

## The Introspection and Healing in Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*

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After publishing *The Color Purple* (1982), Alice Walker has received extensive attention from all over the world as a womanist. She herself suffered from discrimination in the American South, and thus, has settled on subject matter about the lives of African American woman who also suffer from similar situations and face up to them. Walker wrote *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) about the African tradition, FGM (Female Genital Mutilation). She has received much criticism because she took up the African tradition which seems to have nothing to do with her own identity. However, she has her own consistent belief, and so she coined the term, "womanism." Walker aims to acquire the rights and safety of all women, regardless of nationality or race. Therefore, it seems natural for her to embark on the problem of an African woman as well. FGM forces women to have an unconscious sense of belonging to tradition, which serves to prevent them from escaping from it. Walker feels that the history of discrimination and abuse in Africa is similar to her own experience in the American South. That is why she grapples with FGM. In this study, I examine Walker's suggestion in this novel to abolish FGM in order to save both physically and mentally wounded women by focusing on the mental growth of the protagonist, Tashi.

In Chapter I, I consider what Tashi's mutilation represents. Tashi, who gets deeply hurt physically, gets agitated mentally and loses herself. That is to say, it is the mental mutilation attended with the physical mutilation of FGM. In order to clarify what these two mutilations represent, I comparatively verify and focus on the common points and different points between Tashi and other characters who have also been physically mutilated.

In Chapter II, I discuss the difference between Tashi and those around her which the representation of her mutilation shows. She looks at her own mutilation in the face and puts up resistance to the oppression which imposed such a situation on her. However, most of the characters except Tashi have a different of awareness of her issues. I consider how they gradually make up for their imperfect understanding of each other in order to narrow this gap.

By doing so, Walker insists that everyone should be aware of the oppression of him/her. In addition, Walker emphasizes the bond of human beings while she deals with an African woman who suffers from FGM.

In Chapter III, I examine the bond of mothers and daughters by focusing on the reason why Tashi murders her circumciser, M'Lissa. The characters get to know various things in order to compensate for the differences from others who suffer from the oppression. In this case, to know means to know the meaning of the tradition, the system of the society, and themselves. The mutilation and resistance that Walker expressed through Tashi implies that she is apprehensive that the voices of people suffering from the mental mutilation might be ignored.

The main theme of *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is about Africa, but at the root, it fits people all over the world. Walker has struggled with unfair and cruel treatment thus far. Moreover, she has seen how the weak have been ignored and how their lives were claimed unjustly. Walker has carried out her original intention from the first in order to save people's lives. It can be seen in this novel as well.