

# Metamorphosis Of Albert In Alice Walker's The Color Purple: A Socio-Cultural Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

The majority of African American literary matriarchs have been frequently criticized for airing the dirty representation of the African American men but ironically most of these critics have largely ignored how these literary matriarchs have drawn our attention to the regeneration of Black men from their degenerated state. This study intends to analyze one of the most well-known Black male fictional characters, Albert, from Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), in the context of a hostile socio-cultural milieu in North America from 1910 to 1940 from a Black feminist, womanist, & psychoanalytical point of view. Although Walker has portrayed Albert as violent, insensible, and destructive, she also acknowledges the factors that contributed to his devilish disposition in a sympathetic and understanding manner. This study aims to demonstrate that Walker attempted to make Black men aware of their own degradation and urge Black men to overcome their degraded state through the description of Albert's regeneration as a new Black man. In addition to this, the text emphasizes how men have gained social supremacy through the antagonistic dualism of gender roles and social stratification. This paper makes an attempt to defend the stereotypical portrayal of a Black male character by African American literary matriarchs.

**Keywords:** Black Men, Slavery, Patriarchal Legacy of Violence, Hypermasculinity, Heteronormality, Psychological Emasculation, New Black Man

## INTRODUCTION

The protagonist in Alice Walker's contentious book *The Color Purple*, Mr. Albert, is a man (1982). He has an extremely complicated personality since he is difficult to comprehend. It is inexcusable and inconceivable how he treated Celie, but his

love for Shug Avery and, in the end, his gracious and atoning treatment of Celie humanizes him. A thorough inquiry reveals him to be a patriarchal agent, which crushes him and causes him to become insane. We cannot afford to dislike him towards the end of the book; instead, we must have a good attitude towards him due to his emergence as

a new black man. He represents Walker's hope for the ground-level prospect of Black men's rebirth. Before attempting critical analyses, it seems viable to give a brief historical backdrop on which context the narrative of the text has been formed and fabricated.

The descendants of African American are rooted out from the African continent and brought in forcibly to work as slaves. Their rights were severely limited, and they were long denied their rightful share in the economic, social, and political sphere of the United States. In that white-dominated society, African American men and women became victims of unbearable torture, degradation, humiliation, oppression, and exploitation. Due to the legal and systematic deprivation of all human rights under the system of slavery, black males were reduced to the status of objects and property. However, slavery left a baleful scar on Black men's substances as well as their psyche. Socialization, oppression, denial, and degradation all worked together to destroy Black male's self-power, consciousness, and reasoning faculty. While enduring the horrors of slavery, Black men tried to uphold their respect and self-identity. In front of their women and children, they were abused, whipped, and emasculated. Again, they even could not protect their women from abuse and sexual oppression by white agents because the situation was beyond their reach. In this way, their weaknesses, inabilities, and emasculated conditions became very much visible to their women; as a consequence, their masculinity was suspected by the Black women.

However, the whites' way of living fascinated the black men. They started imitating the white men's patriarchal norms of living. A distinguished example in their endeavour to imitate the white men was the Black men's choice to maintain their women out of labor force. Ironically, being a passive Black male in a white-dominated society, they were a failure in carrying out the

responsibility of being the head of the family due to the fact that they are Black, and they did not obtain education or schooling in other competencies. Wallace states, "Frustration and desperation to succeed has led many Black men to turn to illegal activities" (Wallace, 1978, p. 30-31). Their failure in social, political, and economic grounds resulted in their metaphorical emasculation; and to tackle such emotional breakdown they tend to exploit their women who were taken for granted as inferior both physically and socially. Ironically, it appeared to them as the only means to exhibit their potency and severity.

