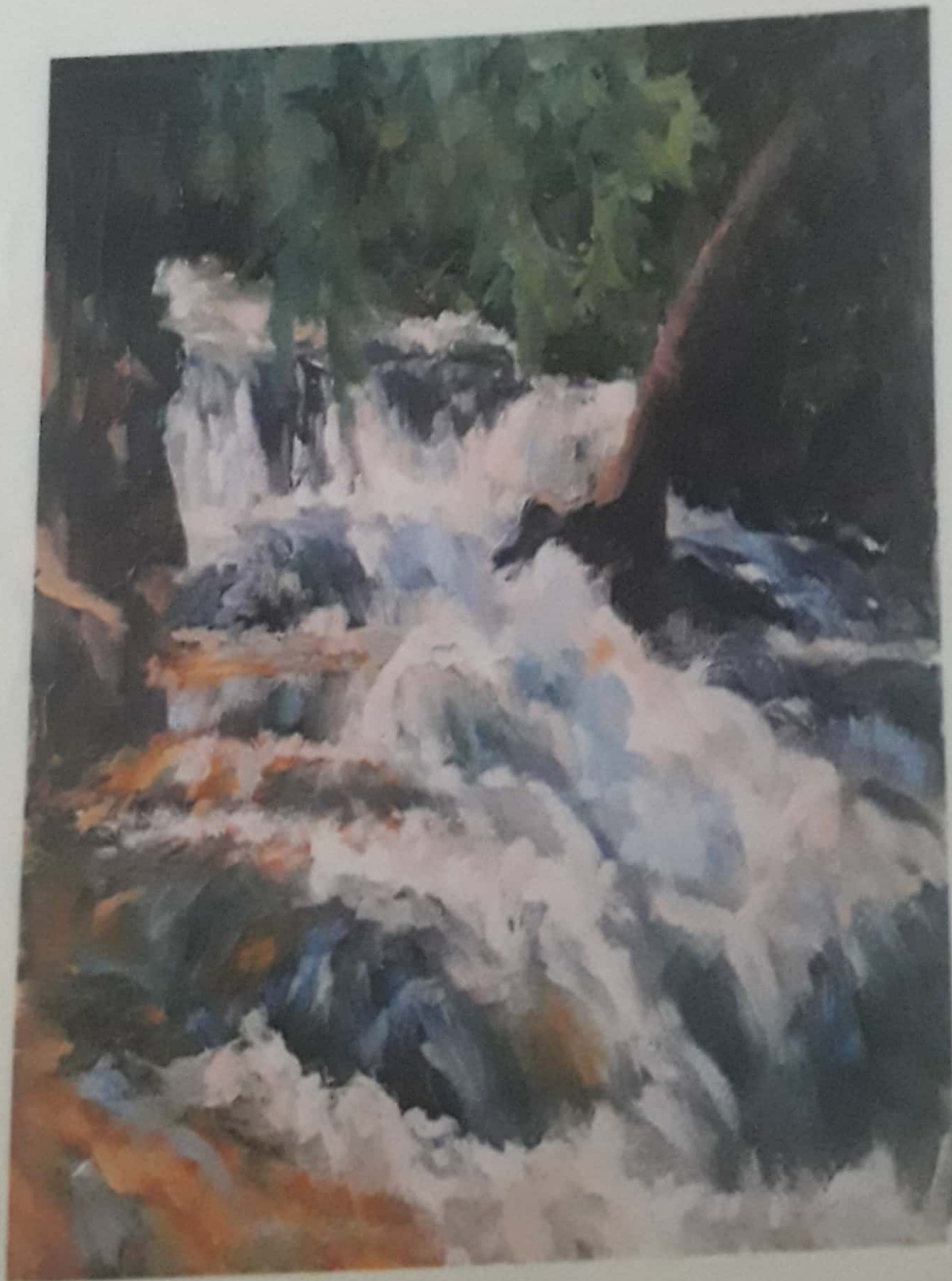


ECHOING CASCADES

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SPIRITUAL QUEST AND SELF – AFFIRMATION IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

G.SARADHA

Alice Walker is a writer and activist, meditator, and mother. The youngest of eight children born to a farm family in rural Georgia, Walker grew up to become one of the best-loved writers in America. The major themes of her writing remain unchanged. Walker is fascinated by community: its integral place in our lives, how it can be destroyed and achieved. She continues to contemplate suffering, especially among black women facing both sexism and racism. While her writing often deals with horrifying subjects, Walker manages to accentuate the positive. Causal, precise, and fiercely honest, her contemplations read like letters to a friend. The word "love" comes up repeatedly. Alice Walker's writing has been a key to naming and defining African American women's thought for African American women as well as for non-African American feminist scholars. Walker's strength as a writer lies in her ability to write about topics that are generally a taboo, to construct characters, themes and plots that are often untouchable for mainstream writers and audiences, and to continue to raise topics whose popularity fizzles while the issues continue.

