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In Love and Trouble and Finding the Green Stone by Alice Walker - An Environmental Approach

Shubhanku Kochar

Abstract

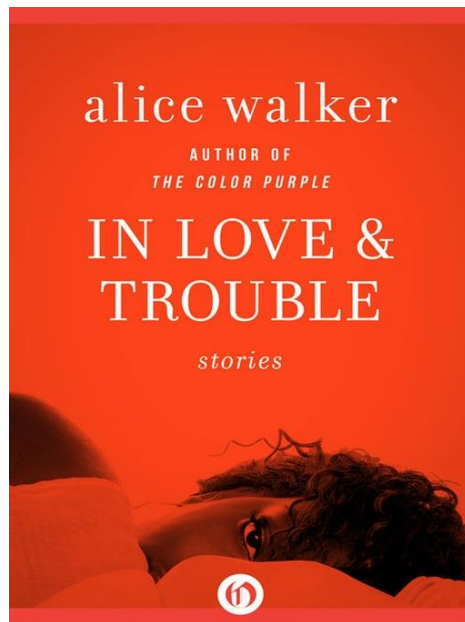
Alice Walker is a renowned a short story writer as well as a famous a poet and novelist. Her career spiraled into excellence after the publication of *The Color Purple* in 1982, and her short stories that got published prior to *The Color Purple* and after it are also well known for their excellent depiction of remarkable women engaged in a stupendous struggle. Hitherto, she has penned three collections of short stories entitled: *In Love and Trouble*; *Stories of Black Women* (1973); *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down: Stories* (1982); *The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart* (2000). She has also written a short story book for children *Finding the*

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In Love and Trouble and Finding the Green Stone by Alice Walker - An Environmental Approach

Green Stone (1991). This paper focuses chiefly on four stories beginning with *In Love and Trouble* and *Finding the Green Stone* from an environmental perspective. The effort is to place her stories in the wider context of the current ecological vision. Although not a single story directly speaks of nature and other allied forces, yet a closer reading enables the unearthing of the green platform and the green setting on which the entire edifice is skillfully erected.



The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff

The first story that captures the reader's attention for its analogical resemblance with the biosphere is "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff". It is a story about black magic and its power. Actually, Africans have had deep faith in black magic. Here, one should be clear about the distinction between magic and black magic. Magic is an art. It is a craft which can be mastered by anyone. A magician performs tricks on the stage. He executes his pranks in such a way that beholders are easily befuddled. Its aims are lucrative. Magicians are to be found everywhere, in Asia, Europe and all over the world.

Black Magic

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Black magic, on the other hand, is practiced in the continents like Africa and Asia. Its bearings are such that even lives are destroyed as an end result. People use it for their personal motives. For example, a wife may exercise it on her husband to entrap him in her charm. A husband can punish his wife with its help for her infidelity. One can even practice it for getting rid of enemies with evil spirits. It is neither a moment of social gathering nor a picnic spot like a magic show. It depends for its success on individuals' intuition and belief. It has nothing to do with intellect; more to do with superstitions and fears. Most times it involves the use of `evil spirits, and powerful drugs.

Magic and Miracles

Africans and Asians are noted worldwide for their faith in black magic referred to as voodoo. They often carry with them colorful threads, tie them around their wrists, or around necks and consider them as their charm or talisman. They also believe that every individual possesses his personal spirit. If this spirit turns out to be troublesome, then one has to face immense problems. Afro-Americans, since their essential roots are in Africa, also hold such a thinking pattern. Many writers have extolled Africa for her magic and miracles. For example, Senator Alufalim in "Africa with Magic and Miracle" eulogizes rhythmically his native land:

The magic of Africa is in Africa
Magic shine only in your heart
While miracle shine all around
Your life
Magic magic magic
Magic are not real
Magic cannot save life
Than death yes someone come every
Now and then
Looting stealing
Out magic with happiness

Unknowing to them that
Magic are not real.

Africans also assumed spirits in nature, like many ancient animistic religions all over the world. Just like black magic depends on superstition and intuition, similarly existence of nature as a divine being, or a living being depends on one's imagination and belief. A rationalist can never believe that jungles are full of spirits, because ancestral spirits reside there. For him, a forest is nothing but a physical fact that can be destroyed to build nuclear power plants. For an African of the old beliefs, a forest is as sacrosanct as his own life. He feels intimidated in destroying it. When blacks reached America, they brought with them such an ideology. They must have surely handed down these values to posterity.