Patriarchy and Machismo, the products of cultural adaptations have been the most influential cultural instruments within the North American and Latin American societies, through which men have traditionally achieved control over the social, political and economic systems. The development of this control has been possible through cultural and religious indoctrination on both men and women. A close observation of the patriarchal society reveals that there is an existence of the cycle of violence and hyper-masculinity. hooks has stated that "[i]ndoctrination into the mind-set begun in childhood includes a psychological initiation that requires boys to accept that their willingness to do violent acts makes them patriarchal men" (hooks, 2004, p.59). This is the thought process that permits them to perpetrate violence. Tim Edwards has pointed out that "a more external or structurally overt position of oppression or powerlessness often links strongly with a more initial or covert expression of helplessness" (Edwards, 2006, p. 46). Again, the paradox of patriarchy is that the traditional masculinity of men is dependent on the weaknesses of women.

Through *The Color Purple*, this study searches for the different aspects of masculinity of Black men and also tries to discover if there is any cycle of violence that exists by observing the character of Old Mr.

\_\_\_\_, Mr. Albert, Harpo, and Alfonso. Through her text, Alice Walker shows that not only women but also men suffer due to the patriarchal system. The novel shows that men who are dominated by their own fathers are determined to dominate their sons in the same manner within their own private realms. It is a kind of cycle of violence. Discussing this cycle and power application Kate Millett assesses that “half of the populace which is female is controlled by the half which is male, the principle of patriarchy appear to be two folds: male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger” (Millete, 2000, p. 4).

All men in the African American community lack respect for women and maximum of them participate in the abuse and oppression of women. Actually, as the African American community is patriarchal, the men always think themselves as masters and superior to women, and are seen to practice ‘hypermasculinity’. In *The Color Purple*, it is observed that maximum African American males have the tendency to practice hypermasculinity because socially, economically and politically they are the failure in revealing their masculine power in the white-dominated society. So, only their household is left to satisfy their patriarchal male ego by exerting their domination over their children and wife. Through *The Color Purple*, Walker has shown violent and weak misogynists; and Mr. Albert is one of the manifestations of such characteristics. She has revealed how the patriarchal values are structured with a cycle of violence from one generation to another generation that is symbolized through Albert’s father, and in turn, causing Albert to instil these destructive values of patriarchy in Harpo.

The father-son relationship through the portrayal of Albert’s father, Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Mr. Albert himself, and Albert’s son, Harpo represents the cyclic nature of oppression of patriarchy practised upon the women community by the male-dominated society. The paternal legacy of abuse and oppression

is instilled upon Black masculine community since their childhood and is practised from generation to generation.

In 27th number letter, when readers are introduced to Mr. Albert’s father, it is apparent that he is a typical dominating father having great control over Mr. Albert in front of whom Albert appears to be a submissive, weak, and timid figure. Moreover, while growing up, Albert took his father as a role model of a family head in running a family. Being a follower of his father’s ideologies and attitudes, Albert maintained old-fashioned perspectives of women and of male authority without considering how this was affecting his family. Albert’s father’s control of his son was evident when he visited Albert’s house after Shug Avery had arrived in the house. When he first appeared, we can see that he instantly had taken charge of the conversation, and Albert took the submissive role by not responding during the first part of their conversation. Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ felt that he had every right to interrogate his son about Shug Avery’s stay in his house. Albert’s father interrogated him in this manner:

...just couldn’t rest till you got her in your house, could you?.Mr.\_\_\_\_\_ don’t say nothing. Look out cross the railing at the trees, over the top of the wall...Old Mr \_\_\_\_\_ say to Mr\_\_\_\_\_, just what is it bout this Shug Avery anyway, he say. She black as tar...she ain’t even clean. I hear she got the nasty woman disease. Mr\_\_\_\_\_ don’t say nothing (Walker, 1982, p.52).

