

**Fictional World of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A
Thematic Study of Selected Works**

A Thesis

Submitted for the Award of Ph.D. Degree of

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by

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Under the supervision of

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KIRTI JHA

PREFACE

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the leading Nigerian women writers who have brought acclaims to the Dark Continent. She not only cherishes her descent and ancestry but also highlights various contemporary problems faced by Nigerians in the present times. Her narratives trace how Africans bartered a new religion and new culture in exchange of their identity. Such alterations also have gender violence as appendage and as a tool of coercion used by the colonised and indoctrinated natives. Adichie's fictional works are the portraits of the new experiences of Igbo people via the perspective of women who have risen from their second citizen status. Adichie's literary corpus not only flaunts a globalised Nigeria but she has also created an alcove for her fellow Nigerians on the literary platform of the cosmos. Adichie explores the intersection of the personal and the public by placing the intimate details of the lives of her characters within the larger social and political forces in contemporary Nigeria.

Themes of gender violence with civil war as the backdrop, experiences of immigrant Nigerians, inter racial relationships, sexism and resilience feature recurrently in her narratives. She highlights the experiences of Igbo natives living within their own territories and within the territories of their colonisers. The present research proposes a comprehensive and detailed study of the fictional works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The present study entitled, **“Fictional World of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A Thematic Study of Selected Works”** is an attempt to critically analyze the major thematic concerns in her fictional works, namely, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Americanah*.

The study comprises of five chapters, followed by a conclusion. In the **Introduction**, the history of colonialism in the African subcontinent and the emergence of postcolonialism as a counter expression of colonialism have been examined. Since Adichie hails from an Igbo descent, an in depth study of the Igbo social system and its cultural practices are also a significant part of the introduction. Nigerian modern literature has grown out of a tradition of storytelling and historical remembrance that has existed in Nigeria for millennia. Such oral literature ranges from the proverbs, anecdotes to elaborate the stories memorized and performed by professional praise singers attached to the royal courts. Besides this, the historicity of the Igbo literature and Adichie's pivotal role in the contemporary Nigerian literature are also

incorporated in this chapter. The second chapter entitled **‘Violence Begets Violence’: Curse of the Nigerian Civil War**, focuses on the etymology of civil war as a sociological term with special reference to the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. The ramifications of violence in the nascent democratic set ups (like Nigeria) are explored through the novel *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and the story "Ghosts". An attempt has been made to delve into the ethos of Adichie's literary oeuvre that is sated with violence. Special references are made to highlight the evils of civil violence and its unfading impact on the national psyche of the Nigerians. The third chapter entitled **The Reversal of Dichotomy: Feminist Perspectives in Adichie's Fiction** culls out the feminist perspective from the literary corpus of Adichie because most of her protagonists are young Igbo women struggling to carve a niche of their own. An in depth study of the feminist movements across the eastern and the western parts of the globe are elucidated in order to develop a perspective of the black feminist theories. Adichie's women characters are coming of age 'womanists', who mature into heroines as they brave the patriarchal circumstances. They are remorseless as they capsize the already existing gender dichotomies existing in Igbo societies in Nigeria and abroad. An attempt is made to examine the nexus between sexism, class oppression and racism as practiced by the indoctrinated men in Adichie's fictional world. Various issues related to gender such as resilience and retribution sought by women of the Igbo society and their relevance in the contemporary situation are also foregrounded in this chapter. The fourth chapter explicates the relevant issues of émigré Nigerians such as alienation, loneliness and protagonists' search for their identity intertwined with grief and sacrifice that are truly representative of a Black Identity. It is entitled as **Tales from Hostland to Homeland: Adichie's Diaspora** as it examines the problems faced by Non Resident Nigerians in America and Europe. The chapter brings out a contemporary flavour of voluntary migrations by young Igbo men and women and their challenges of being away from their motherland. Diaspora themes of interracial relationships, the institution of marriage, infidelity, same sex desire, etc, are dealt by Adichie in the most probable and realistic way. The fifth and the last chapter critically analyses the **Narrative Strategies** used by Adichie in her fictional works selected for the present research work. Theories by Gerard Genette, Peter Brooks and Roland Barthes have been examined to develop a theoretical perspective to examine Adichie's narrative techniques. A thorough study of the plots, narrative point of views, literary devices like symbols, repetitions, revelations, etc.

brings out the literary oeuvre of the writer. Adichie stands out as a narrator of Igbo tales in English but she retains her individual distinctiveness. The conclusion is a cohesive assimilation of the ideas and the understanding developed during the course of the study.

This study has taken me down the alleys and nuances of Black consciousness of a woman writer and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie not only emerges as the voice of the twenty first Nigerian woman but also that of women of the third world countries. It is hoped that the various trends examined in this research work would help in taking the postcolonial discourse a step ahead.

This research would not have been possible without the guidance of my supervisor. I owe my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Seema Malik, Dean Post Graduate Studies and Head, Department of English, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, for her meticulous and invaluable supervision. Her support throughout my research was exemplary.

My mother in law Dr. Rajni Kulshreshtha, a woman writer herself has been a constant source of inspiration to me. My mother Smt. Kusum Lata Jha always motivated me in the difficult circumstances to keep on treading a path which has brought me here. My father in law Dr. S.K. Kulshreshtha and my father Sh. S.N. Jha were equally supportive in my task in their own ways.

My husband Dr. Chinmay Kulshreshtha has always been an insightful companion who has not only been a pillar of strength for me but has also instilled in me enthusiasm time and again throughout this rigorous research work.

Candy, my pet too had a vital role in this research as she accompanied me during the long morning and evening walks after the demanding working hours.

I thank the faculty members of the Department of English, M.L.S. University for their support during this research work. I am also grateful to Shri Subhash Nangla and Shri Gopal Gothwal from the administrative staff of the Department of English for their co-operation during this research work.

(Kirti Jha)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I

When Africa was first discovered by David Livingstone, little did the world know that it would serve as the vast foundation of the relentless British Empire. Being the cradle of the most primitive civilisations of the world, it witnessed the evolution of modern man from Neanderthals (Newman et al.) and even saw the rise and fall of the greatest of ancient kingdoms¹ though it was the last continent to be explored, it was the territory *sinecure* which was exploited to the hilt by the colonisers. Since a larger part of Africa was inhabited by the indigenous tribes, they were easy scapegoats of the so called ‘White man’² who carried the burden to civilise the barbarians and counterbalance their dark tribalism with their refined conduct and the benevolent reformers soon became the papier-mâché Mephistopheles on their dark and unkempt land, as described by Conrad.³ One of the American scholars Coleman expressed his general belief about nations of Africa:

The day is far distant when the peoples of Africa will be proficient of organising independent states. (66)

In an attempt to interpret the prejudiced opinion about the colonial territories formulated during the colonial era W.M. Macmillan mentions in the preface to his work⁴ that it as an observational study of the African continent while maintaining a colonialist attitude and misguiding the readers of future generations echoes a Kiplinguesque conduct in describing the necessity and efficacy of British rule in Africa. According to him the civilising mission was only undertaken by the leader country (Great Britain) to bring out Africa from perpetual darkness:

In the nineteenth century civilisation was thought of as a higher synthesis of the best experience of all human race. No leader in those days questioned the theoretical right of Africans to equality and our duty to help their ‘progress’; nor was there any doubt felt about the will or capacity of Africans to follow and attain. In this faith Great Britain undoubtedly succeeded in winning the gratitude and loyalty of her African subjects. (9)

Indeed the bigotry of a coloniser is quite palpable here since the white man believed in the incapability of these black natives to rule their own country and this riddle assisted the process of colonization. He further exclaims that a European would pick up the bones of African savages not for profit but only for the sake of adventure. Africa could never be a profitable venture because he feels that Africa is a land of inhospitable climate with disease infested terrain posed threats to the colonial administrators and the natives are far away from civilisation also, 'it is hard to keep oneself really humane and to be a standard bearer of civilisation' (10).

Scholars of western countries realised the existence of eastern civilisations and slowly, Europe was attracted towards the enigmatic *Orient*⁵ which included the Middle Eastern countries, the Asian continent and Africa and a new discourse of 'Orientalism' was founded by Edward Said with his magnum opus *Orientalism* in 1978. The interested academicians were called *Orientalists*⁶ and ironically they started as language sophists who were keen to learn and imbibe the oriental languages like Sanskrit, Persian etc, but this pursuit took a different turn and the derisive historical masterpieces⁷ were soon followed by imperial plans. Though missionaries and colonial administrators complained about the disease infested hot and humid air and hostile topography of Africa yet the feelings of curiosity and disgust kept their flame of imperialism alive. Paradoxically the whites posed as sacrificial lambs in the impossible task of civilizing the barbarians. W.M. Macmillan quotes Dr. Albert Schweitzer's opinion:

White Man's life in Africa is 'the tragic element...that it is so hard to keep oneself really humane and to be the standard bearer of civilisation. (21)

A similar idea was quoted by Said in his mammoth non-fiction - "The orient...vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty (59). Such quest for the unexplored lands of the world was unquenchable since it involved the unfurling of histories and discovery of something like *Aladdin's Treasure Cave*⁸. One of the missionaries who returned from Africa in 1873 stated a similar repugnance for the natives of Africa in the following words:

The Chinaman meets you with the stolid morality of his Confucianism; the Hindoo with astute logic for his pantheism.....When I carry my torch into the caves of Africa, I meet only filthy birds of darkness. (121)

This urge to civilise was coloured by a desire to plunder and in no time the Dark Continent became the gold mine of resources (gemstones, raw materials spices, slaves etc.) for the colonisers. The claim of bringing enlightenment in Africa was contested by many writers on certain occasions as they expressed the undercurrent charity and benignity through treatise or books and the perpetual defence mechanism worked well while these bringers of light shovelled human and natural resources from the continent:

Those now engaged in African development, enlightened traders and technicians, and the host of enthusiastic and unselfish administrators, though perhaps imperial and authoritative by tradition are certainly not instruments of exploitation. (Macmillan 19)

With the advent of setting up of empire states by imperious colonial powers like Great Britain, France, Spain and Portugal, the discourse of colonised-coloniser, master-slave, and orient-occident became more relevant since an armoured and unyielding dichotomy existed between these opposite terms. While the world moved towards the twentieth century, it brought a sudden onrush of nationalistic fervour and protests from colonies globally which resulted in thwarted dreams of Empire states and the irrevocability of the phrase 'sun never sets on the British Empire' was challenged. Thus the word colonial developed a dichotomy which was the new outcome of anti colonial feeling and the Postcolonial came into existence. Postcolonial ushered as an appendage of avant-gardism and Afro-Asian countries struggled to set aside the fetters and break free from the colonial masters who had so far paddled their economy and socio-political set up. Ironically the idea of postcolonial does not refer to the situation of an erstwhile colony after it has gained sovereignty, instead it incorporates the experiences of the indigenous people during the colonial phase and the manner of their retaliation is both silent and manifest. Very soon the idea spread in various arenas of art and literature and a new ism or theory rose to the dais of world literature and art. Though Ania Loomba has presented a different idea about postcolonialism altogether, she

believes that postcolonialism is yet to be used in a 'single sense' and is yet to occur mainly because a neo-colonialism (socio-economic and cultural) has set in:

It might seem that because the age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once colonised peoples live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial. And yet the term has been fiercely contested on many counts. To begin with, the prefix 'post' complicates matters because it implies an 'aftermath' in two senses- temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting. It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable: if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism. (12)

Some appendage concepts like imperialism, colonialism, orientalism and the like are bound to feature in any of the postcolonial discourse since all these theories form fragmentary portions of Third World Literature and Theory. Said states that imperialism is a machinery to exercise power and dominion and both imperialism and colonialism are not to be taken synonymously at a surface level. It has a deeper connotation since it includes an omission of indigenous culture and is "impelled by impressive ideological formations" (14).

The concept of postcolonial literature has been used as an umbrella term for the writings of various disenfranchised groups from countries of Asia and Africa which were on the primacy list of the colonisers due to motley reasons but priority was to haul out the raw materials from these under developed countries and leave them enslaved for centuries. Major belief behind subjugating these races of Asia and Africa was the Eurocentric attitude which advocated the superiority of the European man and the inferiority of *Homo Africanus*⁹ and other Asiatic ethno-linguistic races. The induction of a new religious order and general overview of leading historian served as the last nail in the coffin of dying indigenous cultures of Asian- African peoples¹⁰ because it depicted these cultures as barbaric and boorish (Said 113). A "falling apart" of such barbaric bastions soon occurred and the countries which comprised of the untouched tribal territories were soon plundered. Slowly, the *Homo Africanus* too underwent an identity crisis and an indoctrinated human was the outcome of such usurpation. The new colonial slave was the results of hegemonic¹¹ attempts made by the colonial masters to brain wash the tribal culture and native essence from these

people and to devise a new slave, who would speak the tongue of his masters, eat the food given by him and follow a new religion, which again belonged to his owner.

However critics like Arif Dirlik speak against postcolonial theory as he goes on to say that the third world literature and language of expression is shapeless and is based on global economies and politics and is derived from the 'first world'. He calls 'postcolonialism' a 'child of postmodernism' who is born not out of new perspectives on history and culture but because of 'the increased visibility of academic intellectuals of Third World origin as pace setters in cultural criticism (329).

In the history of colonised countries one can see that a twofold imperialism took place because of cultural imperialism and the territorial imperialism where the natives faced not only an external threat to their lands but an obliteration of native culture and language which occurred through various coercive actions of the colonial rulers, sometimes by inducting clan outcasts in Christianity and at other times teaching them the tongue of the colonising masters. In the words of Ngugi Wa Thiong O', a Kenyan writer, 'the cultural bomb' was one methodology through which the colonisers manifestly altered the culture and language of the natives by indoctrinating them with a new culture and a new language (3). Thiong' O, retouches the 'Language Question' through his book *Decolonising the Mind* and shares his personal dilemma of choosing a language to express himself. He began to write in English but soon realised how atrociously he was ignoring his mother tongue Kikuyu. Thus, a whole new perspective was developed on the idea of language as a postcolonial concept, as Thiong O' puts it in his masterpiece and no wonder the reader realises that postcoloniality is not just a 'first world' concept (330) as Arif Dirlik mentions about it in one of his essays.

Leaving aside the criticisms, Postcolonial literature is an attempt of the colonised to reshape and restructure their clan identity once again and relive their customs and traditions in their narratives. For instance, Chinua Achebe in his trilogy- *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer At Ease* and *The Arrow of God* tries to present an insider's view about Igbo customs and conventions to the readers and at the same time juxtaposes the pre-colonial and colonial situations in Nigeria. He brings home the idea that a rich and prosperous clan was victimised under 'pacification attempts' by the colonisers which turned the protagonists into faceless and courage lacking individuals. Other important writers like Wole Soyinka, Mongo Beti, Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri, Dorris

Lessing, Chris Abani, Ama Ataa Aidoo and many more have produced literary works which present an overview of the condition of African people within and outside the milieu of their clan fraternity. There is a zest in the postcolonial writers to establish their pasts and rediscover the truths behind all those years when, ‘the dimensionless silence of the orient’ (Said 95) failed to protest against the infiltrators. Postcolonial is not restricted to one single continent or country rather it has gained a major role on the world stage of politics and indigenous culture of more than fifty countries around the globe which were colonies of Empire nations. Stalwart theorists like Frantz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, Edward W. Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Dipesh Chakravarty have been incessantly trying to evolve various strands of Postcolonialism; be it the cultural hegemony, subaltern, nation, other¹², etc. and time and such theorization has rendered a truly global character to the postcolonial discourse. The marginalisation of third world countries has a visible direct relationship with the ignorance (on part of the natives) that the real motive of missionaries was actually situated in the word ‘mission.’ Their mission was not as simple as provision of guidance and knowledge and better medical facilities but an inherent idea of exploitation always ran as an undercurrent. In a postcolonial text the reader encounters an unfurling of a historical past and a negated identity which emerges resilient and more self sustaining amidst an aggrieved history but simultaneously there nurtures a hope for the future which runs parallel through and through. John McLeod quotes:

Postcolonial in part involves the *challenge* to colonial ways of knowing, ‘writing back’ in opposition to such views. (32)

Postcolonial era does not imply an end of the colonial era but it incorporates the historicity of colonialism since the past remains embedded somewhere in the sub surface connotations of these texts. The colonial question emerges out and receives a volley of blows from the champions of liberation and it sinks deep down the narration yet the idea of colonialism survives as an alter ego to postcolonialism. It belongs to the memories of people of former colonies and their revisitations to the past events, instances, experiences. Colonial past can be called as a part of the *collective conscience*¹³ of the citizens of third world countries since they grew up in a world which was always wanting in freedom and which was at the disposal of an imperialist. A struggle to save native culture and language was already on cards for the colonised

because their indigenous culture was branded as barbaric, unrefined, pagan and animalistic:

In colonial discourses, blackness has been frequently evoked as the ultimate sign of the colonised's 'racial' degeneracy. In the nineteenth century, throughout Europe it was commonly believed that world's population existed as a hierarchy of 'races' based upon colour, with white Europeans deemed the most civilised and black Africans as most savage. (McLeod 77)

But not for very long people of Africa and other slave countries bore the brunt of racialism and inferiority. Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire influenced by Claude McKay and W.E.B. DuBois championed the cause of Black people and this gave rise to the concept of *negritude*.¹⁴ However a criticism of *negritude* was spoken of by Frantz Fanon in his book *Wretched of the Earth* wherein he advocates the protection of native intellectual culture more than supporting *negritude* and for that he praises the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong O' for creating a cultural awakening in one of his novels *Grain of Wheat* and that too without taking refuge in *negritude* (McLeod 19). Many countries of Asia, Africa and Middle East faced the colonial fetters but a continent which was by and large fully used and abused by the colonial empires was Africa. The present study will deal with the exploitation of one of such African countries i.e.: Nigeria which was not only situated at the favourable central western coast of Africa but was a hub of variety of tribes and clans which became a centre for Royal Niger Company quite later but stood enslaved till 1960.

Out of the fifty-four countries of Africa, the westerly situated Nigeria, is also known as the seat of early civilisation and archaeological evidences too prove that Bantu migrants inhabited this country around 1st millennium BCE. It can be called a melting pot as various tribes and clans reside here amicably. Edo inhabit the western areas while the Eastern Group of tribes includes Yoruba (inhabiting the northern region and French Dahomey), Ijaws (western people), Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Nupe, Tiv and other minor groups inhabit the northern areas of Nigeria. While describing the ethnography of Nigeria, Coleman says:

The great variety of cultures and of physical types produced by a protracted and extensive intermingling of immigrant stocks, together

with wide differences in the scale and degree of political organisation, has made it difficult to develop a scientific classificatory system for the peoples of Nigeria. (28)

Since there are many sub-tribes inhabiting the Nigerian land, Pritchard's concept of *segmentary lineage* (Ericksen 359) is widely evident in the clans of Nigeria. He proposed a theory archetypal of tribal kinship (especially of Tiv people) interpreting the amicable co-existence of several sub-tribes in a given territory and their attempts "to maintain the tribal order" (Ellen 279). The Federation of Nigeria is criss-crossed by river Niger¹⁵ which flows through this peninsula making it a fertile territory thereby dividing the land into fertile agricultural land and the dense forest area. Forests and swamps in parts of Nigeria have been a boon for the tribal states since the impenetrable segments of tropical swamps and woodland has made the eastern area almost inaccessible. Since there were no invasions in this part during the earlier part of history, the local leaders united to constitute a centralized authority (Falola and Heaton 28). Macmillan opines that it would be fallacious to think that primitive forms of occupation are practised by the natives. He says that earlier most people used the slash and burn technique for making the forest area into cultivable land and in this way they would use the ash as a fertilizer for the crops and when the soil lost its fertility they would move on to the next tract. However they still follow the shifting agriculture but hunting and fishing (like early man) has ceased altogether:

Nomadic hunters, though in parts game is still plentiful, are now very thinly represented by a handful of Bushmen and pygmies. (50)

This tribal order was left distraught when the white man entered the ingresses of these untouched equatorial forests; subjugating and exploiting Nigeria became a prerogative of the British Empire. By the end of 19th century, Nigeria had become a lucrative centre of slave trade for many European countries and finally in 1712 a monopoly of the British was established on the West Coast. If one tries to unearth the clandestine attempts by the Europeans to enslave the peoples of Africa then a document entitled *Periplus of the Erythean Sea* provides a historical account of early enslavement of natives of east coast of Africa (Casson, Kusimba). On the history of slavery Nicola Lo Calzo says:

Between 1440 and 1870, 11 million African people were forced into slavery and sent to the Americas. This trade in human beings deeply changed the African continent's equilibrium. (39)

The history of slave trade in Nigeria is linked with introduction of Islamic religion which led to the increased fraternization between the rulers of different clans and tribal states. Moreover, the slaves were an important asset for the rulers and thus a hierarchy was handed down to the generations and slaves also became a part of the prosperous households:

The connection between trade and Islam is perhaps best exemplified by the *wangarawa* merchants and the Islamic scholars, who spread Islam and commercial activity from the western Sudanic states of Mali and Songhai to the Hausa states of the central savannah from the fourteenth century onwards. Islam provided a way for the traders to identify with each other and also established common values and rules upon which trade was conducted. (Falola and Heaton 65)

Slavery was a social institution within the state of Nigeria and included exchange of slaves for luxury items like gold, salt and textiles and a barter of human beings for things prevailed in the early societies of Nigeria and slaves were misleadingly called 'trade boys' (Coleman 54). It would be inappropriate to state that with the advent of colonialism slavery became prominent because the early practitioners of slave trade were the indigenous people (Islamic) and not the white men:

The Arabs share with the Europeans of the West a heavy responsibility for the slave trade on the African soil. (McMillan 93)

However, it can be derived that slavery had already turned humans into mere movable items and young women were prized possessions of slave masters:

Slaves could be sold for money or traded for goods, with value added over distance. Slaves could also be given as gifts to family members and political supporters or as a tribute to imperial overlords. Slaves were also used as sacrificial offerings in religious ceremonies in traditional settings. (Falola and Heaton 40)

The British finally abolished transatlantic slave trade in 1807 and assertion was laid on "legitimate commerce" but it could not alleviate the inhuman practice totally. Lo

Calzo believes that slave trade has left “livid marks in collective and individual memories as well as in the histories of all countries involved in the trade” (39). Most of the tribes in Nigeria were enslaved because of British infiltration but Igbo of eastern Nigeria were protected between the folds of Tiv in the North and Efik on the coastal areas and the first place where missionaries were able to encroach was Onitsha (Legum 96). Reasons being many as to why the Igbos remained unapproachable by the colonisers but also that they were an enigma for the empire as some of the Orientalists found close similarities between Igbo and Jewish culture. Rev. G.T. Basden felt that the Igbo and Jewish culture are quite identical (Kusimba 62). In 1950s Ike Akwelumo in one of his pamphlets *The Origin of the Ibos* said that the Igbo were a branch of the Jews and the word Igbo or Ibo is a contraction of the word Hebrew (“Akwaelumo” n.d.). For Igbo tribe their culture formed an innate part of their lives and many Nigerian litterateurs like Olahadah Equiano, Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Chris Abani, Sefi Atta, Ben Okri, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and many more have traced the native tribal customs and traditions in their narratives. For instance Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* ; Emecheta in *Joys of Motherhood, Bride Price* ; Chris Abani in *Graceland* etc have mentioned the nuances and mores of typical Igbo family thereby giving a wider public access to the long forgotten kinship of their intrinsic tribe and also popularising the method of expressing “Postcoloniality” in the coloniser’s language. Achebe in one of his essays “The Novelist as a Teacher” says:

I don’t advise them at all beyond the novels. I think just in the same way as I got myself sufficiently informed to understand the culture in which Dickens set his characters or the environment in which James Joyce situated his stories, in the same way as anybody who is genuinely after whatever virtues literature gives and wants to get himself immersed in the life of the Africans. (Lindfors 64)

In these texts there is juxtaposition of the glorified tribal past and the present circumstantial colonization. However agonised the indigenous people are because of thralldom practised by the erstwhile colonisers, they have expressed a strong association with their motherland and their tribal identity. It seems that the hegemonised souls speak out about their experiences and inhuman treatment received at the hands of their self proclaimed masters. Culture forms an important constituent of one’s identity because it

includes various aspects like popular beliefs, practices, morals, eating habits, etc (Tylor 1) and no indoctrination could alleviate the cultural psyche of any human being. At times through these narratives one gets to know about the natives who now claim to be devout Christians and haters of pagan worship in any form but earlier they were pagans and worshipped the forces of nature largely.

Clan fraternity is generally based on common modes and common deities of worship, oracles, belief in ancestral spirits and the ominous and benevolent spirits etc. In contemporary times the Igbo people are predominantly Christians and it is estimated that they constitute one of the largest number of Christians found anywhere in Nigeria (possibly on African continent along with Muslims and other interspersed ethnic groups). However, before the advent of Christianity in 1846 in Nigeria (Falola 2008) paganism prevailed in various tribal clans of Nigeria. At any rate, the pre-Christian traditional religion that the Igbo still practice is organized around four theological concepts, namely, *Chukwu*, non-human spirits (deities or oracles), ancestors and *Chi* (personal God) (Ogba 127). Most of the divinities and spirits formed a significant part of the domesticity and specific corners were meant for their altars. Such pagan worships also involved customary offerings and libations to the forces of nature and ancestors. Undue crop failure, uneven rains or any pandemic was believed to be the wrath of Gods for disregard and neglect of popular rituals.

Oracles were religious shrines that discharged both judicial and messenger's duties from dead relatives and passed them on to the living ones. They warned individuals and whole community about impending dangers and offered advice on ritual matters. Also there were prevalent beliefs in the sacred animals and reptiles, Evil Forest, *Okagbue* (the medicine man), *Chukwu* (the supreme power governing the whole world), *Ani* (the Earth Goddess), *Chi* (personal God) and *Ekwensu* (*Chukwu's* principle enemy and Satan in *Igbo* culture) (Ubah 97-98).

Amongst the pantheon of Igbo deities *Chukwu* (*Chineke*) is the counterpart of Brahma or Zeus¹⁶ in Igbo clan and he is a merciful giver:

Chukwu is responsible for all creation. He knows everything, can do everything, but hardly concerns himself with anything. Quite unlike other spirits, *Chukwu* does not require people to expend their resources in the

effort to worship him, and unlike God in Christian theology he is not jealous of peoples' association with other spirits. (Ubah 98)

Similarly *Chi* is the most powerful spiritual force which is believed (amongst Igbo tribe) to be omnipresent and omnipotent and so the ritual of establishing the shrines of the male *Chi* ie: *Ido Chi* and the female *Chi* ie: *Ikute Chi* in each house, is performed with utmost dexterity and “is seen as an integral aspect of the vital institution of marriage, implying especially the full transfer of the person of the wife from her father's house to her new home in the husband's place..” (Ejizu 380). *Chi* is the central power for domestic harmony and is the personal spirit of an Igbo individual and his life is believed to be directly affected by his *Chi*. Also it is said that a person with good *Chi* is bound to succeed and prosper and the one with bad *Chi* would face misfortunes and dies a miserable death.

Specifically among the indigenous Igbo, the belief in and cult of *Chi* is found in all the six subcultural zones; the north-western; north-eastern, south-central, south-eastern, south-west-ern, and mid-western Igbo subcultural areas. (Ejizu 381)

The Igbos (especially Otanchara and Otanzu) believe in invisible forces which control the lives of men on earth. According to C.N. Ubah for an Igbo, life exists on two platforms: the living and the tangible and the spiritual or the intangible. Similarly, the good and the evil spirits also rule the fortunes and futures of Igbos (91). *Egwugwu* or the masked ancestral spirits were the justices and they were revered by the people of the clan and when these spirits passed from the market place the villagers bowed their heads down in acquiescence and veneration (Achebe). They provided solutions to the domestic problems of people of villages in an amicable manner and in this way they served as the keepers of law and order. Igbo religious symbols and icons include shrines and pantheon that harbour the myriad of Gods and Goddesses to whom the people offer their sacrifices, to seek the divine wills of the deities. In the shrines are found such sacred objects as masks, raffia skirts (the costumes of *egwugwu*), wooden and earthen statues, long drums and cannons, as well as gongs and fiddles (Ogbaa 138). Such beliefs about ominous beings like *Osu(outcastes)*¹⁷ and twins etc have also been popular amongst the tribal people. It is true that since they lived within the lap of nature the paganistic approach towards spirituality and religion came to the forefront quite evidently. Other divinities worshipped by Igbos were: *Ajala*, the earth goddess;

Ihejioku, the god of yam and agricultural production whose festival was held in August and September every year; *Ofo*, the God of truth and justice and *Umunne*, or the god of collective welfare. In this manner each clan had their guardian deities which were concerned about the welfare and well-being of the group. Ancestors held an important place in the social and domestic set up of Igbos and thanksgivings were offered to them in order to seek favours such as success, fertility, protection from disasters etc. (Ubah 94,102). However, by the end of nineteenth century most of the pagans adopted the new religion ie: Christianity which as Emenyonu says happened to be -“...One of the organs of imperialistic regime” (9).

Just like their strange spiritual ways, the political and social system within the Igbo village is also clustered and decentralised. “Political power in Igbo society tended to be founded on an age-based hierarchy at the village level: ie: elders, defined as the heads of patrilineal lines, were responsible for the most important decision of a community” (Falola 19). Since the tribal villages lack a central system of power it follows the pattern of segmentary lineage wherein they are divided into small clusters headed by the village elders who are highly revered citizens of the clan. Eminent Nigerian historian Falola comments on the nature of social setup among Igbos:

The earliest states in the territories encompassing modern day Nigeria were most certainly of a very small scale, decentralised nature. (23)

“The striking feature of Igbo society,” says Don C. Ohadike “was the lack of centralized political structures. The Igbo people lived in autonomous villages and towns, ruled by their elders”(xxiii). He further divides the society ties in three types based on descent and people associated themselves with three groups – first a house or *Uno*(typical domestic unit comprising of man and his wife and children) the second was *Umunna* or lineage (related families) and the third was called town or *Obodo* (the highest clan unit of Igbo) (xxiii).

The very basis of a domestic unit was a traditional thatch house made of wooden frame, bamboos, thatch of bamboo or palm frond or straw depending on the locality and finished with red mud (*uhie*), *odo* yellow clay and white chalk (*nzo*). However in the contemporary times the population of those who still live in this kind of house has dwindled. Contents of the typical Igbo house includes wooden door, veranda, family pallor or family room, bedroom, pantry, kitchen (*usokwu*) which is often an extension

of the main house, a backyard which usually has the family home barn for preserving yam tubers, staple crops etc both for feeding and next seasons crops for planting. The bed is made of hardened mud while bed spread is made of mat (*ute*). Fire place of burn fire is a usual feature of the family room for roasting corn, yam, games and fish. The mud bed is natural chiropractor. A bank is usually located in a sacred spot, shrine for cowries' money and other valuables (www.orafite.com).

Igbo people generally considered stepping out of their familiar surrounding as inauspicious but slowly the impact of colonial culture made them emigrate out of their homelands and settle in foreign lands. A famous Igbo proverb connotes that one cannot remain away from his own shadow no matter how intelligent he can get. Living closer to the motherland was like living with your innate tribalism each day- "You may be clever but you can never lose your shadow" (www.specialdictionary.com 2).

In a traditional Igbo family polygamy is promoted and encouraged by the clan elders as a man's worth is known by the number of wives and cattle he possesses. Such extended families were a boon to the clan system because the number of off springs produced by a man gave a relative rise to the total clan population. However such practices faced diminution under the colonial rule but it is seen that most ethnic groups traditionally allow more than one wife. Some Nigerians see polygamy as a divisive force in the family, often pitting one wife against another. Others see polygamy as a unifying factor, creating a built-in support system that allows wives to work as a team. Though in the traditional Igbo society women enjoy a liberated status despite the prevalent patriarchy but there are cases of violence which blemishes the social and domestic setup of an Igbo society. There are specifically distinguished work patterns for both men and women in all the sectors of domestic, socio-political and economic set up. One of the leading veterans amongst Nigerian novelists, Chinua Achebe describes the work patterns of men and women in one of his novels:

Subsistence agriculture was mainly practised by Igbo people. Head of each family along with his wife and children grew their own crops. While men cultivated yam as it was a popular Ibo saying, "Yam, the king of crops was a man's crop," while women and children grew coco-yams, beans and cassava. Although there were times when they

faced problems due drought followed by crop failure. (*Things Fall Apart* 23)

Azuka Dike in one of his case studies has juxtaposed the position of Igbo women before and after colonization in Nigeria. He opines that the graph of women's condition plummeted after the British occupation of Nigeria whereas they enjoyed "economic independence prior to the British occupation of Igboland"(124). Motherhood holds significance in Igbo Tradition as the bond between mother and child is the keystone of Igbo social relations. A mother has the duty to feed, educate and guard over the moral aspect of the child's life, regardless of its sex. The importance of the mother in social life is stressed through many idioms and proverbs. The most common is *nne bu ihe ukwu* , literally ' motherhood is a very significant thing'(Therese and Ardener 85).

The seriousness with which Igbos regard marriage and domesticity is also highlighted by the respect accorded to in-laws in Igbo society. A well-known Igbo proverb says that a person has three homes: with his father's people (*umunna*), with his mother's people (*umunne*) and with his in-laws (*ndi ogo*) (Smith 32). The culture of the Igbo modify the thoughts, speech, actions and artefacts of the Igbo so much that the Igbo are easily distinguished from other ethnic groups. How a culture survives depends on the people's capacity to learn and transmit it to succeeding generations. 'The Igbo culture expresses itself in the customs, beliefs, war, burial, social norms, religion, racial, and material traits of the Igbo' (Afigbo 28). The complex whole of Igbo culture which contained indigenous knowledge, art, belief, law, morals, customs etc. remained protected in the folds of inaccessible terrain unless a forcible attempt was made by the interloper to disturb the tribal law and order. The white man entered the eastern parts of Nigeria under the guise of missionary zeal and slowly as Said says, colonialism crept in and an academic discourse took a completely different turn. He further mentioned that the missionaries, medicines and schooling were used as equipments to tap the available resources and hence their political designs were fulfilled (1978).

II

Literature in Africa: An Oral Tradition

Just as the African tribes and their systems have plethora of colours and the outsider might identify it with something primordial, the literature of this land is rich and vibrant and finds roots in the oral tradition as it talks about the relationship of people with their land which has rich historiography and literary traditions, the outside world (the whites) may consider the literary tendencies undeveloped while it actually is luxuriant and unfathomable. True that the written text enjoys a privilege of being read and therefore oral tradition suffers neglect and slowly becomes an obsolete genre which survives only in the recesses of our memories. Oral chronicling has been living in our culture and society since ages past and it gives an insight to the rich cultural heritage. Moreover in continents like Africa where the readable text became available much later , oral tradition served as a popular manner of communication and sharing of legends, chronicles, proverbs, animal tales folk tales and ballads etc. Mark Turin says in a foreword to a masterpiece on oral traditions:

For many people around the world –particularly in areas where history and traditions are still conveyed more through speech than in writing–the transmission of oral literature from one generation to the next lies at the heart of culture and memory. Very often, local languages act as vehicles for the transmission of unique forms of cultural knowledge. Oral traditions that are encoded in these speech forms can become threatened when elders die or when livelihoods are disrupted. (Finnegan xvii)

As recently as fifty years ago, some western historians considered African historiography nothing better than ethno history or folk history, worthy of the attention of the anthropologists , but not of the professional historians ,because of the assumption that the African continent still lay in a prehistoric period lacking writing systems , civilisation , or a proper sense of history. Such historians mistook the predominance of oral cultures and traditions and the close relationship of African historical sources to folklore to mean a lack of historical consciousness. As E.J. Alagoa states:

Indeed African historical sources are predominantly oral traditions, reported through time as part of the knowledge, literature, language and cultural resources of communities. The oral sources represent the baseline, internally derived data that carry the ideology, philosophy, history and world view of communities. (317)

While commenting on the limitation of translated oral literature in Africa Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah stresses that a lot of essence of oral literature gets lost during the translation but the ethno-aesthetic principles (i.e.: functionality, authenticity, variation and clarity) should be kept intact as was the case with the translations of Chukwuma Azuonye (128-129). Oral literature and performance poetry have been privileged forms in many lands which have subsequently come under colonial and imperial rule, and one way of maintaining a historical thread with an oral past and refusing to have it obliterated by the imposed scribal or written versions brought by the coloniser. Performance poetry has also been identified as a successor of oral literature and life writing in which language spoken by people in their day to day lives is used. Gina Wesker comments how inheritance of oral traditions keeps the natives connected to their lands:

Usage of the local dialect keeps them connected to their land and traditions. In the African tradition, griots or griottes passed on news and wisdom in tribal cultures in the villages, as oral storytellers also do in Aboriginal Australian communities. In many cases those who have chosen to write down the oral literature, inevitably fixing its usually more dynamic form in the process. (130)

Oral literature and oral story telling are potentially powerful political expressions, inflected by culture and also gender. Initially , colonised Black and Asian or mixed culture oral story tellers who have deliberately revived these forms are Indian writers like Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Arundhati Roy, African Americans Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and Jamaican Erna Brodber. Oral literature is not just the expressions of the ordinary folk culture and their ordinary folk but a deliberate choice of many writers who wish to engage with the lives of their culture, with everyday people and in doing so to make statements about the different worldviews and expressions which local language, culturally inflected myths, parables and interpretations enable by using oral forms (Wesker 131). Egudu in one of his papers

mentions that in an Igbo narrative the primary element is salt which refers to the proverbs, anecdotes etc that not only makes the story interesting but also palatable- “Salt stands for verisimilitude or historical detail and for fabulous or folkloric anecdotes. These are the salt with which stories are seasoned” (Egudu 43). Indeed the salt refers to the various ornamental genres in the narratives worldwide, especially when it comes to the oral literature. While talking about the oral literature in Nigeria Ruth Finnegan is of the opinion that throughout the country the phonetic form remains the same in oral poetry and the only difference is tonal. This indeed pinpoints the homogeneity within the heterogeneous oral tradition in Nigeria. She says:

In these languages tone is significant for grammatical form and for lexical meaning. In for instance, Yoruba, Ibo, or Ewe, the meaning of words with exactly the same phonetic form in other respects may be completely different according to the tone used-it becomes a different word in fact. The tense of a verb, case of a noun, even the difference between affirmative and negative can also sometimes depend on tonal differentiation.(70-71)

Jan Vansina has classified oral traditions of Africa into five major kinds -Formulae: titles slogans didactic formulae, ritual formulae; Poetry: historical and panegyric; religious or personal; list of place names or personal names; tales: local n family tales, aetiological myths artistic tales and personal memories and Commentaries: legal precedents auxiliary explanations occasional comments. The above can be classified further into two main categories: literary and historical. Literary categories would include Formulae: (proverbs parables oaths incantations titles slogans) and Poetry: (praise songs dirges divination poems abuse and work songs); while historical would centre on myths legends ancestral stories and other anecdotes (Agbada 70). The popular forms of oral literature in Igbo culture can be roughly divided in the following genres:

Anecdotes: Instances which are reiterated by the community folks to emphasise any significant idea or opinion or more so for recreation sake could be categorised under anecdotes. Emenanjo states that anecdotes are a part of circulated literature something which is unpublished , and further elaborates that ,“many anecdotes circulated orally among families and friends before becoming incorporated into memoirs, journalistic

articles, biographies and the like” for which earlier there existed no term in Igbo but now it is called *ukabidil* (171). He further mentions interesting facts about anecdotes:

Like the folktale, the anecdote has (i) a story to tell; (ii) the stereotyped opening phrase 'once upon a time,' which, however, is often deleted before anecdotes; (iii) characters from the human, animal and vegetable worlds; (iv) the Tortoise as the central and most common animal character in a good number of the stories-of seventy-two anecdotes containing animal characters in my *Ukabuili ndi Igbo*, seventeen deal with the Tortoise only; (v) an uncomplicated story line; (vi) prosaic language shorn of extensive verbal and nominal modifiers; (vii) served as the sources of some Igbo proverbs; (viii) served as stories with aetiological bases.(172)

Folk Tale: The Folk Tale is a popular tale handed down by oral traditions from a remote antiquity and usually told either by animals or the common folk to draw attention to their plight and to teach a lesson. Generally the trickster tales are more famous in most of the African regions. Finnegan mentions that the possible characters in a tale can vary from an aggressor (which includes a snake, leopard or crocodile); to the rescuer (a child, baboon, gazelle, water antelope, rat or white man) to the one who foils the aggressor (329). Chinua Achebe who is a weaver of tales has used many such didactic animal stories in his novels. The didactic animal tale appears in almost all the novels of Achebe. For eg: the tales of the wily tortoise (*Things Fall Apart* 38, 67) expose the wicked nature of beings and also points out indifference and inconsiderateness of human beings (*No Longer at Ease* 149). Similarly the stories of the mother kite shows the folly of the people of Abame in *Things Fall Apart* (98) and the tale of the leopardess illustrates the ill effects of greed (*No Longer at Ease* 53).

Proverbs: When one mentions oral tradition the role of proverbs cannot be overlooked in making the oral tradition rich and colloquial. Agbada defines proverbs as the documentation of the lives of people at a particular time, he even mentions the reasons for their popularity in communication as it also acts as “dialogue closers, conversation openers, discourse flavours etc” (194). Thus proverbs hold a significant place amongst Igbos as they consider the proverbial statements to be the truth. As he states that the main reason for popularity of proverbs in Igbo milieu is because Igbos

however modern they are they still depend on oral communication. Some of important proverbs are:

Ilu bu abuba eji eri okwu

(The proverb is the fattening-oil with which speech is consumed.)

Okwu Igbo bu riilu riilu

(Igbo speech is marked by proverbs.)

(Agbada 194)

Similarly he even mentions some of the word plays in Igbo proverbs:

Egbe na egbe ka bu otu

(The kite and the gun are still the same.)

O go di ogo di ogOy na ndi ogo y a na-adi mma.

(An in-law that is respectable and stately and his in-laws are usually in good terms.)

Ihe ojoo mere onye onwu nwuru riunwu.

(A bad thing happened to someone whom death befalls in a period of famine.)

Ife yi ife na ife yi aga .

(One thing which looks like another moves with it.) (195)

Songs and riddles also form an important component of oral tradition and popular beliefs and ideas are conveyed to generations over the time. One such popular song which is sung as a part of celebrations after child birth amongst Igbo is given below:

Igbo bja lere sa nwa m amu9na

Igbo bja lere sa nwa m amuona

Igbo bia lere sa nwa m amuona

wu.

si m~ugburu nwa

ama ha anuzuole

Ezi nwa ogbede muna nwa.

(All Igbo come and see that my

child has given birth

All Igbo come and see that my

child has given birth

All Igbo come and see that my

child has given birth

If she had killed the child in

delivery they would all have

heard

Excellent young woman she has

delivered a child.) (Nwoga144)

Thus, this overview demarcates the characteristic features of the African literary tradition which was highly impacted by the heritage of oral literature. Similarly, assessing the literary traditions of Nigeria would further help in examining the intricate trends of contemporary Nigerian writers.

III

History of Literary Tradition of Nigeria:

Literary history of Nigeria was basically a part of postcolonial literature which could also be termed as commonwealth literature because Nigeria too was one of the commonwealth nations of the world. 'Commonwealth Literature' was a term literary critics began to use from the 1950s to describe literature in English emerging from a selection of countries with a history of colonialism .It incorporated the study of writers from the predominantly European settler communities, as well as writers belonging to those countries which were in the process of gaining independence from British rule, such as those from African, Caribbean and South Asian nations. The creation of commonwealth literature as a special area of study was an attempt to identify and locate this vigorous literary activity and to consider via a comparative

approach the common concerns and attributes that these manifold literary voices might have. Significantly, neither American nor Irish Literature was included in early formulations of the field. 'Commonwealth Literature', then was associated exclusively with selected countries with a history of colonialism. The term Commonwealth Literature is important in the association it beckons, and these associations have historical roots. One consequence of the decline of the British Empire in the twentieth century was the establishment of the British Commonwealth of Nations (McLeod 10). However, the literary tradition of Nigeria didn't begin with writings in English. As Ernest Emenyonu states that the first fiction in Igbo language was *Omenuko* by Peter Nwana published in 1933 which not only won large number of literary prizes of International Institute of African Languages and Culture but also has a wide readership of children and adult Nigerians. Emenyonu further says that *Omenuko* was the only novel written by Nwana and it reads more like reportage than an artistic piece of work as it deals with the life and times of Omenuko who lives in Okigwi. When faced with loss in business offers as slaves his clan people and relatives hence ensuring his own survival but commits offence against his family and clan. The novel is a story about sin and redemption of the protagonist Omenuko wherein after many instances of sin he finally has to offer sacrifice in order to appease two irate deities and learns the true value of brotherhood. Another important novel which was published in Igbo was Ije *Odumodu Jere (Odumodu's Travels)* in 1963 (Emenyonu 7-8).

Chinua Achebe who is also famously known as the 'Eagle of the iroko' took the stories of Nigeria to an international level with his trilogy – *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *The Arrow of God* wherein the readers witness the fall of the protagonist due to the interference and infiltration of whites in their tribal hub. Such works by Achebe narrated the damages done to the complex tribal system by the encroachment of the British rulers. Chinua was born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe in the Igbo village of Nneobi, while his parents stood at a crossroads of traditional culture and Christian influence; this made a significant impact on the children, especially Chinualumogu. Raised by Christian parents in the Igbo village of Ogidi in south-eastern Nigeria, Achebe soon became fascinated with world religions and traditional African cultures, and began writing stories as a university student. At one point of time he discovered Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901), the

autobiography of an American former slave; Achebe found it sad, but it showed him another dimension of reality. Achebe later recalled that, as a reader, he "took sides with the white characters against the savages" and even developed a dislike for Africans."The white man was good and reasonable and intelligent and courageous. The savages arrayed against him were sinister and stupid or, at the most, cunning. I hated their guts" (Solomon 4-5). It was during his studies at Ibadan that Achebe began to become critical of European literature about Africa. He gained worldwide attention for *Things Fall Apart* in the late 1950s; his later novels include *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, *A Man of the People*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*. Achebe writes his novels in English and has defended the use of English in African literature as well. In June 2007, when Achebe was awarded the Man Booker International Prize, the judging panel included US critic Elaine Showalter, who said he "illuminated the path for writers around the world seeking new words and forms for new realities and societies"; and South African writer Nadine Gordimer, who said Achebe has achieved "what one of his characters brilliantly defines as the writer's purpose: 'a new-found utterance' for the capture of life's complexity" ("Achebe" n. pag). Other significant male writers in Nigeria were poet and novelist Chris Abani (with prominent works like *The Virgin of Flames* (2007), *GraceLand* (2004), *Masters of the Board* (1985), *Becoming Abigail* (2006), *Song For Night* (2007)); Cyprian Ekwensi (with prominent works like *When Love Whispers* (1948), *An African Night's Entertainment* (1948), *The Boa Suitor* (1949), *The Leopard's Claw* (1950), *People of the City* (1954), *The Drummer Boy* (1960), *The Passport of Mallam Ilia* (1960), *Jagua Nana* (1961), *Burning Grass* (1961) etc.); Ben Okri (with significant works like *Flowers and Shadows* (1980), *The Landscapes Within* (1981), *The Famished Road* (1991), *Songs of Enchantment* (1993), *Astonishing the Gods* (1995) etc.); Wole Soyinka (with two significant novels-*The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomie*; plays like *The Lion and The Jewel*, *Death and The King's Horseman*, *Kongi's Harvest*, *Dance of the Forests* etc.) ; Amos Tutuola (with significant works like *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* (1955), *The Brave African Huntress* (1958)) many more.

However the literary fabric of Nigeria was an effort of not just the male writers but Nigerian women writers also spun the creative wheel as early as the eighteenth century and the predecessor was Nana Asma'u (Nana Asma'u bint Shehu Usman dan

Fodiyo 1793-1864), the daughter of the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, Usamn dan Fodio . She was a groundbreaker for many of her successors because of which she remains a hallowed name amongst women writers in Nigeria. She witnessed many of the wars of the Fulani War and wrote about her experiences in a prose narrative *Wakar Gewaye* "The Journey" and many other works written in Hausa, Fulani and Arabic languages. Her poetry is full of Islamic teachings and the principals of Sokoto Caliphate which clearly shows that she was a stalwart in her own ways and an unconventional woman who had a grip over administration and was well versed in religious teachings. Indeed she was an exception as women were lesser known as writers or poets because of the patriarchal set up of many states particularly where women were not exposed much to reading or writing and domestic territory were their forte. Mala Pandurang and Anke Bartels state in the introductory pages to their book on African women writers:

This is chiefly due to the after effects of colonialism because the access to higher education had for various reasons been mostly limited to boys. As a result men were not only introduced earlier to written forms of fiction like the novel but also to the respective colonial language, whether this was English , French, German , Portuguese or any other European tongue, which in turn allowed them easy access to European publishing houses operating in Africa. (10)

Other women writers in Nigeria were Flora Nwapa (Florence Nwanzuruahu Nkiru Nwapa , Mabel Segun , Adaora Lily Ulasi ,Helen Ovbiagele (born Helen Aiyeohusa Ovbiagele , (Florence Onye) Buchi Emecheta , Ifeoma Onyefulu and Zaynab Alkali who are known to be on the literary dais since four decades. While the contemporary women writers are Molara Ogundipe (Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie), Rosemary Esehagu , Chika Unigwe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who have rewritten the history of Nigerian literary fold with their impeccable styles and dexterity in handling subjects ranging from Nigerian history to man-woman relationship to the problem of Nigerian Immigrants and the contemporary state of a Nigerian on the world stage ("Nigerian Women Writers" n. pag.).

