

**TRAPPED BY GENDER: A COMMENTARY ON WOMEN IN
CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS* AND
*HALF OF A YELLOW SUN***

By

R. B. Rajalakshmi

(13PEN012)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education

for Women, Coimbatore – 641 043

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

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Abstract

The dissertation is a commentary on women in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's two novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The researcher explores how Adichie, an African woman-writer explores how women become victims of gender stereotyping. These women cope with their precarious situations and dysphonic in different ways. The researcher examines the political pattern interspersed with gender issues in the two novels for study. These incredible works also function as political metaphors of the Nigerian situation. The dissertation mainly focuses on the following objectives: examining the dangers of gender stereotyping and exploring the strategies women employ to fight patriarchy, interrogating how the position and treatment of women is linked to the national struggle and highlighting the author's vision on gender roles.

African women writers pen heart wrenching tales of how they have had to face a number of issues like neo-colonialism, racism, poverty, gender bias and ethnic tensions which become testaments to their unique condition. An amalgamation of thoughts and concerns advanced by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Mary Kolawole is employed to explain the challenges to women's position and empowerment. The dissertation is configured in five chapters. Chapter one presents an overview of the area of research, introduction of the author, examining the construction of gender stereotypes and its relation to literature, review of literature, and overall conceptualisation of the entire dissertation. Chapter two examines the construction of gender stereotypes in the novels under study elaborating on their resultant position and perception in society. Chapter three focuses on the stereotypes

that become prototypes; namely women who strive to break free from the shackles of abuse and oppression. The chapter narrates how some women chart new paths and emerge victorious and empowered. The final chapter assimilates the observations of the study and reaffirms the writers' vision for an emancipated society wherein both men and women complement each other and become compatriots in progress and development.

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Chapter - 1

Overview

The term 'Literature' has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. Literature, in its broadest sense, is any written work; etymologically the term derives from Latin *litteratura*/litteratura writing formed with letters although some definitions include spoken or sung texts. More restrictively, it is writing that possesses literary merit, and language that foregrounds literariness, as opposed to ordinary language. Literature is something that reflects on society, aids in self realisation, all the time offering a treat with the beauty and play of words. It both reflects ideology and changes ideology, just like it follows generic conventions as well as changing them. It also has social and political effects. Literature is the creation of another world, a world that it can only be seen through reading literature. African literature consists of a body of work in different native languages as well as in English in various genres, ranging from oral literature to literature written in colonial languages (French, Portuguese, and English).

Research comprises "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humans, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications." It is used to establish or confirm facts, reaffirm the results of previous work, solve new or existing problems, support theorems, or develop new theories. A research project may also be an expansion on past work in the field. The primary purposes of basic research are documentation, discovery, interpretation, or the research and development of methods and systems for the advancement of human knowledge.

This research is a commentary on women who are trapped by gender stereotyping Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's two novels: *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). Gender stereotypes are over-generalizations about the characteristics of an entire group based on gender. While gender stereotypes have been popularly perceived as having negative connotations, they can also have positive ones as well. The study examines the political pattern interspersed with gender issues in the two novels for study. These incredible works also function as political metaphors of the Nigerian situation. The dissertation mainly focuses on the following objectives: examining the dangers of gender stereotyping and exploring the strategies women employ to fight patriarchy, interrogating how the position and treatment of women is linked to the national struggle and highlighting the author's vision on gender roles.

According to Wole Soyinka in *Africa 39*, the "Wind of change" has already blown over the continent and nearly all African nations had long gained their independence from colonial rule. That Wind, however, did not take long to change direction and character. Inevitably it brought it with it the detritus including shrapnel of ideological warfare from other lands, since the struggle for independence itself was never completely devoid of a find for ideological mainstay. Soyinka writes "The primary function of literature is to capture and expand reality. It is futile therefore to attempt to circumscribe African creative territory, least of all by conformism to any literary ideology that then aspires to be the tail that wags the dog. Literature derives from and reflects upon- Life" quoted in "A tasting table of life African" *Deccan Chronicle* by Ranjona Banerji. Lailah Gifty Akita writes about Africa as:

"Africa! Africa! Africa!

Africa my motherland!

Africa, your people cries for you!

Africans must educate their citizens.

Africans must reach out to it's people and empower them to build the nation.

Africans you are the only people who can liberated your citizens from poverty through education.

Africans must pay the price to rebuild the continent.”

Adichie projects womanhood in a positive light. She upholds female potentialities which the patriarchal structure has repressed. She also makes role models out of her female protagonists. Women’s impassioned struggles to free themselves from the shackles of male brutality and dominance are what holds us fascinated to Adichie’s most alluring and extremely powerful novels. Through her main characters, she reveals how the physical, psychological and mental abuse of women can have negative effects on their well being.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian writer. She is Igbo, one of the largest and most influential ethnic groups in Nigeria. Adichie has been called "the most prominent" of a "procession of critically acclaimed young Anglophone authors” that have succeeded “in attracting a new generation of readers to African Literature”. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born September 15, 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. She was raised in Nsukka near the University of Nigeria. Her father, James Nwoye Adichie, was a professor of statistics and later became the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University. Her mother, Ifeoma Adichie, became the first female registrar at the University. Adichie is the fifth child in a family of six children. She is of Igbo descent and her ancestral home is in Abba.

Adichie studied medicine and pharmacy at her father's behest, at the University of Nigeria for a year and a half. During this period, she edited *The Compass*, a magazine run by the university's Catholic medical students. At the age of 19, Adichie left Nigeria and moved to the United States for college. After studying communications and political science at Drexel University in Philadelphia, she transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) to live closer to her sister, who had a medical practice in Coventry. She received a bachelor's degree from ECSU, where she graduated summa cum laude in 2001.

In 2003, she completed a master's degree in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University. In 2008, she received a Master of Arts in African studies from Yale University. Adichie was a Hodder fellow at Princeton University during the 2005-2006 academic years. In 2008 she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. She has also been awarded a 2011-2012 fellowship by the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University. Adichie, who is married, divides her time between Nigeria, where she teaches writing workshops, and the United States.

Adichie credits Chinua Achebe, Igbo author of Nigerian masterwork *Things Fall Apart*, with her literary success. She once lived in Achebe's house and believes his halo surrounded her. After reading his book at 10 years old, she realized that people who looked like her could exist in books. Her desire to write was sparked by his work. In 1997 Adichie published *Decisions*, a collection of poems, and in 1998, a play *For Love of Biafra*. She was shortlisted in 2002 for the Caine Prize for her short story *You in America*. In 2003, her story *That Harmattan Morning* was selected as joint winner of the BBC Short Story Awards, and she won the O. Henry prize for *The American Embassy*. She also won the David T. Wong International Short Story Prize 2002/2003 (PEN Centre Award), for *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Her first novel, *Purple*

Hibiscus (2003), received wide critical acclaim; it was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction (2004) and was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (2005). Her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, named after the flag of the short-lived nation of Biafra, is set before and during the Biafran War. It was awarded the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction. . In 2008, she received a MacArthur Fellowship. Her third book, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), is a collection of short stories. In 2010 she was listed among the authors of The New Yorker's "20 under 40" Fiction Issue. Adichie's story *Ceiling* was included in the 2011 edition of *The Best American Short Stories*. Her third novel *Americanah* was published in 2013.

Adichie tries to combat the image of Africans as portrayed by Western media. Choosing to write first from her experience as an affluent and educated Nigerian, she was often criticised for shying away from the “real” Africa. But she struggled to write characters who were not “starving, or being bullied by [Zimbabwean dictator] Mugabe, or dying of AIDS.” As reflected in her writing voice, Adichie is a staunch feminist and uses her work as a way to work through the misogyny and condescension she has faced as an African woman in the global literary community. She splits her time between the United States and Nigeria, married to a Maryland-based doctor.