The present story "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff" is also about the triumph of such a belief system. Walker must have listened or experienced in her vicinity such incidents which changed life on the basis of faith and belief.

Instance of Black Magic

In the story too, there is a black woman who slides in the lap of black magic to make right a wrong. Hannah Kemhuff, a mother of four children, visits a food distributing counter in a southern town during Depression. Her husband deserts her there and goes after a whore. A white girl behind the counter who is later addressed as Mrs. Holley denies her the share that she deserves. Her excuse is that since Hannah is dressed better than her, she does not require any food. She takes her stamps from her and gives them to a black gambler. She laughs at her from behind the counter and becomes responsible for the miseries that later beset the black lady.

Her children die due to hunger. She herself becomes a whore and takes to drinking. She undergoes conversion and later meets Tante Rosie, a black magician with a plea that she can no longer bear the face of a white moppet grinning behind her hands. Tante Rosie, on her part, gives her candles and some incense to burn and a prayer to recite twice a day for nine days. She

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informs her to beseech the Man-God who in return will persuade the all pervading goddess to punish Mrs. Holley. In the meanwhile, she assures that she herself will collect the nails, hair, clothes, fishes and water of the target and will safely burry them in a safe place and as a result, the culprit will not outlive poor Hannah for more than six months.

Everything works according to the plan. The narrator who is working as assistant of Tante Rosie goes and meets Mrs. Holley in person. She tells her that she has come there to gather some nails and other accessories of Mrs. Holley so that the wrong perpetrated thirty years ago can be righted. Initially, Mrs. Holley does not believe in her story. She even says that she has no trust in black magic. It is a purely scientific attitude. Later, Mrs. Holley is able to recall Hannah and her own behavior towards the poor girl. Her life undergoes a change from there onwards.

First, she distances her black friend cum maid from her. Then she starts eating breakfast in her room upstairs. Later, she does everything in her room. She gathers her stray hair from floor and comb, lest they be picked by anybody. She stops flushing and gathers her waste in barrels and plastic bags and starts storing them in closets. Her husband starts sleeping in the separate room of her nanny's house due to the foul smell. The mouth that grinned behind the counter stops grinning. She dies due to anxiety and foul smell.

African Black Magic Wins!

It seems as if Walker is out and out to celebrate her African heritage. Symbolically, this can be seen as a suggestive remedy for environmental disasters. The world today is on the verge of extinction. It seems as if there is no possible solution until one accepts the African (and all animistic religions of the world) belief of spirits in nature. This entire story becomes a long metaphor of celebrating African legacy in which intuition and imagination wins over intellect and scientific attitude. It is this very attitude that is pernicious for the health of the biosphere. Unless one is sensitive and imaginative enough to envisage life in nature, one will not spare it.

Nature and Belief Intertwined

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How nature is deeply intertwined in African belief system can easily be seen in the curse prayer that Hannah and the young assistant recite:

That the South wind shall scorch their bodies and make them wither and shall not be tempered to them. That the North wind shall freeze their blood and numb their muscles and that it shall not be tempered to them. That the West wind shall blow away their life's breath and will not leave their hair grow, and that their fingernails shall fall off and their bones shall crumble. That the East wind shall make their minds grow dark, their sight shall fail and their seed dry up so that they shall not multiply... I pray that the sun shall not shed its rays on them in benevolence, but instead it shall beat down on them and burn them and destroy them. I pray that the moon shall not give them peace, but instead shall deride them and decry them and cause their minds to shrivel. (Walker 65-66)

The very mentioning of wind, sun, moon and stars even in the curse prayer goes on to divulge how close Africans lived to nature and how they considered nature to be a living force. It is perhaps this proximity and attitude that Walker wishes to revive.

Strong Horse Tea

“Strong Horse Tea” is another story that has ecological bearings in it. Here, Walker for the first time becomes apparent in her advocacy of nature. It seems as if she is glorifying homemade medicines in opposition to allopathic medicine. She is clearly here trying to revive African and ancient Indian way in which nature was considered as a prime doctor. She was considered as storehouse of all remedies.

