

Womanism and Women in Alice Walker's The Temple of My Familiar

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Dhavaleswarapu Ratna Hasanthi

Research Scholar (Ph. D) UGC-JRF/SRF

Department of English, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract

*African-American women have been inappropriately and unduly, stereotyped in various contrasting images as slaves post-slavery, wet nurses, superwomen, domestic helpers, mammies, matriarchs, jezebels, hoochies, welfare recipients, and hot bodies which discloses their repression in the United States of America. They have been showcased by both black men and white women in different ways quite contrary to their being in America. Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Gayl Jones, Paule Marshall, Sonia Sanchez, Toni Cade Bambara, to name a few writers, have put forth the condition of black women through their works. They have shown the personality of many black women hidden behind the veils of racism, sexism, classism and systemic oppression of different sorts. Walker coined the term Womanism in her 1984 collection of essays titled *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. Womanism advocates consensus for black women starting with gender and proceeding over to race, ethnicity and class, with a universal outlook. Womanism offers a positive self-definition of the black woman's self within gendered, historical, geographical, ethnic, racial and cultural contexts too. Walker's novel *The Temple of My Familiar* 1989 is a womanist treatise putting forth the importance of womanist consciousness and womanist spirit. The novel is a tribute to the strength, endurance and vitality of black womanhood. The novel revolves around three pairs of characters and their lives to showcase the lives of African Americans and the coloured population in America. The three couples namely Suwelo and Fanny, Arveyda and Carlotta, Lissie and Hal showcased in the novel, belong to different age groups and different, mixed ethnicities. Through them, Walker depicts the lives of the marginalized population in America, and the unmet trials they face for being who they are. Furthermore, this paper showcases how Womanism as a theory can enliven the life of the black community, especially black women when put into practice.*

Keywords: Womanism, Racism, Sexism, Classism, Womanist Consciousness, Wholeness

African American women have protested against the "sexism of black literary history" and "racism of feminist literary history" (Showalter 214) with equal gusto to emerge as strong, emergent women. They have been showcased by both black men and white women in different ways quite contrary to their being in America. They have been facing sexism, racism and classism right from their arrival in America. Their lives are a struggle against marginalizing modes of oppression. African-American women have been inappropriately and unduly, stereotyped in various contrasting images as slaves post-slavery, wet nurses, superwomen, domestic helpers, mammies, matriarchs, jezebels, hoochies, welfare recipients, and hot bodies which discloses their repression in the United States of America. As long as there is racist ideology nurtured by people the repressive images of black women are sure going to be put forth, by racist whites and sexist blacks. As pointed out by Patricia Hills Collins "Challenging these controlling images has long been a core theme in Black feminist thought" (Black Feminist 69).

Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Gayl Jones, Paule Marshall, Sonia Sanchez, Toni Cade Bambara, to name a few writers, have put forth the condition of black women through their works. They have talked about the myriad facets of black women quite contrary to the stereotyped images of black women as shown by popular culture, media and literary works as there is a need to see the true personality of many black women hidden behind the veils of racism, sexism, classism and systemic oppression of different sorts.

Alice Walker has written seven novels till date that showcase the being of African Americans and the marginalized lot, of many a coloured people in America and the world, true to life. Through her literary corpus, Walker concentrates on the lives of many a black woman with equanimity, passion, empathy and concern. Walker at the same time does not showcase women who are African American stereotypes but rather depicts real to life African American women along with their trials and tribulations, and the need for their betterment along with the African community, owing to their indispensable contribution to America. As a writer of grit and substance penning the whereabouts of black peoples' lives Walker has said "I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people, . . . But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppression, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women. For me, black women are the fascinating creations in the world"(Walker, In Search 250). She has stood by what she has stated through her literary corpus. Walker through her works has shown many black women in their totality. Walker vouches that black women need to develop womanist consciousness to overcome the tripartite forces of oppression. Walker coined the term Womanism in her 1984 collection of essays titled In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose. The term Womanism used by Walker has its origin in indigenous black culture and the black folks expression "You acting Womanish," i.e. like a woman. The practitioner of Womanism is a womanist. Alice Walker defines a womanist as follows:

Womanist 1. From womanish. (Opp. of "girlish", i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black

feminist or feminist of colour. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grew up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. Serious.

Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the coloured race is just like a flower garden, with every colour flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada, and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."

Loves Music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.

Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender (Walker, In Search xi-xii).