A human society is a group of people involved in persistent interpersonal relationships, or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Human societies are characterised by patterns of relationships between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent members. In the social sciences, a larger society often evinces stratification or dominance patterns in subgroups.

Oxford dictionary defines stereotype as a thought that can be adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things. Mugubi's observation on author's vision is insightful as we unravel the gender vision in Adichie's two novels. Adichie engages herself with special concerns on how society can be transformed for the betterment of humanity. She presents her arguments valorising the positive and life enhancing attitudes and qualities while at the same time berating all the features that leave the humane out from human beings. Tied to her gender issues are other issues of concern to her society and Africa.

In a text that Adichie quotes written by Fredrick Douglas: *Life and Times of Fredrick Douglas: An American Slave Narrative Written by Himself (1892)*, critics observe that women's rights was one of the agenda items for Douglas devotion in freedom struggle. Douglas is believed to have looked at the liberation of the black man and its connection with women suffrage and resistance. It is believed that he found the argument for Women Rights a perfect vehicle to build his case for the black emancipation.

Akachi Ezeigbo quoted in Azuike's "Women's struggles and Independence in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of Yellow Sun*". Ogunyemi elaborates how gender struggles in the African context should incorporate other issues like racial, national, economic, ethnic and political considerations. She identifies the fact that colonialism and imperialism have made the African man impotent and as such he should be empowered just like the African woman. She further contents that sex struggles alone would not end the problems that stand on the way of Africans. Construction of identity has been taken as a critical issue as women confront multiple levels of otherness, racial, cultural, regional, religious, third world and post-colonial. The ideas of Ogunyemi resonate with those of Ogundipe, Nfah-Abbenyi, Kolawale, Badejo, and

Shigali who have converged onto the conclusion that gender in Africa should be discussed together with other urgent and serious problems bedeviling the African people.

Commonwealth writers, not only represent the human experience but also the condition of the country in the wake of colonisation and its aftermath. The studies provide insights and understandings to the complexities of the men and women that discourses their angst. Among the literatures in this genre, African Literature has drawn massive attention.

According to R. Luzolo Mbemba, African literature is very little or not known at all to the American people. It may be divided into:

1. African literature written by Westerners in western languages.
2. African literatures written by Africans in western languages.
3. African literatures written by Africans in African languages.
4. African Oral traditions.

African literature written by Westerners:

It talks about Africa as seen by Westerners. It often shows the negative images of Africa or the Africans. Its authors are usually non-Africans who have lived or spent some time visiting Africa.

African literature written by Africans in Western languages:

African authors in this group are mostly those that received a traditional African education, and then, later, a western or colonial education. The waves of this literature started during pre- or post independence wars of Africa. This period is made possible by the "I Eveil African" (African awakening) movement. It is a period during which Africans came to understand that Western nations should not continue to govern them. During that period, "I'Eveil African" manifested itself with students like

Leopold Sedar Senghor (of Senegal), Aime Cesaire (of Martinique) and Leon Damas (of French Guyana) with their “La Negritude” philosophy. Many more authors followed the “eveil”. Notable authors are Camara Laye, Ousmane Soce, Bernard Dadie, Ousmane Sembene, V.Y. Mudimbe, Ake Loba, Cheick Hamidou Kane, Olympe Bhely- Quenum, Ferdinand Oyono, Tchicaya U’Tamsi, Mongo Beti, Birago Diop and Zamenga Batukezanga.

African literature written in African languages by African authors:

African authors like Ngugi wa Thiong’O, Thomas Mfolo, Fagunwa, Mazisi Kunene, Ousmane Sembene, Cheikh Anta Diop have long encouraged African literatures in African languages. That is why we have texts in languages like Wolof, Swahili, Lingala, Kikongo, Hausa, Sesuto, Xhosa, Zulu, Umbundu, Kikuyu and many others. African literature in African languages will certainly help Africa in its development.

African Oral literature or African Oral tradition:

This is the true African literature. Here, every African is a contributor in his/her native or national language. Griots sing music, sculptors sculpt, painters paint and the elder lies store every bit of their traditions through this oral literature. Every African born on the African land has benefited of these oral traditions. African oral tradition is usually presented in stories, myths, songs and the like. It is in oral traditions that the old and experienced play the roles of libraries, libraries of knowledge, wisdom, traditions and cultures.

African literature written in English language has achieved worldwide acclaim thanks to many authors like Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Gabriel Okara, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Flora Nwapa, and Buchi Emecheta. The researcher acknowledges the major contributions from authors like Grace Ogot, Okot

P'Bitek, Nruddin Farah and Ngugi wa Thiong'O. The Southern African Region is replete with the presence of authors like Alex LaGuma, Dennis Brutus, Matsemela Manaka, Sipho Sepamla, and Thomas Mfolo and so on. The researcher elaborates on the grand setting and aura provided by eminent writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta and has added a brief on each of these writers who have strongly inspired and influenced the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Chinua Achebe's notable works are *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), *Chike and the River* (1966), *An Image of Africa* (1977) and *The African Trilogy* (1988). Achebe's novels focus on the traditions of Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences, and the clash of Western and traditional African values during and after the colonial era. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition, and combines straightforward narration with representations of folk stories, proverbs, and oratory. He also published a number of short stories, children's books, and essay collections. From 2009 until his death, he served as a professor at Brown University in the United States.

Wole Soyinka, a Nobel Laureate, has strongly criticised many Nigerian military dictators, especially late General Sanni Abacha, as well as other political tyrannies, including the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. Much of his writing has been concerned with "the oppressive boot and the irrelevance of the colour of the foot that wears it" Maya Jagi quoted as "Ousting Monster in The Guardian". Soyinka's notable works are *The Swamp Dweller* (1958), *The Lion and the Jewel* (1959), *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1960) and *The Interpreters* (1965). Soyinka's political stance shifted continually between the classroom and the theatre, while his work often focused on the political corruption surrounding the slow emergence of Nigerian democracy.

Buchi Emecheta is one of the growing number of African women writers who have set their authorial eyes on the conditions of women living both on their home continent and abroad. She takes her place among Tsitsi Dangarembga, Miriama Ba, Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, Lauretta Ngcobo, and Lindsey Collen, to name a few, as writers who have formed an intense new voice of African womanhood. Emecheta has published more than twenty works; including the novels *Double Yoke*, *The Bride Price*, *Head above Water*, *Destination Biafra*, and *Kehinde*. Each is an exploration of what it means to be a woman and a mother in rapidly evolving societies where tradition is in a constant state of flux. While some of her novels mirror her own experience as an expatriate living in London, her work mostly focuses on her native country of Nigeria.

The researcher acknowledges that the publication of *Africa 39* during the course of her study added further impetus. *Africa 39* is an anthology of stories/extracts of the most promising 39 authors under the age of 40 from Sub-Saharan Africa and the diasporas, a collection of short stories, excerpts from novels and several unpublished work-in-progress pieces that attempts to showcase this group of diverse writers from 16 nations across the continent with Kenya and Nigeria producing the most work. In *The Shivering*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie provides a simple lyrical short story that brilliantly explores the relationship between two expat Nigerians living in Princeton who find solace in a platonic friendship as they trade stories about their previous romantic heartaches; in 'The Old Man And The Pub', Stanley Onjezani Kenani recalls a tale about a Malawian publican whose struggling Irish bar in Geneva lands him a sum of cash that a former loyal customer has unexpectedly left him in his will; and in 'Number 9', Nadifa Mohamed describes a Muslim Somalian woman's

experience wandering around London's alienated streets, searching for a man she has met on a dating website.

Out of this illustrious glittering stars on the horizon, Sefi Atta is a sensitive writer, who broaches polemical themes in a subtle and nuanced manner. *Everything Good Will Come* (2005), her debut novel, is the story of Enitan, an eleven-year-old girl waiting for school to start, and her friendship with the girl next door; a relationship that receives little support from Enitan's deeply religious mother. Set against the backdrop of the military rule of Nigeria in the 1970s, it is at once coming-of-age-tale and quiet campaign against political corruption and the repression of women. Atta is widely known for her radio plays, which have been broadcast on the BBC, and her short stories, that have appeared in a number of journals including the Los Angeles Review.