Yamuna Prasad points out that each and every plant that was seeded in the verandahs of ancient houses of India used to have medicinal substance. One is here reminded of *Ramayana* where Lakshman, the brother of lord Rama succumbs to a fatal injury while fighting with a

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demon. He is finally cured by medicinal herbs that are brought from mountain tops. In India, many saints and ayurvedic teachers even today brag about the curing abilities of plants and animals. For example, a cow's urine is believed to be elixir for heart patients. Likewise, the leaves of neem and tulsi plant are considered beneficial in various diseases. Cow's milk is often hailed as elixir on the earth.

In African societies too, nature was supposed to be a balm for all wounds. The instance in *Things Fall Apart* immediately comes to the mind where Okonkwo, the central character rushes into jungle to gather herbs for his dying daughter. In *Roots*, one encounters African societies where there are doctors who treat and cure patients with roots and leaves.

Randy Malamud also urges man in his essay, "An Ecocritical Ethic" to preserve animals. They too are important. They are part of a larger ecosystem. They contribute in the overall scheme of things. With the advent of science and technology, man has become ingrate. To gratify his own ulterior motives, he has started codifying animals in images. Walker in her famous essay "Am I Blue?" chides man's habit of patting hens for eggs, cows for milk, pigs for meat and snakes for skin.

In "Strong Horse Tea" too she seems to be presenting animals, particularly horse as a means of curing disease. There is a mother named Rannie Toomer. Her son, Snooks is suffering severely from pneumonia and whooping cough. The mother is impatiently waiting for the doctor to come from town. Sarah, an old black sagacious woman with home remedies, urges her to give her son some of her homemade medicines. Rannie Toomer is reluctant initially. Later, she realizes that doctor won't come because the mailman whom she entrusted with the task of seeking a doctor, did not progress beyond old Sarah's house. She relinquishes her waiting and beseeches Sarah with the words, "I'll do anything you say do, Aunt Sarah ... Anything. Just, please God, make him get better!" (Walker 86).

It is raining outside when the helpless mother abides by old Sarah's instructions. She picks up her coat and goes out to gather some strong horse tea. She walks in the mud. There is a

thunder blast in the sky followed by lightening, but she stumbles as she rushes towards the horse and gathers the desired object in her plastic shoe. The horse snores and kicks her. She falls down, but she saves the substance from spilling on the floor. She realizes that the front of her shoe is cracked, so she sticks her face on it to prevent any spilling of the content. With her ankles deep in mud and freezing in her wet shabby coat, she runs towards home of the boy to give still warm horse tea to baby Snooks who unfortunately has died by this time.

Old Sarah kept on imploring her to adopt her methods earlier. It was she who was delaying. Had she been quick in accepting, her child might have survived. It was she who did not trust nature. So, she had to pay the penalty. Nature always remains bountiful. It is human beings who turn deaf ears to her calls. Rannie Toomer had full faith in the doctor, but he never came. He let her down. She got tired of waiting. Nature is omnipresent. One is not required to wait for her. She is always there. She does not follow the ways of dominant structure. Her munificence is transferred onto everyone without partiality whether it is ruler or ruled.

Eco-Critical View of *Strong Horse Tea*

However, this story can also be reinterpreted from another eco-critical viewpoint as well. Kaori Mori has raised the issue of environmental injustice in both American society and literature. According to the critic, American society has remained environmentally disadvantageous for minorities like blacks, Native Americans, Jews, Hispanics and Asian immigrants. These minorities often reside in unhygienic neighborhood. There are coalmines, barren lands, brothels, railway tracks, polluted ponds and nuclear power plants all around these people. She terms this injustice as environmental racism. For her, whites live in white neighborhood and black live in black neighborhood. Every individual has a right to clean air, water and food to survive, but these basic accessories are alleged to have been craftily stolen from minorities by the dominant culture. As a result, there is dirt and filth all around. This is the reason that many NGOs in America are fighting for better environment for these groups.

In “Strong Horse Tea”, Rannie Toomer lives in a dilapidated house. There are cracks in the window panes and walls. She is poor, so she cannot afford strong walls and roofs. Her son is dying of pneumonia and whooping cough because cool air creeps from the chinks all over the house. She has to use advertising pamphlets to cover these gaps. Her house is in a pasture surrounded by animals. After reading the story, one gets the impression that the house is bound to collapse if a strong thundering storm hits the town. The thundering in the sky is enough to end her son’s life. The house fails to protect him from the calamities of weather. There is mud all around. Rapes and desertions seem the order of the town because Rannie Toomer has no husband. She was not married, and yet she had a child. Most probably, she was raped or her lover deserted her.