Buchi Emecheta is one of the first ladies of Nigerian women writing as she has not only written short stories, plays , articles ,children's fiction but has written more than fifteen novels namely : *In the Ditch* (1972), *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride*

Price (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *The Moonlight Bride* (1976), *Our Own Freedom* (1981), *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Naira Power* (1982), *The Rape of Shavi* (1984), *Double Yoke* (1983), *A Kind of Marriage* (London: Macmillan, 1986), *Gwendolen* (1989), *Kehinde* (1994) and *The New Tribe* (1999). She describes her stories as "stories of the world...[where]... women face the universal problems of poverty and oppression, and the longer they stay, no matter where they have come from originally, the more the problems become identical." While talking about Emecheta's famous novel *Joys of Motherhood* a critic comments about how she speaks against the social evil of polygamy:

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta explores the evil of polygamy in a modern context in the household of Nnaife where he has to share a one-room apartment with Nnu-Ego and Adaku, his other wife, together with their children. In the past, polygamy seemed to have been supported by both men and women because a large and polygamous household attracted high social status. (Ezeigbo 161)

Similarly Flora Nwapa came to the literary scene of Nigeria during the male dominated era of literature but she left a mark on the history of Nigerian writings for portraying women as powerful protagonists in her works like *Efuru* (1966), *Idu* (1970), *Never Again* (1975), *One is Enough* (1981) and short stories like *This is Lagos and Other Stories* (1971), *Cassava Song and Rice Song* (1986), *Wives at War and Other Stories* (1980) and *Women are Different* (1986). She was one such woman writer according to Mala Pandurang and Anke Bartels who, "served as a counter-text to the narratives by Nigerian male writers like Chinua Achebe and Cyprian Ekwensi that cast women in a range of traditional stereotypical roles such as mothers, wives, whores and courtesans" (213). Similarly Ezeigbo portrays how Nwapa exhibited the positive roles of women:

Nwapa is seen as a writer who has an eye for history and is thoroughly nurtured in the culture and tradition of her people. She celebrates what is positive and enduring in traditional society which could help shape and consolidate the present -communal cooperation, the positive side of the extended family system, commitment in the rearing and upbringing of children, love and friendship among women. (159)

Out of the contemporary women writers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie could be called truly the voice of a twenty first century Nigerian woman and is placed by critics as “the third generation African women writers” (Pandurang and Bartels Introduction 6). Born in a third world country, in an Igbo family in Enugu, Nigeria, she witnessed and experienced the “Otherness” experienced by Africans around the world. While she was still studying medicine at the University of Nigeria she edited *The Compass*, a magazine run by the university's Catholic medical students, then moved to the US to study communications and political science at Eastern Connecticut State University. After initially writing poetry and one play, *For Love of Biafra* (1998), she had several short stories published in literary journals, winning various competition prizes. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), which is a narration about the atrocities laid down by a Christian(-ised) patriarch pastor on his family, won the 2005 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book), and was shortlisted for the 2004 Orange Prize for Fiction and won the Best First Book Award in the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. Her second, *Half Of A Yellow Sun* (2006), set during the Biafran war (1967-1970), won the Orange Broadband Prize. She is a 2008 MacArthur Fellow (otherwise known as the Genius Award) and her books are widely read across the world. Her latest book is a collection of short stories: *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), shortlisted for the 2009 John Llewellyn-Rhys Memorial Prize and the 2010 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region, Best Book), and her recent achievement *Americanah* (2013) poignantly narrates the vital issues related to immigrant Nigerians in the USA.

Adichie's narrative considers the Igbo people and their changed cultural preferences in one of the modern cities. She describes variety of milieu and circumstantial behaviour of Igbo natives which also includes the expatriate Nigerians. Adichie also highlights the nascent issue of gender disparity and retribution sought by the weaker sex in the course of her narratives. Adichie has been a recipient of global critical acclaim and a wide readership within a decade of her debut in the literary world. After Adichie won the Orange Broadband Prize award for *Half Of A Yellow Sun* in 2007, Kate Mosse, the director of the Orange Prize stated:

Of the winners of the Orange Prize since 1996, Chimamanda Adichie is one of the most generous, the most supportive and the most serious in talking about the importance of literary prizes to writers publishing

outside of North America and the UK. Most remarkable of all, she works hard for other writers, established and emerging, but without ever losing her own distinctive, devastatingly elegiac, literary voice. (n.pag.)

Adichie's literary corpus not only flaunts a globalised Nigeria but has also created an alcove for her fellow Nigerians on the literary platform of the cosmos. Adichie explores the intersection of the personal and the public by placing the intimate details of the lives of her characters within the larger social and political forces in contemporary Nigeria. Adichie is a conscientious writer and she remembers the African experience of being called a beast and incomprehensible was no less than a trauma. In one of her lectures she mentions the way in which a generalised opinion is circulated in literature which becomes a commonly accepted opinion and a trademark fact for a particular ethnic group which is actually misleading. Adichie speaks about the dangers of such commonly accepted degenerate ideas about Africans being animalistic and barbaric and "in this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in anyway, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity....no possibility of a connection as human equals."¹⁸ Only after reading Chinua Achebe she started believing that literature has its own ways of practising racialism and there were Black writers who had to struggle through this labyrinth of Eurocentricism in order to prove their might as writers on a global arena.

An overview of socio-cultural set of Nigeria was a requisite in ethnic assessment of the country, so a study of topographical details and how it affected the land allocation of various ethnic groups within the country, was made. For such probe, books like *Africa- A Handbook to the Continent* edited by Legum Colin, *Harper Encyclopedia of the Modern World- A Concise Reference History from 1760 to the Present* Edited by Richard B. Morris and Graham W. Irwin, *Africa Emergent – A Survey of Social, Political and Economic Trends in British Africa* by W.M. Macmillan, *Social Change in Modern Africa* edited by Aidan Southall and *White and Coloured* by Michael Banton were of immense help. Since the works of Chimamanda N. Adichie are very much rooted in the soil of Nigeria so an in depth study of Nigerian history was also required. Hence *History of Nigeria* by Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton provided all the relevant evidences on socio-political situation of the country which is otherwise not much mapped by many writers. *African Women Novelists: Re-Imaging*

Gender edited by Mala Pandurang and Anke Bartels, gave glimpses to the themes and motifs used in the literary collectanea by various contemporary women writers of miscellaneous African countries.

Adichie's award winning debut novel *Purple Hibiscus* is a tale of horror and violence enacted under the garb of conserving religious piety and religious order in the family. Eugene Achike is a Catholic convert who resides in a big mansion in Enugu and owns many factories and a newspaper called *Standard* which is known for its fearless and honest news, hates his father whom the readers know as papa Nnukwu because he is still a pagan and has refused to convert. Kambili and Jaja have never known much of Papa Nnukwu all through their growing years and consider it sinful even to be in his house for more than fifteen minutes time scheduled by their father Eugene Achike. This tale is of a stifled childhood and a submissive adolescence of two children who have been forced by their father to get first rank in missionary schools and Catechism classes and are also punished for not being able to achieve so. Change begins to occur in their lives when they visit Aunty Ifeoma's house in Nsukka where the only luxury her three children (Amaka, Obiora and Chima) enjoy is the breath of freedom. Slowly both of them realise that it is not sinful to take care of an old grandparent and living in meagre resources too could make life beautiful provided there is enough space given to the family members to express their selves and act responsibly. Eugene Achike not only mistreats his children but he had beaten his wife Beatrice on several occasions out of which nine times she miscarried. Life in his big mansion is rich and luxurious but stagnant and stifling. Here a dual colonisation is being injected into an Igbo family where the patriarch behaves like his White Master and forces his kin (wife Beatrice and children Kambili and Jaja) to follow a new religious order (Catholicism). By the time when Jaja realises his responsibility towards his ailing old grandfather it is too late and he has passed away but the guilt of not being able to do something to relieve him of his pain seeps in which leads to the first act of defiance when he refuses to go to attend Easter mass at the church. Also there is an awareness that he has done nothing to help his mother Beatrice all those times when his father had beaten her to death and then she had miscarried. But a point of culmination comes and there is an attempt of silent retaliation by his children and wife who otherwise were mute victims of his missionary zeal. The events of the novel are structured around Palm Sunday - which celebrates the triumphal entry of Jesus into

Jerusalem on the Sunday before Easter. A tyrannical father could not bear to see such open defiance of his erstwhile over submissive son and couldn't beat him, but simply throws off the missal and breaks the glass figurines. Hence, an equally important, power struggle and coup is being enacted secretly within the confines of the household, which is a microcosm of the coup occurring outside Eugene's house. With its vivid portrayal of Nigerian life, and brilliant dissection of the characters, this novel moves towards a conclusion full of retribution and resilience. Ultimately it is Beatrice, Eugene's wife who decides to poison him because his violent behaviour in the name of religious purity had already claimed nine of her unborn children and he had violently beaten Jaja and Kambili for living with Papa Nnukwu under the same roof at Auntie Ifeoma's house in Nsukka. A mother overpowers a wife and tyranny comes to a violent end while in the background one finds blooming of the unusual purple hibiscus in Eugene's garden which are no wonder the trope of rebellion and Jaja surrenders to the police for killing his father. But the novel ends on a hopeful note that they still seek a better life when once Jaja comes out of jail. For the review of already existing secondary sources on *Purple Hibiscus*, the unofficial website of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - www.l3.ulg.ac/adichie/be was very helpful as it contains many reviews, articles, interviews and research papers which would be of great help in this work. Some of the important ones are discussed briefly:

In "Inculturated Catholicism in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" Anthony Chennels talks about inculturated Catholicism as propagated even in the African fiction. To prove this he draws instances from Mongo Beti's novel *The Poor Christ of Bomba* wherein the protagonist urges to separate religion from socio-political intrigues and motives as soon as he realises that his missionary zeal is coloured in colonial shades. He wishes to propagate a religion sans cultural peculiarities and political initiatives. Ultimately he realises that religious conversion caters to the need of the subordinated, marginalised, exploited and hushed by providing them a haven from the realities. Similarly he uses instances from Ngugi Wa thiong O's *A Grain of Wheat* the protagonist who was lynched on the tree emerges as a symbolic parallel of Christ, from being scriptural metaphor of Christ and Christian conversions to a "political metaphor of Kenyan insurgency." However with Adichie (in *Purple Hibiscus*) one sees that the new religion is an indispensable part of her literary corpus with a mild survival of her native culture.

“Dethroning the Infallible Father: Religion, Patriarchy and Politics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*” by Cheryl Stobie explores the concept of patriarchy vis-à-vis religionism of the protagonist Kambili’s father. The traces of duo colonialism and slavery is quite evident in *Purple Hibiscus* since the patriarch Eugene happens to be an acculturated Catholic Christian who has been atrocious enough on his family to forcibly accept the ‘new religion’. Kambili and her brother Jaja learn the art of violation of rigid discipline from their aunt Ifeoma. This is symbolically represented by the blossoming of the unusual purple hibiscus instead of the usual red ones in their garden. She highlights the devastating effects of patriarchal control and intolerance within the family, the Roman Catholic Church, education and the State. Papa-Nnukwu the Igbo father of Eugene is an epitome of unswayable allegiance and fidelity to his paganism and Igbo culture. Eugene is blindfolded by Christianity and its virtues that he forsakes his father. Similarly, Father Amadi the young and vibrant Catholic priest is shown in a buoyant light since he uses Igbo words and traditional songs as worship songs, and he is quite encouraging to adolescent Kambili who is perpetually terrified of her disciplinarian father. Yet given his position in the priesthood his encouragement of Kambili’s adoration is viewed ambivalently, and he too is revealed to be fallible.

Scholars have examined Adichie’s literary corpus from the literary, linguistic and stylistic perspective but so far no attempt has been made to study the language as a medium of character presentation and thematic study. This aporia is filled by Niyi Osunbade in his paper entitled “Explicatures in Conversational Discourse in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*” where he highlights the Relevance Theory of Explicatures and uses data which consists of dialogues from the sampled text of *Purple Hibiscus* in order to analyse the explicit communication between the characters. He uses instances for definite and indefinite tokens, phoric references, bridging, disambiguation, gap filling and embedding propositional contents into a higher level explicature.

Similarly in “Trying to Survive: Growth and Transformation in African Female Narratives”, Ogaga Okuyade states that the new novelists of Nigeria have not only responded to the call to revive literature but they have also used novel techniques and stylistics. To name a few: Ike Oguine, Biyi Bandele-Thomas, Okey Ndebe, Uzodinma Iweala, Unoma Azuah, Chimamanda Adichie, Chris Abani, Sefi Atta, Helon Habila, Tanure Ojaide etc. They are not just the story tellers; they are visionaries of the

country. Being able to cogitate between the past, present and future, they unravel the dark sides of history and offer a beacon of hope for the future as well. Most of the third generation Nigerian novels focus on the socio-psychological development of the protagonist safely meandering away the Bildungsroman from the traces of gender bias.

Another paper entitled “Igbo Rhetoric and the New Nigerian Novel: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*”, by Christopher Anyokwu - This focuses on Adichie’s usage of Igbo rhetoric as championed by Chinua Achebe in his narratives. Like Achebe, Adichie too uses Igbo words, phrases, clauses, sentences, anecdotes and greetings. Adichie quotes instances on onomatopoeic and ideophonic dialogues of Aunt Ifeoma. Though the novel is written in English, Igbo lexical items borrowed and coined, motivates and encourages the flow of the words.

The narrative of second novel *Half Of A Yellow Sun* (2006) focuses on the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), with an admirable empathy and the effortless grace of a natural storyteller, Adichie weaves together the lives of three characters swept up in the turbulence of the decade. Thirteen-year-old Ugwu is employed as a houseboy for a university professor Odenigbo, a man full of revolutionary zeal. Olanna is the professor's beautiful mistress, who has abandoned her life of privilege in Lagos for a dusty university town and the charisma of her new lover. And Richard is a shy young Englishman in thrall to Olanna's twin sister (Kainene), an enigmatic figure who refuses to belong to anyone. As Nigerian troops advance and they must run for their lives, their ideals are severely tested, as are their loyalties to one another. Odenigbo and Ugwu are a fascinating pairing. As Nigeria descends into its bloody civil war, naive Ugwu’s experiences help him find his voice. He takes up writing as a way of dealing with his bewildering and disturbing experiences, including facing both the shortcomings and value of his Master; participating in atrocities as a child soldier, and sustaining serious physical damage during battle. The war’s most harrowing experiences are seen through his eyes. On the other hand, Odenigbo becomes more muted, as his idealism is dashed along with Biafra’s hopes. He begins the book as a man sure of his opinions and place in the world. By war’s end, his narrow ethnic nationalism seems empty and, with no defences against slights to his manhood, he sinks into alcoholism. Yet, Ugwu dedicates his book to Odenigbo. But for Odenigbo,

Ugwu would never have learned to read and write and to challenge many of the injurious values taught in school.

The book's central pair is the twin sisters, Olanna and Kainene. Many readers might recall from having read Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* that twins had special significance among pre-colonial and colonial Igbo-speaking peoples. Since twin infants had been seen as abominations and bad omens for an entire village, they were left out in the forest to die. As Achebe, whose praise for *Half Of A Yellow Sun* can be found on its back cover, illustrated, Christian missionaries used that tradition to convince some members of Igbo societies of the inhumanity of their own customs and, thus, to convert them to Christianity. The tensions between Christian and indigenous beliefs may, indeed, be another pairing in this book. Surely, it is no accident that Olanna and Kainene are twins. They are daughters of Nigeria's new, corrupt elite; their parents even try to prostitute them to gain economic and political advantages. Their closeness strained at the beginning of the novel by their perverse relationships with their parents, they both rebel against their parents' values but cannot recognize their own similarities to each other.

Their conflicts symbolize the civil war between Nigeria and Biafra and are a warning to present-day Nigerians to look beyond their differences before they descend into final destruction. The pointlessness of the twins' disagreements represents the futility of Nigeria's ethnic nationalism. Part of the book's chilling quality comes from the almost seamless way people move from thinking of themselves as Nigerians to thinking of themselves as Biafrans. How quickly the word Nigerian shifts from self-identity to epithet; comrades become vandals; and neighbours become saboteurs. People no longer see how their destinies are intertwined. Olanna and Kainene learn through the terror and shocks of wartime that nothing—neither sexual infidelity nor personal jealousy—should estrange them.

Various perspectives in *Half Of A Yellow Sun* have been examined by scholars around the globe and in a significant article entitled, "Composite Consciousness and Memories of War in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half Of A Yellow Sun*" , Christopher Ernest Ouma discusses the Biafran War of 1967-1970 and its effect on the conscience of the characters with special reference to Ugwu, the house boy. Ugwu represents composite consciousness in the novel. Ugwu being a marginalised man Friday of Odenigbo evolves from his slavehood and ultimately becomes the voice of

the nation. His is a collective consciousness of the foiled attempts of revolution, mutilated soldiers, war savagery and an annihilated Biafran nation. Ugwu is therefore a product of a composite consciousness that embodies composite memories. Ouma in another article, “Childhood(s) in *Purple Hibiscus*” suggests that Adichie’s first novel is an ideal narrative for the study of childhood. The narrator is an adolescent girl Kambili, the child protagonist and her memories, and at a subtle level she is in search of her identity. Memory plays an important role in her life since her tyrannical father is also symbolic of colonial history and the child in her is wrestling with domestic puritanical ethos to carve her own identity. The draconian laws of a pastor were too challenging for children growing out of their childhood hence it results in suffocation of their lives and identity.

On a different note Madhu Krishnan talks about the postcolonial fetish in her article entitled , “Abjection and the Fetish: Reconsidering the Construction of the Postcolonial Exotic in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half Of A Yellow Sun*”, where she views and examines the characters in the context of postcolonial ‘exotic’ and has also considered the relationship of the exotic object and a distant subject. Fetish plays an important role in this discussion as it is leading to a certain metonymic relationship. In another write up entitled “Biafra and the Aesthetics of Closure in the Third Generation Nigerian Novel” Krishnan discusses the theory of Closure as mentioned by critics like Rabinowitz, Ronald Barthes and Herman in their various critical texts and says that narrative endings provide meaning to the entire text as a whole hence making it more endurable and definite. She has considered the texts by Nigerian writers which are explicitly lacking in the closure and which flaunt no finale of the plot. They are : four novels in particular: Chris Abani’s *GraceLand*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, Uzodinma Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* and Helon Habila’s *Measuring Time*. Talking particularly about *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, Krishnan says that the beginning of the novel itself focuses on its loose end. By avoiding an appropriate closure these third generation novelists are experimenting and unravelling the falsity behind completeness and logical ends.

Adichie’s next work is a short story volume entitled *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) is a collection of twelve short stories “Cell One”, “Imitation”, “A Private Experience”, “Ghosts”, “On Monday of Last Week”, “Jumping Monkey Hill”, “The Thing Around Your Neck”, “The American Embassy”, “The Shivering”, “The

Arrangers of Marriage”, “Tomorrow is Too Far” and “The Headstrong Historian”, wherein Adichie has tried to explicate the relevant issues of émigré Nigerians such as alienation, loneliness and protagonists’ search for their identity intertwined with grief and sacrifice and which is truly representative of a Black identity. These tales give the reader an insight into the deep recesses of a Nigerian mind. They might be stories of deception, same sex love, sibling rivalry, jealousy or sexism and class oppression but Richmond Times opines that- “they evoke the less celebrated aspects of immigration- loss of place, familiar comforts and unquestioning acceptance by others.” Thus, Adichie narrates real stories about real people, about people associated with common backgrounds and uncommon zest for life and survival, about folks having committed graver sins and are ready to expatiate their experiences with an inner urge for retribution and above all her characters are strong willed women who could be a stereotype of a twenty first century woman but is a fighter in true sense. Some important articles which were helpful in demarcating the women oriented ideologies of Adichie’s short stories are “Self Migration and Cultural In-Betweenness: A Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *The Thing around Your Neck*” by Wirngo Comfort Siver, Daria Tunca’s “Of French Fries and Cookies: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Diasporic Short Fiction” and “Fictional Representations of Contemporary Diasporas: The Case of the Invisible Diasporic Women of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie” by Claudio Braga and Glaucia R. Gonçalves to name a few.

Postcolonialism could not be segregated from the socio-political set up of the Third World countries because it would enhance the understanding of the position of the natives in the twenty first century globalised world. Since Adichie belongs to the Igbo Catholic family so it is necessary to elaborate the Igbo ways of life then and in the contemporary times. The domestic set up in a conventional Igbo household would be of immense help in analysing the juxtaposition between the past and present. If at all the characters behave in a hegemonised way then only a comparative study can reveal the real situation. Moreover , since Adichie has been raised to the high pedestal of being the award winning young woman writer of Nigeria an attempt is made in the introductory pages to trace the literary history of the naira land so that her influences and writing style could be compared and contrasted with other predecessors and contemporaries.

Adichie's latest novel *Americanah* appears to be a love story and a tale of struggle of a Nigerian citizen in America but at the same time it has feministic undertones as well. Ifemelu, the Igbo heroine of this narrative displays an attitude of a 'womanist' as she strives to survive in the male dominated world in Nigeria and in America , moreover in a white majority country she faces 'race' and 'colour' prejudices but she survives them all. Ifemelu is a woman of strong determination because she not only overcomes her inner turmoils and physical ordeals but also gives voice to her anti-racist ideas through her blog *Raceteenth Or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known As Negroes) By A Non-American Black*. The metaphor of love and relationship also unfurls in a different manner in the novel as after a lot of experimentation in love affairs, Ifemelu returns back to her former lover Obinze, even though she is aware that she is pulling him in an act of adultery. For *Americanah* Katie Alexander's article "Lived Experiences of Male and Female Hybridity Within Chimamanda Adichie's Diaspora" is of great significance.

Through *Americanah* Adichie portrays a different picture of what America is to a Nigerian and how it dwindles into something else. While the narrative deals with a Nigerian woman's encounter with America, it also has undertones of love and deception, race and colour, uprootedness and desperation to move back to one's homeland. Ifemelu and Obinze are star crossed lovers who were companions since high school but life decides a different destiny for both of them. *Americanah* unravels the grim side of their great American dream and how an Igbo Nigerian woman metamorphoses herself into an American citizen but that longing for home and her old flame brings her back to her roots in Lagos.

Scholars around the world have done research on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's literary corpus and a few of the theses submitted by scholars in various universities in the past years are mentioned below:

1. A thesis entitled "African Women Writing Trauma: The Representation of Psychological Trauma in African Women's Fiction", was submitted by Diouf, Emilie Ndione, for M.A. at Michigan State University in 2010.
2. "Descent or Dissent: Patriarchy and Genre in Adichie and Achebe", was another thesis submitted by Eisenberg, Eve Judith, for M.A. at State University of New York, 2008.

3. Na'Imah Hanan Ford's thesis "Theory of Yere-Wolo Coming-of-Age Narratives in African Diaspora Literature", was submitted for a doctoral degree in 2007 at University of Missouri-Columbia. It also contains discussions on *Purple Hibiscus*.
4. Jessie Zondiwe Kabwila Kapasula's "Transnational Feminist Agency in African and Afro-Diasporic Fiction and Film" was another Ph.D. thesis submitted at the State University of New York at Binghamton, 2010, which contains discussions on certain writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Edwidge Danticat.
5. Georgiads Kivai Mboya submitted thesis for post graduate programme in Kenyatta University, Kenya in 2011- "The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in [sic] Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half Of A Yellow Sun*".
6. Adeniyi Osunbade's thesis entitled "Explicatures and Implicatures of Conversations in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half Of A Yellow Sun*" was submitted for Ph.D. at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria in 2010.
7. Christopher Ernest Werimo Ouma's M.A. thesis entitled "Journeying Out of Silenced Familial Spaces in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" also focuses on Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus*. It was submitted at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa in 2007.
8. Christopher Ernest Werimo Ouma's Ph.D thesis entitled "Childhood(s) in Contemporary Nigerian Fiction" was submitted at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa in 2011. It contains various sections on *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half Of A Yellow Sun*.
9. Audrey Peters' M.A. thesis entitled "Pro Patria: Fatherhood and Fatherland in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*", was submitted at the East Tennessee State University, USA in 2010.
10. Delores B. Phillips' Ph.D. dissertation- "In Questionable Taste: Eating Culture, Cooking Culture in Anglophone Postcolonial Texts", submitted at the University of Maryland, College Park, USA in 2009, contains a chapter

entitled 'The Excesses of this World: The Cookbook Form's Unwillingness to Report The News', which partly deals with *Purple Hibiscus*.

11. "Becoming the Third Generation: Negotiating Modern Selves in Nigerian Bildungsromane of the 21st Century", was submitted by Willem Jacobus Smit for MA, Stellenbosch University, South Africa, 2009. Includes a chapter entitled 'Negotiating Traditions, Gender and Silences in *Purple Hibiscus*.'
12. "'Home is Nowhere': Negotiating Identities in Colonized Worlds" was presented by Julia Ann Tigner for MA, University of Georgia, 2007. Contains a chapter entitled 'Tradition or Modernity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.'

Besides this, other important sites are: www.contemporarywriters.com, www.oraifite.com and www.motherlandnigeria.com. So far not much has been explored on the pre existing dichotomies in the texts of Adichie. Though much conceptualisation has been attempted by scholars on *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and *Thing Around Your Neck*, while *Americanah*, the newest novel, is still waiting for critical receptions. In this research an attempt would be made to explore the narratives of Adichie in a more explicit way. Despite the availability of limited secondary sources on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, an attempt would be made in the present study to explore the various issues in her novels and the short story collection.

Adopting an analytical, comparative and expository approach in the present research work, an attempt would be made to trace the political, social and cultural background of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie that forms the backdrop of her literary output and examine how far it has impacted her writings. The study would include inputs from library research, close textual reading, interpretations and thematic analysis. The chapters would be schematized as:

- 'Violence Begets Violence'-Curse of the Nigerian Civil War.
- The Reversal of Dichotomy: The Feminist Perspectives in Adichie's Fiction.
- Tales From Hostland to Homeland: Adichie's Diaspora
- Narrative Strategies

to be followed by a conclusion that would cohesively assimilate the ideas stated in the foregoing chapters.

In the present chapter, an attempt has been made to situate the study in a postcolonial context and trace the heritage of oral literature in Africa with special focus on Nigerian literature. Since Adichie hails from an Igbo-Christian family of Nigeria, the impact of Igbo culture on her is very natural and spontaneous. Her writings are coloured by socio-political upheavals in Nigeria and she fulfils her role as a nationalist writer by taking up the cause of Biafra in her fictional writings. The Nigerian civil war was the most important influence on most of the Nigerian authors and the next chapter examines and analyzes the sociological impact of the civil violence on the common masses of Nigeria with the help of selected narratives of Adichie.

Endnotes:

1. Egypt was famous for its kingdom of 12th century Pharaohs worldwide.
2. Rudyard Kipling's poem "White Man's Burden" (1889) attracted lot of critique from the postcolonialists worldwide because of the colonialist attitude expressed throughout the poem. It also became a trademark for Eurocentricism.
3. Joseph Conrad describes in his novella *The Heart of Darkness* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 1992), one of the white man in Congo as papier maché Mephistopheles because of his starched white clothes amidst dark milieu of Congo basin.
4. *Africa Emergent*. Edinburgh: R. & R. Clarks Ltd., 1936.
5. Term used for countries located to the eastern side of the world. It was coined by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) and has been used for Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries.
6. Term devised by Said in *Orientalism* (1978) to describe discipline of the study about the eastern countries from Asia, Africa and Middle East.
7. Edward Said mentions works by Hugo and Gerard de Nerval as leading to a degenerate view about the oriental countries of Asia, Africa and Middle East (Hugo's *Les Orientales*, in *Ouvres Poétiques*, 1:684 and Gerard de Nerval, *Ouvres*, ed. Albert Beguin and Jean Richet Paris: Gallimard, 1960)
8. Exotic story of Aladdin and the treasure cave from *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Translated by Burton, Richard. New York: Random House, 1959.

9. *Homo Africanus* was first discovered in 1929, by Raymond Dart. *Australopithecus* is the longest surviving hominid species in the evolution tree, spanning over 3 million years from 4 million to 1 million years ago.
10. for example : Balzac , Chateaubriand , De Lesseps etc. (Travels in Greece, Palestine, Egypt and Barbary during the years 1806 and 1807 by F. A. De Chateaubriand trans. by Frederick Shoeberl. New York: Van Winkle and Wiley.
11. Hegemony was coined by Antonio Gramsci 1947 in his collection of articles, essays, critiques etc later on compiled as *Quaderni di carcere (Prison Notebooks)*. He used the term *hegemony* to mean the ways in which ruling classes use a dominant ideology to conceal their control of the masses.
12. The Other was originally used by E. Levinas in his essay *Temps et l'Autre* and simultaneously quoted by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (translated by H.M. Parshley. London: Vintage ,Random House,1949,1997.pg 17).
13. Term devised by French psychologist Emile Durkheim (Durkheim used the term in his books *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897), and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912))*Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, p93
14. *Negritude* as a theory of distinctive African personality and culture was developed by African Francophone writers Leopold Sedar Senghor, Birago Diop and Aime Cesaire immediately before and after the Second World War.(postcolonial studies: key concepts)
15. African nation, named for the river Niger, mentioned by that name 1520s (Leo Africanus), probably an alteration (by influence of L. niger "black") of a local Tuareg name, egereou n-igereouen, from egereou "big river, sea" + n-igereouen, plural of that word. Translated in Arabic as nahr al-anhur "river of rivers."
<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=australopithecus+africanus>© 2001-2012 Douglas Harper.
16. Brahma is the God of the Hindu Gods in Hindu mythology and so is Zeus in Greek mythology.
17. "Osu" was part of the complex priestly system to the Igbo ritual world.other synonymous terms for osu are fact, the names, Osuji, Osuagwu, Osuala, Nwosu, etc.
18. Excerpt from a lecture delivered by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. See TED.com for full lecture "The Danger of a Single Story."

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Chapter 2

**‘Violence Begets Violence’: Curse of the
Nigerian Civil War**

CHAPTER 2

‘Violence Begets Violence’: Curse of The Nigerian Civil War

The Nigerian civil war has a large presence in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and therefore, the present chapter is an attempt to analyze and assess the causes of the civil war in Nigeria in 1967-70, and examine how Adichie brings forth the harsh wartime milieu with the help of her second novel *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and a short story, “Ghosts” from the volume, *The Thing Around Your Neck*.

Decolonization is an equal and opposite phenomenon of colonization and it refers to the process of political independence of a colony. As decolonization can comprise of de-hegemonising the territory, as well as the minds of the natives, Pramod K. Nayar opines that though seemingly decolonization may be territorial but people could be in the clutches of erstwhile colonial powers as neo-colonialism is a stealthy sub-surface way to control the economy and the minds of the natives (2). Frantz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* highlights that decolonization has close ties with history and it is obviously a program of complete disorder. It is a combat of two equal and opposite forces, the origins of which could be traced in the historicity of the erstwhile colonies. Most of all, it is through decolonization that the victimized colonized would rise up and strike the colonizer once and for all and be liberated and emancipated, thus becoming, “the last shall be first and the first last (27). According to Fanon, this phenomenon of decolonization invokes and evokes violence as it is a decisive struggle between two protagonists that is: the colonizer and the colonized (27, 28). Hence violence is an inevitable curse as well as a boon for the postcolonial world. Third world countries have gained independence by picking up machetes and spears but the curse of civil violence lurks around such amateur democracies.

Violence is an indispensable occurrence in the discourse of postcolonialism. Synonyms like revolution, revolt, declaration of war, etc. have been used repetitively to highlight the aggression and force that the colonized used, to overthrow the colonizers. Colonization happened because of the illicit and undaunted usage of violence and aggression and hence the process of decolonization too reeks with gore and violent clashes between the colonial forces and the natives. Aime Cesaire in *Discourse on Colonialism*¹, mentions such “hideous butcheries” (41) committed by

colonists of various countries. He quotes about the confession of a certain Colonel de Montagnac, one of the conquerors of Algeria:

In order to banish the thoughts that sometimes besiege me, I have some heads cut off, not the heads of artichokes but the heads of men. (40)

Many more of such slaughter sprees are mentioned by Césaire when he talks about a certain Count de Herrison who does not mind taking back, “barrelfuls of ears”(40) or a Saint Arnaud who professes plunder, destruction and setting fire the houses of natives (40). The callous imagery which flashes in one’s mind after reading the ghoulis accomplishments of these French conquerors is that the natives of the colony were reduced to animal entities and any kind of violent dealings with them was a part of their colonial duty.

Pramod K. Nayar adds to the necessity of a discourse on violence while considering the process of decolonization by mentioning the fact that though, “it is a bad choice to begin with violence” (1), yet one should come to terms with it since the very foundation of colonialism is based on it. He further elaborates that there were several forms of violence used during colonial encounter – epistemic, cultural, economic, political and military, all of which are an innate part of the historicity of third world countries (1). Martin Luther King’s famous line ‘Violence begets violence’² holds water when one talks about the colonization spree by the erstwhile imperial powers and the concomitant decolonization revolution by the third world countries. Firebrands like Fanon and Césaire believed that violence is necessary to overthrow the imperialists, because only an equal force could only overpower these marauders with ‘missionary zeal’. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon proposes a treatise that the only way to tackle the colonizers is by violence alone. He further delves into the psychological aspect of colonization by mentioning that the whites rendered all possible emotional and physical violence on the non-whites to such an extent that these natives developed inferiority complexes and varieties of neurosis. Fanon takes this anti-colonial discourse to a step higher in *Black Skin White Masks* by mentioning about the psychological trauma a black inculcates in himself because of colonization or because he is enslaved. The only way to cure this epidemic and this misnomer is by taking up arms against the colonist.

Violence is a major tool to subjugate or terrorize a person or a state as in ancient times barbaric practices were followed by the kings to enslave and terrorize people. It would indeed be an oxymoron if one looks for instances of violence meted out by the so called civilized imperial powers at the innocent natives of the colonies. Aime Cesaire rejects the epithet of 'civilized' while he talks about mother nations like France and England and prefers to call them "dying civilization" and "sick civilization" (31). It is true that the colonists were better equipped with guns, cannons and bayonets than their 'barbaric' counterparts and hence their colonial pursuits extended over distant parts of the globe:

...that they kill; that they plunder; that they have helmets, lances, cupidities. (Cesaire 33)

There was not only political pressure to conquer the unknown lands but the religious masters and bishops too gave a religious colouring to these marauding. The gross nature of these conquests could be understood by the instance where Cesaire mentions about the aims of a certain Rev Muller:

Humanity must not, cannot allow the incompetence, negligence and laziness of the uncivilized peoples to leave idle indefinitely the wealth which god has confided to these charging them to make it serve good for all. (39)

While considering violence in the twentieth century one cannot ignore the post independence era of these Asian and African nations which are freshly delivered out of the hands of imperialists, but the misuse of power on grounds of ethnic prejudice lurk around their foundations. In these third world countries, where multi-ethnic groups dwell together, issues related to territorial claims of forests, better opportunities, caste, class and racial nuances could strike up flame of ethnic violence quite easily. Critics mention that ethnicity could be one of the secondary reasons of civil violence; nonetheless a significant one when a subcontinent like Africa is under consideration.

Ethnicity is derived from a Greek term *ethnos* which means race. Ethnic affiliations refer to the socio-cultural affiliations of people who identify with each other on grounds of race, religion, linguistic and other shared cultural heritage. Ethnic groups are different from other social groups since they evolve through centuries undergoing

a process called ethnogenesis³. In ancient times, Greek philosopher Herodotus⁴ laid the foundation stone for ethnic tracing by categorizing the basic parameters for identifying race and ethnicity. Similarly, Thomas Hylland Erikson⁵ too gave treatise on two schools of thought about ethnicity namely: the primordialist and the instrumentalist. According to him the first ie: the primordialist believed that ethnic ties are externally given coercive social bonds. On the other hand, the instrumentalists believed that ethnicity has roots in arrangement of political strategy so that the resource utilization could be done by the members of that group in order to increase wealth, power or social stature (1). Ethnicity is often used synonymously with race but the difference lies in the very fact that ethnicity is a social terminology while race is biological and the origin of any community or social group could be traced by studying their genetic composition. In the postcolonial times, the third world countries which are inhabited by multiethnic groups are facing the curse of ethnic conflicts. There are instances when trivial misdoings have flared up ethnic violence in continents of Asia, Africa, Central Europe and Australia.

Critics are of the opinion that only ethnic ties ‘alone’ are not responsible for massive civil wars and socio-political evidences suggest that the causes are generally cumulative and just one reason becomes the catalyst event for widespread violence and killing. The World Health Organization in its report on Violence Prevention and Health (2002) states that violence is:

...a universal scourge that tears at the fabric of communities and threatens the life, health and happiness of us all. (Krug et.al 10)

The twentieth century not only involves the violent process of decolonization but it also witnesses various types of violence, ranging from self directed, interpersonal to collective violence (13), rendered by human beings to meet malicious ends and selfish motives. One can even say that the twentieth century reeks with violence, blood and mass killings since the motive to capture power by misleading the masses and easy availability of weapons carved an easy path for the few religious and political leaders who are blind to the loss of innocent lives. Nelson Mandela⁶, mentions that violence seems to be the legacy of contemporary times and even fears that ‘a culture of violence’ (13) can bud up in the absence of democracy. For a democracy, the most dangerous of all the three types of violence is collective violence which could be further divided into social, political and economic (13). When a mob adheres to

violence for various types of resource capture then mass killings, abuse of human rights, terrorism and crimes are bound to occur (14).

Small and Singer define civil war as , “any armed conflict that involves (a) military action internal to the metro pole (b) active participation of the national government and (c) effective resistance both sides ” (210). The basic point of differentiation between a civil war and an interstate or colonial war is the delimitation of the action to the territories of the state and the presence of government as a counter insurgent party. Another parameter of defining a civil war would be the death toll which normally is more than 1000 in case of a civil war (Sambanis 816). It is true, that if the civil war is judged on the basis of ‘levels of violence’ (819) then, ‘wars might be identified as periods with many violent spikes, in addition to other characteristics of the violence’ (819, 820).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s second novel *Half Of A Yellow Sun* deals with the civil war torn Nigeria during the Biafra-Nigeria War of 1967-70 and the Igbo characters are portrayed bearing the brunt of ethnic violence that forces the Igbo population to present their demand for a secession of a separate state of Biafra. The war broke out when this demand is not met by the federal government and the Igbo military leaders decide for a coup de tat in the army. However, it is paradoxical to notice that citizens fight amongst each other in the name of Biafra or federal troops but the sense of loss is present on both the sides. The novel justifies its appellation, the Biafran flag i.e. ‘*Half Of A Yellow Sun*’ because Adichie’s war novel adheres to the historical event of the Biafran civil war and so the style of her narration follows the war. Charles E Nnolim suggests:

On rare occasions when literary and historical and political events coalesce and tangle, there may be no escape from using an appellation which may be unavoidably unliterary, as in the case of the Nigerian civil war, where the war novel that emerged, tangles with the period which provided the experience being recorded. (196)

Half Of A Yellow Sun is one such novel which could be aptly categorized under the historical fiction because the plot is very much set inside the Biafran war zone and the characters are representative of the Nigerians from all walks of life. Critic Harry E. Shaw states that historical novels are not read for the sake of history but there are

specific roles that , “history has played in standard historical fiction” (51). He elaborates three reasons why history finds ways to be embedded in fiction and he begins with the fact that history serves as an ideological screen on which the contemporary issues could be represented. Moreover, history has an innate “dramatic energy that vivifies a fictional story” (52) and the end result of such dramatic energy is either melodramatic or cathartic. Similarly, history has always been a subject of fictional writings and authors have conceptualized and represented history in their narratives for a variety of purposes (52). Adichie’s concept of weaving history into the love stories (in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*) serves as a curtain on which the deprived Nigerian lives are depicted with a dramatic energy. This energy which is represented in the forms of emotional outbursts of the characters and their psychological trauma and fear becomes the driving force of the plot and it often creates a cathartic effect. Hence, Adichie’s novel could be termed as a ‘hybrid’ which is neither a fictional work nor a historical (Ugochukwu 235).

But first, an analysis should be made about what factors were responsible for triggering a civil war in a developing country like Nigeria. Nigeria is one such nation which is multi-ethnic in population composition and these differentiations have seeped deep in the roots of the nation when it gained independence on October 1, 1960. Though this country became a fully sovereign state in the British Commonwealth but it stayed divided on regional and ethnic levels. While Hausa and Fulani groups were prominent in the North, Yoruba occupied the south west, Ijaws were present in south and Igbo gained prominence in the south eastern part of Nigeria. Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton highlight that post-independence Nigeria still exported a larger part of its agricultural products to earn a major share of its revenue. Industrial development was very minimal as European companies operated large scale industries on the Nigerian soil (149). Economic and industrial corruption created an ethos of unrest and Tawafa Balewa’s⁷ dream of building a nation’s firm foundation were nearing its death. Though groups of artists, scholars and some politicians propagated the idea of united Nigeria through speeches, art, writings and legislations, so that people could develop cultural affinity and commonalities, bureaucratic corruption, ethnic voting systems and favoritism sowed the seeds of disruption, disillusion and unrest amongst Nigerian Youth. Heavily flawed elections of 1964 and 1965 laid grounds for the military coup of 1967 (150).

There was a mass unrest among people especially the Igbo military officers because of the failure of the first republic under the headship of Prime Minister Balewa. On Jan 15, 1966, five majors namely Kaduna Nzeogwu, E. Ifeajuna, D. Okafor, C.I. Anuforo and A. Ademoyega led the military coup in Nigeria, the first of its kind. All the regional leaders were arrested and killed especially the Prime Minister Balewa, Premier S.L. Akintola of the Western Region and Premier Ahmadu Bello of the northern region. Though many politicians were killed in this coup but it was not successful. The plans of 'these five majors' however till date remain ambiguous. However, when J.A. Ironsi took over as the head of Nigeria after Balewa's death, he made several provisions in favour of Igbos and people thought that he too was a part of the coup conspiracy. Ironsi not only denied any trial to the five accused Majors but also abolished the federal system and instead levied unitary system of government in Nigeria. This act of decentralization of power, reduced the regional politics to negation, hence annoying the regional politicians of the north because they took it as his "Igbo" conspiracy to control the entire nation. Consequently, the northerners, who were not ready to lose any further power, carried out a counter coup with the help of military officers and killed Ironsi in Ibadan (Falola & Heaton 173, 174).

Stremlau states that shortly after the first military coup in Jan. 1966, succession of a thirty one year old northerner lieutenant Col. Yakubu Gowon (after Maj. Gen. Ironsi), there was a major political unrest as he commanded only a "modicum of allegiance from three of Nigeria's four regions" (29). The Igbo dominated eastern region was led by Lt. Col. C.D. Ojukwu, who refused to recognize Gowon as the head of the state of Nigeria and went ahead with a position of defector secession behalf of the eastern regions. Earlier there were attempts made by the eastern and western political leaders to bribe the minor sub-ethnic groups in each other's region and in various areas of Hausa dominant northern parts, that led to violent confrontations and allegations of widespread voting fraud and corruption, hence a coup d'état was the only solution to curb this unrest (33). So the politics of the first republic of Nigeria was embedded with widespread political instability and parties worked on fissiparous lines of regionalism. Once again there was a threat to the national unity when Gowon declared Nigeria a Federal Republic. Since there had been a history of Igbo massacre in September 1966, Ojukwu feared about the safety of Igbos living in the North. Hence "he urged the easterners to return home and northerners to do likewise" (Falola &

Heaton 174), which resulted in massive exodus of the population in the latter part of 1966 and early 1967.

While commenting on the reason for civil war in Nigeria, a U.S. Marine student 91/92, Major Abubakar A. Atofarati highlights, that Nigeria had never been a homogeneous country since people from various ethnic groups had had clashes of interest due to the question of who would control the resources. He quotes, “There was division, hatred, unhealthy rivalry and pronounced disparity in development of all the four major ethnic regions” (*Global Security* n. pag).

Major Atofarati elaborates that Gowon divided the country into twelve states from the original four in May 1967 and as a result, the eastern region under federal decree, declared it an independent state of Biafra. Finally the federal government had to apply force and coercion to bring back the eastern region to the federal unit and punish the secessionist (n. pag.). Even the growth of nationalism was based on ethnic or tribal lines rather than collective national interest so when a coup was followed by a counter coup in 1966, a bloody civil war started on ethnic grounds.

But Randall J. Blimes disagrees with the fact that the only ‘viable’ reason for civil war is ethnic difference. For this, he puts forth two kinds of theories regarding ethnic conflict cluster: the primordialists link the ethnic clash to “ancient hatreds” (537), the instrumentalists disagree with this ancient hatred nomenclature of violence as “ethnic groups with a history of animosity have managed to live in peace” and therefore the argument cannot be generalized. Hence ethnicity is merely a tool to stoke inter-ethnic violence. Ethnicity may be one of the secondary reasons along which societal cleavages, but it cannot be the sole reason as a homogeneous society is also prone to civil conflicts:

An ethnically diverse society is no more likely than an ethnically homogeneous society to experience civil war given the absence of factors that increase the probability of civil war such as low per capita income (Blimes 539).

Besides that, Falola and Heaton highlight three major reasons why the Gowon Government and military government in Nigeria could not risk the act of secession of Biafra to succeed. Secession was a major threat to the federal unity of Nigeria, allowing Biafran secession can cause a major threat of secessions by other minority

groups and third major reason was that the lands claimed by Biafra contained 67% of the known petroleum resources of Nigeria (175).

After 1945, civil wars were generally fought as guerilla conflicts headed by motley band of militants, insurgents or rebels hiding in forests and unduly terrain and were hunted down by counter insurgent forces every now and then (Fearon 1). There are government informants amidst the villagers with whom these militants interact or depend upon for food supplies and other necessities. A country becomes more prone to violence, when low per capita income is combined with ethnic diversities (2). As far as the point of difference between civil war and other forms of violence is concerned, the greatest distinguishing factor between civil wars and other forms of violence is the “large scale destruction” involved in the former:

A high threshold of deaths can set wars apart from riots, terrorism and some coups (although not necessarily from pogroms or genocide).
(Sambanis 820)

The Biafra war which lasted for two and a half years witnessed the genocide of millions of Igbos. The Federal Military Government (FMG) launched police measures to control the Biafran forces. It banned all Red Cross aid, food supplies and allowed only the medical aid to the Biafran army. “Deprivation” quotes Heaton & Falola, “was indeed a tool of the FMG’s strategy” (177). In December the FMG managed to cut Biafra in half primarily by the efforts of 3 Marine Commando Divisions of the Nigerian army led by the then Col. Benjamin Adekunle popularly called the Black Scorpion and later by Olusegun Obasanjo. Ojukwu fled to the Cote d’ Yvonne, leaving his chief of staff, Phillip Effiong to act as the officer administering the government. Violence did not cease with the absorption of Biafra into the Nigerian Federation. Conflicts between Christians and Muslims (Igbo Christians and Hausa/Fulani Muslims) have been incessant since the end of the 1970 civil war.

The Civil war of 1967-70 has been a part of the collective conscience⁸ of the Nigerian citizens and so there are a number of fictional and non-fictional writings that talk about the trauma induced by this communal violence on the civil psyche.

Literature has been since ages, the mirror of socio-political reflections and gives an expression to the experiences of the country and its people. Wars not only ravage and divide the nations into fragments but also impact the psyche of the people in such a

way that it remains marred forever with scars of heinous moments of civil wars. Such a kaleidoscope of violence is fitly captured by writers all over the world who have witnessed a dance of death and gore. War narratives are a way to relive the country's history of violence and many writers and critics have penned down the horrors of Nigerian civil war in their fictional and non-fictional works. The Nigerian civil war has not only impacted the social and political history of the country but the post war literary history too has undergone a sea change and so the civil war must be considered as a metaphorical watershed in literature. Hugh Hodges mentions that there are a number of political or historical works on the Biafran War but a few famous fictional writings include , “Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972), Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* (1975), Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Cyprian Ekwensi's *Divided We Stand* (1980), Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* (1982), Eddi Iroh's *The Siren in the Night* (1982), Kalu Okpi's *Biafra Testament* (1982), Ossie Enekwe's *Come Thunder* (1984), Nwapa's *Wives at War* (1984) and Anthonia Kalu's *Broken Lives and Other Stories* (2003)” (1). Similarly, Francois Ugochukwu adds to this argument by reiterating Chinyere Nwahunanya's categorical demarcation of civil war literature being a ‘hybrid’ between literature and history (234) yet the war literature still remains a popular genre especially amongst Igbo writers. There are more than “fifty-five fictional and non-fictional accounts written on civil war” (235) that show the popularity of this very historical issue of Nigeria. However not much has been written during the war period because Igbo people wanted to survive at all cost so that they can share their war time experiences with other countrymen. Such recollections of war include Flora Nwapa's short story “My Soldier Brother” which was published in *This is Lagos* and Nwankwo's *Road to Udimu*, which was initially written in German language and was published in Germany. Flora Nwapa has been called “the mother of modern African literature and she is known as the first African author who was published in English language in Britain (Busby 399). While complimenting Nwapa for her strong women characters Alison Perry states:

The heroines of Ms. Nwapa's books are strong-minded women who have economic independence and yet, suffer at the hands of unfaithful and unreliable men. her skill is in presenting her women as individuals and dealing with their special burdens. (*West Africa* n.pag.)

Similarly, Nwapa's *Wives at War* deals with the perseverance of women during the Biafran War. In a way the term war is representative of the cultural war between these women and their families (Mears 155). So with Nwapa, one gets to hear the women's version of civil war as well as their inner struggles to survive the war.

The major literature on civil war started coming up only in the eighties because for a long time, the people were in a trauma and the immediate post-war political and national ethos were not amicable for such venture. Further later, many war memoirs were produced and each of them speaks of an ordinary citizen's struggle to survive.

Similarly, *Destination Biafra* by Buchi Emecheta is another civil war narrative that deals with the feminist perspective of the Biafran war. Debbie Ogedemgbe, the daughter of the assassinated finance minister, joins the army because she feels that there is a need for improvisation in the army as well as the political system, so that the dream of a new Nigeria could be fulfilled. But the corruption, Igbo witch hunt, communal slaughter, incessant air raids etc. makes her more convinced towards the necessity for abstinence from greedy personal ambitions and the need to rise for a nation's cause (*Kirkus Review* n. pag.). Debbie not only survives a rape but also gains strength from the resilience stories of other women survivors during the war (n.pag.).