Thus one can observe that post colonial Nigeria has a notable tradition of fiction writing. It is from this impressive oeuvre that Chimamanda's first novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) emerged. The novel is an account of a teenager watching her family breakdown in a country that is doing the same. As in many post colonial societies, the personal and political are inseparable, although here the disintegration of the Nigerian state (a military coup takes place early on in the story) is as nothing compared to the fracturing family at the centre of the novel. The events take place in Igbo land in Eastern Nigeria, and the narrator, fourteen-year-old Kambili, is the obedient only daughter of a harsh Roman Catholic patriarch, Eugene, a big man and wealthy local manufacturer in the city of Enugu. He is a proprietor of a newspaper in which, at considerable personal cost, he bravely champions freedom of speech against military tyranny at the same time as he rules his home with the most tyrannical of iron grips.

The novel's picture of modern Nigeria is an authentic one; it depicts the land full of potential and with an educated middle class, a country in which a coup can suddenly erupt and a local newspaper editor can be killed for what he writes. A place whose inhabitants is aware of the nation's flaw and yet are fiercely patriotic, loath to immigrate until things get truly desperate. Chimamanda's main strength is dialogue: as her characters speak, one hears the voices of modern Nigeria. Her descriptions, however, sometimes lack subtlety, and she has a tendency to overdo the symbolism: objects break as the family falls apart; the *Purple Hibiscus* runs rampant over the tidy garden as the children and their mother test their freedom.

Chimamanda's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, centres on the Biafran war. The author has stated she believes that many of the issues that caused the war still remain today. She further comments that the war is talked about "in uninformed and unimaginative ways", and that the war is as important to the Igbo people her book features today as it was then. The political events can never change in book, Adichie said that the book contained "emotional truth", and that the book showed the war had a significant impact upon the people of Nigeria.

The Nigerian Civil War (or the "Nigerian-Biafran War") started on 6 July 1967 and ended on 13 January 1970. The war broke out due to political and ethnic struggles, partly caused by the numerous attempts of the south-eastern provinces of Nigeria to secede and form the Republic of Biafra. Political conflict between the Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and Fulani people erupted into two deadly military coups. The Igbo tried to break away from Nigeria to become the Republic of Biafra, but was met with little support. From 1968 onward, the war fell into a form of deadlock, with Nigerian forces unable to make significant advances into the remaining areas of Biafran control. Nigeria cut off humanitarian aid to Biafra, resulting in hundreds of thousands

of civilians dying from starvation and disease. Many lives and resources were lost during the war; and even today there are still tensions between the different ethnic and religious groups of Nigeria.

In Adichie's short-story collection, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), she demonstrates the same insight into her characters and the same compassion for them, but she expands her range to include characters that have left Nigeria for a new life in the United States. The characters in the collection's twelve stories struggle to determine where their home is, who their people are, and how an increasingly globalized world even a relatively peaceful one shapes their identity.

Many of the characters in this collection are immigrants who have come to the United States for higher studies, as Adichie did, or to follow their husbands, or to look for a better life. These stories join those by Jhumpa Lahiri collected in *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* (2003), and other works that illuminate the promise and ultimate disappointment of the immigrant experience. These authors present characters mostly women with one foot back home and one foot in the new world, eager for new experiences but unwilling to sever ties with the old ways. Scenes of cooking and eating are important for all these writers, as they depict lonely women trying to fill the empty places inside them with food from home.

Where Lahiri and Ali ultimately offer hope that immigrants can find new homes, Adichie's stories are overlaid with loneliness and regret. In "Imitation," a woman in New Jersey whose husband travels back and forth between New Jersey and Nigeria learns that he has a mistress in Lagos. In "On Monday of Last Week," a young, bored, and dissatisfied wife named Kamara is hired as a nanny for a privileged couple in Philadelphia. Kamara believes she has made an exciting connection with the mother, Tracy, but Tracy discards her as quickly as she picked her up. In "The

Arrangers of Marriage,” Chinaza, another new young wife, finds that her arranged marriage to a Nigerian medical student in America will not be as she had dreamed: Her husband is critical, pretentious, and so eager to fit in that he has even changed his name from Ofodile Emeka Udenwa to Dave Bell.

The collection’s title story is about a young woman who wins the lottery for an American visa. Her extended family is excited that she will live in the land of plenty; her relatives tell her, “In a month, you will have a big car. Soon, a big house.” Predictably, her actual experience is very different. She begins her life in the United States with an aunt and uncle but has to leave with no prospects after her uncle sexually abuses her. Her employers take advantage of her, paying her below the minimum wage, and they think she is Jamaican because she is black and has an accent. Told in the second person, the story is a heartbreaking depiction of loneliness. Like many of the immigrants in this collection, the young woman in this story is completely alone, aching but unable to tell her family what is happening to her.

The narrator crystallises this situation with a recurring image: “At night, something would wrap itself around your neck, something that very nearly choked you before you fell asleep.” For a time, with a new American lover, she finds that “The thing started to loosen, to let go,” but, like many of the women in this book, she discovers that the answer to her desolation does not lie in the arms of a man. She sees the strengths and virtues of her characters as well as their faults. *The Thing Around your neck* is a moving, unsettling, and ambitious addition to an impressive body of work.

Adichie’s *Americanah* (2013) encompasses her powerful observations regarding race and class. She understands that such fine-grained differentiations don’t penetrate the minds of many Americans. This is why a lot of people here, when

thinking of race and class, instinctively speak of “blacks and poor whites,” not “poor blacks and poor whites.” Many of Adichie’s best observations regard nuances of language. When people are reluctant to say “racist,” they say “racially charged.” The phrase “beautiful woman,” when enunciated in certain tones by certain haughty white women, undoubtedly means “ordinary-looking black woman.” Adichie’s characters aren’t, in fact, black. They’re “sable” or “gingerbread” or “caramel.” Sometimes their skin is so dark it has “an undertone of blueberries.”

Americanah tells the story of a smart, strong-willed Nigerian woman named Ifemelu who, after she leaves Africa for America, endures several harrowing years of near destitution before graduating from college. She starts a blog entitled “Race or Various Observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” and wins a fellowship at Princeton as Adichie once did thus sealing the autobiographical tone to the work.

The researcher has chosen Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* to draw attention to the position of women in Nigerian society. The sufferings of women are universal. However the causes remain different. The way the author has brought out the consequences of the Biafran War and its impact on the society which disposition the conditions of the women is intriguing. Chimamanda’s effective representation of the stances of women has paved way for the researcher to opt these novels. Chimamanda, in an interview entitled “We should all be feminists” in TEDx talk in the year 2012, shares her experiences of being an African feminist, and her views on gender construction and sexuality. Adichie believes that the problem with gender is that it shapes who we are.

“I am angry. Gender as it functions today is a grave injustice. We should all be angry. Anger has a long history of bringing about positive change, but in addition to

being angry, I'm also hopeful because I believe deeply in the ability of human beings to make and remake themselves for the better.”

The writings of women are based on the notion that their lives are shaped and restricted by the intervention of male livelihood. The patriarchal society has subjugated women to lead a subservient life, causing gender stereotypes to endure. These differences become apparent in the works. Women writers reflect in their works the distinctive concept of the marginalisation of women which leads them to forcibly choose a diminished life. Through their writings they re-create the world that they dream of, with a belief that the existence of gender inequalities and the condemnation of women by the society could be redeemed. Women are fettered by the inadequacy of freedom that results in their quest for liberation from gender bondage. These characteristics are seen in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

An amalgamation of thoughts and concerns advanced by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Mary Kolawole is employed to explain the challenges to women's position and empowerment. Women are at the heart of development as they control most of the non monetary economy (subsistence, agriculture, bearing children, domestic labour etc.) and play an important role in the monetary economy (trading, wage labour, employment, etc. She is the first teacher, the sustainer and maintainer of the home, the peace maker, the symbol of beauty and major moulder of the character of the child. By their sheer psychological, physiological and intellectual make up, they do perform more than mere complimentary roles in the production process (Jeminiwa, 1995).