This place is totally segregated from the larger world. Doctors do not come there. People survive on their ignorance. They are impelled to rely on home remedies of a local old lady, Sarah. It is this lady who instructs Rannie Toomer to bring strong horse tea to cure her son. She is notorious for giving people cat’s blood and mess of bat’s wings. In such ignorance and backwardness, nobody can lead a happy life. Walker with this short story seems to be demanding environmental justice for her own brethren. She seems to be trying hard to attract the attention of masses-politicians, bureaucrats and rich whites - to demand justice for those who live in environmentally dispossessed localities. It is sometimes difficult reconcile positions: for example, sometimes nature cure is praised and at another level nature cure based on belief is decried.

Nobody lives in a vacuum. There are so many influences that shape an individual’s character. Environment is one of them. A healthy mind always resides in a healthy body. Both of them are impossible in unhealthy environment. So, to make a nation thrive and prosper, it is inevitable to create healthy individuals and for that one must generate healthy environment.

The Flowers

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Another short story, “The Flowers,” can also be studied from an eco-critical perspective. Here, nature is present in abundance. In fact, she presents nature as a vast landscape of dense greenery that is missing in other short stories analyzed previously. Walker, being a female could not escape from converging both gender and nature. H.K. Manion aptly suggests, “Several authors (Momsen, Visvanathan, Sturgeon, Turpin, Miles, Mellor et al.,) have stated that certain ecologically damaging issues have more of a detrimental effect on women than on men, particularly as women tend to be more involved in family provisions and household management”. (5)

If disturbance in nature affects women more, then by implication, peace and harmony in nature should also affect her more. This is what Walker seems to be suggesting through this short story. There is a small girl who jumps cheerfully, runs cheerfully in fences, pigpens and hen houses. She gathers flowers, sings songs and feels at ease while exploring woods. She is in a state of bliss while in proximity with nature. Walker describes the entire scene vividly as:

It seemed to Myop as she skipped lightly from hen house to pigpen to smokehouse that the days had never been as beautiful as these....She felt light and good in warm sun. She was ten and nothing existed for her but her song, the stick clutched in her dark brown hand, and the tat-de-ta-ta-ta of accompaniment. (Walker 106)

Later, she feels a bit gloomy and starts circling back towards her house when she suddenly encounters an unimaginable scene. Her foot strikes a dead body lying on the ground covered with earth and debris. She discovers that the person lying is a man. He is a tall man and when she unearths his head, she finds that his teeth are broken. Rejected by the society, he is accepted by mother earth which is symbolized by the earth and debris that is spread all over his head and face.

Importance of the Story *The Flowers*

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This short story is very significant for three reasons.

Primarily, it provides immense relief from extreme heat like temporary and sporadic rain does. Just like, an ephemeral shower soothes parching throats and earth from intense heat; likewise reading the above analyzed stories and then coming onto this one, is like passing through blazing sun and arriving abruptly in the shade of a green tree. There is no nature in between to shelter the readers. All kinds of unimaginable and stupendously horrific incidents like a father smiting his daughter's breast, a woman kindling fire in her own wedding bed and thereby nullifying her own existence, a woman dying from anxiety and foul smell of her own waste, a helpless mother running after a horse to gather its waste so that her dying son can be saved and a pious black woman thrown out of the white church are mentioned in detail. After all this, one finds "The Flowers", a smooth, short, delicate, exquisitely splendid and poetic short story which quenches tired minds and souls. Though, there is mention of a dead body and lynching towards the end, yet one should not forget that rain often brings mud with it.

Secondly, it reveals how at ease a woman can feel when she is in the lap of nature. Experts often explain this as a psychological fact. They are of the opinion that since the exploiter in both the cases is man, hence both woman and nature feel one in their suffering.

Last, but not the least, the story produces a kind of sensual pleasure by mentioning sweet and colorful flowers thereby reminding its readers of John Keats. The flowers like: strange blue flowers with velvety ridges, sweet suds bush full of the brown, fragrant buds and wild pink roses are enough to satisfy the eyes, noses and hearts of imaginative readers.