Walker has ushered in a new theory named Womanism that spoke about the needs of black women. As a more inclusive theory, it found more acceptance than feminism and black feminism. The four afore-stated definitions are vital to the understanding of Womanism as a theory, that ushers in freedom, equality, equanimity, wholeness, racial upliftment and peace beyond limiting parameters of race, sex, class and gender when put into practice. Womanism advocates consensus for black women starting with gender and proceeding over to race, ethnicity and class, with a universal outlook. Womanism as a discourse offers a positive self-definition of the black woman's self, within gendered, historical, geographical, ethnic, racial

and cultural contexts. The womanist perspective as put forth by Walker is concerned with enriching the female gender through consciousness-raising while giving a human touch to the struggle for the appreciation, emancipation, elevation and total self-fulfilment of black women in positive ways. It addresses the racial-ethnic, class and gender identities of marginalized women. As Collins has succinctly put it: “Womanism seemingly supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking black men” (Collins, “What’s in a name?” 11).

African American women have been showcased by both white men, women and black men in different ways. They have faced conformed situations of slavery along with racism, sexism and classism right from their arrival in America. Their lives have always been that of struggle against marginalizing modes of oppression. Black women face more oppression as an ethnicity as well as a race too, as Blacks are the most visible race in America. They are easily discriminated after having stayed in America from the same time as their American inquisitors. Many people rarely acknowledge the unique experience of black women under tripartite struggle. “It is essential that people recognize that “black women experience a unique form of oppression in discursive and non-discursive practices alike because they are victims at once of sexism, racism and extension by classism (Smith 317). Relegated by both the Black Nationalist Movement and White Feminist Movement, and American society on different counts, black women started voicing their lives, and the need for freedom through activism and writings too.

Walker’s novel *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989) is a womanist treatise putting forth the importance of womanist consciousness and womanist spirit. The novel is a tribute to the strength, endurance and vitality of black womanhood. It shows how black women have outgrown beyond hurdles, humiliations put forth by both whites and black patriarchs within black society working under the tutelage of white patriarchs and have built a better black community. The racist, sexist and classist aspect of American society is put forth by Walker through the narrative twists and turns employed in the novel. In America: “Social constructions of black womanhood and

manhood are inextricably linked to racial hierarchy, meaning systems and institutionalization. Indeed gender takes on the meaning and is embedded institutionally in the context of the racial and class order: productive and social reproductive relations of the economy” (Brewer 17). Walker through the novel talks about the need to overcome conformities of the sort above and emerge as successful individuals. Womanist awareness is the keynote aspect of the novel. Women seek deliverance from their problems through womanist awareness.

Moreover, Walker’s novel:

“The Temple of My Familiar is a novel about love, in all its forms; love for spirits and spirituality, love for the land and plants, love for all people regardless of colour, sexual preference and age – and love for all living things. It is about compassion for the oppressed, the grief of the oppressors, acceptance of the unchangeable and hope for everyone and everything” (Martz 413-414).”

The novel ends on the hope for a better future for blacks, as a race and community and an egalitarian America.

The novel revolves around three pairs of characters and their lives to showcase the lives of African Americans and the coloured population in America. The three couples namely Suwelo and Fanny, Arveyda and Carlotta, Lissie and Hal, showcased in the novel, belong to different age groups and mixed ethnicities. Through them, Walker depicts the lives of the marginalized population in America, and the umpteen trials they face for being who they are. Lissie and Hal, the oldest of the three couples who act as interlocutors of a walker, guide the other two couples to develop womanist consciousness. The oldest couple of the novel having aced the tripartite struggle reserved for blacks for many decades serves as a lively connection for the younger generations to connect them to their ancestors and ancestral knowledge.

The novel depicts the postmodern angst of black lives. Fanny and Suwelo continue living with all the racist and sexist retinue as they get on with their lives struck by postmodern anxiety, and their marital discord. Suwelo and Fanny lose contact with their true selves under tripartite struggle. Suwelo being the Mars struck male, rarely thinks about the

needs of his wife. He feels burdened by racism that eats away the vitality of his life. Teaching African American history, he rarely thinks about how marginalized his people are. He never thinks about the true presentation of African American history, nor does he think about the true contribution he can make to his society. "His generation of men had failed women - and themselves - he mused . . . For all their activism and political development during the sixties, all their understanding of the pervasiveness of oppression, for most men, the preferred place for women had remained the home, whatever they were, supine" (Walker Temple 138). Fanny faces overt and covert racism at every nook and corner of her life, both in personal space and at the workplace. Marginalized by racism and sexism on various fronts right from her childhood, Fanny loses contact with her self. Castigated by racism, relegated by her husband, she tries to make a rendezvous with her long lost self. She shudders making contact with herself, as she rarely acknowledges the severe sexism and misogyny she faces from Suwelo. Fanny exclaims: "we knew it wasn't going to work, . . . She hated the institution of marriage. She said the ring people wore on their fingers symbolizing marriage was a remnant of a chain. . . ." (Walker Temple 238). It becomes difficult for her to assess her strengths and liabilities despite being a well-educated woman with requisite awareness under Suwelo's sexism.