As in most parts of the developing world, even in Nigeria, much of women's work here remains invisible, unremunerated and unrecognised. But women are now

challenging the status quo. Mechanisms to right the so called 'Cultures' wrong' are being put in place. Women's voices are now being heard clamouring for an improvement in their socio-economic status and for the recognition of their immense contributions to national development (Amah, 1995). "A land mark novel Adichie brings to history a lucid intelligent and compassion, and a hear felt plea for memory" observed Guardian. Chinua Achebe thought that Adichie is "A new writer endowed with the gift of ancient storytellers". According to Margaret Forster comments on the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* "I wasted the last fifty pages reading them far too greedily and fast, because I couldn't bear to let go... There's a quiet confidence about the writing which is very attractive- it isn't showy, it isn't brash, but on the contrary both captivating and mature". "A sensitive and touching story of a child exposed too early to religious intolerance and uglier side of the Nigerian state" observed J.M.Coetzee of *Purple Hibiscus*. Commented by Telegraph about *Purple Hibiscus* "A beautifully judged account of the private intimate stirrings of a young girl... Adichie is a fresh new voice out of Africa."

Muriungi, in a reading of Oludhe Macgoye's *Victoria and Murder in Majengo* and Genga-Idowu's *Lady in Chains* examines the prostitute trope recurrent in African male literature which critics link directly to the national metaphor of moral decay. However, in reading the two novels she concludes that, prostitution may be taken as a form of emancipation since it allows women to break away from certain traditional roles and networks to forge new and more fulfilling networks outside the watchful eyes of the family and traditional community. Such a perspective hints to the fact that there is female subordination in several African communities although the situation varies in time and space. In an earlier study, Kassam also affirms that African women contest their oppression and condition of otherness enables the African woman to

stand back and criticise the norms, values, and practices that the dominant culture of patriarchy imposes on everyone including those who live at the margins. Georgiads Mboya Kivai quotes in “The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*”.

In an interview with Kimber (2006), Adichie is quoted as saying that she wanted to write the story of war and love in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, because she grew up in the shadow of Biafra. She declares that she wanted to engage with history so as to animate the discourse of Biafra which is hardly a public topic in Nigeria. Adichie laments that those problems that led to Biafra war have not been tackled. In that interview, Adichie identifies issues that include: a concern for humanity; the class question in her society; the colonial and postcolonial experiences; national history and inter-ethnic conflicts. Adichie is angry about how the colonial administration set people against one another through the policy of divide and rule.

African women writers try to map new ideologies that recognise their humanity before they engage in gender struggles. They have protested against patriarchy and oppression, but their major focus has been negotiation, compromise and reconciliation of power since the love of a good man and a stable home is a form of refuge for a woman.

Thesis Statement:

The aim of this study is to examine gender stereotyping as a key factor that leads to the marginalisation and subjugation of women as depicted in the two novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It investigates strategies adopted by women to battle the patriarchal oppression and explicates how women’s struggle in society runs parallel to the national struggle. It also suggests a picture of hope

elaborating on the lives of women who have broken the shackles of oppression and abuse to become prototypes.

Chapter one presents an overview of the area of research, introduction of the author, examining the construction of gender stereotypes and its relation to literature, review of literature, and overall conceptualisation of the entire dissertation. Chapter two examines the construction of gender stereotypes in the novels under study elaborating on their resultant position and perception in society. Chapter three focuses on the stereotypes that become prototypes; namely women who strive to break free from the shackles of abuse and oppression. The chapter narrates how some women chart new paths and emerge victorious and empowered. The final chapter assimilates the observations of the study and reaffirms the writer's vision for an emancipated society wherein both men and women complement each other and become compatriots in the journey towards progress and development.

Chapter - 2

THE STEREOTYPES - CONSTRUCTION, POSITION, PERCEPTION

The concept of culture has been defined in various ways. These various definitions range from its simplistic forms to its complex forms. Culture is being universally defined and understood as the totality of ways of life of the people or a society. Sociologists, anthropologists and historians have offered a variety of meanings for culture and the traits inherent in it. Nigerian culture is as multi-ethnic as the people in Nigeria. The people of Nigeria still cherish their traditional languages, music, dance and literature.

Nigeria comprises of three large ethnic groups, which are Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and Igbo. Yoruba, the south Western part of Nigeria is home to most Yoruba and they are amongst the group of Nigerian people where culture is still preserved. They are well involved in arts and have a long history of poetry, bead works, metal works, weaving and mask making.

Igbo occupy the south eastern and western region by the river Niger. Historically, the Igbos originated from the Nri community dated back to the Stone Age. Igbos are known to be highly enterprising and industrious, a trait that has been in the group for a long time. Among the Nigerian people the Hausa and Fulani occupy the northern parts of the country. Their population spreads beyond Nigeria, involving other parts of West Africa where they constitute the largest single ethnic group in West Africa. However there are other ethnic groups as well.

Thus culture in Nigeria is positively multi-ethnic. Culture of Nigeria gives a lot of value to different types of arts, which primarily include ivory carving, grass weaving, wood carving, leather and calabash, pottery, painting, cloth weaving and glass and metal works. There are more than 250 languages spoken in Nigeria. English

is considered to be the official language. However, it is notable that not more than 50% of the populations are able to speak in English. Every tribe has got its own language, which they prefer to follow as the standard mode of communication among themselves.

Nigerian culture is as old as 2000 years and what makes it stand out is its diversity. Nigerian culture includes varieties in types of clothing because of the different groups of people living in the country. Conservativeness is the common factor in their dressing style. This culture gives a lot of importance in treating the guests with utmost care and warmth. The hospitality of people represents this tradition; for instance, People do not say thank you, when they are offered food. Among the games, the Nigerians enjoy soccer the most. Polo, cricket, swimming and wrestling are popular among the affluent classes.

Gender Stereotype is a social construct which asserts the expectations, capabilities and responsibilities of men and women which are not always determined biologically. The roles assigned to men and women are significantly defined structurally and culturally as the ways which create, reinforce and continue the relationships of male dominance and female subordination. The construction of masculine/feminine, father/mother, husband/wife and superior/inferior is a social discourse exploring the gender equation in society.

Gender stereotypes are fixed ideas where women are labelled as inferior to men. For instance, a commonly held belief is that men are better drivers than women. Although this is a positive stereotype for men, it is a disadvantage for women. Some feel that women lack enough driving skills compared to men. People consider driving to be a “man’s job”. Such stereotypes could lead to discrimination in hiring. For example, an employer refuses to hire woman as a driver just because she is a woman.

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, culture and tradition play essential roles in the oppression and subjugation of women. Adichie engages herself with special concerns on how society can be transformed for the improvement of humanity. Tied to her themes of gender issues are other issues of concern to her society and Africa, in general. Adichie grapples with several problems that manifest in Africa and try to recommend solutions within the larger global milieu of imperialism and neo-colonialism. She looks at corruption, misrule, ethnic tensions, tribal conflicts and the imperial influence on Africa and proposes a way out. She is therefore a committed Third World writer because African literature cannot afford to thrive in the luxury of art for art's sake, since the continent reels under suffocating and devastating social problems that writers should confront and possibly propose solutions to.