To Hell With Dying

Last story in the collection "To Hell With Dying" also calls for an environmental approach. Here too, Walker has provided a green setting, though metaphorically. It is the last story, yet its significance is more than any other in the entire collection. It sermonizes artistically what mankind had and what it has. It engulfs contemporary attitude implicitly. It can be taken as

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a sweet bantering satire on mankind. One can understand the stored wisdom in the story if one draws again the analogy within the paradigm of eco vision and the text itself.

Once upon a time, the land was full of trees, forests and animals. Human beings were living in comraderie with nature. There was a mutual and symbiotic relationship between them. The society was hailed as organic society in which not only the humans were dependent on one another but on the non humans as well. The concept of 'community' and 'we' were rampant. With the passage of time, community broke up. Community was broken into individuals and we into I and me. Man became self centered and detached from his non human surroundings.

This shift in man's outlook has imperiled the earth. Man began to rush for satisfying his own whims. The existence of the other, chiefly the earth and the natural habitat was ignored under the wheel of 'I do not care'. Slowly and steadily, the earth became bald. Her treasure like: trees, woods, flowers, birds and animals were mercilessly obliterated. A strong urge was felt to save it because the entire life system was somewhat affected. There began campaigns for saving her. In earlier societies, earth remained charitable and reciprocated respect and love. Everybody used to join hands in loving her and saving her. But now, people do not have time. So they cannot either love or save. Unless people again join hands in saving her, she won't be able to continue. The earth will perish one day if this rat race of earning more and more continues. It is this ecological vision that "To Hell with Dying" seems to portray competently.

Mr. Sweet

It is a story about Mr. Sweet. He is an old drunkard who is sober and charitable. He was like family for narrator's family. He used to visit them regularly. They all loved him and he too on his part would play and sing for them and with them. He was a guitarist and would hum sweet songs. The young narrator loved his kinky white hair and often buried her small fingers in them. Whenever he would come to their house, they would stop everything and sit around him. This Mr. Sweet can be seen as an equivalent to earth. He was loved and in return gave love. Though, he was often drunk, yet he knew how to control himself.

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He was a lonely person. He lived in a kind of isolated house. His wife had already died and his son did not live with him. He was often found struck in a kind of death ritual that narrator's family was required to revive him time and again. Narrator's elder brothers and sisters got maximum opportunities to revive him. They would go to his home and the father would say, "To hell with dying... These children want Mr. Sweet!" (Walker 116). After this, the youngest child would jump on the bed and on Mr. Sweet and start kissing him all over his face. Then, he or she would tickle him down in his stomach and Mr. Sweet would revive placating everybody's tension.

This process continued for several years. Everybody would join hands in saving Mr. Sweet. And Mr. Sweet, till he was ninety years old, continued to bestow his affection on the family. When the narrator was about to complete her doctorate, she received a telegram informing that Mr. Sweet was about to die. She left everything and flew back home. When she reached his home, she found that nobody was there except her parents. Her elder siblings were living at far off places and her brother who always accompanied her in earlier revival rituals was in Asia as a soldier. Her father again pronounced this time with a difference, "To hell with dying man! My daughter is home to see Mr. Sweet!". (122)

She bent down and placed her head on the pillow next to Mr. Sweet and gently stroked his eyes. They opened and looked at her. They shined because they recognized her. His lips parted gently to smile then he began to trace her hair with his fingers and stopped over her ears. He cupped his hands around her and when she opened her eyes, his were closed and her father gave her Mr. Sweet's piano. This time, they were not able to save him. Symbolically, this anticipates the future of humanity. The existence of human beings depends upon the existence of earth. Walker seems to be preaching that just like one or two persons were not able to save Mr. Sweet, one plant cannot make the entire earth green. Everybody has to come together. It is the right time when one should understand that egocentrism should be given up for eco-centrism. The world cannot be saved by the efforts of one. The concepts of community, interdependence and symbiosis are to be circulated and adopted if one wants to keep the earth as a habitable

planet. Otherwise, one must be ready to confront the dooms day in the form of a great deluge, or may be a mighty quake that will nullify human beings from not only the annals of history but of geography as well.