Further, the jitters regarding her sexuality continuously pain her, both on the physical and emotional planes. The novel as a womanist text is empathetic to all sorts of sexuality. Above all, racism makes Fanny sick. She feels and experiences that there is no freedom with the white man around. She tells Ola her African father :

"In the United States, there is the maddening illusion of freedom without the substance. It's never solid, unequivocal, irrevocable. So much depends on the horrid politicians the white majority elects. Black people have the oddest feeling, I think, of forever running in place" (Walker Temple 306).

Carlotta and Arveyda, another young couple in the novel lead opulent lives and belong to the rich league of America. Despite material riches, all modern amenities and children as blessings, they can rarely see their blessings and are often deluded

by anxiety and post-modern angst. A singer par excellence, Arveyda strikes a chord with his audience but rarely strikes a chord with his self, personal life and Carlotta, later on. The problem of invisibility sucks him inside out, despite being a popular singer as he has connectivity with his ancestors, parents or kinsfolk to keep him on track with his ancestral history and heritage. A journey back home and his mind's voyage to his childhood help him recover contact with his long lost self. Carlotta being a trophy wife claims: "I was a female impersonator" (Walker Temple 384). Carlotta becomes a personal impersonator, impersonating her true personality and neglecting herself on account of sexism, misogyny and domestic violence from her husband Arveyda and her boyfriend Suwelo. The domestic violence women face in the name of love, is brought into focus through the novel, through the two younger pairs, Carlotta and Arveyda and Fanny, and Suwelo. Arveyda faces ostracism and racism despite being a popular singer and unknowingly thrusts the tension faced by him under oppressive marginalizing forces, on his wife and children.

Moreover, the fling with his mother-in-law becomes a matter of contention between him and Carlotta. Cedric and Angelita, their children, suffer immensely due to broken familial relationships. Carlotta, on the other hand, tries to define her beauty according to western standards and constantly fails to belittle herself. She overcomes the lacunae in her life when she develops womanist consciousness and emerges as a strong woman.

As projected by Walker, through the novel, Lissie is the thorough womanist who has survived both overt and covert sorts of racism, sexism and classism but has never lost touch with her true self and fighting spirit. She serves as the guiding light which guides them through difficulties of life connects them with their predecessors, ancestors and ancestral past with her womanist awareness. Lissie and Hal, the oldest couple in the novel, emerge as the strongest couple who have survived the tests of time. Moreover, Lissie Lyles remembers all her past lives in which she has been a black woman many times, and has faced all the trials and tribulations faced by black women right from their landing in America. Lissie has been modelled on Walker's womanist

tenets, and she helps Carlotta and Fanny achieve womanist awareness and equilibrium. As pointed out by Dieke

“The cumulative effect of Lissie’s story is that she achieves something resembling a Universal soul, a transcendent harmony with the entire Universe . . . Lissie represents for walker this eternal spirit, a kind of womanist elan vital. She hopes that some of us well someday become Lissies” (511).

This paper analyses the womanist discourse employed in the novel, to fortify women through literature, especially fiction. This paper argues that unless and until the theory of Womanism is employed on the pragmatic front at the personal level and societal level on African American and coloured women’s lives, they really can’t come out of the tripartite oppressive forces. It concentrates on the women characters and their life partners to showcase the lives of African American and coloured lives in America. This paper argues that Womanism as theory proposes a tete-a tete with the self, as it is a must to develop awareness about one’s strengths and liabilities, and it is only possible when one questions why his/her existence is the way it has been confirmed by society or someone else. All the couples take up individual journeys to find out the true meanings of their personalities and existence. The outward journeys help them discover their true inner personalities and the itinerary of their existence in America.