The patriarchal society sets the parameters for women that are consigned to the margins by the family and society. This gender discrepancy distances women from their basic rights. The domestic and sexual violence thwarts the growth and development of women right from their birth to adulthood. Like capitalism and class divide, gender discrimination is also considered global because it happens in every society. According to O Yesakin, women perform certain roles that make them equivalent to men. They beget and take care of their children, doing the household chores and they economically lend their help to men. For instance, in Yoruba land, women sell what the man produces and rescue them when they are in financial difficulties. Quoted in Georgiada Mboya Kivai, as quoted in Uwakweh's "The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*".

Gender is the chief trait that distinguishes male and female in society. The species of priority varies from one culture to another. For instance, within the family

institutions at present and in the past, it is obvious that the female members of the family constitute the second sex. Man is always the head of the household, as well as he is the breadwinner and ultimately the decision maker. In Nigerian contemporary society, feminism manifests as an effective antidote to the sufferings and struggle of women. Women are largely restricted to their biological roles as wives and mothers as per traditional tendency.

The British took control of Nigeria during the late 1800s and early 1900s and it remained as a British colony until 1960, when Nigeria gained its independence. After years of colonisation and long-standing regional tensions, Nigeria's newly declared independent government lacked stability and a series of military coups ensued. In *Purple Hibiscus* Kambili and her family are members of one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbo. After a coup in 1966, army leaders suspended the national and regional constitutions causing even more turmoil. Later that year, a new leader, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon established another coup. The turmoil in the country eventually resulted in the politically-motivated massacre of Igbo people in the North.

The leader of the Igbo, Chukwuemeka O. Ojukwu, declared the Igbo region as the independent Republic of Biafra, resulting in a gory civil war between Biafra and Nigeria. The secession effort eventually failed, and Biafra was reintegrated into Nigeria in 1970. While the country's economic situation improved after this civil war due to its oil reserves, corruption and unemployment persisted, which led to further instability and successive coups. The chaos and violence under the leader Big Oga in *Purple Hibiscus* echoes the atmosphere during the reign of General Sani Abacha who took over Nigeria in 1993. During this time, a well-known writer, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was executed along with other human rights activists and Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations. Abacha died in 1998 and was succeeded by General

Abdul Salam Abubakar who attempted to restore order. He released political prisoners and held elections. A former leader who was imprisoned during the rule of Abacha, General Olusegun Obasanjo, was elected as president of Nigeria in 1999.

The novel *Purple Hibiscus* is set in the context of the Nigerian political turmoil in the mid 1990's, but this national setting is informed by the awareness of the global that exceeds the local sensibility of the nation. In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili, who is an eighteen year old girl, narrates the events happening in her family in the backdrop of the political chaos. The novel is built around the lives of the women Beatrice, Auntie Ifeoma and Kambili. These female characters represent the position of the Nigerian women in a society. The narrator Kambili is victorious in raising her voice. Adichie chose a child to narrate her story, believing an adult narrator might have appeared too clever. Putting aside the inherent difficulties in writing 'as a child', Adichie beautifully crafts the language and style of her central character. Forbidden to speak or think freely, Kambili's inner world is made up of colourful, sensual, child-like observations. When her father smiles, for instance, she is delighted in seeing his face which breaks open like a coconut with the brilliant white meat inside. The novel shines brighter because Kambili does not attach complicated meanings or pass judgments. She avoids overtly reflective passages all the time making observations that portray the reality of growing up in, and of, a proud country in a state of flux.

Beatrice, Eugene's wife is seen working for the family all the time. She, along with Sissy maintains the household. She is unusually attracted towards some decorative figurines in her house which she frequently cleans. This is her way of suppressing her grief and helplessness. Polishing those figurines provides an outlet for

her grief. Her daughter Kambili also watches her mother helplessly cleaning the figurines. Kambili says:

I would go down to see her standing by the étagère with a kitchen towel soaked in soapy water. She spent at least a quarter of an hour on each ballet-dancing figurine. There were never tears on her face. The last time, only two weeks ago, when her swollen eye was still the black-purple color of an overripe avocado, she had rearranged them after she polished them. (*PH* 11)

Beatrice is the most oppressed amongst all the female characters in the novel. Her husband Eugene is a domestic bully and an inconsiderate patriarch who forces his crude masculine authority upon her. However, she remains steadfast and does not dissolve her marriage even when things are not working out. In Kambili's point of view, the destruction of her family parallels the disintegrating political situation of Nigeria. From the beginning, Kambili is not directly involved in the activism, which goes to conclude that she is ignorant of the political views in Nigeria.

Kambili's world is surrounded by high walls and frangipani trees of her family. When Nigeria begins to fall under the military coup, her father sends her along with her brother Jaja, to their aunt's house. Aunty Ifeoma is a widow and Eugene's sister, whose nature is contradictory to her brother in every aspect. She is a university professor who has a far more degree of freedom that seems to contrast with the nature of Kambili's upper class that leaves the mother ironically helpless. Throughout the novel, Ifeoma is temperate towards her family. She is better aware of how to bring up the children in an ideal and moralistic way.

The atmosphere in Aunty Ifeoma's home is relaxed and natural and her children are brought up as full individuals with a right to life. She allows her children

a great deal of freedom, in contrast to the heavy rule Eugene maintains at the home. The children have the permission to talk and are expected to express their opinions on any subject under discussion. The way Aunty Ifeoma raises her children is completely contradictory to that of Eugene. Eugene believes fear to be the driving principle in bringing up his children. The children follow only what he wants to achieve and they achieve because they are afraid of failures. The practical atmosphere in Aunt Ifeoma's arouses and maintains self-confidence unlike the austere inhibiting environment back home. Upon their return, Kambili notes this difference in this internal monologue:

I wanted to tell mama that it did feel different to be back, that our living room had too much empty space, too much wasted marble floor that gleaned from Sisi's polishing and housed nothing. Our ceilings were too high. Our furniture was lifeless: ... the leather sofas' greeting was a clammy coldness, the Persian rugs were too lush to have any feeling. (*PH* 192)

Kambili and Jaja are not supposed to nurse any ambitions of their own and are treated as machines. Aunty Ifeoma allows her children to correct themselves because she believes that this is the only way that the children will learn and grow up. She respects the culture and tradition but is not bound to it. She is educated with the western ideas and thoughts, which drapes her personality beautifully offering her a global sensibility and an awareness that lacks in Beatrice and Eugene. She is representative of a democratic Nigeria, a level which is imagined to be attained in the future. To Kambili, Ifeoma is larger than life; in reality "The wrapper that stopped above her calves would stop above the ankles of an average-size woman" (*PH* 278). Thereafter, both Kambili and Jaja discover a life and love beyond their father's authority.

Though the African songs, clapping and names are incorporated to the Judeo-Christian faith, the people own the faith instead of the religion controlling them, as is the case of Papa Eugene and Father Benedict. Adichie uses father Amadi to pass the message of true liberation without the kind of inhibitions found at St. Agnes Catholic Church. Amadi's St. Peter's Catholic Church in Nsukka allows lots of practices which are considered to compromise the solemnity of the holy mass at Enugu. Adichie highlights the two environments to find out those who use religion to exploit and oppress others. African cultural practices are also explored in the two novels. Respect for elders, for instance, is realised in the way children are socialised and when Ifeoma bows before Igwe, Kambili observes:

I watched Aunty Ifeoma sink to one knee and say, “*Igwe!*” in the raised voice of a respectful salute, watched him pat her back. The gold sequins that covered his tunic glittered in the afternoon sunlight. Amaka bowed deeply before him. Mama, Jaja, and Obiora shook hands with him, respectfully enclosing his hand in both of theirs. I stood at the door a little longer, to make sure that Papa saw that I did not go close enough to the Igwe to bow to him. (*PH* 94)

Father Benedict is a white man from England who conducts all masses according to European tradition. Papa believed in his style and banished everything that is traditional from the Nigerian heritage. Papa is a prominent figure in Enugu. He owns several factories and publishes the pro-democracy newspaper *Standard* and its editor is Ade Coker. His news paper publishes the articles of uncontrollable Government corruption which is against their tradition and culture. On other hand, Father Amadi is an African priest who blends catholic ways with Igbo tradition. He believes that faith is simpler and more complex than his preaching. Father Amadi is a

modern African man, but he is influenced by the colonial history of his country. He is not an imperfect moralist like Papa and his God.