Joanna Patricia and Alice Walker

A short poem by Joanna Patricia expresses this wisdom poetically just like Walker has expressed this wisdom narratively:

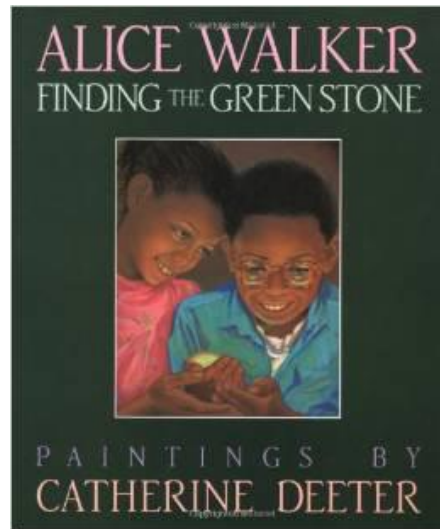
Garbages are everywhere
Looks like everyone doesn't care
About our Mother Earth who's crying with fear
That she might eternally disappear

Storms, hurricanes and so much more
And we really can't take it anymore
For the 'end' is coming
And we don't know where we are really going

Everyone must cooperate
Before its going to be late
In saving our beloved planet
While we still can, plan it

Let us empower our minds
To go beyond the lines
In seeking for ways to preserve our land
For the future of the world is in our hands!

Finding the Green Stone



After reading stories in *In Love and Trouble*, when one comes to *Finding the Green Stone*, twenty years have passed. The world has witnessed the most devastating incidents like Bhopal Gas Tragedy and Chernobyl Disaster. Many space shuttles have been launched into space and many species have already disappeared from the earth. The world has come out openly in seminars and conferences on the issue of environment. So, one perceives a remarkable change in Walker's attitude as well. In her previous collection, she was covert and implicit in addressing the issue of environment. In this later book, she too becomes overt and explicit. This does not mean that every sentence and stanza has green posturing in finding the green stone. No doubt it is, yet it won't be exaggeration if one concludes that this book is partially overt and partially covert in touching upon environmental issues. Its ideological base and the characters in it are truly bio-centric yet the content or the story line requires to be dissected properly before a green platform is discovered. Though it is a novella, or a little bit of a long story as compared to the short story, because it runs into almost 35 pages, but if one reads it as an allegory then it generates more sense.

The New Threat – Human's Mismanagement of Natural Resources

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When Walker writes in late 20th century, the world has come far enough from the concept of heaven and hell. The new threat that appalls everyone is posed by man's mismanagement of his natural resources. Depletion in the ozone layer and scarcity of pure water haunts every intellectual that is why *Finding the Green Stone* can be viewed as an environmental allegory. Its contents and its characters hold a mirror for man to view his own misdeeds. It is a powerful book that documents and extols the concept of community, interdependence, interconnectedness, mutuality, reciprocity and symbiosis. So, it can safely be argued that the concepts like community and interconnectedness that was mildly touched in the last story "To Hell with Dying" in *In Love and Trouble* are explained in detail here.

"Everything is related to everything else" the first law of ecology laid down by Commoner is at work everywhere in ecosphere and in this book too. In class text books, everybody learns the concept of the food chain. A small fish is swallowed by the big fish. The big fish is gulped by whale. The whale is slain by man. Another common pattern is grass is eaten by rabbits; rabbits by tigers, or lions and tigers, or lions by hunters. In this way, the chain continues. If anything is taken out then it disturbs the smooth flowing of cycle. For example, Lyn White Jr. records that Aldous Huxley used to spend his vacations near a valley during his childhood. That was a wonderful place with green grass all around. When he revisited the place as a grown up, he was confounded to discover bushes of grass instead of the small delicate one that had often welcomed him when he was a child. He later found that the rabbits who kept a complete check on the unnecessary growth of the grass were forcibly murdered by local peasants.

Everything has its own importance in the larger scheme of things. The smallest flower is as precious as the largest mountain. From ants to elephants, every being contributes in the larger food chain. Removal of one is bound to impact the entire system. So, Commoner's first law of ecology can be rephrased as, "Everything is dependent on everything else." One should respect everybody. Just as a house is built by putting together so many bricks so the entire system too is built by the joining of both human and non human. Just as, if one brick is taken out from the

structure, it is disfigured, so if one being whether speaking or non-speaking is taken out or disrespected then it can collapse the entire system.

John's Metamorphosis

Finding the Green Stone is the story of Johnny's metamorphosis. Like a classical Greek tragedy, the hero suffers from hamartia. Then he undergoes anagnorisis which results in peripeteia. There are moments in the story where one not only sympathizes with the hero, but also appreciates him. Thereby catharsis is also achieved. Its structure also follows strictly the Aristotelian system of cause and effect. It also abides by to the unity of place and action. However, unlike classical tragedy, it has a happy ending and the dominant influencing agency is also environment, instead of Greek gods and goddesses.

