” (uidaho.edu/pop/Glossary). In view of Marxist Feminist theorists, the role of finance is crucial in matrimonial life. They focus their energies on the
relationship between man and woman in domestic and social life. The social status of women determines their value in their domestic lives especially matrimonial life. The economically weak women suffer greatly at the hands of patriarchy whereas financially stable women have more social security. Marxist Feminist philosophers view private property as the root of the evils done against women by men. Private property gives rise to economic injustice and inequalities in the relationship of men and women in the domestic environment in particular and social setup in general. Men, due to greater opportunities of earning, possess huge amounts of sums in comparison to women. Marxist Feminists demand women’s liberation from economic deprivation. “Friedrich Engels’ *The Origin of the Family* (1884/1972), a fundamental text in Marxist feminism, argued that the move to private property included a shift from matriarchy to patriarchy and was the initiating point for women’s subordination and oppression” (McHugh 79). Engels highlights the role of economy in the relationship of men and women within the domestic environment where man, being the earner of livelihood and possessor of the means of production, has always enjoyed authoritative status.

1.3 Frederick Engels’ Theory: Finance and Social Relation

Marxist Feminists philosophers focus on the fact that the difference between men and women is not biological but social. When man and woman are assigned different social roles they are distributed into masculine and feminine genders. According to Hans Bertens in *Literary Theory The Basics* gender roles are culturally assigned and “A gender role has been culturally assigned to countless generations of women. The same holds for masculinity with its connotation of strength, rationality, stoicism and self-reliance” (98). The culturally constructed roles of gender become typecast with the passage of time. Masculine gender in Western history has been considered as possessing courage, power and self-reliance. Men are working outside the home and achieving economic milestones whilst women are thought to be financially meek and subordinate to men. They are not given financial independence by the patriarchal mindsets. Biologically, nature has bestowed both sexes with features that can help to attain everything. Following the
theoretical standpoint of Engels, many women writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison and Paule Marshall etc. started writing to liberate women from the economic shackles of the capitalist system. These female writers have been propagating the awareness of empowering marginalized women. One of these writers, Alice Walker belonging to the marginalized section represents oppressed women better because of her direct experiences.

1.4 Introduction to Alice Walker

Female writers in African American Literature have also played a constructive role in bringing awareness to the marginalized women of the world. Alice Walker is an influential black woman who has written a number of books including: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), an epic novel that trails three generations of a black Southern family through internal strife and a struggle to rise from sharecropping. *Meridian* (1976) depicts the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s. *The Color Purple* (1982), an epistolary novel, portrays instances of rape, incest, bisexuality, and oppression of African American women. Her later works include *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989) showing the struggle of women in slavery and racial discrimination. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), and *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1998), her characters depict the struggle of oppressed women, and the lower class men.

1.5 Representative Authors of Afro-American Literature

Afro-American literature emerged out of the storytelling genre. The history of stories among Africans is as old as their history. Written literature among the Africans came to forefront in the last quarter of 18th century from documentation of black identity and history when they felt rejected and stereotyped by the white authors. During the 19th century the oral literature that kept alive the black heritage among African Americans, gradually became part of the drama, poetry and fiction created by writers of color. During the first half of the 20th century the Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Movement proved to be a source of literary originality among blacks. Afro-Americans showcased their literature,
music, visual art and their history during this era proving it a blessing for black creativity. After Harlem the significant event that marked deep impact on African American literature is Black Arts Movement during the decade of 1960s. During this time women writers played a significant role in portraying their cultural values and atrocities committed against black race by the white dominating capitalists. Zora Neale Hurston, Paule Marshall, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are some of the internationally acclaimed writers of African American origin who document the struggle of women against patriarchy and capitalism.

1.6 Condition of Black Women in America

Alice Walker documents the sorrows and pains of women of her community by following the example of Marxist Feminism. Economic deprivation is one such grave issue that marginalizes the women in different walks of life. African American community in American social context falls in the category of marginalized factions because of economic deprivation and therefore, African Americans are socially degraded on almost all fronts. Afro-American constitute “13.3%, whereas the whites are 62% of the total population of USA” (blackdemoghrapics, 2016). According to official statistics, African Americans despite five times lesser in quantity have a very high poverty rate than that of white Americans, for instance, “The poverty rate for non-Hispanic Whites was 10.1 percent in 2014, lower than the poverty rates for other racial groups” (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 12-14). Moreover, “For Blacks, the 2014 poverty rate was 26.2 percent and there were 10.8 million people in poverty” (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 14). The condition of black people in educational sector in America is also below satisfactory level in 2013, the statistics indicate only 19.3% attaining bachelors or higher degrees, according to the information communicated by the Department of Commerce in 2015 (US.CensusBureau,2015). The report issued by the US Census Bureau in September 2016, shows that for the year 2014 “the median income of non-Hispanic White households was $60,256, and for Black households it was $35,398” (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 5). This indicates big disparity between the annual income of a white and a black family in America. It highlights the fact,
life for whites in America is privileged while Afro-Americans remain marginalized in terms of income, education and other economic indicators.

In her article “The Economic Status of Black Women in America” Lillian Bowie, The Director of Economic Partnerships & Development in America, highlights the fact that African American women own only about one penny of wealth in comparison to every dollar owned by African men and white women (naacp.org 2011). The economic statistics for African American women are nothing when compared with their men yet these women have to think about fulfilling the basic necessities of their children and households. They cannot enjoy the blessings of life that their male companions do. Lillian Bowie’s words specify the fact that the white women enjoy far greater privileges than black women since the law also protects the white women and their job opportunities.

My research is significant because the readers can also trace similarities between conditions of Pakistani and African American women. Women of both nations are still underprivileged mainly because of their poor economic circumstances. Similar to the black women is the condition of the Pakistani lower middle and lower class women. A report formulated by the UNITED NATIONS titled. *The World’s Women 2015 Trends and Statistics* brings to the limelight the situation of women in Pakistan: “In Pakistan, 64 per cent of women have never attended school, 29 percentage points higher than for men (Jensen and Jackson 83). This shows that there is a great need to do work on emergency basis for the betterment of women’s condition in education sector. The report also shows economic inequality between men and women in Pakistan. “Finally, the difference in earnings between women and men was largest in Pakistan, where women earned only 63 per cent of what men earned in recent years” (Jensen and Jackson 107). Thus, women are still underprivileged in Pakistan, as far as ground reality is concerned. According to Tahira Abdullah, the leading human rights activist in Pakistan 75% of the population lives below the poverty line of which a large number is female. Abdullah has highlighted the deprived condition of Pakistani females while talking in “Feminization of poverty on the rise in Pakistan” She highlights the fact that women have to do house work without any financial benefit. They do not have enough money to fulfill their basic needs (pakistanntoday.com).
A parallel can therefore be drawn between the situations of women in Pakistan to that of African American women. Pakistani women are not aware of their basic rights according to the constitution of Pakistan that grants them equal rights to own and earn money. In Pakistan, women have fewer opportunities to work independently, they do not have easy access to job opportunities and when they get jobs they have to deal with stereotypical patriarchal behavior. Low wages and harassment are also problematic for the women in the workplace.

1.7 Statement of Problem

Household labors assigned to women as obligatory compulsions, are unpaid tasks whereby women toil from dawn to dusk, assuming the role of domestic slaves, also highlighted in the Marxist Feminist ideology. Women remain deprived of property ownership whereas men attain more privileged position in the family unit primarily owing to their control on system and sources of production. This allows married men the liberty to practice their malicious intention in discrimination of women. With the objective to transfer the accumulated wealth to the next generations, men demand strict monogamy and fidelity from their wives while at the same time they practice polygamy and unfaithfulness with the other unrelated women. Such men use money as an enticement to lure women for performing polygamy, accessing them in brothels and searching poor, needy and helpless women and thus they exploit miserable condition of such women.

Patriarchy has dominated the lives of women in both domestic and social circles owing to its control on sources of production. Income is mostly generated through outdoor activities therefore men keep the surplus revenue to themselves. On the other hand domestic chores have no significance and remain unpaid labor, assigned to women, who are also kept out of property ownership. Economy, in this contemporary age, plays a significant role in determining the worth of individuals. Men with powerful financial stature, lead privileged lives whilst women are considered worthless if they do not own property. This study then seeks to address this situation and shows how the deprivation of property and money relegates the status of women in the world. The female characters portrayed by women
writers of Afro-American literature have been the object of subjugation on domestic and economic levels. Since the selected texts of Alice Walker deal with a marginalized class – i.e. African American women, the problem becomes real.

1.8 Significance of Study

Possession of private property determines the social worth of individuals according to philosophies of Marxism and Marxist Feminism. Persons with no possession of material resources are relegated to the poor living standards. Survival with self-esteem is barely possible for economically deprived people. Literature created by authors of African American origin, aims to portray the socio-economic conditions of African American communities not only in the past but also contemporary age. This research is an attempt to record the struggle of deprived factions of African American community, with focus on the monetarily marginalized gender i.e. black women. Women of black origin remain subjugated on account of their gender and owing to their skin color. Poverty is one of the significant factors in keeping Afro-American women to the level of exclusion on almost all fronts. Thus this research aims to highlight the downgraded condition of black women in the context of Marxist Feminist theoretical background.

The main purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role of finance in family relations especially between wife and husband as shown in Walker’s novels. It aims to explore the strengthened position of the men members and the weakened position of Walker’s women characters. The supremacy of men is socially constructed and naturalized by society so it is not biological phenomenon. Biologically men and women can achieve equal excellence provided they are given the right environment for growth. This study works on the premise that the reason of male domination is their chance to earn whilst the lack of opportunities for women puts them in a weak situation. This study suggests ways in which women can get emancipation from unjust social practices established by patriarchy to exercise its control on women. This research project can help women in learning about Marxist Feminist method of women’s emancipation from oppression.

The causes of women oppression according to Marxist Feminist analysis can be traced in the time period of historical change from Barbarism to Civilization, when private
property appeared after dismantling of Gens Tribal system. The phenomenon of patriarchy emerged as a result of men taking control of all affairs of social life concerning women. Because of possession of property, men assumed socially superior position while women were downgraded to the position of social inferiority. This research is an attempt to seek interconnection between patriarchy and private property. The study in this regard aims to expose the ways in which patriarchy exercises its control in matter related to private property and possession of sources of production. This research, therefore, seeks to determine the value of material things especially money in determining the strength of relations, as portrayed by Alice Walker in her writings.

My research is significant for its endeavor to expose the weakness in the relationship of husband and wife, where a husband tries to dominate his wife in every matter, primarily owing to his financial superiority. In this regard, Marxist Feminism is valuable as it strives for social change in the hierarchy of husband/wife relationship by bestowing chances for both the sexes to earn and possess ‘means of production’ equally. It aims to create harmony in the matrimonial kinship, whereby both the parties could enjoy freedom, liberty and mutual respect.

My research is significant for married men, as it suggests ways to them to save their marriage bond and find ways to happiness to survive with their better halves. One major cause of failure in marriage is practice of polygamy with unrelated women on part of men. This research is valuable in highlighting the ill effects of polygamy and faithlessness. The practice of monogamy is significant for both the parties engaged in marital contract. If loyalty is shown and practiced in the relationships then it paves path for life long relationships and convinces both the partners to stay firm in all circumstances. Thus this research is significant in improving the relationship of both husband and wife.

This research is significant in bringing changes to the condition of Afro-American women who suffer greatly due to patriarchy by men in family and society at the same time. For women to liberate themselves from the shackles of patriarchy, it is pertinent for them to gain economic independence. Women with financial stability are less likely to suffer physical violence as compared to the women having poor background.
This research has equal significance for Pakistani men and women as it highlights the ways in which patriarchal practices are used against females. It also suggests practical solutions for women to gain emancipation. Many parallels can be drawn in the condition of Pakistani and African American women, while considering the economic statistics, education and poverty level. Thus, this research can bring positive change for women and men in domestic as well as social level in Pakistan.

This research is significant in addressing the gap in Marxist ideology where domestic labor of women is ignored. Marxist Feminism considers household chores as unpaid labor, therefore it strives to determine the worth of this responsibility. Women are thought to be the guardian of the household duties, whereas the reward is nothing. Rather, women receive physical punishment, disloyalty and huge burden of work. Men on the other hand control outdoor activities, which generate income therefore they remain powerful and independent. Marxist philosophy talks in detail about the problems of men at workplace while completely ignoring the domestic duties and role of women, abandons women. This study is significant in a way that it aims to fill the gap in Marxist theoretical framework.

This study aims to open new windows for future researchers in Marxist Feminist studies in literature. By remaining within the paradigm of Marxist Feminism, future scholars can validate the historical claims about the condition of women in different phases of historical development. Future researcher can also investigate the condition of women at work places, where women remain exploited due to low payment on the basis of gender discrimination, physical violence and long working hours as compared to men who earn more while working for lesser number of hours. This financial disparity is more obvious in private sector where men remain privileged as compared to women. Therefore, this study primarily focuses on financially week position of women in general and wives in particular. Similarly the future researcher can also explore enforced child labor which is very common in most of the developing countries. The families of such children cannot afford their education therefore, they have to leave education and start working for small sums in order to support their families. The economic deprivation and sexual exploitation of transgenders
is also a grave social issue. Therefore, future researchers can also explore the ways in which trans-genders can attain emancipation and respectable living.

In this age, money plays a vital role in determining the strength and direction of human relations. In this regard future researchers can investigate the validity of the standpoints of Liberal Feminists and Radical Feminists etc. Liberal Feminism investigates gender roles which are constituted through ignorance (Sociology.org.uk). Future researchers can investigate this ideology in the literature that depicts the oppressed condition of women belonging to marginalized societies. Radical Feminism on the other hand looks at women as a sex class and considers the relationship between women and men to be a product of the patriarchal class that can only exploit women. Radical Feminists think men to be enemies of women and, therefore, strive for complete freedom from men even to the extent of considering marriage as a hegemonic institution established to exploit women. Radical Feminists, therefore, prefer the use of technologies to men for the fulfillment of sexual desires and reproductive needs (Sociology.org). Thus future researchers can investigate the relevance and validity of these theoretical underpinnings with that of the conditions of women.

Future researcher can also investigate the relevance of Cultural Feminism to the condition of downtrodden Afro-American women. There is difference of approach between Marxist Feminist viewpoint about women’s emancipation and Cultural Feminist ideology. In American mainstream scholarship, feminists tend to avoid Marxist Feminism and has the tendency of advocating cultural Feminism that does not openly criticize the capitalist system, responsible for the oppressed condition of women especially black women. Maria Mies outlines the historical background and political implications of this standpoint that supports education as a cultural action for the revolution in women’s condition. The urban middle class of America has a staunch belief in education as a tool of emancipation. With regard to the woman’s question it is based on the assumption that woman's oppression has nothing to do with the basic material production relations or the economic system. This assumption is found more among Western, particularly American, feminists who usually do not talk of capitalism. For many Western feminists women's oppression is rooted in the
culture of patriarchal civilization. For them feminism is, therefore, largely a cultural movement, a new ideology, or a new consciousness. (Mies 22)

Thus from Maria Mies’ analysis it becomes obvious the American scholars of present day, do not want to dismantle capitalism, as it is the base of their country. They only focus on the cultural aspects of feminism, instead of going for the practical steps as suggested by Marxist feminists for the emancipation of women. Therefore, future researchers can explore the validity and difference of approach in both Marxist and Cultural Feminist theoretical viewpoints.

1.9 Delimitation

This study aims to analyze the novels of Alice Walker, the prominent African American novelist. She has written a number of novels but for the purpose of research, this investigation is delimited to three novels: The Temple of My Familiar, Meridian and The Color Purple.

1.10 Research Objectives

1. To investigate the struggle of African American women in the patriarchal situation presented in the novels of Alice Walker
2. To explore the sufferings of black women in the background of economic manipulation by men in society as shown in Walker’s novels
3. To determine the role of financial stability in social acceptance of women as portrayed by Walker

1.11 Research Questions

1. How do Walker’s novels depict the condition of African American women in relation to the male dominated American society?
2. How does Walker highlight the sufferings of black women in the perspective of economic exploitation?
3. What role does financial stability play in the social acceptance of Walker’s women?
1.12 Key Terms

Gens. It is the governing body of socialist system in epochs of savagery and barbarism that protected the rights of all the underprivileged people including disabled people, wounded soldiers and women.

**Means of production** refers to the sources of income generation such as crops cultivation and trade with other tribes or people.

**Savagery** is the time period in human history according to Engels that coincides with time period of Paleolithic age which ended in 10,000 BC. This age marks the changes in technology, rapid production of crops and settlement of human beings.

**Barbarism.** The time period of this age is around 1000 BC, with start of Neolithic age. In this age development takes in tools development from stone to bronze and then to metals.

**Civilization** is the time period in history that roughly starts from 2500 years ago around 500 BC. At this time human beings developed business opportunities in the form of cultivation of crops, tending of cattle and enslavement of other fellow human beings.

**System of production** refers to activities to generate surplus revenue such as trade and commerce.

**Monogamy.** It refers to marriage with a single person at a time and observing strict fidelity. According to Engels women are demanded strict monogamy in their relation with their husband.

**Polygamy** here connotes to engaging in extra marital affairs with person of opposite gender other than lawfully wedded partner. Men after the emergence of private property kept their option of polygamy open by going to a number of women other than their wives for the sake of attaining physical pleasure.

**Matrilineal Gentes** are the blood lines of succeeding generations that have their identity and recognition from mother side. In old times when women were in good social position there were elders of family and succeeding generation associated themselves with their mothers.

**Marxian Feminism.** In this document Marxian Feminism is used as a term in place of Marxist Feminism. Both have same meanings and are used interchangeably.
Patriarchal capitalism is a system of governess and societal set up where men are in complete control of all affairs especially in matters related to financial matters. Men have strong hold on sources of production that leads to generation of revenue. Consanguine family is the first updated stage of human relationship from animal lives. At this stage men and women had liberty to keep conjugal association with persons of their likings. The only restriction was banned intercourse with people of different generations such as father and daughters. Punaluan family. In this type of marriage all siblings including cousins of the same generations are prohibited from engaging in connubial relation. Outside this restriction people had liberty to establish physical relations. Pairing Family. It is the third stage of development in matrimonial association where a man is allowed to marry a single women. The physical relationship with other people is strongly prohibited. Private property. Before Civilization era all the property was in possession of Tribal Gens. After Civilization men took control over the affairs of gens and started owning private property in the shape of land, crops, land and slaves that made them powerful compared to other people. Subject. It is used as noun for marginalized people of black community. Plantation refers to the places owned by white men where black people are enslaved to demanded to work in the fields of different vegetables that leads to the economic benefits for white people. The white captor own the blacks and use them for their own capitalism. Slavers. Slavers here is used as a slave traders in this study. People who carried Miss Lissie and Zede from one owner to another are called slavers. Slavers in this document refer to white people involved in slave trade who transport Zede and Miss Lissie from one owner to another in Walker’s The Temple of My Familiar. Slavery. Engels explains in detail the phenomenon of slavery in human history where the powerful wealthy group of people enslaved other week people in order to gain economic benefits from their physical labor. So poor men and women were enslaved by rich people for their personal gains.
Unpaid labor. Marxist Feminism categorizes the housework as unpaid labor because it is assigned to women and they do not get anything in rewards for performing laborious tasks of domestic duties.

Class system. The people of Upper class enjoy privileges because of their economic prosperity whereas people of lower class remain deprived. Almost all societies are divided into class systems based on distribution of wealth in the society.

Working Class. Women are divided into three classes based on their social status, Upper class women, Middle class women and Working class women. The women of Working class suffer the most due to patriarchy and capitalism.

Black Arts Movement refers to the time period of 1960s and 70s where a group of black poets, dramatists, musicians, artists, and writers motivated with political interests to attain the right of vote for black people.

Spoiled Twice. Celie is made pregnant twice at the small age of fourteen by her stepfather who takes the children away and sells them whereas he informs her about their death.

Intertextuality is the presence of references and examples from other texts within a text. Post Structuralism undertakes the task of multiple interpretations, where a reader has the liberty to interpret the meanings of signifiers in a number of ways. The interpretation in this theoretical stance can never be final and absolute.

Harlem Renaissance. It this peak time of African American literature during 1920s and 1930s where a number of Afro-American literary writers emerged on forefronts to bring awareness and social recognition among black people.

Emancipation. In this document refers to liberation of women from shackles of poverty, patriarchy and exploitation caused by both black and white men.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Marxism and Marxist Feminism

Marxism is a political doctrine that deals in unshackling the chains of oppression exerted by the elite class using superstructures like law, religion, race and sources of production. Marxism is defined as: “the political, economic, and social principles and policies advocated by Marx; especially: a theory and practice of socialism including the labor theory of value, dialectical materialism, the class struggle, and dictatorship of the proletariat until the establishment of a classless society” (merriam-webster/marxism). Marxist doctrine identifies two social classes, namely bourgeoisie and proletariat, the former being the dominant while the latter subjugated in all affairs of socioeconomic life. “By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour” (Marx and Engels 31). To Marx, the dominant capitalist class remains influential primarily because of their control on sources of revenue generation. Similarly “Capitalism, Marxism tells us, thrives on exploiting its labourers.
Simply put, capitalists grow rich and shareholders do well because the labourers that work for them and actually produce goods” (Bertens 83). Through this control, the bourgeoisies or capitalists establish hegemony upon the proletariats. “The proletariat class is the class of wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live” (Marx and Engels 31). The working class, which is the lower class, has to depend upon the sources of production owned by the ‘bourgeois class’ for their survival. “Marx and Engels demonstrated the element of class antagonism based on the conflicting interests between the main classes of capitalist society and particularly between the capitalists and wagelabourers” (Milios, Dimoulis and Economakis 4). The capitalist enjoys the fruit of the labor performed by wage workers, who are paid much less than they contribute in form of their strenuous efforts. Despite performing the physical labor, the people of lower class are relegated to the status of enslaved people. “Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overseer, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself” (Marx and Engels 40). Marxist ideology brings to limelight the treatment of the working class by the bourgeois class. Moreover, this subjugation is much more complex than it apparently seems, as it may include monitoring by the machines, by the master and his retinue who are assigned the task of observing the performance of these laborers.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels formulated theoretical principles of Marxism on idea of revolutionary philosophy aiming to bring social change and to improve the condition of the proletariats. Marx and Engels in *Communist Manifesto* suggest the “Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes” and “Abolition of all right of inheritance” (57) Therefore, “The aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange” (Berry 156).

For Marxism the economic reality is the biggest of all other political, cultural and racial realities. In a society, it is this economic phenomenon that regulates all aspects of life. All systems and proceedings run and are controlled through economic means of
production. Various classes in a society exist depending upon the economic means they possess. Moreover, this economic reality either excludes or eclipses all other individual or social realities such as gender, religion, age, caste or race, as Marx and Engels point out in their *Communist Manifesto*: “Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex” (Marx and Engels, 40).

Marxist Feminism is one of the prominent theoretical stances of the Feminist theory. It is implicated in the position taken by Marxist philosophers about exploitation of the poor by the rich on the basis of economy. Karl Marx is of the view that, "Productive Labour… is wage labour which exchanged against the variable part of capital (the part of the capital that is spent on wages) reproduces not only this part of the capital (or the value of its own labour power), but in addition produces surplus value for the capitalist. Only that wage labour is productive which produces capital" (Lokaneeta 1410). Thus the system of capitalism produces revenue that directly favors the capitalists as surplus goes to them. The proletariat people only receive the smaller portion of financial benefits in shape of wages. The productive labor works in advantage to make the dominant capitalist more powerful. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels developed the system of economic and political thought especially the doctrine that the state, throughout the history, has been a device for the exploitation of masses by a dominant class. They focused on the deprived condition of the proletariat classes by the powerful capitalist class. The objection that Marxism has often faced is their focus on capitalism in terms of labor performed outside home in field or in factories in the corporate sector whereas domestic labor is ignored by them.

The family or the domestic mode of production is based on the unpaid labour of the wife and creates antagonistic relations of production between the husband and wife. This is the basis of the patriarchal exploitation where the men are the exploiters…. The fact that the same labour when performed in the market is considered productive and has exchange value reflects the concealed value of the domestic labour. Marxists never considered domestic labour as contributing to production,
as it was believed that under capitalism the family ceased to be productive.

(Lokaneeta 1410)

Karl Marx’s theory mainly focuses on the representation of man in the work and all the class division is made in terms of relation to man. Marx can be called as a representative of patriarchy. He struggled to make man free from the capitalist powers and wanted to empower him. In his works, he does not give importance to woman and unpaid labor within household environment. In this regard Frederick Engels played a significant role in bringing awareness among the women.

Though Marx’s philosophy has shaken the political doctrine of many countries in the 20th century and gave voice to the proletariat class, yet Marx, according to many feminists, worked only for strengthening the patriarchal system and paid no attention to the economic empowerment of the female gender. Women in many societies are restricted to the domestic duties only and these household labors do not have much role in political systems governed by men. It is in this socioeconomic context that the current research intends to explore the economic condition of the married women in comparison with their better-halves. This stance is taken up by Frederick Engels, who sees gender as a social construct. Many of his followers and also critics view Marx’s economic ideology as denying the due representation of women. Women in this context are doubly marginalized, as they suffer not only economically but at the hands of the male gender as well. Theorists, such as Simone De Beauvoir, see construction of gender as on the basis of evil nature of men; similarly, Kate Millet also criticizes Engels by looking at women’s oppression as psychological and sexual phenomenon. The researcher also critically views such interpretations of Engels’ works and sees his theory as a significantly contributing factor in highlighting the plight of women in household environment where women are abused both, physically and mentally. In this regard, some prominent critics, such as Pat Brewer, Sharon Smith, Chris Harman, Carol E Handerson, Martha Gaminiz, Chris Ingraham, Furgusaon and Rosemary Henssay, have made vital contribution and related Engels’ theory to the modern times where the plight of women is not different from the one that occurred in the ages of industrialism, feudalism or in any age marked with dominant
patriarchal system. Engels also brings forward the strategy of liberation of women from clutches of deprivation, physical and sexual violence. If causes of women’s subjection are removed then their emancipation could be attained.

2.2 Difference between Engels’ and Marx’s theory

Engels has widely been acknowledged by many prominent feminist theorists for his ground breaking work in favor of women. Engels’ work proved to be a guideline for women’s rights activists in the last 130 years. It is because of his vast knowledge of history and deep observation of women’s sufferings in society that he thought differently from his partner Karl Marx whose work mainly focuses on the economic problems of men and their class divisions. Although Engels refers to Marx in his book “The Origin”, yet the latter in his own writings never gave preference to women.

Indeed the history of feminist interest in Marxism has been punctuated by a great deal of critical exchange as feminists challenged Marxism’s limits and in the process expanded its explanatory power as a theoretical framework that might more adequately address the different historical situation of women. (Rosemary and Ingraham 3-4)

Other Feminists also express similar disagreement towards Karl Marx and his theory of Marxism. For instance Nancy Hartsock in her article “Marxist Feminist Dialectics for 21st Century” highlights Karl Marx’s approach towards women.

I have a number of problems with Marx’s own theories, among them: 1) class, understood centrally as a relation among men, is the only division that counts; 2) the analysis is fundamentally masculinist in that workers' wives and their labor are presumed; 3) homosocial birth images mark the analysis in important ways; 4) women come and go in the analysis and are profoundly absent from Marx’s account of the extraction of surplus value - the heart of his analysis; 5) he is clearly a 19thcentury Eurocentric writer who can pay little attention to such contemporary concerns as environmental issues and the rise of service industries. (402) Marxist Feminists part their ways from Marxism for its focus on problems of men related to economic and social situations. According to such Marxist
Feminists, Marx did not pay attention to the problems of poor women and developed the concept of class in relation to only men. Control in matters concerning social and domestic life allowed men to assume superior social position for a very long time. On the other hand, women have been miserable due to the male hegemony that subdued the former by keeping them ignorant, uneducated, economically backward and dependent in all domestic and social affairs. Since an individual’s economic stability plays a significant role in determining his or her social position, and therefore, the higher status of men in society is primarily due to their control on the sources of production.\(^1\) As a result, men have all opportunities available to them to earn, something which enables them to enjoy higher status in society, whereas women, being mostly domestic workers, remain deprived of such economic opportunities as available to men. Women’s inferiority, therefore, is because of their confinement to unpaid labor in household duties. Marxist feminism is a theoretical stance for women’s liberation and strives to empower them by providing them with equal opportunities of participation in means of production thus allowing them to claim their property rights as well. The guiding principles of Marxist Feminism are laid by Frederick Engels who followed the ideology of Karl Marx about hegemonic control of capitalist system.

2.3 Engels’ Role in Highlighting Women’s Oppression

Engels is regarded as the founding figure of Marxist Feminist theory that focuses on the economic problems faced by women in society in general and in domestic life in particular, aiming on eradicating poverty among the women. The main aim of Marxist Feminism is to empower women economically in order to bring their status up to the level of the male members of society. “Engels was among the first to realize the importance of gender in human history” (A Pelz 123). Other scholars and theorists of Engels’ time believed that women’s place within society was due to the natural weakness in their personalities. Engels, therefore, is remembered in the history of Marxism as a revolutionary who highlighted the plight of women as the oppressed faction of society.
Fredrick Engels established Marxist Feminism with the publication of *The Origin of the Family, The Private Property and The State* in 1884. In this book, he focuses on the role of finance in determining the nature of relationship in society especially that of husband and wife. Engels breaks the stereotype that women’s inferior position is due to biological weakness. He proves the fact that women’s inferiority is a social construct. Among the old tribes of Barbarism times, women enjoyed influential prestige (Engels 61). At that time mothers and wives enjoyed more power and authority in the house due to their household responsibilities.

There is no production in general, because production is always production at a given stage of social development. Likewise, there is no gender inequality in general; gender inequality has causes and structural supports specific to each mode of production and is intrinsically related to other historical forms of inequality. (E. Gimenez. 339)

Engels traces the role of men who became the owner of new sources of production such as cattle breeding and selling. According to him, slave trade also became popular among the people of the new era. Men, by owning these sources of income, became powerful not only socially but also domestically. ‘Mother rights’ were replaced by ‘father rights’ and so slowly paved the path for women’s exploitation.

Engels’ investigation of the causes of male supremacy has been followed by many literary critics. Sharon Smith in her book *Women and Socialism: Essays on Women’s Liberation* highlighting this fact states: “He (Engels) developed a historical analysis which locates the source of women’s oppression. In so doing, he provided a strategy for ending that oppression. It is no exaggeration to say that Engels’ work has defined the terms of debate around the origin of women’s oppression for the last 100 years” (23). Engels’ vital contribution in determining the source and origin of women’s subjugation is lauded because he formulated a plan for eradicating this oppression where he has suggested practical solutions that could not only empower deprived females but also create an unprejudiced social setup where every gender is respected and given equal rights. “Engels’ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* provided the most comprehensive account of patriarchal history and economy and the most radical” (Millet 108).
Theoretically this book is premised on Morgan’s concepts, who discovered the time in human history when oppression of women could be dated back to thousands of years. This book has attained the value of core text for a study of the theory of Marxist Feminism. It is followed by a number of authors who are interested in the Marxist Feminist theory formulated by Engels. No matter whether they support the theory or reject it, they follow Engels’ ideology in both cases. “The increasing concern in recent years with the status of women in the modern world has reawakened interest in Frederick Engels' classic theory on this subject contained in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*” (Carrol 223). Thus Engels provides many writers with grounds to further investigate the reasons of women’s economic deprivation at the hands of their male counterparts. Men consider themselves strong and powerful mainly because of their control of economic resources. Pat Brewer in the introduction to “*The Origin*” describes that Engels in his core book on Marxist Feminism “set out to provide a social explanation for the emergence of women’s oppression with the development of the social institution of the patriarchal family and private property at a particular historic period” (Engels 07). Engels explored the roots of women’s subjugation which materialized with the rise of patriarchy in family life and property rights for males. Such details in Pat Brewer’s view aimed a forceful blow at the prevalent religious ideology about women which considered them as being inferior to men in intellectual, physical and moral states. People considered this inferiority to be designed by God and so thought women as weak, dependent and mediocre (Engels 07). Pat Brewer in the introduction to Engels’ book “*The Origin*” refers to Engels’s own reference to Bachofen’s tracing, for the first time, the history of family and role of women in his book *Mother Right* published in 1861 (28). The ideology proposed by religious people regarding physique and nature of women also downgraded the female sex. “This is a view of the part played by women in history quite different from that of the Biblical Eve who, in the later patriarchal era, was made responsible for the "downfall of man." In reality, what occurred at that major turning point in social evolution was the downfall of woman” (Reed 14-15). Millet further presents references from Christian religious discourse that views women merely an object of sensual pleasure. “Accordingly, in her inferiority and vulnerability the
woman takes and eats, simple carnal thing that she is, affected by flattery even in a reptile. Only after this does the male fall, and with him, humanity —for the fable has made him the racial type, whereas Eve is a mere sexual type and, according to tradition, either expendable or replaceable” (Millet 67). The quoted lines show women as a force of temptation first by the reptile in the form of Satan when she accepts the forbidden fruit and then seduces Adam. Such dominant religious ideological propagations show women as the fundamental reason of expulsion of mankind from Eden. This and other Christian texts show the fragile nature of women which enforces an inferior status on women who are therefore easily replaceable.

Theorists like Simone De Beauvoir see the oppression of women as a biological phenomenon and see it in the physical strength and intrinsic desire of men to dominate women. In her view, men remain detached in old age due to lack of opportunity.

We can see that this affirmation would have remained subjective, inward, without validity as long as the individual lacked the practical means for carrying it out objectively. Without adequate tools, he did not sense at first any power over the world, he felt lost in nature and in the group, passive, threatened, the plaything of obscure forces; he dared think of himself only as identified with the clan: the totem, mana, the earth were group realities. (82)

From Beauvoir’s assumptions about men’s dominance of women and his patriarchal self it is obvious that she thinks that it is innately men’s nature to assert authority over women, which had been suppressed in the age of savagery and barbarism. “The discovery of bronze enabled man, in the experience of hard and productive labour, to discover himself as creator; dominating nature, he was no longer afraid of it, and in the fact of obstacles overcome he found courage to see himself as an autonomous active force, to achieve selffulfilment as an individual” (Beauvoir 82). This shows that Beauvoir associates man’s control over the whole world owing to his instinctive desire to create and subjugate subjects. Engels and his followers encounter this notion of natural supremacy and see it as a man-made phenomenon. “On the basis of this historical situation, certain false claims
regarding the social superiority of the male sex have been propagated. It is often set forth as an immutable axiom that men are *socially* superior because they are *naturally* superior” (Reed 23). Evelyn Read challenges Beauvoir’s assumption of widely accepted notion of men’s superiority to be intrinsically superior and therefore rejects it. Read in this way follows Engels’ ideology of patriarchy and gender as a social construct instead of being inbred in men’s nature.

### 2.4 Protection of Women by Gens System

Before the advent of civilization, women enjoyed dignity and respect not only in domestic life but also in social circles. Therefore their condition was superior in comparison to the present day and age. Their rights were protected by the ‘gens tribal system’. According to Engels’ ‘gens system’ originated within time period of savagery and flourished into barbarism, “Growing out of the middle stage and developing further in the upper stage of savagery, the gens reached its prime, as far as our sources enable us to judge, in the lower stage of barbarism (148). ‘Gens’ consisted of the elderly members of the tribes. Women were also appointed as the members of gens. Gens in dictionary entry denotes to “a Roman clan embracing the families of the same stock in the male line with the members having a common name and worshipping a common ancestor” (merriam-webster.com /gens). Gens Tribal system provided social security to underprivileged individuals by supplying food and shelter to the deprived and poor people. “There can be no poor and needy - the communistic household and the gens know their obligations towards the aged, the sick and those disabled in war. All are free and equal - including the women” (Engels 98). The members of gens considered it their responsibility to protect the elderly people, people with sickness and disabled soldiers. Thus the downtrodden people did not have to worry for their survival and basic needs. There was no exploitation of women at that time because the tribal gens system took care of their requirements and presented solution to their problems. Thus women were the responsibility of gens so there was no discrimination between men and women in the old times.

Engels points out some of the constructive features of gens socialist system.
“Although there are many more affairs in common than at present — the household is run in common and communistically by a number of families, the land is tribal property, only the small gardens being temporarily assigned to the households — still, not a bit of our extensive and complicated machinery of administration is required” (Engels 98). Engels, here, points out elements where human beings instead of making progress and working for the well-being of their fellow humans, created a social structure that brought decline to human values. Civilization proved futile as exploitation continues and causes of conflict still exist of which one is possession of property in the form of land. In the olden gens system land was the property of the tribe therefore conflicts of land possession were easily avoided. A family was given a small portion of land to be used as garden and living place and that too, on temporary basis. Thus individual possession of land was prohibited thereby averting conflicts on individual level.

2.5 Family in Historical Perspective

Engels in his book, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*, traces the history of marital relationship. The nuclear family system of the modern times has passed through many stages to reach its present form. In Engels’ view, at the start of humanity all men and women used to live together where the tribe was the family unit instead of the nuclear family. Human beings lived in groups who were related by blood and there was no individual identification of husband and wife. At this time society bestowed equal rights to everyone irrespective of their gender. Men did not have authority to possess and subjugate women in any domestic or social matters. The present day nuclear family has been in place for the last few centuries only. According to Engels the monogamous family system based on relationship between men and women has passed through different stages. Initially the family had the shape of the “consanguine family” which is the first updated stage from animal lives. In this stage men and women had the liberty of keeping marital status with anyone they liked. The only restriction that those people kept, was banned intercourse among people of different generations such as father and daughter, and father and
The second stage of marital relationship is “The Punaluan Family” where another restriction is applied in terms of husband and wife. All the siblings including all cousins of the same generation are prohibited to exercise matrimony. Engels and many of his followers believe that men and “women lived in groups for about 2 million years where there was no concept of the nuclear family as it exists today. During this time there was no concept of inequality among the females or males and anthropologists are of the opinion that women enjoyed high status and value during the ancient socialist period” (Smith 36).

During the time of savagery, family life, in Engels’ opinion, was decisively controlled by women who organized it through the communal system of the family. Males did not settle in the domestic setup and frequently drifted in and out of home. Matrilineal decent was a natural and common method of tracing back family relations (Carrol 225). Thus in the primitive system of ‘gens,’ women enjoyed prestige in domestic and social life.

The division of men and women into distinct gents gave way to the creation of patriarchal and matriarchal lines. The family was divided into ‘gentes’ of two kinds founding itself on patriarchal line for men and matriarchal descent for women. Engels uses the term gentes as “the tribe consisted of a number of groups related by blood on the mother’s side, gentes” (34). In dictionary entry ‘gente’ refers to an Italian word denoting feminine noun, the English translation for which is people or folk (collinsdictionary /gente). For Engels gentes refers to blood lines among tribal people where mothers, being in a respectable position held social privilege of owning the blood line. Inbreeding within cousins belonging to the same ‘gente’ was not allowed. It was only possible when the cousins belonged to different ‘gentes’. He also uses the term ‘gens’ to define the family structure. In olden times, the socialist system prevailed where ‘gens’ ensured fulfillment of the needs of all people. Every person enjoyed his/her social rights without any discrimination. Each individual had value in the laws implemented by ‘gens’. “Kinship was dominant in preclass societies, but the development of the productive forces resulting in growth in the productivity of labor and, consequently, the possibility of surplus production, led to the emergence of private property, social classes and the state, and a new kind of social organization”. (E. Gimenez 340)
According to Engels the initial signs of pairing marriage appeared in the families where husband kept one primary wife and numerous secondary wives. At this stage marriage between men and women coming from the same generation was prohibited. The possession of property and finances on the personal level played a vital role in the promotion of monogamy especially for women paved the way for Monogamous family. In this regard laws of inheritance also played a significant role. Monogamy for females strengthened its roots because it ensured the child’s legitimacy, their property claims and the woman’s loyalty. “Thus, in the monogamian family, in those cases that faithfully reflect its historical origin and that clearly bring out the sharp conflict between man and woman resulting from the exclusive domination of the male” (Engels 75), class antagonism and conflict between both the sexes is obvious. Polygamy for men remained in practice as it did not cost any material loss to them in future (Engels 70). Hence, it can be said that pairing family is a structure of barbarism; group marriage is characteristic of savagery and monogamy is the creation of civilization.

Frederick Engels based most of his research on Lewis H. Morgan’s study of the Iroquois and other Native American tribes. According to Sharon Smith, Morgan found a similar prototype still existing in the 19th century among the native tribes especially related to the primitive social system. Native tribes had similar structures even though they were located thousands of miles away from each other. This led Morgan and other researchers to believe the patterns of kinship among human beings of olden times. There in the Iroquois tribe, Morgan found women in an equal and respectable status as compared to the one in other scientifically developed and advanced societies. Sharon Smith quotes a reference from Judith Brown about Lewis Henry Morgan which states that “Morgan’s careful study of the Iroquois showed two things: 1) that Iroquois women and men had a rigid division of labor between the sexes; but 2) that women were the equals of men, with complete autonomy over their own responsibilities and decision-making power within society as a whole” (35). Morgan spent a long time among the people of the Iroquois tribe where he found people with clear visions about their responsibilities. He saw that they understood each other’s roles and performed their own duties. His observations state that both sexes
are given complete liberty in their work without any hindrance from the men towards their family women. Women enjoy complete freedom in decision making and there is no interference from their male partners in their duties and other assigned activities. Morgan’s research shows kinship features in Native American tribes situated far from the Iroquois Confederacy. The status of women in Native American societies is similar and shows that these societies continue to follow their ancient roots and bestow females with authority and respect. Despite updated and modern research Morgan’s basic theoretical framework holds its ground and proves its validity in the face of recent anthropological research. Engels, Judith Brown, Sharon Smith and many other theorists admit the fact that the basic evolutionary framework formulated by Morgan still holds its validity despite many updated modern research in Anthropology (Smith 36). Morgan’s investigation regarding Native American customs, particularly the status of women, thus, is valid and applicable.

Chris Harman in his article “Engels and the Origin of Human Society” illustrates that classless human societies existed for a long time. The first class society came into existence about ‘6000 B.C.’ and started when iron ploughshare was invented and utilized with the cattle to promote agriculture production. It enabled the production of a large quantity of food that became surplus for domestic usage. Men therefore, started trade with the extra produced foods, eventually leading to profit making. “Class system first came into being in Mesopotamia, followed a few hundred years later by Egypt, Iran, the Indus Valley and China” (Harman). The transition of culture passed through different phases:

In Morgan's and Engels' view, culture pass through three, basic evolutionary stages that are labeled “Savagery”, “Barbarism”, and “Civilization” -with the first two stages being subdivided into “lower,” “middle,” and “upper” making seven evolutionary stages in all. The defining transitions from stage to stage were determined by changes in economic and technological organization. (Carroll 224225)

Thus financial significance has been the cause of greater social changes from one age to another. Men could not exercise their authority and power over women during ‘savagery’
and ‘barbarism’ times, therefore they used their influence in the time of Civilization owing to their control on technological advancements that increased revenue.

In Engels' view, family life, if it can be called such, during "Savagery" was organized around a communal household which was firmly under the control of females and in which descent was reckoned through the female line. Males were seen as constantly drifting in and out of such households, and sexual encounters were not regulated extensively. In such a situation, Engels felt, the use of matrilineal descent was only natural in that, while paternity might be in doubt, maternity could never be. (Carroll 225)

The social institution of family during phases of ‘savagery’ and ‘barbarism’ worked well due to control of the ‘gens’ tribal system. Matrilineal blood lines bestowed identity and social recognition to both the women and children, primarily on descent from the mother. Men did not undertake the responsibilities of household activity and children. Thus women had a stable social situation at home and enjoyed all the social privileges.

The counterpositions taken by the dissenters can be summed up in two statements:
1) There had never been a matriarchal constitution of society; savage women were just as degraded as their civilized sisters today. 2) The nuclear family as we know it today was not a late development in history as the founding anthropologists and Marxists stated. It has always existed and it has always been a father family. (Reed 13)

Evelyn Reed concludes the argument against Engels’ concept of existence of matriarchal gents and old gentile system by pointing out that it neither existed nor did women have any veneration in olden times. “These two propositions, that the matriarchy had never existed and the father-family has always existed, go hand in hand” (Reed 13). Engels and his followers strongly challenge this notion circulated by supporters of patriarchy. Before the advent of private ownership the society bestowed esteem to women of antiquity the proof of which is found in tribes having traditional tenets. “When the earliest settlers came here from the civilized patriarchal nations in Europe, where women had long since become degraded, they were astonished that these "savages” would make no important collective
decisions without the agreement and consent of their women” (Reed 13). Reed’s explanation gives details of the reactions of European invaders towards Native American tribes who followed the matriarchal ancestries.

2.6 Socioeconomic Exploitation in the Civilization Era

The dawn of civilization brought many advantages to mankind in relation to growth in their food sources, developed economic activities, better clothing, improved communication with different nations and trade progress. Men benefited greatly from civilization by getting hold of the means of income such as cattle breeding, crops cultivation and slave trade. From Engels’ and Morgan’s analysis of history described in the book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State* it is easy to comprehend that the old gens system protected and respected women and with the weakening of the gens tribal system women started losing their value in the social setup whereas men started gaining power and status.

Thus, in the Grecian constitution of the Heroic Age, we still find the old gentile system full of vigour; but we also see the beginning of its decay: father right and the inheritance of property by the children, which favoured the accumulation of wealth in the family and gave the latter power as against the gens; differentiation in wealth affecting in turn the social constitution by creating first rudiments of a hereditary nobility and monarchy; slavery, first limited to prisoners of war, but already paving the way to the enslavement of fellow members of the tribe and even of the gens; the degeneration of the old intertribal warfare to systematic raids, on land and sea, for the purpose of capturing cattle, slaves, and treasure as a regular means of gaining a livelihood. (Engels 106-107)

Engels provides evidence of weakening position of women from Grecian constitution of the Heroic Age where the loss of mother rights, beginning of father rights, inheritance of the property by children and accumulation of the wealth, made men more powerful than they were in the gens system. In fact men took over the responsibilities of gens and made it null. Instead of promoting the welfare of their fellow beings men started engaging
themselves in conflicts. The desire to attain more power and land motivated men to attack and seize land from control of other tribes. The purpose of long and furious battles was to control the resources of other people. The tribes with more land and possession of wealth became more influential. Due to such conflicts the system of monarchy came into being. The nobility with the passage paved the path to pronouncing certain families superior to others. These powerful people enslaved their fellow beings who lacked possessions and influence. Men took over the powers of gens and enslaved members of gens for their personal gains. These slaves were used in the fields to grow crops and performed physical labor for their masters. In this way systematic slavery also came into existence. This slavery, which started centuries ago, still continues in one form or another where powerful people subjugate powerless people. Thus the strong tribal communist system of gens began to lose its influence as men made economic gains. Since material achievements reflected higher status therefore men started using unfair means to accumulate more wealth through slave trade, capturing the cattle of other people and raids on the land and sea. So “wealth is praised and respected as the highest treasure, and the old gentile institutions are perverted in order to justify forcible robbery of wealth” (Engels 107). Thus material assets were praised as the highest treasure since they ensured men’s power, status and influence over their fellow beings.

### 2.7 Economy and Slavery

Economic prosperity also promoted the enslavement of fellow members of the gens as well as the gens itself. In Engels’ view “The period of savagery coincides with the archeological period of the Paleolithic, up until around 10,000 years ago when rapid changes to production, technology and settlement took place” (15). Similarly the epoch of "barbarism start with the Neolithic (or new Stone Age) featuring smooth and ground stone tools and encompass the beginning of the working of metals, including the bronze age up to the development of iron starting around 1000 BC” (Engels 15). Likewise the age of civilization in Engels’ view starts about 500 BC. “And the new society, during all the 2500 years of its existence, has never been anything but the development of the small minority
at the expense of the exploited and oppressed great majority” (99). The system of gens was conducted and controlled by its members. Gens, according to Engels “consists of all persons who, by virtue of ‘Punaluan marriage’ and in accordance with the conceptions necessarily predominating therein, constitute the recognized descendants of a definite individual ancestress, the founder of the gens” (89). Thus women’s blood line played a significant role in the attainment of position as a member of the gens. Since people lived in the form of groups instead of as a nuclear or single family in a pairing marriage women held respectable positions and the descendants of woman founder of gens were appointed as members of gens. With the emergence of private property and its ownership the ‘gens’ system could not sustain itself and was replaced by patriarchal control.

Hence, as wealth increased, it, on the one hand, gave the man a more important status in the family than the woman, and, on the other hand, created a stimulus to utilize this strengthened position in order to overthrow the traditional order of inheritance in favor of his children. But this was impossible as long as descent according to mother right prevailed (Engels 66) Men ensured their control on the means of production because it enabled them to attain more power as compared to the one they had under gens system which was based on matriarchal lines. The position of women within tribes was exchanged by men. “The simple decision sufficed that in future the descendants of the male members should remain in the gens, but that those of the females were to be excluded from the gens and transferred to that of their father” (Engels 66). The rise in the financial standards of men gave birth to the class system and people with interest in commercial activities went into the business of enlarging their wealth and productivity.

Under the given general historical conditions, the first great social division of labour, by increasing the productivity of labour, that is, wealth, and enlarging the field of production, necessarily carried slavery in its wake. Out of the first great social division of labour arose the first great division of society, into two classes: masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited. (Engels 150)

In order to achieve escalation in the field of their business the tradesmen and landowners needed more people to work on their fields for minimal wages. This led to the promotion
of slavery and cheap labor. This social division of labor gave rise to two classes in society: masters and slaves, or exploiters and the exploited. The land owners and the wealthy people took the position of masters and exploiters while the poor laborers were exploited as slaves who had to obey their masters and perform duties for the betterment of their owners. The masters owned the slaves fully and utilized their energies for the comfort of their own bloodline.

