



On The Bookshelf



*Alice Walker, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004.
[813 WAL]*

Now is the Time to Open Your Heart

FROM THE AUTHOR OF
THE COLOR PURPLE

Having read the “Colour Purple” by Alice Walker and seeing the words ‘heart’ and ‘open’ in the title, I lay down to read this book, with great expectations. As with life, things generally work out better if I have fewer expectations and I am myself ‘open’ to experiences. I have to say though that ‘I didn’t get this book’, I didn’t enjoy it and emerged disappointed and curious about my own lack of engagement with this highly acclaimed author.

The central theme was about a man and woman in relationship, ‘finding themselves and each other’ through separate inner journeys. The man was an artist and the woman an author, so they were already familiar with their intuitive and heart selves. The woman journeyed with shamans and native Indians in the Amazon jungle, while the man journeyed in Hawaii. I

found the descriptions of their inner journeys to be like travel guides into new age spirituality. The narrative felt superficial and I had difficulty staying connected. I don’t want to discount the deep personal issues that were explored in this book, but rather make a point about the style of writing that did not appeal to me.

There was however, another theme that ran through this book that I found a lot more interesting. Using the woman’s experience with native Indians in the Amazon and the man’s experience in Hawaii, Alice Walker explored ideas of social inequity, poverty, colonization, development, and dispossession of Indigenous cultures. She also discussed the strength and depth of Indigenous culture and spirituality. While these ideas were subtly woven into the protagonists’ journeys, they were nevertheless addressed seriously and sensitively.

I submit this book review reluctantly because I feel that I do this book an injustice, in not really understanding it. In fact I have to admit to not finishing it! And therefore I may have missed the best parts. If I was a more rigorous reviewer I would make myself read it again, but alas.....!

Kaye Mehta