Chinua Achebe's short story volume *Girls at War* has a title story "Girls at War" which not only poignantly brings out the grim war scene but also narrates the emotional trauma of commoners, especially the war time plight of young women? Two characters namely Gladys, the girl soldier and Reginald Nwankwo, the narrator, meet several times during the war either at the check post or at a familiar place and every time Nwankwo undergoes a change of heart for girl soldiers. Earlier, he sneered at them but now after meeting Gladys, he respects them for their duty and sacrifice but later, Nwankwo comes to know that Gladys has fallen into war time prostitution. The story ends with Gladys dying in an air raid in a car along with a soldier and it is then Nwankwo realizes the futility of war and how it degenerated and mistreated women folk (238).

It is true that women and children are worst sufferers of civil violence and it is equally important to view such events from their point of view. *Blow the Fire* by Leslie Jean Ofoegbu, is one such work which deals with the struggles of a Scottish born expatriate girl Leslie, who falls in love during the Nigerian civil war and is

determined to survive the war raising her three children side by side. Ofeogbu's narrative highlights the war time struggles through the perspective of women and the children they rear in the times of war. There are instances of anonymous mothers and expatriate wives who struggle hard to survive and they refuse to leave Biafra. Thus a whole new point of view was highlighted by Ofeogbu where the worst sufferers of a civil war come out resilient:

It introduces readers to the author herself and her role as a worker in an orphanage, a nurse in a refugee camp, a relief worker, a mission teacher and motivator. (Ugochukwu 241)

In the contemporary times, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has emerged as one of the leading 'daughters of Achebe' who has portrayed the grim picture of the Biafran war in the most sensitive and realistic manner through her second novel *Half Of A Yellow Sun*. The readers not only get to know the inimical situation for Igbos in Nigeria in 1960's, the corruption and the callousness of Nigerian bureaucrats but also the reasons for the embroiled statelessness and the concomitant civil war from 1967-1970. Adichie fulfils the responsibility of a writer as an informer as she documents the struggles of common Igbo families to save their lives during the air raids of Biafran war for independence. Adichie also has a keen sense of depicting the war situation realistically and portrays the suffering women and children through her simulatingly real characters.

The past of an African nation shapes its writers' ideas about the future and the present. Earlier it was realized that the African writer empathized too much with the past, thus obliterating the future. But presently, the African literature has the potency to cull out the hope and the new paradigms for African society which was for long, culturally, socially, alienated from the rest of the world, "the creative art for the African writer is not just an art form that seeks to entertain the audience,...it is more of a social document geared towards the reconstruction of the socio-political configuration of the African people" (Okuyade 245,246). As the role of the African fiction writer is to portray the socio-domestic and cultural lives of people of his/her times, Adichie, through her narratives, makes the readers live in an Igbo world. Several layers of stories are woven around characters like Olanna / Odenigbo, Kainene / Richard and their families which also comprise of their servants Ugwu, Harrison, Jomo etc. Olanna's parents Mr. and Mrs. Ozobia, Odenigbo's mother,

Amala, etc. also form an important woof and wan of Adichie's narrative fabric. As Nigeria gets tangled in ethnic civil violence, the revolutionary professor Odenigbo runs from place to place to save his family – wife Olanna and child Chiamaka (Baby).

Similarly in the short story volume *The Thing around Your Neck*, the story entitled 'Ghosts' makes the readers relive the ravages of the Biafran war. It talks about the sudden appearance of a dead man after thirty seven years of his supposed death. The narrator happens to be a seventy one year old retired Mathematics Professor James from university of Nsukka and through his observations one comes to know about the dismal condition of Nigeria. The dead man walking is his colleague Ikenna Okora, who is a former Sociology professor, famous for his system-defying behavior. The revolutionary Okora is now a shrunken mass of bones but his voice still echoes the revolutionary zeal which defined him well during his active years. The narrator reveals that Ikenna was last seen on July 6, 1967 when Nsukka, the university town was evacuated and later on heavily shelled by the federal soldiers which they called 'vandals' (61).

The violence and bloodshed that was involved in the civil war was so immense that the historians like Stremlau give factual information while making comments on the ethnic violence of Nigeria during the later 1960's. They also pinpoint that the violence was massive in the sense that even Gowon appeared helpless in curbing the violence. Hence the declaration of secession wrecked havoc on the Igbo people because the multi-ethnic status of Nigeria rested in a fragile axis of the four major ethnic groups:

There were reports of continued killing of Igbo sergeants and enlisted men by Northerners within the army. Although there has been no suggestion that Gowon knew of the purges in advance, or in any sense condoned such actions, he appeared powerless to stop the carnage and this further undermined his pretense of authority. (37)

There are various factors which coincide and become the reason of civil war for example, unequal distribution of wealth, unrest, injustice availability of resources and opportunities to a favoured few etc. Such factors stoke the fractionalizations in a territory where diverse groups live in close association. For this, Chaim Kaufmann favours the separation of communities, tribes as a viable preventive panacea for civil

wars (137), hence, in the case of Biafran War too, one can see mass exodus of Igbo population from the North towards the south -east.

Whether civil war could be traced along the fault lines of ethnic communities or not, the consequences of such mass violence is irreparable and it mars the memory of history of that particular territory where it occurs. Ethnic cleansing seems to be a menial term when one analyzes the malice and revenge intent of the attacking tribe/community on the victims. This gruesome purification ritual takes place so that the homeless refugees may never think of going back home. Women are raped, houses are destroyed, children are killed, others are expelled only to teach the opponent a lesson (145).

In *Half Of A Yellow Sun* Adichie presents visuals of the pre-war and the post Nigeria through the medium of a houseboy, Ugwu, who was employed by Odenigbo. The blood and gore spilled during the civil war does not leave any character in the story untouched, so sights and scenes witnessed by Odenigbo, Olanna, Richard, Kainene, Ugwu and others also contribute in reinstating the tragic event of Biafran civil war 1967-70. The very first instance of Igbo massacre is witnessed by Olanna when she happens to be in Kano to bring her pregnant cousin Arize to Nsukka. Her former lover Mohammed rescues her from the Hausa and Fulani men, thirsty for Igbo blood. Later when they go back to look for her Arize at her house, her throat parches to see utter destruction and murder:

The street looked strange, unfamiliar; the compound gate was broken, the metal flattened on the ground. Then she noticed Auntie Ifeka's kiosk, or what remained of it splinters of wood, packets of groundnuts in the dust... She stopped when she saw the bodies. Uncle Mbaezi lay face down in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Something creamy white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head. Auntie Ifeka lay on the veranda. The cuts on her naked body were smaller, dotting her arms and legs and legs like slightly parted red lips. (185-186)

Very soon she realizes that ethnic violence has guzzled the entire family and her cousin Arize was missing. Olanna feels a "watery queasiness in her bowels" when she sees their 'friendly' next door neighbor, Abdul Malik, brandishing a weapon and looking for new victims to slay (186). Scenes of genocide do not stop with the

massacre in Kano. The crowded train on which Olanna escapes from Kano, has a woman passenger, carrying a calabash and is wearing a blotched wrapper. When Olanna looks into the calabash, she sees a “girl’s head with the ashy-gray skin and the braided hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth (188) and she imagines that the passenger’s child has fallen prey to the blood – thirsty Northerners and the mother could not save her so she was in a trauma. Kharoua comments:

Exemplifying the post-traumatic effects of telling about the gross events in the novel, Olanna is able to narrate the story of the little Igbo girl’s severed head only belatedly. She comes face to face with the event when the Igbo people have escaped the atrocities committed in the North. The inability to tell the story of the girl denotes the imperative to undertake the moral and individual disposition to be a responsible witness. Her incident on the train when she sees the head of a little girl is a telling instance of the fraught issue of vicarious victimization and the need to attune for her guilt as a bystander who needs to respond to the demands of extremity. (299)

Thus the ordinary way in which a fellow passenger shows Olanna, the head of her dead girl child in a calabash, is indicative of the fact that the civil war merged the commonplace and the unusual.

A stark reality on which Adichie focuses in the novel is the psychological trauma experienced by the characters during the civil war. In fact, the psychological fear and insecurity generated by constant bomb raids and mass slaughter also leads to the physical reactions such as incontinence (of Richard or of Olanna) and uncontrolled weeping (of Richard). Critic da Silva et. al. is of the opinion that deep within these characters are aware of the impending danger and their bodies react to their psychological fears:

In the course of the war that will bring about the end of the Republic of Biafra, each of the main characters will be betrayed by their bodies, brought low in humiliating circumstances. In Adichie’s aesthetics of excess, the horror of the war too manifests itself in the bodily dysfunctions that the main characters experience, dramatizing the young nation’s poisoning as something occurring as much from

without as from within... In Adichie's writing, the body in pain is especially prone to leaking, its physical limits powerless to contain the terrorised self's response to the senseless and random violence. (465)

Adichie mentions that after the Kano escape and the number of murders that Olanna witnesses, she loses her stability and becomes bedridden. Moreover, she is haunted by "dark swoops" and is too shocked to share her agony and pain with Odenigbo. Further in the novel there are several spine chilling scenes, such as the eyeless man Ugwu meets at the Nsukka railway platform (*HYS* 183) and the violent ethnic cleansing which is witnessed by Kainene's lover Richard, at Kano airport:

There were more soldiers now, more shots, more shouts of "Nyamiri!" and "Araba, araba!" The bartender was writhing on the floor and the gurgle that came from his mouth was guttural. The soldiers ran out to the tarmac and into the airplane and pulled out Igbo people who had already boarded and lined them up and shot them and left them lying there, their bright clothes splashes of colour on the dusty black stretch. (192-193)

Francoise Ugochukwu points out that though Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born seven years after the civil war, the experiences of her parents and grandparents, who lived through the first hand horrors of war, create magic in the narrative of *Half Of A Yellow Sun*. It is true that Adichie lost both her grandfathers in the war and two of her uncles fought on the Biafra's side and the way the war narrative becomes a family memoir is very subtle and spontaneous. It almost seems that Olanna's fear of 'dark swoops' are faced by the entire Igbo community and not just one woman character in the novel :

One memory leads to the next, and the words reveal Olanna's trauma, then her struggle to cope by telling it out, before trying to wipe the picture off her memory by denying what still haunts her, and refusing to relive her nightmare. She eventually engages in the grieving process, accepts her scars and turns to talking again, helped in this by Ugwu's sympathetic listening and questions. Sharing this crucial moment also allows Olanna to put the child's death in context and link that senseless killing to those that preceded and followed. (9)

Ethnic purging in the North led to a mass exodus of the Igbo population, southwards. Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton highlight the futility of declaration of federation of Nigeria by Gowon as it aggravated ethnic tensions between Igbos and the northerners:

A spate of massacres, many conducted by northern soldiers, took lives between 80,000 and 100,000 easterners during this period, the worst occurring in September. These massacres sparked revenge killings of northerners resident in the eastern region. Such events led Ojukwu to question whether Igbos could ever live in harmony within a federal Nigeria. He urged all the easterners outside the region to return home and suggested that all northerners in the east do likewise. This led to large population movements in the latter half of 1966 and the early part of 1967. (174)

The short story “Ghosts” gives the readers a vivid picture of mass exodus of Igbos that was forced by the soldiers of the federal army under General Yakubu Gowon. In the story, Ikenna seems to be a pro-Biafran who fought for the cause of a separate nation Biafra and lost his family amidst violence and vandalism. He recollects:

Yes my whole family was in Orlu when they bombed it. Nobody left, so there was no reason for me to come back. (63)

Similarly, the horrid times of war are presented in bits and pieces of human memory and hence only flashbacks can take one to the civil war times. Professor James, the elderly narrator of the story is reminded of the evacuation day when federal troops started attacking the University town Nsukka:

...the day we evacuated Nsukka in a hurry, with the sun a strange fiery red in the sky and nearby the boom-boom-boom of shelling as the federal soldiers advanced. We were in my Imphala. The militia waved us through the campus gates and shouted that we should not worry, that the vandals-as we called the federal soldiers would be defeated in a matter of days and we would come back. (61)

In *Half Of A Yellow Sun* too, mass exodus of Igbos is described by Adichie when Odenigbo and Olanna decide to move to Abba as the federal troops were nearing Nsukka. Later on when they move from Abba to Umuahia, Odenigbo’s mother refuses to leave her house. She retaliates:

I will stay and watch over the house. After you all have run, you will come back, I will be here waiting for you. Who am I running away from my own house for, *gbo*? (245)

Also during the small wedding ceremony of Olanna and Odenigbo, the feast gets disrupted by air bomb raids and federal troop attacks. Ugwu, the houseboy compares the bombing planes with two blue birds of prey spurting hundreds of bullets as laying large eggs. The raids leave the entire place wasted and full of smoke with two houses totally collapsed and people looking for survivors in the rubble:

Smoke rose from a compound near the corn grinding station a street away. Two houses had collapsed into dusty rubble and some men were digging frantically through the jumbled cement, saying, “Did you hear that cry? Did you?” A fine haze of silvery dust covered their entire bodies so that they looked like limbless ghosts with open eyes. (254)

Further, when the bombing planes disappear from the sky, Odenigbo and others look for survivors in the rubble. The descriptions of bomb raids in *Half Of A Yellow Sun* indicate that the supporters of Biafra had now become stone eyed to all the casualties of war and rather than getting shocked or traumatized, they started taking it as a mundane affair. Ugwu does not react to the burnt body of a woman but he is keen on searching the survivors:

A car was on fire; the body of a woman lay next to it, her clothes burned off, flecks of pink all over her blackened skin, and when somebody covered it with a torn jute sack, Ugwu could still see the stiff charcoal-black legs. The sky was overcast... “I heard the child,” somebody said again. “I heard the child.” (255)

Similarly, Ikenna, in “Ghosts” is nonetheless a fighter personified who takes the readers through a sense of loss of his family and a nation, Biafra, shares his disgust on the destruction of homes and cities which is caused by bombing initiated by federal army. As he recollects the horror one can imagine that the destroyed sight of his own house appears to be too repelling for him to resettle:

Our books were in a charred pile in the front garden, under the umbrella tree. The lumps of calcified feces in the bathtub were strewn

with pages of my Mathematical Annals, used as toilet paper, crusted smears blurring the formulas I had studied and taught. (63)

Another evil of civil war is forced labour and forced conscription of civilians and child soldiers by the army. In *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, one gets to know through Mrs. Muokelu, who taught the class one of elementary school at Akwakuma, that young and able bodied men are compulsorily conscripted in the army. Conscripted soldiers were made to live a hard life which mainly constituted of rigorous physical training and obstacle training combined with numerous “kicks and slaps and meager wraps of garri and thin soup” (450). Children were forced into trucks monitored by soldiers and they were subjected to hard work like cassava grinding which made their palms bleed (329). Olanna had heard about how young men were forced into army services and she was so scared that she prevented Ugwu from going outside their house (356). Olanna pays huge amount of money and bribes the soldiers so that they would set Ugwu free. It is important to note that though a houseboy, Ugwu holds the position of a family member and a protégé for Odenigbo and Olanna. This is evident when Olanna panics and hurries to the place where Ugwu is ready to be shoved into a truck as a conscripted soldier:

They had just begun to walk at an awkward pace, kill and go shouting, “lep! Li!” when Ugwu saw Olanna. She was hurrying, panicky, wearing her wig, which she hardly wore these days and she had hastily put it on because it was lopsided on her head. She smiled and motioned to kill and go, and he shouted, “stop!” before he went over to her. They talked with his back to the men and moments later, he turned around and slashed at the rope that bound Ugwu’s hands. (441)

But Ugwu could not be saved from getting conscripted the second time while he returns home after spending time with Eberechi, and is pushed into a van where he meets an elderly man, a thirteen year old boy and a ruffian Hi-Tech. A heart – wrenching scene of forced conscription is witnessed by Olanna when she is close to the Corn grinding station:

A woman ran out of a roadside house, crying, following two soldiers who were pulling a tall boy along with them. “I said you should take me!” She screamed. “Take me instead! Have we not sacrificed Abuchi

to you people already?” the soldiers ignored her and the boy kept his posture straight backed, as if he could not trust himself to look back at his mother. (414)

When one considers *Half Of A Yellow Sun* from the perspective of forced conscriptions during the Biafran War, there are stark similarities between Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and Ken Saro Wiwa’s *Sozaboy* especially when one considers Ugwu and Mene respectively. While Ugwu comes before the readers as a twelve year old houseboy at the beginning of the novel but he has a zest of improving his life and hence he not only learns to read and write but also pens down a book at the end of the war. Mene, the idealist in *Sozaboy* too vies for better life and hence uproots his family in search of better prospects but loses them at the onset of war. While Mene now christens himself ‘Sozaboy’, he desperately searches for his mother and wife and presents himself as a firebrand patriot. While Ugwu too had once nurtured the hope of getting conscripted and imagines that he , “would be like those recruits who went into training camp - while their relatives and well-wishers stood by the sidelines and cheered...He longed to play a role, to act” (HYS 249). Both these characters are identical and Andrea Borunda mentions that there is a dense enigma that surrounds them:

The phenomenon of the child soldier as explored through the narrative devices of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and Ken Saro-Wiwa’s *Sozaboy* reveals substantial light in conceptualizing immunity to terror and choice in conscription. Ugwu and Sozaboy both provide harrowing firsthand accounts of war that examine the susceptibilities of children and their resilience in times of combat. (5)

Hunger, starvation and the personal loss which each Nigerian and Biafran suffered, remain the worst demons of the Nigerian Civil War because no money or relief grant could replace the family members lost due to food shortage and hunger. Adichie in *Half Of A Yellow Sun* brings out the bone chilling instances of hunger when, at one point of time Olanna’s neighbor Mama Adanna kills and eats an infested mongrel Bingo for meat (430). Also the shortage of food takes a toll on small children who are largely malnourished, bony and sick. In one of the refugee camps Olanna is too shocked to see the Kwashiorkered condition children:

They were naked; the taut globes that were their bellies would not fit in a shirt anyway. Their buttocks and chests were collapsed into folds of rumpled skin on their head, spots of reddish hair. (437)

Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton highlight the political and economic causes for the widespread hunger and starvation during the war:

In 1968 January, Gowon announced that the Nigerian currency would be changed. This meant that any Nigerian currency that the Biafrans had amassed to fund the war and their government quickly became worthless. Food became increasingly scarce and high inflation made even existing goods prohibitively expensive within Biafra. For example, the price of beef rose from 3 shillings a pound to 60, dried fish from 5 shillings a pound to 60 and a chicken which went for roughly 15 shillings before the war, cost as much as £ 30 by its end. (176)

They further comment that “deprivation” was indeed a war tool which Gowon used to subjugate the Biafran revolution and ‘malnourishment and starvation which rapidly increased within Biafra proved to be Gowon’s mistake” (177).

Similarly, the story “Ghosts”, not only unravels the stark corruption in the university system, politics, and even the medical aids during the three year Nigerian civil war but also talks about the shameful side of international Red Cross society in its inability to extend help to the innocent Biafrans :

I did what I could I did. I left the International Red Cross. It was full of cowards who could not stand up for human beings. They backed down after that plane was shot down at Eket, as if they did not know it was exactly what Gowon wanted. (64)

It is interesting to note that the grim reality of rottenness and corruption in Nigeria is juxtaposed with visitations of the ghost of Professor James’s wife, Ebere. These visits are conglomerated with the sadness of war and act as rhubarb to the narrator’s memories. After the war, people were faced with an existentialist crisis to continue with their family-less, hollowed lives and hence they decide to live in their happy past or the ‘ghosts’ of their past.

Another heinous evil of civil war which is highlighted in *Half Of A Yellow Sun* is war time rape and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie foregrounds the double subjugation of women folk during the war times. The novel brings forth how the newly inducted military officers like Prof. Ezeaka and others practice anarchy in the form of violent coercive behaviour in the Biafran territory which is due to the lack of a central power that gross disorder and jungle-rule prevailed in Biafra. The conscripted soldiers not only looted houses and ransacked kitchens for food but they also raped the house owner's daughters and wives. Special Julius, an agent in the story tells Odenigbo and Prof. Ekwenugo about such loot and riot:

They are even looting toilet seats! Toilet seats! A man who escaped from Udi told me. And they choose the best houses and force people's wives and daughters to spread their legs for them and cook for them. (358)

One even gets to know about the animal like behavior of one such conscripted soldier called Hi-Tech who not only defiles the bar girl himself but also forces Ugwu and others too to do the same (457). When Nnesinachi tells Ugwu how his own sister Anulika was raped by soldiers near the stream and also injured her eye, Ugwu is full of remorse. Later Ugwu realizes, Anulika was gang raped and beaten by the conscripted soldiers, just like he has raped the bar girl, he could not stop hating himself for the act.

“They said the first one that climbed on top of her, she bit him on the arm and drew blood. They nearly beat her to death. One of her eyes has refused to open well since.” Later, Ugwu took a walk around the village, and when he got to the stream, he remembered the line of women going to fetch water in the mornings, and he sat down on a rock and sobbed. (256)

Even a priest like Father Marcel too behaves in this satanic manner and lives under the garb of a missionary rendering solace and comfort to the refugees until Kainene discovers the truth:

Can you believe who is responsible for that small girl Urenwa's pregnancy?... Her eyes bulged out of her angular face, filled with rage and tears. Can you believe it is Father Marcel? Apparently I've been

blind; she's not the only one, Kainene said. He fucks most of them before he gives them the crayfish that I slave to get here! (498-99)

While investigating the severity of civil conflicts, Bethany Lacina states that civil war can be more deadly if the warring parties are better armed and well organized. Certain variables like state capacity, regime time and ethnic and religious diversities are to be kept under consideration while verifying the conflict severity. Where young men willingly conscript themselves as mercenaries, high levels of violence and irregularities are bound to take place in the territory. Also, the severity of civil war zone is situated in urban and open territory. Since all kinds of combats i.e. aerial, artillery, heavy infantry etc. can take place, a high risk of civilian deaths cannot be ruled out in such cases. While on the contrary, a territory with undulating forest area would experience combat in smaller units in far off regions and hence civilian deaths would be lesser (282). Thus the Biafran war situation worsened because of the conscripted soldiers behaving haywire at their gun points and also because of the armaments facilitated to them.

The plot too moves swiftly as one notices the rising symphony of demand for secession of a separate Biafran state by the Easterners, the revolution lights up the flames of the hope and safety for the Igbos and they are ready to sacrifice for a noble cause but as the war degenerates into a stalemate, the Biafrans are portrayed in the most pathetic and anguished state. In *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, as Nigeria takes its final dip in the bloody stream of Civil War, the naive houseboy of Odenigbo, young Ugwu takes center stage to narrate the rummages of war.

While analyzing the element of trauma and fear in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, Mustapha Kharoua mentions that the novel is more focused towards the ordeals faced by the commonplace characters in dealing with civil war on daily basis and it is much less concerned with the soldiers fighting for a secessionist cause and this very unique feature of the novel makes one wonder that there are times when the mundane (daily lives of people) and the extreme (the civil violence) can co-exist at the same time. The novel follows a very humanistic approach as the one gets sensitized about the fact that the citizens of Nigeria face a constant life threat in the wake of the civil violence and there is a direct witnessing to the war brutalities (293). The novel follows a different pattern by incorporating the "Book" *The World was Silent when We Died* which also expresses the unspoken and the forbidden truths about this war:

The anti-linearity in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, reflects the very process of being confronted with the challenge of integrating the “real” events of the past into the narrative flow. The inset, fragmented text written by an unannounced author to supplement the storyline, however, constitutes the parallel thread which insists on restoring historical justice to the past. (295)

Thus the novel is a clarion call for the rectification of the political wrongs done to the Nigerian citizens in the name of ethnicity and it also raises a question whether restoration of justice could be done to the masses that suffered during the war.

Ugochukwu is of the opinion that while Chinua Achebe witnessed and survived the war Adichie’s war survival story has eye witness accounts conglomerated with “imaginative truths” (238). He very categorically draws similarities between texts by Achebe, Ofoegbu and Adichie :

All three texts share a common sympathy for ordinary people dragged into a conflict that leaves them destitute, fragile and hungry; they provide a multifaceted approach and insiders’ points of view on the impact of the conflict on daily life and relationships, work and leisure. They also reveal a shift in values, changing attitudes to life and the presence of women at the heart of the war zone, central to the preservation of life. (238)

Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* too deals with the women centric view of the war but the only difference is that unlike other (silent spectator) heroines, Debbie in *Destination Biafra* is a woman soldier and despite her Oxford education, she is wholly dedicated towards the cause of a new Nigeria. Critic da Silva et. al. clearly state the difference between Emecheta’s and Adichie’s handling of the war drama:

Destination Biafra is as focused on the collapse of the Biafra state and its bloody aftermath as on the articulation of an overt feminist politics. Thus, while Adichie’s novel focalises, zoom-like, the intimate space of self as subject, *Destination Biafra* focuses on a broader canvas where the machinery and machinations of geopolitics, class envy and ethnic hatreds serve as background for a triumphal birth of the ‘new woman’, with its obvious links to such gender discourses. (462)

There are common threads between Achebe's portrayal of war time starvation and corruption in *Girls at War*, in rationing of food and Adichie's description in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, about Olanna struggling to get relief food in the refugee camps.

Nwankwo spends his days in search of relief food-rice, beans, and *garri*. Although the food he gets is for two families that include more than ten children, the sight of a hungry and ragged crowd watching him fill his boot makes him feel guilty, a privileged man using his personal contacts to jump the queue and get preferential treatment. (Ugochukwu 237)

It could be surmised that the Biafran War started because of differences between ethnic groups who were fighting for maximum resource capture. Civil wars emerge out of conflicts for identity rather than for any other reason. In a country catering to heterogeneous population, civil wars may arise out of a cumulative effect of ethnicity and religion, for example: the Biafran – Nigerian war (1969 – 70) (also the focus area of the present chapter), the Chechnya War (1994 – present times), Bosnia, Rwanda, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan civil wars, etc. In ethnic wars, the role of identity is of utmost significance:

Such wars have been understood as fights over differences that cannot be resolved any other way: fundamental questions of ideology, identity, and creed. A disputed border can be redrawn; not so an ethnic grudge. In the last two decades, identity has become the preferred explanation for persistent conflicts around the world, from Chechnya to Armenia and Azerbaijan to cleavages between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. (Christia n. pag.)

Thus, civil wars may or may not be stirred by ethnicity, religion or other markers of identity but power remains the main trigger in civil wars of multi ethnic territories. The question arises as to how such ethnically triggered wars are to be prevented so that peace could be restored.

As far as the number of deaths in a civil war is concerned, critics have found out the irregularities noticed by the codes of war data sets. Since 1000 is the death toll which demarcates a civil war from any other form of violence, there are findings about

civilian genocides apart from the civil war tools. Nicholas Sambanis highlights the difference between a civil war and acts of massacre committed during the phases of peace. He quotes an instance from the Cambodian Civil War which witnessed a peaceful gap from 1976 to 1977, there was no trace of a war yet mass killings of civilians took place during this one year phase. Also it is a possibility that the civilian massacre might lead to a situation where civil war would be triggered due to inflammation of petty conflicts (823). Stremlau in his book *International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-70*, documents the Nigerian civil war as a result of the widespread political – economic corruption, labour unrest, failure of federal system, palsied judiciary and failed public administrative system. Moreover the coup de-tat of 1966, January 15, by Igbo Majors, gave an ethnic colouring to this whole uprising (33). In September 1966, Gowon convened a constitutional conference in Lagos which failed to sort out the ethnic difference between the west and the north but resulted in widespread Igbo violence. He further quotes that an open hostility to general Ironsi was exhibited by mass Igbo genocide:

On what is now referred to in Nigeria as “Black Thursday”, Sept. 29, 1966, mob violence broke out against the tens of thousands of Igbos who until then had been shopkeepers, civil servants and service workers throughout the North. Estimates to the number of deaths range from 5000 to 50,000 and the number of Ibos who subsequently returned home as refugees from around the federation may have ranged from 700,000 to 2,000,000. (38)

Thus, the artistic deftness of Adichie in portraying harsh war time realities is laudable and at the same time it compels the readers to delve deep into the causes of the ethnic violence which engulfed a majority of Igbo population in the late sixties. Though much has been written on the Biafran crises, Adichie presents the theme very carefully and achieves a distinctive position as a war narrative writer:

When one considers the preponderance of works on the subject of Nigerian civil war, it is surprising to see a novel that probes this over trodden path with deft freshness, and that is a compelling read. It is a mark of Adichie’s remarkable adroitness that she is able to handle the historical truths of the brutalities and effects of the war without squeamishness or overt melodrama. The issues of causes and effects

are surveyed within the ambits of their impacts on the day-to-day existence of the characters. (Ojinmah 4)

As highlighted in *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and a short story entitled 'Ghosts', from *The Thing Around your Neck*, the civil war of Nigeria did not remain a private affair since the world powers were involved in supplying the warring parties with heavy artillery, fighter planes food supplies and medical aid. It is true that the interference of power alliances with Nigerian political instability prolonged the civil war :

The ability of international actors to move supplies into Biafra across the blockade allowed the embattled state to survive for much longer than it would otherwise have done. (Falola and Heaton 178)

These works pinpoint the sufferings and losses of Igbo families who were uprooted from their houses and were made to live like refugees in infested camps. Ethnic colouring was given to the political ambitions that, later on flared destructive communal sentiments. Adichie represents the commoners through Ugwu, Kainene, Olanna, Odenigbo (*HYS*), and Ikenna Okora of 'Ghosts' who have been through the ordeals of civil war. Such common Igbo men and women either lost their families for the cause of Biafra or they were martyred by the federal troops. Some others who lived through the harrowing experiences of civil war tried to make meaning out of their wasted lives.

Hence Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie fulfills the promise of a true Igbo woman writer by presenting the civil war in the most realistic and apolitical manner as she wades through the emotional and mental trauma faced by millions of Nigerians during the explosive times of Nigeria's post independence years. Chinua Achebe's praises for Adichie on the success of *Half Of A Yellow Sun* is befitting to the glory she has brought to her country and countrymen:

We do not usually associate wisdom with beginners, but here is a new writer endowed with the gift of ancient story tellers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie knows what is at stake , and what to do about it... She is fearless, or she would not have taken on the intimidating horror of Nigeria's civil war. Adichie came almost fully made. (Birnbaum n.pag.)

Through this chapter one comes to know the bitter truths about developing countries like Nigeria where existence of multi-ethnic groups makes it a hot bed of politics and violence and also the fact these Commonwealth countries are still facing the postcolonial trauma and thus violence remains an inevitable weapon in capturing authority. Sometimes, Adichie talks about the interference of international powers in misguiding the fighting citizens and in this way imperial interference continues in one way or the other. Adichie portrays the true realities in the most audacious manner, thus cutting an edge above the rest of the contemporary writers.

The discourse of violence in the societies of the third world countries like Nigeria could also be viewed in the light of gender and sexual violence. So the the next chapter examines the gendered perspective of violence and how the reversal of gender dichotomies are achieved by Adichie's women characters, in her selected narratives.

Endnotes:

1. *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aime Cesaire.
2. Famous lines by Martin Luther King Jr. "Violence begets Violence".
3. Ethnogenesis refers to the process of formation or emergence of ethnic groups.
4. Herodotus – ancient Greek historian who lived between 484 BC – 425 BC.
5. Thomas Hylland Eriksen's 'Theory of Ethnicity' as already discussed in J. Hutchinson and A.D. Smith's edited work – *Oxford Readers : Ethnicity* (Oxford 1996)
6. Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013), South African President (1994 – 1999), anti apartheid revolutionary, politician, activist, lawyer and philanthropist.
7. Tawafa Balewa (1912 – 1966), the only prime minister of an independent Nigeria and an active Nigerian politician.
8. Collective Conscience: term was introduced by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim in his *Division of Labour in Society* in 1893 for the set of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes which operate as a unifying force within society).

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Chapter 3

A Reversal of Dichotomy: Feminist Perspectives in Adichie's Fiction

CHAPTER - 3

The Reversal of Dichotomy: Feminist Perspectives in Adichie's Fiction

The fictional world of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is not only coloured by the nationalist ideas for Biafra but there are significant strands of feminist perspectives in her novels and short stories that have established her as a coming of age feminist writer among the contemporary Nigerian writers. Feminism is an umbrella term which includes manifold movements and ideologies aimed at achieving equality in cultural, socio-economic and political arenas for women (Beasley 3). The feminist movements across the globe have brought about great historical changes pertaining to the position of women vis-à-vis men. Etymologically the term feminism is derived from *feminisme* (Fr.) which was used by Charles Fourier in 1837. However, the word finds its origin from the Latin term, *femininus* which means pertaining to women (Kruseman 31). While feminism is innate to all the global societies but as far as Africa is concerned, feminism is very recent and has certain indigenous nuances specific to the African societies. The feminist movement gained prominence not only in the field of music, cinema, theatre, visual arts, architecture, etc. but, the feminist literature became a highly sought literary trend amongst the writers around the world. During the wave of feminism, fictional and non-fictional works were produced by the writers, in which attempts were made to reappraise the academic and scholarly contributions made by women in the past decades (Blaine et. al. vii). In this way, the obliterated past of women philosophers and writers not only gained prominence but also became the holy canons of the feminist movements.

Feminism is an ideology that was governed by the distinctive indigenous approaches from country to country. For example, the French feminism was known for its boldness owing to the contributions of Simon de Beauvoir, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, etc. French feminist and philosopher Simon de Beauvoir¹ came out in open protest against subjugation of women throughout the world in conventional societies. *The Second Sex* which was initially published in French is based on the existentialist perspective of feminism. Beauvoir believed that a woman is born as a free individual but the society makes her 'the other' or the marginalized sex. Beauvoir states in , *The*

Second Sex, that since times immemorial, men have captured the “concrete powers” and with the help of biased laws and societal codes have forced a dependent status on women, thus establishing her as the “Other” (171). At this juncture, “the Other” is left with two choices, i.e. either to accept the man as her possessor and destroyer or if she fails to submit to his whims, the woman remains a stranger (171), altogether. Thus, history has reduced womankind to a mere dependent who ceases to exist when she is not in conformity with the superior being i.e. the man. Several ways have been devised by the patriarchal society as a slave and an inferior being and even theological texts have towed down the unfortunate lines of patriarchy to put down women. The writer exposes the religious prejudice against women when she talks about the ‘Legend of Genesis’, which has become a popular belief among the Christians worldwide. The myth mentions that God, deliberately created Eve, the first woman, out of the flanks of Adam and her role was only to recreate Adam, hence she was a dependent by birth. While commenting on the biased description about the creation of woman, de Beauvoir states:

She was destined by Him for man; it was to rescue Adam from loneliness that He gave her to him, in her mate was her origin and purpose; she was his complement in the order of the inessential. Thus she appeared in the guise of privileged prey. (173)

So, the general belief, that woman is an inferior being and is meant only for recreation of her male counterpart, has existed from the time of the formulation of religious beliefs. The inequality and the biased treatment that women have faced in patriarchal societies have been drawn from the religious canons and the very origin of these ideas makes them unquestionable. Through this text, Beauvoir questions not only the myth of origin of woman but also states that the complete obliteration of women from ‘virile myths’, ‘poetry’ or ‘religion’ and their asymmetrical position vis a vis men, etc. (174), have been concocted by male dominated societies. At the same time, she is not turning a deaf ear to some co-existing societies during the twentieth century that have given women, prominent and respectable places. For example, the Communist writers like Aragon in France and Vittorini from Italy have represented women in a positive perspective and it is here that Beauvoir is hopeful that these writings will not only aid in reversing the myth of the woman but would encourage women folk to assert their position equivalent to men (174).

Similarly, Elaine Showalter², in America, emphasized on developing a feminist critique in literature and called it gynocriticism. The way in which she divides the historicity of women's literature into the feminine phase, the feminist phase and the female phase, shows the evolution of women's writings from the era of protest towards the age of female experience as an independent art. In her essay, "Towards A Feminist Poetics" she stresses upon the fact that gynocriticism is free from the bondages of sexism and gender strife:

In contrast to (an) angry or loving fixation on male literature, the program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture. (131)

Hence, in America, feminist critique was different from the French feminist ideology because the former was meant to preserve the 'female aspect' of the literature written by women, while the latter encouraged bold writings by women. It also unearthed several anonymous women writers who were helpful in breaking new dawns in the field of women's writing.

While these social movements gained sympathy in the European or American white societies, a distinct ideology was deemed necessary for the African women. These societies had, for long, been benefitted by an independent status and so the European connotation of feminism appeared alien to the black women. So, in Africa, feminists argued for a separate ideology for black women because they could not relate to the ideas propagated by the white feminists.

African feminism gave voice to the colonized and doubly oppressed black woman, who remained oblivious of their rights since times immemorial. It also helped in realizing the challenges black women face in the societies of the African subcontinent and those women of African descent, who have become a part of the global Diaspora. There are subtle differences between feminist approaches within Africa too because

of multi-cultural regions within the continent. A critic elucidates possible reasons for such differences:

For African women, feminism is very dependent on a temporal scale shaped by political eras. These eras are pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial Africa. These eras are highly dissimilar across African countries because of the histories of the liberation struggles are different for each country. The result of this is that, the definitions and experiences of feminism are different from region to region within Africa. (Goredema 34)

Minna Salami traces the origin of feminism in Africa in a very interesting manner. She begins with the description of first cradle of feminism by the efforts of Adelaide Casely-Hayford (1868-1960) in Sierra Leone, to Charlotte Maxeke's Bantu Women's League in 1918 in South Africa to Huda Sharaawi who founded the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923. African feminist movement slowly and gradually dispersed throughout the continent and women leaders from majority of the African countries came forward and fought against colonial rule as well as patriarchal set up of their societies. But the international recognition came only after the declaration of UN decade for Women 1975 to 1985 and African feminism branched out as a socio-literary discourse around the world. In the present scenario African feminist writers like Bell Hooks, Zora Neal, Buchi Emecheta, Leymah Gbowee, Joyce Banda, Simphiwe Dana, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and many firebrands have contributed towards the cause of socio-economic and cultural equality for women of colour. Bell Hooks, especially is vocal about the worthlessness of white feminist movements in securing an equal status for black women because for the women of colour, prejudice of colour and race is a major hindrance. She says:

Women in lower class and poor groups, particularly those who are non-white, would not have defined women's liberation as women gaining social equality with men since they are continually reminded in their everyday lives that all women do not share a common social status. (xvi)

For women in Black societies, simply being a feminist firebrand is not enough because the deep rooted sense of colonialism and slavery makes them different from

the white feminists. Being women could mean one thing, but being a black woman is nothing short of double colonization. Salami is blunt in saying that even in the twenty-first century women are being marginalized at every step and these writers are contributing in re-structuring the female narratives and forming a woman's point of view in the global societies. She highlights a difference between the African Feminism and the rest:

While the term 'feminism' is an import to Africa (as all English words are), the concept of opposing patriarchy, the *raison d'être* of feminism if you like, is not foreign. Africa has some of the oldest civilizations in the world so while they didn't always call it feminism (the noun) as far back as we can trace we know that there were women who were feminist (the adjective) and who found ways of opposing patriarchy. Feminism is an important part of African women's "herstory". (n.pag.)

While discussing feminism in Africa one cannot ignore the term 'Womanism' which was coined by Alice Walker in her 1979 short story "Coming Apart" and this term applies to the metamorphosis a suffering woman undergoes as she rises up courageous, audacious and bold from the shackles of society as well the patriarchs. Walker later used the term 'womanist' in her work *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* and explained the basic distinction between womanism and feminism by highlighting that womanism raised issues not only related to gender inequality but also colour and race based oppressions, faced largely by the African womenfolk. Womanism has an ingrained opposition towards racial and gender discrimination. It deals with the daily monotonous challenges a woman faces in her life but womanism aims to eradicate all social inequalities. Walker also generates a whole new discourse in which being an African woman and being an artist creates a very paradoxical situation for a woman because of the double standards of the black society which is the result of prejudiced folklore, oral tradition and the pre-existing literature which runs down African women. In this way she not only raised issues of dual colonization of black women but also the way they are marginalized and forgotten by the male dominant African societies:

Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, "the mule of the world," because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else- everyone else- refused to carry.

We have also been called “Matriarchs,” “Superwomen,” and “Mean and Evil Bitches.” When we have pleaded for understanding, our character has been distorted; when we have asked for simple caring, we have been handed empty inspirational appellations, then stuck in the farthest corner. When we have asked for love, we have been given children. In short, even our plainer gifts, our labors of fidelity and love, have been knocked down our throats. To be an artist and a black woman, even today, lowers our status in many respects, rather than raises it: and yet, artists we will be. (Walker 237)

Thus, Walker brings forth all the subtle ways in which women were oppressed by the society and the family and were not given pedestals to stand up and speak out their sensitive minds. She also defends the cause of a black woman as a writer and an artist.

Womanism became innate to the early Feminist Movements because the demand for the woman’s suffrage was limited to the middle class white women only and it largely ignored the needs of the women of colour and different race altogether (Hogan n. pag.). Scholars brought out their Womanist experiences and that is how the movement gained agility and worldwide academic interest only later to become a perspective for social change. For instance, Clenora Hudson-Weems propounded ‘Africana Womanism’, a feminist ideology for women of African diaspora because she felt that the position of the African women is different from their white counterparts in foreign countries. So her theory focused on the identical needs, desires, challenges and experiences of African women around the world and there was a need for a separate movement for black women:

There is a general consensus in the Africana community that the feminist movement, by and large, is the White woman’s movement for two reason. First, the Africana woman does not see the man as her primary enemy as does the White feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her White male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as White men have had to oppress White women. (Hudson-Weems 25)

Similarly, Barbara Smith, in her path breaking essay “Towards a Black Feminist Criticism,” states the necessity for a black feminist critique. The white critics are oblivious of the socio-cultural milieu of black women, so they are unable to put forth a black feminist criticism, but the historical fact, that the whites have constantly oppressed black women, runs as an under current (1). Over the years, Black women writers were ignored due to the lack of support and encouragement given to the scholars who indulged in Black feminist theory. Moreover, when a few texts written by Black women were studied, the impact of the sexual and racial politics was largely ignored. She says:

A Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers is an absolute necessity. (3)

According to these writers, the white women bear the brunt of patriarchal societies but the condition worsens as one moves from the West towards the East and one cannot compare the experiences of the black women with the European women. In *The Second Sex*, comparative instances of master-slave, negro-woman, etc. have been drawn to depict the morbid social position of women in general. The woman is revealed not only as the other but master-slave duality and the situation of a Negro is also used as trope to highlight gender insensitivity of patriarchal society:

But there are deep similarities between the situation of a woman and that of the Negro. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism, and the former master class wishes to ‘keep them in their place’- that is, the place chosen for them. In both cases the former masters lavish more or less sincere eulogies, either on the virtues of ‘the good Negro’ with his dormant, childish, merry soul- the submissive Negro- or on the merits of the woman who is ‘truly feminine’- that is , frivolous, infantile, irresponsible-the submissive woman. (Beauvoir 23,24)

True enough, the social status of women is subjugated and suffocated in a worse manner in African and Asian countries. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a twenty-first century Nigerian woman writer aggressively portrays her women characters and

makes them black harbingers of social change. Her women characters are not only black women struggling for equality of gender in their native societies but they are also precursors of equality of race and colour. The present chapter is an attempt to evaluate and assess the feminist perspective in the literary corpus of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Being a Nigerian, Adichie has witnessed a dual colonization in Igbo societies and therefore, she sensitively portrays the doubly colonized women in her native land as well as those who have moved to America in quest of better future prospects. Adichie depicts the contemporary scenario where, women despite being educated and belonging to the elite strata of society face tortures at the hands of their partners or husbands. Hence women become the *alterite*³ or the other and men remain the self⁴. Such marginalization of women takes place through violence, aggression and mental subjugation by men in patriarchal societies, and Adichie's protagonists scuttle their way out from violence and battering, adultery and deception.. Thus, there is a reversal of dichotomies and the subjugated ones emerge powerful and resilient.

Reversal of Dichotomies in Adichie's narratives could be traced on three levels, as far as the man woman relationships are concerned. In the first tier, the battered wife, Beatrice of *Purple Hibiscus* features initially as a victim of domestic violence but later she turns out to be an avenger of all the wrongs done to her by Eugene, her husband, thus leading to a reversal of victim/victimizer duality. In the second tier, adulterous couples like Olanna – Odenigbo and Kainene-Richard from *Half Of A Yellow Sun* stand with their brand of being a one-time cheater. Adichie here adds novelty to such situation by describing how for Odenigbo's deception, his partner Olanna sleeps with her sister's white lover Richard and denies her victimhood. In the third and the final tier, experimental lovers like Obinze and Ifemelu in *Americanah* enjoy a no-strings attached relationship but here the woman wields a power and control over her sexual preferences, which is untraditional as well as defiant. Thus, Adichie's women characters are revenge seeking women, who do not believe in quiet weeping but they seek justice and equality in the patriarchal society of Nigeria. The first reversal of dichotomy happens in *Purple Hibiscus*, where the entire narrative reeks in gender based violence.

Gender based violence widely affects and haunts the domestic set ups of developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Middle East. In her article Takiwaa

Manuh mentions that, “Violence is one very important discriminatory practice and unequal relations women in Africa face” (n.pag.). Gender based violence is an assault directed towards an individual on the basis of gender. It not only poses a breach of fundamental rights of a person but also widens the gap of inequality between men and women and “gender based violence and violence against women are often used interchangeably as most gender based violence is inflicted by men on women and girls” (n. pag.).

In a paper entitled “Domestic Violence and the Law in Africa”, Burill et. al. highlight that domestic violence has been occurring in African hearths since ages and due to rigid socio-domestic and political systems, “families themselves have often been the site of violent coercion”(1). They further comment on the United Nations WHO study 2005 that physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence, controlling behavior etc. could be the wider categories of violence against women and not just African countries but urban global centers like Japan also has witnessed one or the other form of domestic violence :

The wide variation in these findings suggest that intimate partner violence is not an unchanging human propensity but rather produced by historically contingent factors including colonialism poverty, cultural beliefs and barriers to education. (4)

While according to the conventional norms of partner violence, it is the woman who suffers, but the twenty first century has witnessed male victims as well. Johnson and Ferraro state :

Control, the second promising theme is most visible in the feminist literature, which has argued that partner violence is primarily a problem of men using violence to maintain control over “their women”, a control to which they feel they are entitled and that is supported by patriarchal culture. (949)

However on the contrary there are women who practice control to overpower their male counterparts and violence too comes as a handy aid for such aggressive women. In the post modern, post colonial societies, gender violence is not necessarily perpetrated by the male counterpart. While Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie portrays some stereotypically battered women characters, her male protagonists are tropes of

Suzanne Steinmetz's⁵ "battered husbands (500), especially when the female characters seek retribution. Similarly, Michael P. Johnson highlights that an anti feminist move was noticed with Steinmetz's article on 'violent women' which explored an anti-thesis of the twenty first century male/female dichotomy. And as far as the intimate partner violence is concerned, only one is categorized under "domestic violence". The three types of intimate partner violence are (1) intimate terrorism (2) violent resistance (3) situational couple violence etc. Making generalizations about domestic violence from biased samples without distinguishing between the types of violence, often lead to serious misconceptions that intimate partner violence and domestic violence are identical and only women are victimised in specific ethnic groups (Johnson 1126 – 1130).

Gender violence has always been the first and foremost methods of suppressing women physically. When one moves from Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) to *Half Of A Yellow Sun* (2006), the first decade of Nigeria's independence flashes in the mind. The turmoil is domestic in the first novel while it takes a national status in the latter. Also one sees a mixture of post independence ordeals in the twelve stories of *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and the country narrative takes a leap in *Americanah* (2013) where Nigerians perform on the global centre stage-exiled, uprooted and isolated in search of their great American dream. In Adichie's literary corpus, the dichotomies are displayed first and then the plot boils down to a reversal of stereotyped roles - the victim becomes the victimizer, the son becomes mature before age, the slave (houseboy) becomes the actor – narrator of the civil war documentation and a wife avenges her husband's adultery by committing a similar act. Moreover, *coup de tat* is a strong metaphor used by the writer to signify a reversal of dualities and a resurgence of novelty, hope and light.

Gender based violence runs deep in the story of *Purple Hibiscus* where a tyrannical father Eugene Achike is a Christian convert (from Igbo) who has abandoned all ties with his staunch pagan father Papa Nnukwu for he has refused a Christian conversion. Achike, though an upright and honest editor of a newspaper *The Standard* behaves otherwise in his house. He often comes before the readers through the looking glass of his fifteen year old daughter Kambili, who narrates the horrendous acts of violence committed by him. The text of *Purple Hibiscus* is interspersed with violence and the very first instance of violence in *Purple Hibiscus* occurs when post lunch, Eugene

beats Beatrice for showing reluctance to visit Fr. Benedict, thus leading to her miscarriage. Kambili, describes the violent attacks on her mother:

..... when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hard carved room door. I imagined the door had gotten stuck and Papa was trying to open it. (32)

Minutes later the children see blood on the floor as if "someone had carried a leaking jar of red water colour all the way downstairs (33). This was not the only occasion when he had beaten Beatrice for committing 'sin' because it is narrated that she had miscarried about eight other times due to the violent attacks by Eugene.

If one traces the origin Eugene's violent behaviour could be attributed to two types of violence: gender violence and cultural violence. Gender violence, according to Amobi Linus Illika, is a recurrent and major issue related to Nigerian women of Igbo origin. Moreover, the Nigeria National Reproductive Health Policy has enlisted gender based violence as one of the major health issues of Igbo women. She further highlights that it includes, "hitting, slapping, kicking and beating and psychological abuse like constant belittling, intimidation, humiliation and coercive sex" (78), and also includes controlling a woman's movements and restricting her access to resources. Since the societal constitutions and traditions interfere with the perception of gender violence, the global charters may or may not hold significance at a local Igbo town of Nigeria.