The novel showcases how Black women have been sidelined down American history right from their landing on America on slave ships travelling along with their owners. Their contribution to the American economy as labour and work force, along with their contribution to American society as domestic helpers, mammies, wet nurses, culture makers has been sidelined by both black men, and white society. Walker asks women to come out of such typecasts by embracing womanist awareness. The previous births of Lissie Lyles as a slave on slave ship, like a pygmy, as a woman without a hymen, as a witch, as Lulu a dancer, are all a testimony to the tripartite struggle that has been faced by many a black woman of her sort down ages. “She embodies the womanist attitude as a result of having acquired the wisdom that comes with experiencing life form a

variety of perspectives through multiple incarnations through time” (King 237). The womanist awareness she develops as Lissie Lyles using all the knowledge of their past lives, makes her understand that women need to guard their well-being without discriminating black men from their lives. Having survived segregation and having seen utmost racism she feels that things have turned far better for the next generation of blacks than for them. The mother figure womanist of the novel Lissie Lyles, meets Suwelo at Baltimore, along with Hal her husband and friend, to give him, his legacy from his uncle Rafe, her boyfriend. Through him, she meets the younger lot through her letters and makes them know their strengths and weaknesses, with motherly instinct and maternal wisdom, which is another important aspect of Womanism showcased by Walker.

“The novel’s pre-occupation with matriarchal wisdom (- - -) foregrounds the material, not in the restrictive sense of individual mothering but the wider contexts of social nurturing and pre-oedipal development” (Brandelin 166).

She makes Suwelo and Arveyda realize their long lost selves and help them lose their sexist and misogynist nature and become better men.

Walker through the novel brings forth the sexism faced by the modern black women through the characters of Carlotta and Fanny. They both face utmost sexism and misogyny at home that cannot be done away with. They face domestic violence of the utmost sort. They both are seen more as lust quenchers of their husbands. Both Suwelo and Arveyda waft themselves in porn and promiscuity and demand faith and subservience from their wives. The domestic violence they face on the physical, emotional and psychological fronts tarnishes their overall well-being. Fed up by the promiscuity of their husbands, Fanny and Carlotta try various means of seeking peace like taking up holidays, meditation classes, yoga, joining consciousness-raising groups, visiting shamans, beautifying themselves, wearing lingerie and what not. On the verge of divorce, both the women come out of their turmoil developing womanist awareness. They accept their blackness and understand that black women have a unique way of life. They modify their lifestyle, undo hatred for their husbands and make them understand their

turmoil, and emerge as victors in due course of time. Lissie, on the other hand, feels free about her size, shape and colour and enjoys life as it is, and Hal respects her for who he is. They serve as Walker's role model womanist couple who are a strength to each other.

Suwelo and Arveyda learn from Hal to respect women and treat them as life partners than sex partners. Walker has shown an imitable male model in Hal. Lissie's letter to Suwelo and through him, to his wife, Carlotta and Arveyda make them know their ancestral history and equips them with the awareness to respect the opposite sex, and imparts them womanist awareness. Her words bestow solace and help them do away with sexism and gender egos if they have to overcome the parodies of life thrust by tripartite oppressive forces. Hal and Lissie understand pretty well that the race problem they both face cannot be overcome by staying apart with bickerings all the while, but can only be set aside by making place and space for each other. They impart this knowledge to the younger couples in the novel.

The novel mirrors both covert and overt racism of the menacing sort. Racism and racist slurs of the worst sort have been experienced by all the characters in the novel. Lissie and Hal, have experienced outright racist attacks. Lissie in her previous births has experienced lynching, burning at stake. In her life as Lissie, she has experienced misogyny from her other boyfriends and male companions. Having lived under segregation of the worst sort Lissie and Hal manage life with all the courage they have. They avoid situations that tense their well-being, emerge as survivors even during the 'Depression Era' making out a good livelihood. They avoid people who hate them. Carlotta, on the other hand, loses her temper under racist slurs and models herself according to western standards of beauty, becoming a female impersonator of the worst sort. She becomes normal after developing womanist awareness that makes her realize that black is as beautiful as it is. She acquires knowledge about her ancestral past and understands the beautiful nuances of it and realigns her fractured spirit. It takes half a lifetime for Fanny to overcome the racist slurs, discrimination and physical violence she has faced as a child. In psychological and psychiatric therapy, she

finds the real reason behind her fractured spirit. The racial abuse faced by her from her childhood along with the sexism she faces under her husband builds her neurotic façade and makes her lose her wholeness. The workplace meetings she attends turn out to be racist playgrounds for her white counterparts that she prefers being a masseur than an academician. She tells her doctor therapist Ramirez "*I won't be a murderer. I won't do to them what they've done to black people. I'll die first*" (Walker Temple 300). The pent up angst makes her hate white people, and she visualizes them "*sliding off the planet, and the planet saying. 'Ah, I can breathe again!'*" (Walker Temple 301). Unable to bear overt and covert racism she tells Suwelo "*I can't stand it! After all, we've been through*" (Walker Temple 302). The lines above showcase how the stream of consciousness of a sensitive black woman is filled with pain and angst. She becomes normal after developing womanist consciousness and making a truce with her past, filled with racist and sexist abuse. Much later on, she learns that forgiveness is a way to overcome the legacy of racism, though it is difficult to forgive racists who lynch the spirit of the abused forever.

