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INFLUENCES OF THE ENVIRONMENT, FAMILIAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL



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ABSTRACT

Not only academic experiences and life events but also her experiences with family relations influenced Walker. Her father, her mother and brothers-sisters shaped her idea and thoughts, her ideology, and her new theories. Walker loved and admired her father for his funny nature and subversive wit. But Alice saw him as a man with short-coming in particularly sexism. He was the victim of racism but he was blind to his patriarchal culture of sexism. It led him to treat his wife and daughters differently from the way he treated his sons. He believed that women should obey, love and honor; and cooking and cleaning was their household duties. Male children never washed dishes and swept floors.



KEYWORDS :*Environment, familial and socio-political, family Relation.*

INTRODUCTION :

The influences of Family Relations

Girls performed house labor and had to be marginalized and restricted. Her father favored sons rather than daughters. Alice could not bear her tyrannical father's beliefs – unfair and unjust. He did not punish Curtis who was responsible for a serious injury in her right eye. Alice Walker challenged such kind of wisdom of her patriarchal father, his system of values and beliefs. Alice Walker challenges unjust patriarchal power in her writing. Sexism and patriarchy are her themes pervading all over her writings. Such themes appear thematically in her art. She protested and revolted against the male-dominated society.

Afterward Alice Walker realized that her father could not move away from his attitudes and system of values because he thought of his behavior as normal. Walker understood him looking upon her not as a person but as a female. Walker reexamined herself in order to reconcile with her father. It took a long period to reunite with her father. Alice felt that she was in quest for a father figure. Walker could not understand him while he was alive but only after his death in 1973 she understood him. The theme of reconciliation and reunion is reflected in her stories of black women – in novels as well as in

short stories. Her own daddy is the symbol of patriarchal power.

At the time of her father's death her mother paid tribute to him without tears and regrets but with smiles "Goodnight Willie Lee, I'll see you in the Morning". It is at this moment Alice realized that forgiveness has a healing power of emotional wounds. It is the fact that forgiveness became a central point of Walker's life, her fiction and poetry. Her art is redemptive.

Walker loved her mother Minnie (Lou) Tallulah Grant Walker, whole heartedly. Not only her father's death but also the death of her mother after nearly twenty years played very important role in shaping her mind and in understanding life-value. At the moment of dying,

"When her mother looked her and told her daughter that she was „a little mess, ain't you?"

The daughter felt complemented. Walker came to realize that mother recognized her rebellious nature and sanctioned her subversive behavior. Walker thanked her mother before she died. Her mother is commemorated in a collection of poetry "Goodnight Willie lee, I'll se you in the Morning (1979). Her mother became also the source of story-telling system. What she learnt from her parents is the art of story-telling. They entertained Walkers with tales from their past oral culture. Thereby stories about their ancient relatives were kept alive. Alice Walker herself explains.

"So many of the stories that I write that we all write are my mother's stories."

Through hearing tales about relatives and past culture, Walker gained mastery over the art form.

Walker's brothers were somewhat typical male siblings, and treated her with cruel jesting. Walker had five brothers and two sisters. Her oldest brother Fred showered her with lot of hugs and kisses. Walker played with Curtis and Robert. When Curtis caused the injury to her eye, they asked her not to reveal all the facts to their parents because they were afraid of physical punishment. They asked her to tell a lie that while playing on a tin roof of a garage, a protruding wire pierced her eye. Walker agreed to this invented story. They were not punished but Walker suffered pain and agonies. It was at this first moment Walker experienced her first male aggression. What Walker learnt from this that she would speak truth and only truth as Walker realized the consequences of telling a lie. Walker later on treated sexism in black communities truthfully in her literary works. Walker declares afterward

"I resolved to take my chances with the truth"

As brothers treated her cruelly, Walker turned to sisters Ruth and Molly. As her father was short tempered and did not treat the boys and the girls equally, he cherished negative attitude to Ruth. Alice felt that Ruth suffered needlessly. As a result Ruth-

"She escaped the family home at the first opportunity- marriage"

Molly won scholarship and travelled all over the world. During her trips to various places, She learnt about many things. She shared her experiences with the family and used to tell them. She cooked well but she was ashamed of the family for their provincial mores. She thought that they were not worthy of meeting her acquaintances. It caused pain to Alice. The situation would appear in her short-story – "Everyday Use".

Her child-hood friends also influenced her writings. During her childhood life. Walker had her best friend Cassie Mae Terrel. Walker called her Sister Terrel'affectionately. Both of them loved laughter. They were so close-friends, inseparable that they had sleepovers at each of their houses. But later on they were separated because Cassie's family shifted to New York. Twenty years after Walker happened to see Cassie. Walker came to know that Cassie's married life was devastated because her husband denied her the basic need of life, food. It resulted into the end of her attractive physical features and the laughing friends became silent. This turn in Cassie's life led Alice to adopt women's liberation ideology which is reflected in her fiction and short-stories – stories of black women.

CONCLUSION:

This concluding article is concerned with bringing together the significant points that have come to light in the present thesis which aims at tracing the journey of black women in Alice Walker's two collections of short stories from self-abnegation to self-recognition.

Dealing with Alice Walker's treatment of black women characters, an attempt is made to throw light on their evolutionary growth and development which is historical and psychological. By analyzing and interpreting short stories, it appears that their journey to self-recognition and liberation is endless. Walker's black-women characters grow, develop, and learn and above all transform, but they are not left with "happy ever after". Their journey does not end with "All is Well"., It is not complete but continuous. They will have to do much work in time to come and have to undertake and perform innumerable tasks before they reach their destination. They are left with personal commitments in order to recover from psychological and mental traumas of inferiority, since they live in the tense situation created by the oppressive system.

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