The colonization and subjugation of blacks started with adventures of Christopher Columbus in 1492. In one of his letters he records his dealing and observation with Indian Americans in following words. “At every point where I landed, and succeeded in talking to them, I gave them some of everything I had — cloth and many other things — without receiving anything in return, but they are a hopelessly timid people” (W. Eliot 24). Furthermore Columbus stereotypes the Natives by showing them unable to distinguish between the broken glass and jewels. “Whether it be anything of great or small value, with any trifle of whatever kind, they are satisfied. I forbade worthless things being given to them, such as bits of broken bowls, pieces of glass, and old straps, although they were as much pleased to get them as if they were the finest jewels in the world” (W. Eliot 24). It shows he considered the local inhabitants of America as senseless creatures who did not know the worth of broken bowls and broken glass. Columbus’ claim about discovery of America have been uprooted by modern criticism. “We were all miseducated. Columbus did not discover America. The historical facts: in December, 1492, Columbus was totally lost, wandering around the Caribbean islands thinking he was in Asia, when he was discovered by the native Arawak Americans who lived in these islands (Clarke 67). The voyage of Columbus is the advent of slave trade and marginalization of people of eastern world:

Non-European people, especially Africans and the Indigenous Americans the Caribbean Islands referred to as "Indians," initially attributed to the Europeans a humanity and a spirituality that they did not have, and still do not have in their relationship with most of the non-European people of the world. This was a weakness dealing with the aggressive Europeans, and to some extent it still is.
Christopher Columbus was the forerunner of the European aggressor and landgrabber of today. (Clarke 68)

White Europeans in the history and presently frolicked their role in providing themselves a prestigious position white relegating the others especially Africans to a place of total rejection in all spheres of life. A large number of African slaves were brought in America and were settled there on plantations. Presently there succeeding generations are called African-Americans whose condition in America is still truncated in social and economic matters as compared to dominant white Americans.

To the extent that racism contributes to a class system, society has a paramount interest in controlling or suppressing it. Racism injures the career prospects, social mobility, and interracial contacts of minority group members. This, in turn, impedes assimilation into the economic, social, and political mainstream of society and ensures that the victims of racism are seen and see themselves as outsiders.

(Delgado 134)

Despite the fact that modern age has raised the living standards of human beings, all the prosperity is enjoyed by the powerful white men owing to their stronghold on the economic resources in the capitalist oriented social setup. On the hand the minority group of AfroAmericans remain deprived and excluded in all affairs owing to their poverty.

2.8 Subjugation of Women with Emergence of Private Property

Men in the transition period focused more on animals and their domestication and enlarged their herds especially through cattle breeding and selling. Men not only kept cattle but also possessed slaves to generate more economic benefits by using them to tend herds and crop cultivation. The accumulation of wealth by men of that time gave them the concept of owning private property. The first step they took was to keep women away from ownership of herds, food commodities and slaves. Engels highlights this fact in these words:

The herds were the new means of gaining a livelihood, and their original domestication and subsequent tending was his work. Hence, he owned the cattle,
and the commodities and slaves obtained in exchange for them. All the surplus now resulting from production fell to the man; the woman shared in consuming it, but she had no share in owning it. (151)

Man due to his influence outside the home explored business opportunities with the purpose of gaining greater influence in social circles. Herd tending emerged as a promising business deal therefore men ensured their strong control over it. The market value of cattle increased as did the value of related commodities such as milk and meat etc. Men used these animals for purchase of more slaves since slaves proved to be of great help in increasing the economic value of their masters. Another significant step taken by men at that time was disowning women from possession of property in the form of cattle and crops. Women were given responsibilities of household activities so they had to work as before but their housework was an obligation without any reward. This led to the discrimination against women in domestic life. The men allowed the women to consume the newly acquired commodities but deprived them of their possession. Possession of private property thus paved the path for greater injustice.

Discrimination against women originated ages ago, yet it continues in the present age and has remained in practice throughout the subsequent centuries. Men during the course of the ages have felt privileged in subjugating women and keeping women away from economic independence is still in practice. Women’s exploitation is prevalent in developing and developed countries alike. Men continue to exercise authority over women by disowning them from possession of material goods. On the other hand, women are shouldering the same responsibilities as they did in the times of savagery and barbarism; however, the difference lies in the fact that now their performance is not being acknowledged.

Capitalists objectively exert power over workers regardless of their self-perception as businessmen just doing their job; women who are full-time wives and mothers, if they lack independent wealth, are objectively under their husbands' economic control regardless of their beliefs about their relative power within their household". (E. Gimenez 341)
Martha E. Gimenez rightly identifies the capitalist control of husbands upon wives owing to possession of wealth and sources of production. Duties assigned to women have not changed with transition period although their status has changed with time. Engels brings this issue to the light in these words:

The very cause that had formerly made the woman supreme in the house, namely, her being confined to domestic work, now assured supremacy in the house for the man: the woman’s housework lost its significance compared with the man’s work in obtaining a livelihood; the latter was everything, the former an insignificant contribution. (151)

Civilization, thus, proved highly beneficial for the freedom and supremacy of men against the gens system where all were equal whilst it turned out to be extremely unfavorable for females who were deprived of their privileges by men after the dismantling of the powerful tribal gens. The assigned duties of women performing domestic obligations did not change but they gradually became worthless as men became valuable. A significant transformation thus occurred in the actions and psychology of men. They started assuming authority and used their newly attained power over women in the house to oppress them, considering women to be their property also. Women’s contribution of household work became insignificant as all household activities like preparing food, washing, cleaning and child rearing lost their weightage. It was man who was now valued in society because of his hold on the sources of income. Man shared a small portion of revenue for food and essential domestic expenditure only when he was respected and obeyed. Women were desired to be chaste, obedient and faithful to their men whereas men were liberated from such considerations. This behavior of men strengthened domestic exploitation. Engels, commenting on the change in the relationship, states: “Such riches, once they had passed into the private possession of families and rapidly multiplied, struck a powerful blow at a society founded on pairing marriage and mother-right gens” (Engels 65). The value of women in all relations became insignificant when compared with material goods and the harmony that lay in the social system disintegrated. Men invented new methods and ways to multiply their belongings as women were turned into servants instead of companions.
and sharer of wealth mainly for the purpose of greater financial gains. The partnership of the promised relationship of marriage was torn apart and was transformed into a relationship of exploited and exploiter, owner and slave, oppressor and oppressed. Thus the high esteem given to females by the tribal socialist system was devalued and disrespected by men of all later ages.

The word ‘family’ originates from the Latin word famulus which means servant (webster.com/family). The wife was also considered a servant when the concept of monogamy first came into existence. The institution of the family originated for the purpose of passing on the collected private property to the next generation. “Emergence of the monogamous family was to ensure inheritance for the 'legitimate heirs' for men in a capitalist society” (Lokaneeta 1408) For this purpose man accumulated as much wealth as he could during his life time.

The modern family arose for one purpose only: to pass on private property in the form of inheritance from one generation to next. All of the romantic imagery of “true love” which has since helped to idealize marriage in contemporary society can't change the fact that marriage is essentially a property relationship. Most people learn this all too clearly if they find themselves in divorce court. (Smith 96) Thus finance plays a significant role in making and breaking of a marital relationship. The ideology of ‘true love’ in Marxist Feminist philosophers’ view is not more than an illusion where men keep themselves socially superior while women remain publically inferior. The evidence of marriage as an economic relation can be witnessed in a courtroom where both parties try to attain maximum financial benefits. In Engels view the beginning of the concept of private property brought about the decline of the feminist status in society.

According to Engels' famous analysis, in “The Origin”, of women's situation in the history of different economic modes in production, women were originally equivalent to, if not more powerful than, men in communal forms of production with matrilineal family organizations. Men's control of private property, and the ability thereby to generate a surplus, changes the family form to a patriarchal one where women, and slaves become the property of the father and husband (Frugsen and Hennssay). The downfall of the gens
system not only enslaved women in their own homes but also brought the institution of prostitution into existence. Engels, in “The Origin”, highlights the fact that the demand for monogamy and prostitution are the result of the class system which came into existence with the concept of private property. The trend of wage labor earning gave promotion to the act of adultery as it was an easy way for the men to satisfy their lusts at the cost of cheap money. Women who engaged themselves in such forbidden activities also earned their living. Engels describes relation of monogamy and prostitution as “monogamy and prostitution in the modern world, although opposites, are nevertheless inseparable opposites, poles of the same social conditions” (82). Monogamy was a great achievement where conjugal relations are concerned but it gave way to slavery and the concepts of private wealth and prostitution. Wage labor in the form of slavery and prostitution came into existence side by side in ancient society where men exercised their newly attained economic power and social superiority (Engels 74-75). Kate Millet, a leading feminist thinker of sexual politics, disagrees to Engels’ proposal of private property as the root cause of women agonies while she suggests that sexual dominance is perhaps the reasons of all inequalities. She says, “Thus all the mechanism of human inequality arose out of the foundations of male supremacy and the subjection of women, sexual politics serving historically as the foundation of all other social, political, and economic structures” (120). Engels and his followers, on the other hand, are very vibrant in their approach of property ownership to be the reinforcement of women.

The significant conversion in women’s status in Engels’ view took place between ‘the lower and the middle barbarism stages’ of history when the ‘economic system’ was transformed from hunting to ‘cultivation of plants and domestication of cattle’ (Carrol 225). Moreover, men ensured control on the economic means and simultaneously the demand for purity in the shape of monogamy on the part of the women materialized. Sharon Smith provides a reference in this regard from Eleanor Burke Leacock that the idea of class society and monogamy in relationship appear to be closely related with each other. The requirement of monogamy was strongly applied on all women whilst the male members enjoyed polygamy even after marriage throughout the ages. Men insisted on loyalty from
their wives by forcing monogamy\(^5\) whereas they thought themselves liberated from this restriction demanded by the marital status in terms of remaining loyal. The psychology working behind this strict demand for monogamy from women was a desire to ensure the transfer of property and personal possession to legitimate heirs (Smith 46-47). Thus all the restrictions were applied to the vulnerable women whilst men acquired power due to their newly attained status considering themselves liberated from all the regulations that they imposed on women.

Polygamy originally meant having multiple wives and the Cambridge online dictionary defines it “the fact or custom of being married to more than one person at the same time” (Cambridge/polygamy). Engels uses the concept of ‘polygamy’ as engaging in physical relationship with women other than having a primary wife. ‘The Monogamous marriage’ that consists of one man and a woman is the updated form of marriage that “one man lives with one woman, yet in such manner that polygamy and occasional infidelity remain men’s privileges, even though the former is seldom practiced for economic reasons; at the same time, the strictest fidelity is demanded of the woman during the period of cohabitation, adultery on her part being cruelly punished” (Engels 59). Man involves in physical affiliation with other women despite his marital status to a woman. The concept of monogamy that refers to” The practice of marrying or state of being married to one person at a time” (oxford/monogamy). Men because of their socially privileged status are liberated from demand of monogamy and practice polygamy. Men engage in infidelity with women other than their wives by having physical association whereas any such act on part of women is dealt with punishment. This reflects double standard of men in practice of polygamy for themselves and their demand of monogamy from their wives.

The beginning of monogamy and so called civilization proved detrimental for women especially in relation to their role in domestic and social lives. In ‘Punaluan’ and ‘Consanguine’ family systems, men did not run after women as they were easily available and were not the property of specific men. The beginning of pairing and Monogamous family increased the market value of women, due to scarcity of women. Like slaves and new means of production they too, became men’s possessions who remained interested in
other women in order to fulfill their lust of polygamy. Hence women were exploited on a
greater level both as slaves and prostitutes at the dawn of civilization. “Whereas under
previous forms of the family men were never in want of women but, on the contrary, had a
surfeit of them, women now became scarce and were sought after. Consequently, with
pairing marriage begins the abduction and purchase of women — widespread symptoms”
(Engels 59). Women thus began to be utilized as a business commodity with the emergence
of pairing marriage, which paved the way for the establishment of prostitution as a
commercial activity. Married men actively participated in and promoted this business, at
the same time ensuring monogamy for their wives. Having kept their option of practicing
polygamy in the form of running after younger women, abducting them for their personal
pleasures men ensured that prostitution as a profession flourished.

The impact of the financial growth on domestic life was very significant because it
changed the nature of the relationship between husband and wife. All the principles on
which society was founded were violated and new rules were established where mother
rights were no longer protected and respected. All mother rights were taken by men in the
shape of father rights. Engels depicts the changed role of men in the family in the following
lines:

Pairing marriage had introduced a new element into the family. By the side of the
natural mother it had placed the authenticated natural father — who was probably
better authenticated than many a “father” of the present day. According to the
division of labour then prevailing in the family, the procuring of food and the
implements necessary thereto, and therefore, also, the ownership of the latter, fell
to the man; he took them with him in case of separation, just as the woman retained
the household goods. (65)

The fathers, thus, established and exercised their power and promoted it through economic
supremacy. The economically powerful father had greater authority and command than the
father of gens time. Women had to suffer more at the hands of men who treated their fellow
women as subordinates instead of partners. In the new role men started to take revenge
from women since they considered women as being the primary reason for their early
powerless position in the gens system. The possession of property was termed to be men’s right who allowed women to use it on temporary basis only. In case of separation men took all the possessions with them and women were not given possession of valuable goods. Women could only own household goods for their daily use and men ensured their superiority through the possession of private property and owning the sources of production. Men sustained their power by gaining greater wealth through the new means of increasing production. Engels highlights this fact in the following words: “Thus, according to the custom of society at that time, the man was also the owner of the new sources of foodstuffs — the cattle — and later, of the new instrument of labour — the slaves” (65). Men ensured their total control over the newly discovered means of production which gave them not only a sense of supremacy but also made them independent of the control of the socialist tribal system of gens. These new sources included all the food items produced on farms where surplus foodstuff was utilized as trade for exchange of expensive items that other tribes possessed. Rearing and tending of cattle also profited men to a great extent and it was used as a valuable trade item. In this regard slavery played a great role. Since the influential men of the society dominated and enslaved the poor masses and used them as instruments of labor for the purpose not only of cultivating and harvesting crops but also tending cattle. In this way by utilizing the energies of weaker people the capitalist ones expanded their business on a large scale imposing their will on dependents by forcing them to work for them. This hegemonic attitude of the powerful exploiters continued both outside and inside the home.

Apart from Engels’ hypothesis about the origin of women’s subordination in the emergence of private property, Barbara Smuts in her article “The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy” outlines five other theories of the origin of male supremacy. She says, “Among ancestral hominids, female ability to resist male aggression was compromised by reduced social support from kin and female allies” (Barbara12). This theory suggests that oppression had origins in the differences in relationships and support from fellow women and therefore men became powerful. The second theory suggests, “Over the course of human evolution, male-male alliances became increasingly well developed. These alliances
were often directed against females, and they increased male power over females” (Barbara 13). It shows that the unity of males turned into mobs and they considered females as their enemies. Another hypothesis proposes, “Over the course of human evolution, and particularly since the advent of agriculture and animal husbandry, males gained control over resources that females need to survive and reproduce. This increased male ability to control and coerce females” (Barbara 17). Women’s reproductive ability turned out to be a source of their marginalization with the domestication of animals. The fourth theory endorses, “In pursuing their material and reproductive interests, women often engage in behaviors that promote male resource control and male control over female sexuality. Thus, women as well as men contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchy (Barbara 18). According to this notion the conduct of women became the reason of their suppression. The last philosophy promulgates, “The evolution of the capacity for language allowed males to consolidate and increase their control over females because it enabled the creation and propagation of ideologies of male dominance/ female subordinance and male supremacy/female inferiority” (Barbara 19). This theory basis its foundation on linguistic principals. The use of male dominated vocabulary and linguistic violence grow into one of the causes of female relegation and emergence of patriarchy as a social fashion in historical contexts.

Engels basis his theory of women’s coercion in development of private property. The trend of profit making started spreading throughout the region, mainly because it granted superiority to the wealth owners and made them more powerful. The rise in business activities, activated the demand of more laborers to increase the productivity of crops: land owners enslaved more and more human beings in order to increase production and this slowly gave way to human slavery on a large scale (Smith 40). Similarly Smith favors Engels in his claim that private property proved to be the root cause of disturbing the relationship between men and women. It transformed their relationship in a chaotic position and dragged it into a conflicting direction. Sharon Smith quoting Karen Sack states: “Private property transformed the relations between men and women within the household only because it also radically changed the political and economic relations in the
larger *society*. For Engels the new wealth in domesticated animals meant that there was a surplus of goods available for exchange between productive units” (Smith 43). The reasons behind the transformation of relationship are political and economic.

women act as a reserve army of labour, to be absorbed and rejected by capitalism in times of economic prosperity and depression respectively, and so on. Female subordination and inferiority do in fact suit the capitalist mode of production in certain crucial ways, and those ways can be demonstrated to great effect. (Bozzoli 142)

In order to gain political solidity and economic stability men changed the balance of relationship with women in the household life. Whereas as in social circles capitalists deliberately keep women in a marginalized condition for gaining more financial leverage. Domestication of animals also played a vital role in the alteration of the kinship. Engels “traced the ways in which the rise of private property controlled by men led women to a position of subordination” (A. Pelz 123) Engels’ investigation holds strong grounds when it comes to domestic affairs between husbands and wives. Kate Millet presents her counter argument to Engels’ notion of economy to be the essence of women’s oppression. In her view: “The subjection of women is of course far more than an economic or even political event, but a total social and psychological phenomenon, a way of life, which Engels frames in terms of class emotion” (Millet 121) She thinks patriarchy controls the lives of women absolutely in terms of social and psychological occurrences whereas Engels delimits this subjection to economic and political factors. Here Millet includes women’s miseries as a whole. She thinks that the patriarchal system, as it influences women’s lives already, is required to achieve liberation, a careful planning incorporating various steps as well. The goal has to be specific in order to be practically accomplished. Therefore Engels’ indication of causes of women’s pains are more appealing and achievable target.

**2.9 Three Classes of Women**

Ann Ferguson and Rosemary Hennessy divide women into following three classes:
working class women, middle class women, and upper class women. About trustworthiness of the women’s movement they show their reservation by posing a question. “If poor and working class women's issues are different than middle and upper class women's issues, how can the middle class women's movements be trusted to address them” (Feminist Perspectives)? The working class includes all the women who are unpaid and work as housewives, nurturers and childcarers. The upper and the middle class women have more economic privileges than the working class women. They do not fully imagine the pain of these poor women; therefore, the problem for working class women is greater. Ferguson and Hennessey conclude that “middle and upper class women's economic privileges will inevitably lead them to betray working class women in any cross-class alliance” (Feminist Perspectives). Working women do not have money or resources to fulfill the basic necessities of life. Life for them is full of hardships since the well-heeled professional women use the working class women for their own benefit. They exploit them by keeping them at low wages as nannies etc.

This argument, which has taken place over a whole range of issues, carries a certain conviction: female low wages and exclusion from participation in trade unions is a manifestation of capitalist manipulation and division of the working class; the nuclear family, and the isolated unpaid or low paid labour performed by the woman (wife or domestic servant) within it, serves to lower the cost of reproduction of labour power. (Bozzoli 141)

Thus women of working class are manipulated by the men and women of higher class for their own personal gains, economic benefit, being the greater of all. Women of lower class are excluded from production at home when they are subjected to unpaid domestic service by patriarchal husbands in nuclear family and at work place suffer greatly by low wages offered by the capitalist women and men. In doing so, “the upper and middle class women keep the surplus income for themselves. On the other hand the upper and middle class women should come out of their hollow professionalism” (Feminist Perspectives). They should help the working class women by giving them good wages and helping them to learn new skills.
There is a striking difference in the discrimination faced by the working class women and wealthy women. Life for wealthy women is much more comfortable in comparison to those hailing from the poorer classes. Higher class women enjoy property rights due to the excessive wealth flowing into the family’s economic unit.

If anything, the oppression experienced by working-class women is much more severe than that of wealthy women, precisely because their families have no property (This was undoubtedly also true in Engels’ day). There is no comparison between the life experiences of ruling-class women like Hillary Clinton or Ivana Trump and those of a woman clerical or factory worker. (Smith 54)

Smith points out the differences between the condition of women from the ruling class and the poor class. The problems of women from both classes are entirely different as access to sources of production for the elite class women is easier than for the poor women. Of two classes, “ruling-class families exist to reproduce the next ruling class; working-class families reproduce the next generation of workers. The very nature of the oppression suffered by women of different classes is therefore quite different” (Smith 54). Thus, women of both classes have different circumstances, as the ruling class women produce only class of rulers whose life is spent in oppressing others, whereas women of the working class only create more laborers to work for the wellbeing of rulers. The women of the ruling class enjoy higher status in their social life. “When they enter the managerial or professional workforce, this does not in any way increase their oppression as women, since they have a staff of servants at their disposal” (Smith 54). Hence for women of high class the working class is always available to provide comfort. “The result is that working-class women face a double burden, in which they return home from work at the end of the day only to face all of their family responsibilities” (Smith 55). Thus, life for working women is not easy, whereas women of the ruling class enjoy comfort not only in the work place but also in their domestic life.
2.10 Emancipation of Women

Pat Brewer in the introduction to *The Origin* shows that Engels’ theoretical standings about the financial status of women holds ground even in the 21st century - “and the fundamentals of Engels’ analysis of women’s oppression still hold” (Engels 23). Kate Millet one of the leading critic of Engels emphasizes the need of application of Engels’ philosophical ideas in order to obtain social change. In her book *Sexual Politics* she says: Engels was fully aware of how, drastic, far reaching, and significant a social change this might represent, but confident of the success both of socialist and sexual revolution, he prophesied with an optimism which has a somewhat melancholy effect today:…….. The revolution was still to come—but soon. Nearly one hundred years later we yet await it. (Millet 126)

Thus patriarchy because of its strong foothold restricted the application of Engels’ ideology. The revolution in terms of curtailing of polygamy and social equality for women still has to be materialized. The small percentage of women who have the opportunity of earning, receive lower salaries in comparison with men at the same time that they have to face violence and harassment within the family and the workplace (Smith 51). Due to the earning prospects, that man has been provided with, man naturally attains the position of supremacy without formally assuming the “titles and privileges whereas the wife is reduced to a mere servant or proletariat in housekeeping affairs”. (Edles, Appelrouth 86)

Within the family life women are assigned duties such as childcare and household responsibilities comprising of cooking, clothing, cleaning, and gardening etc. All these activities are performed without any financial incentive, Women are involved in unpaid labor and do not get any compensation in this regard. Lindsey German in *Sex, Class and Socialism* states that a large number of women still suffer from domestic violence and rape by both related and unrelated men at the same time that women who hold jobs outside their home have also been given the duties of childrearing and household responsibilities. “The family exists for the reproduction of labour power for the capitalist class, which consequently has a great stake in the family” (German 41). In a situation where men do not perform any obligation and consider their related women as domestic slaves, life for the
women becomes extremely hard. According to Engels women’s oppression is not the result of her biological makeup rather it is a social construct. As a reward for household activities she is only fed and is given few chances of earning in most societies. If a woman wants to go outside her home to earn, she has to face double burden in the form of official duties and domestic duties, since household duties are considered woman’s responsibility. She cannot fulfill both duties equally at the same time but most men do not participate in household activities as they consider themselves responsible only for the outdoor activities of economic gain. “Work places demand a minimum of eight hours daily which is unlikely to be handled by women in addition to household activities” (Edles, Appelrouth 86). Thus they remain excluded from opportunities of earning and public production tasks. Instead of getting facilities, in their role of social development, women are paying a steep price and are deprived of economic and social benefits. As long as the family remains a monetary unit the emancipation of women is beyond consideration because this oppression started hundreds of years ago and is part of contemporary life even in the developed countries.

Marxist feminists view domestic labor as unpaid labor and ultimately a kind of slavery. The ultimate aim of Marxist Feminists, therefore, is to liberate women from domestic slavery and restore their lost dignity. Engels has analyzed the history of gender oppression and the status of women within the family in connection with family relations. Since men do not share surplus income with their family women, preferring to keep their savings hidden, therefore women remain deprived of possession of property and valuable goods.

Under capitalism, the production of the means to satisfy human needs has taken the form of relations of production in which resources that are collectively produced are not collectively controlled or shared. Those few who own or control the forces for producing (technology) what is needed to satisfy human needs do so because of the surplus value (profit in the form of capital) that they accrue through the unpaid labor power of many. (Rosemary and Ingraham 4)

Woman, thus, remains deprived of growth and development. In the present age even in civilized communities, man controls everything since he possesses wealth. Women are
oppressed through all possible means even in developing communities as well. Primarily women are not provided with earning opportunities and wherever they are given possibilities to earn their wages, their wages are not up to the level of the male members (Smith 51). This indicates the fact that women are exploited despite all claims to the contrary. According to Engels women can gain social status by acquiring wealth and status: “The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree. And this has become possible only as a result of modern large-scale industry” (151). Engels here points out the fact that women can be liberated from the shackles of domestic and social slavery when they have equal chances of participation in the system of production. Simone De Beauvoir endorses Engels’ viewpoint about emancipation of women. Woman can be emancipated only when she can take part on a large social scale in production and is engaged in domestic work only to an insignificant degree” (De Beauvoir 81). Thus in order for women to get liberation, their related men also need to play a significant part. Men will remain dominant due to their hold of resources of income and possession of property, so to liberate women, they must share revenue and possession of property.

The first condition for the liberation of the wife, according to Marxist Feminists, is “to bring the female sex back into the public industry where both sexes possess legally complete equality of rights and abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society” (Edles, Appelrouth 87). Women should be allowed to participate in economic generational activities in the public enterprise so that they can be financially independent. Within the family the wife should have equal rights of owning family property and all the members of a family, whether they earn or not, should have equal access to the economic resources generated by the family as a whole. “To this day, the competing demands of job and family are a major source of stress for all working mothers—but are especially so in working-class families, who cannot afford to hire others to help with laundry, housework, cooking, and other domestic chores” (Smith 166) This shows that after working in the field the domestic chores, being the responsibility of women, put them in a stressful situation as
they cannot hire anyone to perform domestic duties for them. In such situation the emancipation of women can occur only when economic liberty is given to women within the family life and household duties are shared by men. In order to change sex stereotypes, men should participate in household activities willingly and actively helping women in domestic work and child care in order to create a balance within the family life. “Hence, what is needed is not simply the ownership/ control of women over property but also a radical transformation of domestic division of labour whereby "domestic duties require their [women's] attention only to a minor degree". (R. Papuji 3400)

There is a need to allow women to participate equally in social life but this is possible only if and when domestic duties are equally shared by both men and women. Women need to achieve essential skills like education etc. in order to provide better services to the industry. When women earn and own revenue then their relation with men can also be harmonized because the root cause of oppression I-e ill distribution of finance and possession of private property will be eradicated.

Emancipatory change that aims to eliminate exploitation and oppression within a social system cannot take place by eradicating inequities only in one sphere of social life-whether it be the economy, state, or culture. For change to be truly emancipatory, it must include civil rights and cultural reforms and extend to the social structures that allow wealth for the few to be accumulated at the expense of the many. (Rosemary and Ingraham 4)

Thus the relationship between men and women can be restored by giving them equal rights of earning and possession. The malpractices exercised by patriarchy against women need to be controlled. There is requirement to transform the thinking of men so that they could start valuing the related women. The cultural notions about women especially as only sex object, should be changed to companion and sharer in life. Social rights to women should be given on equal terms. Efforts are required on social and cultural level to bring harmony in both domestic and social lives, where all causes of exploitation could be removed. Engels also suggests dissemination of equal rights to all classes of people and that the ruling and the ruled class must have the same standards of living in order to achieve liberation of the
poor from the shackles of poverty, hunger and dispossession. “What is good for the ruling class should be good for the whole of the society with which the ruling class identifies itself. Therefore, the more civilization advances, the more it is compelled to cover the ills it necessarily creates with the cloak of love, to embellish them, or to deny their existence” (Engels 163).

2.11 Postmodernism and Black Women

Postmodernism is a philosophical reaction against the Western scientific revolution that occurred between the 16th and 20th centuries. During this period many assumptions about social realities, social practices, independence of human minds and naïve realism were rejected; a new ideology came into existence which not only claims to reject all preconceived notions of colonialism and modernism but talks about new realities and truths by showing promises of improving the conditions of class, gender, race and ethnicity etc. (Duignan Britannica)

Bell Hooks in her article on “Postmodern Blackness” is of the view that there is no meaningful connection between the theoretical background of critical theory coming from Postmodern ideology and black experiences thus showing that despite the postmodernist claims of emancipation the condition of the black people is still poor. White men claim to have bestowed equal rights on them but in reality these claims exist in theory but not in practice. Hooks, being a member of the black community, is of the view that there is no meaningful connection between black experience and critical thinking about aesthetics or culture. (postmodern_blackness)

Marxist Feminists philosophers also criticize the ideology of postmodernism to be lacking practical application. The postmodernism claims are hollow and do not address the problems of black women. Economic deprivation of women of African American is a grave issue whereas postmodernism seems unable to address it. “Marxist feminism sees in much postmodern theory a refusal to acknowledge the historical dimensions of postmodernism and a limited and partial notion of the social-in Marx’s words, an effort to fight phrases only with phrases (Rosemary and Ingraham 9). It also shows that postmodernism does not
give value to the historical aspects of women’s oppression. In Marxist Feminist analysis women oppression started with the rise of civilization and private property. Thus Rosemary Hennessey and Chris Ingraham like bell hooks, criticize postmodernism to be only talk and lofty ideas lacking practical application. In the subjugation of black people capitalism played a significant role. “Historically, the oppression of women and people of color through patriarchal and racist ideologies has been necessary to and embedded in this fundamental structure of capitalist production (Rosemary and Ingraham 4).

### 2.12 Origin of African American Literature

African American literature comprises of the literary works created by the people of African origin. It started in the era before revolution with the litigious dialogue between African American people and literary works produced by the white American authors. The literature thus created, was the expression of in-depth social insight highlighting historical facts and identity issues. African American literature came to the forefront during the antebellum era. This literary creation joined “the war of words between England and its rebellious colonies with the special” purpose of decolonization (L. Andrews Britannica). The earliest Afro-American authors strove for equality for black people as a right enjoyed by white Americans. In this regard Phillis Wheatley wrote on various topics such as religion, morality and slavery.

In 1773, when Phillis was just 20 years old, her poems were collected into a book titled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. This book not only made her the first important black poet but also the first African American ever to have her writing published. She showed that a slave could not only be a good worker, but also a great writer. (McLesse 7)

The first Afro-American book showing mastery of form, metre, selection of themes and depiction of her spirit in poetry, proving the fact that black people were equally capable of expressing their ideologies in a literary form. Wheatley showed her artistic mastery not only in form and metre but also in the choice of her topics.

African American literature belonging to the early part of the 19th century involves the struggle against slavery. The aim of the writers was to convince the white literary
writers to join hands with the blacks against the slavery. For this purpose they utilized the medium of poetry, fiction, essay and conventional journalism. In 1827 Freedoms Journal inaugurated African American newspapers that propagated the achievements of people of black color with the purpose of bringing awareness for the attainment of social and human rights and extolling the achievements of black people worldwide all the while lobbying for an end to slavery. As the prophet of literary Black Nationalism in the United States, David Walker in 1829 wrote his fire-raising *Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World* aiming:

> to warn white Americans of impending racial violence if slavery were not abolished. Echoing Walker, who was a fellow Bostonian, Maria W. Stewart, the first African American woman political writer, issued her *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* in 1835, in which she encouraged black women in the North to take a more outspoken role in civil rights agitation and black community building. (L. Andrews Britannica)

After a year of publication of Stewart's *Productions*, Jarena Lee, a domestic servant incited by the call for preaching published, *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee*, the first autobiography by an Afro-American woman writer (L. Andrews Britannica) depicting her experiences and observations as a domestic servant.

Oral tradition has played a vital role on the literary screen of African American literature. Blacks have kept alive their culture and inheritance through the use of oral stories and songs. During the slavery period “the communal consciousness of the millions of slaves” on the plantation served as an inflammatory factor in agitation for the antislavery movement (L. Andrews Britannica). Most of the folklores incorporate beast characters symbolically in order to show their credence of supernatural elements. One of the significant characters is of the ‘trickster’, who in oral folk tradition comprises of “animals or characters who despite their weakness overpower their strong adversaries” (trickster.html). Oral traditions have been a great source of transfer of the heritage and norms of the black people from one generation to the other for a long time. Thus the
communal consciousness served as a concrete foundation for the emergence of AfroAmerican literature and its popularity in the black community.

Following the oral tradition the genres of prose, drama and poetry dominated African American literature with the purpose of fighting for the rights of the black people. In this regard William Wells Brown well known for his fugitive narration, published the first Afro-American drama *The Escape or, a Leap for Freedom*. During the Civil War a number of African American writers devoted their abilities to persuading the then American President, Abraham Lincoln that the entire black nation was involved in the battle against slavery. At that time thousands of black people joined the Union army. The Civil war ended when Robert E Lee, the commander of Virginia forces, surrendered and Lincoln officially declared the ‘Emancipation Proclamation’, marking the abolition of slavery in the constitution of USA (L. Andrews Britannica). At this time the notable literary figure among the black community was Elizabeth Keckley, the former slave who became stewardess to the first lady Mary Todd Lincoln. Keckley wrote her biography in 1868 with the title *Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*, where she narrated her experiences of oppression in slavery and her troubles after liberty. “In fact, Keckley herself is one of the first writers, if not the inaugural one, in the tradition to which she refers – a tradition of “negro” servants writing (“angrily” or not), a tradition of “servant narratives” emerging from slave narrative”. (Birnbaum 31)

In *Sketches of Southern Life* (1872), a volume of poems based on her own travels among the freed people of the South, Harper created an effective counter to the popular white stereotype of the passive and incompetent ex-slave in the person of Aunt Chloe Fleet, whose wit and wisdom, expressed in Southern folk vernacular, evinced the literary potential of African American dialect writing. After the war, with arising awareness among the middle class African American community, the black people consciously strove to get education with the purpose of raising black people out of the marshes of slavery. The writers of this age mostly imitated the sentimental tendency and genteel style of the popular American literature that appealed to the white middle class with the exception of Anna Julia Cooper, the graduate from Oberlin College, who wrote *A Voice from the South* (1892).
Being a teacher and coming from the middle class, she portrayed the thinking of the black middle class women. (L. Andrews Britannica)

Paul Laurence Dunbar was the first professional Afro-American author who utilized his genius in writing fiction and poetry. In poetry he utilized the Negro dialect very effectively and gained great critical acclaim and financial success. He appealed greatly to the white readers because of his form and diction. His poems include “The Haunted Oak”, “Sympathy” and many others. Dunbar’s poetry clearly indicates the aspirations of a black person in a white dominated society. His poem “We Wear the Mask” shows the anxieties and fears of black community.

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties. (Dunbar, Paul)

The novelists belonging to Afro-American literature like Harper, and Chesnutt used novel as a tool for social reform. Owing to the prevalence of the Euro-American attitude, the white authors projected blacks as stereotypes and depicted typical ‘racial mythologies’ which persuaded the white public to overlook the atrocities encountered by the black people. The black authors strove in their writings to discard stereotyping and racism in order to restore black integrity. Frances E. W. Harper’s novel Shadows Uplifted or Lola Leroy written in 1892 is considered as the first novel created by an Afro-American woman that strove to counteract the white writers’ popularized myth of slavery vis-a-vis the idealized and glorified plantation life, with the purpose of bringing awareness among the middle class black people. The production of Iola Leroy was rooted in the authority of Harper's experience as abolitionist, lecturer, poet, teacher, feminist, and black woman (Carby 63). The themes of the novel cover ‘race, politics and class’ aiming to improve the life of black people (doverdirect.com). According to Hezel V. Carby the text of “Iola Leroy (Shadows Uplifted) needs to be assessed not only in formal literary terms but also
close reference to its political intent, as a novel which was written to promote social change, to aid in the uplifting of the race”. (63)

Charles Waddell Chesnutt being the son of free parents got a chance of getting education and observed closely the violence in his home town situated in Cleveland committed by whites against innocent black people. His fictional work attained readership other than blacks and gained the attention of esteemed publishing houses located in New York and Boston. His renowned novel is *The Marrow of Tradition* published in 1901 and is based on the racial riots of 1898 in the fictional town of Willington located in North Carolina. The novel records ‘the massacre of the African American community and dispersal of thousands from their homes’. (unc.edu)

One of the most influential of the Afro-American literary authors is Booker T. Washington who strove to persuade the blacks of the significance of economic independence, through his writings. He is renowned for his autobiographical work, *Up from Slavery* (1901) which narrates his story when he was a slave working on a Virginia plantation and the painful life that he spent, due to lack of a personal identity and family history. The novel begins: “I WAS born a slave on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia” (Washington 13). Washington also recounts his deprivation of education in following words, “I had no schooling whatever while I was a slave though I remember on several occasions I went as far as the schoolhouse door with one of my young mistresses to carry her books” (Washington 16). He narrates the faithfulness of the slaves towards the masters by saying, “When the two young masters were brought home wounded, the sympathy of the slaves was shown in many ways. They were just as anxious to assist in the nursing as the family relatives of the wounded” (Washington 20). Moreover Washington also describes the issues faced by slaves such as deprived living, pitiable diet and torn clothing. Due to his hard work and consistency the author became a renowned educator and economically stable person. The tone of the novel is optimistic and reveals secrets of self-improvement and success for the downtrodden Afro-American people.
2.13 Harlem Renaissance

African American literature witnessed its peak during the time of Harlem Renaissance which is also known as the “New Negro Movement,” a period of outstanding literary vigor and creativity during the early 1920s and 1930s,

Embracing literary, musical, theatrical, and visual arts, participants sought to reconceptualize “the Negro” apart from the white stereotypes that had influenced black peoples' relationship to their heritage and to each other. They also sought to break free of Victorian moral values and bourgeois shame about aspects of their lives that might, as seen by whites, reinforce racist beliefs. (Hutchinson Britannica) The movement centered in the black ghetto of Harlem, in New York City, where aspiring black artists, writers, and musicians gathered, sharing their experiences and providing mutual encouragement. “Though it was centered in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, many French-speaking black writers from African and Caribbean colonies who lived in Paris were also influenced by the Harlem Renaissance” (pennylibertygbow. wordpress.com). Many of its ideas remained in practice much longer especially in literature.

The Harlem Renaissance developed out of the changes that had taken place in the Negro American community since the elimination of slavery in the United States’ law which accelerated as an outcome of World War I and the great social and cultural changes in early 20th century in United States. Industrialization was catching the attention of people to cities from rural areas and gave rise to a new mass culture. New industrial frame work created work opportunities especially for the black people of America. The Great Migration of African Americans to northern cities was one of the contributing factors leading to the Harlem Renaissance. Most of the African-American literary writers arose from a generation that had lived through the gains and losses of Reconstruction after the American Civil War. Some writers had had parents or grandparents who had been slaves. Their ancestors had sometimes benefited through investment in social capital, including better than average education. During Harlem Renaissance “This GREAT MIGRATION eventually relocated hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the rural South to
the urban North” (ushistory.org/us). African Americans sought a better standard of living and relief from the institutionalized racism in the southern states.

Harlem Renaissance came to forefront on two stages, the initial stage appeared in 1910s. It started with a white playwright, Ridgely Torrence’s *Plays for a Negro Theatre* that used Negro actors as their leading characters. They gave voice to the black people and tried to break black stereotypes. James Weldon remarked about the role of these plays, "the most important single event in the entire record of the Negro in the American Theatre". (Jordon 253)

The Harlem Renaissance was an obvious racial pride for the blacks that came to be symbolized in the concept of the New Negro. Black creative artists started challenging the prevailing stereotypes and racial discrimination through creation of art, literature and music. African American literary artists and musician used their art to unite the black people besides employing creativity in form of literature like modernism and Jazz poem, a new addition to kinds of poetry.

Some common themes represented during the Harlem Renaissance were the influence of the experience of slavery and emerging African-American folk traditions on black identity, the effects of institutional racism, the dilemmas inherent in performing and writing for elite white audiences, and the question of how to convey the experience of modern black life in the urban North. (pennylibertygbow.wordpress.com)

Blacks used art to prove their humanity and claim for equality and the Harlem Renaissance led to more opportunities for blacks to be published by mainstream houses. Many authors began to publish novels, magazines and newspapers during this time and the new fiction attracted attention from the nation at large.

The women's movement on Afro-American women's consciousness had great impact that promoted the term “the black women's literary renaissance” of the 1970s” (L. Andrews Britannica). This Renaissance is also a continuity of life of Harlem among black literary creators. “Although this outpouring of creative energy by African American
women, especially in fiction, had a long foreground, its founding text is generally considered *The Bluest Eye* (1970) by Toni Morrison” (L. Andrews Britannica).

After attaining education from Cornell and Howard universities Toni Morrison started her career as a literary author in 1970 with publication of *The Bluest Eyes* that focused “on the destructive effect of white ideals of beauty, symbolized in blue eyes, and a lonely black girl's attempt to find a positive sense of identity in a loveless family and a community prone to scapegoating” (L. Andrews Britannica). In this novel, Morrison endorsed the slogan of 1970s that, “Black is beautiful” and she also deviated from tradition of portraying male protagonists especially in the time of Black Arts Movement.

By the end of the decade, Morrison was the leading African American writer of the 1970s, an inspiration to a generation of younger novelists, especially Toni Cade Bambara, whose novel *The Salt Eaters* (1980) won the American Book Award, and Gloria Naylor whose novel *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982) won a National Book Award for best first novel in 1983. (L. Andrews Britannica)

Women’s writers of African American literature became focus of attention for the readers and critics during the era starting from 1970s till the end the century. Due to their talent attained from Harlem male writers also regularly received significant appreciation. In 1987 Rita Dove received “Pulitzer Prize for poetry for *Thomas and Beulah* (1986)” Likewise Octavia E. Butler won Hugo and Nebula awards for her short story "Bloodchild," published in 1984. She became the first significant Afro-American women writer of science fiction.

The Negro community proved their identity through their creativity in literary creations and got acceptance all over the world. The spirit of Harlem can even be seen in the literary writings of the present contemporary age. A similar spirit is described by Toni Morrison in her acceptance of “the Nobel Prize, Morrison stated: “Word-work is sublime…because it is generative; it makes meaning that secures our difference, our human difference - the way in which we are like no other life” (L. Andrews Britannica). Although Morrison refers to betterment of the world by highlighting the miseries lurking in it yet she also hints at the marked differences that African American literature has shown from ‘absence or lack to a symbol of artistic mastery. (L. Andrews Britannica)
Along with Morrison, Dr. Maya Angelou is a renowned African American novelist, poet, educator, producer, historian and civil rights activist who herself, being black, experienced the brutality of racial discrimination. “As an African American, Angelou experienced firsthand racial prejudices and discrimination in Arkansas. She also suffered at the hands of a family associate around the age of 7: During a visit with her mother, Angelou was raped by her mother's boyfriend” (maya-angelou). Her strong bondage with the traditional Afro-American community and culture gave her unshakable faith and values. Her writings include *Mom &Me and Mom (2013)*, which depicts her autobiography and her relationship with her mother, *I Shall Not Be Moved* (2004), the collection of poems that ‘records the victory and pains of being black and her struggle to be free just as *Shall I Rise*, depicts the triumph of human experience over the bitter realities and miseries’. (angelou.com)

### 2.14 Exploitation of Women in Afro-American Women’s Writings

#### 2.14.1 Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes were Watching God*

*Their Eyes were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston is a novel that deals with the problems of marriage and finance. Such as “Nanny voices the history of oppression of many African American women. As a slave, Nanny experienced sexual exploitation by her master and physical abuse by her jealous mistress. She was forced to run away with her newborn daughter, Leafy” (Bloom, *Watching* 82). Hurston highlights the oppression of black women because of the white male oppression. Nanny, during her slavery period, is exposed to physical exploitation. Nanny outlines a stark power hierarchy exercised by both white and black men against the women of color. "So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wid you" (Hurston 19). Nanny’s words indicate the fact that black women have to face double marginalization by black men in domestic environment and white men in society at large.
Similar to Nanny, her granddaughter Janie undergoes experiences of male hegemony and physical exploitation through the institution of marriage. After her arrival in her hometown Eatonville, Florida, Janie narrates her story to her friend Pheoby Watson. Janie’s story comprises of her three relationships with different life partners in different time periods of her life. She marries to the elderly potato farmer Logan Killicks only because of his social and economic stability but he turns out to be a patriarch therefore her marriage with him fails. Janie is miserable with Logan because of his pragmatic and unromantic approach towards life. He treats her like an animal and this is why Janie elopes with Joe Starks. “Janie’s first two marriages—with Logan and Joe—are clearly relationships of domination” (Bloom, Watching 51). Her married life with Joe also proves to be a failure despite the twenty years she spends married to him. Joe attains success in spite of his poor background by becoming a business man and later mayor of the city, where he makes his fortune. “Joe exhibits the consciousness apropos of the subsequent epoch—monopoly capitalism” (Bloom, Watching 53). Joe exhibits behavior of a capitalist monarch in his conduct to his wife and oppresses her. “Joe’s need to order everything justifies the severe restrictions he places on Janie’s behavior: not allowing her to speak in public, forcing her to keep her hair up, keeping her from the mule’s funeral, and not permitting her to join in the “signifying” on the porch of the store. All of these restrictions emanate from Joe’s desire to keep Janie in her proper place within his organization”. (Bloom, Watching 54)

Joe excludes Janie from public life and restricts her to limited household environment. Thus survival for Janie becomes very difficult in her relation with Joe. “Through the character of Joe, Hurston presents the ideological form of domination endemic to monopoly capitalism: a totalized whole organized around a legitimating and controlling center” (Bloom, Watching 55). Therefore, she leaves Joe and starts living a simple life with Tea Cake. She enjoys life and true happiness with Tea Cake even though he is a poor man and she has to work as a bean picker in the fields. “Tea Cake liberates Janie from the confines of a tightly organized economy” (Bloom, Watching 55). Thus Janie’s relation with Tea Cake frees her from the shackles of capitalist patriarchy. Janie
herself narrates the difference between her kinship with him and her earlier husbands. “Tea Cake ain’t no Jody Starks” and that their relationship “ain’t no business proposition, and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma’s way, now I means tuh live mine” (Hurston 152). She spends eighteen months with Tea Cake in satisfaction and happiness due to his humorous nature. Tea Cake falls a victim to the hurricane and Janie is left alone in the end. Through the character of Janie, Hurston highlights the problems associated with institution of marriage and patriarchal attitude of men.

2.14.2 Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*

Although the outpouring of creative energy by African American women, especially in fiction, has had a long foreground, its founding text is generally considered *The Bluest Eye* (1970) by Toni Morrison. In her novel *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison portrays evil of incest in character of Pecola. The violent manners of patriarchy are employed in this work of fiction by means of Pecola’s father, Cholly. He not only beats his daughter, but also rapes her; that is the signifier of incest occurring in a black family. According to Bluent and Yasmen “Pecola is the representative of both psychologically and physically abused girl” (qtd. “The Suffers” 441). In Kubitschek’s opinion Toni Morrison’s novel “*The Bluest Eye* delineates how Pecola is repeatedly exposed to psychological violation, and how physical violation completes the psychological destruction” (30). Thus Morison’s novel in Matus’ view, “…bears witness not only to the trauma of the incest and rape that Pecola experiences, but to the trauma of pervasive racism” (qtd. “The Suffers” 441). Therefore, in black patriarchal families their men have adopted the role of oppressors and treat their family women in an abusive manner that lead to their traumatization. Similar instances of men performing their exploitative role against their females of their own family are found in Alice Walker’s novels.

*Beloved* by Morrison is also a novel that focuses on the problems faced by the African American community during slavery and the time immediately succeeding it. All levels of humanity were forgotten by the white plantation and slave owners at that time
when slaves were treated worse than animals. *Beloved* narrates the story of a middle-aged woman named Sethe who has been a slave. The story is told in flashbacks when Sethe meets Paul D, a former slave and comrade of Sethe on the plantation known as Sweet Home. School teacher, the brother in law of the owner Mrs. Garner, and his nephews are put in charge of all activities on Sweet Home when Mrs. Garner, falls ill. Sethe reports the cruel misdeeds to Mrs. Garner committed by the in charge and his nephew towards the plantation slaves, as a result she is given severe punishment. Despite being pregnant Sethe is brutality whipped by the school teacher and his nephew leaving her scarred and swollen. “In Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Sethe is a woman who becomes a sexual object for both white and black society. The images of nature, rape, and animalistic behavior and treatment dominate this neo-slave narrative” (Watson 94). In Cincinnati, Ohio after a month of her fleeing the plantation when school teacher follows her into town. “Sethe decides it is time to run when she realizes that her children, the product of her body’s own labor, are increased property for schoolteacher” (Franco 119). After escaping from the clutches of the plantation overseer, she prefers to kill her daughter rather than submit her to a life and her children to slavery. Sethe’s problems increase with the arrival of the ghost of Sethe’s dead daughter Beloved who proceeds to take over the house.

The family, at 124 bluestone road, is dependent on the community under the leadership of Ella, a former railroad laborer, and their sufferings do not decrease with the passage of time. “Sethe, like so many African women, committed love-murder because after being victimized by brutal rape and sex, these women felt that they had no choice” (Watson 103). Morrison, thus, creates deprived protagonists who highlight the miseries of the African American community in America. Afro-American women suffered a great deal of pain and humiliation due to the hegemonic control of white men over the financial resources. The African American people were exploited on a large scale mainly due to lack of opportunity and poor social status while the whites due to their privileged positions enjoyed a comfortable and luxurious life.
2.14.3 Paule Marshall’s *Brown Girl, Brownstones*

Paule Marshall is a widely known African Caribbean novelist who brings to light the problems faced by African American women. She highlights the issues of the impoverished black community and the obstacles faced by black people especially the women, first due to womanhood and secondly by residing in a capitalist social setup governed by patriarchy. Marshall in her novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones* presents the significance of finances in American society by narrating the story of the Boyce family who had newly arrived in Brooklyn in the 1930s. “Her (Marshall’s) first novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), explores the conflicts and negotiations in the lives of an immigrant Barbadian family who has settled in a brownstone apartment building in Brooklyn, New York, where a young Bajan (Barbadian) community flourishes” (Coser 60). In the novel Silla and her family members are immigrants from Barbados to America. “More than a study of immigrant life,” the novel is, according to the writer, "a kind of commentary on American society” There is strong pressure on the newcomers to conform and "make it in America" (Coser 60). Silla’s poor circumstances force her to work as a cleaner and dish washer in the house of rich American people. The reason behind picking such lowly jobs is that she wants to protect her family by giving them their own house on American soil. “Selina’s mother, Silla, is obsessed with forgetting about the Caribbean past and saving to buy a house in her new land. She has assimilated what makes Marshall "so unhappy about American society: this kind of almost blind absorption in the material" that results in "a kind of diminishing of life, of feeling"” (Coser 60). This novel shows miseries of black women in society of America where all hopes, promises, prosperity become futile. She is unable to materialize her dream because of the non-serious behavior of her husband. Her husband does not cooperate with her in sharing household expenses. His lack of interest in strengthening the family unit can be witnessed when he inherits a piece of land in Barbados. Despite Silla’s great urgings her husband does not agree to sell the plot which she wants to, so that she could buy a house in America. When Silla finally succeeds in selling the property with aim to buy a house for herself and her family. Her husband Deighton, again proves to be irresponsible in spending that lavishly on buying useless things. Marital
differences between Deighton and Silla increase to such an extent that when his arm becomes useless in an accident in factory Deighton decides to join the Peace Movement. In her anger about this decision of her husband, Silla informs the police about his illegal stay in America. The policemen arrest Deighton and take him to deport him by the sea route. While on sea he jumps out of the boat and drowns himself. Silla remains dejected at the end since she cannot really achieve anything.