Albert’s father’s such authority in Albert’s private life revealed how much he had dominated his son. Even when Albert got the nerve to respond to his father, Mr. Old\_\_\_\_\_ reminded Mr. Albert that he must be accountable to him since he had been the owner of all the property that Mr. Albert had been enjoying: “...Well, this my house. This my land. Your boy Harpo in one of my houses, on my land. Weeds come up on my land, I chop’em up. Trash blow over it I burn it” (p. 53). So it is evident that Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

always had control over his son to some degree because of his fatherly position and ownership of Albert's property. It is said that once tortured becomes a torturer. Ironically, the pressure and domination that Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ inflicted over his son, Mr. Albert also, in the same way, had treated his son, Harpo. Consequently, it is observable that Mr. Albert had been following his father's footsteps and Harpo following his father that was reflected in his actions while attempting to torture his wife Sofia.

In the 17th letter, Albert's authority over Harpo and Harpo's fear and passivity toward Albert is seen when Harpo took Sofia Butler to meet Albert. In this letter, Albert's attitude towards his previous wife, Annie Julia was also visible which was of scorn and contempt. Mr. Albert hated Julia because of her extra-marital affair and as a consequence, her death didn't even matter to him. He told Harpo that the nightmarish scandal of his mother's murder had hanged over Harpo and that it made him unfit as a suitor for his girlfriend. Julia was not to blame, and yet everyone in the community did blame her since she let her desires seek gratification. It reflects the misogynist attitude of African American society where men can keep mistresses in spite of being married but it becomes a crime when a married woman keeps a lover. Such is the hypocrisy of African American society. Again, without knowing Sofia properly, Albert rejected Sofia in marrying Harpo and passed shallow, insulting, and nasty comment on her character. It clearly depicts Albert's attempt for becoming a dominating figure that echoes his father's ideology and cyclic oppression of patriarchy. Albert's first interaction with Sofia follows:

...she say, How you, Mr \_\_\_\_\_? He don't answer the question. He say, look like you got yourself in trouble...who the father? heast. She look surprise. Harpo. She say. How he

know that?...Young women no good these days ... Got they legs open to every Tom, Dick and Harry. Harpo look at his daddy like he never seen him before. But he don't say nothing. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ say, No need to think I'm gon let my boy marry you cause you in the family way. He young and limited ... Harpo don't say nothing ... Harpo sitting there with his head down and his hands tween his knees (Walker, 1982, p. 31).

Such behavior and attitude depict a similarity between father and son as Mr. Albert reacts just like Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ regarding the relationship of Harpo and Sofia. Harpo's reaction to Albert was also just like Albert's passive reaction to Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ when Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ boldly confronted him about Shug Avery. Harpo's meekness and gesture revealed his impotency to break the hereditary submissive acts toward his father. Because males are taught from their early childhood that real manhood includes the sons' submissiveness towards their fathers. Both Old Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Albert were "...father-figures, who, trapped in a time – warp, want to be called 'Mister'. These are the fathers who identify with the racist violence of (white) culture in the South by miming [the ability to weaken another] in their relations with their black sons" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 980).

Albert gradually becomes a model figure for Harpo in becoming masculine according to the culture of African American society. Harpo had witnessed his father's treatment to his mother, Annie Julia and later to his stepmother Celie. He noticed how his father brutally and inhumanly treated Celie before and during his marriage to Sofia. Basically, Walker portrays Harpo's traits as feminine since he is very much skilled and comfortable in doing household works such as cooking,

cleaning, taking care of children etc. But after the marriage of Harpo, Albert pokes and demeans him because Harpo is lenient to Sofia instead of being aggressive and violent. As a consequence, Harpo starts following his father Albert's footprint blindly; because he feels that it is the only way in becoming masculine, in becoming a husband that will uplift his status as a man.