Another detrimental factor resulting in sustenance and enhancement of partner violence is the attitude of the victim, where due to cultural conditioning, the victim does not report such instances to law authorities. The role of Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* is largely governed by social norms of timid acceptance of any partner violence rendered by her husband. In one of the surveys done on the married Igbo women, Illika exposes the fragile nature of women's rights protection within the Igbo household:

The women experienced verbal, physical and psychological violence exhibited in scolding and abuses, beating, forced and non-consensual sex and sending the woman out of the marriage home to her parents. (81)

Kambili and Jaja are not spared either. Each time an inadvertent and petty violation of religious rules and beliefs is committed by them, their 'ruthless patriarch' performs

waywardness. Eugene Achike beats his daughter for eating some cereal along with Panadol, a medicine for cramps:

He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulders. Then Mama raised her hand as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by a puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse. I put the bowl down just as the belt landed on my back.
(PH 102)

Life in Eugene's big mansion is luxurious but stifling as a dual colonization is being injected into the Igbo family where the patriarch behaves like his white Master and forces his kin to follow a new religious order with utmost discipline and piety. The instance of 'Jaja's deformed finger' (154) also redirects one's attention to the heartlessness of a father who in a frenzy of religious superiority, behaves inhumanly with his own son which according to Ogwude is nothing less of a "Cultural Hostility" (111). Michael P. Johnson in one of his articles supports the opinion of an anonymous reviewer that "there are harmful effects of psychological abuse... caustic, cruel forms of communication are corrosive to relationships and to personal well being (1130).

In an article published by Women's Health and Action Research Center (WHARC) , Illika mentions that after several declarations , the official declaration on the elimination of violence against women was passed, which was followed by the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Also the Beijing Declaration (ICPC) and the African Charter on Human Rights specifically have urged member countries to protect the rights of women. Ironically, the paradox is that Nigeria is a signatory to most of these pacts but "violence against women continues to be pervasive among the Igbo Ethnic group and in other part of Nigeria" (78).

Gender violence as portrayed and defined by Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* is an instance where the violence from parents is perpetrated in the children. In "Do Child Abuse and Interparental Violence Lead to Adulthood Family Violence", Heyman and Slep echo the cyclic nature or transgenerational transmission of violence⁷ wherein the victimized children grow up to victimize others. Children in Achike household are only in their adolescent phase, yet they weigh and measure every act, every word,

every thought in terms of sins and confessions. This reaches a climax when Achike comes to know that Jaja and Kambili have slept in their grandfather's house in Nsukka and so he performs a cleansing ritual on them for coming in contact with their heathen grandfather:

He lowered the kettle into the tub and tilted it toward my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly as he were conducting an experiment...the pain of contact was so pure, so scalding that I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed (194)

Achike later justifies this punishment by narrating to Kambili how once when he committed a sin against his own body, the 'good father' at St. Gregory's soaked his hands in hot boiling water to purify him (196). Beatrice, the mother figure in *Purple Hibiscus* is a weak, timid and submissive wife who feels indebted to Eugene for his monogamous attitude. She is doubly colonized since she is the spouse of a post independence Nigerian Christian zealot who has pushed his ethnic roots into the background and has portrayed himself as a Christian. Illika categorically holds religion responsible for woman subjugation in marriage and she mentions instances from the Holy Bible and other church documents⁸. The Pauline discussion on marriage and the code of canon law explicitly forbids divorce or exit from marriage. Illika states :

There is a cultural belief that a husband is the glory of a woman. An unmarried or divorced woman is regarded as a failure and a 'free woman' who lacks esteem and male protection. (86)

One can also associate Eugene's puritanical nature with his misbehavior with Beatrice and his children. Because Eugene is a staunch Christian so, his wife-battering are directly governed by the status of women prescribed in the Holy Bible. The 'Myth of Genesis' specifies that the wife is inferior and is only meant to relieve her husband's boredom:

He hopes to fulfill himself as a being by carnally possessing a being, but at the same time confirming his sense of freedom through the docility of a free person. No man would consent to be a woman, but every man wants women to exist. (Beauvoir 173)

Beatrice is a living example of a Christianized wife who is the “privileged prey” (173) and “naturally submissive” (173) and an obedient inferior being who assists Eugene in fulfilling his responsibility as a Christian pastor.

A revolt creeps in the disciplined and Christianized household of Eugene Achike when his adolescent children go to Nsukka to spend a vacation at their paternal aunt Ifeoma. Ifeoma is educated but has regard for her Igbo roots. Being a widow, though it is difficult for her to take care of her three children – Amaka, Chima and Obiora, yet she fulfils her duties as a daughter too by tending to Papa Nnukwu. It is Ifeoma who emerges as a symbol of deliverance for Jaja and Kambili and they get influenced by their aunt’s fearless demeanour and revolutionary thinking. Her children breathe in the air of emancipation unlike Jaja and Kambili. Their individual expression, feeling of sharing and joys in meagre living make Jaja and Kambili question the ways of their own house on Palm Sunday and Jaja rebels by refusing to perform the Eucharist. This rebellion is subsequent to Kambili’s and Jaja’s visit to Ifeoma’s house in Nsukka. They experience a transformation deep within, after interacting with their cousins. Kambili recollects:

Jaja’s defiance seemed to me now like Auntie Ifeoma’s experimental *Purple Hibiscus* a different kind of freedom from the one crowds wavering green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do. (10).

This defiance culminates into responsibility which Jaja shoulders for his mother and sister and confesses his role in his father’s murder while actually it was Beatrice who had administered poison into Eugene’s tea with Sisi, the housemaid’s assistance.

Man woman relationship in *Purple Hibiscus* is majorly depicted by Eugene Achike and his wife Beatrice. The marital bond is specked with gender violence, display of tyrannical male behavior with an air of religious purity thus leaving little space for Beatrice to breathe. Here not only the man versus woman dichotomy is present but one also observes that the tyrants versus victim and religious versus sin, etc. dualities are pervading the plot. The inferior position in such dualities is not only held by Beatrice but her two innocent children Jaja and Kambili are also crushed under their over bearing father. Eugene treats his children in the same way he was treated by religious pastors at St. Gregorys (196). For a religious zealot like Achike, the

domestic world is ruled by the twin concepts of sin and punishment. Also one finds a sub-surface imagery of colonial victimization through religious conclusion and indoctrination of the natives so that the native becomes a white man personified in black skin.

During the climax when this dichotomy is reversed, it is Ifeoma, Eugene's self-willed and upright sister who stands for freedom and hope, while Eugene sinks in violence and self destruction. It is Ifeoma who is the bringer of light and life in the suffocated lives of Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja. Also, the role of the young priest Father Amadi in ushering optimism and love in Kambili's life needs to be taken note of. It is Father Amadi who teaches her the beauty of freedom and helps her to come out of her introvert behavior. He not only coaxes her into wearing shorts and lipstick without seeking her father's permission but also takes her to get her hair braided (238). Moreover, he is concerned about her when she gets hospitalized after Eugene kicked her recklessly. Amaka, her cousin mentions Father Amadi's concern for Kambili in following words :

You're different. I've never heard him talk about anyone like that. He said you never laugh. How shy you are although he knows there's a lot going in your head. He insisted on driving Mom to enough to see you. I told him he sounded like a person whose wife was sick. (220)

Thus, Ifeoma and Father Amadi bring a real light into the lives of Beatrice and her two children. The plot lucidly brings forth the progression of the psychological maturity of Jaja and Kambili from blind believing and following their father to individuals who can think with prudence about the religious fanaticism practiced in their home. Daria Tunca mentions that Kambili is not only the narrator of the story but she is the "internal focaliser" for most of the events, her devotion towards her father Eugene is so intense that it is his points of view which are slipped into Kambili's direct speeches (123, 124). But this devotion suffers a setback after Papa Nnukwu's demise and Kambili revolts against her father by openly rushing to the floor to protect the torn pieces of Papa Nnukwu's portrait (210). It is at Nsukka that Jaja sees the unusual purple hibiscus bred by a botanist friend of Ifeoma and he feels that there is a hope and possibility of creating something new. Jaja's deformed little finger reminds the readers of the torture which his father inflicted on him in a frenzy

of religious superiority but at Nsukka he vents out that pain by sharing it with Auntie Ifeoma :

When he was ten, he had missed two questions on his Catechism test and was not named the best in his first Holy Communion class. Papa took him upstairs and locked the door. Jaja came out in tears supporting his left hand with his right, and Papa drove him to St. Agnes hospital. (145)

He longs for freedom in Enugu so he plants the stalks of purple hibiscus in the garden. Thus he returns home with an insight and awakened consciousness and as the purple hibiscus flowers blossom, his rebellion too matures and becomes visible.

Similarly Papa Nnukwu, the aged father is also an anti thesis of Achike's Christian fanaticism as the former stands by his Igbo rituals, practices and cultural roots while the latter constantly forces him to convert. Kambili and Jaja have never known much of their grandfather all through their growing years because their father considered it sinful for them to spend time with a pagan. Slowly both of them realize that it is not sinful to take care of an old grandparent and living in meager resources too could make life beautiful. When the grandchildren go to see Papa Nnukwu at Nsukka there is a strange quietude which prevails between their short monosyllabic talk. Eugene does not even allow his children to eat or drink with his pagan father and papa Nnukwu is courageous enough to confront them at their first meeting:

Eji Okwu ? I know your father will not let you eat here because I offer food to the ancestors but soft drinks also? Do I not buy that from the store as everyone else does? (66)

Papa Nnukwu suffers every minute because his only son has abandoned him due to his refusal for conversion. He has lived for his traditional Igbo values and has to suffer for his audacity. He confesses, "My son owns a house that can fit in everyman in Abba, and yet many times I have nothing to put on my plate" (83). Despite this suffering , the tormentor fails to become all pervading in the end and the victims (Beatrice, Jaja, Kambili and Papa Nnukwu) emerge victorious. Eugene's wife decides to poison him finally when once again he breaks the Bible table on her pregnant belly and she miscarries for the ninth time. She shares this incident with Ifeoma and Kambili :

You know that small table where we keep the family Bible? Your father broke it on my belly ... My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it. (248)

A mother overpowers a wife and tyranny comes to a violent end while in the background one finds blooming of the unusual purple hibiscus flowers in Eugene's garden which are no wonder the tropes of rebellion and ultimately Jaja surrenders to the police for killing his father. Purple hibiscus, the eponymous flower is also symbolic of the reversal of dichotomy since the tortured, subjugated and marginalized emerge on the forefront and display their resilience. It is interesting to note that in the epilogue one gets to know that soon Jaja will be released from the prison and they are hopeful about the future. Also the new Steward Celestine gives an impression of a new beginning in Beatrice's life since Kambili mentions that "I have seen the way he looks at Mama sometimes ... and I know he wishes he could make her whole" (296). Hence the victims exhibit a special kind of resilience and courage as they work towards the betterment of their life, which was effaced with violence and aggression of a "Gothic Patriarch" (Mabura 206).

Thus if one divides the man-woman relationship in Adichie's narratives, into a three tier dichotomy, then the first tier is occupied by the basic conjugal relationship of Beatrice and Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*, which appears to be frayed and interspersed with abject aggression and violence. Here the man-woman belong to rich elite class and happen to be of same race and colour. Both Eugene and Beatrice are of Igbo-Christian descent from Nigeria, yet there is an incompatibility between them because of the dual-colonization. In a typical Christianized Igbo household, the winter takes the readers on a journey of abuse and injuries. But this dichotomy is reversed when the wife decides to kill her husband.

Maureen Amaka Azuike mentions that since Adichie's texts are replete with "psychopaths, rapists, religious fanatics and ruthless rulers" (81), her novel is a tool for self discovery of these victims and it acts as a balm for the tortured women. Eugene Achike is not the ideal Christian husband, instead he is a "ticking time bomb who regularly explodes on his poor family" (82). Beatrice's drastic action of murdering Eugene is the only way she could resort to because of the endless torture he inflicted on the family. Her attempt could be compared to the actions of abused

women in most of the radical African feminist texts⁹. Azuike also states instances from Nawal El Sadaawis's *Woman at Point Zero*, where Firdaus, the helpless victim kills the pimp who exploits her sexually and financially, but Firdaus is destroyed by her own society. Similar instance could be traced in Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures*, when Dikeledi and Kebonye castrate their abusers who also happen to be their husbands. Thus the radical African feminist texts are authored by women who can readily explore the dehumanizing situations that abused women undergo at the hands of their intimate partners or their husbands. Moreover they are 'quick to implore readers to examine the circumstances surrounding the murder' (83 – 85). Thus, Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* comes before the readers as a writer of radical African feminist text, who is aware of the agony and pain of thousands of Beatrices who are married to fanatics like Eugene and they silently undergo tortures only because they are afraid of their ethnic societies. Adichie not only justifies the murder of Eugene by Beatrice but also makes the readers hear the victim's version of the narrative.

With the second novel, *Half Of A Yellow Sun* (2006), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie delves into a war chronicle which takes the readers on a journey of 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil war, but that does not mean that *Half Of A Yellow Sun* is only besotted with war-time hungers, murders, rapes and communal violence. With this novel, Adichie unravels the second type or the second tier of man-woman relationship of lovers who have transcended the barriers of race, colour, nation and even adultery for the sake of their love. The twin sisters Olanna and Kainene are hypocrites, but their non-conformist attitude also carves a revolutionary out of them thus adding a romantic colour to the plot. In *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, the typical examples of Utopian couple are Olanna and Odenigbo and later on it is their conjugal love which stands the test of time. On the contrary, the older twin Kainene and her white lover Richard epitomize a no strings -attached-kind of relationship but theirs is a love across the barriers of race, class, colour and nation.

The novel belongs to these 'difficult daughters' (Bhattacharjee 100), who are a combination of idealism and sarcasm. But at the same time, their respective lovers Odenigbo and Richard are also responsible in taking the praxis forward. With the back drop of the Nigerian civil war, in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, these lovers too experience a rising and falling symphony of their love and commitment. Olanna, the

beautiful one, enters into a live-in relationship with her revolutionary lover Odenigbo, who teaches maths at the university, while Kainene, the unattractive and androgynous twin, who believes in a relationship sans responsibility, enters into a dalliance with a British expatriate, Richard. Such non-conventional women are truly the products of an empowered and independent Nigerian elitist society. They are tremendously different from Beatrice of *Purple Hibiscus* or their own mother for that matter. Though the twins are educated, independent and contemporarily modern, yet they witness the dualities of man-woman relationship.

For Olanna and Odenigbo, their love was ‘a relationship consumed in sips’ (HYS 36) because she was more than ready to live in with him but denied the idea of marriage:

They were too happy, precariously so, and she wanted to guard that bond; she feared that marriage would flatten it to a prosaic partnership. (65)

Olanna and her revolutionary lover share a passionate relationship which according to her was a love at first sight as she was moved by his anti-racist demeanor outside the ticket queue of the University theatre (36). But their “crackling magic in the air” love receives a setback when Odenigbo’s mother calls Olanna an “educated witch” who was not nursed by her own mother (101). However Odenigbo pacifies her by saying that she is the bi-product of post colonial world:

That is the only way she can understand it. The real tragedy of our post colonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather it is that the majority have not been given the tools to negotiate this new world. (129)

Olanna receives a shock when she comes to know that Odenigbo has slept with Amala the village girl who came along with Mama. Moreover she could not overcome this grief when the news of Amala’s pregnancy reaches her. For Odenigbo, this “brief rash moment of lust” (225) did not matter much, but for her it cleaved their blissful love bubble. Her decision to seek refuge in Aunt Ifeka’s house in Kano does not really help her from getting rid of this excruciating pain of Odenigbo’s reckless adultery but here Aunt Ifeka comes before the readers as a courageous woman who has surpassed the bitter truths of marriage. She not only consoles Olanna but also shares her experiences after marrying Uncle Mbaezi :

When your uncle first married me, I worried because I thought those women outside would come and displace me from my home. I now know that nothing he does will make my life change. My life will change only if I want it to change. (282)

Here Aunt Ifeka emerges as a feminist who though uneducated, yet believes that her body and her life are not tied to her husband like a yoked animal. Instead she exhorts Olanna that “you must never behave as if your life belongs to a man” (226). But Olanna follows Father Damian’s advice to forgive Odenigbo not for him but for her own self finally helps her in accepting human follies of her lover. Kivai Mboya mentions that such behavior of Olanna is ruled by the “humanist” approach of solving gender struggles. Women in Africa have revolted against patriarchy and oppression but their focus is on, “negotiation, compromise and reconciliation of power since the love of a good man and a stable home is a refugee for a woman” (15).

Olanna suffers a second “shattering of her dreams” (Bhattacharjee) when she learns of Amala’s pregnancy. This time, she retaliates by sleeping with Kainene’s white lover Richard and is unable to “regret the act itself” (293), because it had “redemptive significance” (293) thus finally freeing herself from the burden of Odenigbo’s adultery.

It is interesting to note that the beautiful and faithful Olanna retaliates by committing an adulterous act in order to avenge her lover’s momentary adultery. Such revolt gives a feminist colour to the plot of *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, since Olanna was aware that Odenigbo’s adultery is a way to subjugate her. Olanna’s feminist move is proved well by Akachi Ezeigbo comment that, “feminism is simply the awareness that women are subjugated and their determination to correct their subjugation” (24). Azuike furnishes this statement further by tracing the birth of second class treatment of women in Nigeria and holds the missionaries and western colonization responsible for their faulty educational system which compels the widening of gender gap (81). So Olanna’s act should not be taken as a sin but a retributory instance because it is through sleeping with Richard that she is able to shrug off the feeling of being sexually used and abused by her lover Odenigbo. Azuike interprets Olanna’s ‘act’ as a revolt against patriarchy that was intentionally committed on “the denial of her freedom and her right” (79). Thus Olanna not only stands for the rights of women

who were denied fidelity by their husbands but also fulfills the role of a radical feminist who knows how to avenge a man's adultery.

Olanna is a twenty-first century educated Igbo woman who happens to be one of the protagonists of *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and her relationship with Odenigbo is reduced to gender strife. During the course of the novel she too plays the role of a patriot of Biafra, hence could be compared with the society building heroines like, "Dora Akunijili, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Ndi Okereke Onyiuke and Oby Ezekweili", who have always worked towards the benefit of Nigeria at the same time upholding their self-esteem high (Azuike 78).

Olanna's behavior generates a feminist discourse since she is neither ready to subjugate herself under her lover's adulterous act nor she is the product of colonial missionary education where girls are trained to be good Christian wives. She believes in living on equal terms and conditions with Odenigbo. Her confession to Odenigbo is ruled by the feeling that "distrust would always lie between them" (HYS 244), but she realizes that life is too ephemeral after seeing grief stricken Edna (245), hence she forgives Odenigbo and moves back with him.

Similarly Olanna's fraternal twin Kainene is bold and sarcastic, as she does not shy away from nonchalantly pointing out towards her sister and herself as "meat" on her very first meeting with Richard, the white British researcher of Igbo – Ukwu art (59). Kainene's relationship with Richard is very unconventional since the latter is the "seeker" in this game of love after "hopelessly falling" in love with Kainene's "sardonic humour" (114). Richard's expatriate status in Nigeria brands him as a "lover and a modern day explorer of the Dark Continent" (78). Kainene sets the rules for this relationship and Richard is too 'love struck' to follow it. Here lovers are of different race, class and colour and many of Kainene's friends have posed objections for such an alliance. For instance Major Udodi discourages Kainene by pinpointing the infidelity of white men in following words:

The white men will poke and poke the women in the dark but they will never marry them. How can! They will never even take them out to a good place in public. But the women will continue to disgrace themselves and struggle for the men so they will get chicken feed

money and nonsense tea in a fancy tin. It's a new slavery. I'm telling you, a new slavery. (101)

When Kainene learns of Richard's adulterous stint with Olanna, she does not snap her ties with him, instead punishes him with her sardonic comments and silence. In this relationship, Kainene has an upper edge over Richard despite being a woman of black ethnicity which is quite evident when a remorseful Richard seeks apology from her but receives a replies which is monosyllabic and tense – "We will talk when I want to talk, Richard", and he behaves like a 'reprimanded child' (323). Kainene has been experimental in her relationships because one also gets to know about her intimacy with Col. Madu when he suddenly appears at her door after several months of his live burial news :

Kainene screamed. "Madu! Is this you ? *O gi di ife a?*" Richard was not sure who walked towards whom first, but Kainene and Madu were holding each other close, Kainene touching his arms and face with a tenderness that made Richard look away. (175)

Mabura highlights the non-conventional behavior of these 'Igbo twins' by calling them 'Gothic prototypes' who have gone against the prevailing Igbo social norms (215). Olanna and Kainene shock the readers by their easy going mannerisms on issues of adultery and infidelity. The former forgives Odenigbo and not only accepts his child with Amala but also decides to marry him, while Kainene forgives Richard because the impending civil war shocks her out of her loneliness and sarcasm. Sophia Ogwude in her article "History and Ideology in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Fiction" mentions that though, "Olanna is an apparent victim of Odenigbo's unfaithfulness but she rightly detects Amala as the actual victim ...who did not have a voice" and "who was so helpless" (256, 258). Such unconventional and unusual behavior is made acceptable by Adichie's humanist treatment of very critical situations of Olanna and Kainene's relationship with their respective lovers. Ogwude further praises Adichie's unusual treatment of stereotypes in human behaviour:

Human lapses are condoned in a humane stance and this in the final analysis proves redemptive for the offender as well as for the offended. In these aspects, the novelist tears down major age long crippling notions of what may or may not be acceptable in relationships. (121)

Infact, Olanna's momentary infidelity with her sister's white lover could be assessed as a challenge she poses before the patriarchal dominance since she feels empowered and free of agony after committing the act. Shalini Nandeshwaran in her article echoes Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's "womanist metamorphosis theory" (28) and mentions that the path to empowerment of Nigerian female characters could be paralleled to the metamorphic process of Womanist Theory¹⁰ where the young girl inherits womanism after a traumatic event or after an epiphany (29). This traumatic event could range from an experience of racism to rape or death in the family and through this change she (Nigerian girl) develops a sense of "agency" and "personhood". Such metamorphosis aims not only at attaining the stolen freedom but also at establishing a distinct identity. Nandeswaran further elaborates the idea of Ogunyemi's Womanist theory in assessing African women characters:

Black Women theorists like Gloria T. Hill, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith, authors of the feminist statement, reject pedestals and female subjugation to suggest that women should create their own identities. The idea moves beyond reclaiming stolen freedom but rather explores the idea of developing a sense of one's own distinct individuality. Power then is transmitted from the hands of the oppressor to the subject, which leads to agency and self identification. (24)

Olanna in *Half Of A Yellow Sun* represents the metamorphosed girl who achieves womanism only after she comes to terms with her lover Odenigbo's unfaithfulness. However momentary may be his "brief rash moment of lust" with Amala but it destroys her identity as a girl and she turns into a woman ready to assert her "identity" and "agency" on Odenigbo's patriarchal behavior. Thus with *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, the concept of womanism replaces the second wave feminist theory which talked about "the personal is political" (Canty 15) and opposed the subjugation and marginalization of women and it takes the gender discourse to a contemporary level where not only the gender dualities are challenged but this third wave feminism even highlights the presence of multiplicities and diversities in perspectives of women (Ogwude 156).

Olanna's twin Kainene appears to have already achieved the sense of identity and "agency" much before Olanna because she has been the less privileged one amongst

the two, but Kainene's "desire to participate in the public realm beyond 'her' cultural and social circle encourage 'her' towards an individual mobility and agency" (Nandeswaran 26). It is Kainene who is bold enough to expose a missionary father Marcel, a rapist as he molests and rapes "starving girls" before giving them small portions of crayfish (HYS 398). Her zest for serving Biafra by running refugee camps during the civil war itself establishes her fearlessness and empowerment. Finally, she goes on her last "Afia Attack" by crossing the enemy lines to procure food for her starving refugees at the camp, only never to return back (432).

Shalini Nanadeswaran pinpoints the reasons for evaluation of such aggressive and empowered third generation African women characters. According to her the "absentee mother" contributes to such a development of 'agency' and 'identity' in daughters more so because they witness their mother's inability to take action which collaborates with their own need for a change, thus rendering 'mobility' to young daughters (28). For Olanna and Kainene, their mother was perpetually lacking in maternal instincts, because Mrs. Ozobia does not shy away from presenting her girls as a bribe for procuring contracts from Chief Okonji (HYS 59), thus failing to fulfill the womanist idea of Alice Walker in *In Search of our Mothers Gardens*¹² which highlights that women should draw courage from their mothers and imitate their brave actions (Nandeswaran 27). Hence the unorthodox behaviour of these twin sisters suffuses the narrative of *Half of Yellow Sun* with revolt and romance. In Adichie's texts the reversal of dichotomy brings hope unlike the classicists of Grecian drama who believed that, "with disorder sets in the disturbance" (Dodds 36). Shreya Bhattacharjee aptly comments on the women characters of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:

She resists fundamentalist patriarchal dominations though such norms are implemented by her loved ones. And she speaks the truth though the truth be unspeakable. A single word definition is hard to contain it all but Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's women are indeed incorrigible. (93)

Kainene actually plays the role of a son for Ozobias and her responsibility was not limited to expansion of family business in port Hartcourt but she also brokers military contracts during the Biafran civil war and even as a relief worker in the Igbo refugee camp. Though, twins are considered as an abomination amongst Igbo, yet Olanna

and Kainene prove themselves as the real daughters of Biafra. For these patriots, the personal benefit has long been shelved away as they fight for the creation of a free and independent Biafra while, “Chief Ozobia and his wife flee Nigeria during the war and seek refuge in England while Kainene and Olanna stay and witness the horror and chaos that ensue” (Mabura 207).

Thus Olanna and Kainene not only reverse the dichotomy but only rise to the occasion as real heroines who are independent and emotionally strong vis a vis their relationship with their male counterparts. As they avenge their lovers for being infidel they are brazen and unremorseful. They are truly the coming of age progressive women and true harbingers of the third wave feminism. With Olanna and Kainene, Adichie shakes out the blind superstitions from the reader’s mind:

For minds trapped in primordial African values, the novelist could be considered iconoclastic but in reality, she is delightfully progressive. (Ogwude 122)

In the third tier of the reversed dichotomy in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s narratives, the uncommitted lovers find a place and the discourse largely looms over Ifemelu and Obinze of *Americanah* (2013). Such lovers though ardently exercise their free will but establish a bond with each other, which could be called ‘wantonness’ or ‘opportunistic relationship’ in ethical perspective. Ifemelu, the protagonist is a go-getter who comes to America in search of better prospects of education and a secure future. She is young and perceives that an entire ocean of opportunities lie before her. Through *Americanah* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie paints the dark and somber shades on the canvas of the American continent. Ifemelu arrives in the United States of America with dreams in her eyes but in due course of her struggle to survive in a foreign land, loses her identity as a Nigerian in the U.S.A.

Through Ifemelu, Adichie portrays a feminist character who has been the beloved of Obinze, Blaine, Curt and Fred but she refuses to wipe away her identity as a woman for the sake of procuring a husband. For, her identity lies in the kinky Afro hair and not the straight ones treated with chemicals and relaxers. She keeps on moving from one relationship to the other but without compromising with her identity as a Black woman.

Ifemelu comes before the readers as a woman full of defiance – against society, against men and she believes in living her life on her own terms. Her love encounters with men lack commitment, sometimes on their part and often, she fails to do so. Ifemelu's high school lover Obinze is the only one she keeps getting attracted to time and again. The flame of love between Ifemelu and Obinze keeps burning even when Ifemelu had shut herself from Obinze for fifteen years after the self-loathing act with the tennis coach for a sum of 100 dollars in Ardmere (*Americanah* 156). The instance which shudders her to guilt and sinfulness indicates that she is not a woman of frivolous character but was too naïve and unaware of the ways of a foreign country. Besides, the burden of her diminishing accounts made her vulnerable and she loses herself and her integrity and could not have enough courage to face Obinze afterwards. The narrator aptly describes her mental state after the Ardmere episode:

She walked to the train, feeling heavy and slow, her mind choked with mud, and seated by the window, she began to cry, she felt like a small ball, adrift and alone. The world was a big, big place and she was so tiny, so insignificant, rattling around emptily. Back in her apartment, she washed her hands with water so hot that it scalded her fingers and a small soft welt flowered on her thumb She would never again wear those clothes, never even touch them. (154)

Ifemelu is a young woman whose life and ambitions are sandwiched between riots and instability in Nigeria and emptiness and selfishness in America. She comes to America in search of a dream but fails to find a way out of this labyrinthine life in a foreign country. She acquires a fake identity of Ngozi Okwonkwo in America in search of a working visa since back home her father had lost his job and she could not sound discouraged to her family. This instance at Ardmere made her numb and she hated her very being. Her relationship with Obinze breathes its last when she decides to shut herself away from him after the Ardmere episode as she did not have the heart to narrate the incident to him:

At first, she gave herself a month. A month to let her self – loathing seep away, then she would call Obinze. But a month passed and still she kept Obinze sealed in a silence, gagged her own mind so that she would think of him as little as possible ... Many times she started to write to him, she crafted e-mails, and then stopped and discarded them

she would have to tell him what happened and she could not bear the thought of telling him what happened. She felt shamed; she had failed. (158)

After Obinze, Ifemelu becomes experimental in her sexual preferences. She dates a rich white overprotective Curt, and later commits a wayward sexual encounter with Rob, the shabbily dressed neighbor who plays in a band. One can say that her relationship with Curt was purely based on physical attraction because she is instinctively drawn towards Rob for the same reason. Here Ifemelu behaves like a true feminist who refuses to be in control of a man and that too of another race and tries to break free from his clutches by indulging into casual sex with her neighbor, Rob. A furious Curt shouts on Ifemelu, reducing her to a mere object of sex, to which she replies that she is empowered and free enough to experiment as men would do :

You gave him what he wanted ... In a giddy fit of recklessness, she corrected Curt. "I took what I wanted. If I gave him anything, then it was incidental. (288)

Later Ifemelu introspects the reason for her wanderlust while still being in a relationship with Curt and she realizes that 'race' was the issue since Curt was a white American and Ifemelu belonged to Nigeria:

I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America when you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your lover. But the minute you step outside, race matters. (290)

Another reason why Ifemelu feels "a hunger, a restlessness, an incomplete knowledge of herself" (289) could be linked to what Frantz Fanon called, "a realization of the Manichean concept of the world" in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). Fanon mentions that the relationship between a white man and a woman of colour is doomed because of the inherent racial inferiority. Black and white are two polarities that are in constant strife with each other. He further states:

I am black: I am the incarnation of a complete fusion with the world, an intuitive understanding of the earth, an abandonment of my ego in the heart of the cosmos, and no white man, no matter how intelligent

he may be, can ever understand Louis Armstrong and the music of the Congo. (31)

Since Ifemelu is constantly under the pressure of ‘a crushing objecthood’ (Loomba 122) of being called the exotic black girl friend of a rich and elite American hotelier, she commits adultery only to break free from ‘being objectified’. A single confrontation with a white man stirs the conscience of the Negro and he feels the heaviness of being black. Fanon highlights the colonial experience on the colonized and the way in which colonialism has rendered these poor people neurotic and psychologically sick:

The Negro is unaware of it as long as his existence is limited to his own environment; but the first encounter with a white man oppresses him with the whole weight of his blackness. Then there is the unconscious. Since the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to “make it unconscious.” The white man, on the other hand, succeeds in doing so to a certain extent, because a new element appears: guilt. The Negro’s inferiority or superiority complex or his feeling of equality is conscious. These feelings forever chill him. (116)

Ifemelu’s sudden infidelity is an attempt of her black conscience to break free from the golden cage of the white man. It should not be misinterpreted that Ifemelu in due course of her dating with Curt loses her mind but it is true that she could no more bear the burden of being an arm candy to a white American. In this relationship Ifemelu’s “blackness confirms the white self (of Curt), but whiteness empties the black subject” (Loomba 124) and Ifemelu refuses to empty her identity any further to a ‘Curt’, hence ends up committing a desperate act of adultery with Rob. In this way she saves herself from being doubly colonized by her white boyfriend. In the novel *Americanah*, it is Ifemelu who makes and breaks the rules even if it coerces her to experiment with her own sexuality. This revolutionary experimentation with her sexual preferences that are directly linked with her allegiance to her black origin is indeed a feminist move of Ifemelu.

In due course of time she meets Blaine, a half-caste Professor from Yale and she becomes instantly attracted to him. But her relationship with Blaine suffers a setback

because of his “power dripping” writer sister Shan (*Americanah* 319), who never accepts Ifemelu as a person but always mentions her race and colour. Eventually, the story of Ifemelu and Obinze comes to a full circle when suddenly after a gap of ten years she receives an email from him mentioning about his mother’s demise. Ifemelu goes back to Nigeria and becomes the features editor of a magazine – *Zoe* and the long forgotten love between these star-crossed lovers rekindles. But Obinze is already married to Kosi and he indulges in several episodes of extra-marital relationship, dishonesty and cheating with Ifemelu.

Ifemelu, conscious of Obinze’s marital status could not prevent herself from loving him and neither could Obinze stop thinking that his marriage to Kosi was on the rebound and he did not love her. He confesses to Ifemelu:

“There’s a lot of pretending in my marriage, Ifem,” He paused.” I married her when I was feeling vulnerable; I had a lot of upheaval in my life at the time. (451)

But his marital status renders a lot of guilt and ‘sinking panic’ (450) to Ifemelu. She knows that being in a relationship with a married man would add on to the ambiguities in her life but she could not help herself. When she realizes that Obinze is not able to detach himself from his daughter Buchi, she reprimands him for being possessive on her decision to have dinner with Tunde Razzaq. She asserts, “I’m never going to ask you for anything. I’m a grown woman and I knew your situation when I got into this” (451).

In her relationship with Obinze, there are a lot of upheavals of emotions and denials of truth but Ifemelu is not the kind of woman who would budge from extracting her due from life. Thus corruption becomes rampant in the lives of Ifemelu and Obinze as they decide to seek instinctive pleasures of life and Obinze decides to divorce his wife Kosi but still feels responsible for Buchi, his daughter. He confronts Ifemelu as the novel moves towards the finale:

I know we could accept the things we can’t be for each other and even turn it into the poetic tragedy of our lives. Or we could act. I want to act. I want this to happen ... I’ll stay in my flat in Parkview for now and I hope to see Buchi everyday if I can. (477)

Obinze and Ifemelu belong to the third tier of man-woman relationship where they exercise their 'free will' while choosing partners. There is no strings attached love where both of them get in and out of relationships while still belonging to each other. Such a status happens to shock traditionalists but for these lovers the quest for 'each other' makes them experiment 'love' with other men and women. It is Ifemelu who wields an upper hand in her bonding with Obinze as she decides when to and when not to have intimacy with him. She refuses to become 'the other woman' and thus changes situations, lest she be called a wanton woman. But at the same time she is empowered and liberated enough to claim her share of love with her high school lover, Obinze. Thus "*Americanah* not only explores the roller coaster life of Ifemelu and Obinze across three continents" but also, "explores various manifestation of differing cultural values; what is held in esteem and what is stigmatized ..." (Jagoe n. pag.). With *Americanah*, Adichie portrays the contemporary Nigerian woman who has shunned away the orthodoxical notions about love and marriage where woman was the seeker and man was the giver and believes in 'opportunism' of relationship.

With heroines like Beatrice (*Purple Hibiscus*), Olanna and Kainene (*Half Of A Yellow Sun*) and Ifemelu (*Americanah*), Adichie gives voice to the silent women of Nigeria from all walks of life. They might be incorrigible but they refuse to be dominated and tortured by men. Women from these three narratives represent the tortured and domesticated one (Beatrice), the educated and aggressive ones (Olanna and Kainene) and the empowered and experimental one (Ifemelu). All these women are Igbos and follow Christianity and their instincts rule them to the extent that they tumble down the patriarchal setup of their surroundings if their identity and womanhood is threatened.

"While Chinua Achebe became the voice of a colonized man Okwonkwo's consciousness" (Cox 53), the feelings and experiences of women in Africa remained ignored and marginalized since ages. With the advent of the third generation women writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the African women are heard on the global literary pedestal. Though Adichie nowhere denounces the significance of husbands and lovers in lives of her female protagonists but she could be called feminist for the subtle ways in which her women deny the acceptance of male dominance and subjugation. Adichie in her speech entitled, *We Should All Be Feminists*, states that

the twenty first century woman should not shy away from her femininity and should be respected for the choices she makes:

I have chosen to no longer be apologetic for my femininity. And I want to be respected in all my femaleness. Because, I deserve to be. I like politics and history and am happiest when having a good argument about ideas. (*TED Talks*)

Similar nuances are also found in Buchi Emecheta's narratives who, being Adichie's predecessor, also gave voice to her female characters but calling her a feminist would be a wrong interpretation (Cox 53). Adichie nowhere projects aggressive feminists in her female protagonist but at the same time they do not budge from denying a superior pedestal to their male counterparts.

Thus, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie not only displays the man-woman dichotomy as tropes in her narratives but also reverses these dualities to give a radical colour to her novels. Her women and men are real characters from day to day lives and one almost feel a human bonding with Ifemelu and Obinze, Beatrice and her children, twin sisters Kainene and Olanna – their lovers Richard and Odenigbo. The three tier demarcation of man-woman relationship not only helps in examining the various facts of relationship but also highlights the contemporary intimate partner trends. Adichie takes the readers into an ocean of emotions and feelings through the display of different levels of man-woman relationship and renders her literary corpus a bold hue, thus establishing Adichie as a true feminist.

Adichie's fiction has a global appeal as she deals with the problems and challenges faced by émigré Nigerians. Rootlessness, exile and the status of an immigrant generates a dilemma of choices in her characters as they face discrimination in a foreign land. The next chapter evaluates Adichie's treatment of the theme of diaspora through selected short stories and a novel.

Endnotes :

1. Simone De Beauvoir (1908 – 1986) – Author of *The Second Sex* (1949).
2. Elaine Showalter (1941) is an American feminist known especially for her essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (1979).

3. *alterite* or the other refers to the weaker sex or women (First used by E. Levinas which is mentioned in Beauvoir's – *The Second Sex*)
4. Self – refers to the male
5. Susan K. Steinmetz- "The Battered Husband Syndrome". *Victimology*, 2(3) Supplement, 4, 499 – 509.
6. Dual colonization refers to the subjugation of women by their already colonized Black husbands.
7. Transgenerational transmission of violence – Similar idea was previously theorized by C.S. Widom (1989) in an article . (Widom, C.S. "Does violence Beget violence? A critical examination of the Literature." *Psychological Bulletin*, 106, 3 – 28.)
8. Church documents – *The Code of Canon Law*, London : Collins Liturgical Press 2001; *The New American Bible*. New York : Thomas Nelson, 1970; Genesis 2, 21 – 22, Colossians 3 : 18 – 19.
9. Radical African Feminist Texts – Novels and Plays which pertained to depiction of empowered and revenge seeking African women victims of patriarchy.
10. Ogunyemi's Womanist Metamorphosis Theory – Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's article entitled – "Womanism : The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English." *Signs* Vol. 11, No. 1, Autumn 1985.

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Chapter 4

Tales From Hostland to Homeland: Adichie's Diaspora

CHAPTER 4

Tales From Hostland to Homeland: Adichie's Diaspora

Even though I'm an immigrant,
The angel with the flaming sword seems fine with me.
He unhooks the velvet rope. He ushers me into the club.
("Trailing Clouds of Glory" from Vijay Sheshadri's *3 Sections*, 2013)¹

Migrations happened throughout the world and the African people form a larger percentage of world Diasporas. Since literature is a mirror which reflects the trends and cultures of communities, it also becomes a vehicle to express and understand the feelings of immigrants of various countries around the globe. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie can be called a Diasporic writer because she lives in America but through her works, she commemorates the culture and people of Nigeria.

Diaspora is derived from the Greek term *diaspeirein* which means to disperse or sow or scatter. The term *diaspora* could be defined as "scattering of language, culture, or people: a dispersion of a people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated in one place" (Harris n.pag.) or it could be simply used to refer to people of some country settled in a foreign land. The remembrance of their indigenous history, life, culture and language leads to the birth of Diaspora literature. The word has a biblical origin since the natives of Israel lived outside their country for some 2500 years and it started with the conquest of Babylon in the 6th century B.C. At times they interpreted their exile as a punishment for their sins and at other times it was understood as a choice to live away from their Holy Land. In Biblical times the exiled people interacted with the local culture and thus their own Jewish culture became remarkably diversified and renewed. Thus the dispersion of Jewish community to the rest of Europe came to be known as diaspora.² Movement, displacement, migration and exile are also terms that are synonymous with diaspora (n.pag.). In the twenty first century, the term has enormous significance since globalisation has led to scattering of peoples of the world away from their native lands and when the feeling of exile and uprootedness is exhibited in black and white then it gives birth to the Diaspora Literature³.

William Safran, in his article entitled, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” stated that these expatriates [diasporas] have dispersed from their land of origin and are located in foreign regions but they still nurture ‘collective memory’ of their motherland. Since the migrants keenly believe that their true country is their original homeland so as a result they refrain from getting assimilated into the country and its local cultures and, “therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it” (83). Safran also specified that these migrants relate to their homeland and “their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship” (84).

Robin Cohen mentions that Safran’s theory on diaspora, was probably clouded by the Jewish experience, but, at the same time he, “correctly perceived that many other ethnic groups were experiencing analogous circumstances due perhaps to the difficult circumstances surrounding their departure from their places of origin and/or as a result of their limited acceptance in their places of settlement” (4). It is here that Cohen appears to be immensely moved by William Safran’s concept of significance of homeland and collective memory and agrees with the fact that, “members of a diaspora, “retained a collective memory of ‘their original homeland’; they idealized their ‘ancestral home’, were committed to the restoration of ‘the original homeland’ and continued in various ways to ‘relate to that homeland’” (4). Considering rapid globalisation, Cohen adds one more category to the list of Diaspora and that includes voluntary migrations too and calls it, “groups that disperse for colonial or voluntarist reasons” (6). Braga et. al. further state that the trends quoted by Safran and Cohen are useful in evaluation of diasporas but all peculiarities may not be present at one time analysis.

Adichie is not only aware of the aftermaths of missionary attempts on the Nigerian psyche and the Nigerian socio-political history which talks about the travails of this civil war struck country but she is also conscious of the Nigerian immigrants residing in America and other whiter parts of the world. Her concern for the Nigerian diaspora is exhibited in her novel *Americanah* (2013) and her collection of short stories *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), in which five stories deal with the challenges émigré Nigerians face when they are away from their homeland. The present chapter is an attempt to assess and evaluate how Adichie deals with the problems and challenges of the immigrant Nigerians, in the above mentioned works. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

has given a new meaning to diaspora with the publication of her short story volume *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and her recent novel *Americanah* (2013) has brought laurels to her realistic treatment of themes associated with emigrant Nigerians. The present chapter would explicate the relevant issues of émigré Nigerians such as alienation, loneliness, search for identity intertwined with grief and sacrifice, etc. that are truly representative of a Black Identity in a distant land.

Critic Ola Uduku traces the African Diaspora in four stages. The first phase of Igbo migration was during the trans Atlantic slave trade and the activities of the Anglican and the Presbyterian missionaries, when the Igbos were sent to “theological colleges and medical schools” in U.K. (303). The second phase was during the first few years of Nigerian independence when the race for higher education abroad became a trend among Igbos. The third phase was a bit painful because the 1967-70 Biafran civil war forced the Igbos of Nigeria to migrate to places which could offer them refuge from ethnic cleansing (304). The last phase spans from the middle of 1980s when the lack of political and economic security has persuaded Igbo youth to settle abroad in America and their most important concern is that of, “immigration, employment and secure form of remittances” (306). The most striking feature of this fourth phase of Nigerian diaspora is that their immigration is of temporary nature and their ultimate goal is to return back to their homeland (306). Decades ago, the African Diaspora was interpreted in terms of slave migration due to Trans Atlantic trade⁴ but recent trends have shown the development of African Diaspora as writers and narrators of their experiences as pariah or expatriate in American or European countries. Patrick Manning gives a clearer picture of the recent contribution of African Diaspora in world community:

Often Africans and their descendants are portrayed as representatives of primitive culture or slavery. The current consensus among specialists is that viewing the contribution of the African Diaspora to the history of modern times gives us a more complete appreciation of global history. The effect of the African diaspora on modernity can be viewed by the history and culture of the people from the African diaspora. African decedents around the world have kept their ties to the African continent creating a global community. They carried with them

their culture, family values, views on government, and their spiritual beliefs. (69)

Thus, the contributions of non-resident Africans have not been confined only to in field of medicine, art and culture. Rather they have exhibited African culture on the canvas of the world through literature and poetry. The famous names of Nigerian Diaspora writers are Buchi Emecheta⁵ (*Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*), Helen Oyeyemi (*Icarus Girl*) and the recent contributors are Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (*Americanah*) and Teju Cole⁶ (*Open City* and *Every Day Is for The Thief*) who share their experience of being an expatriate in the twenty-first century.

Daria Tunca traces the trends of Anglophone Nigerian Literature into two broad types. The first one was that written by predecessors like Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutola and Wole Soyinka, pre-independently and though they lived abroad on academic purpose, they were not considered diasporic but were called indigenous since they highlighted their country and culture and associated themselves with the mainstream native writings of Nigeria. But over the past fifty years Nigerian Literature has become an innate part of Diaspora writings and with the arrival of second generation diaspora writers i.e. Buchi Emecheta and Helen Oyemeni on the literary platform, critics have realised the importance of the theme of emigration in their writings (291). Thus with the second generation writers of Nigeria, the stories of the natives undergoing difficulties in foreign lands like the U.S.A. and Europe gained popularity in fiction.

Buchi Emecheta, born in 1944 in Lagos, Nigeria has authored more than twenty books on diversified themes of diaspora, child slavery, motherhood, female independence and freedom through education which have established her as a writer with a purpose and she has even received the Order of the British Empire in 2005. Emecheta once described her stories as "stories of the world...[where]... women face the universal problems of poverty and oppression, and the longer they stay, no matter where they have come from originally, the more the problems become identical" (Dawson 117). In her novel *The Second Class Citizen* (1974), Emecheta describes a young girl Adah of Igbo origin, who dreams of settling in the United Kingdom. Though she uses her marriage as a ticket to the U.K. but receives a cold and grey welcome in a foreign land and a first class citizen in Nigeria becomes a second class citizen in the U.K. Similarly in her other novel, *In the Ditch* (1972) , a young

divorcee, Adah supports her children by working in the library at the British Museum in London and lives at the Pussy Cat Mansions. Her strong determination helps her to get out of the ditch where she could not identify herself with women living in charity houses. Also her novel *Head Above Water* (1986) deals with the theme of social conditions of blacks in England. Again Adah, the protagonist not only earns for her family but also graduates in sociology and finds time to progress as a writer. Emecheta ends this novel autobiographically when Adah buys her own house and becomes a full time writer. Emecheta explores the ordeals of Black working class of England thus also highlighting other sub themes of neo-colonialism, patriarchal dominance, economic exploitation and racism.

Another Nigerian diaspora second generation woman writer of repute is Helen Oyeyemi who established herself with *The Icarus Girl* (2005) though many epithets were associated with her as she left Nigeria at the age of four to settle in Britain, but she claims her African heritage with caution (Tunca 292) and uses Nigerian mythology, beliefs of indigenous culture enmeshed with the imagination of an eight year old girl Jess Harrison (in *Icarus Girl*) who wishes to fly dangerously high like the mythological Icarus. Tunca further states that the quest for Nigerian identity by writers come full circle with the arrival of Third Generation Writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Teju Cole and several others who have penned down their experiences of living in a foreign country with a firsthand description and originality. While the writers pose as an immigrant Nigerian in an unknown land, they recollect the petals of nostalgia every now and then, strewn throughout their narrative. While Adichie too is a resident of the USA on academic purpose, she is entitled to be listed as a Diaspora Writer with the arrival of her story volume *The Thing Around Your Neck* and her novel *Americanah* as both these works deal with the lives of Nigerian citizens in America. The political unrest and mass corruption in Nigeria led to a mass exodus of young men and women to America in search of better lives and future but they are welcomed there with racism, indifference and feelings of exile.

The literary corpus of Adichie contains “threefold concern with ethnicity, colonization and migration” (Tunca 293) and *Americanah* (2013) and *Thing around Your Neck* (2009) are sketches from the lives of Nigerian youth who migrated to America for education or in quest of “the great American dream” (293). Daria Tunca disapproves of the usage of the term diaspora as a fashionable tag for just every other

Nigerian writer settled abroad and defends the justness of calling Adichie a diaspora in the following lines:

The term ‘diasporic’ is not intended as a fashionable tag designed to loosely describe the narratives written by Adichie after her move to the United States: rather, I believe that the word finds thematic reality in parts of her fiction. Several of her short stories indeed feature Igbo characters who have left Nigeria to settle in the USA, and occasionally in Britain. It is to this body of work that my use of the adjective ‘diasporic’ refers. (294)

The first work under examination is *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) which is a collection of twelve stories situated either in Nigeria or America and the central characters are all Nigerians. In all the stories the concept of Nigerian Identity stands tall; when the background is that of a civil war in Nigeria these tales become a war narrative where the protagonist is clueless about the ruthless bloodshed and identity collapses into ethnicities. At other times when the theme is of an emigrated Nigerian student in United States of America the identity as an African amidst all white skinned native Americans and Hispanics emerges to the surface and hides all other shades of the story. Sometimes emigrated status becomes a reason for marriage, relationships, infidelity, gender and power dynamics and multiculturalism. Thus the stories cater to multifarious themes of love, betrayal, re-conciliation and resilience as they range from political and social issues towards domestic themes. However, only five stories specifically refer to the problems of emigrant Nigerians namely, “Imitation”, “Arrangers of Marriage”, “On Monday of Last Week”, “The Thing Around Your Neck” and “The Shivering” and they have been primarily discussed in this chapter. Similarly, the novel *Americanah* (2013), a full-fledged documentary of a young girl Ifemelu’s experience in the States and her realisation about being Black and African which descends on her ‘only’ in America, gives enough evidences that America etches out identity of a person through his or her skin colour. The narrative too deals with the difference in concepts of relationships in Nigeria and that in America and Adichie brings out the crisis of characters most realistically and artistically.