Ancestral connectivity is debated as a way to reclaim racial pride and overcome racism, and sexism by Walker, through the novel. The following lines in the text vouch for the aforesaid womanist doctrine. "*Learning from one's elders do not permit pessimism. Your day is always easier than theirs. You look at them, so beautiful and so wise, and you cannot help trying to emulate them. It is courage given by osmosis. I think*" (Walker Temple 316). All come in contact with their roots that helps them reinvigorate themselves. "*Fanny Carlotta Suwelo and Arveyda all need to come to terms with their pasts; they seem to be adrift until they learn where they learn where their roots are*" (Sol 396). Suwelo aligns with his ancestral past knowing about the rich legacy, he shares with other blacks and resurrects his broken self. He controls his attitude of being a sexist male and makes a truce with his wife to overcome racism. Arveyda overcomes the misalignment in his life through ancestral connectivity. He connects with his ancestral past makes a truce with his dead parents, forgives them, and understands the depreciating racist, and sexist circumstances under which they

were.

Hal, Suwleo, Arveyda, Lissie, Fanny and Carlotta connect themselves with their ancestors by making communion with their own culture and indigenous ways of life. Alice Walker in an interview with Claudia Deifrus has said: "...I'm ...Literarily trying to reconnect us to our ancestors. All of us. I'm trying to do that because I see that ancient past as the future, that the connection that was original is a connection; if we can affirm it in the present, it will make a different future"(31). She has projected the same through the novel and has asked blacks to claim their ancestral past with panache and equanimity.

Walker by showcasing three different kinds of men and women via three different pairs of characters in the novel has shown the diversity amidst the African American population in America. By showcasing, a mixed ethnic population she has shown the molten pot culture in America, amidst a multi-ethnic population, where there is competition for everything. Walker through the novel has put forth the idea that African Americans need to reclaim their self-identity as it leads to wholeness and upliftment of themselves and the black community. This paper puts forth the idea that African Americans especially black women need to reclaim their self-identity as it leads to wholeness, and upliftment of themselves and the black community. This paper argues that for black women, self-love and seeking one's own identity leads to the realization of the self, that are for a treasurable keepsake forever. Walker through the novel endorses the idea that: "*No woman who chooses to be self-loving ever regrets her choice. Self-love brings her greater power and freedom. It improves her relationships with everyone*" (Hooks *Feminist 137*).

Walker's womanist discourse implicated in the novel puts forth the idea that the noble contribution made by African Americans in the making of America since its inception is indispensable to American history. Hal, Suwleo, Arveyda, Lissie, Fanny and Carlotta realize that embracing their own identity as African Americans, by reconnecting themselves with their ancestral legacy. They feel happy as they share a cherishable legacy with their forefathers of having contributed their might in the making of the present-day United States of America. On the personal front,

they claim their black womanhood and manhood without thrust racist encumbrances from whites or anyone else.

As a black woman, Hooks has pointed out that "*By no longer passively accepting the learned tendency to compare and judge, we could see value in each experience. We could also see that our different experiences often meant that we had different needs, that there was no strategy or formula for the development of political consciousness*" (59). Walker through the novel vouches for the statement above, as African American women need to bind together, despite differences for a better black community. Fanny, Suwelo, Arveyda and Carlotta belonged to the black elite understand that though they have made progress when compared to previous generations, they are far behind their white counterparts. Marger N. Martin has adroitly put forth that "*As a collectivity, blacks in the past four decades have made significant strides in income, occupation, and education. However, they continue to lag behind whites on all measures of socioeconomic status*" (208). Walker shows this perspective stated by Margery N. Martin through the novel. The characters in the novel except that they can't do away with sexism, racism and classism forever as the disjunction between black and white lifestyle cannot be sent away because of systemic oppression from whites who are a majority. They understand that they cannot get better themselves at an instance as the backwardness thrust on them on many counts of oppression for centuries, cannot be redressed in a decade or two. They understand the need to overcome intra-racism in addition to inter-racism and covert racism to improve their socio-economic, and cultural status. The novel ushers in an egalitarian society, where all can co-exist together without bitterness, animosity and hatred.