2.14.4 Female Characters of Alice Walker

Besides the noteworthy women writers, Afro-American literature has provided a forum to numberless authors thereby establishing its place in world literatures. Many prominent writers emerged the in the late 20th and early 21st centuries and have received worldwide acclaim together with a number of prestigious awards from all over the world.

Alice Walker the ambassador of contemporary African American literature, an activist and a strong defender of not only human rights but also the rights of living beings, she highlights the miseries of her own community by depicting their experiences. The central characters of the most of her novels belong to the down trodden class. For instance Celie and Sofia in *The Color Purple*, Meridian in the *Meridian*, Zede and Carlota in *The Temple of My Familiar*, are Afro-American women who belong to the poorer classes. They are all suffering economically and struggling hard for survival. Walker depicts the slave experiences of Zede and Miss Lissie in *The Temple of My Familiar* and the virtual slavery of Sofia at the white Mayor’s house in *The Color Purple* and the struggle of Meridian during the 1960’s Civil Rights Movement in the *Meridian*.

Celie, Sofia and Meridian are black women who suffer from atrocities committed in family life by the male members and are exploited economically. Walker not only shows the struggle of women but also depicts their liberation from slavery and economic depravity. The characters of Celie, Shug Avery and Sofia in *The Color Purple* are socially accepted only when they attain financial stability. Similarly Zede gets liberated from the plantation in *The Temple of My Familiar* and starts making expensive feathery caps to get social acceptance. Meridian in the *Meridian* also gets satisfaction when she plans to go
away from Truman and leads independence life. Thus the purpose of Walker in creating the characters of black women is to liberate them from poverty and slavery. She provides a glorifying end to her characters where they can live a satisfied life and have economically sound status.

This research aims to investigate Alice Walker’s novels to explore the financial problems on the guideline laid by Frederick Engels in Marxist Feminism. The researcher believes that Walker’s female characters have been victims of male dominance in various ways. Of these economic possession and superiority are two important factors. The research is based on the premise that if women have equal opportunities of progress they can attain respectable positions not only domestically but also socially.

END NOTES

1 “System of production”

2 “consanguine family”
“The Punaluan Family”

Engels Frederick. *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*. Resistance books:

Monogamy on part of women strengthened its roots because it ensured child’s legitimacy and property transfer to rightful heirs.

Engels Frederick. *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*. Resistance books:
Australia. 2004. Print. (81)

Cultivation and slave trade.


CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

Research methodology in an investigative study presents the procedure of performing research in a systematic and process oriented way. It provides a guideline to the researchers investigating a problem. S. Rajasekar, P. Philominathan and V. Chinnathambi in their manuscript “Research Methodology” submitted to Cornell University Library, define it as “Research methodology is a systematic way to solve a problem. It is a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology” (05). Research methodology incorporates various methods depending upon the nature of problem selected for study. This research project incorporates textual analysis as my research method and content analysis approach as my technique to conduct the textual analysis of Alice Walker’s novels in terms of exploitation faced by women of Afro-American origin due to patriarchy and racism.

A significant method for research inquiry in qualitative research is Textual Analysis advocated by Catherine Belsey that I plan to apply to my research study for investigation. With Textual Analysis method the theory that I intend to employ is Marxist Feminism formulated by Frederick Engels. The chapter also presents the application of Textual analysis as a method on my study of Alice Walker’s selected novels which highlight the social system that prevailed in the United States towards the turn of the century. Content Analysis as a technique suggested by Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon in ‘Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis (1277 to 1287) will be utilized for in-depth analysis of Walker’s novels under the guidelines suggested by Engels in Marxist Feminism.
3.2 Textual Analysis as a Research Method

All research investigations involving cultural criticism or social reformation integrate Textual Analysis in their framework as a research method. Cultural criticism incorporates all disciplines\(^1\) that strive to comprehend cultural values and their implications. Catherine Belsey in her article “Textual Analysis” published in *Research Methods for English Studies* outlines the philosophical underpinnings of Textual Analysis in research conducted on literary works of art, specifically painting. Textual Analysis in literary research adds additional knowledge to research exploration from outer sources in order to validate or contradict established facts within the selected texts. According to Belsey, research has shown that “There is no such thing as ‘pure’ reading: interpretation always involves extra-textual knowledge. Some of this is general, part of the repertoires of knowledge that constitutes a culture; some of it is personal, a matter of one’s own interests or biography; and some of it is derived from secondary sources” (Belsey 161). Using Belsey’s perspective, therefore, I aim to analyze Walker’s novels in the background of Engels’ Marxist Feminism. The readings of Walker’s novels incorporates my understanding of Marxian Feminist underpinnings as a theoretical perspective. In order to validate Engels’ framework I plan to incorporate a number of other theorists and critics to strengthen my theoretical foundations. My focus is to understand the traditions prevalent in American culture with a focus on treatment of women of Afro-American community.

3.3 Critics versus Readers

In Textual Analysis the role of a reader is of great significance. The reader attains central importance in the analysis of the text because the reader is the final destination of the text. Roland Barthes in his essay “The Death of the Author” highlights the value of a reader whose judgments and understanding provides meaning to the selected text. The author in this regard becomes meaningless as his/her job is completed with the publication of the text. Henceforth it is the job of the reader to investigate new insight present within the text and that can be brought to the limelight by inculcating his/her background knowledge, personal experiences and secondary sources. Similarly critics have always had
significance in traditional criticism where their interpretation and suggestions are considered authentic and valid. “Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature” (Barthes 148). Interpretation asserted by critics is accepted and respected by all whereas in Textual Analysis the role of the critic is reduced to the minimum.

Barthes is of the view that critics “hug the text’ to themselves, claim a superior access (based on their research of course) to the author’s intentions, and then explain the work in those terms, excluding all other possible interpretations” (Belsey 161). In traditional criticism the critics enjoy authority as for as interpretation is concerned whereas Barthes challenges the role of critics and authors after creation of a literary text. In his view the power of critics serve best the interests of the author instead of work of literature. “To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author” (Barthes 147). All energies of critics thus remain focused on unearthing the author’s intentions embedded within the text. In traditional criticism critics have the “important task of discovering the author … beneath the work; when the author has been found, the text is ‘explained’ – victory to the critic” (Barthes 147). In this regard critics ignore not only the artistic beauties of a literary text but also the margin of multiple interpretations limiting creative works of art to the intentions of the author, his or her biography and age.

In Post Structuralism, the task of multiple interpretations is encouraged in order to bring perspectives embedded within the linguistic devices utilized while creating textual masterpieces. Readers, therefore, have achieved more value and space in ‘New Criticism’ as compared to critics and institutions of criticism. The reader, in Belsey’s opinion, needs to be given more liberty and validity in order to interpret text according to his/her understanding (Belsey161). The reader in this situation gains greater significance mainly because he/she is the destination of the text as literary authors create texts for readers to read especially in the genres of fiction, prose, poetry and drama. In this regard a reader remains the focal point after the publication of the text whereas the writer stays on the
margins of the text as his/her role in the text is eliminated once the text is presented in written form. The final meanings of the text are explored from its destination and not from the margin. Barthes is of the opinion that “it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (148). By this he means that the role of the writer ends with the completion of the text and the role of the readers continues as a never ending process of interpretation; as a result of which multiple interpretations emerge and a text can be analyzed by different readers.

The reader is the very space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a field all the traces by the written text is constituted. (Barthes 148) In traditional criticism the author is considered to be of greater significance while in new criticism the author loses his/her value, giving way to the reader. Thus it remains the job of the reader to explore the embedded meaning in written manuscripts. The focus of all quotations, plot and themes is to enable readers to investigate the hidden realities. The reader, in other words, does not need the history, biography and psychology of author. The text itself is sufficient in producing meaning and explaining itself. All the themes and minute details are coded in the text and the task of a reader is to explore them by applying the techniques utilized in Textual Analysis. It only requires a detailed investigation and consideration on the part of the reader to explore the thematic depth from available linguistic devices employed within the text. By giving responsibility to the reader Barthes does not simply mean to shift the authority from the writer to the reader. Rather he wants the readers to be more rigorous and investigative and with an inquiring mind to ask questions of the text and find their answers within the text. In this way the foundation for authentic research can be laid to make an in-depth analysis of the research project undertaken. In this study my aim is to apply the readers’ based textual analysis method suggested by Barthes and Griffen for the analysis of Walker’s selected works. I deliberately do not include the interpretations of critics as far as my analysis is concerned. The analysis that I aim to carry out spurs purely from my own
comprehension of Engels’ theory and Walker’s novels. The secondary sources that I used are present in sections of introductory chapters while in the textual analysis phase I intend to utilize my own ability to present and connect the causes of women’s miseries and strategies for the empowerment by theorizing the discussions in the light of Engels’ theory.

3.4 Reader vs Author and Intertextuality in Literary Texts

A literary text, besides having dialogues present within it, also assumes the shape of a dialogue with the readers. Thus a text can be comprehended by exploring the relationship between a text and a reader. In traditional literary criticism, critics focus on the text and use expressions in such a way that the text forces us to see various angles according to the understanding and will of a critic. On the other hand Belsey affirms that no text has the ability to compel its readers to explore meanings on multiple levels; it rather invites us to explore these meanings. It is the job of the reader to explore multiple meanings by looking into the various aspects of a text. In this regard the role of language and linguistic devices, is also significant. The writer encodes ideas and experiences by utilizing various aspects of language and embeds meaning in a text. It then remains an investigative task for the reader to decode this created language.

During the creation of a literary text the author keeps other created texts in his/her mind and takes guidance and direction in the continuation or confrontation of an ideology. In doing so, references of other texts appear in a newly created text where a text engages itself in dialogue with earlier created texts following particular footprints. “A text is made of multiple writings drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relation of dialogue, parody, contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused, united, and that place is reader, not, as hitherto said, the author” (Barthes 148). According to Barthes the text is composed of multiple inscriptions allowing the mingling of parodies, dialogues and debates taken from various cultures and traditions that is called intertext. The focus of all this intertextual multiplicity is to enrich readers and to bring new perspectives along with already existing stories as incidents and narratives that occur on the basis of
happenings. “Intertextuality is the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text – quotations” (Fairclough 39). Julia Kristeva in an interview with Margaret Smaller conducted in 1985 states about Intertextuality that there is the recognition that a textual segment, sentence, utterance, or paragraph is not simply the intersection of two voices in direct or indirect discourse; rather, the segment is the result of the intersection of a number of voices, of a number of textual interventions, which are combined in, the semantic field. But also in the syntactic and phonic fields of the explicit utterance. (Kristeva)

Therefore the language of literary texts carries a number of interventions from earlier created texts which conforms language as a potentially multi-meaning phenomenon. The language creator presents it with particular intentions to influence reader who is able to arrive at multiple meanings and distinct interpretation. Intertextuality has relevance to my research as the novel The Temple of my Familiar extends and portrays the story of next generation of Celie who is also the protagonist of the novel The Color Purple. Fanny Nzingha is the granddaughter of Celie and she mentions the sufferings and emancipation of her grandmother during her discussions with her mother Olivia. Therefore there is a thematic and characters similarity in both the novels created by Walker. In this way the use of intertextuality as a technique by Julia Kristiva has relationship with my research.

3.5 Marxist Feminist Theory and Frederick Engels

3.5.1 Framework of Analysis

Frederick Engels formulated the Marxian Feminist theory with the publication of The Origin of The Family, Private Property and The State. In this core book he laid out all the guiding principles of Marxist Feminism that consist from finding the root cause of women’s social deprivation and suggested ways to women’s empowerment as well.

3.5.2 Private Property

According to Engels, private property made men powerful in their social status while women remained powerless owing to dispossession from sources of production that
includes all income generational activities. Men started to control revenue manufacturing accomplishments. Women on the other hand were restricted to domestic chores and men did not share their surplus income. Once the tradition of exclusion of women started with the emergence of civilization it continues till date. Even in this age men still disown women and control the lives of their family women. The relationship of wives and husband suffers greatly owing to such unjust practice.

3.5.3 Men’s Tendency of Going to Old Consanguine and Punaluan Family

The history of conjugal kinship passed through three stages according to Frederick Engels in Marxian Feminist theory namely Consanguine, Punaluan and Pairing Family where physical relationship was banned gradually in terms of selection of partners. In Consanguine Family there was only banned intercourse among people of different generations otherwise people had liberty to have conjugal relation with persons of their liking. Punaluan Family imposed restriction of intermarriage among siblings of similar gents while allowing people to intermarry with all other people. The Pairing Family sanctioned marital relation to only one man and a woman. Despite advancement of human conscious, it is an incline among numerous men to indulge themselves in forbidden association of adultery among their female relatives other than the spouse. These men have a strong tendency to sexually engage with young girls of their family who fall into categories which are banned by earlier Consanguine and Punaluan family systems. Therefore exploitation of such young girls by their elderly relatives is a factor that shows men’s inclination to go back to the ages of savagery and barbarism.

3.5.4 Use of Women’s Physique for Men’s Gratification in Return for Financial Assistance

In Capitalist system of government, currency possessions in the shape of cash or valuable goods is a significant factor in social affairs, according to Engels’s Marxist Feminist ideology. People with fewer opportunities of earning and having no possession are the most miserable. Women too fall into the category of deprived persons when they
are deliberately kept away from owning the sources of production and revenue creating activities. Men with financial stability take advantage of the circumstances of such people offering to assist monetarily while in return satisfying their lust with physical exploitation of such poor womankind. Thus Engels highlights the cruel face of patriarchy that uses women’s body for their evil designs. This factor is very common in workplaces where women work as subordinates to men. Men take advantage of their socially privileged position and use women while in return providing them with some financial assistance that helps women to survive.

3.5.5 Enslavement of Majority by the Small Minority for Economic Profits

Marxist Feminist Theory observes the social structures prevalent in societies based on capitalistic philosophy. The class based system was created on the basis of economic prestige of higher class and lower class of people. With emergence of private property there appeared a ruling powerful class with staunch control on the sources of income generating activities. People with resources attained more power by using the energies of working class to enlarge their wealth. The influential class of men attained more influence at the expense of working class of laborers belonging to marginalized factions. These proletariats were gradually made dependent by the aristocracy on the small income. Women owing to their socially powerless eminence become easy prey to influential men and became cheap source of workload within family and social life. Concerning this aspect Marxian Feminist points out the atrocities committed against women by the powerful elite. In this age white men use women of color as slaves to attain more material benefits. The whites as a class are dominant while blacks as a class are submissive. Whereas women of black class face double marginalization for being women and their lower black status.

3.5.6 Women’s Enslavement and Physical Punishment

It is a well-established fact that slavery of human beings on all accounts is a condemnable act and it shows the seamier side of human civilization. Marxist Feminist philosophy critically evaluates the role of the slave business, slavers and treatment of
enslaved individuals. Slavery as a curse makes the lives of people miserable and the subdued persons lose all hope that humanity bestows upon privileged people. Engels in his core book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State* not only highlights the historical aspect of start of slavery with emergence of private property, but he also brings to limelight the contemporary enslavement of women. Controlling Men use physical punishment as a weapon to tame and control these downtrodden women with intention to maximize their physical capacity of laboring and making them silent subjects. The curse of slavery has been the dark aspect for the people of African American community. Women of Afro-American origin besides facing physical punishment also underwent the sexual exploitation at the hands of their white masters during the time of slavery. In this age too, women of the African American community experience racism and virtual slavery owing to the strong social influence of white capitalist men.

3.5.7 Polygamy vs Monogamy

Engels clearly points out the flaw in men in terms of their practice of polygamy even after their marriage where they strictly apply the phenomenon of monogamy upon their related women. According to Engels there is a close connection between the demand for monogamy and fidelity. In his view it is a common practice among married men to openly practice adultery with women other than their wives and demanding complete monogamy and fidelity from their wives. Men use other women for their unsatisfied lust despite the presence of their lawfully wedded wives. This hypocritical behavior by men leads to the creation of unquestioned supremacy of men and inferiority for the status of women in matrimonial relationship with their spouse.

3.5.8 Unpaid Household Labor

From Engels’ Marxian Feminist analysis it is obvious that the appearance of private property paved the way for the demise of the old tribal gens system and beginning of civilization. With development in new opportunities of earning, men accepted outdoor responsibilities whereas women took control of domestic duties and this ultimately became
the reason for the downfall and exclusion of women from possession of the sources of production. Men continued to prosper with their multiple sources of revenue while women given a share only in consumption, became fragile in their social standing. The workload of women became more challenging due to their extended timings for domestic duties and responsibilities of children whereas men in outdoor activities had fixed timings to conduct professional matters. Men have more than half the day to relax and complete their personal matters whilst women remain engaged in never-ending duties. Marxist Feminism highlights the problem of unpaid women’s labor along with their excessive workload.

### 3.5.9 Women’s Emancipation

Marxist Feminism standing for women’s rights, seeks their oppression as a social construct and therefore belief in the possibility of their liberation from the strict control of patriarchy. Patriarchal hegemony started with the ownership of private property and sources of production. The privileges relished by men in this world are primarily owing to their economic property and Marxist Feminist puts forward the stand that women can come out of their misery with ownership of property and control of sources of revenue. Thus this research aims to present strategies for women’s liberation.

### 3.5.10 Women’s Resistance and Liberation

In order for women to achieve their liberation the most important thing is realization and resistance to patriarchy by standing up for themselves. Patriarchy can be overthrown but only through careful planning. Marxist feminism encourages women to take part in activities that empower them e.g. acquisition of skills that generate financial activity is significant. Women in their own circumstances and available resources need to assess how the acquisition of new skills can empower them both psychologically and financially. As their poverty made women miserable so their financial stability could make them prosperous.
3.5.11 Financial Improvement of Women and Men’s Acceptance of Responsibility

Economic stability leads to improvement in social and domestic lives of women according to the Marxist Feminist standpoint. Strong and stable women also have the attention of their fellow men. Women with elevated social status are given respect in society. Marxist Feminist philosophy lays emphasis on the role of men in the lives of women. In order to develop harmonious relations between men and women especially husbands and wives, men should also learn to take responsibility of domestic duties. Men should also help women in household chores and the help that men would provide in family duties would liberate women from being unpaid domestic laborers. The breathing space that women would get in their home, would allow them to think about their creative aspects. With some relaxation in their burden of daily routine women could learn and practically apply their knowledge in the achievement of financial goals like their family men.

3.5.12 Harmony in Relations of Women and Men

Women and men can attain harmony in their relationship if the causes of women’s sufferings are removed. Financial subjugation is an important cause along with physical punishment of women. Men’s going to other women for polygamous purposes and demanding monogamy from their wives also creates a rift in their relationship. Women too can come up to the level of men in the Marxist Feminist viewpoint if these grounds of subjugation are removed. By doing so women will have many more opportunities of financial empowerment thus leading to harmony in their relations. Men also pay attention to women who have a socially stable status and which in turn emerges due to economically established circumstances. Thus Marxist Feminism suggests concrete steps that could assist in women’s emancipation from the influence and atrocities committed by patriarchal behavior.

3.6 Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis

In Hsieh and Shannon’s view Qualitative Content Analysis focuses on various features of language used as a medium of communication with focus on context meaning
or content of text. Content Analysis can be in any form such as oral recording in the shape of interviews or electronic media, print media in the shape of articles, manuals and books. In this study I have selected three of Alice Walker’s novels in addition to related articles and books from various sources like online journals, encyclopedias, educational websites and libraries. The purpose of Content Analysis is not just to count words and examine them but to investigate language and establish meaning in the larger context. Content Analysis aims to present an understanding and knowledge of the texts under study. My emphasis in this study is to comprehend the social implications of relationship between men and women, their aspirations, their disputes and their coming to terms with each other in kinship of marriage, using content analysis as a technique I intend to elaborate all these phenomena. It is used as a practical strategy to understand, interpret and present analysis of Walker’s text in the light of Engels’ theory.

According to Hsieh and Shannon, Content Analysis presents a number of analytical techniques and interpretive analysis to strict and systematic textual analyses. The major differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness (1277). The selection of a particular technique within content analysis depends upon nature of problem undertaken for research project and theoretical interest of a researcher. Hsieh and Shannon define qualitative content analysis research as ‘subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns’ (1277). Hsieh and Shannon in their essay also highlight other aspects of content analysis “Content analysis describes a family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses” (Hsieh and Shannon 1277). The specific type of content analysis approach chosen by a researcher varies with the theoretical and substantive interests of the researcher and the problem being studied. My area of study as having literary nature demands that this study be a move from my intuitive and interpretive analysis to strict methodical textual analysis using framework of analysis developed from theory of Marxist Feminism. Thus interpretation performed within Textual Analysis is not a willful activity
rather it is systematic process that applies various techniques in order to analyze the selected text for research study.

Content Analysis is an amalgamation of three distinctive approaches comprising of summative, conventional and directed approach. These approaches are utilized for interpretation of meaning and differ from one another on the basis of origins of codes, coding schemes and trustworthiness. “Summative approach to qualitative content analysis starts with identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content” (Hsieh and Shannon 1283). Here text data is gathered by counting, quantifying words by hands or with usage of computer and then collected text and context underlying is interpreted. Thus multiple variable are selected with purpose to identify words usage and various meanings a word can gain depending upon context. So it is a non-reactive and unobtrusive way of investigation to study different features of selected phenomenon in an objective manner. “It can provide basic insights into how words are actually used. However, the findings from this approach are limited by their inattention to the broader meanings present in the data” (Hsieh and Shannon 1285). This approach is limited in its usage as it focuses on individual words closely than larger and contextual meaning present in text. Therefore summative approach is not related to my area of study as I aim to establish broader cultural, social and historical context to see the application of Engels’s ideology on works of Alice Walker.

Conventional content analysis is applied to a research project where the purpose is to investigate a phenomenon and when existing theory or literature is limited. The researcher is not allowed to carry preconceived notions as the purpose is to explore new insights. “If data are collected primarily through interviews, open-ended questions will be used. Probes also tend to be open-ended or specific to the participant’s comments rather than to a preexisting theory,” such as “Can you tell me more about that?” (Hsieh and Shannon 1279). Collected data is organized and categorized into various groups and sub groups to find meaningful clusters. However, “One challenge of this type of analysis is failing to develop a complete understanding of the context, thus failing to identify key categories. This can result in findings that do not accurately represent the data” (Hsieh and
Shannon 1280). Another problem that Conventional content analysis faces is this that it can be confounded with other similar qualitative research methods such as ‘Grounded Theory Method GTM and Phenomenology’ which strive beyond content analysis with aim to develop a novel theory as well as lived experiences. Thus both the proponents of conventional content analysis conclude it “is limited in both theory development and description of the lived experience, because both sampling and analysis procedures make the theoretical relationship between concepts difficult to infer from findings” (Hsieh and Shannon 1280). Thus conventional content analysis like summative analysis has some drawbacks that hinder both of these techniques to be utilized as guideline for research in literary studies. Due to requirement of my research both these approaches seem irrelevant owing to their limited utility as the scope of my research moves to a direction of cultural study with existing social phenomena of Marxian Feminist analysis that incorporates social structures based on economy and their implication upon women of marginalized communities.

3.6.1 Directed Content Analysis as Technique

Third approach suggested by Hsieh and Shannon in qualitative research is Directed Content Analysis which I plan to use as my research technique in undertaken investigation study. “Sometimes, existing theory or prior research exists about a phenomenon that is incomplete or would benefit from further description. The qualitative researcher might choose to use a directed approach to content analysis” (Hsieh and Shannon 1280). Directed content analysis helps researchers to explore with the help of already existing theory related to an incomplete feature of a theory that could profit from additional research. It is an established fact from my discussion, arguments and counter arguments in Literature Review section of this study that Marxist Feminism in a recognized theoretical stance about the oppression of women in both capitalist and communist communities where domestic labor is ignored. This research focuses on position of women in societies based on patriarchal practices. In this way Directed Content Analysis would be a helpful strategy in application of Marxist Feminist ideology on status of women in Alice Walker’s fiction.
This deductive utility of theory aims to validate a theory and broadens theoretical conceptual framework. “It can provide predictions about the variables of interest or about the relationships among variables, thus helping to determine the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes” (Hsieh and Shannon 1280). Initial categories of codes like variables and key concepts are identified by using earlier research and existing theoretical perspectives. Existing theory of Marxist Feminism would provide me help in formation of operational definitions of each category based on key concepts identified in Framework of Analysis section that later on in Textual Analysis of Walker’s texts works as a guideline to carry out analysis. “If the goal of the research is to identify and categorize all instances of a particular phenomenon, such as emotional reactions, then it might be helpful to read the transcript and highlight all text that on first impression appears to represent an emotional reaction” (Hsieh and Shannon 1282). Thus the application of Marxist Feminist theory upon the selected texts for study can be carried out with the help of directed content analysis and techniques presented in it.

The next stage in analysis is to code all highlighted passages according to predetermined codes such as in my current research project texts of Walker’s novels would be coded under categories selected from Engels’ core book on Marxian Feminism *The Origin of The Family, Private Property and The State*, such as Gens, Consanguine Family, Punaluan Family patriarchy, polygamy, infidelity, monogamy, fidelity, savagery, barbarism, maternal gens, paternal gens, civilization, physical exploitation, slavery, private property, economically privileged class, poor and working class women, oppression in family setup, racism, realization and resistance, emancipation and financial stability etc. Text that could not be labeled according to initial schemes of codes³ would be placed in new category in this stage of investigation. In order to increase trustworthiness the researcher can begin without coding initially with the aim to capture all possible insights of a phenomenon. “If the researcher wants to be sure to capture all possible occurrences of a phenomenon, such as an emotional reaction, highlighting identified text without coding might increase trustworthiness” (Hsieh and Shannon 1282). Initially I will use this strategy of proceeding without codes to gain maximum features of Marxist Feminist theory from
selected novels of Alice Walker then I will categorize them into various categories under the guidance of theory established by Frederick Engels given in the of shape codes mentioned above. In the next stage all findings of supporting and non-supporting text using directed content analysis would be elucidated by strategy of description while taking support from Marxist Feminist Theory. All non-supporting text put under a new category to see its relevance to other associating codes. The discussion of findings will be made on basis of selected aspects of Marxist Feminist Theory explained in Frame of Analysis section. Newly revealed discoveries from identified categories may help in refining, extending and enriching the existing theory or it may lead to offer contradiction to above mentioned phenomena. “The main strength of a directed approach to content analysis is that existing theory can be supported and extended” (Hsieh and Shannon 1282)” Using content analysis approach as my technique to conduct the study, my focus is to present the utility of Engels’ theory in the contemporary age on the situation of Afro-American women portrayed by Walker. Thus my purpose is to support, validate, refine, extend and enrich various aspects of Engel’s theory of Marxist Feminism.

This research project falls into qualitative content analysis due to its nature and application. This study aims to investigate Alice Walker’s novel’s to explore sorrows of African American women on guideline laid by Frederick Engels in his theory. I believe that Afro-American women have been victim of male oppression mainly due to lack of economic privileges. If women should have equal opportunities of progress in terms of financial stability then they can attain a respectable position not only domestically but also socially. Equal economic rights can bestow women a glorifying status where they can lead a life full of blessing instead of atrocities.
“cultural criticism includes English, cultural history and cultural studies as well as any other discipline that focuses on texts, or seeks to understand the inscription of culture in its artefacts” (157).


2 Post Structuralism undertakes the task of multiple interpretations, “It is a shift from seeing the poem or novel as a closed entity, equipped with definite meanings which it is the critic's task to decipher, to seeing it as irreducibly plural, an endless play of signifiers which can never be finally nailed down to a single centre, essence or meaning” (120).

Eagleton, Terry Literary Theory An Introduction. United States: University of Minnesota Press. 2008 Print

3 Codes given here are taken from core book of Marxist Feminism that also includes theoretical framework of this study.
CHAPTER 4

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY

This chapter records Walker’s presentation of the lives of women of African American origin. The focus of the chapter is on the role of the men particularly husbands in the exploitation of their wives. Married men and men of mature age run after younger virgins to fulfill their lust. The theme of incest is a common thread in the writings of black female writers and is also seen in Walker’s novels, where men indulge in sexual intercourse with relatives that religion and morality forbid e.g. father/daughter, son in law/mother and other relationships that are sacrosanct and where the men establish physical relations with
young female relatives. Celie e.g. is used by her father and Arveyda indulges with his mother in law. Similarly money is used as bait by male members to exploit young girls for instance young Meridian is exploited by men like Dexter, The Assistant and Professor Raymonds. Likewise Meridian’s own mother teaches her to submit to the patriarchal setup and adopt the stereotypical role assigned to women traditionally. The marriage institute and its problems are brought to the limelight by Alice Walker in all her novels. Men engage in ‘polygamy’ whereas they demand ‘monogamy’ from their wives. The phenomena of ‘polygamy’ denotes the possession of multiple spouses but for the sake of reference this document uses Engels’ definition of having multiple partners. Men openly cheat their wives by going to other women and Celie’s husband Albert in The Color Purple, Meridian’s husband Eddie and her lover Truman in Meridian and Carlota’s husband Arveyda, Fanny’s husband Suwelo are some of the examples that Alice Walker focuses on in order to highlight the promiscuousness of men.

The contribution of female African American literary writers is invaluable in representing the sufferings of the women belonging to African American origin. These literary artists have brought to the limelight gender and racial differences while portraying their own experiences of being both female and black. The fiction works created by female authors incorporate textual representation of class, color and cultural differences that help in the construction of gender, sexual and racial identity of the women of the black community. All such texts challenge the myths of blackness that they inherit in their culture and which carry strong historical footprints of slavery and the privileges enjoyed by whites by enslaving the blacks and enjoying their resources. Black men came out stronger from the slave experiences in an age where black women are still deprived and lead a miserable life. African American Literature came forward as a significant branch of American literature especially after the 1970s where the majority of authors belonging to African American origin portrayed a long lasting struggle of the black community in America. Many significant writers like Alice Walker, Tony Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Maya Angelou, Paule Marshal and many others contributed in depicting black experiences especially the
miserable life experienced by black women. All of them focused on the fact that to be a woman is far easier and comfortable than to be a black woman.

Patriarchy proved extremely dangerous for the women belonging to African American origin. These women are doubly marginalized firstly because they are women and as such have been oppressed by men all over the world for a long time. Secondly they are black women and their sufferings increase due to racial discrimination. The remaining opportunities of black women’s survival are snatched by patriarchal capitalism. So being black and living in capitalist society proved to be certain death for poor black women.

Alice Walker is a renowned Afro-American author who has recorded the miseries of women in capitalist backgrounds. All her female characters undergo pain and she focuses on the problems of poor black women who suffer at the hands of their own family men. The treatment of black men towards black women is extremely hostile, and they are considered as laborers who are put under the burden of domestic labor and full responsibility of the children’s care. The miseries of black women are heightened when despite performing all household duties they are deprived of their due share in the family income; the men do not consider their life partners worthy of owning the small amount of savings that they earn. The amount of work is far greater than women can bear. Besides fulfilling household chores men demand their family women to work outside in fields to increase men’s revenue. Therefore women have to work as peasants after performing the duties of a domestic servant. After fulfilling their duties honestly they do not receive their deserved respect, instead they get beaten up by their husbands, who want to make them more obedient. Physical assault from other relatives in the shape of incest is also a great issue for black women. Women from their childhood face physical abuse from men of their own community. Girls in the black community do not have enough money for quality education and the crafty men use money as a bait to lure and seduce young girls. In addition to having wives at home the men are unfaithful and treat the women at home brutally, taking pleasure by putting greater burden on them and punishing them. Thus for the women of black origin survival is extremely hard and they remain house slaves, despite the formal
end of slavery as a social practice, while black men enjoy privileges in both domestic and social lives.

Walker in her writings uses Marxist Feminist ideology where she initially highlights the oppression of women within the family life. She creates traditional families in her fictional works where men being economically powerful and socially influential, remain dominant while women being poor remain miserable. Alice Walker, in her writings, records the wretchedness of women who have had to bear circumstances where life becomes too difficult to bear. Her characters Celie, Meridian, Zede, Carlota, Miss Lissie and Fanny go through horrible situations created by men related to them. This study focuses on how Ms. Walker presents the lives of these women in her work.

4.1 Role of Men in Subjugating Women

Frederick Engels in his core book on Marxist Feminism, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and The State*, describes different shapes of family relationship between husband and wife in various stages of history consisting of ‘Consanguine family’ where all individuals had freedom to keep matrimonial relationship with people of their likings without having any social restriction about duration and number of spouses. At this stage there was one restriction that was limitation on physical relationship between people of different generations. The second stage in marital status was ‘Punaluan family’ where strict constraints were enforced on siblings such as brother/sister and cousins of same generation. Whilst the third stage is the Pairing Family where men assumed the position of head of family and he had liberty to keep many wives besides having one primary wife. Similarly the feature of incest where intercourse occur between closely related people who are forbidden by law, is depicted as a social evil in writings of African American women. Incest reflects one of great atrocities witnessed by young black women from their own family members. In fact it is the characteristic of centuries long abandoned traditions exercised before civilization in barbaric and savagery stages of human development. It shows men’s desires to shake off all progress and go back to times of Consanguine and Punaluan families where there was freedom to exercise physical relations with women of
their likings. Incest shows that in order to fulfil their lust men can go to any limits due to their social influence where they are certain that no harm can come to their privileges. Engels sees a close connection between men’s freedom of exercise of polygamy and women’s physical, economic and social exploitation. Kate Millet on the contrary sees women’s assault as their marginalization to a mere sex toy. She thinks that sexual politics plays a greater role in subjection of women as compared to political and economic structures. Engels on the other hand sees women’s social weakness directly as a result of expansion in property possession. The application of Engels’ ideology can be found in Afro-American literature, in general, and in Alice Walker’s novels, in particular.

*The Color Purple* by Alice Walker is a prize winning novel with a complex story which portrays lifelong distresses of Celie. When she is fourteen she is raped by the man she has known and called her father. She gives birth to two illegitimate children by her own father, and he takes them away from her. She is then forced into an early age, ugly marriage with an elderly man and her married life too, like her early age, proves disastrous and brings pain, suffering and domestic slavery. Alice Walker also describes in detail the oppressive role of men in the family system. Men subjugate women in all possible ways as they depend on men for their survival in terms of domestic as well as financial matters. Their treatment of women, thus, is far worse than the treatment received by slaves since these are free women.

### 4.2 Incest in Walker’s *The Color Purple*

In the novel *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker employs the epistolary form of writing where Celie writes letters to God and her sister Nettie narrating the miseries she faces at the hands of her father, husband and step children. Nettie, in return, writes letter to Celie describing her experiences with missionaries in Africa and the adopted family that provides her refuge. The story of the protagonist Celie, is described from childhood to old age as she suffers miseries at the hands of different men; first her father and later her husband.

Walker begins her novel *The Color Purple* with the narration of the fourteen year old Celie’s rape by her stepfather whom she considers her real father. In her letters to God
Celie describes her father assaulting her sexually and the fact that she cannot share this trauma with anyone related to her. Initially she becomes a victim of sexual abuse in the absence of her mother. Her father tells her, “…you better shut up and git used to it” (Walker, *Purple* 3). Celie thus has to remain silent, “But I don’t never git used to it. And now I feels sick every time I be the one to cook. My mama she fuss at me an look at me. She happy, cause he good to her now. But too sick to last long” (3). When her mother got too ill, her father Alphonso, whom she later discovers to be her stepfather, forcefully exploits her for many years. Due to her mother’s sickness she has to perform household duties like cooking etc. and within a short span of time there starts, for Celie, a never ending period of tyrannical circumstances when she twice gives birth to the children of her own father, at the age of fourteen. The greatest tyranny is that Alphonso does not allow Celie to keep the babies; he takes them away and lies to Celie that they are dead. He abuses her, beats her and considers her evil, his treatment of her becoming worse day by day. Alphonso degrades himself to the level of ‘consanguine family’, a system which had been wiped out hundreds of years ago, although even then intercourse between different generations was forbidden. His physical assault results in the birth of two children and he does not care for her innocence and adolescence. Rather he threatens her and beats her regularly to prevent her telling anyone. In a social setup where men enjoy ultimate authority, survival for women is extremely difficult and the life of women degenerates below the level of domestic animals. Celie is only fourteen years old when she is impregnated and when the girls around her are going to school, she is bearing children, showing the discrimination in the social setup.

4.3 Incest in Walker’s *The Temple of My Familiar*

The theme of incest is portrayed vividly within the African community in Alice Walker’s *The Temple of My Familiar* as well. The men follow the centuries old tradition of going after other women despite the presence of a wife in the home. Arveyda and Carlota are happily married till Arveyda involves himself in an illegitimate relationship with Carlota’s mother. Despite being married to her daughter, Arveyda has sexual relations with
her mother and this extramarital and incestuous relationship permanently shakes the foundations of the couple’s marital relationship. Zede, Carlota’s mother, whose only taste of a sexual relationship has been in prison, feels guilt and as proof of her guilt she hides her secret from Carlota. Carlota, however, becomes suspicious when her mother Zede starts to avoid her and her husband. When Carlota objects to her behavior Zede has to tell her the whole story of the sexual encounters with her daughter’s husband. In her furious surprise she asks Arveyda about his involvement with his mother in law, her husband confesses love for Carlota’s mother and their relationship falls apart. In their heated argument what is most clear is the difference in the thinking of Carlota and her husband as they have radically different opinions about having a relationship between son in law and mother in law. Carlota protests to her husband and her mother about cheating her and rejects the relationship. On the other hand Arveyda remains persistent and not only openly claims his feelings for his mother in law but refutes her allegations mockingly. He rejects Carlota’s objections about Zede being mother, grandmother and elder in age calling her an artist and confessing his love for his mother in law (Walker, Temple 26). The tyranny of the situation increases when he states that he wants to continue his relationship with both mother and daughter at the same time. This shows the fact that Alice Walker sees the ugly face of the social setup where patriarchy is at its peak. Men possess total authority and power to fulfill their desires without caring about legal and moral implications of their actions. Patriarchal hegemony allows them to indulge in activities where they can fulfill their desires, no matter how heinous they may be. This power is enjoyed by men in societies where there is unjust distribution of wealth and class system in practice. Arveyda being the member of the elite patriarchal class engages himself in forbidden activities confidently on the basis of the power that he has attained owing to his wealthy standing in society. He knows that no one can do anything against him and that is why he is stubborn in his assertion of his relationship with the grandmother of his children.
4.4 Physical Abuse of Meridian

Sexual exploitation of young girls by elderly married men is also a grave issue in African American society. Cunning people take advantage of situations where they tempt children by offering them different goodies. George Dexter, a mixed breed in his fifties, adopts such strategies to seduce Meridian when she is only twelve years old. He would entice her to his small office in the rear of his home. As a young girl coming from a poor background where poverty allowed her to eat only home grown food items, Meridian enjoys eating a variety of candies purchased for her. Taking advantage of her situation, Dexter is generous to Meridian and in reward he brings her close to him to feel her young physique. He continues this for many years giving her food items as a reward for physical gratification. When Meridian is about 15 the intensity of Dexter’s exploitation increases and he starts to entice her by showing his wallet to her. “he would take out his wallet crammed with money, and leave it on the sofa between them while he felt her breasts and tried to pull her onto his lap” (Walker, Meridian 59). He continues to take advantage of her in a community where there is ill distribution of wealth and sources. Meridian goes to Dexter’s home because of all that he provides for her to eat. Similarly he gives her money that she cannot get from her poor parents and with money she fulfills her needs. The exploitation of poor children is a grave crime in the eyes of law makers and authorities but in practical life such children have to suffer grievously at the hands of people like Dexter.

Marxist Feminism focuses on details of relationships especially those of husbands and wives. A common practice according to Marxian Feminist discourse is that they go after other women despite having a primary wife. For them purity and chastity are reserved only for their wives and when it comes to application on their personal beings such sublime words lose their value. For men there is no harm in the practice of polygamy or engaging in extramarital relationship with a number of women while on the part of their wives they demand strict monogamy. Alice Walker in her literary work Meridian depicts this theme through the character of Meridian, who in her childhood, has been a victim of sexual abuse not only by Dexter but also by his assistant, who is a young and smart black married man. Despite having a family and wife his main objective is to chase young girls like Meridian.
He uses his voice and cunning talk to tempt young girls. Meridian visits the office regularly and The Assistant, in the absence of Dexter, knowing her secret allures Meridian in his trap and exploits her sexually. The narrator of the novel describing his method of tempting young girls states: “The Assistant was very clever and so never actually forced her beyond a certain point, but each time he left her with one of little homilies” (60). Being a married man he adopts such strategies that Meridian, who never actually likes him but did not resist him out of curiosity, falls into his trap, in her immaturity. In order to arouse her curiosity the assistant invites Meridian to witness him performing intercourse with another young schoolgirl. He “arranged for her (Meridian) to watch him while he seduced another schoolgirl (the same girl, in fact, who did babysitting for his wife)” (60). This incident is the proof that his target is a selection of young schoolgirls whom he uses to fulfill his lusty animal desires. There is no moral or ethical code of conduct for men like The Assistant who target school-going babysitters. This brings to light the aspect of exploitation of the domestic servant which relates to Engels’ view of master/slave or concubine relationship. Material prosperity allows men to exercise the power of their wealth over young girls for both economical and physical oppression. This feature has been in practice since the start of ‘Pairing marriage’, that Engels discusses and is still in practice mainly because of men’s stronghold on the sources of production whereas women are forcefully kept at the receiving, subjugated and oppressed level and have to tolerate such conduct in order to survive in the male dominated social setup.

4.5 Meridian’s Exploitation

One objectionable aspect of patriarchal community that Marxist Feminist brings to light and criticizes is the exploitation of women at the work place. Men being in a powerful and authoritative position misuse their power and exploit the poor girls physically with the aim to amuse themselves and at the same time compensate women with some financial benefits in order to keep the secret hidden. When Meridian’s husband goes away leaving her alone with her son Eddie Jr. she has no way to support herself. She considers herself to
be a deserted wife, a society dropout and a deprived woman and therefore decides to join school in order to secure her career and earn respectable livings later on. For this purpose she gets a scholarship to Saxon college and enrolls again. But owing to her poor family background, survival in the wealth oriented system becomes extremely difficult for her.

School would cost twelve dollars a year, and her mother would have to earn every cent of it. Refusing to complain and, indeed, refusing even to discuss the hardship it would cause, her mother had gone out to do other people’s laundry, and Meridian’s mother remembered her trudging off—after doing her own washing and work in the fields—with her rub board under her arm. (Walker, Meridian 122)

Meridian’s mother despite being traditional minded helps her in continuing her studies by taking on the responsibility of her school expenses. She knows the hardships of later life without good education and proper income so assists her in all possible ways by taking on the burden of supporting her. The scholarship that Meridian receives covers only her tuition fee and in order to cover other expenses her mother has to work hard. In her own house she has to do the household work as well as field work since she works as a washer woman. Her mother fulfills her responsibility towards her daughter by empowering her with education so that she recovers from the tragic phase that she has been going through as a result of her relationship with her husband Eddie. After some time Meridian asks her mother to send two or three dollars more on a weekly basis to satisfy her needs in school. Her mother does not have that kind of money so she asks Meridian to start working as a typist for an old black retired professor, Mr. Raymonds, whom her mother knew a long time ago. Her mother encourages her to work mainly because her father cannot afford to and her mother could only earn two or three dollars from the laundry work that she has been doing. Mr. Raymonds provides Meridian a job as a typist but being a black female Meridian has to pay the price when the old man assaults her physically.

Some raisins, Fig Newtons, a carton of Cokes,” she said, swinging them up on the table, “and enough money to buy a good tennis racket… The truth was, she was chased around the desk by Mr. Raymonds. The truth was, her scholarship did not cover all her school expenses and her other needs, too. The truth was she depended
on the extras Mr. Raymonds gave her. Every Coke, every cookie, every can of
deviled ham, every tennis racket that he gave her meant one less that she had to
buy. (107)

Besides giving her money to meet her expenditure Mr. Raymonds proves to be very
generous by giving her coke, tennis rackets, cookies and other things. But like everything
in the patriarchal and capitalist world Meridian has to pay the price. Mr. Raymonds
regardless of his old age, is full of lust and chases Meridian around the desk. She depends
on the money, he provides her, to continue her studies as also for other things. In order to
save what little money she has, she becomes a victim of assault at the hands of the old
professor. Although the professor is an educationist himself, he uses Meridian as a target
for his lust thereby proving that power attained as a result of sound financial status
encourages men to exercise their evil intentions towards poor women who do not have the
strength or authority to object primarily because of their low financial status in society.

Here Engels’ proposition of property to be the foundation of evils done against women
seems more appropriate as compared to other theories such as male-male alliances or
female alienation.

4.6 Poverty of Women

Poverty of women is one of the significant themes of the Marxist Feminist ideology.
Poor women are more vulnerable to exploitation by the male patriarchal, hegemonic
attitude. Patriarchal capitalist philosophies compel men to adopt and implement strategies
that benefit men. In this way they protect their interests and accumulate huge resources of
wealth. As a result men subjugate the women by depriving them of owning sources of
finance generating activities. Therefore this oppression works at both domestic and social
levels. Most societies developed by capitalist ideologies do not privilege women and they
are denied access to the basic necessities of life:

They lived in a shabby, poorly lighted flat over a Thai grocery in an area of the city
populated by the debris of society. Some of the people did not live indoors, although
it rained so much of the time, but slept in doorways or in abandoned cars. Her
mother found work in a sweatshop around the corner. There was no man in her mother’s life. There were just the two of them. Her mother’s responsibility was to provide food and clothing, and it was Carlotta’s job to do the cooking and cleaning and, of course, to go to school. (Walker, The Temple 06)

These lines from another one of Walker’s novels indicate the fact that Zede and her daughter Carlota lived in a poor and miserable condition due to their poverty. They cannot afford to rent a room in a peaceful, clean and well organized area and have to live in the room above the shop where her mother works during the day time. Both Carlota and her mother strive their best to survive in the male dominated society. The condition of other people around them is described by Alice Walker as being extremely pitiable, since they do not have any shelter even in the rainy weather therefore doorways and abandoned cars are their only shelter from rain. In the patriarchal capitalist system there is no protection for the downtrodden people and only the people from the upper classes have means for secure survival while people from the lower class have nowhere to go as the system does not provide them a comfortable living.

Besides Zede and Carlota, Alice Walker has also created the character of Meridian, in the novel of the same name, who undergoes financial crisis throughout the novel and is exploited by men like Dexter, his assistant and Professor Raymonds. In her later life too, she does not find any compensation from the male controlled system. She moves from the North to the South with the purpose of finding a good job. She goes into smaller towns to explore for work so that she can earn a respectable living. In this way she has a purpose of understanding the male dominated world in which she has to survive. “From being a teacher who published small broadsides of poems, she had hired herself out as a gardener, as a waitress at middleclass black parties, and had occasionally worked as a dishwasher and cook” (Walker, Meridian 19). This statement highlights the hardships that Meridian has to endure despite having a college education. Being a female coming from a poor class and striving to live an independent life, subsistence is extremely challenging in a system dominated by males.
The episode of Wild Child in *Meridian* records the atrocities that women of the black community have been facing through the ages. They have been victims of patriarchal lust for a long time. The poor homeless ‘wile chile’ as the people called her and who cannot speak or understand other people one day suddenly appears around the slums of Saxon College. Alice Walker describes the helplessness of Wild Child in these words, “Wile Chile was seen going through garbage cans and dragging off pieces of discarded furniture, her ashy black arms straining at the task……She would be seen scavenging for food in the garbage cans, and when called to, she would run” (*Meridian* 23). The only source of existence for wild child thus is the heaps of garbage that provide subsistence for the poor black children in the slums of black communities. No one cares for poor children who become victims of male lust. The similar is the fate of wild child who becomes pregnant at an early age:

It was four or five winters after they first spotted her that the neighbors noticed Wile Chile was pregnant. They were critical of the anonymous “low-down dirty dog” who had done the impregnating, but could not imagine what to do. Wile Chile rummaged about as before, eating rancid food, dressing herself in castoffs, cursing and bolting, and smoking her brown cigarettes. (24)

Being physically helpless she was sexually assaulted by an anonymous male and was impregnated. She was thrown away and left to die but the people showed their sympathies only in words and the only source of survival for wild child was the rotten food she got from trash. This is a huge blow for patriarchy where even abandoned children become victims of male hegemony and male brutality and are left to die. Meridian took her to her hostel and gave the pregnant wild child good food and clothes but the warden could not tolerate her, “She must not stay here,” she said gravely. “Think of the influence. This is a school for young ladies” (Walker, *Meridian* 25). This indicates the double standards on the part of educators where a helpless child becomes a burden for such institutes and is thrown away. When she runs away from the Saxon College fearing the powerful mistress she is killed in a car accident. For the first time the wild child became clean, wore neat clothes and slept in a coffin after being killed as a result of reckless driving. “The Wild Child, who
wore for the first time, in her casket, a set of new clothes” (Walker, *Meridian* 37). Thus the poor child not only spends all her life in destitute circumstances but also dies in a pitiable manner.