Adichie contemplates that culture should be respected by others. Some of these cultures are held as a great part of the heritage of the nation. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Olanna is called at Auntie Ifeka's funeral to explain what she saw regarding the death of Auntie Ifeka and the family during the massacre. The elders follow an organised system of doing things. Her prompt response is also an indication of the respect one has for the elders. Adichie demands nothing but respect for the African people, culture and tradition.

Papa- Nnukwu is a traditionalist and he follows the rituals of his ancestors. Hence, his son and daughter convert to Christianity. On the other hand, Eugene condemning and rejecting old Papa Nnukwu is contemptuous and against the traditions. A main role for the daughters is highlighted, when Ifeoma takes care of their aging father. In taking care of her old father, Ifeoma supplants the failures of her brother. Because of her, her father does not suffer a sense of rejection. Papa Nnukwu observes, "I joke with you, *nwa m*. where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter?" (*PH* 83). Such a declaration given by Papa Nnukwu is Adichie's own voice for a stable place for women in the Igbo society.

Ifeoma's act elevates daughters to the same level as sons who traditionally are supposed to inherit both wealth and responsibilities of aging parents. In addition, Adichie attacks the practice of harassment to wives and the socialisation of boys within a biased environment which portray men as superior to women. Through Papa Nnukwu's announcement that Ifeoma does not count because she is a woman, he injects inequality in the Igbo traditions and culture. Adichie attacks the practice of gender segregation when the children watched the *mmuo* festival. Aggression is

associated with the male spirits since they are the ones who chase women. Papa Nnukwu informs his grand children that female *mmuos* are harmless; hence there is more joy in watching the female *mmuos* than the male ones.

Kambili is the only witness of Papa Nnukwu's usual habits. She realises that Papa's faith differs from her grandfather's faith. Her faith is extended beyond the boundaries of her religion. She feels the beauty of nature in her family, her prayer and the Bible. Aunty Ifeoma agrees that God is present but she does not agree with the Bogeyman. Kambili has not recognised at this stage that Aunty Ifeoma has a different set of motivations. She speaks out of a different perspective that translates as a conscious negation of the perception of Eugene as a God. As seen earlier Eugene has a self-image of himself that makes him construct others in terms of "ownership". It is this self-image that Aunty Ifeoma's disrespectful tone is meant to challenge. She insists: "Eugene, let the children come out with us!" (*PH 77*).

Kambili observes that she sounded irritated and her voice was slightly raised. Eugene is ruled by a sense of fear; that is fear of contamination from what he perceives as pagan values. Accordingly, his perspective is dominated by closure as demonstrated in the closed doors, the high walls that hurdle the family house both at Enugu and in the village. It is manifest in the huge gates to his compounds and the schedules that rule the children's lives. Kambili thinks that God protects Aunty Ifeoma's family and feels happy for it. The novel *Purple Hibiscus* explores the individualistic view of faith through Kambili. The death of Papa Nnukwu acts as a catalyst for the rest of the plot; it causes Eugene to get back the children from Nsukka, having discovered that they are sharing a home with a heathen. It also fuels Aunty Ifeoma and Eugene's conflict, causing him to become even more adamant that Mama and Beatrice tried to escape from him.

Colonialism is an intricate topic in Nigeria. In Papa- Nnukwu's view, it is an evil force that enslaves the Igbo people and destroys them. Father Amadi represents the global world of modern Nigeria. For Papa, colonialism is the main cause for his access to higher education and grace. Papa is a product of colonialism. He studied English in the missionaries. He abandons the traditions of his ancestors and selects to speak primarily in British accented English in public. Kambili and Jaja are not allowed to watch television by Papa. They both adjust to their father's rules by accepting traditional ways.

Silence is a vital component in the dialogue on oppression in African Literature. Especially in *Purple Hibiscus*, silence is not only a mechanism of patriarchal control but also is the way of domestic servitude. The mother never speaks of her experience with anyone, not even with her own children. Kambili only knows that her mother has suffered another trashing while seeing her cleaning the étagère where she keeps ceramic figurines of ballet dancers:

Years ago, before I understood, I used to wonder why she polished them each time I heard the sounds from their room, like something being banged against the door. Her rubber slippers never made a sound on the stairs, but I knew she went downstairs when I heard the dining room open. I would go down to see her standing by the étagère with a kitchen towel soaked in soapy water. She spent at least a quarter of an hour on each ballet dancing figurine. There were never tears on her face. (PH 10)

According to Georgiada Mboya Kivai, as quoted in Uwakweh's "The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*", "All imposed

restrictions on woman's social being, thinking and expressions that are religious or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure" (75). In Uwakweh's point of view, silence of the female character is a trope that cannot be excluded in the African novel. In this novel many characters are gripped with silence. For instance, Kambili suffers the most, unable to speak more than rehearsed. Silence is drawn as a product of the abuse that she endures at the hands of her father.

While a happy family is built together by the father and the mother, Beatrice's efforts to take care of her husband and children is paid by regular physical and mental abuse from her husband. Eugene fails in his role as a husband because of his lack of appreciation, and lack of love for the wife and children. On the contrary, Ifeoma spreads the love and concern for her family which turns the family to a lovely heaven, full of happiness. To Adichie, the rebirth of the family is essential, since freedom at the family level means freedom at the national level. In the last chapter, Adichie mentions a different kind of silence by suggesting that men are essential in the lives of women and vice versa.

The silence in that final section in *Purple Hibiscus* is occasioned by the absence of Jaja and Papa. It is the silence where the diverse voices of both men and women are lacking. Adichie voices out for the need of men, but she also suggests doing away with those who cause suffering for women. She propagates her dream of gender harmony realised through the complementation of gender roles. Georgiada Mboya Kivai, as quoted in Uwakweh's "The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*," Wole Soyinka in his memoir *You Must Set forth at Dawn* captures several years of silenced national space where uttering the word 'democracy'

was enough to earn a confinement. He captures coups and civil killings that rocked Nigeria since independence and challenges the leaders to take charge of the fate of the nation. On the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight companions, Soyinka writes that, “it signalled the futility, indeed the death of dialogue” (419).

Kambili has no chance to tell the truth about her sufferings at home. Kambili’s fear of socialising comfortably with her peer group displays her lack of confidence due to Papa’s oppression. Ifeoma’s daughter and Kambili’s cousin, Amaka is an adolescent girl who embodies what Nigeria could become on a democratic path. She equally likes both western and traditional Nigerian music and she expresses her opinions freely. Kambili learns how to speak when she was taunted by her cousin Amaka. Aunty Ifeoma encourages her to defend herself, only then Amaka and Kambili begin their friendship. She starts to speak confidently, laughs and even sings.

Both Kambili and Jaja communicate through their eyes, unable to utter the truth of their situation. Mama Beatrice despite understanding her daughter cannot speak freely in her own home. She behaves realistically; she is her true self only with Aunty Ifeoma. Here silence is used as a punishment. Jaja refuses to speak with his father when they arrive from Nsukka for Easter. A few years later the silence that he imposed upon his children is used as a weapon by them. Even the government also maintains silence when Ade Coker is murdered.

Ade Coker is killed by a letter bomb, presumably sent by the state. The government wants him dead because Ade was an instrumental part of the paper that criticised them. The death invokes the memory of Ken Saro- Wiwa and other outspoken Nigerian journalists and writers. Adichie has a wide range of literary forefathers, foremothers, and sisters that include Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Yvonne Vera, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Maya Angelou, and Sapphire (89), Roger Kurtz

quotes in, “The Intersexuality Imagination in *Purple Hibiscus*”. Adichie uses the term silence as a type of violence. In *Purple Hibiscus*, there is a coup that culminates in the military rule. Ironically Papa is a self-righteous dictator in his own home. Papa and his paper *Standard* carry articles of corruption in the state. After knowing Ade Coker’s death, Papa beats Kambili severely leaving her hospitalised in a critical condition.