Like himself, Albert wanted Harpo to grow up as a dominating male figure like him. Just on the first day of the marriage of Celie with Albert, Harpo had badly injured Celie's head but Albert did not reprimand his son to mend his ways. In the 12th letter, it is revealed that when Albert's sisters asked Harpo to fill the water bucket, Harpo refused to do so because Harpo felt such kind of works were not meant for men. "Harpo, she say ...don't let Celie be the one bring in all water. You a big boy now...women work, he say. What? She say. Women work. I'm a man" (Walker, 1982, p. 22). But it is noticed that Albert instead rebuked his sisters instead of Harpo. In this manner, consciously or unconsciously, Harpo continued taking lessons and guidance from his father the rational at the back of abusing wife. "Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me, Mr \_\_\_\_ say, cause she my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for – he don't finish"(p. 23). Harpo tried to carry his father's behavior into his marriage with Sofia. It was a matter of embarrassment for Harpo that he was unable to control his wife. This is evident in the following statement, "Harpo want to know what to do to make Sofia mind....I tell her one thing, she do another. Never do what I say. Always backtalk...You ever hit her? Mr...ast. Harpo look down at his hands, nawsoh, he say low embrass" (p. 35). Harpo's disgrace in terms of being unable to control Sofia revealed his discomfort over his lack of authority on his wife. It also indicates his experience of ignominy at being exposed in front of his own father as an impotent man and husband. He failed to follow his father's footprint but at the same time unable to move beyond the

system. He was incapable of exercising authority, and this was why to show his masculinity he attempted to beat Sofia. In this context, Tim Edwards' comment is worthy of mention:... physical violence, in particular, is predominantly more socially acceptable as a practice for men or boy rather than for women or girl while, conversely, men or boys are often acutely embarrassed if they become victims of violence and particularly if that violence comes from girls or women, whereas the fear of violence remains a dominant factor in many women's lives (Edwards, 2006, p. 37)

To uphold his dignity as a man, Harpo longed to control his wife as his father did, which had been evident in his conversation with Celie. He told her, "I want [Sofia] to do what I say, like you do for Pa ...When Pa tell you to do something, you do it ...When he say not to, you don't. You don't do what he say, he beat you ...I try to beat her she black my eyes" (Walker, 1982, p.60). Harpo's such attempt and treatment led Sofia to say "He don't want a wife, he want a dog" (p.62). The statement above certainly indicates that society's enforced masculinity has put Harpo into a dilemma with himself as societal standard has forced him to shake off his so-called feminine and liberal behavior. His failure in taming Sofia leads him to think that he is a failure and fully powerless.

It is evident that both Mr. Albert and Harpo could not go through a healthy psychological development, and were snatched off their originality and happiness because they lived their lives for their fathers and society. Thus, in *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker exposes cyclic oppression of patriarchy and the vulnerable position of Black men in the power structure.

*The Color Purple* exposes the predicament of the black woman Celie who is uneducated and poor and gets physically abused by her so-called father and husband. In this way, the cyclic oppression of patriarchy over women is noticeable. Walker seems to convey the

message that women can never be liberated from oppression and domination until men are redeemed and women are conscious of their strength.

The misogynist attitudes are internalized in males in such a way that they do not think twice in hurting their girls or wives. In *The Color Purple*, the first man with whom the reader is introduced is Celie's stepfather, Alfonso who physically and sexually abused Celie; it is he who instilled a lack of worth in her. Just from her early childhood, he continued to control her to meet his male ego. He was a remorseless child molester. He seemed to only value women for sex and their ability to take care of his home. He continued the verbal, physical and sexual oppression on Celie until her marriage by silencing and threatening her. Celie wrote: "Just say you gonna do what your mommy wouldn't ...Then he pushed his thing inside...when that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it" (Walker, 1982, p. 1). In this regard, Charmaine Eddy noted that "the [African American] male characters may hope to confer upon themselves a position of masculine dominance by transferring the structure of slavocracy to the relationship between men and women..." (Eddy, 2000, p. 6). Celie was treated merely as a piece of property by her stepfather; and he acted as a slaveholder through his bargaining with Albert for dowry in trying to get Celie married. Charmaine Eddy observes about this type of slave trade and says:

Celie's body pass[ed] from paternal control to the control of her husband ... Celie [was] called from the house by her father's command and she emerg[ed] to be looked 'up and down' by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. The equivalency established between Celie and the cow that accompan[ied] her as her dowry [stole] her status as a commodity in a patriarchal

system of exchange ... As Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Celie's stepfather discuss[ed] her attributes, they focus on her potential as breeder ... and her strength as a laborer, as if she were a slave on display on the auction block before a potential purchaser (p. 6).