### 4.7 Celie as a Domestic Slave

The miserable life of Celie does not end with her physical abuse by her father. More miseries wait for her as a result of her marriage to an elderly man. After some days when Celie’s children are taken away she receives a marriage proposal from an elderly person named Albert whom Celie calls Mr._____. Celie is introduced in a disgusting manner in front of her future husband by her father who has been exploiting her for many years. He describes her as if she is a laboring tool or some domestic animal utilized for labor work. His words clearly indicate the fact that he wants to get rid of her by all means. His description of Celie is full of derogation calling her ‘spoiled twice’ on the basis of her two illegitimate children even though it is a result of assault by her own father. His description shows that she got pregnant because of her own choice and desire whereas the fact is that her own father was to be blamed for the reprehensible act. Even the social setup of savagery and barbarism times did not allow relationships such as that of Celie and her father. The biggest irony is that instead of feeling guilty he treats her like a slave. The way he portrays her, she seems to be worse than a prostitute. While talking to Mr. ____ Celie’s father remarks about her, “She too old to be living here at home. And she is a bad influence on my other girls” (Walker, *Purple* 10). Her father tells Mr. ____ that Celie is ugly but she is no stranger to hard work. He considers her ugly in comparison to her sister, keeps her uneducated and does not consider her Nettie’s sister on the merit of beauty and appearance. He says about Celie, “She ugly. Don’t even look like she kin to Nettie” (10). He uses her to do all the field work like sowing grain, tending crops and harvesting in addition to domestic duties like looking after other girls, cleaning and cooking which were also the sole responsibility of Celie. In spite of all the work that she does, Celie does not receive any respect at all and is degraded in every possible way. “She'd come with her own linen.
She can take that cow she raise down there back of the crib” (Walker, *Purple* 10). Her father also remarks that she can work like a man. Despite all her short comings her father thinks her becoming a wife for Mr. _____ the best thing that can happen to her. The standards he sets for a woman to be a good wife is that she should work like a man in the field and fulfil all the domestic duties assigned to her. As a representative of the male dominated society, Mr._____ shows that men need a slave to work at home who can satisfy their needs, tend their animals and nourish their children. Her father also describes her as a careless person due to her generous nature of helping others and suggests that her future husband keep an eye on her so that she does not distribute all his property amongst other people. This description of Celie indicates that she has no value, no self-esteem and no personality for her father who denies her all human characteristics and does not allow her to develop her personality. He manages to accomplish all this by exploiting her physically, morally and psychologically.

The day of marriage brings blessings for many people as they embrace their new life with joy, cheerfulness and hope whilst the situation for Celie becomes even more horrible after marriage. She is married to a father of four children and her marriage proves to be a continuation of the domestic slavery that she experienced in her father’s house. On her marriage day she keeps running after children who pay her no respect because they are already spoiled since nobody has taught them manners and good behavior. The wildness in their attitude is clearly visible in their dealing with Celie. The twelve year old Harpo proves very hostile to her and on the first day of her marriage he wounds her by throwing a piece of rock at her. As a result of this Celie gets a head injury causing blood to run down her body. The biggest irony is that her husband only tells the boy, “Don’t do that!” (13). This remark adds more pain to Celie’s condition showing one example of how Celie in fact turns out to be in a more miserable condition after marriage. In this dejected condition she has to cook food for the whole family and clean the hair of his daughters who had not washed it for many months. She has to untangle them slowly because her husband does not allow Celie to shave off their messy hair. The children curse her and cry for many hours
while she untangles, washes and combs their hair. With this as her marriage day she can only feel more deprived, dejected and despondent than ever before.

The patriarchal marriage allows men complete control over their spouse with permission to use them as slaves who carry out domestic duties as well as field work. For such men taming their fellow women even if comes from punishing them, is a lawful activity. Similarly Mr. _____ used to beat Celie regularly in order to teach her a lesson and tame her. One day when he beats her cruelly his son Harpo cannot see the pain that Celie is going through, “Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me. Mr. ___ say, Cause she my wife. Plus, she stubborn” (Walker, Purple 22). This shows that in that community it is the husband’s right to beat a woman if she is his wife. When Harpo asks Celie the cause of her stubbornness she thinks of why people do not ask her the reason for being a wife to such a cruel man. “Harpo ast me, How come you stubborn? He don't ast How come you his wife? Nobody ast that” (22). Her husband locks her in a room and beats her with a belt. The children peep through the cracks in the walls. “He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don't never hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man” (22). She has to tolerate her pain being a women from the black community. She tolerates misery by trying to imagine herself a tree mourning her fate. She compares herself to a tree because they too are at the mercy of men who can chop them whenever they want and break them into pieces for their personal use.

Besides performing household duties and bearing punishment at the hands of her husband, Celie has to work as a farmer in the fields during extremely hot weather. She picks cotton in the field for many hours when he enjoys comfortable sleep at the same time. “He wake up while I'm in the field. I been chopping cotton three hours by time he come” (Walker, Purple 26). She sweats a lot during the plowing of the fields. She says, “I’m roasted coffee bean color now” (27). Life for Celie grows worse day by day mainly because of the rude attitude of her husband who considers her worse than a slave. The condition of
Celie gets worse as time passes. During a discussion about her post marriage situation with her sister, Nettie remarks that after marriage with Mr.____ Celie seems like buried and Celie replies, “It’s worse than that, I think, if I was buried, I wouldn’t have to work” (18). These words indicate the fact that Celie is living under a burden that is far beyond her capacity. She has to work like a mule from dawn to dusk. Her life is so miserable that she wishes to die so that she can get relief. In Engels’ view, the cruel treatment of women started centuries ago with the overthrow of ‘gens’, a socialist system that provided justice to the miserable women and children but it is evident that in modern times there is no system which can counter the tyrannical attitudes of husband and other family men over the poor women. Women in patriarchy are over burdened by the work load in the house and fields while the income goes to the men. In the same way Celie’s husband Mr.______ orders her all day long to fulfill his desires. The very title indicates her detachment from her husband since she does not like to say his name and refers to him by a title. He does not consider household chores or fieldwork as his responsibility and in fact just stares at Celie while she works in the cotton fields or orders her to fulfill his needs: “go git him a cool drink of water, git his pipe, sit on porch and stare” (26). He never allows Celie to sit beside him and relax but always wants her to do something for him: looking after his children, cooking, cleaning or working in the fields. There is thus no one whom Celie can look to for consolation.

The beginning of civilization proved beneficial for men as it gave them ultimate power to rule others according to their wishes without any restrictions imposed on them. One restriction that civilization demands, in the marital state from both men and women, is to remain loyal in their monogamous relationship. However men restrict their women in all possible ways to remain faithful to them at the same time that they openly practice polygamy, in Engels’ view - where they go to other women in order to gratify their lusty passions.

Polygamy generally refers to ‘having multiple spouses’ at the same time. In some cultures men are allowed to marry more than one woman and they are considered to be
engaged in a polygamous relationship. For Engels ‘polygamy’ refers to having physical relationship with women other than the lawfully wedded wife. Engels calls such relations ‘infidelity’ and states that with the start of ‘The pairing marriage’ and civilization, men ensured ‘strict monogamy’ upon their wives whereas they themselves continued to practice polygamy with a number of women. In this document ‘polygamy’ does not refer to marrying multiple women, rather it is used for multiple partners. For instance Albert is involved in polygamy when he runs after other women like Shug Avery despite being married to Celie. Similarly Suwelo and Arveyda engage in polygamy by having physical relations with other women despite being married to Fanny and Carlotta, respectively. The husbands demand strict monogamy and fidelity from their wives while they themselves engage in polygamy and commit infidelity with women other than their wives.

In addition to her other problems Celie also wants to protect her sister Nettie from the barbarian attitude of her husband and her father fearing the same miserable fate could befall her. Nettie is the only one she cares about in this world. She adores Nettie because of her intelligence, smartness, love for education and beauty. Nettie also has to leave home to protect herself from the cruel attitude of her father because he had already exploited Celie. Nettie runs away from home and comes to Celie’s house but here too, she does not feel safe because of the abusive attitude of Celie’s husband towards herself. Nettie is prettier than Celie and that is why Mr. is interested in her right even before his marriage to Celie but her father had offered him Celie as he wanted to get rid of her first. When Nettie came to Celie’s home to stay Mr. looks at her but Celie and Nettie understand his evil intentions instantly. Celie, fearing the worst, asks her to run away from there and take refuge somewhere else thinking that Mr. might get advantage of her and exploit her physically and that is exactly what happens as she leaves Celie’s house.

The first letter that Celie receives from her beloved sister Nettie explains the nature of exploitation that Mr. wanted to commit against Nettie. When Nettie leaves her sister’s home, Celie’s husband follows her in the woods and while Nettie is walking on foot, Mr. follows her on his horse and starts teasing her by praising her and expressing his love for her. In the woods when there is no one to notice he gets down from his horse
and gets hold of her. Nettie says he, “started to try to kiss me and drag me back in the woods” (107). This incident between Nettie and Mr._____ indicates the lack of moral or ethical code of conduct since he tries to physically exploit the young girl who is closely related to him. This little confrontation between Nettie and Mr._____ highlights the fact that Mr._____ can fall to the lowest level to fulfill his animal desires. In the meantime Nettie struggles and adopts a more aggressive attitude. She manages to get out of his grip at the same time injuring him: “I hurt him bad enough to make him let me alone” (107).

Likewise when Nettie foils her brother in law’s wicked plan of making her his concubine he takes revenge by breaking their communication line. In her first letter that she by chance discovers after many years Nettie informs Celie about M.____’s last words when she is running away from him after injuring him. “He said (to Nettie) because of what I’d done I’d never hear from you again and you would never hear from me” (Walker, Purple 107).

For many years he conceals Nettie’s letters to Celie in a trunk in his room. When Celie does not hear anything back from Nettie, she presumes her sister to be dead and loses all hopes of seeing Nettie again in life.

Another significant instance of polygamy in The Color Purple Alice Walker narrates is Celie’s husband’s illegal association with a famous singer of the South; Shug Avery. An important development in Celie’s life is the discovery of Mr.____’s extramarital relationship with Shug Avery who is known as ‘The Queen Honeybee’ in circles where she is very popular. She is smart, good looking, stylish and well dressed. Many a men runs after her for her sweet voice and her seductive beauty. Mr._____ continues inviting her to his house to serve her besides bringing her to bed. He expresses his feelings for Shug to his father in these words. “I love Shug Avery. Always have, always will. I should have married her when I had the chance (49). Mr._____’s father of course scolds him and threatens dispossessment of the land and property of which Mr._____ and his son Harpo are in control.

Mr._____ cannot marry Shug Avery due to the fear of his father who threatens to disown him if he were to marry her. The expression of emotions for love on the part of Mr.____ indicates his deep involvement with Shug despite his marriage and being the
father of four children. His father is a very strict man and issues strict orders to him to stay away from Shug since, “Nobody even sure exactly who her daddy is……. Plus all her children got different daddys” (50). However Mr.____ remains adamant in his desire to be closely connected with her in future. This example indicates the authority that the patriarchal system provides to men who can exercise power to fulfill their unlawful desires. The wives remain at home and are beaten, abused, cheated and subjugated by powerful property-owning men.

4.8 Meridian’s Catastrophic Marriage

Alice Walker deals with the ruinous effects of marriage in the lives of women due to the non-serious attitude of men towards their wives. All of her major characters suffer from marriage problems due to the patriarchal and hegemonic approach of their family men. The protagonist Meridian of the novel Meridian is also a character who suffers agony growing up in a male dominated world. Meridian marries Eddie at the very young age of 15. Her sexual encounters with Dexter and his assistant, expose her to a forbidden world where she is exploited and as a result gets involved with a young school boy, Eddie. They live and enjoy each other’s company for many months until she realizes that she is pregnant. She has to get married out of compulsion and the first year of marriage goes well due to their youthful passion. However things change when they both find alternative paths. Meridian is expelled from school even though she has a strong urge for knowledge and learning. “More seriously: She hated the fact that although he was still in school and she was not” (Walker, Meridian 65). This going out of school and becoming a house wife at such a young age does not suit her strong revolutionary passions. She has an obsession for learning new things and when she’s at home she watches quiz programs on TV to learn new things. Staying at home increases her anxiety for household activities and her family members especially for Eddie. Meridian’s young husband does not share with her the problems that he faces in the outside world where he has to work after school hours. Because of Meridian’s pregnancy Eddie does not discuss his working at different positions in the restaurant at short notice from his owner and the meager salary that he receives. Eddie keeps complaining to Meridian about small household duties wanting the domestic
work to be completed well in time, in spite of her advanced pregnancy. “The worries he was unable to hide were about small things that bothered him: ironing of his clothes, ..........: the cooking, which she was too queasy to do at all: and sex, which she did not seem (he said) interested in” (57). For Eddie, the domestic duties are the sole responsibility of Meridian, no matter what her physical condition. All he wanted was for her to be a maid who could perform her duties well in time and without any delay or objection. Eddie’s mother, thus, has to take on the cleaning and ironing of clothes on a humble request from his wife because as a husband he demanded it of her.

The primary expectation that Eddie insists on is the fulfillment of his strong desire for sex despite the fact that Meridian’s physical condition prohibits it. But for Eddie it is the duty of Meridian to satisfy his needs even if it comes at the cost of physical pain. Eddie’s personality is a complex one: on one hand he spares Meridian by not telling her details of the problems that he faces in life outside but on other hand he wants her to gratify his physical needs and desires. The Marxist Feminist doctrine speaks against such domestic exploitation of women and highlights the miseries that they suffer at the hands of their fellow men. Men treat women as domestic servants whose chief concern should be the gratification of men’s desires, urges and longings. In such conditions the natural balance of harmony within the family system is unable to sustain itself and chaos is likely to prevail for a long period of time.

Frederick Engels’ Marxist Feminist theory brings to the limelight men’s tendency to go to women other than their wife. Men consider it as their privilege to enjoy sex with as many women as they like. Similar is the case with Eddie in the novel Meridian. Alice Walker brings to light the horrible practices that societies practices on a regular basis. Meridian becomes pregnant by Eddie thus making it obligatory for him to remain faithful and loyal to her as she goes through a painful period of her life. On the other hand Eddie goes to other women for the satisfaction of his sexual needs. “By that time—and it did not surprise her—he had a woman who loved sex, and was able to get as much of it as he wanted every night” (58). For Eddie establishing extra-marital relationships is not only legal but an essential practice to be performed on regular basis. Eddie is about 16 years old
but he shows signs of being grownup, since that is what he witnesses in society that shows him that it is his right to go to any extreme for personal pleasure. No moral or ethical code of conduct stops him since he is a male member of his community.

In the patriarchal social setup, men especially married ones can go to any extreme for fulfillment of their desire. In this regard the role of elders is significant as the norms and taboos in societies are inherited from trends in progress for generations. Young people follow the foot prints of their elders and adopt attitudes whose application in society is deeply rooted as a result of centuries of practice. The proof of such behavior can be witnessed in the conduct of the elderly women around Eddie who know about his involvement with other women when Meridian is pregnant. They consider it perfectly normal conduct: “But he was “good” to her, even then, he did not “cheat” and “beat” her both, which meant he was “good” to her according to her mother, his mother, the other women in the neighborhood” (58). Such conduct from elder people who know everything about Meridian’s condition and willingly allow it as an example of good conduct. Elderly women themselves are not aware of their own rights as they have been victims of patriarchal oppression all their lives and have witnessed nothing but subjugation all their lives. Such behavior arises from privileges that men have been relishing from a long time ago and which mainly started as a result of property rights and property owning. Here one of theories of origin suggested by Barbara Smuts is significant in showing the essential role of women in perpetuation of patriarchy. Women play their crucial part in further strengthening patriarchy. In this way aged women prove quite handy to assist their patriarchs.

Eddie goes away in order to secure his future and make a successful living, leaving Meridian in a state of despair. He continues his education while Meridian is thrown out of school because of her pregnancy. Eddie continues to work and earn money while Meridian has to stay home and do all the household chores, receiving nothing in the shape of financial assistance. “She was still only seventeen. A dropout from high school, a deserted wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law” (70). Thus her life is ruined as she has no position in the social
circle. Her life becomes even more miserable with the passage of time, due to the men around her who take advantage of her for their personal gains and pleasures.

4.9 Role of Mothers in Strengthening Patriarchy

Women have played a significant role in subjugating their fellow women by propagating patriarchal manners of oppression of women. In this regard mothers have been utilized by men to suppress girls of the younger generation. Women perform their role due to their lifelong service of patriarchy that does not allow them to think otherwise. The other theories of origin of patriarchy has relevance in this regard where women are only given role of producing children. Barbara Smuts also points out the proposition that women play their vital role in prolongation of male supremacy and allow men to rule over their fellow women. Here theory of lack of kinship among women is also important that as tool of deepening roots of patriarchy serves its role. Mothers are only accustomed to ways of hegemony exercised by men in the roles of father and brother in early life and husband in later life. Alice Walker too depicts instances where women play their part in prolonging patriarchal hegemony. Mothers are used as a tool for strengthening this oppression. For example in Meridian’s family she is taught to follow the socially assigned role to women like her mother. Like her great grandmother, her mother is also taught and expected to become a strong woman who should silently perform all her duties such as washing, ironing, cooking, taking care of other family members and going to fields for manual labor. The narrator that Alice Walker employs in the novel says about the strong great grandmother of Meridian - Feather Mae - “soon be married, soon be expecting, soon be like her own mother, a strong silent woman who seemed always to be washing or ironing or cooking or rousing her family from naps to go back to work in the fields” (Walker Meridian 49). This statement highlights the traditional expectation of the patriarchal system of every woman in this role.

The role of Meridian’s mother is also significant in her suppression at the hands of the men in her own community. As a young girl she has no one close to teach her the ways of men in a male dominated society. Due to the lack of communication and generation gap
between Meridian and her mother, Meridian gets used by younger boys in the name of love in the bushes.

Later on she would frown even more when she realized that her mother, father, aunts, friends, passers-by—not to mention her laughing sister—had told her nothing about what to expect from men, from sex. Her mother never even used the word, and her lack of information on the subject of sex was accompanied by a seeming lack of concern about her daughter’s morals. Having told her absolutely nothing, she had expected her to do nothing. (53)

Statements like these in Walker’s portrayal of Meridian’s character make it obvious that the people around her who are aware of ways of men’s exploitation of young girls’ contribute in the destruction of Meridian’s childhood and youth. Her elders have all experienced such situations before her but do not share their understanding of the world with Meridian. She does not get any direction or moral guidance from anyone and she is therefore physically abused by many men around her such as her boyfriend, Dexter, his assistant, the Professor and Truman. Her marriage at an early age also fails due to her lack of information about survival tactics in a patriarchal society.

4.10 Meridian’s Grandfather

Since men have a powerful status in social setups the activities they indulge in, aim to promote personal desires. Men enforce monogamy only from their wives while considering themselves liberated from restrictions imposed through their marital status. They are involved in polygamy where they can enjoy physical relations with the women of their choice in addition to the wife they keep at home in order to use them as domestic workers. Similar is the condition of the husband of Meridian’s grandmother. “he also had no desire to raise children— though he enjoyed sex with any willing, good-looking woman who came his way—and he beat his wife and children with more pleasure than he beat his mules” (Walker Meridian 122). For such people monogamy does not pose any restriction; all they care about is the fulfillment of their desires no matter what means they have to adopt. All illegal sources that allow the satisfaction of their personal needs become legal
and in such condition they assume greater authority and consider their family members to be a burden on them, adopting all possible ways to keep the people who become source of their satisfaction happy. On the other hand they consider their wives as their enemy and a threat to the ultimate freedom that they want to enjoy endlessly. They are not reluctant to use even physical violence against their wives as in the case of Meridian’s grandmother, who is beaten severely by her husband, who takes pleasure in punishing her and that too, without any reason. He beats her because he considers her his property and treats her as a slave. For him there is no difference between his wife and his mules rather he considers her insignificant compared to his mules whom he treats with care. He does not behave responsibly to his family women and proof of this can be seen from his lack of desire to raise children and the beating of his wife. The motive behind this attitude is financial supremacy; Meridian’s step grandfather is a wealthy man with a farm that brings him a sizable income. Therefore he engages himself in amorous activities as he knows nobody can object to him and there would be no consequences. This is an example of how men who own large properties can enjoy life according to their likings.

4.11 Truman’s Exploitation of Meridian

In a male dominated world, men always get chances to enjoy life according to their desires but for women the situation is quite the contrary. If women have a weakness in the eyes of society their survival becomes extremely difficult. Men want women in perfect condition in every sense and if they find fault in their characters which might not be because of their own flaw they instantly show their reluctance towards women. The lives of widows is not easy in such a male oriented society where they adopt means which drive those women away. For example Truman is a person who always runs after young woman with the purpose of seducing them and he chases Meridian considering her a virgin. He assumes her to be a virgin and when he does not find her to be so he becomes suspicious about her piousness. Truman is driven away from her when he comes to know that she is a divorced woman with a child. Alice Walker says about Truman’s approach, “How could he have a wife who already had a child?” (Meridian 140). Truman lives in a utopian world where he
practically adopts polygamy in his relation with other young girls but when it comes to the selection of a wife he wants a woman who has not been touched by any man. “He had wanted a virgin, had been raised to expect and demand a virgin; and never once had he questioned this. He had been as predatory as the other young men he ran with, as eager to seduce and devirginize as they. Where had he expected his virgin to come from? Heaven?” (140). The fact that Walker wants to highlight is that men are brought up in patriarchal societies to long for virgins instead of remaining virgins themselves. It is a commonly practiced and widely accepted phenomenon to search for virgins with the purpose of assaulting them. Such is the case with Truman and the other boys living near him. They all have the idea of running after women who are in their early youth. They lose their own virginity whenever they get a chance to prove themselves as hunters of virgins. It shows a duplicitous conduct adopted by patriarchal practitioners where men’s adaptation clearly contradicts the ideals that they keep in mind and strive for. Truman wants to seduce a virgin girl. “He had wanted a woman perfect in all the eyes of the world, not a savage who bore her offspring” (140-141).

Truman expects Meridian to be perfect in order to prove his superior status in the eyes of people in his social setup where no one could object. What bothers him the most is that if the insult comes from a woman it is not acceptable on any terms. “He was not prepared to love her over a long period, but for a short one” (Walker, Meridian 138). Truman’s expectations portray the psychological aspect of Truman who wants to keep the woman by his side but without the promise of life time relationships as he wants to provide himself with the margin of seducing other women. Since he wants to keep his chances alive he does not want to give Meridian a permanent status in life but wants to keep many women without any restriction imposed on his freedom. The narrator of the novel describes Truman’s approach towards Meridian, “He did not want a woman who tried, however encumbered by guilts and fears and remorse, to claim her own life. She knew Truman would have liked her better as she had been as Eddie’s wife, for all that he admired the flash of her face across a picket line—an attractive woman, but asleep” (106-107). These lines indicate the attitude of Truman who had a keen interest in not only Meridian but also
a number of other women who came his way. He does not look for long lasting relations with any woman because he considers them temporary enjoyment and does not want to make a commitment to any specific one.

Meridian knows Truman’s conduct towards herself and other women. Despite giving him her honor and permission to use her body she does not have the right to possess him. She feels grieved at his approach towards her and concludes that Truman would have liked her most if she had been Eddie’s wife which shows Truman is a woman hunter who goes for a woman who is possessed by another man. In Meridian’s case Truman strives to get his prey but when Meridian is freely available Truman keeps her as a part time concubine because he takes into consideration her deserted status. In such a condition Truman makes her realize her low value and status when he denies her the social status of marriage. In this case Truman wants to enjoy her and at the same time keep her at his feet in a begging position. This is the dilemma of societies where patriarchy is not questionable, men being in a superior position adopt all the means that strengthen their supremacy in society even if it is at the cost of their power over moral, philosophical, social and ethical obligations.

After the bitter experience of engaging in sexual activities Meridian and Truman part ways mainly due to his lack of interest in her and longing for other girls. “The time she had seen Truman, after he began dating the exchange students, had been bitterly regretted. And for her part in what happened, Meridian paid dearly” (102). Being a woman Meridian cannot do anything to bring back Truman who is busy dating other women; she regrets her fate and is worried because Truman goes to other girls for gratification of his manish covetousness. There is no way left for Meridian to get back her lover who is engaged in loving other young girls and eventually marries Lynne. In her disgust she goes away from Truman and his pretentious life, living alone in a small town in Alabama. In order to survive she works in a freedom school and passes her days in a tranquil and peaceful manner in that town, away from the hustle and bustles of the capitalist patriarchal social system. Truman enjoys multiple tastes of female flesh, searches even after three years of her marriage despite his being father of Camara.
Truman is a self-centered, obstinate person and only caters to his greed and lust. His visit to Meridian after a long time also reveals his male chauvinism, as he wants to gratify his physical relations with Meridian. “He had begged her, or tried to beg her (because she did not seem to understand what begging constituted), to give him another chance” (137). He visits Meridian with the idea that she is a deserted woman who would jump to opportunity and would embrace him instantly. “She loved him, he rashly assumed—as she smiled at him—and he did not see why she should deny herself” (137). This approach of Truman reveals his selfish attitude towards women whom he merely considers objects to gratify his lustful, misguided passions. Despite being married and father to a daughter he has no respect for women of his own black community. Due to his high status he considers Meridian a person of such low self-esteem that she would not only forgive him for his earlier blunders of deserting her and running after many women but also would love him back. All his ambitions and motivations are self-directed where there is no place for the opposite gender. On the other hand Meridian laughs at his approach towards life in which there is no dignity of women. After such insults inflicted upon Meridian, it is doubly strange on Truman’s part to ask for a second chance and that too, when he is already married and has a daughter. Similar objections are brought to notice by Meridian when she calls attention to his marital status and warns him against entering the forbidden world of adultery whilst Truman is persistent with Meridian. After three years of his marriage to Lynne and relations with other girls Truman again seeks to enjoy close association with Meridian. He blames the whiteness of his wife, but the blame itself reveals the nature of Truman leaves Meridian because she is black and runs after his present wife and other young female students. In his persistent arguments he questions Meridian, “How can you take her side” (137)? In response she asks him about ‘her own side’ and place in the affair. She also calls attention to his being the father of a daughter, “Don’t you think you owe something to Camara” (137)? Truman is astounded and bewildered by Meridian’s rejection of his offer to be in a polygamous relationship. She prefers monogamy and advises Truman to remain faithful to his wife, who despite all counter arguments remains unchanged and unaffected.
4.12 Sufferings of Women in *Meridian*

Alice Walker documents the struggle of women for the purpose of gaining their rights. One such movements which marks the central point in the lives of African American people, the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s, is recorded in her novel *Meridian*, where women are shown struggling for the right to vote and ultimately eradicate social oppression. The slogans of the movement are high but actually here too, women are kept aside; the focus is more on the rights of black males and the agenda being political in nature favors patriarchy. Millet’s idea of sexual politics seems more appropriate in this regard as the revolution is more of political in nature as compared to problems of individuals especially women. In the process of the struggle the protagonist, Meridian Hill, has to undergo hardships where she suffers because of the patriarchal attitude of not only the white male community but also black men. She has to struggle against rape, racism and violence. Like all social revolutionary movements the Black Arts Revolution too, proved to be a movement of slogans where debates and talks were held for social and political transformation but life at the grass roots level remained uninfluenced by it. The widely oppressed faction of society comprising of women remains deprived despite the slogans of the movement. The focus of patriarchy is clearly visible in the attitudes of activists whose political aim is to utilize street power of common people for the promotion of male domination while individuality is not taken into consideration. For example Meridian who behaves differently from other people is considered a liability because she refuses to kill a human being for the sake of the revolution. To a question from her friend Anne-Marion about killing white people during time of revolution she answers as “No” (18). Meridian values human life as she believes in the pacifist ideology that strives for the solution of conflicts without engaging in violent activities. When Anne-Marion tries to persuade Meridian to kill and die for the revolution, Meridian shows her reluctance in getting involved in violent activities. This proves the fact that Alice Walker wants equality for all human beings but she does not want the revolutionary notion and patriarchy to dominate the individuality of human beings especially those of women. The Civil Rights activists
comprised mainly of women in the novel and the protagonist, Meridian considers killing an act of brutality. Walker views killing a combat strategy that aims to reproduce a power group that engage themselves in never ending fights for more rights. All Walker strives is to empower individuals in a peaceful manner. Walker does not entirely rely on political changes only; her emphasis remains on personal transformation. For her individuality of a human being is extremely significant as the societal system heavily relies on individuals so when persons have a promised future the society too, can be prosperous. Thus personal improvement of human beings guarantees their well beings.

4.13 Emblematic Significance of Sojourner

For the purpose of personal transformation Walker has created the character of Meridian who despite leading a lowly life in a humble background focuses on folk tales comprising of traditional stories and songs around the historical tree, The Sojourner. She takes help from the narrations of rebellious actions performed by women in past ages. The Sojourner, the large magnolia tree located in the middle of Saxon College campus, witnessed atrocities committed against young black women by telling tales of the college related to bestowing “Ladyhood” upon students passing through teenage (Walker, Meridian 28). The only Sojourner ceremony organized around it, is the commemoration of Fast Mary of Tower which is attended by all the people including blacks, whites, rich and poor alike. Mary was a young girl who after being raped became pregnant and being too ashamed to take assistance from anybody in the patriarchal society she chopped the new born baby into pieces and threw it in the toilet. When she was caught she was locked in a windowless room where she committed suicide after three months (34-35). The Sojourner was the only friend with whom Mary shared her secrets and felt at ease since human beings rejected her and thought her brutal and degenerated. This case of Mary hiding her pregnancy and committing suicide can only occur in a societal setup that is based on the principles of male-controlled ideology. Mary was frightened to reveal her secret because she feared severe punishment that her family members and community would impose on her.
Patriarchy has played a significant role in social life by assigning stereotypical role to women where all the socially assigned roles have been strictly regulated by men who were always in a superior position in patriarchy. Alice Walker describes the characteristics of women in the novel *Meridian* in relation to the tank in which Meridian at the start of novel performs her role as a mummy of ‘Marilene O’Shay’, three titles are printed on it that promulgate three roles for women ‘obedient daughter’, ‘adoring mother’ and ‘devoted wife’ (5). Men in the roles of father, son and husband always demand strict conformity under all circumstances and consider themselves to be liberated from the regulations of obedience, adoration and devotion towards their female members of the family and exercise all kinds of freedom for themselves. They consider the application of strict regulations on women due to their weak social position in terms of power, finance and position in society. Whenever they notice their family women stepping out of the boundaries they label women as disloyal, unfaithful and treacherous. For example on the trailer of ‘Marilene O’Shay’, the fourth title inscribed is ‘Gone Wrong’ (5) and indicates the expectations from women that have not been fulfilled. That is why Meridian performs the role of mummy before all the village men who get inspiration to treat their family’s women as corpses when they are unable to carry out their given roles. All people whether black or white enjoy the miseries of poor people especially women as Meridian says while talking to Truman, “They’re grateful people…. They appreciate it when someone volunteers to suffer” (12). For people the agonizing life of a woman is a joyous scene when they can gossip and amuse themselves. The theory of male-male alliances brought to limelight by Barbara Smuts is essential in this respect that propounds male hegemony directed against women to showcase their power and unity as they consider women to be their common enemy. Men take revenge from women to establish their hegemony. In such masculine systems men have no desire to help the pained women and instead consider that she has violated the role that women must adopt without any objection. When they see a slight alteration in these strict lawful roles they desire open punishment. On the other hand no such regulations are made or practiced in societies controlled by males. Men have all kinds of freedom to
exercise polygamy, assault other women and beat their wives at the slightest pretext, indicating the double standards of the men.

4.14 Fanny’s Father’s First Wife

Depriving the wives of financial revenue and basic necessities of life is a deeply rooted tradition in civilized societies. According to Engels when men became powerful against ‘gens’ the first act they performed was to oppress their fellow beings and deprive their family women of the sources of income. In doing so they ensured the poverty of their family women especially wives and enjoyed a powerful and unchallenged status for a long period of time. Other theories of male supremacy and female oppression also exist that perceive causes of women subjugation in things other than property items. For instance Barbara Smuts highlights these proposals that include theory of women’s kinship distance, male-male unity, women’s role reduced only to reproduction of children, women’s role in their own subjection and linguistic violence. But Engels explanation of property ownership to be the foundation of problems of women seem more convincing. In exploitation of their family women black men played their role along with the white oppressors. Walker narrates a similar instance of economic subjugation in her novel *The Temple of My Familiar*, when her step sister Coolly Nzingha, illustrates the black men’s role in keeping their family women at a subdued level.

And I feel so frustrated, because the men can always run on and on about the white man’s destructiveness and yet they cannot look into their own families and their own children’s lives and see that this is just the destruction the white man has planned. Meanwhile, the women are starting to crack from the white man’s blatant success and the lack of their men’s support (253).

From Coolly Nzingha’s words it is apparent that the black men are equally responsible for the down trodden and backward situation of their fellow women. Black men keep talking about white men’s contribution in depriving the black community of their basic human rights because they have been in power for a long period of time. They too, become tools of devastation of their own community members and follow in the footsteps of their white
masters. In fact for poor black women the period of colonization never ended as for them it is merely change of masters from white men to black men. Both black and white men proved themselves to be oppressive rulers and the poor women of African origin remained their victim. In doing so black men also assume the oppressive role that white men have been efficiently performing against black women. For black women both white and black men are equal in status as white men continue to get more and more prosperous and black men are equally non cooperative towards the backward condition of their family members especially women and children.

Similar is the story of Coolly Nzingha and Fanny Nzingha’s father David nicknamed Ola who deserts his second wife Harriet after marrying her in the battle against the white regime in Africa. Due to unbearable economic repression she joins the revolutionary African fighters Mbeles. She is a fighter who fights against the white regime along with many other African fighters. She is a woman of action and displays her sincerity doing work for the African community. As Coolly Nzingha remarks about her mother during a conversation with her sister Fanny, “She saved my father’s life, she saved many people’s lives, …. My father married her while they were still outlaws; she became pregnant with me with between battles” (Walker, Temple 254). At war times during nontraditional manners Nzingha’s mother seems a heroic figure to her father who appreciates her guerrilla fighting and therefore marries her on the battlefield. Things start changing with the overthrow of the government and achievement of their mission. As Nzingha says to Fanny, “With the overthrow of the white regime, my father’s stock rose very high, because he’d been partially educated in Western ways by the missionaries. He was sent off to Sweden to further his studies” (254). Ola becomes a prominent figure in the black patriarchal government owing to his early education and is sent to get further education and training. Whilst Harriet, Coolly’s mother becomes useless after war she does not have any further task to accomplish. The traditional society stops functioning and patriarchal government considering her illiterate and superstitious does not assign her any task so she is deprived in every sense.
My mother took care of me, and waited. Right there in the little hut he left her in, the hut she’d erected herself. And when he came back, he no longer remembered how she’d saved his life or how heroic she was. If he did remember, it was in that way that writers remember things, as if they happened to someone else, and you needn’t be bound by the facts. (254-255)

Nzingha’s father spends several years studying in Sweden on government expense for the betterment of his country. In all these years her mother and little Nzingha have nothing to do except waiting. Her mother waits for her father’s return and thinks that he would compensate for the several years that she spent in the little hut she herself built. Despite having strong connections in the new government Ola does not make any effort for the welfare of his wife and daughter. He comes back as a changed man after getting education in a foreign country. Ola appears as a distant man to his wife and no longer recalls her heroic role in saving his life on the battlefield. He forgets her gallantry in acquiring a post in the government of his liking. In a true sense he becomes a writer who makes his own personal stories impersonal with the help of negative capability whereas the writers adopt such positions generally in writing about other people’s lives. Ola on the other hand forgets his wife, her struggle and the long wait that she has been in for many years for her husband’s well-being. Despite all personal sacrifices there is no reward for her mother and other women who contributed in overthrowing the old white government. “It was a government she had helped—through immense risk and personal sacrifice—put into power, but that, once in power, conveniently forgot she existed. This was true of all the women: they were forgotten” (255). Thus all efforts and endangering of lives to bring change and hoping for prosperity were in vain. Women are not given any role at all in government affairs and are abandoned by black males of their own community. Similar is the case with all other women as Nzingha points out. Personal gains and economic benefits allure men into their shackles where sacrifices of other related women become meaningless. This shows the barbaric instincts of the men that lead them to enjoy life in their own way and without paying any heed to their loved ones especially women as wives as in the case of Ola and Harriet. It is not that Ola’s wife is dull in day to day matters as
Nzingha remarks about her own mother in these words “My mother had no education but she was extremely psychic,’ she continued, ‘even politically psychic, which is rare” (255).

Nzingha’s mother has a deep understanding of all affairs despite lack of education owing to her poor circumstances and background. She has the ability to predict even in political matters that later turned out to be true but even then she is badly ignored in influential circles. For example Nzingha tells about her mother’s political foresight in the following words. “She knew that no matter how my father studied, emulated people of other cultures, or otherwise shaped a “modern” self, he would always come into conflict with the government here, even though it was this government that sent him and other young men abroad” (255). This turns out to be true when Ola’s own government arrests him for criticizing it in the plays that he writes for the theatre. Her mother knows her father’s confronting attitude with the authorities. Despite Ola’s own education and high power he does not pay attention to his wife’s worsening financial condition. He does not assist his wife in any way as she lives in a poor hut made by herself and sleeps on a piece of mat on the floor. During her conversation with her sister Fanny, Nzingha criticizes all men especially her own father in this quote, “men are giving these women children, and that is all they give. Not a cent do they give for food or clothing or education” (252). It is a sad reality on the part of men who do not consider all the needs of women and children after the birth of their children. During their single life they are anxious to present a dreamy picture of future life to their beloved women. In their passionate love making time men do not understand the heavy responsibilities that they will have to bear after the arrival of children. Men due to their irresponsible behavior do not support their wives and children financially. Similar is the condition with Nzingha’s own mother when she is deserted by her father for a long period of time whereas he himself enjoys the privileges of Minister of culture in the government. It is common belief in the Olinka African tribe that, “A woman was for breeding, a woman was for sex, a woman well, in our language the word for woman is the same as for seed granary” (255).

Exploitation of women within the family among people of African origin is not an unknown factor; in fact there is agreement on the role of women and that is only to produce
children and sexual satisfaction for their male partners. The word for woman in Olinka language is synonymous with seed granary where seed can easily be understood as children. This is why Ola follows the traditions established in society despite his education and powerful social position and thus keeps his wife financially deprived and in a small hut. On the other hand Ola (Dahvid) enjoys a luxurious life style with a big car and a luxurious house. After five or six years when he first visits his wife in her hut says Nzingha, “He came in a big car, with a driver” (255). Likewise the grandeur of Ola’s house can be understood from his introduction of house in his first meeting with his second daughter Fanny.

Because I am the minister of culture,’ he says, drawing himself up loftily, ‘I have to live in a native-style house!’ He laughs. It has all the conveniences, though. Two baths, four bedrooms, a large ceremonial living room, a verandah that goes completely around the inner courtyard. There are flowers, and, because he is also a farmer, a large vegetable garden. (163)

The size, quantity and quality of rooms, garden and flowers indicate the splendid nature of the house and style in which Ola lives whilst at the same time his wife, Harriet lives in a poor hut and sleeps on a mat. It also highlights the hypocritical attitude of Ola who despite enjoying a powerful position keeps his poor wife in a degraded and deprived condition in a hut made of branches of trees. Nzingha narrates the shabby condition of her poor hut in these words. “The rain had eaten away a corner of the hut, and the giraffes, which she used to paint each year at the beginning of the dry season had faded” (257). This description also shows the double standards in the living style of a rich black representative of patriarchy who leads a comfortable living among the elite. His poor wife, who spends precious years of his life waiting for his return, is deprived of the basic necessities of routine life. Ola does not even give her financial support and his wife earns her own living.

Nzingha tells about her mother’s source of income, “She was drinking the home-brewed beer that she made to sell” (257). It shows the poor condition of Harriet who despite being the wife of a minister has to make beer in order to fulfil her basic needs. The reason that Nzingha presents the irresponsible detached behavior of her father with his wife is that he
keeps her hidden from the people of his acquaintance in the government. She is an illiterate, traditional woman whom he does not think fitting in his elite social circle so he keeps her in the poor village. Nzingha says, “He was a childless man, though, as far as his friends in government knew; at least, it was not definitely known he was married” (256). Ola holds his wife and daughter secret from the people around him for many years. During the life of his wife he does not accept her in his social circle. This grieved her and to add injury to insult Ola takes young Coolly Nzingha away from her mother when she is only five or six years old and puts her in a boarding school. She says about her mother, “We left her there in the village to rot” (257). Ola gives the reason of separation between mother and daughter as acquiring good education for their daughter that will ultimately be good for her country. She does not resist at that time when he takes her but it burdens her heart heavily as her only remaining reason of survival is taken from her. She has nothing to do but pass the remaining days of her life in that ruined hut. Once on a rare occasion when Nzingha visits her mother, she is surprised to see her in an entirely transformed condition. “I said a few words in English to her, and she went into a rage, throwing things—not that there were many things in the hut to throw—and stamping alone” (257). Her mother becomes ferocious at the words of English that indicates that she hates Nzingha’s father in her so that whenever her father visits her, he speaks to her in English in an angry manner that she does not understand. She feels degraded in the presence of English because in her youthful time the only task she efficiently performed was fighting guerrilla war against white English speaking regime and blow up “their building or power stations” (256). In her loneliness Nzingha’s mother is totally transformed from a gentle person to a wild one as she says about her mother, “Her eyes were red, her hair matty and wild. There was a coarseness in her mannerisms and a slackness in her expression. I’d never seen and never thought my gentle mother could have. Nor did I understand yet about changes in the personality wrought by grief” (257). Because of being lonely, poor and grief stricken Nzingha’s mother is traumatized and changed from a healthy fighter to a patient. With the passage of time survival for Harriet becomes unbearable or in Nzingha’s words “She died, after a lingering illness, when I was sixteen. Probably from cancer. Or heart failure. Or
heartbreak. The cause of death had no name, in the village. Only the reasons. She was very
tired, the villagers said, very lonely” (258). This specifies the double standards in the social
living of the elite ruling class. Harriet is the wife of a minister and the reasons of her illness
cannot be determined as there is no one to take her to the doctor or to take care of her. She
suffers from deadly diseases but her husband is involved in his own affairs and therefore
has no time or interest to get her medical check-up done by good doctors. She leads a
miserable life in the absence of her husband and her only daughter. She has no money to
purchase daily household items and getting expensive medical treatment is out of the
question for her. Her poor broken hut, lack of household basics, degradation on the part of
her husband black patriarchal setup are major factors in destroying the life of a brilliant
fighter. In a male dominated world women lead a life of deprivation in terms of economic
possession whereas men enjoy a privileged life based on luxuries and possessions to attain
maximum pleasures and comfort.

4.15 Suwelo in the Patriarchal Setup

Men impart their ways of survival to their next generations especially boys. They
directly and indirectly teach their young boys to control their women in order to carry on
the centuries old traditions of property possession and polygamy. It is a common practice
in patriarchal societies to teach boys to follow in the footsteps of their elders. From
childhood boys are taught to be liberated form the encumbrance of loyalty, fidelity and
honesty.

I was brought up on Playboy, in which the goal of every red-blooded man is to
pierce as many women as possible, and to think of their minds, their creative gifts,
and their professional abilities as added sexual stimulation, nothing more. I loved
that joke inspired, I’m sure, by the Playboy mentality: What did you do with the
female scientist who discovered a cure for the common cold? You screwed her.
Yuk,yuk. (Walker, Temple 280)

Alice Walker creates the character of Suwelo who himself admits following patriarchy
while growing in a men dominated social setup. The life aim of all young men in Suwelo’s
society is to exploit as many women as possible. The one who seduces the most women is considered successful. All their energies, creativities, and professional skills are utilized for only one purpose which is to tempt and physically exploit women. By indulging in successful exploitative strategies men are considered to qualify to be members of male fraternity. Suwelo calls such attitude as being representative of ‘playboy’ whose life achievements are to seduce as many women as they can. Playboy mentality was commonly known and practiced in all societies amongst the male members. This indicates that for men, women can only fill in one role comfortably and that is to saturate the physical demands of men. Men consider women inferior in every aspect other than that of providing sexual satisfaction. The tyranny lies in the fact that apart from practicing such behavior men openly transmit this to their younger generations thus ensuring that this manipulative conduct continues like a never ending maze. The practice of men exploiting women started centuries ago and continues to date in almost all societies of whom Suwelo is only one representative. From childhood they are taught one perspective about women and that is that women are only sex objects. Other roles of women where they have dignity, respect and self-esteem are not presented to the younger generation of men. Alice Walker indicates this conduct in the character of Suwelo who grows up into a playboy and physical oppression against women comes naturally to him. The ideology of Marxist Feminism highlights the exploitation of women be it a result of men’s betrayal or economic oppression. It also highlights the root cause of problems between married couples. Thus Marxist Feminism challenges the stereotypically assigned role for women and formulates strategies to eradicate their oppression and liberate them from the shackles of patriarchy. Kate Millet on the other hand puts sexual oppression of women on a higher level comparatively.

4.16 Suwelo, Carlota and other Women

Patriarchy provides equal chances in all matters to men of all classes. With the beginning of civilization men ensured monogamy on the part of women whereas they liberated themselves of all restrictions of monogamy and enjoy polygamous relations with
a number of women. In the practice of such hypocrisy, men adopt various techniques to play around without the knowledge of their wives. Alice Walker portrays the example of Suwelo, who is a History professor in the African American community of The Temple of My Familiar. He and his wife Fanny, a Women’s Studies teacher, are one of the significant couples with marriage problems. Being a black woman Fanny too, like many others suffers at the hands of the patriarchal attitude of Suwelo. During his discussion with Mr. Hal and Miss Lissie, Suwelo presents his own situation as a dejected lover who has not committed any mistake. Fanny and Suwelo’s relationship is disclosed in Suwelo’s words where Fanny is shown as having a very weak opinion about the social institution of marriage. She wants to liberate herself from the bonding of marital status. On the other hand Suwelo presents an entirely different story claiming his innocence.

Alice Walker portrays discussion between Suwelo and Mr. Hal where Suwelo narrates his own version of story in relatedness to his ongoing rift with his wife, Fanny Nzingha. Says Suwelo, “I felt abandoned, rejected, set adrift. After all, this was someone I’d known and loved for a good portion of my life. When we were married, I considered it a natural joining, a legal verification of what was already fact. We were one, in my opinion. And being legally married seconded that opinion” (141). Suwelo reflects the general psychology of men who consider a marital contract as the sole reason for leading a happy life and expects Fanny to follow him in all conditions without questioning their patriarchal attitude. Fanny demands a divorce and discusses their separation routinely, e.g. during his introduction with Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal, Suwelo says, “we had been discussing a divorce for months now…” (138), thus indicating the distance between them which increases on a daily basis.

Fanny lost her belief in marriage as a social institute and reaches the conclusion that she will be happier without marriage since she will neither be possessed nor will she expect anything of her spouse. Alice Walker portrays the character of Suwelo, as initially loyal and faithful and one who wants to continue his marital status with Fanny calling it a ‘natural joining’ and ‘legal verification’. He considers himself ‘abandoned, rejected and adrift’ and is surprised at his wife’s demand of separation from her husband. In his opinion they were
‘one’ and as such it was difficult for him to digest rejection from his wife. Fanny is depressed by the male sense of possession and control and says, “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” (Walker, Temple 139). There is lack of trust between this previously happily married couple when a strong rift is created because of his mistrust. Fanny does not doubt Suwelo’s marrying another woman. She tells Suwelo, “You will find another woman right away… You will be rarest of all qualities: black, free, gainfully employed. You will be snapped up in no time” (139). Suwelo continues to claim complete loyalty towards his wife but Fanny has strong grounds for an extreme step like divorce. In the introduction to Miss Lissie and Mr. Hall he presents the other side of the picture. Before giving him divorce Fanny seeks the consent of her husband and says, “Listen Suwelo, I love you too much to divorce you without your consent”. (157)

In Suwelo and Fanny’s relationship, Suwelo’s patriarchal ways become a great hindrance that ultimately lead them closer to divorce agreement. Suwelo does not approve of his wife’s ways and desires but tries to remain in his own comfort zone. One example that Suwelo narrates to Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal in his discussions with them is the argument regarding ‘cart’. Fanny feels comfortable in carrying her newly purchased goods in the cart from the market whilst Suwelo considers it as insult and feels satisfied in bringing things in his comfortable car which is an emblem of high status. During the debate about the cart, Suwelo feels annoyed and refuses to use the cart. At this, Fanny physically detaches herself from her husband’s lap where they had been sharing cordial moments until the argument broke them up.

“It reminds you,” she said, “of women”

“My mother pushed a cart. My grandmother, too,” said Suwelo.

“Your wife pushes one,” said Fanny.

“I just don’t see myself pushing one,” said Suwelo. “I’m sorry”. (167) The above quoted argument between Suwelo and his wife highlights the difference of approach in their behavior. Fanny wants to identify with the traditions of elderly African American women whereas Suwelo does not want to merge his own individual patriarchal
identity with those of women. He does not like Fanny’s using the cart to go to and from the market. This unpleasant argument between them weakens their relationship to a further degree. It changes their level of cordiality towards each other and the delicious meal that they were having loses its sweet taste. Alice Walker narrates the after effects of the debate about the cart, “There had been a little murder, there in their bright, homey kitchen, where, up until that time, they’d both felt light, free, almost as if they were playing their roles. The cart disappeared, and Suwelo felt terrible about the whole episode” (Temple 167). The murder that Walker talks about is the slaughter of mutual trust that the Afro-American couple experiences and which haunts them for a long time. It starts as a rift but with the passage of time leads to a great difference in their relationship.

Another significant tension that keeps mounting between Fanny and Suwelo is his dislike of literature created by women writers despite being a teacher of American History, himself. His profession requires that he read a lot for his professional growth and Fanny is fond of women’s literature due to her interest in the area and because it is a professional requirement of Women Studies. Every interesting book that Fanny reads she recommends to Suwelo who rejects it in a disgraceful manner. For instance in Part Three of the novel Alice Walker remarks: “He was a teacher; he taught American history; he was good at it. He read enough. Besides, he had never read a book by a woman” (176). Being a teacher of history, Suwelo does not consider women’s literature worthy of reading and claims that he has never read a single book by any woman author even though his wife keeps influential women’s literature on his table for him to read. His patriarchal attitude does not allow him to read these books. “One day he got tired of them being there and shifted them to the floor” (Temple 176). Fanny wants Suwelo to understand the role of white people in the discrimination of African people. She wants him to convert his Eurocentric approach to postmodern critique but Suwelo remains persistent in his conventional approach. As the narrator in The Temple of My Familiar says, “But he did not want to change the way he thought of Africa. Beside, when he wanted insight into Africa, he’d read a man” (176).
This reflects Suwelo’s detachment from Fanny’s female ways and approach towards problems. Instead of regaining her trust, he keeps asserting his masculine intentions and openly rejects her ways of life.

