

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

PREJUDICES ON FEMINISM IN ALICE WALKER'S MERIDIAN

E. RAMESH¹, Dr. K. RAVICHANDRAN²

Assistant Professor of English, Krishnasamy College of Engineering and Technology, Cuddalore

E-mail: rameslit@gmail.com

Associate Professor of English, Thiruvalluvar University, Serkkadu, Vellore



E. RAMESH

ABSTRACT

Alice Walker's novel Meridian focuses the fact that what we have not experienced on humanity so far. In Africa, the fact is established that there is flowering of the emergence of literature as part of cultural identity and revolutionary struggle against domination, marginalization and political cruelty in African states like Kenyan, Nigeria, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa etc... This paper emerges regarding unfaithful patriarchal who is transforming the desire upon faithful matriarchal in cruel way to have vengeance.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

Alice Walker (1944-) is considered as a writer who is the powerful woman at expressing political and social struggles on feminism. According to my perception, she has been named as a militant without weapon in order to bring equality for regarding inferior of black women in all the nations. Her vision consistently mirrors her concern with racial and political issues, particularly with the black woman's struggle for spiritual and political survival. Her political awareness, her Southern heritage, and her sense of the freedom made greatness into the revolution. Much of her writing reveals her concern for black women and their families. This paper, **Prejudices on Feminism in Alice Walker's Meridian** focuses the fact that what we have not experienced on humanity so far.

In Africa, the fact is established that there is flowering of the emergence of literature as part of cultural identity and revolutionary struggle against domination, marginalization and political cruelty in African states like Kenyan, Nigeria, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South

Africa etc... The life of African Americans in America is scheduled that they are weak and submissive in all the ways to live. It is often ravaged by discrimination in the name of race. It becomes much more horrid, if they belong to the poor class and female gender.

Most significant themes of Meridian includes "...the estrangement and violence that mark the relationships between Miss Walker's black men and women" (17). Moreover, "...the most difficult paradox that Walker has examined to date is the relationship between violence and revolution..." (Evans, 1984: 466) The years of movement have witnessed the sharp strictness and violent sides of both government and society. Walker posits Meridian's struggle for personal transformation as an alternative to the political movements of the 1960s, particularly those that merely reproduced existing power structures. As Karen Stein writes,

... the novel points out that the Civil Rights Movement often reflected the oppressiveness of patriarchal capitalism. Activists merely turned political rhetoric to

their own ends while continuing to repress spontaneous individuality. To overcome this destructiveness, Walker reaches for a new definition of revolution. Her hope for a just society inheres not merely in political change, but in personal transformation. (130)

In *Meridian*, Walker reveals another kind of discrimination that borders on race. Truman, who considers that marrying a white woman a prized possession, and Lynne, who considers that the black man is a piece of Art, decides to marry each other. The marriage that is found on reasons other than love gives into pressure. Lynne faces racial prejudice and she has to struggle hard to win the acceptance and trust of black people. For Lynne, hetero sexuality, complicated by the pressures on the biracial couple in a racist society, leads not to liberation and to the affirmation of a new social mode, but rather to the rock-button basement of self. She is called a white bitch and her child Camara, a mulatto. In *Meridian*, rape incident is seen again. Lynne's daughter Camara who is also black, like is father; Truman is raped by a crown man. "...his six-year old daughter... had been attacked by a grown man and was now lying nearly dead in the hospital" (Walker, 1986: 169).

Their struggle to live in the society and get its respect that thinks of them inferior leaves them desperate and psychologically mangled. The angst and despair destroy their hope and ruin their confidence. As a result, they turn into disgruntled wretches, when their attempts to measure up to the white middle class patriarchal system evade their reach and baffle their aspirations. The socio-economic and political transpirations affect their psyche; and their disappointments and failures manifest into unknown fear and unreasonable anger. The simmering anger erupts with a volcanic catastrophe in their relationship among the members of the family.

Black women have not been putting up with the endurance from the unexpected commitment of patriarchal entreaty. Another awful interpretation is Tommy Odds, who loses his arm in a racial dispute, considers his amputated arm a symbol of white arrogance. He unleashes his distrust

in the white society by raping Lynne. She does not complain, since she acquiesces herself for the loss of his arm. She sympathizes with him, overcome by the guilt. After the sexual act, she kisses his armless slick round stump. Her attempt to soothe the racial wound is mistaken, when Tommy Odds arrives the next day with Hedge, Atuna, and Raymond. They encountered her sexually at the time she was not known how to administrate the hazard and she set loose. When she reports the same to Truman, he refuses to react but convinces her, saying that she is to them, an unread book which they want to read, or an unvisited town which they come across while they pass. In the absence of Truman's categorical objection and Lynne's stout resistance, the black man uses her as the tool to take revenge upon the white society. They rape her repeatedly, until she becomes a popular prostitute.