Adichie’s diapora belongs to the fourth phase of migration during the 1980s, when the Nigerians were disillusioned and they wanted to go abroad in search of better

opportunities and education, far away from the political mayhem in Nigeria but later face the challenge of disassociation from their host country combined with an inner urge to return back to their roots (Uduku 306). William Safran called this yearning to return back to the homeland as “*lashuv le-eretz avotenu*” (94) in the context of the Jews and Israel.

The first tale of the expatriate experience deals with the heroine’s strong desire to return back home but unfortunately the cataclystic event for returning back to Nigeria is adultery. In “Imitation”, Nkem and Obiora have been married for many years now and they live in a richly donned mansion in Philadelphia, but Nkem is in a state of shock on learning about her husband’s adulterous liaisons with a young girl, back home in Nigeria. Nkem’s husband loves to collect fake Benin masks and her entire home is decorated with the fake pieces of art. The fake Benin masks are cold, heavy and lifeless (25) art pieces and stand as synecdoche of the inanimate body of Nkem caged in Obiora’s plush house in Philadelphia. A reverberation of the simulated marriage is present in this story of Nkem and Obiora and it is in keeping with the dual nature of Obiora’s married status. Just as Obiora is keen on decorating his house in America with facsimile of Benin and the Nok terra cotta masks, his wife Nkem identifies herself with the imitation of his ‘original girlfriend’ in Nigeria. Though there is a constant urge in Nkem to deny Obiora’s adultery and her instant reaction is, that of numbness, “and that she wishes that her friend, Ijemamaka had not called up” (TAYN 23), yet, she is now coerced to ruminate over the artificiality of her marriage which seems identical with the fake Benin masks Obiora brings home.

“Imitation” could also be treated as a Bildungsroman of Nkem since she grows psychologically from a woman who “was proudly excited because she had married into the coveted league – The Rich Nigerian Men Who Sent Their Wives To America To Have Their Babies” (26) to the thoughtful Nigerian woman who realises that the gloss of American life has made her dumb and lifeless like the Benin masks of iron and brass and the only person she could appropriate her situation with is her housekeeper, Amaechi. She not only longs for her home in Lagos but also there is an urge to move back to her motherland from this country of “curiosities and crudities” (37). Michiko Kakutani in his review on *The Thing Around Your Neck* states that all that the stories have to offer about individuals setting their foot in America is not simply the fiction but contains ample autobiographical instances:

The expectations of the observers and the experience of the witness, not to mention the value of certain experiences in the global literary mart place but practically slip through as a whole and traces the journey Adichie herself has taken; ... the sheltered child, vulnerable immigrants in Philadelphia and Brooklyn, the foreign student adrift in a dormitory in Princeton, the young African writer asked to objectify herself for an uncomprehending audience. (3)

One learns that Obiora comes to America in search of better business prospects that later dwindle into a hide and seek game of adultery and deception towards his wife. But Nkem protests by cutting her hair and the finale of her dissent comes to the fore when she declares in front of Obiora “We are moving back at the end of the school year. We are moving back to live in Lagos. We are moving back” (*TAYN* 41). The very phrase of “moving back” to the native land echoes a sense of displacement and longing and while people migrate to places in search of greener pastures but their psyche is always haunted by appalling situations thus creating a lacuna in their minds for homeland. Comfort Wirnigo Siver thus comments:

Migrants tend to suffer from solitude, torture due to racism, self destruction, loss of identity or develop an unstable sense of the self, disappointment, despair and psychological trauma, which pushes them to regret and long to return to that from which they moved away. (19)

Uduku states that the [Igbo] Diaspora would always exhibit stronger ties with their home and roots rather than with their host country. So Nkem’s decision to go back to Nigeria where she could find safe refuge is influenced by the nature of loose bond she has had with America:

The semi-autonomous nature of the Igbo community and its strong ties with kinship sub groups also work to strengthen ties between diaspora and home, as conceptually the relationship to home town tends to be stronger than the supra groups of (Igbo) ethnicity and nation. (308)

In “Imitation”, the protagonist Nkem realises the futility of her American life and moves into the bylanes of nostalgia where she remembers her impoverished childhood and though she has never shared it with her housekeeper, yet she feels that they stand on the same pedestals:

She has never told Amaechi how similar their childhoods were. Her mother may not have rubbed yam peels on her skin, but then there were hardly any yams. Instead there was improvised food. She remembers how her mother plucked plant leaves that nobody else ate and made a soup with them, insisting they were edible. They always tasted to Nkem like urine. (TAYN 33)

Moreover she also draws comparisons between her husband's young mistress and her own wayward life as a young girl when she too was an arm candy to several older married men like Ikenna and Tunji who met all her household expenses yet never proposed marriage to her (31). She is thus forced to identify herself with the very woman she hates and there begins a longing in her to reach out to her home in Nigeria. Claudio Bragga and Glaucia R. Gonclaves thus echo Nkem's self-introspection in these words:

Deprivation and social responsibility seem to force Nkem into objectification. She was the *ada*, or the first daughter, the one who is supposed to provide a better life for parents. Now aware of her husband's mistress, Nkem faces the ironic fact that she too was once in such position. Momentarily, she even identifies with her husband's young lover, considering how both of them were used by rich, older, married men. (3)

The story introspects into the problems of adultery and deceptions in marriage of an expatriate couple, while positing the protagonist into the shoes of her opponent. Nkem not only realises the futility of a glossy American life but also decides to move back to her house in Lagos at the end of her daughter's school year. Thus Adichie tackles the problem of adultery in marriage of a Non Resident Nigerian woman who is struggling with the feelings of exile and pariah, innate to every tale of diaspora and resolves to move back to her homeland to save her family from any further disgrace and brokenness.

While Adichie talks about dualities in the lives of Nigerian diaspora settled in America, one cannot ignore that the major crisis in their lives is that of identity. Critics Oroskhan et. al. state that, this duality is the result of self-imposed instability and the willing "deracination from [the] homeland and [the] ideals" which leads to

their entanglement in “doubleness of diasporic identity” (302). A similar idea of dual identities is highlighted in the story “Arrangers of Marriage,” wherein Adichie highlights the serious problem of fake marriages by Nigerian men for the sake of American visa. An orphan girl Chinaza has been looked after by her benevolent Uncle Ike and Aunt Ada, and they have got her married to a doctor of Nigerian descent in America. It is ambiguous whether the benefactors were aware of the actual ‘status’ of this doctor Ofodile Emeka Udenwa as it is discovered by the new bride Chinaza that the groom was not a doctor but still an intern and that he already has a wife pertaining to his illegal method of securing a green card. Chinaza is left aghast by the ways of her ‘new husband’, the manner he repudiates her for speaking Igbo in public, for disliking the McDonald burgers and cheap pizza with under cooked tomato topping which according to him is the real American way.

“Arrangers of Marriage” also deals with a forced marriage which is devoid of any love or affection and which is actually a result of a compromise. Chinaza Okafor fails to realise when her identity is played upon by her ‘new husband’ Ofodile and she becomes Agatha Bell, christened so by her husband. When she retaliates by stating the dissimilarity between her original and the fake new names, Ofodile affronts her by saying:

You don’t understand how it works in this country. If you want to get anywhere you have to be as mainstream as possible. If not, you will be left by the roadside. You have to use your English name here. (TAYN 172)

Chinaza Agatha Okafor becomes Agatha Bell after arriving in America but soon becomes weary of the flatness of American life. Daria Tunca comments that a change of names of immigrants is a repetitive phenomenon in Adichie’s narratives which is done in order to create a sense of familiarity in a foreign land and also to assimilate oneself with a different culture at all costs. Here the critic talks about the author’s initial pen name “Amanda N. Adichie” and “Amanda Ngozi Adichie” later on resuming her original Igbo name Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (300). In Adichie’s short stories, not only are the names being renamed by Nigerian immigrants, but they also try to obliterate their mother tongue Igbo. Ofodile not only discards his Igbo name but also dislikes Chinaza speaking Igbo in public and otherwise too. Daria Tunca while reflecting on “Arrangers of Marriage” says:

Ofodile regards the act of forsaking his mother tongue as one of the keys to adaptation to America and, in keeping with this reasoning, he orders Chinaza to stop speaking Igbo in the shopping centre, arguing that “there are people behind her”. He later asks her to speak English at home too so that she can “get used to it”. (302)

Chinaza’s new husband also takes her to a mall to purchase her an on-sale over sized coat which is of “the color of a gloomy day’s sky, puffy with what felt like foam inside it’s lining...” (177). Thus she is being led into the American way by her new husband while she longs for the colourful markets of Enugu. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie depicts a submissive character through Chinaza, one who readily becomes Agatha Bell because she is reminded of the benevolence of her Uncle and Aunt in finding a ‘doctor’ husband for her but she also presents juxtaposition with Nia, an Afro- American liberated next door neighbour of Chinaza. Nia is the one who smokes and drinks, have been into several casual relationships with men (including Ofodile), wears transparent clothes with mismatched lingerie to boast her style and has a heavily make upped face with shimmery lipstick and eye shadow (180). In one of her articles Daria Tunca finds out the truth behind the hopeless situation of Chinaza in both the places, in her native Nigeria and in America:

In “The Arrangers of Marriage,” neither of these societies seems to provide answers to the heroine’s quest for well-being. In Nigeria, she was not allowed to pursue higher education and was forced into a loveless union with Ofodile because her uncle would not let her marry her Yoruba boyfriend. When, towards the end of the story, she packs her bags and decides to leave her husband, she realizes that she cannot go back to Nigeria, because her relatives would condemn her choice. Her prospects in America are equally limited, since she is jobless and cannot support herself. Consequently, she is left with no other option but to remain with Ofodile – at least temporarily for, like many other immigrants, Chinaza may be able to “get a job” and “start afresh” the “U.S. of fucking A.” (“AM,” p. 186), as her African-American neighbour Nia helpfully suggests. (305-06)

Here the protagonist is situated in two different cultures and two different countries but her hopelessness and inability to protest remain the same. Through this story

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie pinpoints the weak position of women caught up in deceptive marriages which does not change even if the plot is situated in United States of America. While in Nigeria, Chinaza is indebted to her uncle and aunty so she marries a man of their choice as she does not intend to be branded as an ungrateful orphan and when she discovers that her 'new husband' is just an intern and not a doctor in America and that he was into casual sexual relationships with women including his next door neighbour Nia, helplessness still clouds her determination. Since now Chinaza is in America and having recently discovered being into a loveless relationship, still wonders at her prospects of leaving her husband but returns back , only to wait for her work permit to mature.

At times one feel that Chinaza and Nkem share their rootlessness and pariah feelings and they both live in identical worlds, the world of a rich husband and plush house in Philadelphia like Nkem has or the world to which Chinaza belongs where the prospective husband's medical profession in America is considered fortunate for an orphan like her. Little did these women imagine that they are being led into deception and adulterous marriages and being in a foreign land would make their situation worse than a slave. Siver comments on the similarity between "Imitation" and "Arrangers of Marriage" by stating the following:

Although Nkem and Chinaza share the same motif for displacement, Chinaza meets her doom, first when she moves into the unfurnished house called home. Then, Ofodile Udenwa" s change of name to Dave Bell, his roughness on bed, the unpalatable foods that does not suit her context, and above all the marriage with the white woman which makes it difficult for Agatha to have her employment papers, make her regret a lot about life. She pulls on though longing to be back home where she would eat delicacies and do her shopping the proper way. She hopes to be free from the mess in which she finds herself. These dreams can only be realized if she leaves Dave Bells house after getting her green card. Her predicament she admits is caused by the naivety of the people back home. Her foster parents, Aunt Adah and Uncle Ike, live in an illusion of what America is all about.(22)

Where Chinaza feels cheated, Nkem too feels that she has just been an inanimate object of desire for her husband all these years. For Chinaza, marrying a doctor in

America seems to be the only way out of her Uncle and Aunt's indebtedness as she was never fortunate enough to receive university education or have a better life:

The divergence between her family's attitude and her intimate feelings make her accept the arranged marriage with an unknown Nigerian medicine student living in the United States, believing that the only possibility for change in her life would be to leave her homeland. Her arranged marriage, nevertheless, turns out to emulate the oppressive Nigerian context from which she had hoped to escape, and her already low self-esteem is only aggravated by her husband. (Bragga et. al. 3)

Over the years Nkem's husband collected a number of artificial Benin masks in their Philadelphia house and she would wonder at his love for artefacts but soon she receives this message that she too has been an artefact for Obiora. On a foreign soil Nkem and Chinaza have lost their identity and moving back to their homeland is the best possible redressal for their ordeals for both these women thus indicating that their umbilical cords from their motherland were never severed.

Adichie gives a different flavour to the theme of diaspora with her story "On Monday of Last Week" wherein she talks about a Nigerian babysitter Kamara whose husband Tobechi is a taxi driver in America. Kamara arrives in America after waiting for six long years of her marriage and her perception about her husband takes a different shape altogether in America. The story centres on bland loveless marriage which is nothing of what she had imagined while being with Tobechi in Nigeria. Adichie begins the story with Kamara imagining Tracy's fingers caressing her midriff and one wonders why a baby sitter would behave in such an awkward way in the washroom. Kamara has been given the charge of Tracy and Neil's seven year old son Josh and here Adichie introduces the background of this couple to the readers. While Tracy, an abstract artist by profession is of an Afro-American origin, her husband Neil is a practising Jew and hence their son Josh is a half-caste. Through this story Adichie describes the situation of two couples from two different countries. On one hand Kamara's employer, Neil who is an expatriate because of his Jewish origins depends on guidebooks to take care of his seven year old son while his wife Tracy spends a mysterious underground life in the basement of their house. Although Kamara has taken up this job of a babysitter as she wants to help out her husband financially but there is a deeper sense of agony behind, "wiping the buttocks of a stranger's child"

(TAYN 78). As the story proceeds, one gets to know about Kamara's life that how she united with her husband Tobeche after a long ordeal of his absence and how she is struggling with her inability to conceive. Kamara notices a sea change in Tobeche and realises that their relationship has dispersed into nothingness after arriving in America. The passion and love between them has dried out since the 'American' Tobeche, being a taxi driver, has forgotten Kamara and prefers earning dollars while Kamara yearns for intimacy. Here Kamara is seen getting nostalgic as she remembers those days of initial courtship with Tobeche:

...but what drew her was the way he looked at her with awed eyes, eyes that made her like herself. After three months she moved into his room in the Boys' Quarters....They took bucket baths together in the bathroom with slimy walls, then cooked on his little stove outside, and when his friends began to call him "woman wrapper," he smiled as if they did not know what they were missing. (83)

Kamara is forced to draw a comparison between Tobeche's attitude in Nigeria and in America. She often wonders that this man in America "excavated memories and aired them, rejoiced in them" (84), because his life in America has become flat, insensitive and inanimate. Though she comforts herself by saying that situation would improve between them and she feels awkward with Tobeche because of those six years of separation but she never recovers from that and coldness enters their marriage. The simple emotions of love and affection were not there in her heart when Tobeche takes her for a court marriage in Philadelphia:

On the day they went to a courthouse to exchange vows in front of an impatient looking woman, he whistled happily as he knotted his tie and she watched him with a kind of desperate sadness, wanting so much to feel his delight. There were emotions she wanted to hold in the palm of her hand that were simply no longer there. (85)

When Kamara arrives in America, the union with her husband after six years is not exciting but full of 'flatness' (86). And Tracy's touch worked like a spell on Kamara's unfeeling heart. The title of the story is derived from that day when Tracy, Josh's mother, comes upstairs in the kitchen and interacts with Kamara. Tracy is a feminine full bodied woman who appears in long sweater and paint stained hands and touches

Kamara on her chin admiring her teeth. At that point of time Kamara feels that life has been breathed into her and she feels coy like a young bride. Adichie describes her feelings in the following lines:

Tracy's hand was still on her chin, slightly tilting her head up, and Kamara felt, first like an adored little girl, and then like a bride. She smiled again. She was extremely aware of her body, of Tracy's eyes, of the space between them being so small, so very small. (87)

Here Adichie pinpoints the fact that the heroine of this story who was almost turned to stone because of her husband's lack of attention and adoration for her finds same sex attraction more fulfilling and bewitching. Kamara, whose passionate and caring man Tobechei has become insensitive and indifferent towards her, looks for one gaze of adoration in Tracy. At one point of time Kamara wonders how her husband can turn blind to her struggle in conception and how "he could not see the grayness that clouded her days, the hard things that had slipped in between them" (86).

Here Kamara faces a loss of identity as a wife and companion of Tobechei and one can always compare her longing to go back to those loving old days with Tobechei with a migrant's desire to go back to the homeland. When Kamara arrives in America she is not only uprooted from her country but also from her marriage which was once full of marital bliss. Kamara's attempt of self introspection has made her realise that there is no hope left in her relationship with Tobechei and so she is ready to explore another identity as Tracy's same sex love interest. Kamara's situation is well explained in the following lines:

The migrants are faced with an on-going process of identity loss for they are uprooted from their tradition and local place. The appropriate response to such situations is a search for identity and the self-discovery or self realization. (Oroskhan et. al. 304)

America has made Tobechei and Kamara into plastic and the spark between them had died out and hopelessness has replaced the love between them. Since Kamara is sexually vulnerable, Tracy's touch not only makes her feel beautiful but also the way she repeats her name sounds musical and romantic to her:

Kamara imagined Tracy saying that again, this time in her ear, in a whisper. Kamara, Kamara, Kamara, she would say while their bodies swayed to the music of the name. (TAYN 89)

And when the suggestion for posing nude for a portrait comes from Tracy in a “tone soft like a breath”, Kamara feels nervous but excited and from that Monday she keeps on hoping that Tracy would have said “something bolder” and would ask her to be her model. Newness comes over Kamara and she begins admiring herself once again. Not only she longs for Tracy’s touch and gaze but also feels jealous of Maren, Josh’s new French teacher and even of Tracy’s husband Neil. It is important to note here that lovelessness between a one-time-passionate couple has led to a change in sexual orientation of one partner, almost to the verge of perversion. What once happened in the kitchen is nothing short of “a flowering of extravagant hope” and “what propelled her life was the thought that Tracy would come upstairs again” (80).

Though the characters are fictional representations in “On Monday of Last Week”, yet they leave impressions of relationship problems faced by immigrants in America. Since the sense of uprootedness and social financial insecurity occupies their lives, they tend to miss out on the relationship and family part leading to the creation of various factions between the loved ones, thus opening cleavages for change in sexual orientation too. There is a streak of lesbianism in Kamara’s character since in her dejection she turns towards Tracy for same sex love and avoids long conversations with Neil.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie through this story highlights and evaluates the repercussions of displacement, which begin with bright prospects but end in disappointment and disillusionment thus leading to a shattering of families. The theme of “On Monday of Last Week” is innovative and novel and depicts how marital relationships suffer in the wake of money prospects in America. What gives a different flavour to this story with a simple appearance is the way in which Adichie shows that an indifferent man-woman relationship can always dwindle into a same sex attraction.

Critic Oroskhan et. al. say that the Nigerian immigrants move to America in search of better education and money prospects but, “the real image of these emigrates are rarely described vividly” and Adichie decidedly presents, “the negative aspects of

living abroad” (303). The eponymous story from the short story volume “Thing Around Your Neck”, describes the tale of Akunna’s American dream and its dissipation. The story is a tale of a nameless, faceless character –“you”, who stands for every immigrant Nigerian and for no one at the same time. Fouad Mami elaborates the reason behind the usage of this second person pronoun instead of addressing the central character by her name:

Readers can note the author’s decline to deploy first and third person type of narratives. For the sake of efficacy in handling such an exceptionally intriguing experience like Akunna’s, the narrator cannot manage herself as a know-all figure; meanwhile, she cannot stay an outside observer. Thus, the choice of the limited omniscient point of view spells a loving keenness and early awareness with the principal character’s exilic experience. (8)

The central character is a girl from Nigeria who wins a visa lottery to the United States of America and later undergoes a topsy turvey experience of being an immigrant in America. She puts up at a thirty year old house of a distant relative in Maine who guides her about job applications for cashier and informs her about American ways of life but later on seeks sexual favour from her as a payback. Akunna gets the shock of her life when her uncle tells her that “America was give and take” (TAYN 117). Adichie talks about the financial hardships in Nigeria which push young girls like Akunna into a ‘foreign country with bright prospects’. Since the protagonist has to take care of her family’s expenses back home she takes up an underpaid job as a waitress in Connecticut and here the writer mentions the nostalgia and longing for home of Akunna:

Sometimes you sat on the lumpy mattress of your twin bed and thought about home- your aunts who hawked dried fish and plantains, cajoling customers to buy and then shouting insults.....your friends who had come out to say goodbye before you left because you won the American visa lottery, to confess their envy; your parents who often held hands as they walked to church.....your mother whose salary was barely enough to pay your brothers’ school fees at the secondary school. (118)

It is interesting to note that Akunna's memories are dotted with the financial crisis of her family and she is constantly reminded of providing them some financial help while being in America. Critic Fouad Mami states these hardships of expatriates in America:

The media-induced opportunities which America seems to offer for Nigerians are processed by these same frustrated Nigerians not as prospects that one can seize and that in due time, coupled with hard work, may lead to some relative success. Instead, they are approached as self-evident truths or facts of nature that guarantee material extrication towards the American heaven. (9)

Akunna wishes to write to her family and relatives but her deprivation makes her reluctant to write to them because she cannot share the nasty realities of life back home. Instead every month she would carefully wrap dollars in a brown envelop to send home a large part of her salary. There is a sense of loss of identity in Akunna after arriving in America because she would confine her thoughts to herself by not writing to anybody back home or by sharing her woes with her colleagues at restaurant. She feels lost in the labyrinth of America:

Nobody knew where you were because you told no one. Sometimes you felt invisible and tried to walk through your room into the hallway, and when you bumped into the wall, it left bruises on your arm....At Night, something would wrap itself around your neck, something that very nearly choked you before you fell asleep. (TAYN 119)

Through this story Adichie also narrates some of the taboos associated with Africans which are popular in America. For instance, Americans assume that every black person with a foreign accent was Jamaican and Akunna too is mistaken to be a Jamaican (119) and Akunna's uncle tells her that Americans think that Africans eat all kinds of animals, because the squirrels started to disappear when an African man moved in a neighbourhood (116).

But one evening she meets a white American man who visits the restaurant where she works. This man, who is a professor at the state university, becomes friendly with her and later on courts her and is aware of her Igbo descent. When the two become closer to each other she even confides in him about her family's financial status. While

Akunna courts a white American, people find it hard to digest that how can this white guy possibly be in love with somebody of mahogany complexion. Here Adichie questions whether the skin colour makes any difference when it comes to love. At one instance when they go to a Chinese restaurant, the Chinese man seemed reluctant to assume that she is his girlfriend. But this was not the sole instance:

You knew by people's reactions that you two were abnormal- the way the nasty ones were too nasty and the nice ones too nice. The old white men and women who muttered and glared at him, the black men who shook their heads at you, the black women whose pitying eyes bemoaned your lack of self-esteem, your self-loathing. Or the black women who tried too hard to forgive you, saying a too obvious hi to him; the white men and women who said, "What a good looking pair" too brightly, too loudly, as though to prove their own open mindedness to themselves. (125)

"Thing Around Your Neck" revolves around a Nigerian girl who arrives in America because of better earnings prospects and her visa lottery paved an easy path for her American dream but the sense of rootlessness clings to her like a burden. Adichie pinpoints the question of race, identity and colour through this story and shows how all these affect the leading character Akunna in a negative way. The complexities in Akunna's life are rightly summed up thus:

"The Thing around Your Neck" is most typical of these stories that deal with the experience of Nigerians in America. It touches on the false and over-bloated expectations of Nigerians about to move to the United States. The general belief is that of comfort, ease, good houses, good food, plenty of dollars, employment and general economic and social security with additional feelings that excesses will be sent home to augment the conditions of relations at home. (Asoo16)

The story ends when Akunna finally writes home and receives the news of her father demise as a shock. Since five months have already passed Akunna is struck by self guilt that she did not care to write home or to find out how her parents have been all this while. She decides to go back to Nigeria but is unsure whether she would come back to America or not and the story ends leaving behind many questions but

homeland remains a safe haven for Akunna. With the help of her family memories, she is finally able to overcome the burden of being an expatriate in America:

She emigrates carrying the burden of all Nigeria's poverty on her shoulders. Later, in the United States, Akunna's thoughts enact a mental return to her homeland as she remembers conflicts, binges, envy, but also her parents' efforts to educate their children. Alternating good and bad reminiscences, Akunna keeps her promise and helps her family back home. Ultimately, this character problematizes the idealization of the homeland and the individual's commitment to it. (Braga et. al. 3)

While major issues related with immigrant Nigerians have been touched upon by Adichie in this story but the character of Akunna lacks elaboration. This lack of detailed overview about Akunna makes it difficult to gauge her personality from the diasporic point of view. Asoo states:

This short story pays very little attention to character but is sufficiently powerful enough to illuminate the glittering socio-economic conditions people believe America offers. At the end, sexual and racial exploitation are suffered by immigrants and a return home remains the best option. The beauty of this short story is that it is poignant, neatly tied, and simple; and has very few characters that are not even properly identified. The emphasis is on the situation, the effect and conclusion is clear enough. The opening, development and the suspense are clear evidence of Adichie's awareness of the demands of the genre. (17)

The last story in the realm of diaspora is "The Shivering" which deals with the search for fraternity and native culture amidst foreign surroundings and at the same time it is about helplessness of a Nigerian in a foreign land as she hears about the plane crash in Nigeria. Her anxiety comes to rest and she becomes hopeful only when a neighbour comes and offers prayer with her. The story begins with Ukamaka, a resident of Princeton University worrying over a plane crash back home in Nigeria. Her anxiety is over her assumption that her ex-boyfriend Udenna might have been on board of this very plane. A neighbour Chinedu comes over to Ukamaka and they both pray for the safety of the survivors. It is here that Chimamanda Adichie inducts the concept of

search for Nigerianess on a foreign soil. Ukamaka's neighbour Chinedu prays with her in a typical Pentecostal way that makes her uncomfortable but optimistic and that prayer also takes her down to the memory lane when she experienced God while uttering Hail Mary besides her bed. This instance is the very "Shivering" which is also a realisation that behind every grey cloud there is a silver lining. Ukamaka recalls the day when she experienced this presence of God:

Then she felt herself start to shiver, an involuntary quivering of her whole body . Was it God? Once years ago when she was a teenager who meticulously said the rosary every morning, words she did not understand had burst out of her mouth as she knelt by the scratchy wooden frame of her bed. It had lasted mere seconds, that outpouring of incomprehensible words in the middle of a Hail Mary, but she had truly, at the end of the rosary felt terrified and sure that the white cool feeling that enveloped her was God. (TAYN 144)

On the day of plane crash two Nigerians – Ukamaka and Chinedu unite in distress and Ukamaka undergoes a hopeful transformation. A mishap back home reminds them of a need to search for common grounds of fraternity on a foreign territory and Chinedu's words echo a commonality between the two:

Us. Our country. Those words united them in a common loss and for a moment she felt close to him. She refreshed an internet page. There was still no news of any survivors. (145)

A neighbour who was a stranger a few minutes back now becomes a constant companion of Ukamaka as his presence makes her feel comfortable and at home. But there is a mixed feeling in Ukamaka about Chinedu because she wants him to go after the prayers are over yet she wants him to stay because, "...his presence gave her hope about Udenna being alive, in a way that she could not explain" (146). Minutes after, she receives a call from her mother about Udenna's safety which in a way strengthens her trust and she weeps in Chinedu's arms who, a few minutes ago was a stranger but now is a deliverer of hope.

Ukamaka shares her grief with Chinedu that how her boyfriend Udenna, one fine day while they were at the ice cream shop declared that their relationship is over and how she has not been able to overcome him. Here Udenna uses the word 'Staid' for their

relationship which was stagnant and vegetative and he has moved out of her life but has 'staid' there forever. She is surprised over the fact that she offered prayers for the safety of a man who broke her heart and though they as lovers discussed about the names of their progeny but it all came crashing down on her inside "Thomas Sweet" (148). In a few minutes Ukamaka pours out her heart to Chinedu with such an ease that she feels light and free and she even shares with him the intriguing attitude Udenna used to wear up his sleeve and the way he used to put her down for almost everything and how she tried to cope up with his behaviour. She confesses to Chinedu:

Once I told him I was sorry, he felt bad about something and he started shouting and said I should not use an expression like I'm sorry. You feel that way because it was unoriginal....He used to make me feel that nothing I said was witty enough or sarcastic enough or smart enough. He was struggling to be different, even when it didn't matter. It was as if he was performing his life instead of living his life. (153)

There is a lot of similarity between Ofodile "Dave Bell" of "Arrangers of Marriage" and Udenna from "Shivering" because both these men want desperately to fit in the American ways. While Ofodile eats American pizza or burger and abhors Chinaza's lingering food smell in the hallways and her Igbo conversation, Udenna too is a sarcastic and insensitive partner who cares a dime for Ukamaka but both are equally willing to be a part of a foreign culture. Udenna is also a kill joy because he criticises about Princeton where Ukamaka is a resident student. Ukamaka uses an apt sentence befitting Udenna as well as Ofodile:

How can you love somebody and yet want to manage the amount of happiness that person is allowed? (153)

Adichie here symbolically comments on immigrants from Nigeria who try to fit in the great American jigsaw fit puzzle in a way that they want to obliterate their Nigerian roots completely but unfortunately they end up in limbo because of their uncertainty and indifference for their fellow countrymen in a foreign country. Ukamaka also notices a difference of attitude between Udenna and Chinedu. While Udenna avoided talking to people of his apartment, Chinedu is friendly and compassionate and does not try to carve out an American identity of his persona while being in America.

During their conversation Chinedu confesses to Ukamaka that he too was in a relationship with a man called Abidemi, who broke his heart and that he knows what it is “to love an asshole” (158).

The story ends with Ukamaka’s discovery that Chinedu is not a resident at Princeton but he was living in his friend’s apartment and worked at construction site but has now lost the job. His visa has expired three years ago and now soon he would be deported back to Nigeria where his family is ignorant about his present status. It is here that Ukamaka pays him back for his kindness and friendship by taking him out to a Catholic Church. She introduces him to Father Patrick with the hope that something would be done to stop his deportation and that he must have faith. Ukamaka not only arranges a place for Chinedu’s stay in the basement of this church but also gives him hope for better future:

“You are not going to be deported Chinedu. We will find a way. We will.” She squeezed his hand and knew he was amused by her stressing of the “we.” (165)

Adichie leaves an open ended conclusion to this story of faith and trust which conveys to the readers how in distress natives extend a helping hand to each other in America. While there are various cues of disillusionment and deception yet faith shines bright and the joy of friendship gives an appropriate ending to this story. It conveys more than meets the eye because it is a tale of finding Nigerian roots in a foreign land where everything seems uncaring, a stranger gives hope and optimism. Adichie’s treatment of the problems of immigrant Nigerians is definitely novel in the way that she tries to explore the hindsight of the people in Nigeria as well as those settled in America. Here one does not find the stereotyped projection of aftermaths of colonialism in Africa but she talks about the globalised Nigeria. A critic comments on the novelty of Adichie’s perceptions in her stories:

Following a trajectory slightly different than other writers, Adichie’s stories have moved from the early visceral attacks on the material aspects of modernity, blaming Africa’s ills on the colonial past. Instead, Adichie is more in favour of an erudite self-examination of global capitalistic culture; she dispenses however with the call for a

mythical return to an ancestral past in order to face the present cultural malaise. (Mami 2)

Thus with these immigrant stories Adichie opens new avenues in the field of sharing diaspora experience and narrates the tales of Nigerian youth who after getting beguiled by the American dream, embrace “irrational choices and confusing them even further all towards dystopic alternatives” (Mami 2). With *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Adichie offers an introspection of the choices the young generation of Nigeria makes and the kinds of challenges immigration poses before them.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s short stories are only a prelude to the elaborate detailing she has done about lives of immigrant Nigerians in her latest novel *Americanah* (2013). The central character in the novel is a young vibrant and ambitious teenager Ifemelu who comes to America on a scholarship for higher studies but the American culture becomes so innate to her that she spends fifteen years on the American soil only to return to her motherland in her later thirties. The process of acculturation takes a heavy toll on Ifemelu as she plods through racial discrimination, displacement and alienation. Through *Americanah*, Adichie portrays a different picture of what America is to a Nigerian immigrant from afar and how it dwindles into something else after her actual migration. While the narrative deals with a Nigerian woman’s encounter with America, it also has undertones of love and deception, race and colour, uprootedness and desperation to move back to one’s homeland. Ifemelu and Obinze are star crossed lovers who were companions since high school but life decides a different destiny for both of them. While Ifemelu struggles with her financial crunch in America she is always reminded of taking up a job in America to support her expenses but ends up in a self-humiliating act with a tennis coach in Ardmore for a hundred dollar note per session which not only makes her hate herself but she loses herself in the labyrinth of American expenses and earnings:

The world was a big, big place and she was so tiny, so insignificant, rattling around empty. Back in her apartment she washed her hand with water so hot that it scalded her fingers, and a small soft welt flowered on her thumb. She took off all her clothes and squashed them into a rumpled ball that she threw at a corner, staring for a while. (156)

And it is this instance which becomes the dividing line between Ifemelu and Obinze because she lacks the guts to share this with Obinze so she shuts herself away from him forever. This self-attained oblivion is because of failed efforts of being americanised after her dislocation from motherland. While Ifemelu's reason of ending a correspondence with Obinze is associated with the 'tennis-coach instance' and with her frustrations of financial crises, in "The Thing Around Your Neck", Akunna too shuts herself up from her family members in Nigeria by neither writing to them along with the monthly cheque nor sending her address so that they can write back. Fouad Mami comments on Akunna's lack of self respect which becomes a reason for her prolonged silence- "Adichie makes sure that Akunna's conditions are exceptional and in tune with most Nigerians who experience a life that lacks in dignity day in, day out" (9) and it is this self esteem which Ifemelu loses after the Ardmore instance in *Americanah*.

Behaviours of Akunna and Ifemelu are identical as these women are lone strugglers in the big American world and when they fail to achieve what is expected from them back home, they simply shut themselves away from their loved ones and live in utter disillusionment. Akunna's 'thing around her neck' is nothing but her stifling experiences on a foreign land which are also a cumulative effect of her yearning to go back to Nigeria but the crushing realisation that she is in America to earn money for her family.

Though *Americanah* begins with a judgemental opinion of Ifemelu regarding certain cities of United States of America like Princeton "smelled of nothing", New Haven "smelled neglect" or Philadelphia's "musty scent of history" (3) and the like but at the outset there is a deep seated longing for home in Ifemelu, who has been in America since last fifteen years, now feels like returning back to Nigeria. During the fifteen year long stay in America, Ifemelu dates the rich white American Curt and Blaine the Afro-American professor at Yale besides few of her casual sexual encounters but her experiences with these men help her understand the concept of race and colour in America. Obinze remains her lover and companion till the end because their descent and nationality are identical. Ifemelu also discovers that, "When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters" (290).

In the novel Ifemelu and Obinze are made for each other yet there is a distance of continents between them and there are moments of frustrations and deep anguish over their stateless condition. Because of her difficulties and loss of self esteem in America, Ifemelu shuts herself away from Obinze and this creates a thick sheet of ice between two lovers. The status of being an immigrant could be blamed for these lovers' misfortune. Obinze too suffers from depression and identity crisis as he has to take up mean jobs like that of a toilet cleaner under a fake identity. This shows that an immigrant becomes a nameless, faceless entity which only breathes and does not feel anything in America. After drifting away from each other these lead characters also experiment with their sexual and emotional lives. Obinze experiences a fling with Tendai, a Zimbabwean which could only be called a sudden upsurge of lust and loneliness (258), while Ifemelu moves from one relationship to another beginning from serious ones like Curt, Kimberly's handsome white American hotelier cousin from Maryland to Blaine, an American Black professor to casual flings with Rob, a shabby looking neighbour who plays in a band and Fred. While being in a relationship with Curt, Ifemelu realises that it is because of race that they look awkward together as he would exhibit her like an ivory tusk trophy and this eventually becomes a reason for their mutual cheating. Ifemelu mentions once:

And it did not help that although she might be a pretty black girl, she was not the kind of black that they could, with an effort, imagine him with: she was not light-skinned, she was not bi-racial. At that party, as Curt held on to her hand, kissed her often, introduced her to everyone, her amusement curdled into exhaustion. The looks had begun to pierce her skin. She was tired even of Curt's protection, tired of needing protection. (*Americanah* 293)

At the beginning of the novel, Ifemelu is a successful blogger of *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black* and has found love in Blaine, a American-African Yale professor, but there is a 'cement' in her heart, which could be linked to the inner urge experienced by the fourth phase immigrant Igbos to return back to their motherland (Uduku 306). Ifemelu longs to return back to Nigeria:

It had been there for a while, an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings,

shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living that over the months melded into a piercing home sickness. She scoured Nigerian websites ,Nigerian profiles on Facebook, Nigerian blogs, and each click brought yet another story of a young person who had recently moved back home.....She looked at the photographs of these men and women and felt the dull ache of loss, as though they had prised open her hand and taken something of hers. (6)

There is a deep seated longing in the hearts of Diaspora characters of Adichie and at various instances they draw comparisons between home and foreign only to yearn to return back to their motherland. Ifemelu cries at the very sight of golden yellow colour of autumn in America and she is actually weeping over her helplessness:

The trees were awash with colour red and yellow leaves tinted the air golden, and she thought of the words she had recently read somewhere: *Nature's first green is gold*. The crisp air, fragrant and dry, reminded her of Nsukka during the harmattan season and brought with it a sudden stab of homesickness, so sharp and so abrupt that it filled her eyes with tears. (144)

This description reminds one of Nkem from "Imitation" who is also too much caught up in her plush apartment in Philadelphia and often longs to return back but the serpentine American way has clinged over her persona :

She does miss home, though, her friends, the cadence of Igbo and Yoruba and pidgin English spoken around her. And when the snow covers the yellow fire hydrant on the street, she misses the Lagos sun that glares down even when it rains. She has sometimes thought about moving home, but never seriously, never concretely. She goes to a Pilates class twice a week in Philadelphia with her neighbour; ... she expects banks to have drive ins. American has grown on her, snaked its roots under her skin. (TAYN 37)

In *Americanah*, this need to dispossess the immigrant status overcomes Ifemelu after she discovers that America is all about race and alienation. This strong sense of country hood never dawned on Ifemelu before she left Nigeria. She leaves for

America with “the hope to prosper” (77) but soon she realises that being black in America is not being ‘usual’ and she decides to return back to Nigeria:

But after displacement, the situation changes and she faces a different life in America. Discrimination and racial issues alienate her as a black which brings her a sense of unbelonging toward America; consequently, she returns to her African origin and reveals her sense of belonging toward Nigeria. (Arabian et. al 538)

While describing Ifemelu’s earlier perceptions about usage of the word ‘nigger’ in the American milieu, Adichie highlights a significant instance in *Americanah* from one of her class seminars in America. During a discussion on the movie *Roots*, a well meaning student Wambui, of African origin expresses her realistic views about the usage of the word ‘nigger’ in America. She firmly contests that one should not live in denials because, “Hiding it doesn’t make it go away” (138). Ifemelu’s first encounter with Wambui helps her in understanding that in America, blacks are different from the rest. Wambui also highlights some cultural differences Ifemelu might come across in America:

And don’t be shocked by the indiscriminate touching of American couples. Standing in line at the cafeteria, the girl will touch the boy’s arm and the boy will put his arm around her shoulder and they will rub shoulders and back and rub rub rub but please do not imitate this behaviour. (140)

Ifemelu describes that how the fact, that being a black in America makes all the difference, dawned on her when at Kimberly’s house, the carpet cleaner gave hostile looks to her because he could never imagine the owner of the house to be a black. The way in which, “He stiffened when he saw her” (166) and later on, after learning that Ifemelu is only a babysitter at that house, “the swift disappearance of his hostility” (166), inspires Ifemelu to write a blog post entitled, “Sometimes in America, Race is Class”:

It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America’s public discourse, “Blacks” as a whole are

often lumped with “Poor Whites.” Not Poor Blacks and Poor Whites. But Blacks and Poor Whites. A curious thing indeed. (166)

Other glaring instances of racial discrimination occur before Ifemelu when her paternal Aunt Uju informs that her son Dike is facing racial discrimination in school and his principal says that “he is aggressive”(171). There is exasperation in Uju’s voice because Dike is bright in school and “he does what other little boys do” (172) but he is branded aggressive because he is the only black student in the class. Later on when Dike shares with Ifemelu that the group leader at his school camp refused to give him sunscreen because he is black and, “[he] didn’t need any” (183), she could only look at the poor child’s expressionless face and hug him. Ifemelu’s growing concern for Dike and the prejudiced society of America makes her write another blog post in which she says:

Finally, race. There’s a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on top.....(Or as that marvellous rhyme goes: if you are white, you’re all right; if you are brown, stick around; if you’re black, get back!) (184)

Adichie brings forth a vital instance of the aftermaths blacks face after experiencing the racial prejudice in America. Here she describes the suicide attempt by Ifemelu’s adolescent cousin Dike, who falls into depression because he was not able to cope up with the colour discrimination Africans face in America. Ifemelu feels deeply responsible for Dike’s suicide attempt because it was she who persuaded him not to discriminate himself as, “we black folk”,(380) while moving around in his school. It is here that one gets to see the dilemmas of immigrants in America who do not wish to blame the country for their condition. Aunt Uju defensively states, “It is a clinical disease. Many teenagers suffer from it” (380). Ifemelu has to raise her voice to make Uju understand that the racial experience and the feeling of not being able to assimilate with the white Americans made Dike consume sleeping pills. She states, “His depression is because of his experience, Aunt!” (380).

Similarly, in *Americanah*, the kinky Afro hair is a major identity symbol for Ifemelu and her failed attempts of acculturating herself with the American hair work as an eye opener for her. Khedekar states that Afro hair is an important aspect for Ifemelu’s Black identity:

Adichie has knitted different elements of the contemporary society as symbols to reflect her political attitudes stating that a black women's hair is political. Her fixation with hair and its ability to proclaim the identity of a black woman is obviously reflected in *Americanah*.(38)

When she is called for the job of a public relations officer in Baltimore, her friend, Ruth suggests her to straighten her Afro hair because, "Nobody says this kind of stuff but it matters. We want you to get that job" (*Americanah* 202). But without the "verve" (203) Ifemelu feels that she has lost her identity as a Nigerian even though she was successful in getting the job. Her white boyfriend Curt also appreciates her straight hair but Ifemelu mourns at her Americanised hair. Later in a blog entry entitled, "Understanding America for the Non- American Black: What Do WASPs Aspire To?", she blatantly states, " "Stupid woman, she thinks she's white." So whiteness is the thing to aspire to. Not everyone does..." (205). Ifemelu realises that she is not meant to be Americanised and race and colour would hinder even her love life with Curt. William Safran mentions that the hostland is responsible for the immigrant in getting rid of the diaspora identity only when it has a multicultural tradition and exhibits a tolerance of diversity (75). For Ifemelu and Obinze, neither of the host countries was supportive enough to shrug off their 'diaspora identity' and so they could not assimilate with the culture abroad and ended up experiencing the issues of race and colour.

During one of the dinner party gatherings in support of Barack Obama, Ifemelu strongly detests one speaker from Haiti who proudly stated that she dated a white man for three years and "race was never an issue for them". She speaks out aloud about the grim realities of 'race' in America:

The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it's a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue. I did not think of myself as a black when I came to America. When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race does not matter when you are alone together because it's just you and your love but the minute you step outside, race matters...It's true. I speak from experience. (290-91)

Hence in *Americanah*, Adichie speaks boldly about the American perspective of race and blacks in America without any hesitation. Whether it is about Ifemelu's experience at spa where the beautician refuses to do her eyebrow by calling it curly (292) or Blaine's sister Shan commenting on how if a white guy dates a Black woman "it is only out of fetish and it's nasty" (320) and that if white men find Ifemelu interesting then it's her "exotic credential, that whole African thing" (320). In the short story "The Thing Around Your Neck" a similar idea is discussed by Adichie where Akunna, the Nigerian heroine finds companion in a white man and she too realises her blackness and the taboo of being in such a relationship with a white man. She wonders:

You knew by people's reactions that you two were abnormal – the way the nasty ones were too nasty and the nice ones too nice. The old white men and women who muttered and glared at him, the black men who shook their heads at you, the black women whose pitying eyes bemoaned your lack of self-esteem, your self-loathing. Or the black women who smiled swift solidarity smiles; the black men who tried too hard to forgive you, saying a too-obvious hi to him, the white men and women who said 'What a good-looking pair' too brightly, too loudly, as though to prove their own open-mindedness to themselves. (TAYN 125)

Adichie handles the very quintessence of 'race and America' in a mature and delicate manner and her originality could be judged from the simplest nuances she quotes during her narratives. Another instance of racial abuse is shown in the novel when Obinze, while working as a kitchen deliverer trips and hurts himself and develops a limp in his walk. At this moment the white truck driver hurls a racial joke at him:

..."His knee is bad because he's a knee-grow!" They laughed. Their hostility rankled, but only slightly...(252)

While Ifemelu, unaware of Obinze's experience in England, writes about the position of blacks in America as second citizen based on her frank recollections of 'white Americans' attitudes for Blacks even though Barack Obama, "a black like them" was now the President of the United States of America. She then writes on the dismal situation of racism in America in her blog:

Today, many Americans say that skin colour cannot be a part of the solution. Otherwise it is referred to as a curiosity called “reverse racism.” Have your white friend point out how the American Black deal is kind of like you’ve been justly imprisoned for many years, then all of a sudden you’re set free, but you get no bus fare. And by the way, you and the guy who imprisoned you are now automatically equal... And have your white friend say how funny it is, that American pollsters ask white and black people if racism is over. (361-62)

Thus Adichie brings forth the soreness of being a black in United States of America, their anguish of being in a free state and yet being a victim of racism. Writers may talk about the greatness of America to assimilate every culture and every native into itself but here the truth is that the black stands alone and away from their white counterparts. Ifemelu decides that the only cure for her displacement and loss of identity is to go back to her homeland, while Obinze is eventually deported back from London:

Displacement brings a sense of unbelonging for Ifemelu and Obinze; therefore, in order to overcome this sense of unbelonging, they revive their African hood via returning to their mother land, and African values, and expressing their sense of belonging to Nigeria. (Arabian et. al. 540)

Another significant problem of immigrants which Adichie speaks of is the troublesome immigration process which is scary to most of the fresh Nigerian emigrants and it eventually leads to problems like fake marriages and fake identities. One such problem of immigration papers comes when Ifemelu in *Americanah* finds out that the driver’s license and social security card has the identity of some Ngozi Okwonko and Auntie Uju convinces her by saying that all Africans appear similar to white Americans (120). Ifemelu not only notices a metamorphosis in her persona as she feels that her self-esteem is slipping out of her palms while pursuing a living in America but all of a sudden she wants to belong to a country which gives and not receives. It is this dilemma of being an American which haunts most of Adichie’s immigrant characters. Here’s a glimpse of Ifemelu’s psyche interacting with a few people at Laura, her employer’s house:

...Ifemelu wanted, suddenly and desperately, to be from the country of people who gave and not received, to be from the country of people who gave and not those who received, to be one of those who had and could therefore bask in the grace of having given, to be among those who could afford copious pity and empathy. (170)

Similarly in United Kingdom, Obinze, her former boyfriend also undergoes a change of identity when he agrees to pay thirty-five percent of his monthly earnings and takes up the identity of Vincent Obi from Abia state “who was a small round man submerged in a large pair of jeans and an ungainly coat” (249) while he works for a chemical company and “tried not to breathe too deeply as he cleaned, wary of dangers floating in the air” to earn four pounds per hour (251). Adichie portrays Obinze taking up various jobs (with his fake identity) as toilet cleaner, chemical cleaner and kitchen deliverer in England only to highlight how immigrants try very hard not to get deported back to their country and for the sake of saving themselves they start living dual lives and even get into the trap of ‘Sham Marriages’. ‘Sham Marriage’ is a common practice amongst immigrants to procure a permanent citizenship of America in exchange for a huge amount of money. While this kind of marriage is not only a blasphemy on the sacrament but it also leads to various complications for the immigrants like blackmailing and money demands by fake spouses. One such instance of a fake marriage occurs in the novel when Obinze makes an agreement with Cleotide, a half Angolan-half Portuguese British citizen to marry her in exchange of some money, exactly two years and three days of his stay in England, so that he would get some cushion time to get his citizenship papers and later on this could end in divorce (231). But his identity is revealed the very day of their so called wedding at the Civic Centre and he is taken away by immigrant officer holding a photocopy of his passport page and he is finally “removed.” Obinze could only think:

He was going to tick on a form that his client was willing to be removed. “Removed.” That word made Obinze feel inanimate. *A thing to be removed. A thing without breath and mind. A thing.* (279)

A similar issue of sham marriage is also raised in the short story “Arrangers of Marriage” where Ofodile reveals his married status when his wife Chinaza asks about her work permit papers. He mentions it in a very relaxed way that annoys Chinaza:

It was just on paper. A lot of our people do that here. It's business, you pay the woman and both of you do paperwork together but sometimes it goes wrong and either she refuses to divorce you or she decides to blackmail you. (TAYN 183)

Thus Adichie brings out the practices of fake marriages and divorce in *Americanah* as well as in the short story "Arrangers of Marriage" through a different lens because it shows that in America even love and marriage could mean business and there is no place for emotions. Adichie is a writer who makes her diasporic characters come alive in her novel as well as the collection of short stories through the process of delving into their expat psyche and culling out the tenderest of emotions and dilemmas they undergo while being on a foreign soil:

The use of what we term diasporic stream-of-consciousness serves the purpose of representing uncertainties about the homeland and the hostland, as well as the unpredictability of the characters thought processes as a constant mental comings and goings, boomerangs attempting to fill the diasporic need to return. As a literary device, the diasporic stream-of-consciousness is made more effective by chronological interruptions as well as by different narrators in first, second and third persons, who promote dispersion, hesitation, and change in stories of diasporic characters. (Braga et. al. 5-6)

With the advent of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the Nigerian diasporic literature has attained new heights of global readership and critical acclaim at the same time through her depiction of lives of Africans in United States of America. She not only sensitizes the readers about racism but also gives voice to the millions of non-resident Nigerians who have undergone identical feelings of nostalgia and rootlessness. Moreover she draws attention towards the problems of marital relationship, same sex love and doubtful nature of those living in America still searching for their great American dream. Katie Alexander accords Adichie with the title of re-evaluator of this 'happy hybridity'. She argues that the celebratory idea of hybridity is a contestable issue in postcolonialism which is a way to conceal the pressures and anxieties of being a diaspora and Adichie provides ample scope of re examination of the concept of hybridity and diaspora in her fiction:

Adichie creates hybrids that suffer through identity crises and anxieties of falsehood; her hybrids live difficult and dark existences. Yet in her short stories, these anxious hybrids are all females: the men, on the other hand, are confident, content, and examples of “happy hybrids”: they feel little anxiety in their positions, and are portrayed as naïve and shallow for feeling this way. (4)

Thus Adichie achieves the high pinnacle of immigration tales with *Americanah* and "The Thing Around Your Neck" as these narratives are replete with rootlessness, depression, exile, low self esteem, fake marriages and divorces, and the dilemma of making it big in a land of dreams called America and the bursting of that dream bubble. Uduku states the major challenges posed before the Nigerian Diaspora in the International borders, where race and class are two common hurdles they face:

Most have a constant struggle to establish their status, often working in the harsh unregulated employment sector, where immigrant labour is welcome but grossly underpaid. With often irregular immigration papers, many are illegal or 'invisible' persons to the official authorities and therefore are open to economic and social exploitation at all levels. Furthermore, as ethnic blacks there is also the racism attached to colour that many encounter, in their socio-economic transactions with the 21st century Western economy, similar to early diaspora communities who had to survive in 19th century Europe and the New World.(309-310)

For the immigrants, what remains, in the end, is a longing for homeland and a dull ache of losing something worth vying for, but Adichie does not offer any practical solution to the problems of diaspora. Asoo comments that Adichie’s role as a story teller is limited to the exposition of various problems and situations faced by immigrants in America and as a writer she does not give solutions to redress these problems (26) but another critic defends her role as a writer by saying that “rather than imposing solutions, she subtly invites the reader to engage with the intricacy of cultural and linguistic influences that have shaped the Nigerian experience” (Tunca 306). Thus Adichie may not be a trouble shooter for difficulties of immigrant Nigerians but she paints her canvas with the grim realities of being in America which no doubt have an autobiographical significance.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has carved a niche as a writer on the post modern canvas and the next chapter would examine the new age narrative techniques employed by her in her narratives.