Due to Suwelo’s manners Fanny’s optimism about her own husband is undermined and she feels that her husband is merely a tool of the patriarchal class that takes pleasure in overpowering the female class. She also feels deprived of the domestic situation and faces oppression in the work place. Suwelo proves himself a member of the masculine class. In order to shake off the stronghold of Suwelo, Fanny decides to detach herself from him and demands a divorce. Suwelo admits before Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal that, “Marriage simply hadn’t fit us. Fanny thought it probably didn’t fit anybody. She thought it unnatural” (282). Having the upper edge they have a greater chance of being in a powerful position and can exploit the opposite gender. She loses faith in men and resolves to live an independent life where she wants to get out of the control of men, their disloyalties and rough attitude towards women (241).

Suwelo’s biggest disappointment is reflected in the case of the settlement of the divorce agreement, where he wants to continue the sexual relationship with Fanny even after their divorce. Fanny being aware of Suwelo’s mentality taunts him of pursuing his wife with the sole aim of making love. Suwelo does not care for her personality; her physical beauty is the only thing that keeps him in a relationship with her. He does not take into consideration other grave aspects of his wife’s personality such as her research on African American life, her sensitive spirit and her inner nature. This is why Fanny gradually detaches herself from her husband both physically and psychologically. While talking to Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal, Suwelo narrates instances of Fanny’s indifference. He says, “There were times when, if she wasn’t there, and I could see she was not, though her body was sitting quietly beside me in a chair, I wasn’t sure whether I was. I always seemed to be chasing Fanny even when she was literally locked up tight in my arms” (Walker, Temple 281). Suwelo observes the strangeness of his wife’s behavior many times when she is mentally somewhere else even though physically she is with him. Differences between Fanny Nzingha and her husband Suwelo increase with each passing day and she becomes
more and more disappointed. The dissimilarities in their natures bring Suwelo to such a level that Fanny starts to compare her husband to the lesser creatures. During one of his long talks with Mr. Hal, Suwelo quotes an argument with his wife, Fanny, saying: “Well, we are different, after all. I have my way, you obviously have yours. We shall simply coexist. If I can share space with bobcats, bucks, otters, and snakes, I can certainly live with you” (278). Fanny’s dislike of Suwelo is clearly visible from the comparison of her husband to that of smaller animals. She considers her husband’s loyalty equal to bucks, otters, snakes and other creatures of lowly status. She is ready to share her life with Suwelo on the same level as the one she shares with animals, with whom she has no psychological dealings. The level of trust between the married couple, is at its lowest point, since Suwelo believes that Fanny does not know of his flirting with other women.

I have to laugh when I think of what I told you earlier: that Fanny didn’t know about my playing around because she was a space cadet. It wasn’t because she was a space cadet that she didn’t know. It was because she trusted me. Trusting me, she simply didn’t tune in to a lot of the signs the way she could have. And, too, there were all the other signs, from all over the place, that she was getting and trying to relate to. (278)

Suwelo considers Fanny to be removed from this world and its happenings and continues seducing other women around him. He thinks her to be an escapist as he says it to Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal. He thinks Fanny does not pick up all the signs of his adulterous living that he leaves around. When the reality is exposed he ponders on his judgment of her character and laughs at his own fake confidence in his wife. Miss Lissie, listening to long narrations about his past life, remarks: “What kills me,” said Miss Lissie, “is that men think women never knew” (243). This remark is incisive in nature as it shows Suwelo that he might claim time and again about Fanny’s not knowing about his illegitimate activities but she is fully aware of his devious nature.

Fanny is a traditional woman who loves the life of simplicity mainly because of her upbringing by her missionary mother, Olivia. Her straightforwardness is reflected clearly in the clothes that she wears; being an art lover she dyes her clothes in all colors showing
her sense of variety and fashion. She feels content to wear these dresses that cover her body from head to foot and which Suwelo considers unappealing since he is more interested in prostitutes who are semi-nude when he visits them. This is why he demands nudity from his wife and that leads to another altercation. Walker relates a conversation between the two in these words: “… I get cold in that stuff you like,’ she said. ‘And I feel ridiculous. It’s too flimsy to wear. Why do you want me to wear this?’ she asked, looking at me so piercingly that I wanted to drop the whole thing” (279). She clearly shows her dislike of the flimsy under garments that Suwelo buys for her. Fanny’s reaction to the clothes is very strong. Suwelo states: “I felt okay, at least I thought I felt okay. She felt terrible. She cried and said she felt degraded. I never saw the red satin and net again” (279). Her reluctance in stripping, followed by crying, indicates that Fanny did not feel easy in wearing clothes in which she feels degraded; what was satisfactory for Suwelo, was very humiliating for Fanny. Suwelo considers Fanny’s blind trust as a license for him to continue practicing adultery and admits his failure in compelling Fanny to wear body-exposing dresses but also admits the fact that he had enjoyed similar dressing of other women for a number of years. He also admits that he enjoyed a secret sexual life away from his wife for which he pretended to be pious before his wife (279).

Suwelo accepts that his deceitfulness must have hurt her a great deal and she sometimes cries out violently, as he says, “Once, she even sat straight up in bed out of a sound sleep, or so I had thought, screaming, ‘Who are all these women in this bed with us? Who are they? Who are they?’ And she began to batter me with a pillow, and to weep” (280). She is very aware of her husband’s fooling around since her crying, weeping and hitting her husband indicates that inwardly she suffers greatly at her husband’s betrayal. She feels the presence of other women in her bed although Suwelo makes a joke out of it and admits the fact that he had to pretend to be virtuous at that moment. “For she wasn’t supposed to be aware of what I was doing, and I wasn’t supposed to be, as far as she was concerned, doing anything,” says Suwelo (280). The hidden reality is that Suwelo has relations with many women whom he considered beautiful. He is therefore representative of members of the patriarchal social setup whose appearance and practice run into
contradictions. Inwardly they know all their playing around with other women is ethically, morally and by all conducts wrong but still continue indulging themselves in that treacherous circle in order to saturate their never satisfying lust.

Suwelo besides getting involved in physical relations with prostitutes, also betroths himself to his colleague at college, Carlota who also teaches women’s literature in the same college. Like Fanny, Carlota suffers from the agony of betrayal at the hands of her husband, Arveyda who develops a strong liking for Carlota’s mother and engages in physical relations with his own mother in law. Suwelo is attracted towards Carlota’s initial appearance when she wears 3 inch high heels, tight sweaters exposing the curves of her body, short skirts, makeup, earrings and false eyelashes. He admires and appreciates Carlota to Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal by comparing her with women of whom he had dreamed: “She extended her legs, her three-inch heels. I’d seen women like her, lissome, tan, with tiny flat waists and high breasts, in magazines and naked onstage. In a way, whenever I looked at her, I saw those other women. The first time I kissed her she left lipstick all over my face” (246). These sentiments of Suwelo’s indicate his intentions towards Carlota whom he likes primarily due to her resemblance with the nude pictures that he has seen in magazines.

The existence of family is solely based on fidelity, commitment and trustworthiness towards the life partner. Men of African American origin in Alice Walker’s fiction show a strong inclination to destroy family as a social institute and one example is that of Suwelo’s character who is attracted to a woman because she wears three inch high heels and considers this fact to be a green signal for seduction. He even goes so far as to admit his disposition to whoredom when he tells Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal. “I got into pornography,” said Suwelo promptly. “I was lonely. I got into prostitutes. But I’m too soft-hearted. I always wanted to know all about the lives of the prostitutes—the one I liked best had five children—and in the end I got this terrible dose of claps” (242-243). Suwelo sees faults in his wife and considers himself rejected and lonely and thus justifies in getting into pornography and prostitution. He considers himself too soft hearted and does not his see own physical indulgence in establishing a sexual relationship with them. In doing so Suwelo does not
recognize his act as adultery despite being an educated man. For him practicing deceit is justified in the case of loneliness. Suwelo continues his relationship with Carlota for a longer period of time; even when Fanny goes to Africa to meet her father, it is Carlota who remains the constant source of physical satisfaction for Suwelo’s lust.

During his discussion with Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal he narrates his encounters with Carlota: “I would go to her cheap little apartment after class and watch her clack across the kitchen, making dinner in her high heels, and sometimes I’d just grab hold of her and we’d end up on the kitchen floor. I don’t think she enjoyed this at all. But at the time, I thought maybe she did. She was pretty impassive” (246). He does not care for the presence of Carlota’s children at home even though he knows that Carlota has no time to relax due to her concern for her children. Carlota is dejected due to the betrayal of her husband, Arveyda, but does not share her problems with Suwelo. She does not tell him anything about her family background and her husband and is either quiet or weepy. Suwelo describes Carlota’s silence about her personal life, “Only if I married Carlotta would she tell me who she was, maybe. Who her people were, who her father was, and her mother. Who her husband was. I didn’t even know if they were divorced” (247). This admitting on the part of Suwelo emphasizes Carlota’s alienation since she keeps him at a distance from her personal life. Her association is temporary and for her life does not have meaning while Suwelo being a true representative of patriarchy enjoys himself and feels satisfied despite her spiritual aloofness. Suwelo narrates his own condition to Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal: “If I married her she could trust me with her secrets. But I sort of liked being unmarried. I especially liked being unmarried to Fanny. Strange to say, I felt there was more freedom in our love. And not just because I was banging Carlotta” “Men are dogs,” said Miss Lissie dispassionately,” (247).

For Suwelo, in particular, gratification of the sexual hunger is everything, no matter what the cost to others. Suwelo seeks greater liberty which he sees in being unmarried since this way he has a chance to enjoy as many women as he likes of different tastes and shapes. The burden of responsibility is automatically taken away from him and he can continue to enjoy his liberty. All progress of civilization ends when the sole purpose is the fulfilment
of lust and women are merely used as an instrument for fulfilment of this lust and the concerns, feelings and psychological conflicts created by men are not taken into any consideration. Suwelo looks at marriage as a liability instead of a problem solving agreement. Being unmarried to both Carlota and Fanny he feels liberated of all burdens, responsibilities and cares of the marital relationship and can enjoy the sexuality embedded in his nature. At this particular moment Miss Lissie’s comment reflects women’s attitude towards this kind of mentality. She calls Suwelo and other men ‘dog’ since they formulate a definition of freedom in which the family institute, established as a result of the happy marriage, is broken and the situation goes to the pre-civilization when there were no concept of single marriage. For many centuries this freedom has been relished by powerful men like Suwelo who admits during one of his talks with Miss Lissie and her husband Mr. Hal: “being a man within a patriarchal system. I could see some privileges in this relationship with Fanny”. (282)

In the ongoing tussle between Suwelo and Fanny, the latter decides to leave for Africa to meet her father. Later Suwelo thinks his own infidelity as one of the reasons for Fanny’s leaving him and going to Africa. Suwelo himself admits this: “she probably knew before I did. Maybe she stayed away in Africa for such a long time because she wanted me to have the freedom to fuck around” (280). His own view that Fanny had gone to Africa mainly because she wanted him to fulfill his lust for women allows Suwelo to admit his greed. Thus it is his infidelity that leads to the destruction of social institution of family established on the basis of mutual trust, sincerity and complete honesty towards other partner which are basic requirement for continual of matrimonial links. During his discussion with Mr. Hal and Miss Lissie, Suwelo thinks about and highlights the deteriorating relationship with his wife.

Other men marry women and say they love them and within five years, though they still live with them, you can see they have essentially separated themselves. There is no longer a spiritual or even an authentic physical connection. Instead, they are connected by house payments, a car, children, political expediency, whatever. Over time, Fanny and I shared none of these things. The divorce was merely our first
shedding of any nonintrinsic relatedness. After that, it was as if we just had to see how far we could go. (282)

According to Alice Walker this is a common drawback of men who feel it to be a burden to drag the relationship with a woman whom they had once loved. Both physically and spiritually they feel alienated from the spouse and run after younger girls. Civilized people are bound by social compulsions like sharing household responsibilities, expenditures, children and political affiliations whereas in Suwelo and Fanny’s case their differences were so intense that they did not fall on the normal standards of patriarchy. There is no mutual sharing of any economical or physical commodities since he thinks it his patriarchal right to possess his wife as well like the expensive property items. Thus the demand for divorce along with suspicions of his faithfulness are a great surprise for his essentially patriarchal nature.

“I didn’t tell Fanny. Of course not…. When I thought of what Fanny’s six months in Africa gave me, it was the enjoyment, without guilt, of pornography. My woman had left me, you see, taken my rightful stuff off to another continent, totally out of reach of my dick, and left me high and dry. Well, I knew how to get off without her. There were plenty of other women in the world. This was my attitude”. (243)

Suwelo is an expert patriarch who enjoys life to its fullest extents in all matters. For him Fanny’s going away does not make any difference to his ways of livings since he feels liberated from all restrictions of marriage. He remembers his wife only as a source of physical satisfaction and his freedom in Fanny’s absence gives him a chance to flirt with other women in the shape of prostitutes. Being a wealthy man it does not matter to Suwelo to be away from his wife. Men of his society consider it as their right to betray their wives at the same time demanding monogamy form their wives. Alice Walker portrays a very realistic picture of the patriarchal system where men like Truman, Professor Raymonds, Dexter, The Assistant, Mr. Albert, Aphonso, Harpo, Suwelo, and Arveyda show fondness for women other than their wives. Following Engels’s ideology Walker creates these men characters who openly exercise adultery in the form of polygamy by engaging with women other their wives. For all these men polygamy is pleasurable and they run after other women
especially young girls, hunting them like predators. In such a social system women, particularly wives, undergo great pain owing to the deceitful attitude of their family patriarchs. Women, therefore remain in miserable circumstances due to patriarchy on the one hand and the capitalist system on the other, since men do not allow women to prosper financially and restrict their family women within the household environment. In doing so men ensure women’s submission and their own domination in domestic as well as social lives.

END NOTES


4 See Engels Frederick. The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State. Resistance books. Australia: 2004 Print. (58)


7 An author possessing negative capability is objective and emotionally detached, as opposed to one who writes for didactic purposes; a literary work possessing negative capability may have beauties and depths that make conventional considerations of truth and morality irrelevant. http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1710304/negativecapability Web 08, June. 2015
CHAPTER 5

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND CAPITALISM

This chapter presents the analysis of three of Alice Walker’s novels, *The Color Purple*, *Meridian*, and *The Temple of My Familiar* with special focus on the discrimination exercised by the white capitalists and slave owners against the women of the African American community. The guidelines given by Frederick Engels on Marxist Feminism form the basis of this analysis. The Marxist Feminist theory focuses on exploitation of women in terms of economic subjugation and physical abuse. The purpose of making others slaves in Marxist Feminist viewpoint is to gain financial benefits\(^1\) and sexual pleasure\(^2\) i.e. to establish illegitimate physical relationship with women out of wedlock. During the era of slavery the accumulation of wealth at the cost of physical pain inflicted upon others was a legitimate business. The women because of their weak social standings became easy victims of white patriarchal practices. Besides the physical work in all seasons, inside and
outside the houses, women were also used as objects of sexual assault by slave holders and their companions, and it did not end with the emancipation proclamation rather it has continued in different forms such as enforced economic slavery and racial discrimination of blacks at workplaces by white people. Alice Walker, in her Pulitzer winning novel, *The Color Purple* has created the character of Sofia who experiences modern day slavery at the hands of the white capitalist patriarchal system where she is practically enslaved by the influential mayor. Initially she is thrown in the prison house for three years with the aim of taming and performing free labor in the jail. Later she spends almost nine years as a slave and as an unpaid domestic servant in the house of the white mayor. Similarly Mary Agnes is raped by the white warden of the jail when she pleads justice for Sofia. In *Meridian*, too, Walker has created the character of the protagonist who suffers due to racism and poverty. Through the character of Meridian, Walker highlights the racial discrimination of the American society during the time of the Black Arts Movement. A black women had to face discrimination in a white dominated society. In the novel *The Temple of My Familiar* also, Walker portrays the character of Zede and Lissie who were enslaved at an early age. Miss Lissie, along with her family members, undergoes the hardships of slavery and is raped many times by her captors. Fanny Nzingha is also one of the central characters who remains a victim of racism throughout her life. Walker also narrates the condition of African people in Olinka where black people are exploited by white colonists. Alice Walker in her writings displays the Marxist Feminist ideology in her novels through the portrayal of her characters who are victims of discrimination practiced by capitalist white patriarchs.

Alice Walker is one of the prominent writers of African American literature who have and continue to create fiction centering the blacks, especially women and their struggle in the last quarter of the previous century and the first decade of this century. In her novels the protagonists are usually females who belong to the poor faction of society. Women in her novels undergo the miseries of poverty and slavery. The slavery of black people is the most significant theme of Walker’s novels and her novels focus on racial discrimination against women belonging to the black community. The white masters do
not spare black women of any age who are mistreated, overburdened with heavy physical work and are sexually abused.

5.1 Women’s Exploitation in *The Color Purple*

5.1.1 Sofia’s Forced Imprisonment

Alice Walker follows the Marxist Feminist ideology of modern day slavery where women are forcefully abducted and enslaved by powerful wealthy white people in influential positions with the purpose of acquiring unpaid wage laborer. There is no law or authority that can stop them from inflicting brutality upon the poor women belonging to the economically compromised Afro-American community. The curse of slavery started with Columbus’ ventures has far reaching impact upon communities other than white Europeans. Afro-Americans were a large public who were directly influenced owing to European expedition and quest for denomination at the cost of black people’s physical labor. The condition of black is below satisfactory level even in this modern age in America. Alice Walker has created the character of Sofia who falls victim to white patriarchy: she is forced to wash the clothes of convicts in jail for six months where she is beaten violently by police men and is forced to live in a poor place. Then she is transferred to the white mayor’s house where she has to toil for twelve years, performing house hold activities in return for food. She is not even allowed to visit her children and family members for many years. She becomes the prey of white supremacists due to her inferior status in society. The only crime that she commits is to keep her children hygienically clean. This fact attracts the mayor’s wife’s attention when she is on her way to her sister’s home. The mayor’s wife asks her to work for her as a maid when she sees her clean and neat children. “All your children so clean she say, would you like to work for me, be my maid?” (Walker, *Purple* 76). At her point blank refusal to the influential white mayor considering it his wife’s insult feels infuriated and slaps her. Sofia, in return, slaps the mayor in her self-defense. Such conduct from a person belonging to a marginalized society has severe consequences and Sofia has to face the consequences for a long and miserable time. “The polices come, start slinging the children off the mayor, bang they heads together.
Sofia really start to fight. They drag her to the ground” (76). This encounter of Sophia with the powerful Mayor and his wife brings about her downfall and she is thrown into enforced slavery. The white capitalist Mayor considers Sofia, being black, as his slave and an object for his personal custody.

Although slavery has been officially banned, discrimination of women by wealthy people is common as Walker shows in the case of Sofia: the mayor assumes the role of master and enforces Sofia to become his subjugated proletariat. Initially she is put in a jail where she is physically assaulted with intention of taming whereas before her abduction Sofia was a strong woman with a strong body and healthy appearance. Sophia comes from a healthy family with good height and strong bodies. When Celie visits her home she says about Sophia’s sister, whom she’s seeing for the first time, “They all big strong healthy girls, like amazons” (Walker, *Purple* 60). Celie compares Sofia and her sisters to the mythical warriors of the amazon because to her they appear as strong and physically beautiful. Similarly when Celie describes the physical health of Sofia, after she has given birth to one of her children, she says: “Sofia look half her size. But she still a big strong girl. Arms got muscle. Legs, too. She swing that baby about like it nothing. She got a little pot on her now and give you the feeling she all there. Solid. Like if she sit down on something, it be mash” (32). From Celie’s description it is obvious that before going to jail Sofia’s body was in good shape and she was physically strong. Her arms and legs were healthy with sturdy muscles and she had a solid appearance. In Celie’s view, Sofia could break anything if she were only to sit on it with some force. Thus physically Sofia is full of energy but when she goes to jail she is completely transformed. The tortures inflicted upon her makes her look and feel miserable. For example Celie, the narrator of the novel, describing her miserable condition states: “When I see Sofia I don't know why she still alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out tween her teef like a piece of rubber. She can't talk. And she just about the color of a eggplant” (76). From Celie’s narration it becomes obvious that females of African American community, like Sofia, are considered as lifeless objects in the eyes of white
capitalists who love to tear such hateful objects into pieces. The pain and agony inflicted upon poor, helpless women shows that the powerful whites take pleasure at the cost of the sufferings of the destitute. Sophia does not have any will or ways to protect herself from such individuals. They inflict maximum torture on Sofia treating her like a beast of burden whereas her wish is to be free to take care of her children. The intensity of the pain inflicted on poor Sofia can be grasped from Celie’s description of her appearance in jail when she meets her for the first time and wonders how she is alive after receiving such brutal treatment at the hands of her white jailers. The bones of her skull and ribs are fractured by policemen who work above and beyond all rules and regulations; her nose is mutilated and she is smashed in such a brutal manner that one of her eyes becomes useless. The rough treatment of poor Sophia can be seen from her swollen body which bears the marks of punishment and she has difficulty keeping her tongue within her mouth. This makes it difficult to talk to Celie and her family members when they come to meet her. This merciless beating of a woman of poor black origin by members of powerful white community, working under the protection of the law indicates the miserable condition that women of black community face in the white, capitalist patriarchal system.\(^3\) For women of the black community, the only safe place and job that the white patriarchal system can provide is to be their servant. If an individual with self-esteem tries to object to this stereotyping, her/his fate is similar to that of Sophia.

Marxist Feminist ideology speaks against labor extracted from people for the purpose of personal gain without caring about the physical burden of people in subdual. In such condition, masters consider their subjects as beasts of burden and squeeze the maximum amount of physical work from them. In doing so the masters are able to safeguard their capitalist status and extract work at minimum expense. For these white capitalist masters there is no law or regulation forbidding them from inflicting injustice upon fellow human beings. Besides the physical punishment that Sofia receives from her masters she has to toil hard at orders from her white jail attendants. Celie narrates her condition during work time in jail. “They put Sofia to work in the prison laundry. All day long from five to eight she washing clothes. Dirty convict uniforms, nasty sheets and
blankets piled way over her head. Us see her twice a month for half a hour. Her face yellow and sickly, her fingers look like fatty sausage” (78). Sofia is sent behind bars for resisting the mayor’s physical abuse. The mayor shows his powerful upper hand in the situation by giving specific directions to the jail authorities who also work under him. This is the reason that her jailers treat Sofia worse than the criminals of high profile. The poor black woman is made to work the whole day in the prison laundry which is the most horrible place in the jail as far as the work load is concerned. During the daytime she has to wash huge amounts of clothes consisting of muddy uniforms of the prisoners in the jail, unclean bed sheets and the most difficult of all, filthy blankets. As a result of this labor she becomes weak and pale in appearance. Her weariness is reflected from her sickly face and her strong hand which is deformed by the beatings she receives.

In social structures based on capitalism, individuals of high status and financial stability are always rewarded with privileges out of which the greater one is that they have complete control over lives of people who come in their sphere of influence. Everything runs according to the desires of powerful and the powerless have to follow their masters in order to survive in society. For instance when Sofia refuses to be a maid of white lady, Miss Millie her husband, who is the powerful Mayor of city interferes and teaches lesson to Sofia. “Mayor look at Sofia, push his wife out the way. Stick out his chest. Girl, what you say to Miss Millie? Sofia say, I say, Hell no. He slap her” (76). At this moment when Sofia tries to defend herself the police men protect the Mayor and drag Sofia to prison house. This indicates the fact that Mayor being white and influential remains unharmed. Like a master the mayor throws Sofia into jail where as a slave she has to obey orders and does not have any other choice because she is a woman from a marginalized community. “They put Sofia to work in the prison laundry. All day long from five to eight she washing clothes” (76). Sofia has to follow the life mapped by powerful white mayor in the prison cell and later on she has to work in his house for about twelve years. The wealthy land owners live a life of luxury where all comforts are taken for granted and life is a blessing. On the other hand life for people especially women of poor marginalized communities presents an accursed picture. Sofia’s is ill-fated life is the result of her heritage and the fact
that she is poor. Celie describes Sofia’s living conditions in one of her letters to God. “Everything nasty here, she say, even the air. Food bad enough to kill you with it. Roaches here, mice, flies, lice and even a snake or two. If you say anything they strip you, make you sleep on a cement floor without a light” (78). These lines highlight the unbearable conditions that Sofia has to suffer in the dark rooms of the jail where life is like a heap of garbage. The unhygienic conditions of the jail are reflected in Celie’s descriptions: the food makes the people ill since the jail is full of infection-causing insects and rodents wandering freely in the jail for colored people. Unhygienic conditions are used in addition to physical labor, as a means of inflicting greater misery upon the imprisoned person. Such strategies are utilized to traumatize the people under custody. There is no person to look into these matters because the prisoners belong to the lower class of society and lack the power to challenge the authorities in any way. If they utter the most minor complaints or try to speak against such injustices the reward is to strip the women naked and make them sleep on the cold floor in the middle of all the deadly poisonous creatures. Thus life for the people of the lower class and specially the black women remains in the hands of influential people who apply inhuman techniques to harm the poverty stricken people. Sofia is a tamed person, when she’s thrown into prison, but she does not get any concession from the jailers. All her good conduct does not yield any fruit for her. While talking to Celie, Sofia remarks about her conduct in jail. “Every time they ast me to do something, Miss Celie, I act like I'm you. I jump right up and do just what they say” (78). Thus Sofia follows in the footprints of Celie who silently bore exploitation at the hands of her step father (who physically abused her during her childhood) and then by her cold hearted husband who beats her besides treating her like a slave. The only way of survival in patriarchal setups is to bear all evils without uttering a single word of complain. Sofia like Celie tolerates all ill-doings without resistance in order to survive, yet she is thrown in prison for many years and all her youthful charm rots behind prison bars.

Twelve years a long time to be good though, she say.

Maybe you git out on good behavior, say Harpo.
Good behavior ain't good enough for them, say Sofia. Nothing less than sliding on your belly with your tongue on they boots can even git they attention. (78)

Celie quotes the talk between Sofia and her husband Harpo in a letter that she writes to God. Harpo suggests that Sofia’s good conduct in the prison may be considered by the whites as a sign of submission to the authorities and prison time may be reduced but Sofia who lives day and night in that jail says that in their arrogance the white men neither look with empathy nor take into consideration any such things. For these whites the blacks are nothing and the only way to get their notice is to lick their boots. This attitude of the white jail owners suggests that they like to pose as demi-gods and think the black women to be worthless slaves whose mere existence is for the purpose of fulfilling the needs of wealthy white people. In social systems exploitation of females of marginalized factions of society is bound to occur as there is no authority to question or challenge their inhuman acts. All systems are governed by powerful individuals who protect each other’s interests in order to enjoy limitless power over the powerless individuals of black women of the lower classes.

5.1.2 Sofia’s Enslavement and Unpaid Labor

Sofia’s sufferings do not end with her stay in a prison cell despite the honest work that she does washing the countless uniforms of the convicts. She is transferred for service to the same white Mayor’s house whom she had resisted earlier when she had refused to be his domestic maid. Being a member of the subjugated class Sofia has to kneel before the authoritative mayor’s desires.

Sofia would make a dog laugh, talking about those people she work for. They have the nerve to try to make us think slavery fell through because of us, say Sofia. Like us didn't have sense enough to handle it. All the time breaking hoe handles and letting the mules loose in the wheat. But how anything they build can last a day is a wonder to me. They backward, she say. Clumsy, and unlucky. (89)

Alice Walker, in these lines, questions and challenges the stereotyping of black people since the white man has always encouraged the ideology that the curse of slavery is
primarily because of the black people’s own conduct and that they do not have the ability to handle serious matters. The whites like Christopher Columbus and followers depict the stereotyped image that it is the birth right of the African American people to remain subservient due to their illiterate status and traditional ways of handling all affairs of life. Columbus calls the native people stupid in his letter who in his view consider “broken bowls, pieces of glass, and old straps” as “the finest pieces of jewels in the world” (ushistory/columbus). In white ideology blacks cannot handle the day to day matters without causing trouble. On the other hand Walker, through the character of Sofia, breaks this stereotype by describing the foolishness of white men who cannot even put a handgrip to the hoe handle and do not have the ability to handle a pair of mules. They break the fence and the animals run away and ruin the wheat crop. Walker terms the white people backwards and clumsy due to their lack of manners and limited depth of understanding of routine matters. The white people, for generations, have considered blacks as backward and ignorant whereas Walker deconstructs that ideology and calls the white people backward. Thus Walker breaks the stereotype that white people have of blacks and presents her black characters as having great depth and understanding about sublime matters related to life.

The foundation of capitalism is a class system in society. The elite or upper class exists mainly because there is a lower or poorer class of people. This class system in turn is based on an economic structure where people with financial stability are categorized as being in the upper class whereas people with fewer opportunities of economic growth are grouped in the lower classes. Due to this class based economy some people enjoy privileges that people of other classes can only dream of. One significant comfort that the advantaged class receives over the deprived class is of using the physical energies of the people of low class for personal luxury. Similar situation is explained by Delgado while discussing the economic and social structures of American community where AfroAmerican have lower career prospects, no social mobility and reduced interracial contacts. As a result Afro-American people are kept out of economic, social and political mainstream. Though slavery ended decades ago even now authoritative people have the
desire of enslaving people of less privileged classes. This is the kind of situation that Alice Walker depicts in her novel *The Color Purple* where Sofia is forcefully taken into custody with the intention of enslaving her, post emancipation proclamation. When she refuses she is punished for three years in a jail cell and is then transferred to the white mayor’s house where she is to serve the mayor’s wife and children. Walker describes a conversation between Sofia and her elder son who is allowed after five years to see her for a few minutes once in a year.

He say, Don’t say slaving, Mama.
Sofia say, Why not? They got me in a little storeroom up under the house, hardly bigger than Odessa's porch, and just about as warm in the winter time. I'm at they beck and call all night and all day. They won't let me see my children. They won't let me see no mens. Well, after five years they let me see you once a year. I'm a slave, she say. What would you call it? A captive, he say. (89)

Sofia’s son hears his mother saying, ‘slaving away’ when she has to clean the mess that the children create with their toys. Sofia is ordered to clean the mess made by white children in such a way as to leave no finger marks. Sofia’s son considering it an insult objects to his mother but Sofia explains to him the nature of the slavery that she has been thrown into and the treatment of her masters. She is given a small room to sleep which is hardly bigger than her sister’s car porch. Such a small place for a person who had independent large rooms indicates her uneasiness. The tyranny is that she has to respond to their calls at all times without any thought of whether it is day and night. She is a servant twenty four hours a day and has to obey her master in all seasons and all conditions. For her the only purpose of life left is to serve her masters without raising any objection. No law or authority has the courage to liberate Sofia from this forceful captivity as the white men are shown to be the only custodians of law and the blacks have no other choice but to follow the commands of these white capitalist. The biggest cruelty against a mother is to keep her away from her children. Sofia also refers to this cold hearted reality, the enforced distance created between her and her children. The irony of the situation is that Sofia is only allowed to meet her elder son after five years of imprisonment in the jail and the mayor’s house.
Since Sofia does not have freedom she calls herself a slave as she does not have any other choice than to follow the orders of her white owners. Her son who is unable to identify the similarity between slavery and captivity, calls her a captive. But the fact remains that Sofia does not have the choice to exercise her will in any matter. Her freedom to live an independent life is snatched from her by forceful means with the use of authority.

Being a slave Sofia has to perform all types of jobs: “Soon as I finish cooking breakfast, putting it on the table, washing dishes and sweeping die floor? and just before I go git the mail out of the box down by the road? we go give Miz Millie her driving lesson” (90).

Sofia has to perform all sorts of jobs in the mayor’s house and has to work throughout the day. The mistress does not do anything and directs Sofia to serve her family throughout the day. Above all Sofia has to teach Miss Millie, the white mistress her driving lessons since she wants to be among those who own their vehicles and she wants to be known to be driving her own car. Sofia informs Celie about the newly purchased car, “Mayor_____ brought Miz Millie a new car, cause she said if the colored could have it then one for her was past due” (89). This shows that her purpose of purchasing new car is not getting comfort out of it but due to the inferiority complex she suffers from in relation to black car owners. When her husband refuses to teach her driving she has no choice but to ask Sofia to teach her. At this point when she is in need she does not consider Sofia’s low status. She allows Sofia to sit on the driving seat and the adjacent passenger seat near her when she requires her assistance but when she has learned driving then her approach towards her changes altogether. Her white mistress feels insulted in allowing Sofia to sit on the front passenger seat. Being unaware of the discriminatory attitude in her mistress’ mind, Sofia sits alongside the white lady who considers it an offense owing to her status in the influential white society. Sofia narrates one such encounter to Celie:

She stood outside on her side the car clearing her throat. Finally she say, Sofia, with a little laugh, This is the South. Yes ma'am, I say - She clear her throat, laugh some more. Look where you sitting, she say. I'm sitting where I always sit, I say. That's the problem, she say. Have you ever seen a white person and a colored sitting side by side in a car, when one of 'em wasn't showing the other one how to drive it or
clean it? I got out the car, opened the back door and clammed in. She sat down up front. Off us traveled down the road, Miz Millie hair blowing. (90)

These lines explain the obvious fact that the whites as socially superior have never considered the poor blacks as their equals in any way. Being in an economically superior position it is beyond white people’s understanding to allow the people of other colors with poor background to be on equal terms. In *The Color Purple* Walker brings to the limelight the different responses of white people in their time of need and in the time of discrimination. Miss Millie allows her servant Sofia to sit on the driving seat when she requires her assistance in learning how to drive but when she masters this art she turns back to her older self where the black Sofia is only subservient due to her powerful elite status. The mayor’s wife herself admits this and asks Sofia to remember their different status when driving in a populated area where all the people regard her as being superior to Sofia by virtue of her social rank. Sofia, being used to sitting in front when giving her mistress driving lessons, does not realize that her status has changed and continues to sit on the front seat as she has been accustomed to. However, Sofia remembering her inferior status, immediately follows the order of the white mistress and goes back to the seat where as a black woman, lower in status, would normally sit.

It is not only elderly white people but their growing children also discriminate against the black women considering them lower in status. The white children observe such conduct from their parents and apply them to the poor black servants in their houses. This treatment is faced by Sofia from the Mayor’s son that Celie witnesses in one of her meetings with her. “Sofia job to watch the children play ball. The little boy throw the ball to the little girl, she try to catch it with her eyes shut. It roll up under Sofia foot. Don't you hear me talking to you, he shout. He may be six years old, brown hair, ice blue eyes. He come steaming up to where us sit, haul off and kick Sofia leg” (87). The six year old white boy knows the superiority of his race and therefore tries to exploit black Sofia. During her free time when Sofia does not have anything to do, she is assigned the task of supervising the mayor’s children in the garden. When the girl cannot catch the ball and it comes near Sofia, the boy orders Sofia to throw the ball back to him. Sofia does not respond for a few
moments. The boy becomes angry and shouts at her like a grown up white man. The six year old child knows Sofia is an unpaid laborer and he can order her about. This is also the reason why, out of great annoyance, the boy runs to Sofia and kicks her with all his power. This little encounter between the white boy and Sofia indicates the distance that the white capitalist people have created between them and black people in considering the blacks unequal to their elite status.

White people, and their children know how to discriminate against black women and make them subservient. When such unruly children grow up and control society because of their family connections and white background, they go beyond every human consideration to subjugate the people of the lower class. Thus, after eleven years of servitude, Sofia’s brother-in-law describes the situation of the mayor’s family and his only son who is grown up by then. “A lot of drinking in that family, say Jack. Plus, they can't keep that boy of theirs in college. He get drunk, aggravate his sister, chase women, hunt niggers, and that ain't all” (173). The boy who is given a free hand to oppress people of the lower class in his childhood is bound to exercise his uncontrolled ego in order to discriminate others especially women who are always easy to subjugate. During his boyhood his mother and father do not restrict him from hitting a grown up servant woman so, in his adulthood, he knows his powerful position in society. Being a man and the town mayor’s son he chases other women that he finds nearby with the intentions of physical exploitation. He also insults his own sister and treats her in a rude manner. Exploiting black poor people is his favorite hobby, according to Sofia’s brother-in-law, Jack. Such unruly white adults are brought up by their parents witnessing the discriminatory attitude of their parents and other family elders. Thus it is not unusual on their part to become tyrannical people with a strong capitalist support in the background. In a social setup where such behavior is allowed, women of inferior social status like Sofia, become easy victims of their patriarchal practices.

During her servitude in the mayor’s house, Sofia performs all her duties honestly and does not cheat her masters in any way. Her white mistress, one day out of sympathy bestows her permission to meet her children by taking Sofia back home and promising to
allow her to stay for a day. “She says. Home. You ain’t been home or seen your children in a while, she say. Ain’t that right? I say, Yes ma’am. It been five years. She says, That’s a shame. You just go git your things right now. Here it is, Christmas. Go get your things. You can stay all day” (90). For five years a mother like Sofia who kept her children clean and took great care of them, was separated from her five children. This underlines the tyrannical attitude of the white power-wielding people, towards black women. Sofia is kept in prison and servitude for a long period of time and is forcefully detached from her small children. The mayor’s wife herself admits the shameful situation and allows her to visit her family but this happiness does not last long because in spite of the fact that Miss Millie drops Sofia to her sister’s home, she returns in fifteen minutes as she does not know the way back home. Sofia, thus, is ordered to accompany her because the white mistress does not trust Sofia’s sister and her husband in dropping her home in their vehicle. “Oh, she say, I could not ride in a pick-up with a strange colored man” (92). She does not agree on giving Sofia extra time with her family after five years when Sofia suggests that her sister and her husband could accompany Miss Millie back home. In order to avoid further trouble Sofia goes back with her mistress in the same truck that is driven by her brother-in-law, the same colored man, whom she had earlier refused to travel with, as she needs a ride back home. This shows the double standards on the part of the white people, who in their time of requirement, forget their superiority and fulfil their needs. Sofia later comes back with a mechanic to take her car back to the mayor’s house. Thus Sofia is given only a very short time to see her children as she says, “I spent fifteen minutes with my children. And she been going on for months bout how ungrateful I is. White folks is a miracle of affliction, say Sofia” (92). This highlights the cruel conduct of the influential white people who try their best to keep the blacks at the begging position. Sofia is allowed to spend only fifteen minutes with her children after her five years of imprisonment. In every sense of the world Sofia is treated like a slave by her white masters. About Sofia’s stay in slavery Celie says, “…they kept her eleven and a half years, give her six months off for good behavior so she could come home early to her family” (169). Thus Sofia remains in enforced slavery for a long period of time during which time she does not get to meet her children. The white
people treat her like a slave in all matters and she has to work day and night at the orders of her white masters.

The purpose of making others their slave saves the expense of giving wages to working people since during such forced slavery the whites do not pay Sofia. This practice emerged centuries ago with the emergence of the concept of private property where men utilized all possible manners of increasing their means of income and made themselves as powerful patriarchs. At about the same time men started enslaving weak people and used their physical energies for the wellbeing of their own. In *The Color Purple*, the white mayor also adopts a similar capitalist strategy when he forcefully tames and enslaves Sofia for twelve years. Throughout this time Sofia works for the prosperity and comfort of the white family whereas in reward she is only given food. The mayor, due to his strong political influence saves the salary of a servant while getting Sofia to work for him. Thus in the systems-based Capitalist practices the individuals belonging to the poor class remain deprived all their lives whereas the people of the upper class benefit from the physical labor of the poor people. The poor in reward do not get much beyond food which suffices for bare survival. The people of the elite class enjoy all the comforts and luxuries due to their stronghold on economic resources. They buy all the luxuries that bring ease to their lives whereas the poor people cannot think beyond earning their livelihood by remaining in the system created by the wealthy people. In such a class based system the discrimination of poor people occurs on a regular basis and women being in a more vulnerable position remain underprivileged and exploited.

5.2 Mary Agnes’ Exploitation

Besides exploitation of slaves the white influential people use their authority to subjugate other women who seek justice for the captive ones. They are labeled devil’s advocates and therefore liable to be punished both physically and psychologically in order not to join hands with other individuals.

Poor little Squeak come home with a limp. Her dress rip. Her hat missing and one of the heels come off her shoe. What happen? Us ast. He saw the Hodges in me, she say. And he didn't like it one bit. Harpo come up the steps from the car. My
wife beat up, my woman rape, he say. I ought to go back out there with guns, maybe set fire to the place, burn the crackers up. (Walker, *Purple* 83)

In her letter to God, Celie narrates the destitute condition of Mary Agnes on her return from jail. She seems to be in rags and physically deformed. When she goes to jail all the black folks decorate her since she’s going to seek forgiveness for Sofia. She is very pretty before visiting the prison house. “She got on a starch and iron dress, high heel shoes with scuffs, and a old hat somebody give Shug. Us give her a old pocketbook look like a quilt and a little black bible. Us wash her hair and git all the grease out, then I put it up in two plaits that cross over her head. Us bathe her so clean she smell like a good clean floor” (83). Mary goes to the jail well-dressed whereas she returns in quite the opposite condition. She goes to jail in ironed and starched clothes whereas she comes back with clothes torn during her visit, when the white jailer abuses her. Despite her presentable looks the jail guard identifies her inferior status and knows that Mary has come with a request for relaxation in the prison sentence of a poor black African girl. This is a good chance for him to saturate his lusty animal desire of physically abusing the powerless woman where he knows he would not have to face any consequences. The warden cannot even dream of laying a hand on the white mayor’s wife due to his prominent status in society while women like Sofia and Mary Agnes become easy prey of male lust due to their inferior status in society and even more because of their inferior family background. Mary goes to the prison wearing high heels whilst she comes back limping with one of her shoe-heels missing. She goes wearing an expensive hat borrowed from Miss Shug but when she returns her hat is missing and her poor body is beaten and raped. Harpo, Sofia’s husband, and Mary’s boyfriend considers the option of destroying the whole police station with explosives but other people around her do not agree with this violent philosophy as they know the result of such behavior. Sofia’s sister remarks about such conduct, “They just come after her if she leave that way” (80). There is no easy escape from this situation as all the black people know. The white vengeance would crush their village with firepower. During her talk with Celie Sofia expresses her longings to kill white people due to the pain they have inflicted upon her during her three years stay in jail. She asks Celie the reason for the passive behavior of
their people and Celie answers, “Too many to kill off, I say. Us outnumbered from the start” (87). Therefore they decide to remain within the zone of passivism instead of fighting the powerful white authorities as they know their weak standings in the white dominated social setup. The greater number of white people within the community gives advantage to the white people to subjugate the blacks easily whereas the smaller size of the black community in comparison compels the blacks especially females to remain obedient even to unlawful practices exercised by white ruling males. Mary Agnes is exploited because she requests the white warden to keep Sofia in jail instead of transferring her to the white mayor’s house as a maid. “I say what yall told me to say. Bout Sofia not being punish enough. Say she happy in prison, strong girl like her. Her main worry is just the thought of ever being some white woman maid. That what start the fight, you know, I say. Mayor's wife ask Sofia to be her maid. Sofia say she never going to be no white woman's nothing, let alone maid” (83). In these lines Mary refers to her crime which was that she dared to speak before the white jailer. She requests the jailer not to transfer Sofia to the white mayor’s house since she wanted to remain independent. Mary becomes a victim of the dominant white patriarchal lust and is beaten and has her clothes torn by the prison warden. Such discrimination against the deprived Afro-American community is frequently found in Alice Walker’s writing where she gives voice to inequalities faced by deserted women. Walker highlights the double standards of white males who pretend to be caring and considerate towards weak people whereas in reality black women like Mary Agnes and Sofia continue to face the atrocious attitude of influential white males. The social setup thus is based on ethnic discrimination and bestows fewer rights to women of color especially when they belong to the powerless class.

5.3 Revolution against the Whites’ Atrocities in Meridian

All great movements carry heavy slogans and high aspirations for revolutions whilst the condition of common people suffering from those problems remains unchanged. They sacrifice their energy, money and time for revolutionary slogans but the poor remain deprived long after it. For example when the sweeper in the Meridian, chapter titled ‘The
Last Return’, complains about inequalities and injustice committed by whites against marginalized black people, Truman remarks that the ‘Civil Rights Movement’ revolutionized the situation. The sweeper in return informs Truman that he has seen such movements coming and going but the situation of the common people remains unaffected. He then tells Truman that he is new to that town and therefore has not witnessed subjugation at the hands of the wealthy white people of that town (Walker, *Meridian* 05). White Americans, despite being outsiders in the black owned neighborhood enjoy valued status and economic privileges. Due to their status, the powerful whites take pleasure in subjugating black people through violent actions and proof of this fact can be witnessed in the conversion of peaceful educated black students into gorilla militants. The reason behind their transformation into a violent mob was the discriminatory attitude of white men. The federal government and police, comprising mainly of whites enjoyed not only bullying blacks but also performing extremely violent actions that included snatching of property and killings. Even after pledging to kill the whites at the time of revolution the narrator poses various questions like: “if they would ever rob or bomb a police station? The answer to all these questions is in the negative” (15). This also highlights the fact that after witnessing the atrocities the black people decide to take revenge by participating in the voting process and encouraging black voters to register themselves. On the other hand during the revolution peaceful protestors are dealt with in a cruel way by white policemen who do not allow blacks to raise their voice for their rights. The right of voting is long denied to blacks and when they protest the police beat them up and lock them in jail. “The earlier demonstrators, she felt sure, would not be set free because a few singing people stood peacefully across from the jail. And the jail was too small to accommodate any more bodies. It must already be jammed” (79). The reason for arresting black men is that they sing inspirational revolutionary songs standing outside the jail. The powerful whites show the blacks their control over the lives of black people by throwing them behind bars and not allowing them the freedom of expression. Meridian knows that this strategy will inflict greater pain upon the destitute blacks because of their lack of influence. When other protestors turn up and the rooms in the jail become too small for the young girls and boys,
the officials decide to release them with the help of the armed forces in order to create space for fresh prisoners (79). This incident of arresting innocent black marchers shows the attitude of white officials towards blacks who have to struggle a lot due to the discriminatory attitude of the white administrative forces. The paratroopers arrive at the scene where black women are singing outside the jail and the jailers liberate the earlier captured demonstrators to make room for new ones but the ones who come out are all beaten up and bruised:

.... the jailhouse door was opened and the earlier demonstrators came wearily out, their faces misshapen from swellings and discolored from bruises. Truman limped along with the rest, moving in great pain and steadily muttering curses as the line of troopers hurried them relentlessly out of the square. It was a few seconds before Meridian understood that it was now their turn. (80)

These lines by Alice Walker indicates the atrocities committed against the peaceful black marchers during the revolution. Black people have been victims of white authorities in slavery, the black arts movement and even in modern times. Physical violence at all times has been a common practice on the part of white strategy makers. In Meridian, Walker describes the disfigured and swollen faces of the prisoners who are set free to make room for fresh prisoners. The white policemen arrive at the scene to teach a lesson to the people singing outside the jail and that comprise mainly of women. The peaceful campaigners face violence as it is the aim of the white law enforcers, is to treat black women and men as their enemies. In order to disperse the protestors policemen utilize all possible strategies and do not hesitate to use force in the form of throwing tear gas on the protestors to show them their low status in society. One of the policemen aims a rubber bullet at Meridian that causes her to fall down and starts a stampede that injures Meridian more as she has already fallen down. The only refuge that she finds is in running into the jail. “....the troopers turned on them, beating and swinging with their bludgeons. One blow knocked Meridian to the ground, where she was trampled by people running back and forth over her. But there was nowhere to run. Only the jail door was open and unobstructed”. (80)
There is no consideration for human pain in the minds of white troopers since they are sent with only one purpose and that is to throw the protestors inside the prison with the use of forceful authority that the law provides them. They use their weapons freely against the crowd that comprises mainly of women who are singing traditional songs with only candles in their hands. Meridian, the central character of the novel is also among the demonstrators so she too is thrown into a prison cell. In showing their aim to crush blacks in the prison house the whites do not spare the black women who are all beaten by the policemen. Meridian is thrown into a cell with many elderly women. The police men do not have any respect for black women and treat them worse than hunters who prey on wild animals. When Meridian is arrested and thrown behind iron bars. “…. the sheriff grabbed her by the hair and someone else began punching her and kicking her in the back” (81). Another police officer also joins in to punish her for being a part of the peaceful protest. This incident indicates the attitude of white men who control all administrative affairs. The all-powerful status of white people is because of their strong hold of the sources of production. For many decades the black people did not have the right to vote which means that they have a choice in the selection of representatives on law making forums and control of business in the whole country. The bourgeoisie white people selected the people of their choice who work in strengthening their control over the people of poor backgrounds. The elected members of the parliament and Congress run the affairs and policies of the country that deal with income generating and other political matters that have been in the hands of whites due to their majority in the country. Thus black people being in minority and working class people remain deprived of all basic necessities of life. In a situation where men are deprived and women of black community are bound to suffer due to their inferior status in social and domestic lives.

5.4 Black Women under Whites’ Economic Hegemony

While discussing the handing over of land to an American Indian, Meridian’s mother questions the origin of the native who might have turned out to be a white man.
Meridian’s father replies, “grown up white men don’t pretend to be anything else. Not even for a minute” (Walker, Meridian 46). The reason that white men do not wish to be in any other role than the one they are already in, is the privileges they enjoy. For them this world is a safe haven with all the comforts and luxuries and where miseries of life have no remote connection with their lives that is protected by their white government. According to Meridian’s father white men do not hesitate to adopt any role if they see an opportunity to grow economically. For this purpose their pride is put aside and they can degenerate into the worst possible form when they are in the land grabbing business. “They’ll become anything for as long as it takes to steal some land” (46). In such conditions the officials in court rooms and jurisdiction become partisans with white people and declare land snatching as the birth right of white people. One example of this is Sacred Serpent Park, which is partly a graveyard for Indians for centuries and partly farmland and which serves as the only source of income at the same time providing fresh vegetables for Meridian’s family, is confiscated by white Govt. Officials. “… the officials said they could offer only token payment; that, and the warning to stay away from Sacred Serpent Park which, now that it belonged to the public, was of course not open to Colored” (48). When Meridian’s father registers a complaint about Sacred Serpent Park, the officials in the courthouse warn Meridian’s father to stay away the from park land. They declare Serpent Park as public property and notify that colored people are banned from it. This incident highlights the reality that black people have been facing at the hands of white men for decades. White officials not only snatch land belonging to colored people but also do not leave them with any option to fight for their rights. The tyrannical attitude towards Meridian and her family makes them even more miserable since not only is their source of income taken away; their options for other conveniences of life such as education, health and other facilities are also reduced. Here through victimization of Meridian’s family Walker criticizes the practice of Columbus’ philosophy of snatching everything from black people on the name of civilization. The discrimination started on the basis of skin color centuries ago is still in practice as emphasized by Walker. Thus Alice Walker documents the ill treatment of blacks
due to the power that white influential people exert and which deprives blacks of all privileges that white people enjoy in society.