Albert feels that no matter how he tortured Celie, there was no one to save her since he very closely observed how Celie's father had treated her. Albert also did the same with his previous wife Annie Julia, because there was no one from her family to protest against Albert's brutal treatment towards Julia: "Her family forgot about her once she married" (Walker, 1982, p.112). Again, it would not be exaggerated to say that older Black men like to seek wives of younger ages with a view to training them into their desired women. Additionally, younger girls are easier to be controlled than a woman of equal or closer age. Both Alfonso and Albert married the women who were very much junior to them and since they belong to power, it easily paved their way in molding their women into desired characteristics. Albert's heterosexuality suggests his conformity to the norms of the patriarchal society and explains the rationale of the boys' rejection of their mother and their ambivalent attitude toward their father. In this regard Sigmund Freud's observation is first rated, "...the ambivalence displayed in the relations to the parents should be attributed entirely to bisexuality and that it is not, as I have represented above, developed out of identification in consequence of rivalry" (qtd.Gananath, 1990, p.86). By this Freud suggests that the boy must pick not only between father and mother but additionally the two sexual inclinations. Therefore, the boy usually chooses the heterosexuality not only out of the fear of castration by the father but also the fear of feminization associated within heterosexual cultures and thus saves him from the ignominy, and emasculation. In

this way, the young boy deals with his father always by identifying himself with him. Albert's heterosexuality suggests how patriarchy had crushed him since childhood that compelled him to wear a mask of cruelty. He was left with no other option but to abide by the patriarchal mindset because of the fear of feminization. He understands that to survive in society, he must internalize the stereotypes of heterosexual male codes. He starts taking his father as an ideal patriarchal role model in running his family. As a consequence, being unable to defy his father, Albert had no preference but to maintain an underground relationship with Shug, and thus became a miserable production of patriarchy.

Celie and Shug are the most significant women in Albert's life. Celie is the second wife of Albert whereas Shug is his ladylove whom he truly loves. His treatment towards Celie is that of a monster though his treatment towards Shug is very compassionate and humanistic. In the exposition, the relationship between Celie and Albert evidently seems to be forced and devoid of love. After all, Mr. Albert did not want to marry Celie but her sister Nettie. However, the reason for marrying Celie lay in Albert's selfish interests for he needed someone to look after his children, for someone to do work around the house, for he needed someone over whom he could vent out his anger and frustration, and for someone to gratify his sexual desire. To him, Celie is more a slave than a wife. "Mr \_\_\_\_\_ come git me to take care his rotten children. He never ast me nothing bout myself. He calm on top of me and fuck and fuck, even when my head bandaged. Nobody ever love me" (Walker, 1982, p. 103). Again, Albert's beating and torturing of Celie now and then places him in the position of an animal. "He beat me like he beat the children...I make myself wood, I say to myself, Celie, you a tree" (p. 23). Albert's inhuman personality is revealed mostly when he conceals Nettie's letter. Celie wrote, "But how come he to do it? I ast. He know Nettie mean everything in the world to me" (p. 109).

However, in the end, their relationship improves to such an extent that he proposes Celie again to get married to him.

It is very much evident that from the beginning to the end Albert's love for Shug Avery is unquestionable. Right from the beginning, he wanted to marry Shug but due to his father's undeniable authority, he could not follow his heart. Shug proved to be his mistress, and overall the best friend of his life. His dejection, pain and loneliness due to Shug's absence in his life were never noticed by his family except Celie.