Endnotes:

1. Winner of Pulitzer Prize 2014
2. Psalms 146-147.
3. Diasporic Literature refers to the literature generated by the expatriate sentiments of emigrants of any country.
4. Transatlantic Trade refers to the slave trade in early centuries from Africa to various European and American countries during the colonial era.
5. Buchi Emecheta- a Nigerian woman writer of repute born in 1944.
6. Teju Cole- A Nigerian-American writer/photographer and author of a diasporic novel *Open City* (2012)
7. Daria Tunca from University of Liege, Belgium is a critic and expert of international repute runs a website on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – www.l3.ulg.ac.be/adichie/.

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Chapter 5

Narrative Techniques

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Narrative Techniques

The fictional writings are their own proclivity to exhibit identities of their protagonists. The form and content of fiction have been experimented with throughout the history of fictional literature. This includes the hagiographies, the struggles of mankind and the secular literature alike. Narratives have been one of the most effective techniques to mirror the writer's cultural and sociological background. More so, narratives draw their authenticity and absorbent capabilities through their experimental nature as any narrative is a cumulative result of the writer's personal experience and predecessor influence of pre-existing master narratives. The secret of the popularity of fictional writings also lies in the very fact that it is here that the readers find a narrator who is exposed to the brighter world but comes face to face with the grim realities of life deep seated in his psyche. Each narrative is individualistic because of variegated attitudes of writers hailing from different socio-cultural worlds. Instances and events which would form the content of such narrative curiosity are unearthed from common day to day lives. The narratives can be representative of an ethnic culture or a person.

The novel as a tool of self-expression has been a popular genre since times immemorial and has evolved over the literary and social epochs in such a way that the novel is now synonymous with the nation's chronicle around the globe. In postcolonial nations, people adapted various genres of literature to retell their version of colonialism and because these confessions were honest so the oriental speaker/writer gained prominence on the literary pedestal. When Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie came to the literary fore, a heritage of male dominated Nigerian literature was already over. Adichie has been a true successor of Achebe¹, because of her indomitable expression as a Nigerian woman in her works. The fabric of her narrative landscape is interwoven with the patterns of Nigerian Diaspora, Igbo ethnic ties, human relationships, political upheavals in her native country Nigeria and feminism. While Achebe was more of a story – teller, who followed the path of oral storytelling to relive the past that contained a rich narrative tradition consisting of animal stories, fables, proverbs etc, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is the new age narrator-cum-

chronicler who weaves her tales in and out of contemporary Nigeria and represents it on the global centre stage.

African literary traditions have evolved out of a rich heritage of oral literature but written adaptations have assisted in the sporadic diffusions of popular cultures of Africa throughout the world. Ruth Finnegan is of the opinion that oral traditions have been overlooked in the past but written words depend on the intonations and presentations on oral literature and:

...the bare words cannot be left to speak for themselves. (17)

Hence with assistance from oral traditions, a complete knowledge of literary, socio-cultural backdrops of different ethnicities could be gathered, and from the audience's point of view, it is entertaining as well. So Finnegan highlights that a suitable symbiotic relationship of oral and written narrations are visible in the African literary tradition. While oral traditions have been carried down from generations to generations within the cultural periphery, it is the written word which familiarizes the global village with the cultural nuances of the rich African ethnicity. Hence, prose narratives are important in the form of a novel and that of a short story. While elaborating upon the oral and written traditions, Finnegan remarks:

There has been a co-existence of written narratives and performance poetry wherein one finds a difference of degree between the two and not of kind. (20)

Finnegan states that writing in the twenty first century has become more of a "specialized art" rather than a "universal art" and is not an impersonal or a detached mode of correspondence with the readers. In fact, the basic reason of survival of oral traditions is because they were written down. She stresses upon the importance of written literature by saying that, "...the Homeric epics or an African poem-only became literature on the day they were first written down" (21).

But still, one cannot negate the contributions of oral literary trends for their important role in handing down the inheritance of culture, language, music and performance in various parts of Africa. Such co-existence of two kinds of literature can be felt in the classics as well as the mundane lives of people:

...the interplay between the oral the written word and, at least, the common diction of everyday speech,(an interaction which may well be

heightened by the spreading reliance on radio and television channels of transmission), as well as the largely oral forms like speeches, sermons, children's rhymes, satires depending in part on improvisation, or many current pop songs, all of which have both literary and oral elements – in view of all this it becomes clear that even in a fully literate culture, oral formulations can play a real part, however, unrecognized in the literary scene as a whole. (Finnegan 22)

So one can derive that in the twenty-first century the written narratives have gained prominence because, by and large, most of the African narratives are influenced by cultural wisdom but the written word gives them a pedestal of self-expression where people across the world can read and comprehend their cultures, ethnicities and inherited wisdom too. Narratives of Third World Nations have a two-fold mission - first, a reshuffling of history takes place through the narrative recreation; second, these narratives bring out the tales of travails of a nation and the tales of its survival. In the first dimension, while reshuffling the history, a narrative also takes the readers on a tour from slavery to freedom. However, in this metamorphosis, the Nietzschean² allegory of existentialist crisis is intertwined with the plot. In Adichie's narratives too, there is an unfurling of an aggrieved past of Nigeria, as well as the impressionistic portraiture of characters who remain fixated in the postcolonial void. In the novels like *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013) and the short story volume *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), Adichie is a woman chronicler, who waddles past through the waters of patriarchy and communal violence.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's narratives are a blend of her consciousness and experiences. Her awareness of being an Igbo in post-independence Nigeria as well as the experiences of her grandparents who witnessed ethnic bloodshed of 1967-70's are ingrained in her psyche. Adichie's synonymy with her Igbo-identity is well expressed in Nirmal Bajaj's comment on Black writers:

... he (the black writer) views the entire community in terms of equality, virtually seeing them in his own image. Through inner vision his self-becomes one with them. Identification of the self with the rest of the community gets reflected in his image like a devotee with the

icon. In this way, he merges his ego with the external reality or else absorbs the reality in his own dormant body. (ii)

Adichie gives new dimensions to the narrative traditions of African origin and nature and presents very contemporary tales of real people from her own surroundings. But before analyzing the narrative approaches of Adichie and the elements which make the texture of her narratives, one must delve into the nitty-gritty of narratology. Monika Fludernik in her book *An Introduction to Narratology* clarifies that the narrative is only synonymous with the novel as well as with the short story is a gross misunderstanding of this term. In fact narrative is present around us in various forms like –“someone tells us that about something: a newsreader on the radio, a teacher at school....a fellow passenger on a train...” etc. Hence, the narrators as mundane conversationalist or as the professional narrators or ‘often unconscious spoken language activity, all are alike encompassed by the term narrative (12). The literary narratology does not adhere simply to the general reading and comprehending of the plot of a narrative but it is an empirical delving into the basic nuances of the narrative, for example – its nature, texture, conceptualization and the cultural linkages involved, deeply seated in the core of the narratives.

Narratology is a study of narrative in a comprehensive and complete way. The chain of events in a narrative may not be necessarily arranged chronologically and so the cogitative movement of time is present and the flashbacks and the flash forwards are also incorporated systematically to move the narrative forward. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* elaborates the narrative discourse in the following statement:

... It isn't just plot in the narrow sense which is at issue, but style, viewpoint, pace and so on, which is to say, the whole 'packaging' of the narrative which creates the overall effect. (215)

Thus narrative discourse includes not only the plot and subject matter but also the technique, point of view and other embellishments that complete the text. Narratology comprehends the manners in which the narrative creates and defines the reader's perspective of cultural nuances together with the individualistic approach of the writer/ narrator. So the narrative media like television, film, fiction, also contributes in laying the much-desired foundation of narratology and in this way aide in the analysis

of 'popular culture' (Dino 1) . This cumulative effect of narratives is thus explained by Hayden White:

... far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a meta code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted. (149)

The word 'narrate' is associated with the speech act of narrating a tale while 'narration' is a widespread activity. But here the question arises as to what a narrator narrates? Monika Fludernik uses Gerard Genette's differentiation between three closely linked (and often synonymously used) terms- *narration*, *discours* or a *recit proper* and *histoire*. While narration is the narrative text as utterance, *histoire* is the story the narrator tells in his or her narrative. Narrative discourse together becomes the narrative act and the story becomes a binary distinction. So, the narration is now the representative element which the narrative discourse reports or signifies (2). Fludernik also states that in this perspective a fictional narrative is starkly different from historical writing because a historian is not free to correct narratives hence they abide by the information provided by their sources, but with individually distinct perspectives, historians can have their own set of prejudices. She thus goes on to say that narrative is a 'story plus narrator':

A narrative (Fr. *recit*, Ger. *Erzählung*) is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure). It is the experience of these protagonists that narratives focus on, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world and in the life of the protagonists. In verbal narratives of traditional cast, the narrator functions as a mediator in the verbal mediums of the representation. (6)

Narratologists around the world have examined and categorized narratology and have laid down theories to explain the complicated nature of narrative form. When Roland Barthes published *S/Z*, it widened new horizons in the field of understanding narrative structures and decoding the hidden meanings and symbols behind simple narratives.

Barthes was influenced by structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure but he disagreed with the subjugative effect of narratology to trace the history of emergence of the narratives systematically hence making the text forgo its individuality. Barthes devised five semiotic codes to highlight the interwovenness of literary structure and stressed upon the plurality within a text. These five codes are categorically the voices that form the fabric and texture of a text and at one point of time may dominate the narrative (S/Z XII). The first code is the hermeneutic code which is also, “the voice of the truth”, is the driving force of a narrative and is the basic principle behind the ‘delay’ in action or maintenance of suspense. Such revelation or solution of enigmas is further broken down by Barthes into – “thematization, positioning and formulation of the enigma, fraud, equivocation, blocking (where the enigma cannot be solved), suspended answer, partial answer and the final disclosure of the truth” (LXXXIX). The hermeneutic code is thus irrevocable since once a story is unfurled before the readers, it cannot be furled back and its effect is permanent and it also occupies larger parts of a narrative. The second code proairetic code which arranges interrelated episodes of human behaviours where each episode or sequence has a regularity that may not draw any logic from the narrative (XI). These are smaller sequences of a narrative and not the larger part of the narrative like the hermeneutic code. It is here that Barthes’s notion of the “readerly text” comes to the fore because he feels that the different parts of information are rendered in a ‘prescribed’ order thereby grouping them into events:

Thus the proairetic code pictures the text as a location with spatial and temporal dimensions through which the reader moves. (S/Z n. pag.)

The semic or semantic code is the next in line and it includes the consultations of the character, person, place or an object:

The character has not only characters but also unstable connotations because the person has an existence (a name proper) which is external to the characteristics, the fixed meaning. (n. pag.)

Characteristics according to the semic code change because characters and places evolve over space and time in a narrative. The semic code gives additional meaning over the basic denotative meaning of the word. It is by the use of extended meaning applied to words that authors paint rich pictures within relatively limited texts and

thus showcase their writing skills. The fourth code is symbolic code which is actually the voice of symbols present within the text. It refers to those innovative meanings which arise out of apparently simple expressions. The interpretations are generally transgressive and they could range from rhetorical transgression, sexual transgression to economic transgression. Hence, “new meanings arise out of opposing and conflicting ideas” (n.pag.). The last and the most empirical code is referential code which is also called the voice of science and is constituted by the points at which the text refers to the common bodies of scientific knowledge. Thus with Roland Barthes, the semantic interpretations of a given text took a giant leap and in the later years to come, other narratologists too added and contributed to his theories on narratology (n. pag.).

Another critic Gerard Genette in his literary cannon *Narrative Discourse* devised that in any narrative, an effective rendition plays an important role rather than the text itself. He distinguishes the basic narrative mode in two sub-types on the basis of presentation of narratives, namely “Mimetic” and “Diegetic”. ‘Diegetic’ means summarizing the narrative in a presentation in such a way that the narrator does not try to create illusion while presenting the sequence of events but the narrator reports the action verbatim, without trying to edit it. While commenting on the mimetic presentation which includes the dramatized parts of the narrative, Peter Barry says:

... in which what is done and said is ‘staged’ for the reader, creating the illusion that we are ‘seeing’; and ‘hearing’ things for ourselves.(223)

Dino Felluga while analyzing Peter Brooks’s *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, finds that Brooks combines the nuances of narratology with Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical theory to provide an understanding of the ‘narrative progression’. At the outset of his book, he highlights that the narrative derives its direction and meaning from the plot. Though Brooks is influenced by Roland Barthes *S/Z*, at the same time he appears to move in a different direction:

Whereas Barthes in *S/Z* wishes to explode the boundedness of a narrative, Brooks is interested in exploring precisely a work’s boundedness, the ways it demarcates, encloses, established, limits, orders... (Felluga n.pag.)

Brooks not only explores and invades the motor-forces that drive the text forward, the threads that connect narrative ends and beginnings but he also talks about the discursive manipulation of a narrative that provides the necessary dilation to create suspense and a cathartic feeling after reading the novel. Thus, these theories on narratology not only give a framework to study the text but also help in developing a deeper understanding of hidden meanings and significant tropes. Since Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a postmodern, postcolonial writer, her texts are replete with symbols pertaining to slavery and freedom, the resilience of women and children, the audacity of the downtrodden and of course the metaphor of birth and death of a new country and quashing of hopes of an ethnocentric free nation. Not only this, Adichie gives a panoramic point of view of the globalised Nigerians, more specifically of those who migrated to the United States of America in search of the great 'American Dream'. So, in this chapter, an attempt would be made to map the techniques employed by Adichie in her works.

The first novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) is a traumatic tale of Achike family. The narrator is a teenager of fifteen – Kambili Achike who is a victim of her father Eugene Achike's Christian fanaticism along with her brother Jaja and mother Beatrice are fellow sufferers. Eugene, a charitable, honest, courageous businessman and an owner of a newspaper – *The Standard*, was once an Igbo, but after being brainwashed by the Christian missionaries, has now forgotten his own father Papa Nnukwu and his Igbo roots. It is very surprising to see him calling his own father a pagan and a sinner just because he still follows Igbo rituals and has denied Eugene the favour of converting himself into a Christian.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is not only aware of her socio-cultural Igbo roots but also takes notice of the changing milieu of Nigeria in the post independence years. Adichie's novels are "socio-domestic documents" (Okuyade 246) and hence heavily inspired by the social changes and political upheavals in her native country. Her second novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) is one such socio political documentary of war-torn Nigeria during the 1967-70 Biafran war crisis wherein Adichie touches upon the ethnic violence during war time and the suffering of innocent natives in a very detached yet heart wrenching manner.

Half of a Yellow Sun is a love story of war-stricken Igbo twin sisters- Olanna and Kainene Ozobia who are caught up between sibling rivalry, misunderstanding,

deception and unfortunate circumstances and so are their star-crossed lovers Odenigbo and Richard respectively. While Odenigbo is a “revolutionary lover” (HYS 44) who is a Professor of mathematics at Nsukka University, Richard is a British journalist cum writer who shows a keen interest in Nigerian art and unusual love for Nigerian culture. While for Olanna and Odenigbo it is love at first sight, Kainene weighs, and measures and teases Richard who has an immense crush on her.

Adichie implants the Biafran Civil War 1967-70 in this topography of human emotions of love, hate, rivalry, deceit, adultery and pride in nationalistic upheaval. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a novel with a difference because here the central character is not one of the twin daughters of rich and powerful Chief Ozobia or their lovers but a simple man Friday called Ugwu, who is only thirteen at the beginning of the novel and transforms into a book writer at the end of the novel. Adichie forms the narrative from the perspective of this houseboy of Odenigbo, who not only grows in age and experience but also witnesses the Biafran war as a forcefully conscripted soldier.

Similarly, in *Americanah* (2013), Adichie shares the experience of émigré Nigerians living in the United States of America and the United Kingdom in search of better living standards and employment opportunities. Jeannie Ortega finds Adichie’s *Americanah* as a commendable and realistic work on ‘globalization’ and ‘immigrant mobility’. She highlights:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* provides the voice of postcolonial Nigeria as a post modern author. *Americanah* embodies the previous novels aspects of local movement and the immigrant story and places their conversations in the twenty first century and global settings. *Americanah* shows how the influence of decolonization can again change shape with the passage of time, industrialization and sophistication of culture... *Americanah* reassesses how the definition of national identity expands in order to express more clearly independent national identity. As a twenty-first century Nigerian Writer Adichie demonstrates the influences of the post colonial condition in her native Nigeria. *Americanah*’s protagonist Ifemelu tries to establish national identity in an era eroded by the cultural history of colonialism, capitalism and post modernism. The novel illustrates the way in which emigration and growing globalization changed the politics of native

Nigeria. The lines and distinctions between nationality based on geographic location and ethnicity, thus with growing presence of international industrialization and subsequent cultural diaspora. (47)

Americanah is a twenty-first century immigrant story in which the roles of author and narrator appear to coincide because Adichie too happens to be an immigrant in America who left her native Nigeria to pursue higher studies. The female protagonist of *Americanah* is Ifemelu, who also migrates to America to study university. During her fifteen year long stay in this foreign country, she achieves a prestigious fellowship at Princeton University and even runs a successful blog *Raceteenth Or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*. The novel is about her first-hand traumatic learning experiences of getting metamorphosed from a Nigerian to an American citizen.

John Mullan, while commenting on the beginning of a novel states that a novel must have the faculty of establishing a contract or correspondence with the reader and it may be aided or hindered by other associated factors. He also brings out the significance of some famous openings which are not only symbolic but communicative and arresting as well:

When we talk about the famous opening of novels, we usually mean resonant first sentences rather than beautifully crafted first scenes or chapters. The memorable first sentence will epitomize in a small way the logic of the novel as a whole. (36)

While two of her novels namely *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* begin from some middle point of the narrative, her third novel *Americanah* commences where the heroine is about to leave America forever and rest of the tale is presented in the form of flashbacks and remembrances. Thus, the chronological order is deliberately evaded to keep the readers engaged in the respective plots. All the three novels are equipped with well-crafted beginnings because the tones of the narratives are set in the opening pages in a way befitting their themes. Adichie pays a tribute to her literary influence Chinua Achebe, in two of her novels i.e. in *Purple Hibiscus*, when she borrows lines from his novel *Things Fall Apart* to summarise the situation of a broken family and in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, when she quotes a few lines from his poem 'Mango Seedling' describing the thwarted dreams of Biafra.

Purple Hibiscus begins on a note of rebellion by Jaja and is quite similar to the thriller winter Ruth Rendell's novel *The Crocodile Bird* (1993) which opens with, "The world began to fall apart at mine in the evening" or "Violent death fascinates people (*Bridesmaid*) (1989) or those haunting lines of *The Brimstone Wedding* (1995) – "The Clothes of the dead won't wear long" (37). The novel opens with the famous line from Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*:

Things started to fall apart at home when my brother Jaja, did not go to the communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère. (*Purple Hibiscus* 1)

The beginning echoes a rebellion at Eugene Achike's household and young Kambili gives a prelude to the fractions which are going to appear in this heavily Christianized family. However Kambili does not reveal the reasons for Jaja's series of denials to Papa for Christian Church rituals and her mother's sufferings in the beginning. Unlike Ruth Rendell's delusionary thriller novels Adichie's narrative delves into the simple time between characters.

The novel begins in '*Medias res*'³ when Kambili notices the strange behaviour of her brother who has shown audacity to defy their father's word. "Breaking Gods: Palm Sunday" is the stipulated beginning from where Adichie picks up the threads of the plot and chronologically it is a beginning from the middle of the action. The rest of the chapters are flashbacks, through which Kambili recollects the exact happenings in which her family is situated. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili is a teenager who cogitates her memories between past and present and hence may sound amateur but she certainly undergoes psychological maturity in due course of time. Here the narrator is not an expert but a young child who goes through ordeals of loving and hating her father and reaches to a conclusion that love cannot subjugate and suffocate. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the narration is not set chronologically but it follows a young girl's memory and so the plot oscillates between the past and the present which is, both, "unconventional and audacious" (Mullan 162).

The beginning of the novel sets the pace for a tale of rebellion, courage, resilience and audacity and Adichie on the very first page of *Purple Hibiscus* acquaints the readers with "the ground rules as it were – of the fictional world into which we are entering" (Mullan 10). Disintegration, rebellion and factions are visible by the way Kambili

begins the narration of this tale of horrific torture of a family at the hands of a 'protecting' father. Jaja's refusal to participate in the communion is the result of his realization of the gross difference between the tyranny of Adichie's house in Enugu and the breath of freedom at his paternal aunt Ifeoma's house in Nsukka.

The title of the novel *Purple Hibiscus* is crisp and phrasey and stands for a symbol of rebellion. The blooming of purple hibiscus in the garden is a sign of newness and upsurge of colour in the lives of children and their mother as well as their concomitant hope and deliverance from suffering. It is true that when Jaja first notices unusual purple hibiscus in Ifeoma's garden, he feels that there is a possibility of creating something new out of the present smothering circumstances. At Nsukka, Jaja confesses the reason for his broken finger and Kambili gathers an audacity to fall in love with a vibrant young priest Father Amadi, a friend of Ifeoma's family. In the first chapter, after exhibition of Jaja's protest for the communion Kambili notices young buds of purple hibiscus which are ready to bloom:

Closer to the house, vibrant bushes of hibiscus reached out and touched one another, as if they were exchanging their petals. The purple plants had started to push out sleepy buds but most of the flowers were still on the red ones. (9)

Similarly, Adichie's civil war narrative, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is an equally powerful and evocative novel which brings forth the true picture of bruised Igbo national sentiment which led to the demand of a separate Igbo state of Biafra in Nigeria. It focuses on elite class political struggle through Olanna, Kainene and their family drama on one hand, while on the other hand, a relentless struggle of common Nigerian citizens for food, medicine and survival in the refugee camps after the onset of civil war is visible. In the 'Author's Note' of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie mentions that her parents Prof. Nwoye James Adichie and Mrs. Ifeoma Grace Adichie shared the horrors of Biafran war with her not because they went through horror, "but that they survived" (n. pag.). Hence the basic survival instinct and resilience are prominent shades in most of the characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

The novel is preceded by an epilogue which is a quotation from Chinua Achebe's poem collection *Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems* (1968). The poem is called 'Mango Seedling' and it was written to commemorate the patriotism and courage of

his friend Major Christopher Okigbo who was one of the leading rebel soldiers. In Chinua Achebe's biography, it is mentioned that Okigbo was one of the Biafran Army leaders who was wiped out by the "gallant federal forces". His death was a shock not only for Achebe but also for his three year old son. Okigbo, along with major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and Major Ironsi were the "three elephants of Biafra" who lost their lives for an Igbo cause. Ohaeto writes that soon after the fall of Enugu, the creative writers and poets fighting for the Biafran cause gathered at Ogbor hill, Aba and most of the poems recited during the meet were in the memory of the Biafran patriot Okigbo (Ohaeto 129).

Beginning a novel on Biafran cause with these lines from "Mango Seedling" takes the readers back to the combat and struggle of courageous Igbo leaders who fought for a lost cause. Ohaeto further mentions in Achebe's biography that Achebe's contribution as a "Parker Pen" soldier was immense because of his power packed war time poems. In a poem "Refugee Mother and Child"⁴, Achebe captures the aftermaths of war by describing an emaciated child and the refugee mother amidst "odours of diarrhea of unwashed children", "washed out ribs and dried up bottoms" and "rust coloured hair" (131). "Mango Seedling" was dedicated to his friend Christopher Okigbo where the patriot friend is portrayed as a mango seedling, "which fails to grow as a result of lack of nourishment and which dies", is linked to the sudden unfortunate death of Okigbo who was fighting for a national cause. The given quotation laments on the dried up mango seedling:

Today I see it still

Dry wire – thin in sun and dust of the dry months

Headstone on tiny debris of passionate courage. (131)

Thus the epilogue highlights the historical significance and conveys the ordeals and pangs of Igbo sentiments which were crushed by the federal troops ruthlessly. In a review of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, E. Frances White compliments the way in which Adichie portrays the grim scenes of war, the suffering and starvation of women and children and demand for a separate state turning into a fiasco is a deft replication of ravages of war in words:

Adichie has done her homework well. Importantly she writes into a rich tradition- virtually every major Nigerian writer has felt compelled

to address this devastating civil war. Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and Wole Soyinka have weighed in. Because of Nigeria's lively tradition of feminist writers, Adichie is also fortunate to follow in the footsteps of Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa each of whom has written about the particular horrors women face during war. (10)

Adichie's *Half a Yellow Sun* is set during the Nigerian civil war but the beginning resonates the significance of monotonous daily life of one of its central characters. The novel does not open with descriptions of soldiers fighting or with shelling of bombs but with a statement about Odenigbo's eccentricity mentioned by Ugwu's aunt while taking him for a meeting with his new employer, the master Odenigbo. The opening lines of *Half of a Yellow Sun* depict the times of peace in Nigeria during the years before the civil war. This sets the pace of this civil war tale because at the beginning, Odenigbo and Ugwu are highlighted by Adichie, who later turn out to be complementary to one another:

Master was a little crazy; he had spent too many years reading books overseas talked to himself in his office, did not always return greetings, and had too much hair. (HYS 3)

The title of this novel 'Half of Yellow Sun' is derived from the Biafran Flag, "which is in tricolor – red, black, and green charged with a golden rising sun over a golden bar. The eleven rays of the sun represent the eleven provinces of Biafra ("Biafra" n. pag.). Apart from this literal meaning of the title, the phrase also stands for the half achieved success during the attempt of succession and declaration of a separate Igbo state of Biafra. Since the demand for succession was only 'half ripe' when it was aborted by Nigerian troops, the "half" adjective conveys the half achieved separate state of Biafra. The title is apt as it conveys the Dorian sentiments of the Biafran soldiers who wore 'half of a yellow sun' on their uniforms. Adichie's adoration for their noble cause is exhibited in her description of the parading Biafran troops:

At the gates, Biafran soldiers were waving cars through, they looked distinguished in their khaki uniforms, boots shining, half of a yellow sun strewn on their sleeves. (HYS 225)

Half of a Yellow Sun has a suggestive title which idealizes Igbo national feelings and its immediate suggestion is that of the Biafran war. Moreover it hints that the

narrative is not a personalized tale of love in the times of war but it is the story of every Igbo who suffered during the civil war and experienced acute starvation in the refugee camps.

Adichie's literary corpus is wide ranging because on one hand she takes up a national cause in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and on the other hand, devotes her latest novel *Americanah* for the cause of immigrant Nigerians.

Americanah is distinctive also because of the coinciding roles of author cum narrator one witnesses during the course of the narrative. Monika Fludernik states that in the postmodern literary times, the author is more important than the narrative. She goes on to say that this "renewed interest in the author" is a clear cut indication to the post modern disagreement on Roland Barthes's concept 'the author is dead'⁵. She says in support of her argument:

At the present time narratologists are also more immediately concerned with the figure of the author of particular interest are texts produced by members of ethnic minorities or more generally groups suffering from discrimination, post colonial texts literature of migration, women's writings. Narratologists are also focusing on texts which undermine the author narrator distinction. (13)

The title of *Americanah* itself is a mock epithet for been-tos, and emerges from its first mention in the novel as, 'Ifemelu's high school friend Ginika is leaving for the U.S. and is distributing her clothes to her friends' (Guarracino 12). The title of the novel is derived from a slang term 'Americanah' which is used for Nigerians who dream of being American citizens. It's satirical nature is shown by the way in which the Americanized heroine Ifemelu returns to her native land after fifteen years of practicing "accommodative attitude" while being in America. Adichie tries to de-glam the entire theory of the great American dream of Nigerians by bringing up most significant issues pertaining to expatriates in America:

The novel effectively dismantles the original ideas of America being a solution to the postcolonial condition. As seen in the process of Ifemelu's identity formation, she learns that race and class are still discriminatory institutions used to categorize and control marginalized groups. (Ortega 55)

It is not usual to find a well explained introductory page at the outset of a novel, but the readers have to have cursory ideas about the nature and purpose of the narrative in question. The world of the narrative text is a “fictional world” and as one reads the very first statement of a novel, the readerly prediction and “expectation” begin to take shape (Mullan 10). The beginning of *Americanah* is both descriptive and judgmental while Ifemelu describes major cities of America, she uses an adjective or two, which are obviously coloured by her experiences. Ifemelu has an obvious ‘affinity’ and ‘affability’ with Princeton since she has completed a prestigious fellowship term at the Princeton University. Yemisi Ogbe aptly describes the opening pages of *Americanah*:

The book opens atmospherically, with a sensory introduction to American cities: “Princeton smelled of nothing, New Haven of neglect Philadelphia of burnt asphalt” These descriptions are opinionated, heart-felt promises. Ifemelu – the voice that carries us through the book – is Nigerian, dark-skinned, self-absorbed and overwhelmed by hair issues. She is headed to the “African hairdressers” to have her hair braided. You learn that she is preparing to return home to Nigeria, there is a secret here being offered that appeals intensely. Adichie insinuates the organic connection between the braiding of black hair, the telling of stories and the transferring of ideas from the braider to one whose hair is being braided; her stories and ideas are being braided into our black hair. (*Chronic* n. pag.)

It is true that that Ifemelu’s comments about various cities of America appear opinionated and prejudiced and she almost seems like casting aspersions on them like an outsider. Her pre-occupation with America is pinpointed by the fact that at the outset, the primary thoughts that come to her mind are concerned with America while the paradox is, she has decided to move back to Lagos.

Narrator plays the most significant role in formation of a plot and he/she is either one of the characters in the plot which results in first –person narrative or he/she remains an outsider and narrates the events of the story hence forming the third-person narrative technique. At times the differentiation between the two modes is vague and the readers get an impression of an absent narrator (Fludernik 21). While this distinction remains universal, linguists and scholars throughout the globe have

formulated various theories regarding the types of narrators, a few of which are discussed below.

Seymour Benjamin Chatman introduced the terms “overt” (identifiable) and “covert” (concealed) narrators to explain the contributions of a narrator in a text. The overt narrator is easily noticed articulating his/her ideas at all levels of the narrative making his/her physical presence felt as he/she presents the narration in first person. Fludernik thus aptly summarises the role of an overt narrator:

The narrator is drawn in considerable detail, even down to providing a description of his/her physical appearance. Such a narrator takes an active part in the story, sits at his/her desk, contemplates the apple trees in blossom and has a spouse or child, a personal history and a gender which are clearly indicated. (22)

The covert narrator is present in an “effaced narration” and one can only, “hear a voice speaking of events, characters and setting but its owner remains hidden in the discursive shadows” (Chatman 197) , largely rendering thoughts and ideas through indirect speech thus resulting in third person narration. At the same time, the physical presence of a covert narrator is indiscernible as the text is generally short of his/her description. To summarise, a covert narrator holds an insignificant position vis a vis the text and he/she largely remains discreet. In Chatman’s words:

Unlike the “non-narrated” story, the covertly narrated one can express a character’s speech or thoughts in indirect form. Such expression implies an interpretive device or mediator qualitatively different from the simple mindreading stenographer of non-narrated narratives. Some interpreting person must be converting the characters’ thoughts into indirect expression... (197)

A similar distinction was propounded by Gerard Genette who coined two terms: “homodiegetic narrator” and “heterodiegetic narrator”. The former refers to a character in the plot who undertakes the role of a narrator, while the latter refers to a narrator who is not one of the characters in the text and is largely an omniscient narrator. Genette thus clearly differentiates between the two :

We will therefore distinguish here two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells [...], the other with the narrator

present as a character in the story he tells [...]. I call the first type, for obvious reasons, heterodiegetic, and the second type homodiegetic." (Guillemette et.al. n.pag.)

Similarly, the narrative perspective devised by Genette is equally significant while assessing the structure of the plot. He propounded three kinds of focalization or perspective types that were based on the situation of point of view. Genette was of the opinion that the narrator and the person perceiving the ideas are different. If the perception of the narrator is omniscient and he is well aware of the inner most thoughts and ideas of the major and minor characters then it would be called "Zero Focalization." The second type of perspective was called Internal Focalization when the point of view of the narrator is limited to the observations of the main protagonist and anything beyond his/her standpoint could not be conveyed to the readers. The third was termed "External Focalization" where the narrator behaves like a camera lens and he observes the actions as an outsider. Here the role of the narrator is restricted to the observations made from the gestures and actions of the characters and he/she has no access to the thoughts of the characters at all (n.pag.).

The narrative pattern in all the three novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie could be analysed on the basis of the narrative theories discussed above. Here the presence of first person or third person narrator is clearly identified in the texts. It is notable that Adichie plays safe by avoiding the less used second person narrative in the three novels.

Kambili narrates the book in the first person but in the past tense. It is evident that the novel does not follow the chronological order because it is a reflection of a teenager's stream of consciousness, hence hiding and narrating the truths of a Christianized family life. This unique structure continues for twelve chapters in such a way that it preserves the Christian flavour and aura of the novel. The novel is divided into four parts – "Breaking Gods – Palm Sunday" "Speaking with Our Spirits- Before Palm Sunday" , " The Pieces of Gods- After Palm Sunday" and " Different Silence- The Present." However, the central motif of the novel remains the Sunday before Easter, so a thorough Christianized pattern is reflected in the narration.

Adichie uses the first person account of a fifteen year old girl as a powerful tool to unravel the frustrations and dilemmas of Christian converts in Nigeria. One sees a

dually colonized wife Beatrice as the punching bag of her indoctrinated and brain washed husband and justice arrives in *Purple Hibiscus* when she decides to put an end to the torturer's life after observing that violence on Jaja and Kambili have reached a high water mark, hence gives slow poison to Eugene with the help of her maid Sisi. Beatrice's nine miscarriages (32), Jaja's deformed little finger (154), Kambili's beatings for eating some cereal before mass (102), the ritual cleansing of Jaja's and Kambili's feet with scalding hot water for spending time with Papa Nnukwu (198) and Eugene kicking Kambili mercilessly when she tries to protect the shreds of Papa Nnukwu's painting (210), etc. are all moments of frenzied attacks by Eugene on his family for breaking the rules of discipline and religious piety and they are reported in detail from Kambili's point of view.

One can call this novel 'Kambili's confession' since her descriptions engage the readers into an enigmatic but horrifying set up of her father's 'Puritan' house, and at the same time Kambili's innermost thoughts and dilemmas are also put forth before the readers through such first person detailing of the novel. In such cases the reading character and the narrator happens to be one person but it is an expert narrative method which would separate the twain (Mullan 46). In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili is an omniscient narrator and views the motives of all the other characters in the novel but she leaves it to the comprehension of the readers as to why Eugene behaves violently, why Beatrice never protests against the violent attacks of her husband and why Kambili and Jaja are proud of their father in the initial stages of the novel? John Mullan mentions that this technique is typical of a 'consummate omniscient narrator' (44). Here the narrator exhibits partial knowledge unlike the author who is aware about the future of the plot. Mullan elaborates about this difference of knowledge and awareness between the author and the narrator:

The author can know everything, but the narrator declines to do so, presenting the scene to us as if he had already puzzled over it, without quite getting to the bottom of things. This partial knowledge, of course is as artificial a convention as another narrator's complete knowledge.
(65)

While talking about Kambili's role as a narrator, critic Daria Tunca mentions that being the "internal focaliser" and "an autodiegetic narrator⁶" most of the events, "are rendered from her point of view" but it is Eugene's opinions that are slipped into

Kambili's direct speeches (123, 124). However this indoctrination suffers a set back after Papa Nnukwu's death and Kambili realizes that her father's atrocities are nothing but frenzied violence.

Adichie's narrative technique in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is experimental in nature and "the story does not unfold in sequence" (Birnbaum n.pag.). Just like the cogitative narrative structure of *Purple Hibiscus*, here too the action moves back and forth thus leading to a division of chapters under the twice repeated titles 'Early Sixties' and 'Late Sixties'.

The deliberate narrative pattern ponders to and fro in space and time and the repetition of chapter titles presents a clear differentiation between the pre-war happiness and the post-war tragedy. In an interview, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shares the reasons for not persecuting the story chronologically where she mentioned that for very humane reasons she as a writer plays upon her narrative pattern:

Well, I was writing a novel and not a political thing. And I wanted to have an opportunity to play with the structure. Also I wanted to keep my characters humanized. Fully human- I didn't want my reader ever to forget that these were real people who had a life before they have to endure. So I started long before the war, just to get my readers to know my characters. I didn't want to know them into war. The classic idea of a war novel is you start off and the characters are thrown into one and we watch them suffer. (Adichie n. pag.)

Thus Adichie's style of narrating the harrowing war time tale not only highlights the gross and unfortunate change which a war can bring in the lives of common people but it is also a "technique of fiction" (*The Morning News* n. pag.) to keep the readers engaged in the novel.

The novel follows the "third person narration" wherein the 'omniscient narrator' retells the civil war tragedy from a vantage point. The narrative has internal focalization since the point of view of the narrator is limited to the lives of the twins Olanna and Kainene and their respective lovers namely, Odenigbo and Richard because they are significant from the central focal point of the novel ie. Ugwu. Similarly there are no evidences of access to the sentiments of other characters like Eberechi, Anulika, Amala, Jomo, Harrison, Colonel Madu and the elder Ozobia

couple. The omniscient narrator or the internal focalizer is nameless and faceless and is not one of the characters from *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie unsparingly analyzes these characters in the most detached and practical manner to bring out human emotions like love, jealousy familial bonding, deception, adultery etc.

Since the third person narrative is free from author's prejudice, it makes the plot strongly persuasive. Adichie, in *Half of a Yellow Sun* renders a tragic narrative in the most flawless manner in which the forte of her narration remains uncoloured by any gross emotions of one particular character. The novel is a war-ridden drama where the socio-political upheaval of a country plays a significant role in traversing the domestic set ups of different characters. The war circumstances have an upper hand in the plot and the characters are puppets who are driven by an unseen driving force. The narration remains aloof from confessions of any single character as it is noticeable that the narrative objectivity of *Half of a Yellow Sun* is unhindered.

The third novel in question is *Americanah*, focuses on Ifemelu's emotional maturity as she progresses from a love – sick adolescent in Lagos to an independent blogger in America. Ifemelu initially begins her stay in America as a university student but during the huge span of fifteen years she also becomes a successful blogger. When the novel begins she wants to return to her roots in Nigeria. Ifemelu is not only the central character in *Americanah*, Adichie also describes major events and people through her point of view. And so the heroine is also the “reflector figure” in the narrative as she serves as a “focalizer” or “lens” and so the plot passes through the “filter” of Ifemelu, be it her notions on race skin colour or hair. The narrative structure of *Americanah* is that of a third person narration by an omnipresent narrator, who not only guides the readers through the external events and physical situations but also wades through the mental and emotional mindset of expatriate Nigerians in U.S. and U.K. by unravelling the dilemmas and crisis of Ifemelu and her lover Obinze Maduwesi respectively. One can identify the narrator – author of *Americanah* with the ‘zero-focalizer’ theory of Genette's which also comes close to Stanzel's⁷ authorial narrative situation :

Zero focalization corresponds to Stanzel's authorial narrative situation in which the authorial narrator is above the world of the action, looks down on it and is able to see into the characters' mind as well as shifting between the various locations where the story takes place. This

perspective is unrestricted or unlimited in contrast to the limitations of internal and external focalization. (Fludernik 38)

The narrative structure of *Americanah*, falls under zero focalization since the narrative is not restricted to the inner thoughts and life events of one single character and it covers parallel lives of various other characters like Obinze and his family, Ifemelu's parents, aunty Uju, Dike and even Ifemelu's lovers Blaine and Curt etc. There are descriptions related to thoughts and expressions, even of minor characters like the hair braiders, if one takes into account the opening chapter of *Americanah*. The workings of the inner mind of the hair braider Aisha are described in the novel :

Aisha shrugged, a haughty shrug, as though it was not her problem if her customer did not have good taste. She reached into a cupboard, brought out two packets of attachments, checked to make sure they were both the same colour. (*Americanah* 12)

Another example further proves the use of zero focalization narrative of *Americanah* :

Aisha snorted; she clearly could not understand why anybody would choose to suffer through combing natural hair, instead of simply relaxing it. She sectioned out Ifemelu's hair, plucked out a little attachment from the pole on the table and began deftly to twist. (*Americanah* 12 – 13)

While talking about the perspective parameter, Fludernik draws from the theory of Manfred Pfister⁸ on perspective structure and throws light on the closed perspective / aperspectival type⁹ and the open perspective. The 'traditional narrative point of view' adheres to the closed perspective since the narrator enjoys the privilege of having his point of view prevail over other characters. But at times the text gives rise to ambiguity and, "provides no clear and obvious guidelines for the readers to decide between the narrator's views and those the characters" (39). *Americanah* ignores the two polarities mentioned above and hence follows the zero focalization theory of Genette, more so because the text has race, ethnicity, place (country) and colour as its priority and not any individual as its sole subject. Since it talks about the Igbo migrant group in America but has a Pan-African affability so it follows the zero focalization narrative point of view.

Symbols are motifs which carry images or represent certain ideas pertaining to the central themes of a narrative. In Adichie's novels, symbols represent not only people but also ideas, emotions and even the states of the mind of the characters. In her novels, one finds two layers of meaning, wherein, the first layer is that of the literal interpretation of the plot, and the second layer is in a symbolic layer in which images and objects represent abstract ideas and feelings.

The first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* is replete with symbols drawn from plants, trees and flowers. Major three symbols in the novel are palm trees, figurines and the purple hibiscus flower. In the opening pages of the novel Kambili describes her mother decorating the house with fresh palm fronds while her father burning the dried palms on Ash Wednesday:

Mama placed the fresh palm fronds, which were wet with holy water, on the dining table and then went upstairs to change. Later, she would knot the palm fronds into sagging cross shapes and hang them on the wall beside our gold-framed family photo. They would stay there until next Ash Wednesday, when we would take the fronds to church, to have them burn for ash. Papa, wearing a long, gray robe like the rest of the oblates, helped distribute ash every year. (*Purple Hibiscus* 3)

Critic Kabore highlights that palm is used as a symbol of Christianity and the triumph of Jesus Christ over sin and death and in a way it also signifies Beatrice and her children's victory over the torture of their patriarch Eugene. Beatrice uses green palms to adorn the dining table while Eugene distributes ashes to the congregation on Ash Wednesday (33). It is symbolic of Beatrice being redeemed from death and torture while Eugene himself turns into dust at the end of the narrative. The waiting period to let the palm twigs dry represents Beatrice's perseverance before finally poisoning Eugene.

Figurines are also portent symbols in the novel because they are made of glass, are ballet dancing figures and are fragile. They represent Beatrice, Jaja and Kambili who are also mere puppets in the hands of Eugene. There are occasions when Beatrice hugs them or cleans them meticulously with a soft cloth so that she can have a mental escape from Eugene's beatings and torture. Similarly the children too are adolescents with a glass-like psyche and any attempt to indoctrinate them with religious teachings,

is reflected clearly in their behaviour. Just like a glass, they are in a fragile state because Eugene is more of a tyrant than a loving father. Kabore pinpoints the link between the figurines and Beatrice:

The author establishes a link between the figurines and Mama's gentle attempts to cope with her husband's violence. Mama is physically weaker than Papa. Interestingly, each time she is beaten by her husband, after her miscarriages for example, she spends some time with the figurines as if retracting to think over and find solution to stop such abuses. (34)

The eponymous flowers of purple hibiscus are also symbolic of defiance from convention, rebellion and freedom. One can decipher that the usual red hibiscus stands for convention, discipline and torture in Achike's house. Moreover the colour red is synonymous with blood, and Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja had bled several times after getting hit by Eugene. The stalks of purple hibiscus are brought from Auntie Ifeoma's house by Jaja, hence it is he who is ready to register an open protest against any form of violence in the name of Christianity.

Similarly the major motifs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are the Biafran flag and the roped pots. While the Biafran flag stands for the demand for secession, the roped pots symbolise Richard's enchantment with the Nigerian country and its art.

The Biafran flag is the most significant symbol in the novel because of its Igbo-centric subject. While many critics view the civil war as an aborted attempt of secession, it was also a historical unification of Biafrans of Nigeria which the world witnessed for the first time. Olanna, one of the major characters in the novel is seen in her full patriotic fervour when she teaches the school children about the Biafran flag, undeterred by the bomber jets and shrapnel:

They sat on wooden planks and the weak morning sun streamed into the roofless class as she unfurled Odenigbo's cloth flag and told them what the symbols meant. Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future. (HYS 252)

Roped pots refer to the ancient ninth century Igbo-Ukwu artefacts which were excavated in Nigeria during the late sixties and a British expatriate Richard Churchill is in awe of these intricate metal pots and of course the, “extraordinary woman” (HYS 389) Kainene. Richard begins his career as an amateur writer and an Afroophile by writing a draft entitled, *In the Time of Roped Pots* but he could never become the voice of the Igbos. Unfortunately, Richard’s first draft on Igbo-Ukwu art gets vandalised during the civil war and another one is burnt by Kainene to avenge his adultery and these events become symbolic of Richard’s foreign origin and that he could never be assimilated into the Nigerian culture. At one point of time Colonel Madu thwarts Richard’s attempt of posing himself as a Nigerian :

Of course I asked because you are white. They will take what you write more seriously because you are white. Look, the truth is that this is not your war. This is not your cause. Your government will evacuate you in a minute if you ask them to. So it is not enough to carry limp branches and shout power, power to show that you support Biafra. If you really want to contribute, this is the way that you can. The world has to know the truth of what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent while we die. (HYS 383)

Since *Americanah* happens to be a tale of an immigrant, colour and race are significant symbols as the novel presents bitter sweet experiences of a Nigerian trying to survive in the United States of America. Ifemelu’s opinions about colour and race could be gathered from the first post of her blog. Her first blog post is about ‘Hispanic’ being differently defined in the various strata of American society. She says that it is about “race” – a thought which is generated after an interaction with Alma, her cousin Dike’s babysitter who is pale-skinned and ‘Hispanic’:

Hispanic means the frequent companions of American blacks in poverty rankings, Hispanic means a slight step above American blacks in the American race ladder, Hispanic means the chocolate-skinned woman from Peru, Hispanic means the indigenous people of Mexico. Hispanic means the biracial-looking folks from the Dominican Republic...All you need to be a Spanish-speaking but not from Spain and voila, you’re a race called Hispanic. (Americanah 105).