The novel *The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker, was published in 1982. It won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983. A feminist novel about an abused and uneducated black woman's struggle for empowerment, the novel was praised for the depth of its female characters and for its eloquent use of black English vernacular. In the novel 'The Color Purple' there are many fine women in this novel, and each of them has a distinctive, fighting sense of courage. They refuse to be beaten into submission. The fiery-tempered women, of course, are easily recognized, but it is the quiet, growing strength of Celie that finally impresses us most. For over half the novel, Celie's method of resistance to violence of all kinds is stoically to endure to pretend that she is wood, a tree bending but not breaking. This psychology works for Celie. For a long time, it is enough to simply endure and "be alive". One must fight. By nature, Celie is not a fighter.

In fact, she refuses to fight until she realizes how thoroughly cruel her husband has been.

Celie's world is also dramatically expanded as a result of her sister's travels in Africa. Living a poor, downtrodden life in the South, she had never stopped to consider her African heritage until Nettie sends letters describing the West African village she's living in. Nettie describes her first experiences in Africa as "magical". For the first time, Celie comes to see black people not as a downtrodden, but as beautiful, noble and proud. Celie learns that the first human in the world were black people, originating in Adam. She also learns that Africans had an extremely rich culture and had thriving civilizations far before Europeans did. Although the Olinka village that Nettie lives in eventually is destroyed by Europeans, through the African setting, both Celie and Nettie begin to feel that their black heritage is a source of pride rather than a cause for shame. They learn that though black people are currently oppressed, this wasn't always the case.

The Color Purple documents the traumas and gradual triumph of Celie, a young African-American woman raised in rural isolation in Georgia, as she comes to resist the paralyzing self-concept forced on her by those who have power over her. Celie is repeatedly raped by her father, and gives birth twice as a result of the abuse, but assumes the children have been killed when her father secretly disposes of them. When a man proposes marriage to Celie's sister, Nettie, their father pushes him to take Celie instead, forcing her into a marriage as abusive as her early home. Nettie soon flees that home, first to Celie and her husband and then out into the wide world. By the time of her reunion with Celie almost thirty years later, Nettie has met and traveled to Africa with an African-American missionary couple, whom she discovers to be the adoptive parents of Celie's children. In Africa, Nettie lives among the Olinka, whose patriarchal society and indifference toward the role of Africans in the slave trade underline the prevalence of exploitation.

Celie narrates her life through letters to God. These are prompted by her father's warning to tell "nobody but God" when he makes her pregnant for a second time at the age of fourteen, and she writes to God with the unselfconscious honesty of someone who thinks nobody is listening. As she builds relationships with other black women, and especially with those women engaging forcefully with oppression, however, Celie draws strength and insight from their perspectives and develops a sense of her own right to interpret herself and her world. Her independence develops symbiotically through her expanded first hand and secondhand experience of the world until she is able to construct her relations to others according to her own values.

Spiritual Quest is actively searching for meaning and purpose in life, to become a more self-aware and enlightened person, and to find answer to life's mysteries and big questions.

Celie, the main character of the novel, goes through life having a hard time noticing the beautiful aspects and appreciating them. She had a difficult life and was abused as an adolescent.

Initially, the color purple is continually equated with suffering and pain. Purple is also the color of Celie's private parts: the site of her sexual violation. First, she is repeatedly raped by her Pa, who later turns out to be her stepfather, Alfonso. Then she is married to Mr. Albert who also treats her as a sexual slave. Thus purple become the color of sex in her life.

Later on, when Celie comes into contact with the blues singer, Shug Avery, the color purple acquires a new meaning for her. Shug tells her she should learn to enjoy her life. When they are in field of purple flowers, Shug tells Celie to look at the flowers and embrace their beauty.

" you must look at all the good and acknowledge them because God placed them all on earth ". After learning this, Celie has a better respect for life and everything it has to offer.

Laugh and Be Merry is a poem written by John Masefield. In this poem, the poet says that

“Laugh and be merry, remember, better the world with a song,
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.”

Thus we find that at the beginning of the novel Celie had no sense of the color purple. She had such a horrible life that she was not stopping to smell the roses. She was just surviving. By surviving, we mean, she was practically dead emotionally though she was physically alive. The true significance of the color purple is realized by Celie when she becomes friendly with Shug Avery. Celie starts to learn more about herself and the world from people who enter into her life from very different settings than her own. Shug Avery comes from the city-Memphis Tennessee- where she lives a much more liberated life than Celie. Shug owns her own home, has a car, wears fashionable clothing, is outspoken, and thinks life is meant to be enjoyed. When Celie leaves home and joins Shug in Memphis, Celie also becomes more liberated. Whereas company making pants for both men and women. She also learns to speak up for herself.

Shug says that God does little things for people, like creating the color purple, just to make people happy and give them pleasure in their lives.

“God made Heaven and Earth for joy He took in a rhyme,
Made them, and filled them full with the strong red wine of
His mirth”

God wants people to notice the beauty of His creation. According to Shug, enjoying the beauty of creation means all of God's creation, including sex, which for Celie has purple color. Shug teaches Celie that enjoying life is exactly what God wants us to do, it's a way of expressing our love of God.

“Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4: 6,7)

As a promise to God, the protagonist of the novel, she writes a letter to God

“Dear God, I am fourteen years old I have always been a good girl, May be you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me.”

If we are to submit all our problems to God, He will give strength for us to face all our problems.

As Celie does learn to love life, she decorates her bedroom of her own home with all purple and red and also she gets self-Affirmation to live in this society.

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