Barbara Christian writes of the danger of the myth of Black Motherhood, noting that, according to this tradition, only stories of strong, successful mothers are passed on:

. . . that tradition that is based on the monumental myth of black motherhood, a myth based on the true stories of sacrifice black mothers performed for their children .. . is ...restrictive, for it imposes a stereotype of Black women, a stereotype of strength that denies them choice and hardly admits of the many who were destroyed. (89)

Things are worse for *Meridian* even from the beginning. *Meridian* thinks that her association with Eddie, his boy friend, will protect her from the lustful black men and save her from responding to the vulgar signals of her peers. To her, sex proves to be not a pleasure, but a sanctuary. In the end, she becomes a sex-pot for Eddie, and she becomes pregnant even while she is in school. Then *Meridian* discontinues her school studies and becomes an unwanted wife for Eddie and an unacceptable daughter-in-law for his mother. When the couple decides to be separated, the women of the community are shocked. They cannot even understand why *Meridian* should be sore about her life with Eddie just for being unlovable.

Meridian's life with Truman also proves to be miserable since he is interested only in white women who read "New York Times". And if at all he marries a black woman, she has to be a virgin and chaste. According to his definition, wife for man is like a port for the ship, or a shed for a train. With French phrases in his mouth and Ethiopian princely robes, he believes that he deserves a woman much better than Meridian. Mrs. Hill, Meridian's mother, considers marriage as a prison and children as a burden. Meridian inherits this sullen temperament and spoils her own life. So she gives up his son for adoption. Twice burdened with this guilt on account of her mother's life and abandoning her son, she suffers all kind of privations, in the end. Consequently, unable to overcome the guilt, she kills herself.

Sexism and patriarchy define the roll of Marlene. She is provided with everything to play the roles of an obedient daughter, a devoted wife and an adoring mother, and she is well preserved and well protected until she remains faithful to her husband O' Shay. He could not tolerate her sleeping with another man. At once, he kills her and her corpse is made into a mummy. The community absolves him from the sin and rather wants it to serve as a warning for erring wives. Three of the titles painted on the Marilene O'Shay trailer sum up the narrow possibilities for women in a patriarchal society: "Obedient Daughter," "Devoted Wife," and "Adoring Mother" (19). The fourth, "Gone Wrong," indicates the perceived tragedy involved when a woman rejects these roles: "Over the fourth a vertical line of progressively flickering light bulbs moved continually downward like a perpetually cascading tear" (19).

Thus, this paper emerges regarding unfaithful patriarchal who is transforming the desire upon faithful matriarchal in cruel way to have vengeance. This brief study **Prejudices on Feminism in Alice Walker's Meridian** might shape the society well and good. Likewise, in her novel Meridian, Walker portrays the struggles and suffers of a black woman, Meridian. Meridian aims to struggle for "...a reluctant world" (Cooke, 1984: 158). She longs for a society in which both blacks and whites have equal rights. During the acts, she and her friends are

exposed to violence and punishment. However, they do not lose their hope for future. In Meridian, Walker "...reminds us the fact that suffering need not be random and meaningless, nor a centripetal human purpose without humor or hope, or mercy, or effect" (159).

Works Cited

- "Alice Walker" (2009). The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bell, Bernard W. (1987). *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*, USA: The University of Massachusetts Pres.
- Christian, Barbara. *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers*. New York: Pergamon, 1985.
- Cooke, Michael G. (1984). *Afro-American Literature in the Twentieth Century*, London: Yale University Pres.
- Evans, Mari (1984). *Black Women Writers (1950-1980)*, New York: Doubleday.
- Stein. Karen F. 'Meridian: Alice Walker's Critique of Revolution.' *Black American Literature Forum* 20 (1 986): 129-41.
- Walker, Alice (1986). *Meridian*, New York: Pocket Books.
- White, Evelyn C. *Alice Walker: A Life*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004. Print.
- Witt, Mary Frese, et al. *The Humanities*. Vol.1. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1985 Print.