

VIOLENCE DEPICTED IN ALICE WALKER'S THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND

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Women are socialized to be caretakers, nurturers, and peacemakers. They participate in vital roles of mother, sister, daughter, wife, lover, friend, sister-in-law, mother-in-law, mistress, and so forth in their domestic world. The outer world, too, expect women to undertake responsibilities towards society, and nation. With all such positions, they also hold an identity of their own. In the diverse events and trials of life, women embody beauty, truth, faith, hatred, triumph, endurance, confidence, responsibility, pain, fear, hope, passion, etc. All such hues, of the African-American woman's persona, are the chief attributes of Walker's subject of writing. The author, through her adroit writing, explores different aspects of a colored woman's life.

Alice Walker, an Afro-American writer born on Feb.9, 1944 in Eatonton, Georgia made her debut as novelist in 1970. She was an activist member in civil rights movement of 1960s and is still an involved activist. She shot into prominence with the publication of her novel 'The Color purple' in 1982 for which she won Pulitzer Prize. Most of her works deal with the theme of rape, violence, isolation, mistreated & troubled relationship etc. She has given words to different perspectives to violence and abused relationship. Alice Walker views Black women as America's greatest heroes. Many of the colored women folk, in her novels, develop as whole persons through adversity. Hence, the vivid portrayal of her black women gives a sense of differences and similarities of women's conditions today and in the past. The position of the colored womenfolk, within the family, is the central point of the unending spiral of relationships. Apart from the roles within domestic sphere, they prove their potential in the outer world as well. The paper aims to probe into the several features, which all the women characters imbibe in 'The Third Life of Grange Copeland'.

The aspects within the family are of a mother, wife, sister, daughter, friend and a lover. In the ups and downs of life, many a times colored womenfolk display their strength, aggression, macho-like courage, benevolence, endurance, rebellion spirit, sacrificing nature, spiritual bent of mind and so forth. For the fellow people, they play roles of a teacher, leader, coach, and harbinger of hope and empowerment. The first novel of Alice Walker, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), spans the years between the depression and the beginning of the Civil Right Movement in the early 1960s. The novel presents different female characters like Mem, Margaret, Ruth, Josie etc. as a victim of male dominating society. The novel is primarily concerned with Black man-woman relationship and deals with the miserable life of Grange Copeland, who leads a frustrated life with his wife Margaret and son Brownfield. The couple leads a loveless marital life. Copeland fails to meet the expectations of his wife and also of his son Brownfield. He is a desperate man, who gradually turns to drinking and violence. Margaret is an obedient wife and always surrenders before the commands of Copeland. But Grange Copeland is shown as a man who keeps double standards in life as on one hand he gets furious on Margaret's asking 'how're you' to other men (11). Ironically, on the other hand he himself keeps illicit

affairs with other woman. Here is shown a picture of men who restrain feeling of their female partners but fully enjoy their life & have extra marital affairs.

Our society allows male members to have no barriers, no restrictions, no control and no limitations at all. As a consequence of his fickleness 'Margaret interprets her husband's infidelity as rejection and proof of some personal failing on her part which allows in her mind self-contempt to grow' (White 98). Copeland's treachery provokes Margaret to indulge into adultery and she gives birth to a White skinned male child named Star. Thus, she is presented a woman, who can turn to be an unconventional being, if the suppressions reach its breaking point. Margaret experiences a tough time as a wife. Her married life is devoid of understanding and care. She is docile and subservient to the demands of her husband. She is destined to lead a wretched life as dictated by Copeland. The man is mean, a drunkard, and also a chronic borrower. He even thinks of trading Margaret so that his debts are paid. Grange was no good, he had tried to get his wife to "sell herself" to get them out of debt.(11) Being a wife, she is submissive and does not even oppose Copeland's affairs with other women. The adverse situations, that come her way, ultimately result in the violation of the laws of marriage. To seek physical and emotional fulfillment, she enters into adultery. At this unconventional and undesired life style, she is abandoned by her husband.

She is the kind of wife, who can't imagine her life without the husband. As long as Copeland remains inactive towards her extra-marital affairs, she continues to be with other men. But when he abandons his family, Margaret takes it as a punishment for her irrational behavior. Burdened with the guilt of adultery she eventually commits suicide. Margaret's miserable life and death makes readers to ponder upon her status as a wife. Copeland's departure proves to be a fatal shock to Margaret. Unable to overcome with the guilt of adultery, she commits suicide and kills her son Star as well. Hence, from the beginning to the end, Margaret's character carries gloom and misery. She is an example of emotionally violated woman who is banned even to breath in the open world.

