

## Ph.D. RESEARCH PROPOSAL ON

### CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK FEMALE IDENTITY IN A PATRIARCHAL AND RACIST SOCIETY: A STUDY OF ALICE WALKER'S LITERARY WORKS

Alice Walker, a prominent African American author and activist, has significantly contributed to literature through her exploration of race, gender, and identity. This research proposal seeks to examine the ways in which Walker constructs Black female identity in a society that is both patriarchal and racist. Through an in-depth analysis of her novels, short stories, and essays, this study aims to reveal the struggles, resilience, and self-definition of Black women within oppressive social structures. The research will be framed within Black feminist theory and intersectionality, highlighting the complexities of identity formation in Walker's literary universe.

Alice Walker is widely celebrated for her groundbreaking novel *The Color Purple*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award. Her literary corpus, including *Meridian*, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, and *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, provides a profound insight into the lived experiences of Black women navigating racial and gender-based oppression. This study will analyze how Walker's characters resist subjugation, reclaim their agency, and construct their identities despite systemic barriers.

#### Research Objectives:

To analyze the construction of Black female identity in Walker's novels and essays, focusing on themes of oppression, empowerment, and self-definition.

To examine how Walker's female characters navigate and resist both patriarchal and racist structures in American society.

To explore the influence of historical and cultural contexts in shaping the identity of Black women in Walker's works.

To investigate the use of narrative techniques and linguistic strategies in conveying the struggles and triumphs of Black women.

### Methodology:

This research will employ a qualitative approach, primarily using textual analysis. Walker's literary works will be closely examined to identify recurring themes related to Black female identity and resistance. A close reading of selected passages will be conducted, along with an exploration of character development, narrative strategies, and symbolic representations. The study will also engage with critical perspectives from Black feminist thought and intersectionality theory to provide a deeper understanding of Walker's depiction of Black womanhood.

### Contribution to Scholarship:

This research will contribute to existing studies on Black feminism, African American literature, and identity politics. It will shed light on the transformative power of literature in challenging societal norms and advocating for racial and gender justice. By critically engaging with Walker's works, this study will offer valuable insights into the ongoing discourse on Black female identity in literature and society.

### Tentative Chapterization:

Chapter 1: Introduction – Overview of research aims, significance, and theoretical framework.

Chapter 2: The Politics of Identity in Alice Walker's Works – Exploration of Black female identity formation and resistance.

Chapter 3: Patriarchy and Racism: Double Oppression in Walker's Narratives – Examination of intersecting systems of oppression in Walker's characters' lives.

Chapter 4: Narrative Strategies and Symbolism – Analysis of Walker’s use of storytelling techniques to convey resistance and empowerment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion – Summary of findings and contributions to literary and feminist scholarship.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive examination of how Alice Walker’s literary works contribute to the understanding and construction of Black female identity in a patriarchal and racist society. The findings will offer critical insights for scholars, readers, and activists interested in the intersection of race, gender, and literature.