Johnny and Katie are siblings. They both have their own iridescent green stones. The children are very happy while playing with them. The stones are small enough to fit easily in their palms. They hold them gleefully before the sun and drop them gently in the water to pick it back. They are spending extremely joyful and comfortable days. One day, unfortunately Johnny, the hero loses his green stone. He searches for it everywhere, but in vain. From here, one can trace the analogy between food chain or inter-dependence and the happenings in the story. Here, the story acquires allegorical structure where characters and their deeds symbolically represent some other things actually.

Johnny suffers because he disrespected others. He loses his precious possession just because he had shown a kind of contempt or dislike for others. When he and his sister are searching for his green stone, they arrive at Mr. Roseharp's cottage. Johnny is afraid to go upstairs. Actually, he had called Mr. Roseharp bad names when the latter was going to the store. Johnny himself confesses: "Since I called you a bad name... I lost my green stone." It is this realization and repentance that fetches Mr. Roseharp's company for them. Mr. Roseharp instead of fuming at them, tucks his shirt in his pants and comes down to help them in finding the green stone.

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Mr. Roseharp's Help

Next, they go to their father who is working in a forest. He is the driver of pulpwood truck that he first loads and then drives. Johnny had initially disrespected his father's occupation. He has often felt ashamed and embarrassed. Now, in the moment of realization, he confesses: "Last week I told Daddy I was ashamed of him for being the driver of a stupid pulpwood truck. I hurt his feelings and I don't know how to tell him I'm sorry." Johnny's father understands his feelings and consoles him with the words that he knew why he had said that. He, like his son, also hates the pulpwooding just because it harms the trees. Johnny's realization again procures his father's support for him.

Next, they visit their mother who is the only community doctor. Johnny had also registered his grievance for her. He wants to change his mother just because he does not get hugs, cookies and milk just like the other kids. He now realizes that his loss is nothing in comparison with the grand work that his mother is doing. His mother chides him severely:

I can't keep up with every single thing, Johnny," said his mother, in a voice that sounded like she was tired of trying. "Maybe if you'd do a better job of cleaning up your room you wouldn't need help finding your stuff. And no, I do not have your green stone. I have my own.

Recognition of Love for the Family

Johnny realizes here that how much he loves his mother and would never wish to change her. He also realizes that he has lost his green stone and would never find it back without his mother's help. This is enough to get his mother's support. It seems as if she has seen repentance in his eyes. She comes and consoles her son:

Listen, son, everybody has his or her own green stone. You ought to know that by now. Nobody can give it to you and nobody can take it away. Only you can misplace or lose it. If you've lost it, it's your own fault... We will get everybody in the community to help look for your green stone anyway!

Johnny has also initially insulted his sister Katie. She was trying to help him. She would often bring her stone for him to play and he thought that it was his stone because it looked brighter and bigger. Once even, he stole her stone only to realize that it did not dazzle in his hands. Later, he atones for his mistakes and seeks forgiveness. Now, Katie denies any help. He again pleads, but she gainsays him again. After this, she observes that her stone was flickering and losing its luster. However, she reconciles with him and says that she feels the happiest when he is happy. It is the acknowledgement of others happiness that brings shine back on her stone.

In Search of the Stone

With the help of his community members, Johnny starts searching for his stone. There is his father, mother, sister, his teacher, minister, shoe man, paperboy, a baby, a dog and all his classmates and friends. They search everywhere: in orchards, under doorsteps, in flower beds and on mountains. Finally, they feel tired and come to rest under a big tree. There, Johnny has a moment of realization. He asks everybody to go home. He apologizes that they had wasted their entire afternoon for his sake, in finding what they cannot help in finding. He picks a small rock and starts fondling it. At this, his sister Katie replies that they wanted to be with him when he found it. Here, after listening to this, Johnny feels warmth gushing out of his body and enveloping everybody else. He looks at the rock and is surprised to find that it is his very green stone. He begins to dance around the tree and they all return his smiles.