5.5 Slavery as an Economic Opportunity in *The Temple of My Familiar*

5.5.1 Slavery of Zede in *The Temple of My Familiar*

Slavery is the invention of patriarchy in Marxist Feminist ideology. When men overtook the tribal ‘gens’ system they started subjugating their fellow human beings for the sake of accumulation of greater wealth that could ensure their superiority over all others. In this process of oppression, women became easy victims of powerful beings. Due to household confinement, women were kept away from surplus economic possessions. When lust for greater wealth grew, men subdued people from other tribes and races with the purpose of getting maximum laborers. Women of other backgrounds faced discrimination on a greater level first by carrying out heavy field work during the whole day and at night as objects for gratification of sexual lust. Alice Walker in *The Temple of My Familiar* creates two important characters: Zede and Lissie who bear the sufferings of slavery at the hands of white people because of their black female status. Through the character of Zede, Carlotta’s mother, Walker provides examples of extreme exploitation of women during the era of slavery. In this novels she illustrates that black African people were forcefully sold by one master to the other, each of whom compelled them to work as slaves on plantations. Zede narrates her account of anguish and highlights her miserable plight in these words. “We were forced to jog for almost fifteen days without stopping......... Out feet were bleeding” (63). Zede was humiliated in such way that she says, “I wanted to run after them and kill them” (63). In fact these slavers did not know the meaning of sympathy for fellow beings. For them women were mere objects who did not feel pain. Zede and her fellow slave women were treated worse than wild animals in any human community “.... a long chain connecting us by the feet along one row, inverting.....there was no movement uncontested by one’s neighbors, lack of sufficient food, lack of air and exercise - never had any of us been away from air and light” (69). These lines indicate the fact that in the treatment of slaves the handlers ignored all human considerations. Even wild animals were better treated when compared with black women. All slaves were treated worse than wild
beasts. Zede and the other women slaves were shackled in chains by their owner despite being powerless, penniless and defenseless. They were not given proper food while the work load put on them was that of beasts of burden with the only crime these women committed was that of their gender and poor background.

Besides the physical pain inflicted upon the women all of them had to undergo sexual assault by unrelated, unknown men. This is the miserable plight of Zede and her fellow women at the hands of their slave owners and guards. They consider these women as their rightful property and use them in ways they like. For instance “Zede as a slave recalls “the guards forced the women to mate with them, and before long each guard had chosen his favorite slave “wife”.’’ (73). There was no consent from the women involved in this forceful physical abduction. Physical assault was common among the slavers who considered women as their rightful property and exploited them according to their wild wishes for the fulfilment of their animal passion of poor, helpless female slaves. There was no objection to selling women and children away from each other for a number of centuries and it was considered fashionable and an emblem of power among powerful and rich people.

5.5.2 Miss Lissie, a Victim of Slave Trade

Mr. Hal and Miss Lissie are an elderly couple whom Suwelo, the history professor, goes to meet after the death of his uncle Rafie in order to collect the property and savings that his uncle leaves for him as the closest relative. Suwelo, finds the elderly couple very interesting and begins to take interest in them. They too, like him for being nice and having good listening skills. They engage in long conversations with Suwelo telling him of their experiences of being black and poor. They recall their miserable lives as slaves, the cruel and inhuman attitudes of white slavers and the brutalities inflicted upon the women and children. Miss Lissie, is one of the main characters of this novel and it is she who narrates the instances of the miserable lives of small children especially girls and young females at the hands of whites. She tells stories of being a black child and young black girl and how she has to undergo suffering numberless times at the hands of her white slavers. Miss Lissie,
along with her mother, sisters and brother had been sold into slavery after the death of Lissie’s father and were been kept as slaves for a long time while she suffered at the hands of evil masters countless tortures that she narrates in a conversation with Suwelo. She remarks about the expertise of white slavers, “Our new masters had a genius for turning us viciously—in ways that shamed and degraded even themselves, if only they’d had sense enough to know it—against anything that once we loved” (64). This shows that the white slavers had knowledge of how to inflict pain on powerless slave women in order to break them and force them to kneel down before them without putting up much resistance.

The exercise of violence in novel and creative ways was the area of expertise, for these slave owners, and would have shamed anyone else but these senseless people did not have any feeling for the helpless women whom they only liked to torture in every possible way. The condition of food and shabby living places was one of the noteworthy factors in exploiting the slave women and children. The treatment of slaves during the slave trade was extremely brutal. The food, shelter and place for sleeping provided to Miss Lissie, her sisters and sick mother are full of filth. In her conversation Miss Lissie tells Suwelo that the amount of food and open air they received was extremely poor. “They fed us a little millet gruel, which we dipped with our hands from a long wooden trough outside the pen twice a day. We could see the sky for the ten minutes it took us to eat” (64). This statement of Miss Lissie’s indicates the conditions that she and her relative women encountered. Even animals get better treatment and food as compared to these women who are penned inside a cottage and allowed to see the light only ten minutes of every day. This example demonstrates the extremely brutal behavior of the white capitalists towards black women and indicate the extremely brutal behavior on the part of white slavers who snatched every opportunity of living from black women.

Slave owners utilized various techniques to inflict agony upon the women. Owing to such violent practices of slavers most of the slave women fell ill. Miss Lissie remarks about her own condition, “Constipation was always my problem; fear and anxiety kept me locked tight” (Walker, Temple 64). Due to the unhygienic conditions of the unkempt place, insufficient and sub-standard food Lissie’s digestion suffered. She was in continuous fear
due to the aggressive and crazy behavior of the slave holders. Patriarchal practices manifested themselves in their supreme form in the treatment of helpless African American women. Their oppression drove other women, along with Miss Lissie, sick. According to Miss Lissie constipation and other diseases also became a fashion, “But cases of dysentery were frequent, and many people while waiting—for what, we didn’t know—sickened and died” (64). The life experiences of slaves especially women are so horrified that in normal circumstances a person cannot even imagine the horrors of the situation. Due to the unhygienic conditions, infection among women leads to loss of blood and severe diarrhea and dysentery which proves to be a fatal cause of loss of blood and ultimately death of the poor enslaved women. Death among the female slaves was a common occurrence since the slave captors did not try to cure the sick women as they only required females with strong physical health who could work in the fields and increase their revenue.

Miss Lissie’s mother had to undergo a similar tyrannical fate because of the atrocities committed by white slavers against innocent female slaves. Like other miserable women her mother also was in great distress as a result of the unhygienic conditions. She became ill within a week of being put in the enclosed stockade. The enclosure was so congested that slave females did not have room to lie down and in order to create a little space for her sick mother all the other women had to move closer together. It is only thus that they can create enough room for her to turn her head and get air to breathe at the same time that she had to kneel down in order to decrease her pain. In the words of Miss Lissie, “She was sick with vomiting and dysentery, those sicknesses it is least possible to hide. Her deeper sickness was over her shame at being filthy and exposed to strangers, in the embarrassed and helpless presence of her children” (64-65). The creative evil genius of the white slavers inflicted agonies upon enslaved women with as if they were seeking revenge from women who were guilty of destroying the white race. Despite such deadly diseases the slavers neither shifted the sickened women and children to another place nor did they provide them with any medication. Their dignity and self-esteem was not taken into consideration rather they were compelled to feel more and more ashamed in front of their family members. Miss Lissie’s mother was modest and very fastidious in terms of
cleanliness so much so that she took a bath every day and wore spotless clothes before
becoming a victim of brutal white hegemony. Lissie remembers her mother using sweet oil
on her hair and smelling her fragrance. “She could not accept so much filth on and about
her person” (65). Being in such a filthy condition made her ashamed of herself besides
experiencing physical agony of the disease. White slavers and slave owners thus adopted
strategies that incorporated both physical and mental pain on poor enslaved female subjects
with the purpose of proving their superiority and power.

Miss Lissie’s mother became so depressed that she longed to die rather than suffer
her shameful condition. The white men did not hesitate to grant her wish and took her life
easily before the eyes of her children and other related women. While talking to Suwelo,
Miss Lissie says, “The white men sent in a couple of brutes to drag her out by her heels—
one of them held a rag to his nose as they dragged her—and place her body on a cart and
carry it away” (65). The level of sympathy is so low that the white men did not pay any
respect to the dead body of an enslaved subject. Instead of picking the body in a respectable
manner they feel satisfied in dragging her by her heels as one would drag an animal that
had died and had to be thrown on a trash heap. Respect for a deceased human body was not
a consideration for these white people whose brutal behavior against helpless black women
reflect the merciless demeanor of powerful and wealthy white people. Similar has been the
conduct of influential patriarchs towards the subjugated females of all ages. Men utilized
women for their personal economic benefit and instead of considering women as living
beings with physical limitation, white males consider them as objects of labor and try to
squeeze maximum benefit out of them in terms of field work and household activities. All
the time the sole reward that these women are given is a small quantity of food whereas the
economic advantages attained from the physical work of these women are enjoyed by men
who grow prosperous day by day whereas the women grow weaker. In such circumstances
only strong females have the right to survive whereas sick women like Miss
Lissie’s mother are left to die in a disgraceful manner.
5.5.3 Subjugation of Children

Besides terrorizing black slave females and men, white capitalist slavers felt it their obligation to make terrify small black children as a part of their malpractices. It is a common patriarchal practice to horrify young children and deprive them of small pocket money or expensive item they may have received from their family members. Men with lusty ambitions do not let go of any opportunity that could provide them additional pennies. Economic gain is the sole purpose of patriarchal men and for this purpose they can degenerate to any level. Men with greed, having no purpose in life, utilize their energies for the destruction of peace and harmony in society, of which innocent small children are an emblem. Alice Walker highlights this fact during the conversation between Suwelo and Miss Lissie, where Lissie remarks, “You sometimes see these same faces on the streets of our larger cities; these are the young men selling the dope, or terrorizing the young ones while they take the little money that was pinned in the smaller children’s pockets for them to buy lunch. They haven’t left us, those faces; they are never hard to find” (Temple 66). Lust for material goods makes men adopt brutal techniques such as indulging in selling drugs to accumulate fast and easy financial gains. Besides spreading the evil of dope among the younger generation these symbolic patriarchal faces also do not hesitate to rob the small children of the little pocket money. Miss Lissie sees such horrible men among the slavers in the slave ship when she and her family members are transported as slaves. Greater pain is also inflicted upon children as Miss Lissie narrates the story of cutting off their hair: “These were brutally cut off, causing much wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Walker, Temple 66). The purpose of cutting children’s hair was to search for “… all manner of precious small items, tokens of home: gold beads, silver pins, bits of gris-gris. In my brother’s and sisters’ hair and in my own the silver coins were discovered” (Walker, Temple 66). The white slave owners and their guides proved their extreme greed by first strip-searching the small children and then cutting the hair from where they found precious items like gold beads and silver coins. Miss Lissie, her small brother and innocent sisters were also deprived of their small cache of silver coins that they had kept hidden during their journey from the African continent. On finding these precious items the slave guards mumbled
grunts of satisfaction as if they had received their rightful wages or property. The miseries of slave life, for Miss Lissie and numberless small girls of her age and color, grew in severity. These small items hidden by the children indicate their hopes for a better future but the slavers snatch the optimism along with the material goods. Thus financial gains can lead men to go to any limit and women and children are easy victims for these men.

Aside from going through the painful process of getting their hair cut, all young girls had to pass through the procedure of acquiring emblematic names. Instead of giving them proper names each slave had to be branded by using hot iron symbols, just as though they were cattle that the owner was afraid of getting stolen. Miss Lissie was branded with ‘C’ that stood for Croesus, the name of a poor state and these symbols were used as marks of identification for the slaves. “By these brands we were recognized, and if one of us died, her brand was checked and she was marked off the record book into which we were all entered” (67). Thus these helpless slave women were treated as if they were some nonliving entities who did not have any human names rather were recognized with letters of the alphabet. These women were deprived of their identity and thenceforth their whole life revolved round a symbol rather than roots or culture or any other values that human beings associate with. These women therefore remained dispossessed of their history and traditions and those who were separated from their mothers had their ancestral background wiped away totally and absolutely. In this way it became much easier to exploit individuals with no past memories than persons with strong past affiliations. Moreover the process of acquiring a name was excruciatingly painful for the poor black females. “When they pressed the metal to the skin of a buttock or upper arm there was much pain. The swelling and burning continued for days afterward. Though the slavers dotted our wounds with a bit of vinegar and palm oil, nothing soothed like the milk from a nursing mother’s breast, a remedy with which all Africans were familiar” (67).

The fact that Miss Lissie’s description of slave life underscores is that all slaves especially young females had to suffer more at the hands of white slavers. Identity that incorporated burning their skin with hot iron to create marks of identification indicates an identity crisis for the slaves who were nowhere as per common standards of survival of life
whereas they had to pass through severe pain during the days ahead. As a last resort the women and children returned to traditional ways of curing wounds by rubbing the injured parts with a nursing mother’s milk. This natural and traditional remedy Miss Lissie and all other young girls found easily because making young black women pregnant was a common practice among slave captors and their guards. The irony of the situation lay in the fact that although all the captors enjoyed making love and having sexual intercourse with the young girls who had barely reached the age of puberty they did not allow them to keep their babies with them:

Babies were not permitted on the slave ship, nor mothers too far advanced in pregnancy. Some of the babies were simply smashed against the ground by the captors of their mothers, some were left on the trail to die, some were sold or, less usually, adopted by a tribe that did not believe in or participate in the slave trade—that is, they refused to sell or buy anyone. (66)

The treatment of babies during the slave trade is beyond any consideration of humanity but white capitalist captors utilized this practice with the purpose of keeping their laborers intact. The white captors were socially and lawfully allowed and nobody questioned their actions. They were owners of these slave women and their children and so they treated them in ways that pleased them and gave them economic prosperity. Financial gains motivated them to kill numberless small babies because they thought it an easy way to regain the worker women by separating them from nursing children and making them useful field workers on plantations. The children who could walk were kept as slaves and sold afterwards. They were transported from one master to another during the slave trade. The children who mainly survived on the milk of those young women were separated from their mother’s feed forcefully. “The breasts of the nursing mothers were a haven for the very young among us, who were permitted to drink the milk. Otherwise some of the more frightened and traumatized of the children would have died” (68). This one example highlights the fact that during the slave trade all human ethics and morality were violated by white slavers who did not spare even the very young ones from violence. For such men to inflict physical and mental pain on young and elderly women must have been a great
source of joy since they continued to exploit these weak girls regularly. The system of patriarchy, thus provided great chances for exercising manipulative techniques upon the women under their control.

5.5.4 Physical Exploitation of Young Girls

The physical assault on girls during babyhood and childhood is also listed by Miss Lissie as a favorite pastime among the slave captors in plantation and slave trade. The slave owners and their guards satisfied their wild and lusty passions on small and innocent girls who barely understand the inhuman situation they were dragged into. During her conversation with Suwelo, Miss Lissie, narrates her experiences on a ship where she was repeatedly raped when she was just a little girl. “The first time I was raped by members of the crew on board the ship, I was in chains and sucking on my thumb. The second time I was violated, they chained me so that my arms and legs were spread out and my thumb was beyond my reach. There was nothing to solace me” (Walker, Temple 68). During her thumb sucking babyhood, Miss Lissie is put in chains and is raped violently by the stonehearted men on the ship highlighting the tyrannical and criminal attitude of white capitalists who allow the practice of such malevolent conduct on a ship under their control. The second time she is raped Miss Lissie is in complete chains so that her legs remain wide open and her thumb is out of reach of her mouth, depriving her of that small solace.

Due to their ill-treatment of the young girls, the white men considering them filthy, drag the wretched creatures in salt water to cleanse their bodies of the pungent smell of the misdeeds of the slavers. While narrating her own tale as a slave Miss Lissie tells Suwelo, “we were forced onto the ship bald, branded, and naked as we came into the world. I fought to hold on to that last small badge of modesty, but a white man struck me a blow to the head almost without looking at me” (68-69). The cruel attitude of this white captor towards Lissie only indicates a common practice of white slavers towards young black women. For white men, black females were worthless creatures who had no self-respect, self-worth and honor before other slave women, men and slave owners. White men treated them as if they were bestowing these young girls a new life where cleansing the body was essential but in
fact these women meant economic prosperity for their captors as they sold them for far more than they had been bought for, depending upon the physical strength of the slave girls.

During the transportation of slaves the hold of the ship, where the slaves were kept, was so congested that there was barely room to stand. For instance Miss Lissie relating her story to Suwelo states:

We were packed as if we were sardines, for this two-month-long journey. Truly, sardines should not be packed so, and if it were in my power they never would be again. Our heads were in each other’s laps, along chain connecting us by the feet along one row, riveting us to the wall of the ship, and there was no movement uncontested by one’s neighbors, of which one had four. (69)

The treatment of the enslaved poor was as if they were some dead animal, as Miss Lissie compares her own condition with that of the many other deserted females indicating the tyrannical attitude of whites towards helpless black women. The chain connecting all females pushed them to one corner towards the wall of the ship where they could not even move since the slightest move disturbed and scratched the neighbors. Even scratching others for creating space was a futile effort on the part of young females and showed the lack of freedom allowed to blacks during their miserable journey. During this two month long journey many poor slaves died due to suffocation created by the lack of fresh food, air and space: “Lack of sufficient food, lack of air and exercise—never had any of us been away from air and light!—all contributed; but many of us died from anger” (69). There was no protection for these poor black souls who were always at the mercy of the strong winds blowing in the sea and who saw no light for whole long days. Above all, according to Miss Lissie, the major factor contributing in the deaths of these abandoned women was the emotional trauma that created anger in them and which led to their consumption of their physical and psychological selves in slave trafficking.

Alice Walker in these three selected novels highlights the miseries of women belonging to the Afro-American community. Her female characters become victims of economic discrimination in one way or the other. Sofia is a fine example of modern day
slavery. For white people black women have very minimal worth and can therefore be either used as slaves or sex objects which is shown when Mary Agnes is raped by the white jailer. During slavery black women were treated worse than criminals. They were thrown in shackles and maximum pain was inflicted on them. The characters of Miss Lissie and Zede experience slavery in the early part of their lives: Lissie as a young girl is enslaved and raped many times. All the other enslaved women that Walker describes are also in a pitiable condition. The application of Marxist Feminist ideology allows us to perceive Walker’s narration of the difficulties of poor black women in a system controlled by influential white men. She brings to limelight the deprived condition of black women in slavery times as well as in modern times and shows women in contemporary society in a deserted state. Men in a white capitalist system are in power and use women for their own purposes since white men enjoy privileges in the patriarchal system that black females are deprived of.
END NOTES

1. Engels explains in detail the phenomenon of slavery as the starting point in human evaluation where the powerful group of people enslaved other weaker people in order to gain economic benefits from their physical labor. See Engels Frederick. *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*. Resistance Books. Australia: 2004 Print. (11, 65)


4. Class system. Upper class enjoy privileges because of their economic prosperity whereas people of lower class remain deprived. Alice Walker depicts characters in her writings where white people because of their upper social status enjoy a privileged life whereas black people of African American community remain deprived due to their week social position.
Despite end of slavery formally in year 1863 it continues to manifest itself in different shapes because of presence of patriarchal system. Alice Walker creates the character of Sophia who in this modern age becomes victim of wrath and superiority of the white mayor. Sophia has to spend 12 years in captivity in the jail and the house of the mayor. Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Florida, USA: 1982. Print. (78)

Slavers here refers to white people involved in slave trade who transport Zede and Miss Lissie from one owner to another in Walker’s *The Temple of My Familiar*. The definition of slaver is “1 a : a ship used in the slave trade. b : a person engaged in slave trade. 2 white slaver” http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slaver Web. 06 May 2015.

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CHAPTER 6

ROLE OF FINANCIAL STABILITY IN THE SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF WALKER’S WOMEN

This chapter highlights the incorporation of Marxist Feminist ideology of female emancipation and its practical application in Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple*, *Meridian* and *The Temple of my Familiar*. The protagonist of *The Color Purple*, Celie, remains under subjugation and physical abuse first by her stepfather and then by her husband whom she remembers as Mr._____ before her transformation in her narration while after emancipation she calls him by his real name that is Albert. In her liberation from the patriarchal influence of her husband Shug Avery plays a significant role. When Shug
realizes Albert’s part in separating Nettie from Celie by concealing Nettie’s letters for many years, she decides to put an end to her sympathies for him. She openly helps Celie in facing her tyrant husband. On the occasion of Sofia’s liberation from twelve years of slavery Celie confronts her husband for the first time in her life in the presence of many women. Celie talks about Albert and his son Harpo’s role in subduing her and other women like Sofia and Mary Agnes. Celie and Mary decide to remove themselves from the control of Albert and Harpo and move to Memphis with Shug Avery. After leaving her husband, Celie engages herself in creative activities of making pants, with the assistance of Shug. She takes care of Celie by giving her a separate room and financial support. With the passage of time Celie acquires perfection in the creation of pants and later introduces them as a business product. Shug aids Celie in allowing her to use her house as a factory, hiring more experienced women and marketing her merchandise. Thus in this way Celie establishes her business and starts earning for herself.

This chapter also discusses the role of Celie’s personal growth and the improvement of the relationship with her husband. Celie’s husband had depended on her all his married life for domestic duties but when she confronts and later leaves him, he ponders on his patriarchal ways. Thus when Celie returns as a transformed and socially developed persona she finds him a changed man too. He is impressed by her new look and independent status and repents his earlier rude conduct. Due to the financially stable situation of Celie, her husband not only starts respecting her but they reunite and start living as a happy couple. The chapter also presents Meridian's transformation on various critical occasions in Walker’s novel *Meridian*. Like other female characters of Walker, Meridian also suffers due to the patriarchal and capitalist attitude of men within and outside the family. Due to her early pregnancy she gets married to Eddie but her marriage soon fails due to the nonserious attitude of her husband who runs away. Meridian leaves her child with her mother and applies for and gets a scholarship to Saxon College. During the Civil Right Movement she stands apart from the popular notion of violence and killing by refusing to kill. The chapter also seeks to explain Meridian’s bold decision in leaving her past lover,
Truman, who despite his marriage with Lynne wants to continue his extramarital relations with her.

This chapter also depicts the analysis of significant characters from Walker’s novel, *The Temple of My Familiar* in the light of Marxist Feminist ideology and racial liberation. The novel incorporates intertextual references from Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* which the next generation of Celie is shown. Celie’s granddaughter Fanny Nzingha is shown as a central character of the novel. Fanny is a lecturer of women studies in a college and has witnessed racial discrimination in society on a large scale. She discusses the option of getting rid of white people and their oppressive conduct and goes to a therapist for a solution to racism. Her mother Olivia helps her in understanding the phenomenon of racism and its solution and they conclude that forgiveness is a better option as it leads to forgetfulness of misery and the creation of long lasting peace. The chapter also shows the struggle of Fanny and Suwelo in overcoming their problems and working for a better future. This chapter also deals with the liberation of Zede from slavery. Both Zede and her daughter Carlotta struggle to survive in the patriarchal capitalist system. Zede’s achievements, despite the odds are obvious since Carlotta is able to get higher education and is ultimately selected as college professor.

In her writings Alice Walker also depicts solutions to the problems in the form of her characters who initially struggle but later get liberation from problems created due to capitalism, racism and patriarchy. She presents emancipatory strategies with the purpose of empowering women. Economic independence is one of the major factors that guarantees women’s liberation from the shackles of financial subjugation within the family, especially at the hands of their husbands and in society. The role of finance is extremely significant in determining the place of a person in society. The business of life in a societal setup is determined by the circulation of money and ultimate power is reflected by economic reserves in the shape of currency and other valuable material goods. The capitalist system of almost all societies is controlled by men due to their strong hold over the sources of production. The patriarchal social setup protects the interests of men in all situations whereas women remain in subservient position due to lack of financial stability. Economic
subjugation is a kind of strategy for oppression; when women are kept out of owning revenue they automatically remain under the domination of the patriarchal system. Men in a system based on patriarchy remain in privileged positions. All the sources of earning are controlled by men and all surplus income goes to men as well.

De Beauvoir’s philosophy of aggression and oppression in men’s nature instead of social construct, if accepted then transformation in women’s situation is not possible because uprooting patriarchy would be impossible. Millet highlights the continual of women’s subjection in Engels’ time and at present as well. In order for change to appear the acceptance of Engels’ view of patriarchy as a social formulation is significant and therefore can be subjected to application for women’s emancipation. Frederick Engels in his theory of Marxist Feminism formulates ways that cause women’s oppression. Economic oppression is one of the great ways in which Engels highlights the role of men. According to Engels it is due to the emergence of private property and possession of sources of income such as cattle breeding, selling, cultivation of crops and slave trade that men rose to power against the ‘gens system’ which worked, according to Engels, for the rights of all human beings living in miserable condition before the start of civilization. The ‘gens system’ provided equality and respect to women in all matters but with the emergence of the concept of private property men ensured their control over the sources of production and so were able to overthrow gens. All sources of income and surplus revenue went to men whereas women were assigned domestic duties and therefore disowned from owning property. Men being in power benefit whereas women because of their powerless and therefore poor economic status are deprived even in this modern age. Alice Walker, in her writings, shows the strong control of men over the sources of production. In her novel *The Color Purple* the protagonist Celie has weak financial status and therefore remains a slave to her family men. In childhood she is physically abused by her step father Alphonso and is twice made pregnant by her father. Her step father has possession of her real father’s property and which should have been given to Celie after the death of her mother. If Celie had owned that property and family income it would have been impossible for her step father to think of exploitation in the manner that he does.
Celie’s husband Albert is also a fine example of the patriarchal male controlling all affairs of home and family. In this process he exploits his wife Celie and is not reluctant to beat her because of her poor situation. The purpose of marrying Celie is not love or any sort of attachment rather he wants a slave or servant in the form of marriage who would fulfill his domestic requirement, take care of his rotten children and fields. He uses Celie as a maid as well to take care of his children from his first wife.²

6.1 Emancipatory Strategies Suggested by Marxist Feminism and Alice Walker

This chapter deals with the opportunities that women can avail with the purpose of emancipating themselves from the shackles of enforced hegemony that they have been thrown into from centuries. The first strategy that Walker presents is enabling women’s economic independence. Walker takes inspiration from Marxist Feminist ideology for empowering her female characters. Women can get social and domestic status if financial sovereignty is provided. Having possession on equal terms with those of men, women too can gain social acceptance and thus come out of domestic and social subjugation. Walker like Marxist Feminists does not exclude her male characters but instead incorporates all male and female characters with the purpose of getting domestic and social harmony. Her characters, during their struggle to change, aim for a situation where both men and women enjoy equal rights to all benedictions offered by life. Both Marxist Feminists and Alice Walker aspire for the situation where there is no exploitation, subjugation and oppression. Through discussion of Marxist Feminist theorists and Alice Walker’s writings it can be deduced that female oppression is not the result of biological make up rather it is a social construct. If female domination is a societal innovation female emancipation is also possible by bringing social changes. Marxist Feminists’ philosophy brings to the limelight the causes of women’s desolation comprising of poverty, lack of possession of property, low income, unemployment, family slavery, sexual exploitation, polygamy, child abuse and physical punishment. All these are products of patriarchal systems, governed by men, and it is these social evils also that bring about the downfall of women in their domestic
and social lives. Evelyn Reed brings counter position of dissenters in this regard who view women’s oppression as an eternal phenomenon and refuse to accept the existence of old gentile system of matriarchy. In order to empower women, Engels and his followers in Marxist Feminist ideology suggest that causes of female oppression need to be eradicated and it is only in doing so that a society can develop mutual trust and harmony towards persons of the other gender.

6.1.1 Economic Comparison of Shug Avery and Celie

In the liberation of Celie from the psychological submission of men around her, Shug Avery plays a significant role. Shug is already an economically independent person with her own earning as a result of her singing career. She is famous and earns a good income that has ensured her liberation from the slavery of patriarchy. About the character of Lillie known as Shug Avery, Celie provides detail in her letter to God. “She make so much money she don't know what to do with it. She got a fine house in Memphis, another car. She got one hundred pretty dresses. A room full of shoes” (Walker, *Purple* 95). Shug does not depend on the men around her for her survival therefore she is liberated from the miserable plight that Celie undergoes all her life. Shug owns a beautiful house and expensive cars. She has many clothes of different color and design to wear and has saved enough money to remain comfortable all her life. The same men who subjugate Celie behave differently towards her. Celie’s husband treats Shug in a loving and polite manner whereas he is extremely cruel towards Celie. She is economically downtrodden and has the lowest social status; her step father abuses her many times and thus makes her twice pregnant. Due to her weak social standing her husband also beats her. Celie herself narrates in a letter to God, “He beat me like he beat the children” (Walker, *Purple* 22). Celie’s husband Mr.____ beats her and putting her under great work load whereas at the same time he remains nice to Shug due to her high social status. Mr.____ brings Shug to his home when she is sick and orders Celie to take care of her. He himself is very worried and obeys her smallest instructions and commands. Celie narrates his conduct towards Shug when she comes home with him. “He sit over in the corner away from the lamp. Sometime she wake
up in the night and don't even see. But he there. Sitting in the shadows chewing on his pipe. No tobacco in it. First thing she said, I don't want to smell no stinking blanketyblank pipe, you hear me, Albert?” (43). He remains at her bedside when she is physically ill and takes great care of her whilst at the same time beating his wife Celie cruelly. He puts his wife to work in the fields, looking after the planting and harvesting of crops side by side with domestic duties at the same time for Shug he remains awake at night. He obeys Shug by abstaining from smoking tobacco despite his strong habit of smoking. He proves himself a traditional husband for Celie while with Shug he proves to be a flexible person. The reason for such transformed behavior with Shug is his desire to indulge in a polygamous relationship with her. He is impressed by her beauty and strong social status. She calls him by his real name and he likes her for that reason. Albert adopts altogether different approaches towards Shug and Celie. The former is respected and loved whereas the latter is insulted and suppressed in all conditions.

6.1.2 Shug’s Realization of Celie’s Life

Due to her demoralized condition Celie idolizes Shug and her high social status. She is so impressed by Shug’s personality that she keeps her picture with her before meeting her in reality. Celie describes Shug’s picture in her letter to God when she sees it for the first time. “The most beautiful woman I ever saw. She more pretty then my mama. She bout ten thousand times more prettier then me. I see her there in furs. Her face rouge. Her hair like somethin tail. She grinning with her foot up on somebody motocar” (Walker, Purple 08). Being accustomed to village life in America, Celie is astonished to see Shug’s appearance. To her Shug is the prettiest of women she has ever seen. She compares herself with Shug and considers herself ten thousand times inferior. It indicates the deprived condition that Celie feels herself in because of her low educational background. She thinks Shug to be sublime since she wears expensive dresses made of furs and costly material. She is standing beside a car in the picture that she wears. This highlights the elevated condition that Shug is already in. On the other hand Walker creates the character of Celie who is in a miserable condition due to the patriarchal men around her. She is poor, unhappy,
raped by her step father, wife to an elderly man who beats her regularly and goes to other women to fulfil his lust. She works at home and in the fields like a slave whilst Shug due to her economic independence is liberated from all restriction that patriarchy imposes. Shug is an ex-lover of Celie’s husband therefore he brings her home when she falls sick. In this way Celie gets a chance of knowing her better by being in her company. Celie, being a simple minded person, does not consider any feelings of rivalry towards Shug, rather she remains compassionate towards her and takes great care of her. She imagines her as a great success in her singing career and this becomes very clear when she writes in her letter to God. “I work on her like she a doll or like she Olivia? or like she mama. I comb and pat, comb and pat. First she say, hurry up and git finish. Then she melt down a little and lean back against my knees. That feel just right, she say” (48). Thus Celie with her sincerity takes care of Shug for many months during her illness. Shug feels detached at the start towards Celie when she considers herself an intruder in Celie’s house. But slowly Celie’s honesty begins to have a deep effect on her. Celie pays attention towards Shug as she considers her a blood relative equal to her own daughter Olivia or her own sick mother. It is Celie’s sincerity that moves Shug emotionally and helps them in coming close to each other. She realizes the horrible circumstances that Celie has been living in for a long period of time. Therefore she helps her, accepts her physical existence and right to survival.

6.1.3 Discovery of Nettie’s Letters and Celie’s Transformation

The incident that altogether transforms and allows Celie to grow out of her servitude is the discovery of Nettie’s letter. Nettie is the only person in Celie’s life who loves her. Celie considers Nettie her only ray of hope and that is one reason why she remembers her in prayer. Shug brings this unbelievable news to Celie about her husband who concealed her sister’s letters for many years. Celie expresses her surprise in her dialogue with Shug when she informs her about stolen letters of her sister.

He been keeping your letters, say Shug.
Naw, I say. Mr. ___ mean sometimes, but he not that mean.
She say, Humpf, he that mean.
But how come he do it? I ast. He know Nettie mean everything in the world to me.
Shug say she don't know, but us gon find out. (Walker, *Purple* 102)

Celie had lived in her submissive role assigned to her by patriarchs around her in the characters of her husband after her marriage and her step father before her marriage. She knows the only one way of survival before the arrival of Shug in her life is to keep herself at a submissive level before the men around her. All her life she has accepted her downtrodden position in society without complaining. As a young girl she tolerates her stepfather’s sexual exploitation and which results in her having two illegitimate children at the age of fourteen. Throughout her youth she suffers at the hands of her husband who physically beats her, puts her under heavy domestic duties and field work and disrespects her all the time. Even then Celie being black and female tolerates and accepts her lot. When she comes to know about her husband’s meanness in stealing her only sister’s letters she does not believe it at once because she does not consider her husband to have degenerated to the extent that he would become the reason of separation of Celie from her only sister. When she comes to know the reality of her husband she remarks on her husband’s heartlessness in concealing the letters of her beloved sister that Nettie meant everything in the world to her. Nettie is the most important person in the world for Celie. Mr.____ conceals her letter because her sister Nettie refuses to allow him to sexually exploit her due to her relationship as a brother in law and preserving her dignity. Therefore Mr._____ warns Nettie that she would not have any contact with her sister for the rest of her life.³ The awareness about her sister’s enforced separation brings about a transformation in Celie’s character. She becomes a more vigorous person from a submissive black female and begins to realize her meaningless conformity to her husband’s cruelties. The first feeling that emerge in Celie’s personality is taking revenge and killing her husband. She writes in her letter to God. “All day long I act just like Sofia. I stutter. I mutter to myself. I stumble bout the house crazy for Mr.____ blood. In my mind, he falling dead every which a way. By time night come, I can't speak. Every time I open my mouth nothing come out but a little burp” (103). Walker creates the character of Sofia as completely contrasting to Celie’s character. Celie is weak and small in appearance whereas Sofia is strong and big in appearance. Celie is submissive to authorities while Sofia resists domination. Celie remains
silent and fearful of patriarchal men around her whilst Sofia challenges the men around her. Celie surrenders her individuality to the needs and power of her husband whereas Sofia leaves her husband Harpo due to his efforts to rule over Sofia. That is why Celie considers Sofia as a symbol of revolt. She imagines herself adopting the rebellious habits of Sofia after learning about her husband’s wicked plot of splitting her from Nettie. She stumbles and mutters words to herself making herself determined for taking revenge from her husband. All her life Celie accepts her defeated position and considers herself as a deprived person. She is the one who advises Harpo to beat Sofia in order to control her. Celie in her letter to God narrates her argument with Sofia. She asks Celie the reasons for advising Harpo to beat Sofia and in response Celie answers, “I say it cause I'm a fool, I say. I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't. What that? she say. Fight. I say” (38). She does not know any other way of survival than kneeling down before men. Celie admits the fact that she lacks the ability to combat unfavorable situations. She cannot stand up even for her own protection. She surrenders completely before the men of her family and remains under family subjugation for a long period of her early life. At this moment Sofia becomes emotional and describes her own struggle against the patriarchs around her. “She say, All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I loves Harpo, she say. God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me” (38). Sofia learnt the lessons of fighting against the oppressive behavior of her family men whereas Celie could not attain this warrior spirit in her youth. Walker, being a female herself, illustrates the horrible situation that a girl has to face in the institution of family dominated by men. When a family is based on patriarchal lines then exploitation of women becomes an essential component of that social institute. Thus Sofia also admits the fact that all her life she has faced miserable plight due to the oppressive men around her. Her only chance of happiness is in her peaceful and happy marriage. After marriage when Sofia finds her husband Harpo on similar tracks of manipulation she fights back hard. She throws back all viciousness in return for violence to her husband. In her letter to God, Celie narrates the condition of
Sofia’s husband. “Next time us see Harpo his face a mess of bruises. His lip cut. One of his eyes shut like a fist. He walk stiff and say his teef ache” (35). This highlights the fact that Sofia does not remain a passive victim against violence imposed by her husband and fights back rather aggressively. In her family life after marriage Sofia saves herself from subjugation due to her active stance against her husband. However, Sofia is unfortunate in that she becomes a slave to the powerful mayor due to his strong white social influence. She is unlike Celie in that she does not allow her husband to mistreat her. In a similar letter where Celie narrates Sofia’s fighting spirit, she also highlights her submissive situation. “I like Sofia, but she don't act like me at all. If she talking when Harpo and Mr.____ come in the room, she keep right on. If they ast her where something at, she say she don't know. Keep talking” (34). This description of Sofia’s nature and habits indicates that Sofia is not afraid of her family men whereas Celie is. Celie does not have courage to face or even talk in front of her husband. During her married years she remains an obedient wife and kneels before her husband’s demands, remaining a victim of physical abuse until the arrival of Shug Avery in her life when she is transformed slowly by the latter taking control of her household. She dresses Celie in pretty clothes, talks to her, stops her husband from beating her and takes her away from her home to show her the world. When Celie comes to realize that her only sister, and one for whom she cares about most, is forcefully separated from her, she too starts thinking about fighting against the atrocities of her husband and even starts considering the murder of her husband. The awareness about separation from her beloved sister in a tactful way by Mr.____ proves to be a turning point in Celie’s life. For the first time she imagines herself standing up. At the beginning of her transformation her feelings are directed towards taking revenge and killing the cruel man and it is only the presence of Shug that saves her from walking on that dangerous path. Shug channelizes her energies in a positive direction and Celie learns to speak to her husband on the basis of equality.

The letters about the discovery of Nettie’s communication bring Shug and Celie closer. It allows Shug to consider the deprived condition that Celie had been in, due to her husband’s cruel conduct. Shug repents her own liberal attitude towards a man who handles
his own wife in such a brutal way. “And when I come here, say Shug, I treated you so mean. Like you was a servant. And all because Albert married you. And I didn't even want him for a husband, she say” (105). Shug admits her own ill-treatment of Celie in the initial days of their meeting. She orders Celie to perform duties for her like pressing her clothes, cooking her food and cleaning her room etc. She maltreats Celie due to her own revenge on her husband. Celie narrates Shug’s intentions towards Mr. ___ or Albert whom she does not want to marry. Albert does not want Shug with the purpose of marrying her but to continue his physical relationship with her. Shug liberates herself from social norms and continues her relationship with him as a kind of revenge but when the realities of his mistreatment against Celie and her sister Nettie expose Mr._______ Shug also begins to hate him. Thus with the transformation of Celie, Walker also liberates Shug from the influence of Albert. In her letter to God, Celie quotes Shug’s transformation. “But what was good tween us must have been nothing but bodies, she say. Cause I don't know the Albert that don't dance, can't hardly laugh, never talk bout nothing, beat you and hid your sister Nettie's letters. Who he? I don't know nothing, I think. And glad of it” (105). Thus Celie’s condition also develops a kind of hatred in Shug’s heart for the Albert whom she had adored till then and who seems to be a totally different person with Celie. He remains good to Shug due to her elevated social and economic status while his abusive self is manifested in his conduct towards the poor and economically deprived Celie. Shug realizes Albert’s exploitative nature towards a deprived and downtrodden woman like Celie. She explains the reasons of her hatred towards him to Celie mentioning some of his rigid qualities. In a way this becomes a point of conversion for Shug as well since she understands the meaninglessness of her fragile relations with Albert. He becomes inflexible and where once he used to dance and laugh with Shug by growing older he too like other patriarchs adopts himself a rigid role of abusing weak women around him. He becomes unbending, is no longer fun-loving and does not engage in leisurely conversations or storytelling. Towards Celie he proves extremely horrible as he beats her without reason and wants to tame Celie and keep her submissive. He turns out to be the sole reason of separation for the two most significant characters of Celie and Nettie in the novel. Due to
these causes Shug concludes that Albert is not the same person that she used to know and love. Rather she ponders that she does not know this strange person. For the fun-loving Shug, he is an alien whose purpose is to dominate others and she feels happy in detaching herself from this unknown patriarch. Thus this becomes the turning point of both Celie and Shug’s lives. They both come out of the long servitude to the point that Celie no longer wants to continue her marital relationship with him whereas Shug stops herself from allowing him to abuse her physically in the future. Thus the first step of domination of patriarchy which is psychological is removed. Celie and Shug, both come out of their mental submission to his superiority and start criticizing and hating his inhuman attitude towards Celie and her sister Nettie. At this point in time, Shug guides the energies of Celie in a positive direction. She takes her into confidence and narrates her own maltreatment towards Celie in the properly apologetic manner.

6.1.4 Celie’s Resistance

Marxist Feminist ideology strives to bring women out of psychological subjugation from patriarchy. For this purpose they aim to empower women to face the cruel conduct of their men. Alice Walker through her characters in The Color Purple applies Marxist Feminist philosophy to empowering women so that they come out of the sense of inferiority and demand equality in domestic and social matters. They struggle to participate in the system of production with the purpose of attaining economic stability. The discovery of her sister’s letters creates an upheaval in Celie’s life. Her view about the superiority of men especially her husband changes completely. All her life she has been a submissive person, but at this point she starts considering her husband a wretched creature and considers killing him as a means of having a catharsis.

At this important phase of her life Walker sends Shug as a mentor for her and to give her direction. Shug stops Celie from imagining killing Mr.____; she engages in long discussions with her and shifts her into her own room with the purpose of guiding her and giving her company so that she can divert her mind to other things. She stops her from her thoughts of murder, “Don't kill, she say. Nettie be coming home before long. Don't make
her have to look at you like us look at Sofia” (Walker, *Purple* 122). On one level she gives her hope to meet her sister soon and advises Celie to remain out of trouble whereas on the other hand, Shug prevents Celie from committing any illegal action against Mr.____ by giving her the example of the miserable life Sofia faced in prison for about twelve precious years of her youth. She convinces Celie that Nettie would feel degraded if she were to find Celie facing the horrible consequences of her irresponsible conduct. Thus through the character of Shug, Walker wants to convey that cruelties can be tolerated and overturned in a systematic way where both compensation of crimes and catharsis of strong feelings is possible.

Besides inspirational conversation Shug provides practical help to Celie to help her direct her energies in a positive direction. She indulges her in making pants for herself. Although Celie does not know the art of sewing clothes Shug helps her in learning it and involves Celie in making pants for herself. When Celie objects to the purpose of making pants Shug gives her justification for looking presentable. Celie at this point in her letter to God narrates her discussion with Shug. “I don't know, I say: Mr.____ not going to let his wife wear pants. Why not? say Shug. You do all the work around here. It's a scandless, the way you look out there plowing in a dress. How you keep from falling over it or getting the plow caught in it is beyond me” (124). Celie’s words highlight the kind of strong control that Mr.____ exerts on her during her early married years. She is afraid of him even to the extent of how she dresses in her own house. At this time it is Shug’s guidance that liberates her from the unconscious slavery that she had been in for many years. She gives her the justification for looking presentable when she honestly fulfils all her household duties and she has the right to wear neat and clean clothes. Even though Celie does all the house work she is dominated by her husband. Another thing that Shug highlights is the keen interest of Celie in embroidery on clothes. She observes flowers and decoration on clothes minutely, so Shug advises her to practice the art of tailoring on a daily basis in order to keep her busy. “We have to git our hands on somebody's army uniform, say Shug. For practice. That good strong material and free. Jack, I say. Odessa's husband. Okay, she say. And every day we going to read Nettie's letters and sew. A needle and not a razor in my hand” (125). This
shows that Shug proved to be a great blessing for Celie in the darkest moments of her life. She acts like a mentor to Celie and shows her direction to engage her both physically and mentally. At this stage Shug does not involve Celie in the impossibility of going outside home and purchasing expensive things to perform creative works. Shug leads Celie to a path where she can be engaged in activities that she can afford. Celie has no sources of income and her husband does not share any of his surplus income. She is only given food in reward for heavy domestic and field duties. In such conditions the suggestion of acquiring an army uniform to practice sewing is a plan that she can easily put into practice and keep herself busy at the time of crises is a useful training. Besides engaging in needlework Shug keeps Celie’s curiosity aroused by giving her company to read Nettie’s letters which serve as the narration of novel as Nettie, being the other narrator of life in African Olinka besides Celie’s narration. "A needle and not a razor in hand", indicates the transformation that Walker provides her character with and prevents her from adopting any violent strategy. Celie wants to use a razor to slit her husband’s throat and murder him but Shug gives a needle in her hand to utilize her creativity positively. Thus her energies are fully directed by Walker in ways that bring healthy change in a society where instead of violence against violence she directs her characters to avoid conflict in a creative way and thus ensure long term emancipation of suffering women. In such ways patriarchy is challenged and slowly the influence that it has been exerting for countless generations on women becomes null and void.

6.1.5 Image of God as Perceived by Celie

Black women in a patriarchal system are so strongly controlled that they see the presence of men especially influential white men on all authoritative positions. The deep rootedness of patriarchy can be grasped from the fact that the poor submissive women consider God as a man due to the lifelong impact on their lives. This situation arises when the system is strongly controlled and practiced by dominant men. This is the situation in The Color Purple where Walker creates the character of Celie, who like many other women, has views regarding the personality of God. When Shug asks Celie about the image of God that she prays to, she responds, "He big and old and tall and graybearded and white.
He wear white robes and go barefooted. Blue eyes? she ast. Sort of bluish-gray. Cool. Big though. White lashes, I say” (165). Thus it is obvious that Celie being in a submissive position is under the effect of white patriarchy in that she imagines God as a white man. She sees white men enjoying the privileges in social circles and her image of God is shaped on the pattern of white people. For her the body figures of a white man like height, complexion, eye color, dressing and personality is similar to that of God. However, this image is broken when she finds out about her enforced separation and communication breakdown with Nettie. She loses faith in God and starts questioning Him.

Celie narrates in her letter to her sister Nettie, her discussion with Shug regarding her never ending miseries and role of God. Shug reminds her of the gifts of God in the form of ‘life, good health’ and Shug’s friendship. “Yeah, I say, and he give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of a step pa and a sister I probably won't ever see 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” (164). Celie remembers her lifelong sufferings before Shug and sees the continuous absence of God and His justice in all affairs. Her real father was lynched by white people for the sake of money and his property. The man that her mother married exploited Celie physically and made her twice pregnant, aside from confiscating the property that was rightfully hers. She remembers her separation from her beloved sister and how her husband was the cause of her parting from her sister. All these thoughts are responsible for thinking that God is also like a man who neither watches her in times of trouble nor answers her prayers. All her prayers and writings, she thinks, are in vain. She compares God to a man since men do not sympathize with women and God too is detached from responding to the questions of the women who suffer greatly due to the cruel attitude of men and indifference of God.

Celie had a firm belief in God from childhood to the discovery of Nettie’s letters. Celie is the primary narrator of Walker’s novel The Color Purple, which is in epistolary form. Thus from the point where Celie’s narration starts, up till the point of discovery of her sister’s letters, the book is in the form of letters to God but slowly her faith in God is shaken and she starts questioning the ways of God and even utters some blasphemous
words: something she has never done. All her life she had been a God fearing person but for the first time in her life she becomes a rebel and starts writing to her sister Nettie in place of God. At this time it is Shug who teaches her a different approach towards God. She transforms her views about God by removing the gender that Celie had associated with God in the form of ‘He’. Celie narrates her discussion with Shug about God in her letter to Nettie.

But what do it look like? I ast.

Don't look like nothing, she say. It ain't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself. I believe God is everything, say Shug. Everything that is or ever was or ever will be. And when you can feel that, and be happy to feel that, you've found It. (167)

Shug thus assigns neutral gender to God by referring to “It”, instead of the more usual form of He. For her God is not in the form of the man that Celie has been thinking about all her life. In this way she helps Celie in the transformation of God, in her mind, and bringing her close to God in an acceptable form. She discourages Celie from forming a stereotypical picture of God in her mind so that Celie changes her approach towards God; all her life she had considered God in the form and color of a white man with white eye lashes, grey beard and bluish grey eyes. Shug directs Celie to feel the presence of God in all of Its Creation. She sees God in the soul of the world and all the things that incorporate creativity. Everything in this world has God within it and Shug guides Celie to look at them closely. She asks Celie to find the path to true happiness by looking for God inside her and to be satisfied.

Shug suggests Celie to explore God within herself and is of the view that every person comes into this world with the Presence of God inside and it is the duty of the individuals to explore their God. Shug tells Celie about her own transformation, “She say, My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people” (167). This indicates the fact that God is present in all things that experience growth. She feels the soul of the world and all things present in it as having God in them. She sees the manifestation of God in all surrounding things of nature. Thus she guides Celie in reforming
her image of God and feeling ‘It’ in Its true spirit that she herself has understood through her experience. Through Shug’s continuous counselling she is able to transform in a positive but slow manner. “Now that my eyes opening, I feels like a fool. Next to any little scrub of a bush in my yard, Mr. ___’s evil sort of shrink. But not altogether. Still, it is like Shug say, You have to git man off your eyeball, before you can see anything a’tall” (168). Celie understands her lifelong conduct as the meaningless practice of patriarchy. She thinks of herself as a fool for remaining submissive in a male dominated world where her worth is nothing more than a slave’s. Her realization about her blind following of manners of patriarchy brings awareness within her. She understands her true worth and that is that in silently accepting their ways, the women appear to be no more than branches of bushes growing in the back yard. She recognizes the role of her husband in sustaining patriarchal control. She trusts Shug in helping her attain emancipation in a systematic way.