However, when Albert hears that Shug Avery is coming to town for her show, his happiness and excitement know no bound. He tries to dress best so that he could impress her: "Shug Avery is coming to town!...Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ going to hear her. He dress all up in front the glass, look at himself, then undress and dress all over again. He slick back his hair with pomade, then wash it out again" (Walker, 1982, p. 25). Again, when Shug gets sick dangerously, nobody in the town willingly comes forward to help her except Albert. Shug's sickness and people's indifference to her had torn him thoroughly: "I look at his face. It tried and sad and I notice his chin weak....Nobody fight for Shug, he say. And a little water come to his eyes" (p. 46). Moreover, Albert strictly asked Celie to take care of Shug and from time to time he inquired Shug Avery's update from Celie, "Mr \_\_\_\_\_ ast me how I git her to eat" (p. 50). In a conversation between Celie and Harpo, it is revealed how much important is love in building a successful happy marital relationship. Celie believed that Albert used to beat her because he never loved her: "Mr \_\_\_\_\_ marry me to take care of his children. I marry him cause my daddy made me. I don't love Mr \_\_\_\_\_ and he don't love me. But you his wife, he say, just like Sofia mine. The wife spose to mind. Do Shug Avery mind Mr \_\_\_\_\_? I ast. She the woman whom he wanted to marry. She call him Albert,...Little as he is, when she git her weight back she can sit on him if he try to bother her (p. 61).

When there is love, the lovers can confront each other for their actions; there may be no fear. That's what Celie attempted to deliver. Just because their relation was loveless, it lacked mutual knowledge and accountability. Consequently, Mr. Albert had got chance and cause to abuse and torture Celie. On the other hand, in front of Shug, Albert is ironically a different person who is timid, accountable and soft-spoken. Shug's dominating presence in front of Albert is a manifestation of Albert's another personality.

African American society has defined gender performance by establishing a different criterion for different activities based upon sex. That means the male members must be masculine in their attitude and activities while women must be feminine in their activities and lifestyle otherwise they would be forsaken, deprived, humiliated, and mocked. Research suggests that if men are excessively forced and pressured by gender stereotypes and if there is the fear of being ridiculed for behaviors that are not 'masculine sufficient', there lies an increased chance to release the anxiety from their repression in negative ways. Such extremeness is harmful because it kills a person's individuality, authenticity, and reasoning power that leads a person towards his own destruction as well as for others. (rewrite the sentence in keeping with grammatical as well as syntactical rules) Such happens in the case of Mr. Albert. Throughout the novel, it is suggested how the Masculine behavior had been imposed upon him. In the 87th letter, the reader comes to know that Mr. Albert once used to love sewing clothes but he had to give up his hobby just because of everyone's expectation of masculine behavior from him. Albert tells Celie, "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" (Walker, 1982, p. 247). Just because sewing is a feminine trait, he had to forsake his passion; otherwise he would be looked down

upon. Another feminine trait of Albert is that he used to like wearing Shug's pants. But such inclination was against existing masculine traits: "I used to put on Albert's pants when he was courting. And he one time put on my dress" (p. 131). Moreover, Shug Avery also thought Albert was 'weak in will' and he was less than a man because he was not bold and aggressive enough to confront his father in taking his decision about marriage. Boldness and aggressiveness belong to masculine code. Since Albert was no longer a man in her eyes, he became inferior to her. "Turn loose my goddam hand, she say to Mr ----- ...I don't need no weak little boy can't say no to his daddy hanging on me. I need a man, she say. A man"(p. 45). Thus, Shug considers Albert as a 'weak little boy' and claims that she had needed a man instead.