Adichie further shares that though she is not a James Baldwin fan like Ifemelu, nor she writes any blog but the writer shares her agony of being treated ‘differently’ in America, as the knowledge of being black dawned on Adichie in America:

Also, race is something that one has to learn. I had to learn what it meant to be black. When I first came, somebody made a joke about fried chicken, and people said 'Oh my God!' And I just thought, 'Why? What's the problem? What's going on?' If you're coming from Nigeria, you have no idea what's going on. When I came to the United States, I hadn't stayed very long, but I already knew that to be “black” was not a good thing in America, and so I didn't want to be “black.” I think there are many immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean who feel that way, and will say very clearly ‘I'm not black.’ (Adichie n. pag.)

Similarly in another post Ifemelu mentions that America is a racist place and that thought emerges out of her surprises on an instance when Dike is refused a sunscreen by a friend in a school camp, just because he is dark skinned. This racism which is heavily ingrained in very young children makes her think about the non-American Black perspective and racial politics:

Finally, race. There's a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on top, specifically White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, otherwise known as WASP, and American Black is always on the bottom, and what's in the middle depends on time and place. (Or as that marvellous rhyme goes: if you're white, you're all right; if you're brown, stick around; if you're black, get back!). (184-185)

Hair is another effective symbol in *Americanah* because in America, Ifemelu struggles very hard to preserve her ethnicity and considers hair-braiding a cultural symbol. The novel begins on the instance when Ifemelu is travelling from Princeton to another town to get her hair braided. This establishes hair as an important subject for a heroine who has been living in America since last fifteen years. Ifemelu is so much inclined to preserve her Afro-hair verve that she joins an online natural hair community *happykinkynappy.com* and considers her kinky hair precious. One of Ifemelu's friends Wambui decides to wear a short hair style just because she is against

hair relaxers and chemical treatments. She quips, “Relaxing your hair is like being in prison. You’re caged in. Your hair rules” (208).

On one of the occasions when Ifemelu expresses her desire to get a job in America, her “caramel skinned African American” friend Ruth suggests her to straighten her hair. Moved by her advice, Ifemelu decides to go for it, but ends up in scalding her scalp with chemicals. For Ifemelu, that moment was suicidal as she could not appreciate straight hair like a native white American woman. Her state of mind is well described by the narrator in the following lines:

Her hair was hanging down rather than standing up, straight and sleek, parted at the side and curving to a slight bob at her chin. The verve was gone. She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully; while the hairdresser had flat-ironed the ends, the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss. (*Americanah* 203)

Realism in character portrayal is an asset to the narration. It is a necessity to have a human-like protagonist at the axial point of the novel so that the narrative appears convincing and probable (Fludernik 6). One can agree with John Mullan when he says that success in characterization is achieved only when the writers are able to strike a sync between the readers and his characters’ inner most feelings, even though the character is an imaginary one (84). Adichie too creates such characters with whom her readers connect instantly, thus triumphing in the art of characterization.

The characters in *Purple Hibiscus* are realistic and symbolic because each character stands for his/her ideals. For instance Eugene Achike is a typical by product of Christian indoctrination in African countries and is a heartless ‘gothic patriarch’ (Mabura 206). At the outset of the novel one finds him to be an eccentric pastor, helping to distribute ash on the Ash Wednesday. Kambili mentions his extra effort to Christianize himself:

Papa, wearing a long, gray robe like the rest of the oblates, helped distribute ash every year. His line moved the slowest because he pressed hard on each forehead to make a perfect cross with his ash covered thumb and slowly, meaningfully enunciated every word of “dust and unto dust you shall return”. (*Purple Hibiscus* 3)

Further, Kambili describes his kneeling position to receive the communion, his eyes shut hard with extra effort and face tightened to show deep respect for a ‘blond life size virgin Mary’ (4), and his dislike for hand clapping during the mass lest it may negate the solemnity of the offerings. Moreover Eugene is the biggest donor to Peter’s Pence and St. Vincent de Paul and is actively involved in charity at hospitals and convents (5). But his benevolence and kindness is juxtaposed with the battering of his wife Beatrice and cruelty with his children Jaja and Kambili who remain in awe and fear of their devoted and tyrannical patriarch:

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie highlights the God like admiration Kambili holds for her father, Eugene Achike. She vies for her father’s admiration, her almost obsessive desire to please her father is also seen when she comes out second place in her class exams feeling “stained by failure”. However there is a complex correlation in the novel as Kambili’s need to please her father also stems from fear. Adichie describes the twisted psychological power held by the father figure that moulds the female character’s mind not only into fearful obedience but also undue admiration. (Nandeswaran 23)

Revelations are a significant part of a narrative mainly because they add an effect to the plot and explain its ‘emotional voltage’ (Mullan 171). A narrative is properly shaped only if the ‘carefully managed revelations’ (171) assist in moulding the storyline. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie utilizes this powerful narrative tool in *Purple Hibiscus*, so as to shock the readers out of the mundane-ness of usual and common finales of such tales of passivity and subjugation. With this revelation, the novel takes a different turn and thus becomes complete. While stating the importance of such emotional voltage in a narrative, Mullan says:

Few novels are complete without revelations. There are the moments when the surface of things suddenly change meaning, when what we have already shifts its significance. (172)

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, revelations are absent because the story line is free from enigma. Only *Purple Hibiscus* seems to be shrouded in mystery of episodes of violence and protests until the final revelation arrives when Beatrice

confesses poisoning Eugene and accepts avenging the wrongs done by him on the family:

I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka, Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor. (290)

Similarly, *Half of a Yellow Sun* has distinct and original characters that make the war time documentary come alive with their individual presence, hopes and aspirations dreams and expectations and failures and disappointments. John Mullan states that “nothing is stranger or more important in our reading of novels than the sense that we are encountering real people in them” (79) and Adichie’s characters erase that thin boundary line between the real and the fictitious because of their human attributes and their response towards the personal and the national crisis. Characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* appear in pairs of master/slave (Odenigbo/Ugwu), lovers Odenigbo, Olanna; Richard/Kainene and a pair of twins ie. Olanna/ Kainene. The characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are significant because their portrayal is realistic and they aptly represent citizens caught up in a war zone. War and characters are complementary also because the fate – tossed lines of different Igbo characters are in synonymy with the war torn unfortunate state of their country Nigeria. Where national ambitions quash, personal lives of the characters are torpedoed as well and in this way, characters epitomize their war struck motherland.

Half of a Yellow Sun deals with human frustrations of aborted ambitions of secession which seep down into the lives of Olanna, Odenigbo, Richard and Kainene and various other Igbos including Ugwu, Odenigbo’s houseboy. While alongside the Biafran crisis, a parallel narrative is that of relationships. The novel begins with Ugwu being introduced as a new houseboy to Odenigbo, a university Maths professor and an “armchair revolutionary” at Nsukka which happens to be the “intellectual center of the Biafran independence movement” (White 10). It is Ugwu who blindly follows his master until the war breaks out and after undergoing the war time trauma, he also writes a war documentary *The World was Silent when We Died*. One can say that Ugwu, though a houseboy, remains at an axial position even when the novel moves from fractured relationships of the twin sisters Olanna and Kainene and their respective lovers, towards civil war. E. Francis White comments on Ugwu’s vital role in the novel:

Ugwu, the author of the book-within-a-book, undergoes a tremendous transformation as he comes of age during this civil war... Indeed, until the war breaks out, the precocious Ugwu seems to be following in the footsteps of Odenigbo, who he thinks of as “Master” even though he is forbidden to call him that (Odenigbo calls Ugwu “my good man”). Both come from largely Igbo villages and adopt well to Western-style education. Their relationship is complex and at times problematic, enabling Adichie to explore class-conflicts in the postcolonial era. Ugwu arrives at Odenigbo’s house during peacetime, when the false promises of independence – granted in 1960 were just beginning to reveal themselves. (10)

While commenting on Odenigbo’s revolutionary fervour and its impact on his relationship with Ugwu, Adichie in an interview reveals the fact that this master-houseboy duo is definitely unconventional because Odenigbo treats Ugwu almost like a son and it is symbolic of treating humans with dignity:

It was over the top but it was well meaning and we discover he is really not as strong as he thinks he is – he has all these ideas in his head. The way he treats Ugwu isn’t the norm. And Ugwu realizes that it’s not. Other houseboys sleep in the kitchen on the floor and they don’t get to go to the school that the master’s children would go to, no way. For me it isn’t that one has to send one’s houseboy to school that one sends one’s son to, its simply that is that people would recognize their humanity and treat them with dignity. (Adichie n.pag.)

The lovers in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are realistically portrayed with their baggage of erring that breathes life into them. When Olanna’s revolutionary lover dupes her “in a brief rash moment of lust” (HYS 225) with Amala, a village girl, her platonic world shatters. After a child is born out of this adulterous union, Olanna and Odenigbo grow more distanced from each other. To avenge Odenigbo’s act, she sleeps with her twin Kainene’s Afroophile lover Richard and even calls the act of adultery ‘redemptive’. Shreya Bhattacharjee aptly describes Olanna’s mindset in the following lines :

Olanna suffers a second shattering of her dreams when Amala becomes pregnant with Odenigbo’s child. A drunk Olanna and a drunk Richard

make love; it is a desperate Olanna questing psychological and emotional overhaul; it is the path to her recovery. Olanna deeply regrets her betrayal of both Kainene and Odenigbo but she finds herself unable to regret the act itself"... Its gross selfishness liberates her. Olanna tells Odenigbo the truth not because she wants to through she knows their relationship would never be the same again. (101)

During the onset of war, Olanna and Odenigbo's relationship dwindles into silence which leads to further complications. At one point of time Odenigbo even starts behaving mysteriously and Kainene criticizes him point blank before Olanna for his changed lack lustre attitude;

".. There's something very lazy about the way you loved him blindly for so long without ever criticizing him You've never even accepted that the man is ugly," Kainene said, there was a small smile on her face and then she was laughing and Olanna could not help but laugh too, because it was not what she had wanted to hear and because hearing it had made her feel better. (HYS 486)

Though Odenigbo picks up "drinking cheap kai-kai" and Olanna believes that he has even slept with Alice, an Asaba woman (486), the redeeming feature of their relationship is that they remain together despite the moments of distrust and adultery which mar their mutual fidelity. It is interesting to observe that if Adichie's characters commit adultery as an antidote to trauma of betrayal at a personal level and the prevalent nationwide sacrilege, then too she forgives them and treats them like normal human beings who are not to be worshipped like idols in a temple and who have their own set of flaws along with innate goodness of hearts.

Another unusual couple is that of Kainene, the older twin of Olanna and the British expatriate Richard. Richard's initial ambition of migrating to Nigeria is to become an author and he wanted to write on exotic Igbo-Ukwu pots, a ninth century artefact recently rediscovered in Nigeria. But he falls in love with Kainene despite her "bitter tongue" incisive sarcasm and 'almost androgynous figure (60). Kainene too, "in an act of rebellion against her parents rescues him and takes him as a lover" (White10) but Richard's expatriate status creates a hindrance in him fully embracing the Nigerian culture and his sarcastic mistress. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shares in an interview

with *The Morning News* that Richard Churchill's character is inspired by an anonymous American gentleman who had strange notions about Africa:

To him, the American- I won't say his name. What struck me then was he had come to expect something of Africa, so the characters had to be unfamiliar and strange. In my more sarcastic moments I thought maybe he wanted them to swing from tree to tree. (Adichie n. pag.)

Thus Adichie renders Richard Churchill unfit as a narrator of Biafran war time crisis because his foreignness clings to him like an albatross even when he longs to associate himself with Nigeria. E. Francis White elaborates upon his dilemmas:

He gets caught up in the Biafran struggle for independence and wants to become the literary voice of the Igbo people- but this is a role that only someone like Ugwu can fulfill. As his confusions grew, it becomes clear to the reader that he has exoticized both the Igbo-Ukwu pots and Kainene. Ultimately Richard discovers that there is very little meaningful room for him in post colonial Nigeria. (10)

Richard Churchill suffers a setback not only as a writer when Kainene burns his manuscript but also as a lover when his rival Col. Madu Madu emerges as a man of honesty and integrity (White 10). Kainene and Richard are not able to unite as lover at the end of the novel because Kainene disappears "after moving across the enemy lines for an *affia attack*" (HYS 432) to procure food for the refugees at the camp.

However heart wrenching might be the story of these lovers, the most fascinating pair of the novel remains the twins Olanna and Kainene. While they belong to the corrupt elite Ozobia family of Nigeria, the twins are grounded and fearless. Olanna, "God's gold" is beautiful, delicate and has a smooth skin with "the lush colour of rain drenched earth" along with a "curvy, fleshy body" (23). Whereas, Kainene (let's see what next God will bring) is boyish and less attractive but plays the role of a son for the Ozobias by expanding the family business and manouvering the political deals with her "sharp tongue" (58). Bhattacharjee calls Olanna and Kainene "difficult daughters" who don't have that fabled female longing to give birth" (100) . Though twins are considered abominations and a sign of bad omen in Igbo traditions these daughters of Nigeria not only stand for family but for their nation as well. E. Francis White assesses their contribution in the following passage:

Surely it is no accident that Olanna and Kainene are twins. They are daughters of Nigeria's new corrupt, elite; their parents even try to prostitute them to gain economic and political advantages. Their closeness is strained at the beginning of the novel by the perverse relationship with their parents; they both rebel against their parents' values but cannot recognize their similarities to one another. (10)

The twins give a feminist reading to the novel because of their coming of age behaviour. Sophie Ogunwole is of the opinion that woman characters are portrayed in a positive light unlike their male counterparts who were unwilling and incapable of achieving greatness. Adichie's women are, "bold, successful, full bodied women with no inhibitions" (120). While Olanna is emotional, Kainene is devoid of any sentiments and is even more wilful" (121). Adichie presents a world of fiction in which women characters too make their choices independently and fearlessly. Ogunwole thus compliments Adichie's art of characterization:

Unquestionably, characterization is one of Adichie's major strong points. It is banal just to say that her characters come all alive, the magnitude of her project in these works is astonishing and the painstaking portrayal of individual character is actually amazing. Whether we consider the key players in Odenigbo's house parties, or his energetic mother, or the unfortunate Amala seeking desperately to abort an unwanted pregnancy by eating hot peppers, or the various house helps and their intrigues ... or her various women characters in different scenes ... each individual personality is etched in the readers' memory. (121-122)

Characters are indispensable part of any narrative and *Americanah* being an important key in the postcolonial wheel, presents before the readers some unforgettable and human characters. It would not be a hyperbole to agree with critics when *Americanah* is called an immigrant fiction that has won many laurels around the globe. While Ifemelu is the protagonist in the novel, one cannot ignore her former love interest, i.e.: Obinze Maduwasie, who is also an America lover, reads American books, speaks American English and dreams of going there for better future. He too faces an identity crisis and is in the fetters of circumstances when he migrates to U.K., only to realize

that he is black and inferior in some foreign land (Guarracino 8). Human characters in a novel thus make this narrative more realistic and palatable :

The emphasis on ‘human’ character is crucial. One criterion of what makes a narrative a narrative is the requirement of having a human or human-like (anthromorphic) protagonist at the centre. Texts describing genes during cellular fission are only ‘narrative’ to the extent that they outline sequence of events. But it is agreed among narratologists that ‘real’ narratives are those that have human protagonists. Even if not all narratives place the thoughts of the characters at the center of the story, the representation of the interior world of the protagonists is characteristic of a fictional narrative since it is only in fiction that it is possible to see into the minds of other people. (Fludernik 6)

Ifemelu and Obinze, both are migrants in foreign lands and both seem to lose themselves in the process of acculturation in the U.S. and the U.K. respectively. While Ifemelu finds Curt, a white American, to be an answer to all her dilemmas and doubts in America, Jeannie Ortega views this from the “cultural politics point of view”. In her opinion Ifemelu becomes “blindly optimistic” that her white boyfriend is an easy key to access the American way of life:

The novel considers cultural politics from a white, American perspective as represented in this new stage of Ifemelu’s identity by having an American boyfriend Curt. As a white, wealthy middle class American, Curt grants Ifemelu another outlook on the American cultural model of hierarchy. In the course of Ifemelu’s story of identity formation, Curt presents the allure of Americanization. The privilege and wealth granted to the white upper class tempts Ifemelu, as she becomes “a woman free of knots and cares”. But as indicated in the novel’s word choice of “blinding optimism”, Curt’s success is contingent on the access granted by his class and the colour of his skin. Ifemelu, as his girlfriend, espouses his perspective and learns more about the pressures of white washing identity. (53 – 54)

But Ifemelu breaks up with Curt because she realizes that in her attempt to assimilate the White and Black cultures she is losing her own identity. Ortega also highlights

that when Ifemelu leaves the salon ‘almost mournfully’ (205) after straightening her hair, a sense of loss dawns on her and it is similar to what Kwame Appiah in his book *Ethics of Identity*¹¹ talks about, ‘mass culture stamping out the richness of diversity’ and that ‘the assimilation usurps the original identity of the individual subject (55). Racial ethics ruptures her one more love interest i.e. a Yale Professor, Blaine who is an African American and who shares Ifemelu’s common history of “transportation, slavery, colonization” (*Americanah* 28) and a common tie of experiences of marginalization (Ortega 57). Both Ifemelu and Blaine fall apart on their distinctiveness of identity and that they share African heritage but they do not share national identities” (58).

A similar trauma is experienced by Obinze who goes to the United Kingdom on a temporary visa and keeps flitting in a foreign land; aimless and empty. Adichie thus describes his situation:

.... In those first weeks, the cold startled Obinze with its weightless menace, drying his nostrils, deepening his anxieties, making him urinate too often. He would walk fast on the pavement, turned tightly into himself, hands deep in the coat his cousin had lent him, a grey wool coat whose sleeves nearly swallowed his fingers. Sometimes he would stop outside a tube station, often by a flower or a newspaper vendor and watch the people brushing past him. They walked so quickly, these people, as though they had an urgent destination, a purpose to their lives, while he do not. His eyes would follow them, with a lost longing, and he would think : *You can work, you are legal, you are visible*, and you don’t even know how fortunate you are. (*Americanah* 227)

But Obinze’s truth of life is no better than Ifemelu since he has become Vincent in London to clean toilets, pack detergent powder (250/251) and has been reduced to a “knee – grow” (252). Obinze not only remains estranged from his mother but he also becomes victim of a sham (fake) – marriage racket of Angolans, only later to get deported to Lagos by the Immigration department (283). While *Americanah* could be a part of any immigrant African’s story, one remains curious to know if Ifemelu is Adichie herself or not. Adichie replies candidly when interviewer Aaron Brady raises this question. She says:

I have many writer friends who get offended when they're asked about the story behind the story, I don't. Imagination doesn't fall from the sky; you have to work with something. My fiction borrows from my life, but even more so from the lives of no other people. And because I write realistic fiction it doesn't fall from the sky – I don't feel threatened when I'm asked that. But yes, I'm very much like her. In Nigeria, I didn't think of myself as black. I didn't need to and I still don't when I'm in Nigeria. Race doesn't occur to me. Many other things occur to me. But in the U.S., yes. ("The Varieties of Blackness" n. pag.)

Adichie's stay in America was an eyewash when she experienced racism and other prejudices as a firsthand experience. Since she too underwent same excruciating experiences as an immigrant in America, the readers have enough of evidences to believe that Ifemelu's experiences are realistic and not imagined by the writer.

John Mullan while commenting on how authors use various literary devices as well as "documents" from the "real world" says that "signs, advertisements, maps, timetables, the patterns of fabrics" and even small datum like exam sheets are used by novel writers to enhance the 'realistic' temperament of the narrative. He further elaborates upon some such devices used by writers like Margaret Atwood, who in her novel *-The Blind Assassin* uses newspaper reports as literary device or Orhan Pamuk in his novel, *My Name is Red*, uses *Ekphrasis*, to add newness to his narrative technique (252-253).

A 'novel within a novel' gives a remarkable impact to the plot of *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie makes Ugwu, Odenigbo's houseboy the mouthpiece of the war time havocs and tortures rendered by federal forces on Biafran soldiers. Ugwu gives the details of war-time political fiasco in a few summarized excerpts of his novel entitled, *The World Was Silent when We Died* and in this way a houseboy not only matures into a writer but this 'novel within a novel' also shows Adichie's pro-Igbo sentiments. Summaries from Ugwu's novel gives a unique touch to *Half of a Yellow Sun* because there are various novels which feature a character or two as writers but there are few instances when pieces of novel within a novel are presented before the readers as part of the main narration. Mullan gives examples from various sources wherein he talks about Carole Shields' novel *Unless* in which the narrator Reeta Winters writes a light novel with a happy ending, namely – *My Thyme is Up*. Another example is from

Anthony Powell's book, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, in which the narrator writes a couple of novels (298). In Shields' and Powell's case, the protagonists are successful novelists and one can then consider them to be the 'alter-egos' of the actual novelties because their thought pattern and style of writing is identical with the authors. Mullan opines that it is a rarity to find the specimens of novel within a novel, and by and large it is, 'a trick played by formally self-conscious novelists' (298). Further he cites examples from Dorris Lessings *The Golden Notebook*, John Safran Foer's – *Everything is Illuminated* and A.S. Byatt's *Babel Tower*.

Through this device of a 'book within a novel' one gets to know about the socio-political impact of international war policies on innocent people who died in air raids on due to hunger. It gives rise to another debate on the role of superpowers in instigating civil wars in under developed countries and Adichie expresses her strong opinions through these excerpts from Ugwu's book. It reveals Adichie's ideology, though it may not serve any mainstream narrative purpose. These excerpts could be considered Ugwu's book drafts because one does not get to see the refined version.

The novel within *Half of a Yellow Sun* i.e.: *The World Was Silent When We Died* is presented in a different italicized font so as to segregate it from the main narrative scheme. Similarities could be found between this novel within *Half of a Yellow Sun* and A.S. Byatt's *Babel Tower* and Stephen King's novel within a novel which are printed in different fonts (299). It is interesting to note that excerpts from Ugwu's novel do not appear verbatim in *Half of a Yellow Sun* but seven summaries from different parts of the novel are present at the end of chapter 3, chapter 6, chapter 12, chapter 18, chapter 21, chapter 24 and chapter 30 respectively. These summaries are no where related to the ongoing plot content of these chapters and are strictly limited to the writer's paraphrasing of Ugwu's book.

The first instance of Ugwu's novel appears in chapter three of *Half of Yellow Sun* where for his novel's prologue, Adichie summarizes and recalls what Olanna had witnessed while boarding a train from Kano to escape from ethnic violence. Adichie, uses the second person pronoun 'he' for Ugwu and also mentions other instances of dead children being carried by their mothers either in suitcases or dress pockets, Ugwu gives a gory design of blood drenched rivers Benue and Niger on his book. An example of Adichie's style to blend these summaries in the novel is as follows :

After he writes this, he mentions the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies. But he is careful not to draw parallels. For the book cover, though he draws a map of Nigeria and traces in the Y- shape of the rivers Niger and Benue in bright red. He uses the same shade of red to circle the boundaries of where, in the south-east, Biafra existed for three years. (HYS 104)

In the second summary, Adichie mentions how Ugwu traces the history of colonialism in Nigeria and how different protectorates were distributed amongst British and French and also about the onset of Christian missionary activities in British occupies Northern parts of Nigeria.

Similarly, the in third paraphrase Ugwu talks about crumbling imperialism and how the path of freedom path was paved for Nigeria. But separatist tendencies were present within this nation in the forms of four major ethnic regions that demanded four separate 'foreign embassies'. Seeds of such factions were supposedly sown by the British before they left Nigeria. In this way, Ugwu elaborates upon the fragments existing within Nigeria:

At Independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of fragments held in a fragile clasp. (195)

The fourth paraphrase throws light on the economic state of Nigeria after Britain's departure. Only raw materials, human resource, enthusiastic youth and little money were left with a newly independent nation. Since Nigeria was in the nascent stage of development, it fell prey to the exploitative foreign loans. Also, Ugwu includes the details of 'Igbo coup' during 1966 massacres which unified the Igbos and made them Biafrans.

Fifth paraphrase from Ugwu's book is on the artificially induced starvation and hunger on the Biafrans by the federal troops of Nigeria during the civil war and how it crumbled the secessionist spirits too soon. The situation also caught international attention and the Red Cross even called it the 'gravest emergency since the Second World War'(296). E. Francis White comments on the significance of this paraphrase in the following lines :

This excerpt from a clever book within Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* confronts the reader with one of the novel's central ironies: enforced starvation, the very tactic that crushed Nigeria's breakaway south eastern region briefly independent and known as Biafra, also brought it the international attention that sustained its rebellion for three years. Those who are old enough to remember will recall that first images of starving African children to pierce the consciousness of the west came from Nigeria's 1967 to 1970 civil war. Adichie's successful historical novel manages to capture many complexities and ironies of one of Africa's first post colonial conflicts. (n.pag.)

The sixth summary of Ugwu's book in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a dirge on the failure of secession of Biafra state and the indifference of the world superpowers during the 1967-70 civil war. War planes and other technical supports from these powers aggravated the war crisis but Nigeria remains ignored and lost in oblivion of white supremacist war game :

He writes about the world that remained silent while Biafrans died. He argues that Britain inspired this silence. The arms and advice that Britain gave Nigeria shaped other countries. In the United States, Biafra was "Under Britain's sphere of interest." In Canada, the Prime Minister quipped, "Where is Biafra?" (HYS 324)

The last epilogue is quite powerful in the sense that Ugwu models it after one of Okeoma's poems and gives it a title "WERE YOU SILENT WHEN WE DIED?" and pours his heart out by describing the aftermath of civil war in verse:

Did you see photos in sixty-eight
Of children with hair becoming rust:
Sickly patches nestled on those small heads,
Then falling off like rotten leaves on dust? (470)

Similarly, Adichie uses blog as a literary device in *Americanah*, which is a unique way for the author to get in sync with the world of internet and online portals. Using excerpts from her blog *Raceteenth : Or Various Observations About American Blacks*

(Those Formerly Known as Negroes(by a Non- American Black, Ifemelu comes before the readers as an aware and conscious global citizen who is not afraid of sharing her experiences as an expatriate in a foreign land. Ifemelu writes more than fifteen times on her blog on subjects ranging from definition of Hispanic to the significance and popularity of Barack Obama among the Blacks, Afro-hair, racial politics, Jews still being dreaded by Americans in the Ivy League Universities to Blacks being treated as ill-privileged in American towns. Adichie highlights that using a blog for her novel is a conscientious attempt because :

I wanted to write about race in a way that was hopefully annoying, stark, funny, and very, sort of a ‘let’s stop pretending’ kind of thing. I also wanted it to be difficult from Ifemelu’s voice in her life. If you asked me to read them aloud, I couldn’t because it’s not my voice either. It’s this thing that she constructs. It’s a persona. I don’t know what it does for the novel. All I know is that I quite enjoyed writing it. (“The Varieties of Blackness” n. pag.)

Adichie is very modest in denying any such special literary touch which the “blog” renders to her novel apart from experience sharing, These blog posts give a “natural chronological shift” to the narrative :

(Yet) blog entries appear far earlier than the blog’s own inception in the plot. These posts, often introduced by the adverbial “years later”, upset the chronology of the storyline by projecting it flash-forward to the moment when Ifemelu’s life will be processed by writing. The chronological shift allows for a double take on many of the character’s experiences as a black migrant in the U.S., so that the reader confronts the young Ifemelu’s sense of bewilderment and emotional pain together with older Ifemelu’s more distanced elaboration of the same episodes and issues. (Guarracino 13)

Ifemelu’s blog posts are interesting because of her ironical beliefs about the American way of life, and the posts are the result of the shocks which she experienced in America. For example she faces dilemmas and doubts during the course of her almost Utopian love affair with Curt. When she splits with him, there is an innate urge to share her “deep dissatisfaction” about racism in America (Guarracino 14). Adichie

differentiates Ifemelu's blog posts from rest of the novel by italicizing the font and more often placing the posts at the end of the respective chapters. One of the interesting and contemporary blog posts is about the reason why Black women in America are in love with President Barack Obama. In this post entitled "Why Dark Skinned Black Women – Both American and Non – American – love Barack Obama", she stresses the fact that since he married a dark skinned woman, Michelle Obama, so the presidential elections success is attributed to his preference for a Black woman unlike the regular "pattern that values lighter skin" (Guarracino 15).

Each time Ifemelu goes through a drastic change in her life, a blog post is born just as when she goes to straighten her hair so that she would be selected for her first regular job she is pained at her hair which has lost the verve (*Americanah* 204 – 205). Thus Jeannie Ortega opines that *Americanah* is about the difficulties and challenges that Ifemelu undergoes in metamorphosing her Nigerian national identity. In the end, she does return back to Lagos but again undergoes 'frustrations' during the course of re-acclimatization. It is here that her blog comes to her rescue when she finds a vent to express her ideas on American culture :

Adichie's *Americanah* provides a composite view of the journey of the post colonial identity. The novel shows how post – colonial identity. The novel shows how post-colonialism has eroded out of the binaries and concepts once used in the past. Twentieth century politics observe how colonial ideology once held in rigid binaries and strict definitions of race, has melted into evolving global culture. Hence, the migrant narrative's trajectory is essential for unearthing the broad scope of how cultural ideology has changed in the post-modern era. (Ortega 61)

Similarly, Repetition is used as a literary device in *Half of a Yellow Sun* whether it is the title from Ugwu's book ie. *You Were Silent While We Died* or the chapter titles of the main novel are divided into four parts each bearing a repetitive title 'Early Sixties' and 'Late Sixties'. J. Hillis Miller mentions about the significance of repetition in a work of fiction in the following lines:

In a novel, what is said two or more times may not be true, but the reader is fairly safe in assuming that it is significant. Any novel is a complex tissue of repetitions and of repetitions within repetitions, and

of repetitions linked in chain fashion to other repetitions. In each case there are repetitions making up the structure of the work within itself, as well as repetitions determining its multiple relations to what is outside it: the author's mind or his life; other works by the same author; psychological, social, or historical reality...elements from the purported past of the characters or of their ancestors; events which have occurred before the book begins. (2,3)

The above comments hold water for repetitions in *Half of a Yellow Sun* because the way in which common lives were shattered by an impromptu civil war in Nigeria, is something which has marred the psyche of generations. Ugwu's 'book within a book' title is significant from historical point of view since super powers around the globe watched silently while massive bloodshed continued in Nigeria. In a way it is satirical in tone and includes candid comments on global cold war.

In written narratives, it is the vocabulary and language that play the most important role. Narrative technique is incomplete and ineffective until the words which are used to convey the tales are effective and in symmetry with the novel. Here 'Skaz' comes to the forefront and it involves vocabulary, phrases, dialects, local songs, ethnicity specific words etc. used by characters during the course of the novel John Mullan further describes 'Skaz' in the following words:

Academic critics sometimes use the term Skaz to refer to a first person narrative that seems to adopt the characteristics of speech. It was employed by Russian formalist critics in the early twentieth century to designate a type of folk tale (derived from *Skazat*, to tell). Originally it referred to an eyewitness account of some episode in rural life.... Now it refers to novelistic prose that consistently exploits the habits of colloquial language, especially those usually excluded from proper written prose. Skaz traditionally included slang, proverbs, dialect and significant errors of decorum or style.(58)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses Igbo words specifically to bring out the local flavour in *Purple Hibiscus*. Various proverbs, greetings, songs, expressions, etc. feature in the novel to lend intensity of emotions like anger, aggression, affection and filial bonding. So the language of *Purple Hibiscus* not only gives a colloquial touch to

the tale but powerful expressions haunt the memory of the readers. While various ideas are put forth by critics and language experts around the world, Niyi Osunbade gives credit to vocabulary and language in powerful thematic projection in any novel:

Largely, scholarship on literary studies has dealt with the manipulation of language as an aid to character presentation, plot advancement and thematic projection. It is only expected therefore that literature finds its expression in language, since the study of language is a complement and aid to the study of literature. (139)

In *Purple Hibiscus*, expressions like “*Nne, Ngwa*”(8), “*Biko*”(8), “*nne*”(10), “*gbo*”(13), “*mka*”(13), “*Ozugo*”(14), “*kpa*”(15), etc. are used affectionately by the family to address each other by Beatrice, Kambili, Jaja and Eugene. Other expressions like “*Nwunye m*”(my wife)(72), “*Imakwa*” (do you know) (77), “*nekenem*” (look at me) (83), “*Ekwuzina*” (talk no more) (149, 243), “*Eziokwu*” (is that true) (66, 131, 136, 148), “*Gini*” (what) (151), “*gwakenem*” (just tell me) (223), “*inaanu*” (Do you hear) (245), “*Ifukwa*” (do you see) (70, 76), “*Imana*” (do you know that) (150), etc. and many more Igbo expressions give a native colour to the novel. Adichie’s flawless narrative techniques through the means of a teenager girl melt hearts and give a reason to the readers to rethink on the issues of postcolonialism.

Adichie uses powerful and evocative language to bring out the ‘Igbo-ness’ in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as well. The *skaz* or first person characteristic speech marks a distinctive style of Adichie because she uses Igbo words, dialogues, songs and addresses (greetings) whenever possible. For example on the first few pages of the novel it is noticeable that Odenigbo prefers to speak in Igbo with his houseboy Ugwu. A few instances are : “*Osio-osiso*”(fast), “*Kpotago ya*” (brought the houseboy), “*Kedu afa gi?*” (what’s your name?), “*nee anya*” (look here). Ugwu even presents an Igbo song for his new master, Odenigbo, “*Nzogbo nzogbu enyimba, enyi*”, at which the latter taps his pen on the table and enjoys it thoroughly (HYS 14). Interestingly Richard, a British native but a Nigeria enthusiast too learns to speak Igbo and even talks to his servants in fluent Igbo. Thus Adichie’s subject of *Half of a Yellow Sun* as well as the dialogues and conversations of her Igbo and non-Igbo characters are strongly nationalistic.

Language has a different role in *Americanah* because it provides a contemporary flavour to the text, yet the Igbo touch clings to words, phrases and expressions, hence making the text heavily dependent on the cultural parameters. A significant reason as to why such accented Igbo tongue is spoken by Adichie's characters is because they are by and large Nigerians or émigré Nigerians residing in their native lands or 'whiter' parts of the world. In creating her literary world, Adichie uses language and thus everything else falls in place. Monika Fludernik speaks about the significance of language in the literary text while maintaining her belief that a lot depends on the readers' imagination too:

The language of narrative creates possible worlds: sentences use words to create characters, incidents, settings in time as well as in space, and put these various elements into some kind of order.(40)

Language in *Americanah* is replete with postcolonial ideas and expressions on a survival of an African in America, colonial consciousness, colour, kinky hair, feeling of exile etc. This is because Ifemelu and other characters in the novel are black natives from Nigeria with Curt, her former lover, being white is the only exception. Hence local dialect is commonly spoken by them and presence of Skaz could be seen in typical Igbo greetings and addresses like – “Kedu”(19), “Eke I no ?”(19), “Asa! Ugo!”(22), “O Gini?” (23), “Shai”(76), “Chai”(90), “Adi m ime”(83), “Ndo”(83) and many others frequent the text. These feature when Ifemelu is feeling nostalgic about her past with Obinze, the times she has spent with aunty Uju and Dike, Obinze's mother etc. Even language becomes a part of identity formation for characters in *Americanah*. With slow and steady Americanization, they too lose interest in their mother tongue and make themselves familiar with English and that too with American accent.

Similarly, the short story volume under consideration, *The Thing Around Your Neck* is a work of contemporary significance and has earned accolade for its poignant and strong message through the Nigerian tales situated in native as well as foreign lands. Adichie, who divides her time between Nigeria and America tries to bring out important subjects singly and handles them in an effective and sensitive way. Adichie belongs to a continent that is also known for oral literary traditions and the African art of narration, and this remains a part of Adichie's rich intellectual, cultural and literary heritage.

Adichie's short stories follow a definite pattern as far as the geographical settings are concerned. Settings of five stories in *The Thing Around Your Neck* are located in various parts of America - "Imitation" and "On Monday of Last Week" are set in Philadelphia suburbs, "The Thing Around Your Neck" is set in Connecticut and at times in Manchester, "The Shivering" is set in Princeton and "Tomorrow is Too Far" is partially placed in California and partially in Nigeria. Nigerian towns like Kano in "A Private Experience", Nsukka in "Cell One" and Lagos in "The Thing Around Your Neck" and "The American Embassy", appears as an important town. Similarly, "The Headstrong Historian" is set in the Nigerian town Onicha and Lagos and "Jumping Monkey Hill" is the only story which has a setting of South Africa.

No matter how full of life the African short-story may be, it is a much neglected genre on the global stage. It appears not as a main line fiction but as a secondary output in the Sunday magazines or as a means of apprenticeship for creative writing aspirants. But, Africa has "the works of Alex La Guma, Taban Lo Liyong, or Ama Ata Aidoo" (Spackey et. al. 74), to prove that the western writers have a literary challenge in the field of short story. For a modern African short story writer, the genre is not just a form but a tool to reveal snapshots from their daily lives and "the needs, aspirations and anxieties of the present-day world loom very large upon the African short story" (75).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is deeply inspired by Chinua Achebe who is also known as the master narrator of Igbo tales. Achebe did not give much significance to the genre of short-stories, so, he authored just one short story volume entitled *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972), in his literary career. But one finds many similarities between him and Adichie as the latter too one short story volume *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) to her credit, the story telling styles of the Achebe and Adichie are similar and their stories are realistic. They include philosophy on life and are very much embedded in the Nigerian soil ("Chinua Achebe" n. pag.). No wonder Adichie is known as the true successor of Achebe after his death in 2013¹².

African short story has evolved over the past decades and it finds a real edge because of the creative writing flair of young women writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and her contemporaries. Such literature is, in fact, a social documentation of the progress of women and the way their lives have changed in the international space and time. Since the twenty first century witnesses African women grappling with the

expatriate challenges and uprootedness which comes as an appendage with globalisation, Adichie truly reflects that pain and ordeal in short story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*. The stories bring forth the “ambiguous” and “disjointed” identities of African Diaspora in the most subtle and powerful way. It is a bitter truth that with increasing culture of expatriates the African women not only suffer displacement but they also have to negotiate with their entities in a foreign world (Sackeyfio 102).

The Thing Around Your Neck comprises of twelve Igbo-centric short stories, out of which eleven are narrated by women and their plots are women-centric and mirror the lives of middle class Nigerian women. While some of these women are portrayed as the victims of adultery, loneliness and are living tragic figures (*The Guardian* n.pag.), others are shown combating with socio-political unrest in the country. The paradox about their lives is that, though, they are young and intelligent enough to grasp the realistic details of life, they are not bold enough to strike back like Beatrice of *Purple Hibiscus* or Kainene from *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie’s stories have a noticeable calendar presence as she also includes significant happenings of Nigerian history in her narration. Most of the stories in *The Thing Around Your Neck* are uni-dimensional tales dealing with the struggle of a lone protagonist and:

Thematically, the stories touch on family relations, inheritance laws, racism, love, culture conflicts, youthful exuberance, religion, decaying moral values, military dictatorship, corruption, the Nigerian Civil war, the uncontrollable desire to live in America among Nigerians and the disastrous experiences of corporate prostitution. Several other lesser themes can be added to these, the result being that Adichie is panoramic in her handling of issues. (Asoo 13)

The twelve short stories can be grouped into diaspora tales (“Imitation”, “Monday of Last Week”, “The Thing around Your Neck”, “The Shivering” and “Arrangers of Marriage”) and the tales of socio-political unrest and the years of civil war in Nigeria (“Cell One”, “A Private Experience”, “Ghosts” and “American Embassy”). Similarly, the story entitled, “The Headstrong Historian,” brings out the Adichie’s patriotic sensitivity to Igbo-culture in the times of Christian conversions by the missionaries in Nigeria. This story is of autobiographical nature as Adichie is of Igbo-Christian background and her family members have struggled to preserve Igbo culture despite

missionary compulsions to forgo their rituals. “Jumping Monkey Hill” is a story with a difference because it elaborates upon the behaviour of African writers during one of the writers’ meet in South Africa and this story can again be an instance from Adichie’s first-hand experience in some African writer’s meet. The last story, “Tomorrow is too Far” is the only story that caters to the issue of sibling rivalry, gender issues and the wrongs patriarchy has done to the Nigerian families.

Adichie displays mastery in depicting diasporic and native characters from middle class Igbo families of Nigerian origin and the way they are intricately enmeshed in the circumstances makes the readers relate with them. The major characters are Nnamabia in “Cell One”, Nkem in “Imitation”, Chika and an unnamed Hausa woman in “A Private Experience”, James and Ikenna in “Ghosts”, Kamara and Tracy in “On Monday of Last Week”, Ujunwa in “Jumping Monkey Hill”, Akunna and her unnamed American lover in “The Thing Around Your Neck”, an unnamed woman in “The American Embassy”, Ukamaka in “The Shivering”, Chinaza in “The Arrangers of Marriage”, unnamed woman in “Tomorrow is Too Far” and Nwamgba in “The Headstrong Historian”. It is interesting to note that in “Tomorrow is Too Far” and “Cell One” the female sibling is invisible and nameless which pinpoints gender discrimination which prevails in Igbo society as well (Sajna 182).

The story entitled “Imitation”, first published in *Other Voices*, is situated in the suburban neighbourhood of Philadelphia. Nkem, who is married to an affluent businessman Obiora, learns that her husband is involved in adultery back home in Nigeria. The beginning is set in the present times and it depicts the unspoken sufferings of a young mother who is being deceived by her husband and it is the cost she pays for living a luxurious life in America. The story has an arresting opening because the protagonist is in a state of shock after learning about her husband’s adultery:

Nkem is staring at the bulging, slanted eyes of the Benin mask on the living room mantle as she learns about her husband’s girlfriend. (TAYN 22)

The title of the story means ‘fake or unoriginal’ and the husband being an artefact lover, is fond of collecting Benin Masks and Ife heads which are not original but a copy. Nkem’s house is decorated with fake Benin masks, and through this Adichie

tries to show that life of the expatriate Nigerians too is hypocritical and behind that garb of prosperity there lies a murky world of deceit and adultery. The story opens with the revelation to Nkem that Obiora is cheating on her and has moved his new girl in their house in Lagos. Nkem is the protagonist who faces a jolt after learning of her husband's deceit and even goes through a turmoil which is nothing short of lowered self esteem combined with inferiority complex. In a fit of anger she cuts her long hair into a cropped bob just like Obiora's mistress. Adichie describes her brokenness in the following lines:

She picks up the scissors, the one she uses to cut Adanna's ribbons into neater bits, and raises it to her head. She pulls up clumps of hair and cuts close to the scalp, leaving hair about the length of her thumbnail, just enough to tighten into curls with a texturizer. (28)

The mistress episode also reminds Nkem of those days when she had relationship with married men named Ikenna, a businessman and a retired army general named Tunji who gave favours to Nkem's family but never proposed marriage. A realisation dawns on Nkem that life in America is as callous and burdensome as the masks which she picks up and feels, "it is cold, heavy and lifeless" (25). The final resolution of this story comes when Nkem puts her foot down and decides to move back to Lagos forever with Obiora. One can relate the cropping of her hair with her firm decision to disrobe herself of fake feminine and wifely duties as this comes out as a portent of empowerment of a subdued wife caged in a luxury house. Braga et.al. thus rightly describe Nkem's situation:

Deprivation and social responsibility seem to force Nkem into objectification. She was the *ada*, or the first daughter, the one who is supposed to provide a better life for parents. Now aware of her husband's mistress, Nkem faces the ironic fact that she too was once in such position. Momentarily, she even identifies with her husband's young lover, considering how both of them were used by rich, older, married men. (3)

Similarly, masks are a powerful symbol in the story. The direct relation between Nkem's fake life and the Benin masks are aptly highlighted by a critic in the following lines:

Imitation illustrates the kind of life and social cycle Nigerian immigrants live in America; where delusions become what they call truth, where the role-models they will like imitating are the citizens that speak English so foreign from what they are used to at home and where news about home is always gotten from phones and the media. (Omatayo n.pag.)

As Nkem is the main protagonist along with her husband Obiora and a house maid Amaechi being minor characters, “Imitation” deals with Nkem’s enlightenment about the true sources of happy life. In America while she enjoys prosperity, she misses her homeland Nigeria and more so because her husband visits America only for two months in one year.

“Imitation” has an open ended conclusion where Nkem tells her husband that she plans to shift back to Nigeria. There is an ambiguity that envelops the ending because Obiora, her husband just says that, “If that is what you want; we will talk about it. Nkem knows it is done” (TAYN 42). Things remain unclear since the author leaves it to the reader’s imagination whether these words signify an actual separation of this couple or their final migration to Nigeria.

As an undercurrent, Adichie questions the double standard lives of émigré Nigerians who are not recognised as regular citizens in America and, “Nobody says “Sir!Sir!” to them in America. Nobody rushes to dust their seats before they sit down.” (TAYN 29). Igbo words like “*kwanu*”, “*oga*”, “*ada*”, “*kedu*”, “*chim o!*”, “*oyibo garri*”, “*jollof rice*”, “*rapuba*”, “*sha*”, etc. are testimony to the ethnic backdrop of the story.

“On Monday of Last Week”, first published in *Granta 98: The Deep End*, is a story of an Igbo woman Kamara, who joins her husband Tobechei in America after almost six years of marriage. Since there is a sense of uprootedness and alienation Kamara feels a necessity to take up a job as a babysitter to a five year old Josh who is the child of a professional artist, an African American mother Tracy and a white Jewish father Neil. The story has a suggestive opening because it begins on a note that something unusual has taken place on Monday of last week, and it has made Kamara, the protagonist, much aware of her physicality and attractiveness:

Since Monday of last week, Kamara had begun to stand in front of the mirrors. She would turn from side to side, examining her lumpy middle

and imagining it flat as a book cover and then she would close her eyes and imagine Tracy caressing it with those paint stained fingers. (74)

The story is set in a middle class neighbourhood of Philadelphia where Kamara babysits Josh and during three months of self introspection realises that she and her husband are leading a loveless life, "... the feeling was one of flatness"(TAYN 86).

The story is also a satire on modern day parenting in America where parents suffer from the anxiety bringing up their child. Here Adichie portrays how children are raised in America but she is critical about "this cocoon of hyper safety" (Adichie n.pag.) and even mentions it to Nina Shen Rastogi in one of her interviews:

It's the kind of thing that makes you start to expect a catastrophe when you shouldn't... I mean this kid (Josh) is eight. I came from Nigeria- I was walking to school when I was in grade one. (n. pag.)

The story brings out a very complex situation of unfulfilled longing of a woman for another woman and at the same time it highlights the robotic life Nigerian couples lead in America. Since Toebchi, who is a taxi driver is not keen on having a child, Kamara notices that America has changed her husband into a callous money hoarding man and she longs for those emotions of love and physical touch from him. It is here that an undercurrent of lesbianism runs parallel in the story when Tracy asks Kamara to pose for a nude painting for her and she feels thrilled by her touch on her chin. Kamara's reaction to Tracy's touch is very subtle and Adichie uses perfect words to describe her attraction for Tracy:

Tracy's hand was still on her chin, slightly tilting her head up, and Kamara felt, first, like an adored little girl, and then like a bride. She smiled again. She was extremely aware of her body, of Tracy's eyes, of the space between them being so small, so very small. (TAYN 87)

Because of Tobeche's negligence, Kamara is vulnerable and so even the first human touch agitates the physical longing in her, it does not matter much that the desire is for same sex. The title "On Monday of Last Week" is significant because it is the day when Tracy proposes Kamara for posing for a nude painting and this reanimates the breath of life in her otherwise "flat" marriage; hence it is a memorable day for Kamara. Words like "*Tufia!*" (80), "*abada*"(86), "*kedu*"(87), "*Ise*"(86) are culturally familiar for Igbo background of the story. The ending of this story is important as well

because it brings out the subtle ways in which jealousy plays a crucial role in same sex love and attraction. Kamara is aware of the presence of a rival Maren, who is now being observed and touched in an homo-erotic way by Tracy:

She raised an apple to her lips and took a slow bite, her gaze never wavering from Maren's face. Neil was watching them with an indulgent smile, and Kamara looked away. (94)

The eponymous story, "The Thing Around Your Neck" is a marvellous piece of short fiction. It was first published in *Prospect* 99 with the title "You in America" and it candidly describes the shortcomings and challenges of a young Nigerian girl named Akunna who migrates to America in search of better dreams but ends up in a waitress job in Connecticut. The story is written in second person narration where the narrator Akunna addresses herself as you, as if she is representing the whole lot of Nigerian migrants who come to America in search of bigger dreams. It not only displays the desperation of Akunna to fit in an All White world of America but she also tries to negotiate too much with her life. Akunna's host in America is a lecherous uncle, definitely not a kindred who even tries to molest her under the logic that "America was give-and-take" (117).