She comprehends Shug’s suggestion of getting rid of man’s image and his influence completely in order to understand the true meaning of everything. Thus Shug teaches Celie to come out of man’s control both in the physical and psychological senses.

The most difficult stage that Celie is able to achieve is the identification of her problems. She understands that the cause of all problems is the capitalist practice by men related to men. Shug further guides Celie in comprehending the system of men’s domination during one of the discussions that Celie narrates in her letter to her sister. “Man corrupt everything, say Shug. He on your box of grits, in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain’t. Whenever you trying to pray, and man plop himself on the other end of it, tell him to git lost, say Shug. Conjure up flowers, wind, water, a big rock” (168). In these lines Walker tries to explain through the character of Shug that men have dominant control over their related women. All the corruption in this world is due to the strong hold of men in all affairs of life. Men control the system in way that things run through them in a smooth way. Everywhere men make sure of their presence and control so that it seems natural to the opposite gender to see man as the only crown of creation. All the systems of life are run through the presence of men in this civilized world. Shug tells Celie to understand and
recognize the needless presence of men in all spheres of life. As men ensure their presence in all matters with the purpose of keeping women under their domination so women feel their requirement in all walks of life according to Walker. In this way in women’s mind both consciously and subconsciously they feel his existence. In such condition it becomes obvious that they think men as God. Therefore women like Celie consider God in the shape of a man. The plan that Shug suggests Celie is to come out of such domination of men and not to assume God in terms of gender role if he or she rather consider God as ‘it’. She tells Celie that when she prays at that moment not to imagine and allow God in figure of a man. If that happens then she should get rid of that man. She rather advises her to seek the Presence of God in all living things consisting of flower, wind, water and rock. In this manner Walker enables Celie to liberate herself from the domination of men that she has experienced all her life. Thus Shug cures the mental slavery of Celie and enables her to connect to the spirit of world. The soul of the world which in fact is the real God, in Shug’s opinion, will assist her to heal: both spiritually and emotionally.

6.1.6 Celie’s Separation from Patriarchy

Marxist Feminist ideology is preferable to other movements of women’s liberation primarily because it is a method that provides practical assistance in the emancipation of women in a male controlled social setup. This ideology moves contrary to other theories of emergence of patriarchy and women’s enslavement highlighted by Barbara Smuts that include: male-male alliances, women’s unfriendliness, females’ restriction only to reproductive activities, women’s own role in their subjugation and linguistic violence. Marxist Feminism aims to form an egalitarian society where equal opportunities of growth in economic terms are provided to both women and men, the malpractices of patriarchy are removed and core practices of Marxist Feminism are put into practice with the aim of providing equality and easy access for all human beings to the sources of production. Marxist Feminist theorists assert that women’s emancipation is only possible when they like men work in the systems of production outside their homes. In this way women are able to achieve financial rewards. In order to reach the stage of economic independence
women need to get out of their homes and learn skills that can enable them to attain sufficient worth so that the corporate sector can provide them easy access to job opportunities. The financial stability they gain as a result will enable them to come out of patriarchal hegemony they have been existing in, for many generations.

Alice Walker gradually moves her characters to gain liberation from the shackles of male domination. The protagonist of *The Color Purple*, Celie leads a miserable life due to the strong control of the men around her, especially her husband. Walker shows the gradual transformation of Celie towards self-awareness. In this regard Shug plays a significant role. She decides to take Celie to Memphis, Tennessee; and away from her husband’s imposed domestic slavery. The purpose of taking Celie away from her husband is to enable her to learn the art of survival in a creative way. Shug announces the news of their departure before all the people sitting in Odessa’s house on the occasion when all of them are celebrating the independence of Sofia from twelve long years of slavery in the house of the powerful white mayor. Shug also thinks it an appropriate time to proclaim the beginning of Celie’s fight against her patriarchal husband when Sofia gets her liberty, whereas her husband does not want to unshackle Celie since he does not want to lose his submissive slave.

> Celie is coming with us, say Shug.

> Mr.___’s head swivel back straight. Say what? he ast. Celie is coming to Memphis with me.

> Over my dead body, Mr.___ say.

> You satisfied that what you want, Shug say, cool as clabber. (170)

Mr.____’s arrogance is apparent from his words that he utters when he hears the news of Celie’s going away to another town with Shug. On hearing it the first time Mr.____ does not believe such a decision on the part of his submissive wife and asks Shug to repeat her words. When he understands the words he becomes more arrogant and threatens them. Here Walker liberates the protagonist, Celie from linguistic influence that Barbara Smuts proposes to be one of the theories of female oppression where men use superior linguistic vocabulary to propagate their supremacy and convince women about their inferior status.
Celie with the help from other related women liberates herself from this linguistic violence as well. At this time it is Shug who rescues Celie and gives her the confidence to stand up against such a cruel husband. She welcomes the challenge of Celie’s husband and her past lover and appears very cool and confident, thus the idiom ‘cool as clabber’ indicating buttermilk. Thus, Shug due to her high social and financial status easily challenges Mr.___. It is in part due to her financial stability that he does not challenge Shug and rather focuses on subjugating Celie who is financially and socially weak in status. Shug shows her confidence by directly threatening Celie’s husband for liberating her from his patriarchal control whereas Mr.___ is a coward who does not have the determination to fight. When Celie confronts him and disgraces him he is surprised to see the revolt of his subservient wife and cannot believe his ears. He asks her, her reasons for the rebellious attitude.

What wrong now?
You a lowdown dog is what's wrong, I say. It’s time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need. Say what? he ast.
Shock.
All round the table folksees mouths be dropping open. (170)

Celie’s answer to her husband’s question regarding her leaving him is very interesting. For the first time in her entire life she has confronted a man and stands up for herself, calling her husband ‘a lowdown dog’. This is the same husband who used to whip up Celie with a leather belt and lock her down in a room. She used to keep silent despite his cruel beatings and she has been extremely obedient to him all her life. When he used to beat her she thought herself as a tree in order to tolerate the miserable life she was forced to live. Celie performs all her domestic duties honestly but then he also demanded that she do the field work including sowing, ploughing and harvesting the crops without considering the horrible weather.

Celie is also used to take care of Mr.________’s children by her husband’s ex-wife and beaten cruelly as a reward. She tolerates these agonies by utilizing socially bestowed rational that a woman is inferior in status and she ought to obey her husband in all circumstances. She is a true example of domestic slavery where she is in the habit of
following her master in the shape of her husband. He assumes and enjoys all the privileges of being a master and owner of her mind and body. With the help of Shug, Celie is trying to change the stereotypical role that had been assigned to her. Both Shug and Celie devote all their energies to the cause of liberating Celie’s mind and body from the stern control of her husband. Therefore Celie does not leave her husband silently but rather confronts him, heroically. She clearly tells him that by parting from him she intends to move in ‘Creation’.

The word ‘creation’, here, may have multiple connotations depending upon the situation of her life. It refers to the docile period of her life where she was an obedient servant of her patriarchal husband. Her entering into Creation means that her early life was a complete mess. In order to change it she must leave him and the repressive atmosphere where her husband rules. This denotes the spiritual transformation where she seems to grow up mentally and emerge from psychological slavery. Creation can also be taken in the sense that she is ready to fight for her rights. She can stand up against her cruel husband and other oppressive men around her. That is why she gives him the name of ‘lowdown dog’ for the first time. Above all the word ‘Creation’ refers to financial emancipation because in the new town she is going to master the art of tailoring and it is there that she establishes a successful business with the help of Shug. The conversion of Celie from a meek, timid and submissive to a bold, creative and liberal entrepreneur surprises everyone. The most shaken person by the news of Celie’s departure appears to be her husband who objects to her leaving and threatens her. Celie makes him speechless when she talks about the matter of concealing her sister’s letter. “You took my sister Nettie away from me, I say. And she was the only person love me in the world. Mr.___ start to sputter. ButButButButBut. Sound like some kind of motor. But Nettie and my children coming home soon, I say. And when she do, all us together gon whup your ass” (170). She shows him the taste of the new and emancipated Celie which he finds hard to believe. She reminds him about the misdeeds that he has committed against Celie and her beloved sister, Nettie. He becomes speechless when he does not have any justification for his cruel conduct. Celie seems justified in using foul language before her husband due to the amount of agony that she receives at his hands.
To her the grief of Nettie’s separation through the exercise of wicked means is an unforgiveable act. She silently bears everything but snatching the only sister who loved and cared for her is the most unjustifiable act on his part. Therefore she not only fights back but also decides to go away from such a degenerate. His mumbling at this point shows that he has no argument to substantiate his wicked intentions and actions. He wanted to use Nettie too as his concubine but when she refuses he takes revenge on her by separating her from her only sister. He does not have any sympathy for Celie and does not reward Celie but rather shows her, his superior status and influence because he is a man.

Walker enables Celie with the help of Shug who is already liberated from the shackles of domestic slavery due to her stable financial status. With her financially stable situation Shug makes Celie capable of facing her cruel husband and silences him by exposing his reality. From the stolen letters of her sister, she comes to know about the return of Nettie and Celie’s children whom her step father had kidnapped after birth and given away to a childless couple in for the sake of money. The thought of her sister’s return, added to her thoughts of reuniting with her long lost children enables her to confront a tyrant like Mr.____. Instead of being afraid of him like she had been all her life she appears confident and threatening to him. She grows in confidence with the aim of emancipating herself from his stern domination. Her husband like a true a patriarch does not accept the changing situation easily. He cannot tolerate the submissive look in his eyes, calling him names confidently. Owing to his old habits of punishing Celie he stands up to beat Celie but the latter grabs a knife and points it at him, threatening him with it like she had never done before.

Walker shows Celie, standing up for her own rights and facing the dominant husband who had beaten her time and time again. Celie does not surrender before him as she is optimistic about the future where she imagines herself to be free from all restrictions of male dominance. Walker does not desert her characters by creating another status quo but she takes them all the way to equality. At this moment when her husband has no more arguments he intimidates her with the pressure of society. In her letter to Nettie Celie quotes his words, “You bitch, he say. What will people say, you running off to Memphis like you
don't have a house to look after?” (171). He warns her like the patriarch that he is and who considers women’s life to be only restricted to domestic duties. Like Celie has been performing all her household chores until this point and when she and her mentor Shug think it appropriate for her to move to another place with the purpose of getting complete emancipation from the world of men. Mr.____ being a traditional husband cares more about his reputation in public than the feelings of his wife who has suffered due to the miseries inflicted by his evil doings. All the time he wants to prove his superiority over women by considering it as his social obligation. The news of his wife going away and leaving her husband is taboo in a social system based on male domination. For him it is a matter of honor as women are considered to be docile and meek and not allowed to go outside the home without the consent of their husbands. Such a bold decision on the part of women is not encouraged because women are to be submissive. At this point Shug defends Celie before her husband by showing him women’s mindset. “Shug say, Albert. Try to think like you got some sense. Why any woman give a shit what people think is a mystery to me” (171). This strong statement of Shug Avery shows that for a woman there is no value of other people’s opinion when her life is in crisis. A woman does not bother about gossiping people whose purpose is to talk back against an individual’s reputation.

Marxist Feminism locates the root cause of women’s subjugation in economic prosperity and its possession in the hands of men. Men have a strong hold on the sources of production that guarantee their security whereas women, due to their financial deprivation, remain underprivileged. When Celie’s Mr.____ sees her ready to leave him, he cannot think of any other way of scaring his wife than by threatening of depriving her of financial assistance. Celie narrates his argument with her. “You not getting a penny of my money, Mr.____. say to me. Not one thin dime. Did I ever ast you for money? I say. I never ast you for nothing. Not even for your sorry hand in marriage” (Walker, Purple 172). Mr.____ being a member of male dominating society knows the value of finance. He knows that in a capitalist system it is not possible for individuals to go out of their home without having enough money. Therefore he threatens to deprive her of his money. He warns her that she would not receive any financial assistance. At this point Celie’s response is very
purposeful and sums up the sufferings of a lifetime. This response shows that despite her poverty she has never asked her husband about money for any domestic or personal use.

Celie’s life in Mr.____’s house was restricted only to household activities and fieldwork even though the revenue generated from field work would go directly to her husband and she did not receive any share out of it. That is why he threatens to deprive Celie of his money which is his source of superiority over his wife. On the other hand Celie keeps her integrity intact by refusing to accept any monetary assistance. She has never demanded any financial aid from him in her entire marital life and does not aim to do so. This shows that all his life he has kept his wife dispossessed of money. Being a housewife she was only given food and shelter as reward for all the hard work and physical labor that she had to perform as obligatory duty.

Economic prosperity is extremely significant since all things essential for survival, required in daily life, things used for comfort; in fact everything from basic necessities to expensive dresses can only be purchased with cash. So Celie was totally dependent on her husband and whatever he provided her, she was content with, since she was aware of her subjugated place in the family. Her disappointment with matrimonial life can be seen from the words that she utters to her husband when she tells him plainly that she never had any interest in marryinng him. Rather her displeasure is obvious from the lack of trust Celie shows due to his wicked manners.

On the day when Celie is about to leave, her husband confronts her and taunts her. He compares her status with Shug’s high status and describes her as being inferior in the social hierarchy. Celie in her letter to her sister records his words.

You'll be back, he say. Nothing up North for nobody like you. Shug got talent, he say. She can sing. She got spunk, he say. She can talk to anybody. Shug got looks, he say. She can stand up and be notice. But what you got? You ugly. You skinny. You shape funny. You too scared to open your mouth to people. All you fit to do in Memphis is be Shug's maid. Take out her slop-jar and May be cook her food. You not that good a cook either. And this house ain't been dean good since my first wife died. And nobody crazy or backward enough to want to marry you, neither.
What you gon do? Hire yourself out to farm? He laugh. Maybe somebody let you work on they railroad. (175)

In these lines Walker highlights the stark differences between the social superiority of Shug and the social inferiority of Celie, according to her husband. Shug is a professional singer with an economically sound status whereas Celie is a poor house wife with a financially low status. Mr.___ tries to degrade his wife, Celie by showing her, her inferior status in comparison to Shug. He compares the physical beauty of Shug with the ordinary looks of Celie. He talks about the confidence of Shug in public dealing whereas Celie, for him, is under confident due to her infrequent social interaction for which he alone was responsible. He calls Celie an unskilled woman so he wishes her to be Shug’s maid. He ridicules Celie by calling her an inexpert cook and unkempt cleaner. The only suitable job that he assigns her is work on railroad as a laborer. These statements indicate that Mr.___ does not want his wife to get any sort of exposure or growth. He only wants her to be subservient to him and to serve his needs for the rest of his life. When Celie tries to argue with him on his comparison he regrets about his dealing with Celie by saying. “Shit, he say. I should have lock you up. Just let you out to work. The jail you plan for me is the one in which you will rot, I say” (176). Celie in response curses him because his evil mentality cannot accept a black woman like her standing up before him and talking boldly. Further he shows his thinking about her, “Look at you. You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman” (Walker, Purple 176). He is hopeful of the fact that due to her being black and a woman she will not be able to survive in that capitalist and patriarchal system. He calls her poor and ugly and considers all these qualities as causes of the downtrodden position of any woman. In the presence of such unacceptable social weaknesses he is certain about her failure and return to him as a beggar. He cannot imagine Celie, earning and surviving in the modern technological age. Mr.___ is a representative of patriarchy and he points out the flaws in any human being that cause devastation. Of these features, for him, being a woman, ugly and poor are enough characteristics for a person to be marginalized.
6.1.7 Transformation of Squeak to Marry Agnes

Celie as a housewife has to take on the responsibility of her step children from her husband’s first wife. All the children are wild and rude, in their conduct towards Celie and even on her marriage day she is wounded when one of her step children hits her with a stone. The hygienic conditions of the girls is extremely bad and they have not been taught to respect their elders. During her argument with her husband Celie refers to the difference of upbringing between his children and her own children raised by her sister Nettie in Africa. “I got children, I say. Being brought up in Africa. Good schools, lots of fresh air and exercise. Turning out a heap better than the fools you didn't even try to raise” (Walker, Purple 170). Celie’s step father, Alphonso exploits her repeatedly and during the process makes her twice pregnant when she is only a small girl. She gives birth to a boy and a girl who are forcefully taken away from her and sold by him. Luckily they are adopted by the same missionary family who give refuge to Nettie and take her along with them to Africa. The family comprises of a husband and wife named Samuel and Corrine. On a mission to preach Christianity they take Nettie as a missionary to the Olinka in Africa. Celie comes to know about these facts when she reads her sister Nettie’s letter hidden by her stonehearted husband. Celie’s life changes completely with the information of her sister and her children. That is why she talks courageously before the same man who used to beat her with the aim of taming her. Celie compares her children with the children of Mr.____ from his first wife named Annie Julia. She calls Mr.____’s children ‘fools’ because of their rotten condition. Celie taunts her husband about his irresponsible conduct in the matter of upbringing of his children. He does not care for their education or moral teaching. He does not take interest in their lives in any way rather he lets them grow wild. Sofia’s marriage with Harpo does not succeed initially because Harpo, like his father, also wants to dominate her. Celie narrates her discussion with her stepson in Harpo in her letter to her sister.

Hold on, say Harpo.

Oh, hold on hell, I say. If you hadn't tried to rule over Sofia the white folks never would have caught her. Sofia so surprise to hear me speak up she ain't chewed for ten minutes.
That's a lie, say Harpo.

A little truth in it, say Sofia. (170-171)

Here Celie in her newly gained passionate manner speaks to Harpo and shows him his role in subjugating Sofia at the hands of the influential white mayor. Harpo at the start of his marriage tries to dominate Sofia by hitting her and she resists it due to her strong built and confidence. She does not stay with him and goes to live with her sister, Odessa and her husband Jack. On an unfortunate day she falls victim to the white mayor’s ego by refusing to be his maid. She has to spend 12 long years as a slave in the prison house and the mayor’s house.12 Sofia like others is stunned to see Celie fighting for her and other women’s rights. Harpo denies the allegation of oppression on Sofia in the early part of her life. When Sofia confirms Celie’s assessment about Harpo’s behavior he becomes silent. Celie further narrates her discussion with Harpo, “You was all rotten children, I say. You made my life a hell on earth. And your daddy here ain't dead horse's shit” (171). Celie’s words indicate the atrocities that she has had to face all her life. Besides her husband she also blames Harpo and his siblings for adding to her already devastated life. Thus patriarchy plays a significant part in the writings of Alice Walker about Women’s life. Almost all her characters suffer greatly due to hegemonic control of men over the lives of women. Alice Walker here shows transformation of her characters. It is the women who support their miserable fellow women to get liberation from capitalist patriarchy just as Shug proves helpful in the liberation of Celie from the strong control of her husband. The reaction of all the women sitting in Odessa’s house about the condition of Mr.___ and his son is very noteworthy. “Shug look at me and us giggle. Then us laugh sure miff. Then Squeak start to laugh. Then Sofia. All us laugh and laugh. Shug say, Ain't they something? Us say um hum, and slap the table, wipe the water from our eyes. Harpo look at Squeak. Shut up Squeak, he say. It bad hick for women to laugh at men” (171). All the women gathered at Odessa’s house support Celie, Squeak and Sofia. They admire the struggle that they have endured due to the control exercised by men. Both Mr.___ and his son become aggressive at the attitude of women due to their traditional approach towards women. They cannot understand women talking boldly to their face because they are accustomed to the
submission of women before them. All of the women amuse themselves from the situation created by the announcement of the departure of Celie. They show these men the strength of their unity against patriarchal practices. By being together they prevent Celie and Squeak from getting beaten at the hands of their men. The laughing indicates the change that is taking place in the women characters of Walker. They are coming out of their weak and submissive position of being submissive. In fact they want to establish a relationship on the basis of equality. Despite their double number in Odessa’s house women do not indulge in violence in order to take revenge. Walker wants to bring harmony between the men and women therefore she takes women away from men for the time being with purpose to engage them in creative activities. On the other hand men habitual to patriarchal ways of life look at this picture differently. That is why Harpo does not like when the women laugh at the men. He calls it a ‘bad hick’ which means awkwardly unsophisticated for women to behave in such a ridiculing way. He considers the attitude of women as below the traditional dignity bestowed upon men for a number of centuries. The only woman that he thinks he can exercise control over, is his girlfriend Squeak so he commands her not to laugh. Other woman are already above his approach to dominate because Celie has just insulted him in a ridiculing way due to his bad conduct with Sofia. Harpo does not have any space for argument because of his indulgence in malpractices that he committed against both Celie and Sofia. He does not give orders to Sofia because he is afraid of her due to her strong health and controlling nature. Shug is a wealthy, aged woman therefore directing her is out of consideration on his part due to his low status compared to her superior status. Thus there remains only Squeak or Mary Agnes whom he orders to remain quiet as she depends on him for her survival. But when Mary too like Celie announces her departure to North with Shug then he becomes furious. Celie narrates the dialogue between Harpo and Squeak. The laughing of all women present at Sofia’s house indicate their revolt against patriarchy. It highlights that Walker is giving her characters chances to resolve conflicts peacefully. All women including Shug, Celie, Sofia and Mary (Squeak) laugh to break the shackles of socially constructed stereotyping of women by male members of society. They break the notion of male superiority by laughter. At this moment Harpo, the step son of
Celie tries to show his influence over Mary or Squeak. His quote indicates his patriarchal self where he tries to stop her from laughing. In his view it is unsophisticated manner on part of women to consider men as inferior and make fun of them. Thus accepting the changing situation becomes a difficult task for men to accept.

Harpo is involved in an extramarital affair with the character named Mary Agnes whom he calls Squeak meaning an instinctive shrill cry. Despite his marriage to Sofia he keeps his physical relationship with Mary and does not divorce Sofia:

You going What? say Harpo. He so surprise. He begin to sputter, sputter, just like his daddy. Sound like I don't know what.

I want to sing, say Squeak.

Sing! say Harpo………..

Everything you need I done provided for.

I need to sing, say Squeak.

Listen Squeak, say Harpo. You can't go to Memphis. That's all there is to it.

Mary Agnes, say Squeak.

Squeak, Mary Agnes, what difference do it make?

It make a lot, say Squeak. When I was Mary Agnes I could sing in public. (173)

From this argument between Harpo and Mary it is obvious that the conduct of Harpo is similar to that of his father. He follows the footsteps of his father in his dealing with women. Being a man in patriarchy he enjoys superior status to his related women. Women, in his view, ought to obey their men under all circumstances in life which to him seems a natural order. All his life he has observed his father dealing with women in a dominating way. He is reluctant to permit Mary to select singing as a professional career. Therefore he does not allow Mary to sing in public despite the fact he owns a junk point where she only serves as a stand in to fulfill his personal needs including domestic duties and his physical pleasure. He provides her food and therefore he thinks he owns her. In his view he bestows great reward. All her needs and wishes in his view end with shelter and food. Mary used to sing in public before coming to him. The extreme of exploitation can be witnessed from his calling her ‘Squeak’ rather than calling her by her real name, Mary Agnes. He calls her by a derogatory name which to him is suitable according to her socially assigned position.
The word Squeak symbolically shows the inferior status assigned to her. For him the individuality of Mary does not have enough worth to call her by her real name. To him there is no difference in her real name or the title given to her. He gives her shelter and food with the aim to seducing her physically because he thinks he is obliging her through great favor. Like Celie, Mary also goes through changes when she confronts the man who considers her as his property. She objects when he calls her Squeak as she decides to come out of his domination. Prior to this she was accustomed to being called by the name Squeak but now she realizes her individuality and demands him to call her by her real name. Alice Walker like Celie liberates Mary Agnes from the control of Harpo by providing her assistance from Shug. Shug decides to take her along with her with the aim to liberate them from the shackles of their dominant men and to provide them such status that could ensure their comfortable survival.

6.1.8 Professional Empowerment of Celie in Memphis

In order to attain financial stability the most significant strategy is to attain professional perfectionism. Marxist Feminism aims to provide all conditions essential to achieving monetary emancipation. For this purpose women not only need moral support but also economic assistance. In this regard Shug plays a vital role in assisting Celie to gain empowerment. After leaving her husband Celie goes to live with Shug in Memphis and is treated very nicely. Shug like a true mentor takes care of Celie in her big house. Shug has an upright source of income due to her professional career as a singer. She owns an expensive car and a big house in a developed area. She enjoys rich status and therefore is liberated from all restrictions imposed by patriarchy on poor women like Celie. She provides a comfortable life to Celie by giving her a dignified position in her house. Celie narrates the prestige of the room provided to her. “Shug give me a big back bedroom overlook the backyard and the bushes down by the creek” (Walker, Purple 177). In a city life a room that has natural scenery with greenery and a water stream running is considered to be of aristocratic value. In urban life due to the high inflationary condition it is difficult for the people to afford such significant houses that have numerous rooms, backyard, plants
and water pool. Shug is an independent woman with extraordinary professional achievements. Therefore she possesses a nice house that inspires Celie. “Shug's house is big and pink and look sort of like a barn. Cept where you would put hay, she got bedrooms and toilets and a big ballroom where she and her band sometime work. She got plenty grounds round the house and a bunch of monuments and a fountain out front. It got windows and doors and a lot of trees round it” (177). Celie’s narration indicates that Shug’s house has all kinds of facilities in it for Celie to enjoy a comfortable life. Her house is built on a style of tradition of African culture with round shape than the European norm of the square shape. Thus Shug attempts to keep her own African culture by painting the house pink and keeping open space for fresh air with cultivation of plants. In such a big house that Shug owns with huge investment she allows Celie to live in an honorable way. She encourages Celie to exercise her will in attaining her professionalism. Celie owing to her integrity offers herself as a servant to Shug. “Let me go with you, I say. I can press your clothes, do your hair. It would be like old times, when you was singing at Harpo's” (179). Celie suggests Shug to permit her to accompany her on her occupational tour so that she could serve her as compensation to her great support. She has served Shug when she met her during her illness. She is willing to extend her support to Shug as a maid in fulfilling all her needs as a gesture of gratitude. Alice Walker does not lead her protagonist Celie to interchange from subjugation. Rather she creates a character that goes for freedom from atrocities. Shug helps her in achievement of true happiness therefore she answers her back to her offer in an encouraging way. She says to her, “You not my maid. I didn't bring you to Memphis to be that. I brought you here to love you and help you get on your feet” (179). This indicates the fact that Shug treats Celie nicely unlike her husband or other men. She does not assign her domestic duties rather she endeavors to comfort her. Celie is given proper time, money and facilities to explore her talent. She starts her creative entrepreneurial effort by sewing pants in different styles, sizes and colors:

I sit in the dining room making pants after pants. I got pants now in every color and size under the sun. Since us started making pants down home, I ain't been able to stop. I change the cloth, I change the print, I change the waist, I change the pocket.
I change the hem, I change the fullness of the leg. I make so many pants Shug tease me. I didn't know what I was starting, she say. (180)

Thus with the help of Shug, Celie is able to gain experience by experimenting with different kinds of materials. She deals with different colors and sizes. In Shug’s home she is able to practice freely the art of creating pants. She selects different types of fabric to rehearse the sewing of pants. She tries to get mastery in making jeans by changing different prints. Thus she applies all methods in attaining expertise. Her independence in drilling allows her to gain deeper knowledge into art of tailoring. Shug encourages her to continue her training. She provides her with all facilities so she can concentrate on her work.

There is no burden of household responsibilities on her that could hinder her creativeness. Above all Shug helps her economically in buying the extra things that she needs for training. Before leaving for her singing tour she asks Celie about the amount of money mandatory to carry on her visit. “She come home, kiss me, step over all the mess. Say, before she leave again, How much money you think you need this week?” (180). It shows Shug takes great care of Celie even when she is away from home. She gives enough money to Celie to buy the required things. She knows the value of financial support and therefore gives obligatory amount to her in advance. She does not let Celie be in the position of begging and that is why she provides her material assistance without her demanding it, in order to keep Celie’s integrity intact. Besides giving her financial support she makes sure that Celie knows she has her complete support. When she comes back from the tour she kisses Celie to show her deep emotional affiliation. Shug expresses her emotional and moral support to her so that she can come out of her traumatized life and start living with confidence. When she prepares a perfect pair of pants she presents it to Shug who puts on the newly made pants and sees herself in the mirror. Celie quotes her remarks about the pair of pants, “Miss Celie, she say. You is a wonder to behold” (180). She admires her and considers her very valuable. “Shug finger the pieces of cloth I got hanging on everything. It all soft, flowing, rich and catch the light. This a far cry from that stiff army shit us started with, she say. You ought to make up a special pair to thank and show Jack”. (181)
Celie shows great improvement in her art and is therefore praised by everybody around her. With each passing day there comes perfection in her work. Jack’s wife Odessa also demands a pair of pants from Celie. Shug likes her pants and wants two more from her. “Then Shug want two more pair just like the first. Then everybody in her band want some. Then orders start to come in from everywhere Shug sing. Pretty soon I'm swamp” (181). This highlights Celie’s improved confidence in making pants in creative ways. Therefore a lot of people like her pants and want them. With increasing demand Celie remains worried for her income as she utilizes Shug’s money in buying material necessary for manufacturing jeans and people whom she gives pants take it for free. At this point when she shares her worries of revenue, Shug gives her some practical pieces of advice. “Let's us put a few advertisements in the paper, she say. And let's us raise your prices a hefty notch. And let's us just go ahead and give you this dining room for your factory and git you some more women in here to cut and sew, while you sit back and design. You making your living, Celie, she say. Girl, you on your way” (181). Celie likes suggestions given by Shug to improve her professionally. They practically apply these plans like putting ads in newspapers and magazines in order to increase market value of the product. They increase the retail price of pants to a level where they could easily sell the pants after covering all their expenditures. Shug proves her generosity upon Celie by allowing her to utilize her house as a factory for stitching the pants. Shug provides her relaxation by hiring more women power in order to run the business more effectively on a commercial level. She allows Celie to act like a boss and focus on overall business management. Within weeks of their new business strategy they are able to achieve their goal of running a successful professional trade. Celie narrates to her sister the occupational accomplishment in following words. “I am so happy. I got love, I got work, I got money, friends and time. And you alive and be home soon. With our children” (183). Due to corporate success Celie becomes more confident and contented. She is able to save money which ultimately brought her respect and admiration from all people around her. Her employees respect her. She is able to make more friends. Her honesty is rewarded in an effective manner. She is optimistic to see her children and beloved sister. Due to her achievement she is able to
regain her life and she feels alive for the first time in her life. She too like Shug slowly becomes influential and therefore respected by all the people around her. Thus Walker enables Celie to come out of her miserable life and gain social acceptance through financial stability. Women if provided with opportunities to earn they too like their fellow men can attain social value in the society.

6.1.9 Celie’s Achievement of Her Inheritance

Alice Walker following the Marxist Feminist tradition makes women financially sovereign. Women under the patriarchal rule have been deprived of the sources of production and thus possession of family property. Men ensured their complete control over holding property in the form of land, house, valuable goods and sources of production like revenue from land and commercial activities whereas women remained deprived from retaining property in all its form. Walker breaks the myth of men possessing the property and makes her women characters capable enough to retain property as well as the system of production. In *The Color Purple* Shug Avery owns a big house and car. She is a professional singer and therefore earns a lot through her singing career. Similarly Celie who is socially degraded due to her poverty and subjugated status within family life, is liberated by Walker from miseries of poverty. She is given creativity in her business of making pants where she starts earning a handsome amount as income. After the death of her step father all the property including a big house and successful business store comes in the share of Celie. Earlier her step father took control of all family property and concealed the will after the murder of her real father by white people. But after her step father’s death Celie turns out to be the owner of all family property. Celie in her letter to Nettie narrates the news of her receiving the property through a phone call by Daisy, the wife of her stepfather. “Your real daddy owned the land and the house and the store. He left it to your mama. When your mama died, it passed on to you and your sister Nettie. I don't know why Alphonso never told you that” (Walker, *Purple* 206). Economic subjugation is not creation of a few years or decades rather it dates back to centuries old era when civilization started. According to Engels the start of Civilization was ensured with
the overthrow of the ‘gens system’ and emergence of private property. Men from the beginning safeguarded their control on property items that included land, house and other valuable goods. In doing so they ensured that women were kept out of possession of property as it guaranteed their social superiority. Alice Walker in her writings strives to break the myth of male superiority and works for equality among both men and women. Thus Walker liberates Celie from the control of her husband, Albert, on one hand, whereas she provides her with property that her stepfather had forcefully occupied after the death of her mother by concealing the will. The property of Celie’s real father in fact had to transfer to both Celie and Nettie after the death of their father and mother. But their stepfather due to their ignorance and young age took control of everything and subjugated both the sisters. During the transformation phase Walker enables her women characters like Celie and Nettie to receive their rightful property, indicating that Walker removes the curse of poverty from her women characters and makes them independent by bestowing them property rights that men have snatched from them for many generations. In doing so Walker frees her women characters from the stereotypically poor status. In fact she provides them with financially stable social status where they too like men become worthy citizens. By attaining societal approval women also develop their significance in men’s judgement who in such a situation starts valuing them. Thus a system based on equality can come into being with women’s economic emancipation.

6.1.10 Celie’s Economic Emancipation and Her Achievement of Conjugal Harmony

Marxist Feminism aims to liberate women from domestic and social slavery. Marxist Feminists work for a social system that can lead to harmony between both male and female genders. On one hand their theoretical stance pinpoints the shortcomings of patriarchy that leads to traumatization of women when they live under the burden of domestic duties and child caring. Instead of getting reward and respect they receive physical punishment. The causes of women’s subjugation in a patriarchal setup are removed. On the other hand it demands certain responsibilities from men who are asked to change their patriarchal ways of living. Marxist Feminist philosophy demands equal
participation in house works from husbands and other family men with the view that when men are involved in domestic activity women have some free time and physical vigor to engage in creative activities that can liberate them from slavery on the psychological and physical levels. Equality can be achieved with equal sharing of responsibilities by both male and female partners knitted together in marital relation. Alice Walker in her novel *The Color Purple* creates the character of Albert, whom Celie calls Mr.____. He is shown to be a transformed person after confrontation with his wife Celie and later on due to Celie’s emancipation. In her letter to Nettie, Celie quotes her discussion about him with Sofia and Harpo. “He work real hard too. What? I say. Mr. ___ work! oo He sure do. He out there in the field from sunup to sundown. And clean that house just like a woman. Even cook, say Harpo. And what more, wash the dishes when he finish” (Walker, *Purple* 189). When Celie visits Sofia to attend the funeral of her mother she is amazed to hear about her husband whom she had left due to his cruel nature, performs household works. Sofia tells her about his field work from morning till evening that he never did when Celie was around, demanding that Celie do all the house and field work. His son Harpo tells Celie about his newly developed habits of house cleaning and dish washing and Celie is amazed to hear. Walker following the Marxist Feminist ideology creates characters who have the ability to transform in their life time and work for betterment of social customs instead of using women as their slaves to do all the work.

Celie does not forget her past and home town after attaining economic independence. She visits Sofia and Harpo who by this time have reconciled and live together as husband and wife after the horrible period of Sofia’s slavery at the house of the white mayor comes to an end. She never demands divorce from her husband thus indicating that Walker desires kinship instead of complete separation. She allows her characters to work on their differences with the aim of reuniting them. Celie sees her husband who is now a transformed person who approves Celie’s improved looks when she visits his house after sometime. He seems to take an interest in her that he had never done in the many years that they spent together. “You know, he say, you look real good since you been up in Memphis. Yeah, I say, Shug take good care of me. How you make your living up there? he
say. Making pants, I say. He say, I notice everybody in the family just about wearing pants you made. But you mean you turned it into a business? That's right, I say” (214). It is for the first time in her life that her husband appreciates Celie on one of her visits when she is financially stable and asks her about her source of living. During her entire married life he has never communicated to her only using his tongue to issue orders for fulfilling his and his children’s demands. But now he asks about her earnings from her business of creating jeans. Thus economic independence makes her valuable in the eyes of her husband, who strives to understand her by coming out of his patriarchal habits. Thus with meetings and discussion Walker brings the couple close for the first time in their mature age. But this time it is free from exploitation because both the partners are now on equal footing. Therefore a kind of mutual trust starts developing in both of them. Celie in her letter to her sister narrates her conversation with Albert when both are working together. When I was growing up, he said, I use to try to sew along with mama cause that’s what she was always doing. But everybody laughed at me. But you know, I liked it. Well, nobody gon laugh at you now, I said. Here, help me stitch in these pockets. But I don't know how, he say. I'll show you, I said. And I did. Now us sit sewing and talking and smoking our pipes. (230-231)

The couple starts understanding each other after their separation where Celie’s socially elevated status and Albert’s sharing the household responsibilities along with the acceptance of equal rights of his wife, contribute to their reunion. They also share their past experiences while working together and it is after they start living together again that the nature of their relationship changes altogether in a new direction where both try to understand each other. When Celie is working on her business of stitching pants Albert tells her about his past experience of sewing clothes in his childhood with his mother. He also shows the stereotypical attitude of other people who do not encourage boys to help their mothers in domestic affairs. Therefore when he grows up, he too like most people turns out to be a patriarch. Celie very wisely invites him to work with her when she assigns him the task of stitching pockets onto pants. She teaches him how to sew in his old age and he does not seem to mind her giving him any orders.
Their talking, working and smoking highlights their direction towards mutual trust and shared feelings. Thus Walker uses Marxist Feminist guidelines outlined by Frederick Engels where her women characters start their course towards financial stability and come out of all types of subjugations. While men characters start paying respect to their related female companions and carry out some of the domestic duties. Such a transformed behavior leads to change in stereotyped social construct of gender. Similarly Celie finds some dramatic modifications in the character of her husband Mr.____. After discovering her economic liberty her husband does not indulge in arguments or fights as he used to do earlier in his life. In fact he starts over with a different philosophy which Celie narrates in one of her letters:

Plus, look like he trying to make something out of himself. I don't mean just that he work and he clean up after himself and he appreciate some of the things God was up after himself and he appreciate some of the things God was playful enough to make. I mean 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 feel like a new experience. (221)

From Celie’s narration it is obvious that after their parting her husband has contemplated on the follies that he has committed throughout his life. That is why he transforms his old habits of exploiting others for his personal benefits. Earlier he had not done any of the house work, had beaten up his wife, did not pay attention to his children and in addition he used to run after other women like Shug with the purpose of having extramarital affairs. He did not care at all for Celie’s contribution to his family. To his old self family meant only subjugation of women but When Celie starts caring for her own self he too takes notice of her. He is impressed by her financially liberated situation and in his updated condition he gets rid of all his objectionable habits. He admires Celie’s new outlook which he had never done in the past. He starts giving her respect as she takes care of herself with the help of Shug and due to the revenue she generates from making pants. He engages in long conversations with her where he tries to understand her. He listens to her long talk by sitting beside her. Celie likes his new approach which comprises of taking care of small things.
She regards his newly developed habit of appreciating all creatures created by God whereas earlier he had only lived in a cynical way aiming to degrade everything. He now respects difference of opinion while in the past he never tolerated anything unfamiliar to his likings and that is why he had continued to beating Celie for many years. During the discussion with Celie he himself admits to changes in his personality. He feels satisfaction in his life due to transformation in a positive direction and that after modifications he is able to revolutionize the stereotypical social roles assigned to men. Albert’s patriarchal self to him is the artificial image that he had assumed all his life and that is why with his new role he considers himself a natural man for the first time. He starts paying respect to everything existing around him and he likes his novel attitude as an exciting new approach to life. Celie narrates the newly developed kinship with her husband in her letter to her beloved sister, Nettie. “Then the old devil put his arms around me and just stood there on the porch with me real quiet. Way after while I bent my stiff neck onto his shoulder. Here us is, I thought, two old fools left over from love, keeping each other company under the stars”.

(230)

In her writings Walker liberates her characters from stereotypical social constructs that cause misery for people throughout the world. Celie and her husband feel physical closeness towards each other for the first time in their lives. Their silent standing on the porch expressing physical intimacy highlights that true emancipation is possible when women come to equal terms with their men in regard to their financial standing and accept responsibilities of domestic life. Women who have economic independence are not a burden on their related men. Thus possession of monetary resources for women are as important as for men because the modern system of circulation only runs on fiscal currencies. So a person with adequate ownership can attain all the basic necessities of life. When men start looking after their women and care for their needs in terms of material goods and emotional attachment then relationship between men and women can become solid and positive. When men do not search for chances of oppressing of female gender rather they remove the causes be it in the shape of physical violence, unfaithfulness or economic oppression and mutual trust and prosperity is easy to achieve. Following Marxist
Feminist ideology of liberation of economic, domestic and social subjugation can bring human beings closer to each other especially in the role of husbands and wives. Both men and women thus have opportunities of living in social harmony where individuals are respected and provided with equal chances of growth in terms of not only financial matters but also self-reliance that can guarantee peace and property.

6.2 Emancipation of Meridian from Patriarchy

6.2.1 Meridian’s House as a Reflection of Poverty

Marxist Feminism deals with injustices committed against women on the economic level as well as the physical. Women remain on a weak footing in marital agreements due to the fragile status bestowed on them through social constructs. In the presence of the patriarchal system, men are rewarded and reserve the freedom of various options whereas women are expected to fulfill the traditional role of performing domestic duties and child care. Similar is the situation with the protagonist Meridian in Alice Walker’s novel *Meridian*. Meridian has to marry at a very young age due to her affair with Eddie and the resulting pregnancy. She gives birth to a baby boy after a few months of her marriage to a husband who is a school going boy. She has a desire for learning but she is not allowed to continue her education due to her pregnancy. “She hated the fact that although he was still in school but she was not” (Walker, *Meridian* 65). Her life thenceforth is restricted to household activities and child care since her husband turns out to be a stereotypical, patriarchal man, who runs away from her and their child. “It was something to think about, the day Eddie moved out for good. She could not”. (66)

Instead of allowing Meridian to follow the traditional route mapped out for such deserted mothers Walker takes her on a path where she is liberated from all traditional norms. The first bold decision that Meridian takes is in leaving her child with her mother and accepting the Scholarship to Saxon College. Meridian prefers her individual growth rather than following the conventional course where she had no options other than working as maid or some other lowly paid laborer because of her lack of skills and education. Her mother due to her traditional thinking does not want her to abandon the child but to stay
with her boy in the absence of her husband and take care of him. Her husband runs away since he is too young to fulfill his household responsibilities. Her mother’s reluctance is obvious when her mother shows concern before Meridian and her friends Delores Jones and Nelda Henderson. “I just don’t see how you could let another woman raise your child,” she said. “It’s just selfishness. You ought to hang your head in shame. I have six children,” she continued self-righteously, “though I never wanted to have any, and I have raised every one myself” (86). From her mother’s description it is clear that child care and children’s upbringing is considered to be the sole responsibility of women in the traditional mode of living. Since Meridian’s mother herself has spent her entire life in raising her children, it is incomprehensible for her to adopt a different direction.

Meridian and her friends are successful in convincing her mother to raise the boy. In this way Meridian is shown to be freeing herself of the responsibility of her child and is able to join college. “When she gave him away she did so with a light heart. She did not look back, believing she had saved a small person’s life” (87). Meridian knows her child is in good hands when she gives him to her mother. In this way Walker leads her protagonist to explore the world and develop accordingly. She liberates Meridian at a very young age so that she is able to join college where learning and growing both psychologically and economically is possible by attaining the skills necessary to survive in a world dominated by patriarchal men.

6.2.2 Meridian’s Role in Black Arts Movement

Walker’s writings create characters who believe in the Marxist Feminist ideology of engaging in healthy activities like earning good revenue and performing household duties by taking care of related people within the family circle. Walker does not encourage violence and aggression. Rather her protagonists move away from violence. Like Celie who prospers peacefully, Meridian also refuses to kill during the revolution. Walker liberates her characters from the common trends based on emotions; her protagonists are persons with creative ideologies and have the courage to deviate from popular slogans. During the Black Arts Movement; following the violent ways and taking revenge from white people
became famous slogans. The young workers who joined the movement appear to be ready to go to any extreme but Meridian does not believe in violence and refuses to follow them. Meridian discusses her intentions with her friend Anne-Marion.

“Then you will kill for the Revolution, not just die for it?” Anne-Marion’s once lovely voice, beloved voice. “Like a fool!” the voice added, bitterly and hard.

“I don’t know”

“Shee-it..!”

“But can you say you probably will? That you will”

“No”

Everyone turned away. (Walker, Meridian 18)

From the discussion between Meridian and Anne-Marion it is obvious that Meridian does not believe in the ideology of violence. Anne-Marion tries to convince Meridian to take the life of the oppressors in order to equalize the equation; the other young protestors believe in killing for revolution but Meridian stands apart from the group and proves her individuality by refusing to engage in violent activities. Meridian is not afraid of disappointing other people although the whole group seems disappointed by her response; to her it does not make any difference as she knows violence does not solve any conflict where it prolongs itself. “What will you do? Where will you go?” Only Anne-Marion still cares enough to ask, though her true eyes—with their bright twinkle—had been replaced with black marbles. “I’ll go back to the people, live among them, like Civil Rights workers used to do” (18). From Meridian’s response to Anne-Marion about her future strategy it is obvious that she is ready to work for the betterment of people by living among them. She feels that harmonizing the situation by adopting peaceful manners is more fruitful than engaging in the futile struggle of aggression. Thus Walker leads her characters onto a path that to them does not harm anyone; rather it strengthens social harmony.

After leaving the Civil Rights protesters, Meridian goes into the field and starts earning a livelihood. She engages in various creative activities, “From being a teacher who published small broadsides of poems, she had hired herself out as a gardener, as a waitress at middleclass black parties, and had occasionally worked as a dishwasher and cook”
(Walker, *Meridian* 19). It also highlights the fact that Walker engages her characters in commercial activities rather than engaging in slogans that result in merely chaos and conflict. Meridian is not hesitant in working at any sort of job for survival. She slowly makes progress and with the passage of time finds better ones and from a dishwasher to a teacher and writer is a great achievement that she is able to attain. Hence Meridian as a revolutionary who refuses to be a part of violent revolution. She does not follow the popular notion of engaging in violence or killing of white people. She wants to solve all issues through peaceful protest and believes in personal transformation. Walker in *Meridian* and her other works focuses more on the individual progress of her women characters instead of giving voice to political slogans created by patriarchy.

Another significant development in Meridian is parting from Truman who represents patriarchal culture. Truman is Meridian’s friend and lover since he seduces her during the Black Arts movement but leaves her when he finds out that she is not a virgin but a mother of a child. Due to his attraction towards other young virgins he abandons Meridian and does not consider her suitable for marriage. Truman marries another white girl named Lynne but after some years when he has some differences with her, he again tries to regain Meridian because he keeps her as an extra option. She is so broken hearted by his attitude that she decides to leave him in the end. Walker narrates a dialogue between Truman and Meridian.

“You make me feel healthy, purposeful—”

“Because I’m black?”

“Because you’re you, damn it! The woman I should have married and didn’t!”

“Should have loved, and didn’t,” she murmured. (*Meridian* 138)

From their discussion it is obvious that Truman wants to reconcile with Meridian even when he is married to Lynne. He wants to keep his relationship with her in order to keep alive his old love. He regrets his decision of not marrying her and now realizes his worth. On the other hand, Walker keeps Meridian’s individuality intact and does not allow her to fall a prey to patriarchy again as all her life she has been used by men around her. This time Meridian stands up for herself and openly rejects him. She objects to his earlier behavior
as he rejected her after seducing her. He goes to a number of virgins and marries one of them. After discarding Truman she goes on a quest for personal development. Alice Walker shows the struggle of Meridian in order to gain an independent social identity when she works at different jobs:

And so she had left the North and come back South, moving from one small town to another, finding jobs—some better or worse than others—to support herself; remaining close to the people—to see them, to be with them, to understand them and herself, the people who now fed her and tolerated her and also, in a fashion, cared about her. (19)

The novel is in fact retrospectively a study of Meridian’s life once she is fed up of patriarchy and capitalism, and moves up leaving her past life. She is already liberated from the traditional life style of marriage with Eddie which fails when her husband despite his young age walks on the path of patriarchy. She also rejects Truman, her one time lover when he wants to maintain the extramarital affair regardless of his marriage with Lynne. She decides to move away from racial discrimination in the developed capitalistic North and come back to the South to survive in a simple life. Following the Marxist Feminist ideology she comes out of patriarchal control and emancipates herself. She searches for jobs of different kinds with the aim of supporting herself. She does not depend on any man around her and in the process of freeing herself financially she tries to understand the ways of men around her. From her childhood she remains a victim of patriarchal lust. Men with money exploit her physically in compensation for material goods; capitalist men like Dexter, The Assistant and professor Raymonds physically abuse her in her time of poverty\(^{19}\) and fulfill their lust in reward for helping her in her financial needs.\(^{19}\) She moves quickly away from such people and tries to find her place in society. By remaining close to people she strives to comprehend their manners of survival so that she can also match their standards.

6.3 Intertextuality in *The Color Purple* and *The Temple of My Familiar*

In her novel *The Temple of my Familiar* Alice Walker creates intertextual reference from her novel *The Color Purple*. The story of the next generation of Celie and the people
related to them is portrayed here. In their lives Walker follows similar Marxist Feminist ideology where she liberates her characters from domestic and social discrimination. Walker shows concern of the African mother regarding the deserted condition of their family life. “But this is the concern of the African mother the world over, isn’t it? The education of her children, the inevitable school fees pinched somehow out of the money earned from washing, ironing, fieldwork, minework. Any kind of work” (Temple 160). In order to provide her children a better future life an African mother, according to Walker, is ready to do all kinds of labor to earn a livelihood. Her basic worry is to liberate her children from the atrocities of patriarchy, racial discrimination and illiteracy. That is why most women characters of Walker liberate themselves by getting higher education such as Nettie, Olivia and Fanny. Similarly her women characters like Shug, Celie, Fanny, Mary Agnes, Sofia, Carlota, Zede and Miss Lissie involves in activities that generate revenue. Financial stability is the key to emancipation for the women of Alice Walker’s writings. Besides highlighting the problems faced by women, due to their own family men, in particular and white men in general, Walker portrays the afterlife where they achieve emancipation from their family men.16

Celie and Shug are shown as the Big Mama of Fanny and her cousin Benny. The family is shown to have respectable social status among members of the black community. Fanny narrates her grandmother’s situation when she is financially stable. “Her house and tailoring shop—she made and sold the kind of pants she always wore—became the light that illuminated their town, as far as black people were concerned” (Walker, Temple 174). Thus due to Celie’s creativity most of the people around her benefited. Celie’s family consisting of her sister Nettie, her daughter Olivia, her son Adam, her grandchildren Fanny and Benny, her husband Albert, her step son Harpo and his wife Sofia and above all her mentor and friend Shug Avery, came out of financial deprivation. She engaged in business of making pants and running store in addition to possessing a big house and lucrative land that eliminated the curse of poverty from people related to her. Celie’s name and family traditions continue due to her daughter Olivia and granddaughter Fanny Nzingha. Thus
Walker continues the story of Fanny, teacher of women studies and her married life with Suwelo, a professor of history.