“Mama reached out to hold my hand. Her face was puffy from crying, and her lips were cracked, with bits of discolored skin peeling off. I wished I could get up and hug her and yet I wanted to push her away, to shove her so hard that she would topple over the chair” (*PH* 213). Kambili wishes that mama would do something. Both at Nigeria and at home, violence brings out violence. Obiora says the university is the microcosm for Nigeria ruled by one man with all the powers. They are on a strike against the hike in price. Sole administrators are misdirecting the funds intended for the university. This is the parallel condition of the country’s situation. Kambili and Jaja understand the reason for their cousin’s struggle. Through this the personal situation becomes political and vice versa. Beatrice’s world is totally controlled by her husband. She is not entitled to express her own feelings or emotions. Once during their visit to Father Benedict after a Sunday service, Beatrice feels unwell and thinks of waiting in the car.

“Let me stay in the car and wait, biko”, Mama said, leaning against the Mercedes. “I feel vomit in my throat.”... “Papa turned to stare at her. I held my breath. It seemed a long moment, but it might have been only seconds. “Are you sure you want to stay in the car?” Papa asked. Mama was looking down; her hands were placed on her belly, to hold the wrapper from untying itself or to keep her bread and tea breakfast

down. "My body does not feel right," she mumbled. "I asked if you were sure you wanted to stay in the car?" Mama looked up. "I'll come with you. It's really not that bad." (*PH* 29)

Kambili is always tense when she sees her parents exchange words. She observes:

I WAS IN MY ROOM after lunch, reading James chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the anointing of the sick during family time, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door ... I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count. Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty ... There's blood on the floor, Jaja said. (*PH* 32-33)

Adichie portrays Mama's image in the novel as a contrast with that of Papa's, who is a force to reckon with. Papa's image is that of an oppressor. Mama is always captured by the narrator as having swollen eyes or spread with tears in her face, a jagged scar or bleeding from the violence. On several occasions Papa beats his wife and children unnecessarily. Every time he is provoked by some event that leads to his immoral actions. Papa beats his wife many times that she gets a miscarriage.

Mama has several miscarriages in *Purple Hibiscus* which point to the dashed hopes of realising her dreams. She has no control over the miscarriages because they mainly originate from Eugene's assaults. Such miscarriages point to disillusioned democracy, and hopelessness that characterise Nigeria and its people. As much as the masses conceive hope of renewed governance, their leaders immediately stimulate a miscarriage in either a form of massive corruption or despotism. The leadership kills the hope of masses by being intolerant, gagging the press and encroaching on people's private lives and individual spaces. The citizens understand that, "what we Nigerians

needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was renewed democracy” (25), Georgiada Mboya Kivai, as quoted in Uwakweh’s “The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*”

The people need democracy and not coups and so their hopes and such are miscarried every time because of the soldiers and leaders who are hungry for power and who instigate coups. Papa rationalises the violence by inflicting it on his family and saying that it is for their own sake, but the beatings have rendered his children mute. Kambili and Jaja are not allowed to reach their adulthood as maturity often comes with questioning authority. They are forbidden to laugh at home. There is an exploitation of women at work with fair cruelty. Mama upsets Kambili by saying that she had miscarriage twice because of her Papa’s thrashing. “There’s blood on the floor,” Jaja said, “I’ll get the brush from the bathroom.” (*PH* 33). Papa does not feel guilty of his wife’s miscarriages and he speaks to Kambili in an ordinary way. “Your mother will be back tomorrow, about the time you get back from school. She will be fine” (*PH* 34). After that, mama returns home and tells Kambili, “There was an accident, the baby is gone” (*PH* 34).

Kambili and Jaja sense the lack of their identities in their home and feel that it should be transformed at great speed. Jaja is confused yet impressed by the life in Nsukka and the democratic household. Aunty Ifeoma’s style of parenting is represented by the flowers in her yard, which forms one of the important motifs of the novel. Jaja is drawn to the unusual purple hibiscus bred by the botanist friend of aunty Ifeoma. Aunty has created something new to reveal the natural world together with intelligence. Jaja takes the branch of the purple hibiscus and plants it in his home. ““That’s a hibiscus, isn’t it, Aunty?” Jaja asked, staring at a plant close to the

barbed wire fence. ‘I didn’t know there were purple hibiscuses’. Auntie Ifeoma laughed and touched the flower colored a deep shade of purple that was almost blue, ‘Everybody has that reaction the first time’” (*PH* 128).

Jaja feels for the first time the sweet taste of personal autonomy. Jaja is able to express his own thoughts and make his own choices. Kambili changes her attitude towards nature signifying her stage of transformation. She is determined to come out of Enugu and her fate of being forced in a claustrophobic situation. She realises that God can be found everywhere and is determined to make the best of her life through this awareness. Kambili has been day-dreaming looking at the fruits, flowers and trees in her yard. Kambili is sickened by the rotting of the tree fruit. The rot not only symbolises Achike but also that she is seeing her home with new perspectives.

Weather also plays a vital role in the novel. When Ade Coker dies there is heavy rain. Rain and wind reflect the drama that unfolds in Achike’s lives. Mama tells Kambili that the mixture of rain and sun is God’s decision. Papa is neither all good nor all bad. His faith does not have to be either catholic or traditionalist nor can she challenge her parents while being a good child. Adichie’s appropriation of Igbo language to fit in her English writing is a confirmation that language is an important element of culture that cannot be ignored in African Literature.

In the use of Igbo words and phrases, Adichie stresses the importance of complementation of languages and cultures and lexical borrowings. It is the language of her people that confirms the compatibility of humanity. Richard in *Half of a Yellow Sun* learns and uses Igbo freely just like the locals and he completes the tenor of human experience and interaction. Richard’s learning of Igbo language creates the complex threads of human relations without the delimitations occasioned by racism. It can therefore be argued that Adichie’s version of the acquiring of African language by

a western English speaker refutes the notions of colonial writers like Conrad who through his main character Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness* (1994), says that Africans had no language. Adichie denies this notion by introducing the character of Richard who identifies the Igbo language and learns it. Adichie uses Kambili's experience in *Purple Hibiscus* as an allegory of Nigeria in a state of postcolonial flux, disconnected from their ethnic identity while living under an oppressive ruler.

The colonial period lasted from 1850 through 1929, when nationalist movements gained its popularity. In 1960, Nigeria gained independence from Britain. But this independence ushered in a wave of instability culminating in a civil war. Bloody military coups displaced those in power. The Igbo people created their own state, the Republic of Biafra, and declared independence in 1967. For thirty months, 1 to 3 million people died in the civil war between the Nigerians and the Biafra.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the boom of oil production ushered in a political system was dictated by profit. Another wave of military coups led to instability and corruption. For example, in 1993, General Sani Abacha took power and staved off overthrow by bribing the military. As the Head of State Big Oga in *Purple Hibiscus* Abacha dies under unusual circumstances. Hundreds and millions of dollars were found in his secret accounts. The military finally returned the country to democracy in the 1999, although those elections were widely perceived to be free and unfair. Several key political figures are either mentioned or fictionalised in *Purple Hibiscus*.

“Coups begat coups, Eugene said telling us about the bloody coups of the sixties, which ended up in civil war just after he left Nigeria to study in England. A coup always began a vicious cycle” (*PH* 24). Military Coup is not just an empty phrase. During the year 1966, two coups occurred. Later, in June 1967, the Civil war

began. After the civil war in January 1970 till 1990s, six more coups occurred in Nigeria.