The beginning is notable because the narrator highlights gross misconceptions that people have about America, "You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun; your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so too" (115). It is indeed hilarious to note that back home Nigeria people have a filmy point of view about America and this is evident enough that Akunna's migration to America was a wrong decision. The story is about the misfit situation which the native Nigerians face in America as there is not only a sense of loss of space but every memory of their motherland haunts them. In America Akunna could not afford a high school since the house rentals were quite high and she decides to visit public library in Connecticut. She even lives in oblivion as she decides not to reveal about her whereabouts in America and her only concern is to send home crisp dollars in brown envelopes to her mother's workplace. Akunna never writes any letter to her parents or friends back home because America is not what she expected to be, moreover being in America is a choking experience for her and she feels "invisible" in a foreign land as she says, "At night, something would wrap itself around your neck, something that very nearly choked you before you fell

asleep” (119). Braga et.al. elaborates upon Akunna’s mental condition in the following lines:

Isolated and lonely, Akunna develops the sensation of something around her neck, literally referring to the difficulty to speak, and at the same time symbolically alluding to cultural and gender stifling. Without anyone to turn to in the United States, Akunna finds no relief in keeping in touch with folks in Nigeria, even though she wishes to write to them about many things. (5)

Akunna becomes friendly with a senior at the state university professor who is white but she finds him honest and also confides into him that her father is not a school teacher but a junior driver for a construction company. As love blossoms between Akunna and her white American lover she feels that ‘the choking’ experience had started mitigating itself and she is more comfortable now in America. Through this unusual couple Adichie also pinpoints the nasty comments native Americans make at an African woman paired with a white man and at times even grieved at her “lack of self-esteem, your self-loathing” (*TAYN* 125). The climax arrives in the story at the end when Akunna writes a letter to her mother along with some money and she informs her about her father’s demise five months ago. It is here that she feels that she is living in oblivion, too occupied with the feeling of being-in-America and she decides to visit her mother. Her unnamed lover is too much concerned about her and even suggests that both of them can fly to Nigeria but she refuses. Here Adichie gives an ambiguous and open ending to the story because Akunna does not reply when her lover asks her if she intends to return back. She only mentions that the green card will expire if she doesn’t come to America within a year. The title itself is a strong symbol of suffocation and uneasiness which the heroine undergoes in a foreign country. This burden of identity is lessened somewhat when she finds a companion but the longing of returning home is always lingering in her psyche. The story is a candid expression of a Nigerian’s experience in a white majority country and Elizabeth Jackson mentions that the wild guesses of people about Akunna’s native country and the uncomfortable and pitying look with which they gaze at the couple are racially politicised (4). Siver points out:

These issues raised by Adichie are not only prevalent in her Nigerian homeland but cut across African boundaries. The nostalgic feeling for

home puts the characters in a dilemma which results to identity crisis, psychological limbo or cultural inbetween-ness. Faced with homesickness as a physical and metaphorical malaise, immigrants tend to reflect on the oddness of foreign life (America) in which one is rendered silent and invisible by loneliness. (12)

“The Shivering” is a Diaspora story of a migrant Nigerian Catholic Ukamaka who is a fellow in the Princeton University in America and it deals with the search for native culture on a foreign soil. The story begins with the news of plane crash in Nigeria being aired on television and Ukamaka is suddenly jolted back into the present times by a sudden and panicky knock on her door. There is a sense of panic and shock in Ukamaka because she is worried if her ex-boyfriend was onboard:

On the day a plane crashed in Nigeria, the Nigerian first lady died, somebody knocked loudly on Ukamaka’s door in Princeton. The knock surprised her because nobody ever came to her door unannounced-this after all was America... (TAYN 142)

She discovers that a Nigerian neighbour named Chinedu has come to pray with her for the safety of fellow countrymen affected by the plane crash. The story becomes all the more interesting because slowly Ukamaka unravels that she too has experienced ‘God’ while praying when she was a teenager. Ukamaka is worried as she fears that her ex-boyfriend Udenna might be on board of that crashed plane and gradually she shares her burden of post-separation loneliness with a man who was stranger a few minutes ago. Chinedu is a homosexual and one thing which is common between Ukamaka and Chinedu is that their lovers have been insensitive and cruel towards them but they still love them wholeheartedly. “The Shivering” unravels conditional love which according to Ukamaka, is even calculative of the partner’s amount of happiness. She says:

If he thought I was happy about something that did not have to do with him, he always found a way to put it down. How can you love somebody and yet want to manage the amount of happiness that person is allowed? (TAYN 153)

The ending is nostalgic and resonant of the deep rooted sense of countryhoof for Nigeria. Ukamaka pinpoints towards the difference between the Mass in America,

which was subdued unlike the vibrant way in which the priest in Nigeria would drench the entire congregation with Holywater. Ukamaka's heart belongs to Nigeria because she feels that she would have felt blessed to be in a Nigerian Mass (166).

Adichie brings up the crisis of émigré Nigerians in America through Chinedu's character as one comes to know that his visa has expired three years ago and he is residing in Princeton University campus under a fake identity and he has a fear of being deported anytime. But the feeling of togetherness rescues a fasting Chinedu and the end leaves the readers hoping that Ukamaka will surely find a way out for Chinedu's survival in America. Prayers and Catholicism are strong portents in the story.

Since Adichie herself is a Diaspora in America most of her stories feature problems and crisis related to migrant Nigerians in America. A similar streak is found in "Arrangers of Marriage" in which deception occurs at the hands of an Americanized Nigerian husband and the story revolves around the wife's struggle with the harsh realities. The story was first published in *Iowa Review* and very soon received critical acclaim. It is narrated in third person and deals with the travails of an orphan Chinaza who is married off by her benevolent guardians, to an American doctor. She later discovers that her American doctor husband is still an intern and has been into a sham-marriage to procure the green card illegally.

The story opens satirically when the narrator uses strange adjectives to address her husband in America. She calls Ofodile "my new husband" (167) which is startling as well as unusual. Moreover she uses epithets like "brooding stairs", "airless hallway", "frayed carpeting", "musty smell" (167), etc. to describe her new residence which is an unlikely description for a newly wedded girl. The remorseful acceptance of Chinaza for her new indifferent American husband is witnessed at the outset. Through this short story Adichie touches upon forced marriages, loveless lives and ulterior motives in the social construct called marriage. Often Chinaza refers to her husband "Dave Bell" as new husband as if he is newly acquired or something new about him is discovered by Chinaza as each day burns into turmoil for her. While her new husband's actual Igbo name is Ofodile but he insists on avoiding Igbo name as well as Igbo mother tongue just to appear the Americanised "Usual". He attempts to obliterate Chinaza's Igbo speech as well:

Ofodile regards the act of forsaking his mother tongue as one of the keys to adaptation to America and, in keeping with this reasoning, he orders Chinaza to stop speaking Igbo in the shopping centre, arguing that “there are people behind her”. He later asks her to speak English at home too so that she can “get used to it”. (Tunca 302)

The story pinpoints only the marriage perspective and not much is spoken on the inner conflicts of the characters:

The fact that very little is revealed about the protagonists inner life as in “The Arrangers of Marriage”, one becomes uncomfortable that Adichie is delivering the “news” about pitiful victims, incorrigible villains and inspirational survivors. Adichie neutralizes this feeling when she calmly eviscerates the pretensions of Westerners whose interest in Africa, masks an acquisition of self-flattering venality. One can therefore say that, Adichie is in effect making it clear that there is nothing like a superior or inferior race. (Siver 14)

The final climax of the story arrives when Chinaza comes to know that Ofodile has been into a physical relationship with a next door neighbour Nia and is relentless about it. Nia supports her morally and even convinces her not to take any drastic action till she finds herself a working visa in America and here the story ends abruptly leaving many questions unanswered:

You can apply for benefits while you get your shit together, and then you’ll get a job and find a place and support yourself and start afresh. This is the U.S. of fucking A., for God’s sake. (TAYN 186)

The ambiguous ending of the story echoes compromise, helplessness and uncertainty of Chinaza’s future as she is a migrant in a foreign country. In a way Chinaza represents thousands of Nigerian migrants who live in America and the way they negotiate with life just like Chinaza:

Adichie’s Nigerian characters negotiate homeland belongings and hostland conflicts as best as they can, as they interact inevitably with natives and also with other Nigerians and Africans who perpetuate certain behaviours and structures on American soil. For these protagonists, undoubtedly, the transnational identification is made

harder by the invisibility that arises from gender and race affiliations.
(Siver 6)

While trying to establish a connect between Chinaza, Nkem and Akunna as diaspora characters in America a critic highlights that all three of them have paradoxical intent since their final decision remains ambiguous:

The women protagonists in these works – namely Ifemelu, Nkem, Akunna, and Chinaza – are diasporic subjects defined by, a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and diaspora...They have ambiguous recollections of Nigeria: on the one hand, Nigeria lacks jobs, university opportunities and equality between sexes; on the other hand, it is the familiar territory in which they know how to face adversities. In a state of permanent hesitation, they wish to stay in the United States and return to Africa at the same time. (Braga et.al. 2)

The language of “Arrangers of Marriage” ranges from dialogues between Chinaza and Ofodile to momentary ponderings of the narrator on Chinaza’s disgust with her arranged marriage. Despite prohibition on Igbo words the story is interspersed with words like - “*egusi*”, “*onugbu*”, “*uziza*”, “*ike agwum*” (168), “*Ezi okwu*” (169), “*ezigbo di*” (170), “*supri-supri*” (171), “*O dim ma*”(172), “*biko*”(177), “*nno*”(178), “*ashawo*”(180).

Thus in “The Arrangers of Marriage” and “The Thing Around Your Neck”, Adichie presents the heavy cost of American life which is paid by the simple Nigerian characters. Not only this, “their passion for America slowly degenerates into cynicism”, when they introspect their pathetic situation (Mami 4).

Adichie’s Diaspora tales bring forth various issues associated with the immigrant Nigerians in foreign countries and how challenges like race, colour, immigrant status, problems of securing a working visa, trap of sham marriages etc. become a part of the daily existence of émigré Nigerians. While critics have unanimously categorised the above mentioned stories as diaspora narratives, Jackson has her reservations on calling these stories as Diasporic:

Although the main characters in these stories are of Nigerian origin, few of them fit easily into the limiting categories of ‘Nigerian’ or ‘Nigerian diaspora’. This is not only because their geographical

placement is often in flux, but also because their sense of identity is not based on nationality, national origin, or even a sense of belonging to a Nigerian diaspora. On the contrary, they can arguably be described as ‘cosmopolitan’ – not in the old elitist sense of the term, but in the sense of transcending the limitations of nationality or national origin as a category of cultural identity. (1)

Thus, Jackson considers diaspora a matter of national identity which remains unaffected by migration of these Nigerian characters to foreign countries. No matter they have ‘Americanised’ themselves, but cannot neglect the indigenous mannerisms and conscience.

Adichie is a conscientious writer and takes up relevant issues back home in Nigeria too in some of the stories. She grew up facing the cruel times of tyranny in the nineties and the economic slump in the later years, she diligently brings out the problems faced by common Nigerian citizen in a candid fashion.

“Cell One”, first published in *The New Yorker*, is about Nnamabia, the spoilt son of a professor in Nsukka University who is jailed because of his association with petty criminal gangs. The story is presented in the second person narrative by the unnamed sister of the protagonist. During the opening pages of the story one gets to know that the story is set in Nsukka where mass unrest and criminal activities are adopted by young boys from well to do families. Major characters are Nnamabia, his unnamed sister /narrator, their parents with other one dimensional characters like Osita, professor Ebube, the jail incharge and his deputy. Cell One begins with a flashback of this story and ends with the present action (Sajna 181). It opens with a recollection of a robbery instance by a nameless female narrator who mentions that her brother Nnamabia is responsible for larcenously taking away gold jewellery from his own house. While portraying the character of Nnamabia, Adichie mentions that he is in a sensitive age between adulthood and adolescence and is highly influenced by his friends but his association with cultism is not clear. The story reaches its climax or turning point when a faculty member along with three engineering students is shot by a group of cult boys in broad daylight and Nnamabia is arrested for his involvement in the murders. He is first taken to Enugu police station which is an unkempt place full of piled up cars and dust and is later shifted to Cell One for disobedience. Satirical overtones concerning Nigeria’s haywire socio-political scenario are to be noticed

when an imprisoned Nnamabia suggests to his family that Nigeria should be run like a cell with a bribe prone tyrannical incharge and a deputy (TAYN 10-11).

The story also glaringly pinpoints towards gender issues. The narrator uses adjectives like “my handsome brother”, “my charming brother” , etc. because one gets to know that the ‘invisible narrator’ is inferior to her brother when physical appearance, looks and complexion are taken into consideration (Sajna 183). It is important to note that in “Cell One”, the title is taken from a horrific and dangerous place where hardcore criminals are punished to death. In fact the title has satirical significance as the story is about Nnamabia’s prison ordeals told by his sister. There is an instance about the corrupt jail head and his deputy accepting bribes and torturing innocent people, abusing human rights openly and the way all the prisoners are made to hold ears and frog-jump on their tunes for thirty minutes reminds one of the tyrannical times of General Sani Abacha. At the same time the story also deals with the rebellion of Nnamabia who protests in favour of an old man and in return he is shifted to Cell One, which in jail glossary, is a road to perdition. A blogger mentions that “Cell One” reminds of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* and the awful stories of Room 101 and at the same time Adichie brings out a parent’s concern about his son’s wasted youth:

When he is in prison, his academic father notices a 'positive change' about him. But when Nnamabia is transferred to CELL ONE because he speaks up for an old man who is incarcerated because his offending son cannot be found for the crime he commits and badly treated by the prison wardens for need of water to bathe, the change Nnamabia experiences afterwards is one his parents never appreciates. (Omatayo n. pag.)

The story is limited to the sufferings of Nnamabia and his family and does not throw light on subjects other than military dictatorship or cultism of young Nigerian boys. Narration is in simple and effective sentences with Igbo words present only on three occasions i.e.: “*Chi m egbuo m*” (4), “*Ekwuzikwano!*” Don’t say that (9) and “*Nekwa ya!*” Watch out (17).

The story entitled, “A Private Experience” that radiates around ethnic bloodshed which prevailed in Nigeria during the tyrannical times of General Abacha in the late

nineteens. First published in *Virginia Quarterly Review*, the two main characters of this story are Chika, an Igbo Christian medical student and an unnamed Hausa onion seller woman and both of them are trying to run away from an ethnic violence which has started on the streets. The story has a third-person narration which assists in bringing out unprejudiced version of two women caught up in ethnic riots. It highlights the true spirit and colour of humanity which is above any religion or ethnicity. The unruly times of General Abacha is a black spot on the history of Nigeria and when one sees Chika and the Hausa woman hiding together at the shop window to save their lives, the outside world and its hatred ridden air does not touch them. They not only share details about their backgrounds but the Hausa woman even gives her headscarf to Chika so that the bleeding from her leg might stop. Both strike an instant connect despite polarities because riots have affected their families equally as Chika's sister Nnedi and Hausa woman's elder daughter Halima are somewhere out and they pray for their safety as well. The time of this story ranges from a few hours of afternoon the next day dawn. Adichie brings out communal harmony through this tale of a few hours duration and these lines sum up the entire story just too well:

Later Chika will read in The Guardian that “the reactionary Hausa-speaking Muslims in the North have a history of violence against non-Muslims,” and in the middle of her grief, she will stop to remember that she examined the nipples and experienced the gentleness of a woman who is Hausa and Muslim. (TAYN 55)

The story closes with the end of riots and the rise of a new dawn but it remains unclear whether Chika and the Hausa woman reunite with their family. This story of sharing of each other's distress is set in a dusty, dark and dingy shop where these women find safe refuge from the riots.

The next story “Ghosts” can be considered a minor story since the narrator-protagonist is a retired Nsukka University Maths Professor James who is thinking about his days of youth. The story which was first published in *Zoetrope: All Story*, is written in first person narration describing the ravages of 1967-70 Nigerian civil war which the septuagenarian university professor witnessed as a young man. His daughter, Nkiru is married and settled in America and since his wife, Ebere's death he lives alone. He revisits old times of his youth in the due course of his chatting with Ikenna Okoro, when tyranny started to spread like an epidemic throughout Nigeria,

even in the university campus as it was more of a political outfit rather than an academic one. He recollects the constant shelling on the day when they evacuated Nsukka and how Igbo people hoped that the vandals aka federal soldiers would be defeated because he believed in “the justness of the Biafran cause” (TAYN 61). The story highlights historical facts like that of a Biafran martyr Christopher Okigbo, who was one of the war veterans of Biafran Republic. Since Adichie too is ancestrally connected with the Biafran cause, through the story she describes the war atrocities of federal soldiers who even devastated the university campus.

The story is limited to the conversational recollection of the past as well as the professor’s nostalgic grief for his wife Ebere. The title is in keeping with the subject since the narrator not only lives in his past years but he also yearns to be with his dead wife and believes that she still visits him. The story lacks a protagonist since Prof. James simply narrates sketches from his days of youth and middle age and his character seems to stand still. “Ghosts” is more about the events and happenings rather than the narrator himself.

A heart rending tale of a mother is presented in ,“The American Embassy” which is situated in the haunting times of General Abacha’s dictatorial rule in Nigeria in the nineties where an unnamed Nigerian woman is queued up for American visa application as she seeks a refuge in a foreign country after her family is victimised by the despot’s vandals. She recollects that her four year old son Ugonna is shot dead two days ago by the General’s soldiers, who were searching for her husband, a pro-democratic activist writer who has written against the despot in the newspaper *The New Nigeria*. She buries her son in the vegetable patch in her ancestral village Ummunachi and is on tranquilizers to deal with the loss of her only child. Unfortunately she has no evidence to prove the government’s responsibility for the death of her child and the visa interviewer and the interview ends with this statement, “Ma’am? The United States offers a new life to victims of political persecution but there needs to be proof....” (140). The story has a strong message of helplessness of Nigerian citizens during tyrannical times. Indeed beggars with enamel bowls are tropes of Nigerians seeking asylum visa in America which is dependent on the embassy seeking strange evidences and of course whims and fancies. The story deals with a few hours a woman spends at the American Embassy in Nigeria but her past

and future are narrated as well. A reviewer mentions about the use of flashback in the story which takes the story back to its turning point ie. the death of Ugonna:

The beauty of this piece lies in its ingenious use of foreshadowing and flashback, which I think Adichie uses deftly in most of her fiction, not just only this Adichie is able to take the reader two days back, to subtly portray what happened, and still tie the relevance of the flashback to actions taking place in real time. There's no distortion of the main narrative whatsoever, which rife in bad fiction, as she goes about this. (Jeisrael n.pag.)

The next story, "Tomorrow is Too Far" is an exceptional story which first appeared in *Prospect 118*, deals with a confession of a rival sibling who is responsible for her brother's death due to slipping from a tree. The story opens as a recollection of last summer the unnamed narrator has spent in Nigeria as she remembers how she got rid of her brother Nonso during that time. The beginning is also resonant of the narrator's parent's divorce and their migration somewhere away from Nigeria. The phrase "it was last summer" is repeated in almost all the paragraph beginnings. The narration is in second person where an unnamed girl shares how eighteen years ago after her parents' divorce, she and her brother Nonso put up with their paternal grandmother in America. The girl is a victim of gender discrimination at home when at every instance she witnesses that her brother Nonso gets most of her mother and grandmother's love and affection as he is her, "only son's son who would carry on the Nnabuisi name" (TAYN 188). However unnatural it may sound but after speeding her brother's death, the narrator seems relieved and also clears away all belongings of Nonso as she nurtures a strong desire to be recognised as the family's daughter. At one juncture realisation dawns upon her and she is determined to wipe him out:

You knew that something had to happen to Nonso, so that you could survive. Even at ten you knew that some people can take up too much space by simply being, that by existing, some people can stifle others. (195)

Though the narrator is sure that Nonso's death is a good riddance but even after eighteen years of his death's secret she shares with her cousin and lover Dozie, she feels ruined because Nonso is still the affectionate one of the family. Memories and

nostalgia are refreshed at Grandmama's death. She recollects that she jokingly scared Nonso when he climbed to the tallest avocado branch, eventually he slipped and died on the spot. The title of the story is derived from the narrator's joke to scare his brother. *Echi eteka* is a poisonous snake and in English the literal translation is 'tomorrow is too far' because the snake's bite is believed to be deadly. Years ago the narrator joked about an *echi eteka* right behind Nonso's branch; he lost his balance and died within a few minutes.

The end is full of remorse because after the narrator confesses her responsibility in Nonso's death, her lover and cousin Dozie hates her and moves away from her. No wonder, she is full of guilt and is pained at the very thought of her brother's death but it is already too late. The final resolution of this story lies in the writer's realisation that her revenge on Nonso actually worsened their lives and in the end she remains broken and guilty with pain in the chest and "you are weeping, standing alone under the avocado tree" (TAYN 197). The story is full of grief, regret and guilt laden as the narrator is never able to shrug off the responsibility of her brother's death from her shoulders. Few Igbo words like "*nwadiana*"(188), "*i laputago m*"(189), "*echi eteka*"(194), "*nne*" (195) are sprinkled in the story to give it a local colour.

The last story "The Headstrong Historian" deals with Igbo women of three generations beginning from Nwambga, the ancestor to Akamefuna, her granddaughter who also has a Christian name Grace. It begins with old Nwambga surrounded by the feeling of nostalgia after her husband Obierika's death as she can still feel his presence around her. Though she banks upon her son Anikwenwa, that he would regain his father's lost heritage from his treacherous uncles through missionary education, but Anikwenwa becomes a Christian convert and digresses away from his mother and ethnicity. It is his daughter Grace who realises the importance of their rich cultural heritage and therefore she plans to make a comeback to her grandmother in Onicha.

It is Nwambga's granddaughter Grace who is the headstrong historian here in this story because, despite her Christian nature she cannot be allowed to visit a dying pagan i.e. her grandmother. She flouts all the rules to be at Nwambga's side and also decides to bring out her rich Igbo cultural heritage through her historical writings. The title of the story is taken from Grace Afamefuna's strong will to return back to her

Igbo roots for which she studies history only to teach the real Nigerian history to her students but also acquires her Igbo name Afamefuna.

“The Headstrong Historian” is a story that encapsulates the theme of clash of cultures, the excessive zeal of converts into Christianity, the pre-colonial history of the southern Igbo religion, the system of justice, creation, myth and legends. The salvaging conduct of Grace who returns from her Christianity to give her grandmother a feeling of humanity and strength is poignantly presented. Her role in the story reminds us of post independent revolutionary politician who saw a desire to return to African ways. In Literature, it was a period which was marked “Negritude”, a movement which sought to restore the dignity and beauty of blackness. (Asoo 8)

Sometimes one may wonder if Grace Akamefuna is Adichie herself who despite having English education plans to return to her Igbo roots. Another striking resemblance between the writer and her character in “Jumping Monkey Hill” could be found because she too faces a patriarchal world while struggling to establish herself as an international bestseller. Eve Einsberg brings out that such protagonists serve a definite purpose in these short stories:

The writing characters in Adichie’s short stories ‘Jumping Monkey Hill’ and ‘The Headstrong Historian’ problematize a discourse of African literary history that figures the possibilities of political activism within a realist-mimetic understanding of the relationship between art and politics. These stories employ Achebe as a kind of shorthand, a way of invoking a dominant meta-narrative discourse of the African author, one that circulates both within and outside the academy. In these short stories, Adichie’s references to Achebe illuminate the problems for African authorship that arise from conceptualising literary-creative possibilities according to an ideological figuration of the author as resistance activist. (10)

Thus with *The Thing Around Your Neck* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is established as a master craftsman of shorter fiction also as she is able to attract the readers’ attention and imagination at the same time. A reviewer mentions about the wide ranged stories of Adichie’s short story volume:

The Thing Around Your Neck, a collection of short fiction by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, explores the lives of Nigerians both at

home in problematic – and sometimes life-threatening – post-colonial settings and, discomfortingly, as “green card” immigrants to the United States. In most cases happiness is at a premium, and loss and sadness are fellow travellers. (Stitson n.pag.)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie touches upon contemporary Nigerian world that had faced challenges in the forms of ethnic wars, corruption, marital discord, cultism, problems of émigré Nigerians, decay in education system etc. through her literary corpus and fulfils her responsibility as a writer by throwing light upon the current problems and travails of Nigeria. She does not offer any solution, but leaves the readers pondering upon valid issues which are presented in a poignant way in these works. The short story volume makes Adichie both nationally and internationally conscientious because, she presents, “experiences of people regardless of their nationality and diasporic status” (Jackson 5), and her stories reflect a global perspective.

One demerit of Adichie’s diaspora tales is that the plot is wrapped in a negative portrayal about the condition of immigrants in America and Britain. The readers tend to form a pessimistic image about the unwelcoming nature of these countries and the conditions in which migrants dwell in American cities. Adichie has been a resident of America since 1997 onwards and has two prestigious fellowships ie. at the Princeton University and the Radcliff Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University and has been the winner of many awards for fiction writing. One cannot ignore the fact that Adichie became a celebrated international writer in America but it is paradoxical to read only the murky details and discouraging situations faced by her characters in America. Adichie should look forward to a balanced approach while dealing with her diaspora tales because America has given her an ocean of opportunities as well.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is no doubt a successful narrator of Nigerian tales as she situates her narratives in the contemporary times, thus enabling the readers to correlate themselves with the characters and the challenges they face in the due course of the novels. Her narrative style not only leaves the readers emotionally stirred but one can also feel an almost cathartic effect when she describes the resilience and hope exhibited by the protagonists. Adichie is a twenty first century writer, so the unconventional ways in which her characters behave could be treated as a seasoning on her almost perfect narratives.

Endnotes:

1. Achebe
2. Nietzschean
3. *Medias res* – in the middle of things
4. Refugee Mother and Child” poem by Chinua Achebe
5. Roland Barthes’s concept ‘the author is dead’.
6. Autodiegetic narrator- term devised by Gerard Genette to refer to the protagonist who also plays the role of the narrator.
7. Franz Karl Stanzel is a narratologist who is greatly influenced by Gerard Genette’s narrative model.
8. Manfred Pfister- Manfred Pfister’s Perspective Structure.
9. Ansgar Nunning has also adopted Mansfield Pfister’s theory on perspective (Fludernik)
10. Womanism- term coined by Alice Walker in her work *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose*.
11. Kwame Appiah in his book *Ethics of Identity*
12. Book review of *Americanah* (<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-06-21-book-review-americanah-by-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie/#.Vg1az8KSyRY>)

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Conclusion

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The discourse of postcolonialism is an innate part of the history and culture of the erstwhile colonial countries and it has gained popularity in the last few decades. After the wave of colonialism got over, it was further established that in fact this ambition of empire building was against humanity in numerous ways. Africa was a continent full of resources but the ignorance of its natives and their primitive culture proved a great handicap for this mine of gold. Orientalists have rendered the African sub-continent as a dependant victim of the prejudiced western opinion. Quotations of Coleman, Macmillan and Rudyard Kipling cited earlier are tangible evidences that prove the ideology of the colonial masters and their supporters. Imperialism came with a baggage of benevolence which was a paradox in itself. With the passage of time, the resistance against colonialism grew and even the litterateurs and creative writers shared their colonial angst and experiences. The reaction against colonialism was the result of protests and the rise of nationalistic fervour in the colonies.

Postcolonial is definitely not merely the physical situation of a former colony but it is the voice of the natives and their expression of opposition against the imperial mother nations. Imperialism and colonialism are two distinct terms and they are not to be used synonymously. Writers and critics around the world have used the term postcolonial for writings by various marginalised natives of erstwhile Afro-Asian colonies that were once exploited for natural and human resources. In colonised nations twin imperialism was observed - territorial imperialism which involved physical capture of land area and cultural imperialism that aimed at indoctrination of the natives in favour of the colonisers. Ngugi wa Thiong O called such hegemonic brain wash of the indigenous people as the 'cultural bomb'. As a result of Thiong O's criticism, writers from Africa started using their mother tongue to express themselves hence proving an antidote to critics who call the postcolonial a first world concept. Cultural uprising in Africa is also indebted to Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire who were influenced by Claude McKay and W.E.B Dubois and this movement was called **Negritude** which was responsible for cultural awakening in African countries.

Postcolonial is not just an answer to the erstwhile imperial powers, it is a way to celebrate and identify with the native culture and traditions which the writers from African and Asian continents relive in their narratives. Nigeria too has been a literary

hotspot for such cultural reinvention where writers like Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti, Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta and many more have presented their native culture in their literary works, in full pride and glory. There has been much debate over the usage of English as a language of expression by the African writers. English is no doubt a language of colonisers but it also gives a wider readership to the African writers and many of them have achieved international acclaim.

A detailed study of the selected works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the third generation woman writer from Nigeria, show that Adichie has carried the cultural torch forward by following the footsteps of her predecessors. But at the same time she has a **postmodern** way of presenting her Igbo ancestry before the readers. Since Adichie's narratives are strongly rooted in Igbo culture, the Igbo socio-cultural patterns and traditional beliefs have been an integral part of the research. It is evident that ancient African practices like oracles, folk- deities and other pagan forms of worship have an indomitable significance even on the twenty-first century African writings. At the same time it is also noticed that marriage and other domestic rituals, the position of women in the family and clan fraternity of Igbos, etc. were also unique but they dwindled away after the usurpation of their territories by Christian missionaries. The literary tradition in Africa is rich and vibrant because of the existence of multi-ethnic groups that have a rich heritage of oral literature. It includes well preserved prose and verse compositions of anecdotes, proverbs, formulae, folk tales, panegyrics, commentaries, praise songs, dirges etc. Performance poetry in Africa is one distinctive way of maintaining a bond with the rich oral literary tradition which survived the period of colonisation but the written literature has its own significance.

Adichie, an unabashed **voice of twenty first century Nigerian woman** has not only established herself as an **Igbo-centric** woman author of Nigeria but has also won accolades as a Diaspora writer. Her fictional narratives- *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Americanah* have not only made the topography and culture of Nigeria popular on the international stage but have also **sensitised** the readers about critical questions on **race, colour and ethnicity**.

After a thorough reading of the texts, it becomes evident that violence looms large on the postcolonial psyche and its ramifications in the newly independent countries like Nigeria have been in the form of ethnic violence and civil war of 1967-70. The steady

manner in which the violence becomes a dangerous weapon in the hands of ethnic groups in a country like Nigeria is noticeable. The second chapter entitled “Violence Begets Violence: Curse of the Nigerian Civil War” analyses the causes and implications of the Nigerian civil war and assesses Adichie’s realistic portrayal of war time evils in the novel *Half Of A Yellow Sun* and the short story “Ghosts.” While Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon tried to establish in their writings that the imperial powers were ruthless during colonisation, Adichie’s texts show that an equal amount of violence and aggression was used by the natives to decolonise themselves. The immortal words of Martin Luther King ‘Violence begets violence’ rings a bell when statistics prove that post independence, commonwealth nations faced the scourge of ethnic violence. Nigeria which consists of an amalgamation of four ethnic groups, also became the boiling pot for inter ethnic violence.

Historians and sociologists are unanimous about the fact that the post independence corruption and unequal distribution of resources paved a path for civil unrest. Moreover, the flawed elections in Nigeria led to a military coup which was led by five Igbo military officers. After a massive political shuffle, the Igbos feared for their safety and hence decided to demand a separate Igbo state of Biafra. The coercion and force that was used to reinstate Biafra again into the federal republic led to the ethnic violence and bloodshed in Nigeria. After an in depth study of the political, social and economic conditions of post independence Nigeria, it emerged that only ethnic differences were not the sole cause to flare up civil violence. Low per capita income, political instability, mad race for resource capture and the widening gaps between the haves and the have nots have greatly contributed towards it. The twin theories put forth by eminent sociologist Randall J. Blimes prove that ethnic conflicts could be secondary reasons for civil war but primarily there were economic causes for the occurrence of the Nigerian civil war. Various instances have been put forth in the preceding chapters to prove that violence is a part and parcel of the human behaviour in the contemporary times and Nelson Mandela even calls this century as a propagator of a ‘culture of violence’. Collective violence is deadly for countries with developing democracies because it opens various avenues through which human rights are abused and masses are engulfed by civil violence and massacre. An extensive argument on civil war and its nuances were thereby presented incorporating leading definitions on civil violence by critics Small and Singer as well as Nicholas Sambanis. Nigeria faced

the scourge of civil war shortly after gaining independence from Britain because its ambiguous political system and ethnic differences led to a massive civil unrest. This curse of the Nigerian civil war is aptly represented in the works of various Nigerian writers like Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and many more literary giants and Adichie's adaptation of this civil war takes the literary tradition of Nigeria a step ahead. Through the novel and a short story, Adichie fulfils her role as a socio-political commentator by presenting the ways in which war affected the common people of Nigeria. It is also observed that literature is a representation of real life events so it is impossible to ignore the role of history in creation of a narrative. The novel *Half of A Yellow Sun* and the short story "Ghosts" are entitled to be called a hybrid between history and fiction. Adichie reaches out to the readers not only as a **socio-political chronicler** but also as a woman writer who understands and **identifies with the sufferings of women and children**.

The fictional world of Adichie presents the war time evils like ethnic murders, rapes, artificially induced hunger, hunger deaths, diseases, psychological trauma and fear, vandalising of property by the so called conscripted soldiers, forced conscriptions of children and young able bodied men, etc. quite realistically. After critically examining her works, it becomes evident that civil wars not only bring out violent outbursts by ethnic groups but also the animal instincts of human beings come to the forefront in the form of rape and molestation. It is here that Adichie gives a voice to the worst suffering parties i.e. women and children who not only face displacement but they are also defiled at the hands of either soldiers or the missionary workers (priests) at the relief camps. Adichie brings forth the **gendered perspective** of the ill consequences of civil violence very realistically.

It is clear that Adichie's stance about the civil war is pro-Biafran as she is of Igbo ancestry. Her protagonists are supporters of secession but she deals with the subject very **objectively** and so she can be called **an insider-outsider** of the Nigerian war. Having examined the differences and similarities between Adichie's style of handling the war drama and that of her predecessors like Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Chinua Achebe and Leslie Jean Ofeogbu, it can be stated that while other writers confine to the portrayal of elitist class, Adichie takes up **the cause of the marginalised**. Adichie is naturally influenced by her predecessors, so there are vivid similarities between the protagonist of Ken Saro Wiwa's *Sozaboy* and Adichie's

depiction of the houseboy Ugwu as both these characters show how young children are susceptible to war. Adichie also describes moments of deprivation and rottenness to highlight the existentialist crisis that was consequential to the civil war. It is observed that Adichie has a **bold and audacious style** of presentation of the ulterior motives behind the civil war. The mal-intent of international powers are also revealed in delaying the medical aid and food relief to the war struck zone where millions suffered and died due to shortage of food and medicines. The civil war remains a part of the collective conscience of the Nigerians and Adichie proves her allegiance towards her country and people who braved a civil violence. The experience of her ancestors has instilled courage in her to tell an unprejudiced tale of a socio-political fiasco.

Adichie is not only a champion of the national cause of Nigeria but as a writer she is also aware of the gender bias prevailing in African societies. The way in which Adichie makes her women characters brave the harrowing experiences of patriarchy also entitles her to be called a feminist. Feminism made waves as a white women's movement in the early years of twentieth century but it gained momentum in African countries through various terms propounded by Alice Walker, Barbara Smith, Clenora Hudson-Weems, etc. The difference between the white feminist movements in France, America and other whiter parts of the world and the Black feminism is clearly stated and elaborated in the chapter dealing with Adichie's feminist perspective. The black women, yearn for **emancipation** at the two levels, both the domains of **race and sex** are contentious for them. A woman of colour attains freedom when she rises from her sufferings and achieves the traits of resilience, and challenges the duplicity of black society. **Adichie's women characters are neither subjugated nor silent sufferers.** In fact, they are **revenge seeking women** of the twenty first century who do not budge from speaking out their hearts when it comes to their liberal way of life. Yet, it is noticeable that they gain empowerment and courage to reverse the old existing gender dichotomies of Igbo society only after undergoing a metamorphosis consequent to their victimization. Such **reversal of gender dichotomy** in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's literary works is traced at three levels. It simultaneously emerges that Adichie's male characters are categorised as symbolic prototypes of "battered husbands", a term coined by Susan Steinmetz to highlight the fact that males are also victims of intimate partner violence.

A comprehensive exploration of Adichie's works shows that her women characters emerge as heroines of the narrative and also deny the victimhood associated with women and are true examples of the third wave feminism. **Indigenous physical traits** of African woman like **kinky hair, caramel skin, full figured body**, etc. have never been so **powerfully portrayed** in fiction before Adichie and it is here that the **aggressive struggle for African identity** on the international level is displayed. It is found that her women characters capsize the notion that man is the giver and the woman is the seeker in the game of love. It becomes evident from the study that Adichie's women characters are the creators of their own future and do not depend on men for their happiness. At times, they also appear libertine. Thus, Adichie's women succeed at **beating men at their own game of love**.

Adichie short stories from *The Thing Around Your Neck* and the novel *Americanah* establish her as a writer of Diaspora. In the chapter entitled "Tales From Hostland to Homeland: Adichie's Diaspora" an attempt has been made to examine Nigerian Diaspora within the theoretical framework of the views expounded by William Safran and Robin Cohen. The Igbo migrations were explicated at four levels and it was found that Adichie's Diaspora belongs to the fourth phase when the Igbo youth was drawn towards America because of socio-economic instability in Nigeria. The chapter brings out a contemporary flavour of voluntary migrations by young Igbo men and women but they later realise the challenges of being away from their motherland. Diaspora themes of **interracial relationships**, the **institution of marriage**, **infidelity**, **same sex desire**, etc, are dealt by Adichie in the most probable and realistic way. The realisation of her diasporic characters, about being Black and African has also helped in tracing the **behavioural and relationship changes faced by immigrant Nigerians**. The protagonists of the short stories as well as the novel happen to be Nigerian women belonging to different socio-economic status and different ages. Thus, it can be said that Adichie's diaspora fiction is woman-centric and very lucidly captures their diasporic experiences and pains of living abroad. Adichie depicts a progressive approach vis-a-vis relationships that transcend the borders of nationality and ethnicity and **the boundaries and the demarcation of the 'other' and the 'self' get blurred in her narratives**. However, like the spider's web that remains rooted to the walls, her imagination also remains rooted to the ground realities of **over bearing racial politics** that engulfs inter racial relationships.

Adichie builds her diasporic narratives taking cognizance of strands like deception, adultery, indifference between married Nigerian couples in America and their consequential disillusionment, to show that **they long to go back to Nigeria**. Similarly, loneliness and displacement faced by unmarried young Nigerian girls and bad experiences in America make them juxtapose between the happiness of their homeland with the wretchedness of America. Strange behaviour of the immigrants like **obliteration of native tongue, fake identities, aping American ways, sham marriages for easy passports**, etc. are also worth noticing in these short stories. It is also observed that through the novel, Adichie tries to portray a **coming of age modern Nigerian woman** who is financially and emotionally independent. Adichie, through her works, reinforce that **race and skin colour still matter in love relationships in America**. The author succeeds in bringing out the hypocrisy of the white countries and the **graveness of apartheid problem** in America and Britain by using blog as a literary device. The ill-effects of racial indiscrimination on black children and teenagers are glaring realities that are portrayed in Adichie's diaspora fiction. These narratives are replete with rootlessness, depression, exile, low self esteem, fake marriages and divorces, and the dilemma of making it big in a land of dreams called America and the consequential bursting of that dream bubble. Adichie very poignantly foregrounds the **negative** and an **anarchist perspective** of her Diaspora experiences through her fiction.

A close reading of the texts reveal that Adichie makes a deft use of narrative strategies to convey the entire import to the readers. Adichie's narrative techniques are deeply embedded in the traditionalist African heritage of oral literature. However, it is also observed that Adichie transcends this oral tradition and associates her writings with the contemporaneous trends as she is a twenty first century woman writer. The present research has employed the tools devised by narratologists namely Roland Barthes, Peter Brooks and Gerard Genette in order to classify and elaborate upon the characteristics of the narrative techniques employed by Adichie. The narrative point of view in Adichie's fiction is also examined with the help of theories by Seymour Benjamin Chatman (overt and covert narrators) and Gerard Genette (homodiegetic/heterodiegetic narrators). Similarly, the narrative pattern and structure varies between novels and short stories, hence significant differentiations emerge between the two. Adichie makes specific use of literary devices like symbols,

confessions, revelations, repetitions and even the innovative ‘book within a book’ and the blog device to convey her own patterns of narrations. Adichie’s characters are unconventional but convincingly realistic. For example, Kainene and Olanna in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, Ifemelu in *Americanah*, Akunna in the short story “The Thing Around Your Neck”, who represent the contemporary Nigerian women with a seasoning of modernity in their personas.

Thus, it becomes evident that **thematic concerns like civil and gender violence, challenges of an immigrant, metamorphosed women and girls, aggressive identity concerns and postmodern features** loom large in Adichie's fictional oeuvre. However, after a comprehensive exploration of Adichie's writings it can be concluded that she is a **conscientious Black woman** diaspora writer and the **identity of a black woman** forms the **axial centre** of her fictional world and the subsidiary thematic concerns revolve around it.

Within the limited scope of the present study, a sincere effort has been made to examine the thematic concerns in the fictional works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It is hoped that the present study would be relevant and useful for further research in this area.

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'A freedom to be, to do': Resilience and Audacity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

KIRTIJHA KUI Sureshtha

While the world was mourning for the loss of the great Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe¹, literary magazines wondered as to who would be his true successor. Only one name made the headlines-Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a contemporary African writer (Pandurang and Bartels) who has represented and upheld the spirit of a true Nigerian on the global literary arena for more than a decade. Adichie confessed in a recent interview about being influenced by Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Chinua Achebe (particularly his novel *Arrow of God*) and Ama Ata Aidoo and finds commendable, "the way in which Ama Ata Aidoo and Bessie Head do not try too hard for making a feminist comment" (Brady).

For a postcolonial woman writer, literature is not a tool to avenge the wrongs done to the natives by the popular circulated notions of the western world, yet it is an attempt to seek redressal for the ignorance and mistake of the Europeans who called them, "half devil and half child."² The statement holds true for Adichie since her literary corpus highlights issues of violence (cultural and physical), colonialism, hegemony, religious conversion and fanaticism, relationships and the problems of immigrant Nigerians in America etc. and at the same time, "she deconstructs the master narratives" (Isaaior 21) by breaking the stereotypes and establishing powerful contemporary women characters.

Ezeigbo comments that traditionally the narratives by Igbo women deal with their own tales and experiences "because that is the one experience they can handle with a marked degree of competence, having been nurtured in that culture which gave rise to the experience" (155). Adichie too focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of Nigeria in all her narratives ranging from religious fanaticism of a Christian convert in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), 1967-1970 civil war in Nigeria in *Half Of a Yellow Sun* (2006) to the problems of immigrant Nigerians in the U.S.A. in her latest novel *Americanah* (2013) and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), thus making the *muthos* (plot) of her works very much Igbo centric in nature. The present paper is an attempt to establish that in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), though the characters are challenged time and again by tyrant yet

they emerge optimistic at the end. Being an heiress of powerful and evocative tales about the nascent feelings of an Igbo, Adichie touches the 'human component' (Azodo) in this novel and highlights an audacity rehearsed by the victimised characters thus rendering a streak of silver lining behind the dark clouds of violence and effacement they undergo throughout the plot.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie focuses on a microcosm of colonization in the domestic set up of Eugene Achike, a Christian convert (from Igbo), who has forsaken his father Papa Nnukwu (as he has refused to accept Christianity) and behaves violently with his wife Beatrice and two children Jaja (his seventeen year old son) and Kambili (his fifteen year old daughter). The novel begins on a note of disintegration and the fissiparous lines of the title express more than meets the eye. At the outset of the novel the title, 'Things falling apart' signify the Achebean concept of brokenness at Eugene Achike's house as rebellion has occurred in his strict and disciplined mansion at Enugu. His son Jaja has refused to participate in the communion a week before Ash Wednesday which was consequential after his visit to Ifeoma's (Achike's sister) house in Nsukka where the only luxury her family enjoys is the breath of freedom. Hence a pact of concordance between the tyrannical father and obedient children is taciturned and it reaches a finale when Beatrice, Eugene's wife poisons him to death.

Okuyade reverberates the principle of African novel as a socio-domestic document and mentions that, "when assessing the African writer, the critic should pay attention to the social context from which the creative art emanates" (246). Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is one such social document which draws heavily from the tyrannical times of Babangida³ and Abacha's autocracy⁴ in Nigeria and creates a similar miniature terror ridden atmosphere of Achike's household. The familial fold of Eugene Achike is interspersed with his violent attacks on family in the name of religious piety. It was the very first time when Jaja has initiated a rebellion by refusing to go to the altar after which Eugene throws a heavy missal towards him. According to Kambili: "Missal was hurled at Jaja by Papa, it cracked the finger size ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the hard floor and then landed after them" (PH 7).

Each time an inadvertent and petty violation of religious beliefs and rules is committed by Jaja and Kambili, the 'ruthless patriarch' performs a clarification ritual to correct his children's waywardness. It is noticeable that this tyrannical father not only runs a newspaper called *Standard*, well known for its honest and

fearless news but doles out money and food in charity. But one also sees him inflicting violence on his daughter Kambili for eating some cereal along with Panadol, a medicine for cramps before mass (*PH* 102). Mabura thus assesses Eugene's personality: "A fanatically religious patriarch, Eugene over-exerts his children academically, and his character generally reads like a Gothic patriarch" (206).

Life in Eugene's big mansion is luxurious but stifling as a dual colonization is being injected into the Igbo family where the patriarch behaves like his white Master and forces his kin to follow a new religious order with utmost discipline and piety. The instance of 'Jaja's deformed little finger' (*PH* 154), also redirects one's attention to the heartlessness of a father who, in a frenzy of religious superiority, behaves inhumanly with his own son which according to Ogwude "is nothing less of a Cultural Hostility" (111). The reason behind Beatrice's silent tolerance is her deep gratitude which she nurtures for Eugene for having stayed faithful and not forsaking her in order to have more children with other women (*PH* 20). Beatrice happens to be the wife of a colonised Igbo, a firm follower of Anglo-Christian practices, "...who has not only curbed her economic and political freedom but the cultural autonomy practised by pre-colonial Igbo women is a distant question for her" (Hogan 47), since she is punished by her husband time and again, leaving her doubly powerless and enslaved. The very first instance of violence in *Purple Hibiscus* occurs when post lunch Eugene beats Beatrice, for showing reluctance to visit Fr. Benedict, thus resulting in a miscarriage. According to Kambili, the numbers of thuds coming from her parent's room were at least a score (*PH* 32).

It is Ifeoma, Eugene's sister, who comes as a symbol of deliverance for Jaja and Kambili and their personalities undergo a renaissance at Nsukka as they are moved by her fearless demeanour and the way in which she takes pride in her Igbo descent. She corrects them by explaining that Papa Nnukwu is a traditionalist and not a pagan and also takes them for a heathen procession at Aro, so that they can learn the importance of Igbo procession from their grandfather. The free air in which Ifeoma's children- Amaka, Obiora and Chima have learnt to express their individual ideas leaves a deep impact on Jaja and Kambili so much that they are prised to compare their aunt's behaviour with that of their fathers. Ifeoma not only narrates the story of King Jaja of Opobo to the children but also inducts them with the significance of defiance by saying that, "a little defiance is as appropriate as marijuana" (144). Later on when Jaja rebels on Palm Sunday, Kambili is reminded of the aptness of his defiance:

Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Auntie Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus...a different kind of freedom from the one crowds wavered green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do. (10)

It is true that the book's namesake flower is a representation of hope and freedom and an audacity to struggle against all tyranny and odds. When Jaja sees the unusual purple hibiscus in Ifeoma's garden he feels that there is possibility of creating something new out of smothering circumstances. At Nsukka, Jaja shares the instance of his broken finger with Ifeoma's family (154) and Kambili too falls in love with a vibrant priest Fr. Amadi, a friend of Ifeoma's family.

Another significant thread to this narrative is Eugene's father, whom Kambili and Jaja had never known all through their growing years because it was considered sinful by their father to spend more than fifteen minutes in their grandfather's house at Nsukka. Slowly both of them realise that it is sinful to take care of an old grandparent and living in meagre resources too could make life beautiful. Papa Nnukwu too suffers every minute because his only son wants him to convert and be a Christian but the former had lived for his traditions and so has to suffer for his audacity (83). Okuyade comments on Eugene's fanaticism and the way he has suffocated his father, his wife and his children by using the equipment of religion:

Eugene, Kambili's father is a religious maverick and his bigotry belief is anchored on the theological standards of Catholicism. He leads a life of Rosary and Crossing and carries himself with a donnish air of Catholic superiority. His overzealous attitude and clipped religious tones reduce members of his family to the size of midgets. (247)

A finale of Eugene's torture occurs when on learning that his children have breathed under the same roof with his pagan father Papa Nnukwu at Ifeoma's house, he performs a cleansing ritual on both Jaja and Kambili by washing their feet with scalding hot water (*PH* 198). Kambili's awareness of her father's heartlessness is combined with a blind devotion for him. As Daria Tunca mentions that being the "internal focaliser" and "an autodiegetic narrator" most of the events, "are rendered from her point of view" but it is Eugene's opinions that are slipped into Kambili's direct speeches (123,124). However this indoctrination suffers a setback after Papa Nnukwu's demise and Kambili too revolts against her father by openly rushing to the floor to protect the torn pieces of Papa Nnukwu's painting (*PH* 210). Beatrice is also shocked out of her passive state after seeing severely injured Kambili on a hospital bed and a culmination of her audacity comes when she decides to poison Eugene. Beatrice had waddled through abuse and physical atrocities only because she felt indebted to Eugene for taking care of the family. She had lost her unborn

children nine times and her limited monosyllabic dialogues and tolerance give the readers an impression of the African Woman portrayed by Sylvia Leith Ross in her work *African Women* (1939) (Kalu 185).

Purple Hibiscus is a tale of retribution and resilience, of characters who have undergone effacement of identities and choices, yet they rise up against all odds and dash away the tyrant with all their might. Ultimately Jaja surrenders to the police for giving slow poison to his father, thus emerging hopeful for the future and freeing himself from the guilt of not being able to protect his family from the tortures of his father. Nandeswaran mentions that Adichie is one such writer who belongs to the “third generation Nigerian women writer’s brigade”, and women characters have a special privilege of being an empowered mother –daughter-wife and they create their own niche thus becoming unforgettable characters like Kambili, Ifeoma, Beatrice and the like (19). While working on a Nigerian loom she highlights the very existentialist toil of the underdog within the domestic set up, simultaneously facilitating a wider discourse to understand the socio-domestic background of Nigeria. *Purple Hibiscus* is akin to most of the narratives of postcolonial forte but the characters exhibit an audacity to struggle, to survive and gain ‘a freedom to be, to do’ (16), which makes them contemporary revolutionaries who can be acquitted for doing away with the oppressor on the clause of self preservation instincts.

NOTES

¹Chinua Achebe’s death news on March 22, 2013 in *New York Times*.

²Adichie’s lecture “The Danger of a Single Story” on TED.com

³Dictator Ibrahim Babangida’s rule after 27 August 1987 (Nigeria).

⁴Sani Abacha, the 10th autocrat of Nigeria (1993-1998).

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