The novel puts forth the idea that disjunctions in African American family life are on account of poverty levels thrust upon them by a white run racist, and sexist economy levied by white systemic oppression. They understand that having lived under the plantation system and poverty for centuries, under the worst sort of segregation before and even after segregation, broken family relationships are not

a myth. This paper argues that low-socio-economic status of blacks, the broken family syndrome has become a part of black family life. It puts forth the idea that blacks need to put in concerted efforts to seek means of education, and livelihood to better themselves and the black community.

Another idea of Womanism decoded in the novel is the reclamation of the body and spirit in totality. The novel puts forth the idea that unless one works on a personal level to mend one's body and spirit, the fractured psyche under tripartite oppression can rarely have wholeness and peace. This paper argues that Womanism as a doctrine asks for alignment of the body and spirit, as the praxis between the body and spirit alone can bestow wholeness, enliven self-worth, lead to self-identity, and make women claim their autonomy. The novel puts forth the idea that sexuality is a way to spiritual beckoning and assimilation. The novel talks about free sexuality without the encumbrances of gender. It neither thrusts homo-normativity or hetero-normativity but asks for compassion for all kinds of sexuality. Fanny, Lissie, and Carlotta realize the worth of their beauty, culture, and fortitude. The therapeutic journeys and holidays taken up by them, help them unlock themselves and welcome life with renewed energy. Lissie as an ardent womanist helps Suwelo, Arveyda, Fanny and Carlotta open up and comforts them with her words and wisdom through her letters. She helps them realize their potential. The sisterhood the women foster acts as a restrictive bond for them. Womanism as a doctrine is not against men as the togetherness of men and women is a pre-requisite for the upliftment of the black community. Reclaiming their body and spirit, makes the men and the women in the novel align themselves with renewed energy. As pointed out by Sol: "*Lissie, Arveyda and Fanny achieve an awareness of their race in existence with a sublimity scarcely paralleled in contemporary literature. By the novel's end, Lissie recalls her incarnations at the beginning of human history, and Arveyda and Fanny unite as incarnations of (a very different) Adam and Eve. Meanwhile, Suwelo Carlotta and Hal can only achieve fulfilment through their understanding of the prodigies' [i.e. Lissie's Arveyda's and Fanny's] powers and by coming to terms with their painful pasts*" (398).

Fanny, Suwelo, Carlotta, Arveyda, Lissie and Hal realize and achieve the "*demonstrable values of oneness, wholeness, and unity as opposed to dialectical tension, exclusivity and separateness*" (Dieke 508). Walker advocates healing of the heart, mind and soul through forgiveness. Walker's Womanism advocates forgiveness to overcome racial bickerings between blacks and whites to avoid violence and terror. "*Forgiveness is the true foundation of health and happiness, just as it is for any lasting happiness. Without forgiveness there is no forgetfulness of evil; without forgetfulness, there remains the threat of violence. And violence does not solve anything; it only prolongs itself.*" (Walker Temple 307-308). The text recommends redressal of racial animosity, as neither whites nor blacks would leave America as it is their home. All the characters form a "*United Front*" (Walker Temple 352) for a better black community. The characters in the novel "*seek methods of connecting to their pasts and each other- through storytelling, music massage, and of course love and sex- and seriously avoid the traditional systems of the white male patriarchy, while asserting a philosophy of spiritual unity and balance*" (Sol 395). By the end of the novel "*they all vaguely realize they have a purpose in each other's lives. They are a collective means by which each of them will grow. They don't discuss this, but it is felt strangely by all. There is palpable trust*" (Walker Temple 398). The novel ends on a positive note wishing for and signing in a better future for blacks, especially black women who develop womanist consciousness and follows the tenets of Womanism in a pragmatic way. This paper observes that the tenets of Womanism + Womanism in practise + Womanist activism + Womanists = Wholeness and Egalitarianism for Blacks in America.' The paper vouches that Womanism as a theory, when put into practice, is the best antidote to the maladies of marginalizing forces and the upliftment of blacks especially black women on all fronts.

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Author Details

Ms.Dhavaleswarapu Ratna Hasanthi, Research Scholar, Department of English, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Email ID: hasanthidr11@gmail.com