To be a truly masculine figure, Albert wore a mask with a view to showing himself as a strict and cruel individual and in no way allowed others to know and love him. He could not share with anyone his pain, feeling and love. Due to his immoderate dominance over his family, he was step by step isolated from his own family. Children did not dare to share their problems with their father. That is why, Harpo did not dare to talk with his father about his love of life. He feared him rather than loved him. Harpo preferred Celie over Albert in sharing his problem, "Harpo tell me all his love business now. His mind on Sofia Butler day and night"(Walker, 1982, p. 30). Albert's loneliness got worse when his wife and lady love left him. In the 78th letter, Albert's loneliness had been described by Sofia and Harpo in a very pathetic way. Sofia said to Celie the miserable condition of Mr. Albert, "Sofia say after I left, Mr \_\_\_ live like a pig. Shut up in the house so much it stunk. Wouldn't let anybody in until finally Harpo force his way in...Mr \_\_\_ too weak to fight back. Plus too far gone to care" (p.202-203). Moreover, being unable to marry his ladylove, Mr. Albert had been living a miserable and lonesome life. Nobody tried to



inquire whether he was happy or not with his father's decisions. His jovial personality had faded away with the passage of time and he embraced the lonesome lifestyles. Shug disclosed to Celie why she was incapable of apprehending Albert:

Nobody dance like Albert when he was young. Sometime us did the moochie for a hour. After that, nothing to do but go somewhere and lay down. And funny. Albert was so funny. He kept me laughing. How come he ain't funny no more? Sheast. How come he never hardly laugh? How come he don't dance? she say. Good God, Celie, she say, What happen to the man I love?...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? (p. 111-112).

Albert's jovial personality in his early life stood in contrast to his present gloomy and strict mind-set. He could also feel, love, sympathize and cry. Fatally, he had been misplaced beneath the mask of so-called masculinity. Thus, through the exposure of Albert's predicament and loneliness as a consequence of the internalization of patriarchal ideology. This is how, in fact, this study attempts to challenge the myth of gender.

The *Color Purple* can be considered a novel of redemption and restoration; the devices of restoration predicted within the novel are proper environment, compassionate attitude, communal bonding, friendship, consciousness and forgiveness. Albert's redemption is one of the significant aspects of the novel. At the end (from letter 79 onwards), it is found that Albert is able to combat the gender and social stereotypes set upon him.

On her return from Memphis, Celie finds that Albert is transformed into a man who had

been preserving a neat residence, cooking, washing, taking care of Henrietta, collecting shells and working hard all day long. And she was amazed to see such a tremendous change in Albert. The absence of Celie and Shug brought a bitter kind of loneliness that gradually changed Albert's attitude towards Celie. At that time, he analyzed his actions and attitude towards Celie and Nettie. He gradually realized his inhuman and cruel personality. His realization of guilt started killing him and he was turning mad but when he dispatched the rest of Nettie's letters to Celie, he started to improve. Sofia's comment on changed Albert was remarkable: "Oh, she say, Harpo made him send you the rest of your sister's letters. Right after that he start to improve. You know meanness kill, she say" (Walker, 1982, p. 203) Celie wrote in this context to Nettie: "Plus, look like he trying to make something out himself. I don't mean just that he work and he clean up after himself and he appreciates some of the things God was playful enough to make. I mean when you talk to him now he really listen" (p. 236). Earlier, Albert used to demean and bully Celie, but the changed Albert started to sympathize and understand Celie more than anyone. Their common suffering in the matter of love had brought them close to each other. He realized how important Shug was in Celie's life and he also realized the pain Celie was undergoing because of Shug's marriage with another person. He also apologized to Celie for his inhuman behavior towards Celie. Celie wrote, "Mr \_\_\_ seem to be the only one understand my feeling" (p. 235). Celie described his process of learning and how it led him to love and be loved. Earlier Celie used to address him as Mr. \_\_\_ but at the end mentioned his real name as Mr. Albert (letter number 90) to signify his ordinary humanity and individuality. Albert loved accompanying Celie and felt very much true in her presence that he spontaneously expressed his thoughts and feelings.