Food Chain and the Stone

Several points immediately strike an ecologically conscious eye. First, it is the spirit of community and respect. Everything is important in its way. When Johnny is rude and disrespects

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others, he breaks the chain. As a result, he feels isolated and loses his precious stone. In food chain too, if any member is discredited, insulted, destroyed then it affects the entire system. The moment, Johnny realizes his fault and apologizes, he is accepted back in the community. His sister too, when she poses arrogance, is at the verge of losing her stone, but when she thinks of Johnny's happiness, her stone begins to shine again. Walker seems to be asserting the principle of community and interconnectedness. Everything and every being is important. Even his father's pulp-wooding business is important because it is the only way he can keep his family alive. One should not be selfish to think about one's own self. Johnny's mother is a doctor. She thinks for the benefit of all. That is why, she has the solution for Johnny's problem.

Significance of Personal Names

Another point that contributes to the allegorical meaning of the story is the names of the characters. Just like, in morality plays, there are characters as personified abstractions like: Pride, Glutton and Anger. Here too, nature is personified as human beings. The characters are named after nature. Johnny truly represents a human being, but his sister Katie connotes cat. His father is Mr. Oaks, his neighbor is Mr. Roseharp. His mother is addressed as Dr. Oaks. His teacher is Miss Rivers. The minister is named as Mr. Skies while the paperboy is referred to as Sunny. Shoeshine man is called as Mr. Birdfield. This is very symbolic in two ways. First, Johnny, the human being is shown at the mercy of all others. It strengthens the notion that human being is powerless without nature. He needs help from others. Johnny is unable to find his stone until they all join in the pursuit. Though, they cannot help him in finding his stone, yet a symbiotic kind of relationship is necessary, before Johnny accomplishes his task. Even a small baby and dog are brought in to help Johnny. It seems to be a nostalgic picture of the time when man and nature lived in harmony. Those were the days when everybody respected the sanctity of others. It is the disregard of others' rights of every sort that produces ecological threats. Nature does not demand too much. What she requires is respect and care and in return she blesses all by giving her bounties to mankind. Johnny too wins his battle when he respects nature. He is lonely, segregated, until he hesitates or accepts that he was mistaken. By portraying Johnny's success only after he acknowledges others, as well as nature. Walker seems to be presenting a model before modern man to emulate.

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Secondly, such names as Miss Rivers, Mr. Skies, Roseharp and Birdfield are crucial because they may remind small children of their surroundings. In contemporary scenario, a child grows in closed compartments where science and technology conceal nature. After reading such a story, a child will surely become aware of things that he or she is missing while sitting in front of laptops and play stations. Last, but not the least, the title too is symbolic. It is *Finding the Green Stone*. Here, a black writer is writing about the color green not the color black, white, brown or yellow. In the beginning of 20th century, W.E.B Dubois spoke regretfully, “The problem of 20th century is the problem of color line” (5). He surely was addressing the issue of black versus white. Towards the close of 20th century, Walker reiterates the metaphor of color. Today, more than white or black or red or brown, the color green matters the most. It is the greenery that is disappearing from the earth. In the story, there is greenery everywhere symbolized by the green stone which is a personal possession. Everybody has his or her green stone. Mr. Oaks wears it on a thong. Mrs. Oaks keeps it inside her cheek. Katie wears it as an earring. Roseharp wears it on his hat while the small baby is carrying it on the handle of its pacifier. The dog bears it on its collar while the tree has one among its many lives. Walker seems to be lamenting on contemporary scene by presenting the greenery as ubiquitous. In a way, it can be construed as a mild warning for the present day reader to mend his ways otherwise the world will not look nice without green color. One has to rise above the regional and geographical concerns of black and white color and should think about the global issue of green hue.

To Sum Up

To sum up, it can be asserted with conviction that Walker writes with a mission. No doubt, she is a black woman writer raised in rural Georgia, but her vision is broad enough to encompass the entire humanity. In her short stories, she undisputedly writes about the problems of black women in black and white America, but her canvas is wide enough to entail the entire ecosphere. With the issues of race, sex and class, the problem of biospheric upheavals are skillfully woven like the pattern of a veteran black woman quilting in her yard by piecing together diverse scraps of clothes ranging from her ancestors to contemporaries to bring them

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together on one platform. Alice Walker sincerely adds the concerns of environment with diverse issues like race, gender and class that enables her to provide a green platform or green setting to her stories. Sometimes, the ecological concerns are implicit in the text and at other times they become explicit, but that is in line with the appearance of the text during particular moments in history as is depicted in the above analysis.

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