Another female character Mem has been pictured as a dutiful and caring wife to her husband Brownfield. He meets her first time in the Dew Drop Inn. In the first meeting, Mem enchants Brownfield with the power of her beauty and intelligence. She is fair and during intimacy, Brownfield feels as if, 'Her body became his shrine and he kissed it endlessly, shamelessly, lovingly, and celebrated its magic with flowers As the babies sucked and nursed at her bosom, so did he, and grew big and grew firm with love, and grew strong' (66). In the early years of marriage, Mem cherishes good times with her husband. However, in the later years she is severely abused and tormented by Brownfield on no account. Her behaviour threatens Brownfield's manliness. To satiate his false ego, he inflicts violence upon her and the daughters; Daphne, Ornette and Ruth. Despite being degraded on several occasions, Mem remains a peaceful, caring soul mate. As a wife, Mem has to experience a series of pregnancies. She bears three daughters from Brownfield even then he blames her for being unfaithful and impure. That was the year he accused Mem of being unfaithful to him, of being used to white men, his oppressors; a charge she tearfully and truthfully denied.(72) To satiate the ego of her husband, she even sacrifices her teaching profession. In fact, 'Her knowledge reflected badly on a husband who could scarcely read or write' (73).

Mem's life as a wife is pathetic as well as painful. She is ultimately murdered by Brownfield in a fit of fury. Her untimely death intensifies horrors of a married life, in which wife is no better than a prey of atrocity. Mem is a sincere and civilized colored woman, who works and earns better than her husband.

Her immense potential is a natural threat and challenge to Brownfield's manliness. To ventilate his frustration, he gradually starts underestimating Mem's vigor to work. He can't tolerate his wife Mem to have more calibers. He brings ordeals in Mem's ways so that her spirit is affected. Nevertheless Mem is a woman of substance who possesses strong resolution and determination and says in firm words:

I have worked hard all my life, first trying to be something and then just trying to be... but if you think I won't work harder than ever before to support these children you ain't only mean and evil and lazy as the devils, but you're a fool. Thus, Mem opposes Brownfield's unjust demands and justifies her actions. She has the guts to assert, 'We might be poor and black, but we ain't dumb... At least I ain't' (114).

Mem has the vigor to oppose the unjust authorities of her husband. The power of resolution and decision making enables her to sustain her self-respect and liberty. If we try to give an eye to the man-woman relationship, we can notice that here are men who repeatedly mistreat their wives and lovers and yet these women remain loyal to them, at the expense of their psychological well-being and personal fulfillment. At one point, in the story Brownfield tells Mem that "(he)ought to make (her) call (him) mister.....A woman as black and ugly as (Mem)ought to call a man *Mister*" (101). He repeatedly tells Mem that she is ugly and black, as if physical appearance makes her deserving of abusive treatment. Brownfield's incompetence in dealing with the world of whites makes him ventilate his frustrations on Mem. Brownfield desires to assert male prerogative with the appellation 'mister'. He murders his wife because a social environment that strips him of manhood cancels out his love for her. Here we have presented different type of domestic violence in black woman life.

Here are some other female characters also in the novel like Ruth, Ornette & Dephne, three daughters of Brownfield & mem. These girls have seen the brutal murder of their mother with their own eyes. Due to this incident, they are always fearfull & possess scattered identity. But later on this novel utilizes the realism to depict the material and emotional conditions of Black men's life through Copeland's character. Why are they like this? Why they treat their loving female partners so brutally that's a question? Why Copeland is a cruel, mean, abusive and inhumane being. Here Walker witnesses the impact of poverty on their minds and bodies, their frustration and shares their exhaustion from hard physical labor that offers virtually no rewards. Alice Walker develops a sympathetic understanding as 'a poor man exploited by the rural middle class rich, like millions of peasants all over the world.' Walker dramatizes how extreme despair erupts into domestic violence. The lives of her characters are not determined entirely by social and economical conditions. The Fact we want to discuss is quite unignorable that 'it's the environment, the locality, the circumstances, surroundings, family and the society which affects a child's psychology and his personality.

Brownfield is the terrifying example of how the situations and circumstances of the black world can physically enslave and spiritually cripple black people. He is a personality, cruelly victimized by the extreme racism and poverty of the world in which he is born and raised. He eventually becomes exactly what his social environment wants him to be. As his name clearly suggests- he is a person of blighted growth. He is a person, who has been physically and emotionally withered by the nearly pathological environment which surrounds him. By the end of the novel, he is presented as -"a human beingcompletely destroyed"(225) The basic cause of Brownfield's destruction are- ignorance, poverty, racism and violence, the worst features of the black rural south world. Because Brownfield's

father Grange can't make an adequate living for his family, his ego is gradually eroded, until he see himself as a 'stone' a 'robot' and a 'cipher'.

Alice Walker has got the talent to draw distinctive aspects of womanhood. Walker assumes that by revealing –actions and violent encounters , she may be able to repair the damage done by unreflective people who are unable to recognise that their actions may have long lasting consequences which affect all members of a family, community, race and society. Alice Walker portrays here women's oppression and suppression, their journey from slavery to empowerment. Racism, poverty and frustration continues to dig the lives of blacks, particularly women.

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