6.4 Emancipation of Women in *The Temple of My Familiar*

6.4.1 Fanny’s Evolution from marginalization

Alice Walker in her fiction work, *The Temple of My Familiar* brings to limelight not only the miserable lives of black women but also presents some practical solution taking guidance from Marxist Feminist theoretical stance. She presents solution of women’s problems in a way that empowers them from despairs created by their related men, white man and a society controlled by patriarchal ideology. Fanny Nzingha is one of the central characters of the novel who suffer due to the racist attitude of white supremacy. She is a teacher of Women Studies in a college. Fanny suffers because of racism that has been growing inside her because of living in a white racist society all her life. Due to her grandmother Celie, she and other women of her family managed to emerge from financial subjugation but the society they live in, is dominated by white people who discriminate against black people on the basis of their skin color. During her talk with her mother she discusses the atrocities committed against her by the racist attitude of white people in the white dominated society of America. Owing to these atrocities Fanny talks about different methods of getting rid of white people’s oppressive conduct during her talks with her father Ola, her mother Olivia and her husband Suwelo.

One of the possible strategies that Fanny appreciates is where her father is adopted into the Olinka where he, along with his other African comrades, fights against the white regime. During her visit to Africa she talks to her father about the revolt against the white people. “It is more honest to fight as you did, perhaps” (Walker, *Temple* 305). Her father had been a guerilla fighter against the white government which dominated them for a long period of time. As a result of their constant struggle they were able to drive the white people away from the region of Olinka. Fanny sees fighting back as an option to eradicate all poverty and misery inflicted upon the black people. That is why she appreciates his
fighting spirit. At that time Fanny also considers the returning violence towards white people in reward for the miseries inflicted by them upon the poor black people.

Fanny discusses with Suwelo the choice of engaging in combat against the white people who deprived her black African community for a number of centuries. She talks in detail about the atrocities committed against the blacks by the white majority due to their influence in all walks of life. Fanny, being a woman from a marginalized black community, sees limited options for herself in a society dominated by men. During her talk with her husband she does not discover an easy way out of racial discrimination. “I approve of self-defense,” said Suwelo. “Isn’t sliding them off the planet self-defense?” she asked. “I’ve marched so much by now and been arrested so many times, I’m really quite weary” (302). In their discussion it is obvious that Fanny is completely exhausted due to the tyrannical attitude of white capitalist men towards subjugated black people.

Fanny is a teacher of women’s literature in a college. Due to her feelings of being underprivileged in a community because of her black color she joins the protest against the dominant people of white color. She is arrested and thrown into prison houses a number of times. When she sees such oppressive conduct towards her community she feels sidelined from mainstream life in a society where she has spent her entire life for its betterment owing to her link with the academia. It also highlights the fact that if such educated people become victims of marginalization, the poor people especially women of black color have no choice at all in such a male dominated societal system. One of the options that she has is the scheme of getting rid of white people from the face of this earth due to their prolonged oppressive role in discriminating people of other colors. In her view sliding the white people from the face of this Earth is a workable option. By purging the domineering white rule Fanny thinks that people of other color will have greater opportunities of survival. The basic necessities of life can only be achieved by deprived people when the sources of production are snatched from wealthy white people and distributed amongst the poor, colored people. Fanny’s husband tells her about the chances of survival of all through equal possession of the Earth by people of different colors, whereas for Fanny, the tactics of
repression exercised by powerful white people is a way of excluding blacks from communal places.

“Obviously because we share the planet”

“They don’t want to share the planet; they don’t even want to share villages, towns, rivers, beaches, and bus stops,” she said.

“No, they don’t,” said Suwelo. “But they’ll have to. It’s either share or destroy”. (303)

Fanny feels that the destruction of planet Earth is due to the malpractices of white people’s conduct and their profit oriented capitalist attitude. She has practically witnessed the shortcomings of the capitalist system that protects the rights of people of white color whereas black people are completely ignored in all aspects of survival. Fanny indicates white people’s reluctance in sharing all places like villages, towns, water and bus stops since they consider this Earth as their possession. Since they have been in power for a long period of time, white men think that other people do not have the right to access in various places in the country. Black people are looked down upon and are not allowed to exercise their freedom even on bus stops. In answer to his wife’s objections Suwelo rightly points out that in this age whites do not have many choices of depriving the blacks of the basic necessities of life due to the increasing awareness about the hegemonic ways of powerful circles. If they do not willingly share all the things with people of other colors then life for whites as well is not going to be comfortable. By stretching the strategies of subjugation they will lead this planet towards destruction which is not going to favor them in any way. The whites cannot afford to step back from the advantages of civilization as they get greater benefits out of it. Thus in order to avoid collision or conflict they must learn to share all the privileges that white people have been enjoying due to capitalism and patriarchy. Empowering others does not mean losing all the possessions that they have, rather it means creating an environment that provides equal opportunities of growth and attaining basic rights essential for living a gratified life on this Earth.

Suwelo’s suggestion of sharing of the Earth seems a workable formula for all the people living on this earth. By sharing he means bestowing the rights to all basic necessities
of life. All economic reserves should be equally owned and distributed among all people. When deprived people get equal opportunities of survival the chances of discrimination will gradually be reduced. In this way it will be possible for all individuals to live with equality and accord. The causes of economic injustice need to be removed with the intentions of bringing suffering people to mainstream circle of life where every individual gets equal share from the blessings that life offers. “And we go with them,” said Suwelo. “And we go with them,” echoed Fanny (303). The problem of getting rid of white people is extremely complex. Any such attempt will surely end in chaos and commotion which will result in greater destruction. By throwing such a huge majority of white authoritative people will bring destruction as they would take revenge from protestors or people in pursuit of their expulsion. All such attempts would prove futile in Walker’s viewpoint therefore both Fanny and Suwelo come to the conclusion that efforts of driving the whites away will result in extinguishing the blacks too with them. In such way the conflict will be unmanageable instead of resolution. Thus Walker does not suggest the type of end that would result in turmoil. Fanny points out the crux of the matter in her talk with Suwelo, “It’s racism and greed that have to go. Not white people” (303). Thus Walker does not show her hatred to white color as the whites express towards the black color. She points out the root cause of the problems as being racism and greed. If these evils can be eliminated then harmony among the peoples is possible. It is due to racism that black people are subjugated as their skin color makes them easy victims of racial discrimination. Similarly the menace that has kept the black people subdued is the greed of the capitalists.

In order to find the solution for the problematic racial discrimination, Alice Walker takes her character Fanny Nzingha to a therapist. She is desperate to stop the feelings of revenge growing inside her. While talking to her husband she says, “’But maybe I can stop racist oppression before it starts in myself?’ And she had the next morning, made her first appointment to see Robin” (303). The therapist, in her detailed conversation with Fanny, finds out the reasons for her isolation and growing aggression that turns out to be racial deprivation. When she asks Fanny a question about her thoughts regarding white people,
“I am afraid of them,” was her reply.’ (314). Robin also explores Fanny’s fears that she discovers deeply rooted in the racial discrimination she experiences from childhood onwards due to the tyrannical attitude of white neighbors. The old white grandmother of her friend Tania did not allow the small Fanny to enter the house (Walker, Temple 328). Due to the racially discriminatory attitude of white students in her college she has to leave teaching since she cannot tolerate their cold conduct. As a teacher she does not receive the deserved respect therefore she moved to administration. During official duties in administrative section she finds similar prejudice among white people against a person of black origin. Consequently she sacrifices her professional career when it is extremely difficult to survive under intolerant conditions created by white dominant people.\footnote{18}

During her talks with the therapist Fanny is able to visualize the depth of racism inside her and she tries to come out of it. Being considerate of human values Fanny shows compassion towards white people and adopts a forgiving approach. While talking to her therapist she remarks, “I won’t be a racist,” said Fanny grimly. “I won’t be a murderer. I won’t do to them what they’ve done to black people. I’ll die first” (300). These statements not only indicate Fanny’s intentions but also specifies Walker’s philosophy of conflict resolution through peaceful means. Instead of adopting violent ways Fanny decides to forgive the white people for the crimes committed against her black race.

### 6.4.2 Olivia, Exploitation of Blacks and its Solution

Alice Walker employs the character of Olivia in order to purge Fanny of racial prejudice. Olivia provides her daughter with some practical suggestions to eradicate racism. Fanny’s mother also presents a solution to tackle racial attitude of white people. She sees the reasons behind the irrational behavior of white people as they grow up. According to her the behavior that white people display is not the conduct of healthy people. “He has moved on to devour us and our children, our minds and our bones. But this is not the behavior of well people. Allowances must be made for the sick” (Walker, Temple 308). By employing the character of Olivia, Walker enables Fanny to look into the causes of
powerful white people committing cruelty. It is white men who conducted brutalities against black people.

Olivia also highlights the role of white men in horrifying the black children and women by inflicting such punishment that could lead them to prolonged trauma. The white men extorted similar agonies on the physique of black children and women living under subjugation. She calls such people ‘sick’ who engage in improper actions of terrorizing other people by thinking them inferior in status. Due to their influence in social circles they apply malpractices over deprived people in the shared aspects of life. Despite the cruelties perpetrated by white people Olivia does not consider them naturally dreadful people and concludes their deeds as the unwell behavior. If white people are hostile, there is need for exploration of the causes of hostility. The biggest reason that Walker highlights through discussion between Olivia and Fanny, is the sickness of the white people. She considers the whites as traumatized since they feel satisfaction in subduing the weaker people. Therefore she suggests ‘allowance’ to be practiced for such sickened people. By ‘allowances’ she means kindhearted attitude that would lead to the treatment of disease of their trauma.

Fanny being a teacher has views that differ from her mother’s. She informs her about the condition of the black people throughout the world. “In South Africa the entire black population is incarcerated in ghettos and “homelands” they despise. Look at what was done to the Indians, and still is being done. Look at the aborigines of Australia, the Maori of New Zealand. Look at Indonesia under the Dutch. Look at the West Indies. Forgiveness isn’t large enough to cover the crime” (308). Walker, here, utilizes Fanny as her mouth piece in order to narrate the condition of marginalized people at the hands of white people across the world. She describes the maltreatment towards colored people in the different countries colonized by white Europeans who utilized oppressive strategies that can be witnessed through capitalism, colonialism, racism and patriarchy. Because of the crimes committed under colonial rules Fanny thinks that they have no right to be pardoned. In her view the whites should also be punished for their wrongdoings. During
the conversation between Fanny and her mother Alice Walker suggests a durable resolution to the long lasting conflict between white and black people.

‘We are too forgiving,’ I say to Mom. ‘I’m beginning to hate the very word.’ ‘No,’ she whispers (we are often in bed for these conversations), ‘that isn’t possible. Forgiveness is the true foundation of health and happiness, just as it is for any lasting progress. Without forgiveness there is no forgetfulness of evil; without forgetfulness there still remains the threat of violence. And violence does not solve anything; it only prolongs itself. (308)

Fanny contradicts her mother at the very beginning, on the suggestion of forgiveness towards the atrocities committed against her community by the whites across the world. Being a black woman she notices racial hatred towards herself from childhood onwards. She observes racial discrimination against blacks at the levels of individual and government therefore she moves away from her job of teaching in a white dominated location. Later she leaves her administration job also, due to institutional racism and patriarchy. For her, forgiveness is not a practical option to equate the crimes committed against black people. Here Walker utilizes Olivia as a guide for Fanny to liberate her from the racism inflicted upon her in a white male dominated society. Olivia describes in detail the phenomenon of ‘forgiveness’ that could lead Fanny and other people affected by racial discrimination to a long lasting liberation. Walker calls compassion a step in the right direction for the freedom of all people from the ill-effects of racial prejudice. Emancipation, thus, is possible through showing compassion to cruel people. In order to forget the foul deeds of others there is strong need for forgiveness. If a person does not forget he/she remains a part of the constant strain of trauma against his/her community. The ill-effects of racism persist, lurking in memory that will surely lead to aggressive actions against subjugators. In Alice Walker’s opinion the philosophy of violence is not a resolution of any problem rather it leads to the vicious circle of greater violence which is unhealthy for any society aiming to exist peacefully. Ferocity in conduct does not stop anywhere, in fact it is prolonged and leads to disturbance and destruction.
Walker suggests the formula of forgiveness that can lead to happiness and prosperity. In order to display the practical action of forgiveness Olivia narrates her mother Celie’s conduct with her dog Creighton. She mistreats the dog every time she sees it and sometimes tries to hit it. Celie herself experienced violence at the hands of the men of her family but she came out of trauma by forgiving her husband and making herself economically independent. People other than Celie also mistreated the dog. As Olivia says to Fanny about him, “He was considered stupid, lazy, clumsy, ugly, and inferior” (Walker, Temple 312). In such condition it was Shug who liberated him and Celie from her hatred towards him. Shug rehabilitated and trained Creighton by taking him to Memphis with her. “Creighton was no longer a slave; he was a dog” (312). So when Celie tries to beat him he runs towards her and bites her. After this incident Celie does not try to scare him. Olivia presents her analysis of the encounter to her daughter, Fanny. “It was the laughter, from someone she loved with her whole being, that ripped through the callus on Mama Celie’s heart. She began to feel for everything: ant, bat, the hoppy toad flattened on the road” (312). Shug laughs loudly at the episode of conflict between Celie and Creighton. Thus laughter proves more helpful than mighty words which indicate that human beings can be moved through compassion and kindheartedness rather than indulging in violent activities that lead to greater devastation. Walker leads her character Celie and her granddaughter, Fanny on the path of transformation by liberating them from racial prejudice. They learn to forgive and forget and thereby to liberate themselves.

6.4.3 Reunification of Fanny and Suwelo

In addition to economic deprivation, Marxist Feminism briefly brings to the limelight the problems of family relations disturbed by patriarchal practices. Of these the differences between wife and husband are the core issues that require to be dealt with. Alice Walker in her writings depicts the subjugation of women at the hands of their family men especially husbands. For her the relationship of husband and wife needs to be built on faithfulness, mutual trust and collaboration. Therefore she liberates her characters from the hazards of disloyalty, mistrust and escape from domestic duties. Besides redeeming her woman characters from patriarchy, Walker transforms her men characters as well with the
purpose of bringing social harmony into family life. Like her novel *The Color Purple* and *Meridian*, she moves her character in *The Temple of My Familiar* from a restorative process where both men and women in family life come to good terms with each other. During her discussion with her husband Fanny highlights the problems that she and her husband had for a long time. Both of them admit this fact. “And no,” she said, “I am not afraid of loving you. At last I see you for what you are. I see the child in you that became the man and is now fast becoming the person. Your sins are no graver than my own”. (Walker, *Temple* 320)

Fanny suffers from racial hatred in the form of the ways of white people whereas her husband Suwelo is deeply involved in polygamy with many other women in the presence of his wife. Fanny does not hate Suwelo rather she hates his immoral indulgence in having physical relations with other women. Therefore Fanny points out his disloyalties in her conversation with him. I indulged in my fantasies of violence for years before I tried to change; as you indulged in sterile, exploitive relationships with other women. I couldn’t see why I should be the one asked not to seek revenge, why the buck of violence must stop with me. Besides, must I myself be the only model I had for the creature I intended to be? (320)

Fanny was a victim of racism that grew inside her for many years. In order to overcome the racial disease within, her mother played a significant role. She also directly blames her husband for destroying the atmosphere of mutual trust by going to other women. Her husband has been involved in polygamous relationship with women other than her wife. She does not feel motivated when everything is demanded only of her. Her husband does not collaborate for reconciliation. She does not have any role model before her and criticizes Suwelo for not showing her a way out of racism and violence. In his defense he asks her about the explanation that she should have given to him when they were together. Suwelo asks his wife Fanny about the delay in solving their marital issues. He is engaged in activities of his likings “I was sick of explaining everything,” said Fanny, with great weariness. “In my women’s studies class and in the administration office at the college I had to explain about blacks; to you and other men I had to explain about women. None of
you seemed capable of using your own eyes and feelings to try to comprehend things and people for yourselves” (321). In these lines, Walker highlights the thoughts of a wife who expects her husband to understand her pain. Fanny objects to her husband not paying close attention to her during moments of crises in their marital relationship. She leaves her college job due to racial discrimination where all the time she had to explain about the different ways of black people. In such a condition it is impossible for her to perform her official duties and that is why she abandons her job at the college. She highlights different ways where she had differences with Suwelo. “I’d tried so often before,” she said, “when we still lived together. I tried with books,” she said. “With records. You wouldn’t read, you wouldn’t listen. You seemed traumatized by the new. It seemed pointless”. (321)

During the married years Suwelo does not try to understand his wife and does not share her interests such as the books that inspire her and that she wants him to read but he rejects them. In fact he has never read any book by women writers as he considers male writers to suffice his needs. Due to his patriarchal ideology he does not consider women’s writings worthy of reading and this makes Fanny furious. He ignores every new thing she introduces in her family so Fanny considering him an instrument of patriarchy turns away from him. Suwelo is interested in reforming and realizes his own shameful role in driving his wife away. He tries to reunite with his wife and has different feelings when he understands life in terms of faith and loyalty.

Something hot and passionate was opening in him, and it wasn’t in his trousers; it was .. in his chest. “I’m flesh, I’m blood,” he said with decision. And for the first time truly felt he was flesh and blood. Human, the same as women. “No, I’m not some perfect old outlaw that lived a hundred years ago that you can love without being required sometimes to contradict yourself. But I’m up for the damn struggle any damn day of the week that you are. (322)

Like her other suffering characters, Walker transforms Suwelo from his polygamous relationships with many other women to a close understanding of his own wife. When he realizes his own misconduct and decides to reshape his action in a positive direction he perceives changes in his personality. His center of focus regarding women so far has been
sexual and he sees women as sex objects but his opinion changes when he tries to understand his own wife. He feels a difference in his own heart that he realizes is he himself coming alive again. He understands that he was a person with a past where he committed blunders and that that is why he decides to reform. He promises his wife his equal share of struggle. He is now ready to share his time and energy to develop mutual trust and harmonize the relationship with his wife. “And am I to assume by this .. um.. declaration,” said Fanny, “that what we have here is an Afro who would like to come home to roost?” “Yes,” he said, joining her laughter. “Here’s my hand in strugglehood. Let’s shake on it”.

From their talk both Suwelo and Fanny come to some level of understanding and they decide to harmonize their relation to an optimum level showing that Alice Walker brings her characters onto the path of transformation. Both go through a process of modification with the purpose of attaining social harmony. In such conditions where patriarchal practices are eliminated and human beings start understanding each other, social equality can be achieved. The only thing needed is a social atmosphere where women are respected within the social institute of the family. Alice Walker puts some responsibilities on the family men in order to perform their role in harmonizing their relationship with their family women. Men ought to come out of polygamy and leave illegal relationships in terms of sexual closeness.

6.5 Emancipation of Women from Slavery

Marxist Feminism seeks complete liberation of women from the restraints of economic injustice, patriarchy and slavery. According to Frederick Engels slavery is the production of the patriarchal social setup. With the overthrow of ‘gens’ men ensured their supremacy over women through possession of property and the sources of production. In order to develop their business interests men went into the business of increasing their property. Cattle, bread and crop production at that time of history proved to be fruitful commercial activities. In order to generate greater revenue men required more labor and the easy and cheap way of increasing business interests was to make the simple and
powerless people as their slaves. With the emergence of private property, women who were already on a weak footing were enslaved. Alice Walker in her writings besides depicting agonies of women during slavery, liberates all of her women characters from slavery and gives them an independent life where they are socially accepted.

6.5.1 Liberation of Zede from Slavery

Besides financial emancipation Walker releases her characters from the chains of slavery and bestows upon them the social rights by leading them onto a path of fight against atrocities. Carlotta’s mother Zede, is freed from slavery by the Indian tribe, ‘the Karpokechuan’ when she was locked in a hut with the dead body of an Indian man named Jesús. Zede had to stay in a hut with the corpse of the man she had dared to love. Both Jesús and Zede are punished by the owners of the slave plantation: he is killed and she is locked with his lifeless body. She narrates her own condition while talking to her son in law Arveyda, “Days and nights went by. The flies came by the hundreds. The rats. The smell. I beat on the door until my hands, covered with flies also, were dripping blood. I screamed” (Walker, Temple 75). At this dark moment of her life Walker sends the tribe of the person whom the white people had killed. The Indian tribesmen search for him in order to provide him a respectable burial and to liberate Zede.

And then one night I heard a noise outside the door—soft, almost not a noise. And then the door slowly opened, and the mournful and barbaric-looking tribesmen of Jesús filled the little hut. They wrapped his body in a large blanket before they turned to me, naked, shivering, dying on the dirt floor. Then I saw there was also a blanket for me. (75)

Hence the Indian tribesmen of Jesús prove to be a source of freedom of Zede from slavery. Jesús was a noble person in his tribe who considered guarding the three small stones “about the size and color of brown pigeon eggs” The tribe believed in keeping the stones in their position all the time in order to ensure the safety of the tribe and other human beings (73). The tribesmen not only give Zede clothes but also gave her respect. In this way Zede is liberated: “When Carlotta was born, they made me understand I must go away in order to
save her, in order to save Jesús” (75). The Indians ask Zede to go away to some distant place in order to avoid future encounter with her masters and other plantation owners and that is how Zede comes out of subjugation and tries to attain financial stability.

Walker shows that her characters realize the significance of finance in real life. Zede has to strive hard for survival after attaining liberation from slavery. “Zede had been a seamstress” (Walker, Temple 3). She works outside her home and supports her only daughter Carlotta in getting education and the basic necessities of life. “Her mother’s responsibility was to provide food and clothing, and it was Carlotta’s job to do the cooking and cleaning and, of course, to go to school” (6). Zede is a good mother who keeps Carlotta in a school and ensures that her daughter gets a good education.

From this glimpse of the Halloween parade Carlotta marked the beginning of her mother’s new career. During the day she sewed jeans and country-and-western style shirts and ties in the sweatshop where she worked. At home they ate mainly rice and beans. With the money her mother managed to save, they bought feathers from one of the large import stores. Eventually Carlotta would work at one of these stores, called World Import, first as a sweeper in the storeroom, among the crated goods, so cheap, so colorful and pretty, from countries like her mother’s (she did not think of South America as her continent), next as an arranger of goods on the floor, and finally as a cashier. (6-7)

Like her mother Carlotta too makes good progress in terms of financial achievement. She starts working as a sweeper in a store and is then able to secure a job as a manager in the store. Her honesty and dedication is rewarded and she manages to attain the position of a cashier. Due to her education Carlotta is able to make progress that not only liberates her from economic disparity but also provides her with a good social status. Zede and Carlotta save money to buy peacock feathers to create expensive caps that wealthy people are interested in. Both Carlotta and Zede actively engage in the business of making caps since: “for one spectacular peacock cape, she could feed and clothe herself and Carlotta for a year” (Walker, Temple 7). Thus Walker bestows her women characters enough economic
stability so that they not only come out of slavery but start living a respectable life in society. In this way both mother and daughter earn to free themselves from the shackles of slavery and economic deprivation. Zede helps her daughter to get higher education so that Carlotta can become a college teacher. “She had studied women’s literature in college. That is what she would teach” (20). Thus Walker emancipates her characters from slavery, poverty, hunger and social degradation and enables them to move freely, economically developed and socially respected.

END NOTES

1. With overthrow of gens the value of men raised because of possession of private property.


2. Celie’s husband physically beat her. (22)

His children also beat Celie on her marriage day. (13)

She is used as a field worker page no. see page umber. (26-27)


3. Mr, ____ assaulting Nettie.


4. Albert whom Celie calls Mr.____ that shows her detachment from him whereas Shug calls him Albert that indicates her equality with him in social status.

5. System of production. It refers to cooperate sector where women like men can attain easy access to job opportunity with growing demand of human labor.


6. Egalitarian Society. A society based on economic equality among both female and male members of the society.


7. Celie’s tolerance of husband’s severe physical punishment.


8. Celie performing field work. Her husband stares only at her and sits idly.


9. Nettie, the only sister of sister of Celie, she runs away from her home when she understands about Mr. ____, Celie’s husband’s evil intention of seducing her. See page 18 Nettie is more beautiful than Celie in appearance. Therefore he is from the start interested in her. P. 10 When she realizes his wickedness she decides to run away. Mr. follows her on his horse in hot weather. In the deserted jungle he tries to assault her physically. She manages to hurt him and runs away. At this time he vows to separate both the sister. P. 107 Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Florida, USA: 1982. Print.

10. Rotten condition of Celie’s step children. On her marriage day she is wounded.


(13, 17)

11. Celie is made pregnant twice at the small age of fourteen by her stepfather. P. 3-4.
He takes the children away and sells them whereas he informs her about their death. P 5

12. Sofia remains slave of the white mayor for twelve years.

13. Harpo calls Mary by the name Squeak.

14. Junk point, a place in the woods that Harpo builds where he could run his business of serving whisky, bear and other relevant stuff. He hired some singers to attract the attention of the people

15. Round House of African tradition. Shug’s house is in round shape she argues with Celie about shape of houses and prefers round house.

16. ‘Intertextuality is the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text – quotations’

In *The Temple of My Familiar* Alice Walker extends the life of Celie’s family from her novel *The Color Purple*. Fanny Nzingha is the granddaughter of Celie and one of the central character in *The Temple*, Similary daughter Olivia’s and her relationship with Ola is narrated. Detail about other characters like Shug Avery, Nettie, Tashi, Sofia, Adam is also described.

17. The fight of Fanny’s father, against the white regime
Women writers of Afro-American community create literature with purpose to document the struggle of deprived factions including the poor blacks, slaves and women. Alice Walker is a prominent Afro-American literary writer of the contemporary age who
also records the struggle of marginalized people while at the same time exposing the hegemonic practices of patriarchy and racial discrimination. Her writings focus on the problems faced by people of black color especially women residing in America. Walker’s writings are mostly viewed in the perspective of her biographical and racial background. In this study my aim was to part ways from such interpretations. For the purpose of this research exploration, I aimed to analyze the fictional works of Alice Walker in the guidelines formulated by Marxism and Marx-Feminism. For both these theoretical perspectives economic exploitation is a significant concept. In Engels’ and Marx’s views economy determines the social significance of individuals and various classes in the society. It is the lower class that suffers the most because of lack of possession of sources of production. Alice Walker in her writings creates such characters who remain exploited through unjust capitalist and patriarchal practices. The women of Walker’s novels suffer from patriarchy of black men and capitalism of white men. Besides highlighting the sufferings, she also leads her characters to the path of emancipation where both men and women are provided with equal opportunities of growth and liberation from patriarchal mindset and capitalist practices.

Marxist Feminism is a theoretical framework that explores the history of men and women’s kinship and the problems associated with it. Marxist Feminism established its foundations on the principles of Marxism as Engels, its founder was a comrade of Karl Marx and collaborated in many of his works. It incorporates the concepts of Marxism that include class system based on economic inequalities, poverty and human labor as a tool to strengthen capitalists.

Marxist Feminism brings to the limelight the issue of unpaid household labor that Marxism ignored in its manifesto. Women’s duties in domestic life are not rewarded and they are deprived of the possession of property, thus being subjugated by their own family men. Engels in his core book on Marxist Feminism, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*, describes the stages that matrimonial relationships passed through after its evolution from animal lives. The first of three stages, ‘Consanguine family’, the second being the ‘Punaluan family’, the third called as ‘Pairing family’, and the fourth known as
‘monogamous family’, with various restrictions of marital boundaries in different epochs of time. The present time marital relation between men and women is almost similar to monogamous family where a man and woman are in matrimonial connection but men secretly perform polygamy with many other women while women are demanded to be monogamous, chaste and loyal. The shift of authority of men over women has varied in all the stages of conjugal kinship such as men did not have domination over women in the earlier two stages but with the appearance of pairing family where marital status was restricted to one pair of men and women at a time, men assumed superior social position by dominating the women. Men kept enjoying polygamy in monogamous family with women other than their wives as it did not cost them any material loss. Sexual exploitation of other women especially younger ones remained a profound hobby of men of the civilization era. Thus exploitation of women at the hand of their related men in family and unrelated men in society started and continues its journey till date.

Engels in his theory sees the emergence of women’s subjugation at the start of the civilization period. Women before civilization had a respectable position in society due to the authority of the matriarchal system organized by ‘Gens’. The affairs of ‘Gens’ were controlled by the elders of a community who took care of women’s rights. Gens dealt with the conflicts of family life and poverty and helped the needy people like disabled and old people. In such a societal system the exploitation of women in domestic environment was also avoided. As far as the duties of women were concerned they remained the same; e.g. controlling domestic affairs and performing household duties. The gens in olden times handled all affairs concerning the people of a tribe and treated all individuals equally.

The emergence of private property and its possession brought complete transformation in existing social structures under the control of gens tribal system. Commercial opportunities came in the shape of cattle breeding and crops cultivation, trade dealing with men of other tribes etc. Men gratefully accepted and controlled outdoor engagements of economic growth. The action that transformed all social structures was the overthrow of gens because men felt powerless in its presence and they controlled private property and owned surplus income. Women were kept out of all activities of capital
production that led to profit making. Out of all business profits that men attained women were not given equal share.

Slavery is the product of civilization because with the emergence of private property men needed more human labor to earn profit from fields and cattle rearing. So they enslaved their fellow human beings including women to run their commercial activities. People with weak social status and low income fell easy prey to people with high social status and great wealth. In this way two classes of people, the master and the slave, and the exploiter and the exploited were generated. In modern times black people due to inferior status bestowed upon them remain in slavery imposed on them by white people. Thus in order to restore system of equality slavery in all its forms be it domestic or social must be eradicated. There is need to develop such social structures where opportunities of growth are equally provided to all people. All forms of oppression whether economic and marital, need to be removed.

There are three classes of women suggested by Ann Ferguson and Rosemary Hennessy: women coming from the upper class, middle class and lower class. The problems of the women of the upper and middle classes are entirely different from the women of the lower class. Economic and physical exploitation is common among the women of the lower class who are forced into unpaid labor of domestic duties. If by chance they find jobs they only get work as nannies and childcarers where they are paid the lowest possible wages which do not even cover the food expenses of their children. These women are also exploited by women of the elite class as they do not get enough financial compensation for their labor. Men of this class exploit women by depriving them of the family income and abusing them physically and sexually.

The causes of miserable life of women that Marxist Feminism investigates in their domestic and social life of which one is unpaid household labor. Women toil from dawn to dusk in their domestic duties but no reward is bestowed upon them. Instead of getting wages or compensation they are put under physical labor and punishment as well. In domestic life men in role of husband and father due to their superiority become the basis of exploitation of their related women. Whereas in social life women of black African American
community are victim of double marginalization first due to being women and second because of belonging to poor black community. So women of African American people face subjugation from patriarchy and capitalism at the same time.

Marxist Feminist theorists view women oppression as a social construct therefore they suggest emancipatory strategies that can be utilized to liberate women from the shackles of subjugation. In the present day scenario Marxist Feminists want women to participate in system of production as economic depravity is the cause of women persecution so empowering financially women can lead to their freedom. The possession of property and income generating activities is equally crucial for women as well. By empowering themselves women can come up to equal footings along with their family men in social status. Thus it becomes extremely difficult for men to exploit women in the presence of monetary stability. This theoretical stance also demands monogamy on part of men that could restore loyalty, honesty and mutual trust between men and women. The marital relation demands equal amount of faithfulness from men as well in order for the marital kinship to work smoothly. Another significant responsibility that Marxist Feminism lays upon men is equal participation in household activities so that women could have time, energy and motivation to work and earn not only for themselves but also for the prosperity of the family unit.

The philosophical stance of Engels is as applicable today as in his own time. In this modern age women remain victim of patriarchal and capitalist practices. Engels’ followers like Simon De Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Sharon Smith, Chris Harman, Martha E. Geminiz and Pat Brewer rightly point out application of his theory in our times. Despite some archeological advances that show modifications in Engels theory, his basic framework about exploitation of women remains valid. Women in domestic environment still suffer from violence inflicted upon them from their family men and unpaid household work. Domestic slavery along with social slavery is common these days. Almost all societies are divided into two groups the master and the subservient. The influential people exploit people working under their submission. The dominated people have to be obedient in order for their existence. Thus the framework that Engels advocated rightly highlights women’s
plight in this developed age and delineates the method of their liberation from the shackles of poverty, patriarchy and capitalist discrimination.

Alice Walker follows the steps formulated by Marxist Feminism in her writings. Besides depicting the issues of women caused by patriarchal and capitalist attitude of their family men she leads her female characters on a path to emancipate themselves. As far as the miserable life of her women characters is concerned they mainly suffer on two accounts: due to the patriarchy of their own family men such as Celie, Nettie, Meridian, Carlotta and Fanny, as also economic exploitation too plays a significant factor where slavery of Sofia, Zede and Miss Lissie is portrayed in her writings. Walker liberates all these characters from the subjugation of patriarchy and capitalism, and describes the atrocities committed on the women of African American origin. In doing this Walker highlights their agonies through her fictional writings. Her novels, *The Color Purple*, *Meridian* and *The Temple of My Familiar* present characters that undergo experiences of poverty, corporal punishment, physical exploitation and capitalist discrimination both at the hands of their family men and white influential people. *The Color Purple* portrays the physical and economic exploitation carried out by Celie’s stepfather and her husband. Similarly the twelve years slavery of Sofia in the house of the white mayor is also described in detail. *Meridian* records the exploitation of Meridian due to the patriarchal conduct of men around her. *The Temple of My Familiar* depicts the discrimination of Fanny and Carlotta by their patriarchal husbands. The slave cruelties borne by Zede and Miss Lissie are also shown in detail. In addition to the delineation of the problems of black women, Alice Walker depicts emancipatory strategies to liberate her women characters from the chains of patriarchy and capitalist degradation. In this regard Celie is liberated from economic subjugation when she goes into the creation of pants. Her husband is impressed by her developed position and starts respecting her. A social harmony between Celie and her husband Albert is achieved when she attains financial stability and he eradicates his patriarchal habits. Likewise Meridian comes out of all patriarchal subjugation in the shape of her husband, Civil Rights violence and her lover Truman. She travels the path of creating poetry by going away. Similarly Zede and Lissie get liberation and are bestowed with socially accepted status showing how
Alice Walker ends all her novels, following Marxist Feminist guidelines, on a note of optimism with the women attaining emancipation and all restrictions imposed by men being removed from women.

My analysis of Alice Walker’s works underlines the significance of my research objectives which were to explore and investigate the struggle of African American women as presented in the novels of Alice Walker and highlighting the sufferings of black women due to patriarchal discrimination, slavery and capitalist hegemony shown in Walker’s novels at the same time determining the role of financial stability in social acceptance of women as portrayed by Walker. The analysis brings to the limelight the atrocities committed against women by their male family members. Women have been exploited physically by men since the start of civilization. Physical abuse in the form of incest is not new and commonly occurs in social setups based on patriarchy. Walker in her novel The Color Purple portrays instances of incest when Celie’s stepfather continuously rapes her and makes her pregnant during the process and by the age of fourteen she has already given birth to two children. Similarly Walker narrates instance of incest in her The Temple of My Familiar where Arveyda engages himself in a forbidden relationship of sexual intercourse with his own mother-in-law, Zede. Arveyda is a famous singer with a lot of wealth and social status. By taking advantage of her loneliness and poverty, he involves her in a sexual relationship even when he has a beautiful wife, Carlotta whom he has married out of love. Zede makes love only twice in her entire life and that too, during slavery times, with another slave named Jesus. Her life passes under hardships of earning a livelihood for herself and her only daughter, Carlotta. Zede is provoked physically by Arveyda the proof of which can be witnessed from her behavior afterwards as she refuses to meet him and she becomes silent because of this shameful act. She repents her action while Arveyda, like a patriarch, does not feel any guilt and is willing to keep on walking the adulterous road. In her novel Meridian, Walker also depicts physical abuse exercised by men against young girls of the same community. The protagonist Meridian is very young when she is assaulted. Money or material goods that she cannot afford to buy, are given to her to lure her into exploitative actions. Dexter, the elderly man, physically abuses Meridian at an age when she does not
know anything about sexual activities luring her with candies that she cannot afford and money that she cannot imagine getting from any other source because of her poor family background. He physically exploits her for his personal pleasure just as his young assistant uses her physically by touching her. In his boss’ absence Meridian becomes the victim of The Assistant’s lust since Meridian is too poor to get the candy any other way. In this novel Walker records the miserable life of young girls in the character of Meridian who at a very early age becomes the victim of male lust.

During her college days Meridian is sexually exploited due to her poverty. She goes to Saxon college on a scholarship as she cannot afford the tuition fee for the college. The only source of income her family had, was a piece of land and that too was forcefully occupied by white people. Her father and mother cannot afford the expenditures of college like clothing and eating and in order to ensure her survival she has to work as a typist at the house of an old professor named Raymonds. However his true nature is exposed in his conduct with Meridian. He chases her around the room and in compensation for physical pleasure, provides Meridian with extra things such as packets of biscuits, bottles of coke and other things that she cannot buy. Thus he fulfills his physical lust from young Meridian by taking advantage of her helplessness.

Alice Walker in her novels describes the subjugation of married women at the hands of their husbands. Almost all her married women are in miserable plight due to the cruel conduct of their husbands. The character of Celie in The Color Purple is one such downtrodden character who is exploited on almost all fronts by patriarchal practices. Be it incest or cruelties of marital status or economic injustice, Celie remains the victim of patriarchy and capitalism at the same time. The tyranny of the situation is when her stepfather abuses Celie physically and after getting tired of her, he considers her as a bad influence for his other children and forcefully marries her to an elderly person named Albert whom Celie calls Mr. ___. Celie leads a life full of misery after marriage and even on her marriage day she is wounded by her step children who hit her with a stone and she is wounded in the head. She has to run after her husband’s children in order to control them but they disobey and disrespect her in every way. Celie is also beaten by her husband time
and again with the purpose of taming. She is locked in a room and beaten with leather belts. She cannot go anywhere else as she has no one to lessen her grief and help her against the oppressive assertiveness of her husband. The only influential male relative is her stepfather but he has already abused her physically and hates her. The atrocities against her keep on increasing mainly because of her husband’s patriarchal attitude.

Celie also has to work in the fields as a slave whereas her capitalist husband does nothing but stares at her all the time smoking his pipe. She has to perform all the household chores including cleaning, cooking, washing and taking care of children. Despite her dedication to her domestic duties and her husband’s family she gets physical punishment. She is not given any share of revenue or wages in compensation for physical labor that she toils from dawn to dusk. In this way Walker highlights Marxist Feminist concerns of the economic deprivation of Celie from the system of production and labor reward. Her husband like a true capitalist manipulates her energy for his personal gains and improvement of his personal life.

Like Celie, Walker’s other protagonist; Meridian also becomes a victim of the hegemonic attitude of men in the institution of marriage. Meridian marries when she is a schoolgirl. Her husband gets bored of this immature relationship with her after some time therefore he runs away to an unknown place. At the young age of seventeen Meridian turns out to be a deserted wife and a drop out from school with a child to take care of. Truman, another Civil Rights worker falls in love with Meridian and remains closely connected to her during the revolution. After seducing her for the first time he finds out that she is not a virgin as he does not ask about her past life and assumes her to be a virgin. Subsequently he leaves Meridian and chases other young virgins in the college campus. This incident breaks her to a great extent because she feels that she has been rejected by a man whom she had thought to be true to her. Walker by portraying these women highlights the role of men in the subjugation of women within the family life. Women are oppressed on a greater level by their own male relatives who use women for their personal gains all the while considering them socially and domestically weak.
In her novel *The Temple of My Familiar* Walker focuses on issues of marital status. Like her other writings men here also oppress their women especially wives. For example Fanny’s father Dahvid known as Ola, besides being a freedom fighter also turns out to be a patriarch in his dealing with his first wife whom he deserts in Olinka. After achieving freedom from the white regime he becomes a minister of culture. During war time, Fanny’s stepmother, Harriet also fights guerilla war against the oppressive white people but once they have their own government all women, like Harriet, are rejected and forgotten by the black men who assume all the affairs of the government while they are left in the village to rot in poverty and loneliness. Harriet lives in a small hut in village while Fanny’s father resides in a luxurious large house in the city. In the village she survives by making homeproduced wine and selling it. She passes the days and night of her life in a miserable position whereas her husband enjoys privileges in the ministry. He does not give her even a small sum of money for her survival and does not disclose his relationship with Harriet to the people of his elitist circle. He considers it an insult to tell people about his uneducated village wife. In this way he becomes a source of exploitation for his wife whom he keeps close when he needs her during the battle and whom he discards once his objectives have been achieved. Harriet dies in the little hut because she does not have enough money to go to a doctor and her husband does not consider her worthy of treatment. Her lonely death shows her husband’s carelessness towards her.

In *The Temple of My Familiar* also Walker portrays marital problems in the correlation of Suwelo and Fanny Nzingha. Suwelo is a follower of the centuries old tradition of polygamy as he engages in extramarital relationships with many other women. Besides going to Carlotta, he also goes to brothels and when his wife senses this unfaithfulness on his part she detaches herself from him both physically and emotionally. Suwelo admits his infidelity during his talk with Miss Lissie and Mr. Hall acknowledging that his relationships with many women at the same time is deeply rooted in his upbringing. He indicates that manhood is only bestowed upon men in patriarchy when they have sexual relations with a number of women during early adulthood. Therefore, the root cause of polygamy lies in the nurturing of men. It is society that forces men onto forbidden paths by
showing how beneficial it is. Thus Walker highlights the fact that men cause marital relationships to fall apart.

Alice Walker’s novels portray characters that become victims of racial degradation. Sofia is taken into slavery by the white mayor because of his pride in the whites’ superior capitalist position and inferiority of the poor black community. Sofia’s refusal to become a maid for the mayor’s wife, throws her into enforced slavery of unpaid labor for twelve years of her life. She is thrown into jail to learn a lesson through the infliction of extreme physical punishment including washing the dirty clothes of convicts. After this spell, in the prison house she is shifted to the mayor’s house to work as a slave. Sofia has to obey the orders of her master, irrespective of the time of day or night. Sofia has to perform all the tasks assigned to her without any financial compensation. All household activities are demanded of Sofia besides taking care of their white children. She is allowed to meet her own children after five years of her captivity for only fifteen minutes. Her situation is such that the younger children do not recognize her as their mother.

The story of Sofia proves that poor black people are helpless before influential white people even in this day and age. The white mayor because of his influence keeps Sofia in prison and then uses her as a slave to fulfill his domestic needs. Influential white people, therefore, have complete control over the people of other colors. There is no authority that can question powerful white people on their conduct towards deprived black community. Sofia, however, is not the only one in *The Color Purple* who becomes the victim of the greed of white people. Mary Agnes called Squeak also finds herself in a difficult situation when she goes to the white jailer to plead Sofia’s case for mercy. The white warden of the prison does not like Mary Agnes’s relatedness to Sofia and rapes her violently in the jail. On her return Celie shows her physical condition when she comes back with torn clothes, limping because of the missing heel of her shoe and missing hat. Her physical condition is entirely changed to when she went to jail with nice dress, wearing a hat and looking presentable. The white prison cell in charge, exploits Mary but the black people are helpless to do anything against them as they know their insignificant social worth as compared to influential white people.
The novel *Meridian* like Walker’s other writings also depicts sufferings of black women because of the white people’s conduct of bestowing inferior status onto black people. Meridian feels this rejection by the black community in all walks of life because of their poverty whereas she finds white people enjoying all the privileges of life owing to the control on state institution, the police being one of them. In *Meridian* Walker records the protests of the black community for their right to vote. During the Civil Rights campaign the black protesters were brutally beaten by white policemen and thrown into jail for further punishment. The police did not spare the women of the black community. Meridian is also among the victims of police aggression and is hit by rubber bullets and thrown into the prison house. All the women singing revolutionary songs are met with a cruel display of force by the white authorities. The crime that black community and their women are punished for is their demand for the right to vote. The powerful policemen cruelly punish Meridian for taking part in the peaceful revolutionary movement. Inside the jail the sheriff beats her violently. For white people blacks do not have any self-esteem or dignity that is why they punish them with all their might. The white people know that in doing so they do not have to face any consequences of their actions and they therefore openly exercise their power to control the socially weak, poor and powerless black people. Because of their large representation in parliament and other decision making places the Whites pass such rules and regulations that benefit them and make them more powerful whereas blacks are deprived of all such social privileges. Walker portrays instances from history in the manner of fiction to prove her point that black people are marginalized by white people for personal gains like land grabbing, and declaring the property official land and using it for personal benefits. Meridian’s family owned the land of Serpent Park and used it for cultivation of different vegetables and crops as their source of production and survival. The white authorities liked the piece of land due to its beautiful location so they forcefuly occupied the land and deprived Meridian’s family of their possession. As a result, Meridian as a student has to work and become a victim of male lust.

In the novel *The Temple of My Familiar*, Alice Walker creates the character of Fanny Nzingha who is socially rejected by white dominant society. Fanny sees the discrimination
against poor black community by white people at individual and institutional levels. Similarly when she works as a teacher of Women Studies, Fanny cannot continue her teaching job owing to the attitude of white students. During her stay in the college as an administrator too, she finds a strong connection between patriarchy and bureaucracy and consequently quits her college career completely in order to save herself from the increasing violence brewing up inside her.

Walker also highlights the discussion between Zede and her son in law, Arveyda to bring to attention the experience of Zede as a slave on a plantation owned by white people. During the years of slavery all slave men and women were assigned duties of harvesting the crops while the women experienced even greater cruelty because they were also used as objects for sexual gratification by white plantation owners and their guards. In fact each slave woman was presumed to be the wife of a guard and when the guards found out about Zede’s relations with the slave Jesus, they killed the slave and locked Zede with his mutilated body in the forest.

Like Zede, Miss Lissie also narrates her experiences of how she and her siblings were thoroughly searched and the silver coins hidden in their hair were snatched by the slave owners. Besides stealing money, the physical abuse of young slave girls by their owners was a common feature of the slave trade. During the movement of slaves from one place to another their treatment was worse than the handling of animals. Miss Lissie narrates her physical exploitation at an age when she was still sucking her thumb and yet was put in chains in spite of the fact that the ships were so congested that slaves could not even move their body parts.

Alice Walker follows the Marxist Feminist ideology of emancipation of women from the shackles of domestic and social subjugation. She frees women from the domination of men especially wives from the subjugation of their husbands. In this study I have highlighted Walker’s aim to provide equal status to women and men. Her purpose is to present her characters in a socially acceptable status that is free from exploitation.

In her novel The Color Purple Walker shows the complete transformation of her female characters from domestic subservience to economic independence. In the
emancipation of Celie, Walker brings the role of Shug Avery who is a professional singer and who helps Celie in coming out of the shackles of marital slavery. One of the most significant incidents which bring a ray of hope for revolt is the discovery of her sister, Nettie’s letters that her husband, Mr. ___ has been keeping hidden for a number of years. This instance shakes Celie’s deep rooted subjugation, allowing her to transform to such an extent that she is ready to kill her husband because to her Nettie means everything in the world. At this moment Shug helps Celie in facing up to her husband and with her help Celie changes her subservient attitude. Shug directs the energies and feelings of revenge in Celie in attaining perfection in creativity by encouraging Celie to use all her resources in the field of tailoring. Her business flourishes due to her perfectionism combined with the marketing strategies that Shug employs. Thus Walker empowers not only Celie but also other women around her.

The economic independence of Celie has a deep impact on her liberation from patriarchy, supporting Engels’s claims that financial stability aids women empowerment. When Celie stands up to her husband and leaves him, he realizes his folly and sets out to transform himself. When Celie returns as a successful businesswoman with improved looks he shows his interest in her, apologizes for his past conduct and tries to reunite with her by helping her in her business and her domestic duties.

Through the examples cited in this and the previous chapters, Walker’s novels show the application of the Marxist Feminist theory that women can and do get respect from their family men when they liberate themselves financially. Walker enables the reunion of Celie and Albert by removing the causes of subjugation. After the death of her stepfather Walker enables Celie to possess her family property thus removing the root causes of her oppression. Celie, in turn, also becomes a source of liberation for Mary Agnes from the control of Harpo, by forcing everyone to acknowledge Squeak as Mary Agnes. She too stands up to Harpo, with the help of Shug and tells him to call her by her real name thus liberating herself from Harpo’s influence and participating in the system of production so that her labor is rewarded.
Like her other characters Walker also liberates Fanny from the disloyalty of her husband. She finds out a way to tackle social discrimination by learning to forgive white people for the criminal actions committed against her community. She understands that violence prolongs itself and that in order to achieve long lasting peace she has to agree with her mother, Olivia’s, philosophy of forgiveness. She also resumes her relationship with her husband Suwelo by making him face up to his extramarital relationships, repenting his past conduct and promising to join hands with Fanny in solving their differences and reforming their relationship to achieve trust and harmony of marital kinship, thus showing Walker’s emancipation of Fanny from violence of white patriarchy and her husband’s faithlessness.

Walker does not abandon her female characters: instead her characters are emancipated from domestic and social subjugations. The different characters she describes, the troubles and travails they encounter are all examples of Walker’s depiction of women’s emancipation through empowerment. She bestows her women characters with financial stability as a means of acquiring socially acceptable status thus proving the validity of Engels’ theory of Marxist Feminism. This study focused on the application of Engels’ theory to the text of Walker’s novels and the research questions developed therein. The attempt has been to investigate the struggle of African American women in the novels of Alice Walker and by exploring the sufferings of black women, in contemporary society, to determine the role of financial stability in the social acceptance of Walker’s women. The study, through the application of textual analysis to the three selected novels succeeded in showing, through the presentation of different characters and their development that financial stability does aid in social acceptance in the African American society presented in Walker’s novels.

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