Another most important change in Alberts' perspectives was his changed radical view towards gender norms. His admiration for individuality rather than the stereotyped role was an astonishing aspect. He began to consider human beings beyond gender role; and his admiration for Shug and Sofia revealed such fact:

Mr \_\_\_\_ ast me the other day what it is I love so much bout Shug. He say he love her style. He say to tell you the truth, Shug act more manly than most men. I mean she upright, honest. Speak her mind and the devil take the hindmost, he say. You know Shug will fight, he say just like Sofia. She bound to live her life and be herself no matter what.....Sofia and Shug not like men, he say, but they not like women either...they hold they own, he say. And it's different" (Walker, 1982, p. 244).

So, it can be commented that the most significant realization of Albert came when he determined that both Sofia's and Shug's personality was neither that of the stereotyped role of men nor women. He came to view them as authentic individuals. This radical perspective brought to light a new Albert. At the end of his life, Albert is a 'new man'. He did not mind doing cleaning, cooking, washing, sewing and talking about feelings. Growing beyond culturally defined gender role, Albert was content with his new self that did not mind in expressing his feelings, passions, and likings underneath the masks of so-called masculinity. He transformed completely and asked Celie to remarry him whom he once used to abhor and oppress. Celie could not accept him as the husband but did come to regard him as a friend. She forgave him for all of his wrongdoings. Albert even did not force Celie or reprimand her for rejecting him. Celie, in her way to self-realization, changed the attitude of her husband. As a result, Albert begins to treat her as an individual with self-dignity. Albert's redeemed personality

introduced him the real happiness and contentment that had been expressed through his language, "I'm satisfied this the first time I ever lived on earth as a natural man. It feel like a new experience" (p. 236).

There is no denying the fact that Albert's self-assessment and evaluation of his treatment of people throughout his life enable him to take action to correct his mistakes. Albert determined feelings in commonplace with Celie as soon as he understood their mutual affection for Shug. Another credit could go to Shug Avery in the novel who acted as a catalyst in bringing a change in the life of Celie and Albert for the best. Shug Avery created the environment in making Albert understand that women are not husband's property, women deserve to enjoy their rights, they have the right to live with respect and individuality. By letting go of his oppressive male ego, Albert was finally enabled to convert himself into a man who could act naturally in harmony with his surroundings as opposed to coercing it.

Through the portrayal of African American male characters like Albert, Walker has acknowledged the issues within the Black men and brought them to the front. The issues that she addressed directly or indirectly through the portrayal of Albert are basically psychological emasculation of Black men, hypermasculinity, traumatic past, the cruel and degrading consequence of slavery, the patriarchal legacy of oppression, white hegemonic society, the strained relationship between men and women, and the redemption of Black men.

Towards the close, *The Color Purple* suggests that Albert is a sympathetic figure in spite of his villainies. Albert's violence, cruelty, and inhumanity towards his wife Celie bear the testimony of the patriarchal legacy of violence and oppression towards women. He was not given any space by his father to be an independent man and take his own decisions. He took his father as a role model and became an irrational and

egotistical individual. He felt if a man is unable to dominate his wife, then he is an impotent man. His hypermasculine behavior suggests his frustration with the white-dominated society where he was unable to stand with high head along with white men. This study has described how Albert had lost himself in becoming a successful patriarchal figure. However, his behavior significantly changed at the end of the novel. Albert was completely reformed and the key to this transformation lay in the misery he experienced when both Shug and Celie had left him. The women of his life had shattered all of his patriarchal ideology. Their independence, success, and individuality made him realize the hollowness of patriarchal norms. He came to view women as human being. He gradually realized that a human being must not be confined within stereotypical norms and beliefs. In the end, he emerged as a new Black man who became respectful and compassionate towards women and who did not mind doing household chores. Through the portrayal of the character of Albert, Walker tried to show if Black men are given chance to grow in a healthy environment and if Black men think with an open mind about their action and mind-set, they would certainly rise up in forming a healthy community that will sing for both Black men and women. Walker also tries to convey the message that women's independent, courageous, motivating, and forgiving soul and actions can assist in restoring Black men. Compassionate attitude, friendship, consciousness, dialogue, love, and forgiveness from both men and women

can form a healthy environment that would restore Black men for the better.

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