Adichie's second novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* revolves around the Nigerian-Biafran war of 1967-1970. The novel nations the ethnic multiplicity of Nigeria and its focus on the large ethnic groups such as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Fulani. It narrates the identity crisis of the Igbo people of the South Eastern provinces of Nigeria who recognised themselves as the citizens of Biafra. Adichie retells the culture, political and social backgrounds and aftermaths of the civil war through the same. Adichie's vision is that of health relationships despite class, racial, ethnic and gender differences.

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, swings back and forth between the pre-war 1960s and the conflict stricken southern region in the late 1960s. In the earlier stage, the intellectual communities of Nsukka express their ideas throughout a string of dinner parties at Odenigbo's. In one instance, the host passionately exclaims that, this defense pact is worse than apartheid and segregation, but don't realize it. They are controlling us behind drawn curtains. The Friendly arguments between colleagues, discussions among artists, the rhythm of local music, flowing alcohol and Ugwu's delicious cuisines pictured in the novel create a vivid and idyllic backdrop to the upcoming events. The approach of the educated and elite people of the newly independent country echoes throughout the novel.

The novel mainly depicts struggle of the major characters in forming an emotional, cultural and social identities that resonates their distant cultural past. The main characters in the novels are Ugwu, Odenigbo, Olanna, Kainene and Richard. Ugwu is a thirteen year old village Igbo who works as a houseboy to Odenigbo, a professor at the University of Nsukka. Olanna is the girlfriend of Odenigbo who is an

educated and wealthy Igbo woman working as a professor of sociology at Nsukka University. Her twin sister Kainene takes care of their father's business at Port Harcourt. Her lover Richard is an English man working as a journalist in Nigeria. He is very much interested in Igbo-Ugwu art and aspires to write a book about Nigeria. These main fictional characters of the novel are placed in the real historical events and represent the fundamental social identities. The novel confronts ethnic consciousness to a great extent by portraying the beauty, complicity, culture and heritage of the Igbo society.

The novel bustles with bold and successful full-bodied women with no inhibitions. These women— Kainene, Olanna, their mum, the visiting black American lecturer, Edna Whaler, Aunty Ifeka, and Miss Adebayo – and their worldview and lifestyles reminds us of Soyinka's sophisticated female characters who are also well grounded in, and proud of our culture. Adichie's women are all very strong. Akoete Amouzou writes in "Reconceptualising Gender in Nigerian Literature: The Dynamics of Womanist Ideology in Floranwapa's Fiction," that:

Olanna was used to her mother's disapproval; it coloured most of her major decisions, after all: when she chose two weeks' suspension rather than apologise to her Heath-grove form mistress for insisting that the lessons on Pax Britannica were contradictory; when she joined the Students' Movement for Independence at Ibadan; when she refused to marry Igwe Okagbue's son, and later, Chief Okaro's son. (HYS 35)

Kolawole keeps on arguing about cultural identity as the important feature as African women's struggle for the freedom of women and subsequent end of oppression. As Odetola (1983) in his book *Man and Society in Africa: Introduction to Sociology* writes, culture is defined as "A man's entire social heritage all knowledge,

beliefs, customs and skills acquired as a member of a society. Thus, people become distinctively human by acquisition of culture. Culture presumes the existence of a human society and provides the skills for making the society work. Culture is therefore a larger part of what is transmitted in the process of socialisation. It is through the acquisition of culture that even simple groups have solved the problems of their life in their own way. Culture can be material or non-material. Material culture includes clothing, utensils, work of art. Non-material culture includes ideas, languages, norms, mores and beliefs.

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents another type of struggle from which the women win their freedom. *Half of a Yellow Sun* deals the multiple struggles of women to free themselves from sexual abuse, exploitation, corruption, humiliation, civilians attacks mass evacuation depression, hunger disease and death in the wake of the Biafran War. How women are easy targets in such a tumultuous scenario is explored by Adichie in a heart-wrenching manner. Most of the rulers and politicians in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are male, for instance, Olanna's father is a rich politician and businessmen, who hosts high level dignitaries in his home. Olanna is a revolutionary and does not cohabit with the exploiter and so she is against her parents' ideas and their choice of Chief Okonji. Chief Okonji, like Olanna's parents is a corrupt and ruthless exploiter. Olanna values other people's humanity and that is the reason she discounts how her parents and politicians treat those less endowed or engage in pilfering the national resources. He is a person who convinces even his own daughter to prostitute herself.

The awful character of the father is pictured when Chief Okonji, a wealthy cabinet minister, wishes to trade Olanna for the contract proposed by Olanna's father. "Kainene ask her twin Olanna, "Daddy literally pulled me away from the veranda, so

we could leave you alone with the good cabinet minister’, Kainene said ‘Will he give Daddy the contract then?’... ‘The benefit of being the ugly daughter is that nobody uses you as sex bait’” (*HYS* 35). This situation highlights the commodification of women. Olanna’s parents dislike Odenigbo, her fiancée who is a revolutionary lecturer at Nsukka as in their opinion, he has ‘nothing’ to exhibit for himself except books. In her parents point of view Odenigbo was crazy, one of those hothead University people who talked and talked until everybody had a headache and nobody understood what had been said and therefore seriously wrong for her.

The desire for children is explored through the characters of Olanna, Arize, Odenigbo’s mother and Anulika among others in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It is the desire for a child and a grandson that drives Odenigbo’s mother to coerce Amala into sleeping with Odenigbo and this leads to the near collapse of Odenigbo’s relationship with Olanna. To Mama Odenigbo, a spoiled woman is one who cannot bear children. She says, “Nobody knows if she can have children. Do you know? Does anyone know?” (*HYS* 198). Mama’s concern grows out of the significance attached to children in Igbo society and by extension Africa. She seriously wants to have a grandson. “She complains that those girls who go to University follow men until their bodies are useless to have children. She says “no wonder my son has not married while his mates are counting how many children they have” (*HYS* 97).

In Nigerian society, the women are expected to be a mother as soon as they commit. From the beginning Mama dislikes Olanna because she did not give birth ever since she started living in with him. Mama calls her a witch and always shouts at her, “Please go back and tell those who send you that you did not find my son. Tell your fellow witches that you did not see him”. Olanna stared at her. Master’s mother’s

voice rose, as if Olanna's continued silence had driven her shouting. 'Did you hear me? Tell them that nobody's medicine will work on my son'" (HYS 96-97).

Mama said to Olanna that, "He will not marry an abnormal woman, unless you kill me first. Only over my dead body!' Master 's mother clapped her hands, then hooted and slapped her palm across her mouth so that the sound echoed" (HYS 97). This mentality left infertile women without identification in the society. Whatever may the case may be, both Olanna and Odenigbo long to have a child of their own but her infertility becomes an obstacle. Adichie describes how Olanna and Odenigbo have passionate, unprotected sex. Her mother- in- law who was unfortunately a traditionalist did not accept Olanna and she decides to separate her son from her.

Through this the non materialistic aspects of culture and its practice for freedom of women is reflected. Igbo language, a valuable asset of cultural element, cannot be ignored in African Literature. In the use of Igbo words and phrases, Adichie highlights the importance of native language as an effective tool to represent indigenous culture. Richard learns the language of Igbo. It portrays the complexity of human relationships without limitation by racism. Odenigbo struggles for the recognition of the black American elements of abuse. He praises Cuba for the American domination. Colonialism, imperialism, racism are attacked by Adichie through the character of Odenigbo. She desires a world where the people treat each other as human beings without the doubtfulness which characterise tribe's races or class.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, when the white man marries black woman Kainene, their relationship invokes a fixed idea about racial discrimination being a wrong notion. Kainene is simply the voice against Udodi and his idealistic talk. Richard is

despondent wherever the Igbos does not accept him even though he can speak their language. Adichie uses Richard to demolish racism.

Ugwu embodies the memories of ordinary living that arise out of his role as a houseboy, as well as the traumatic memories of the war, having fought in it as a child soldier. He is therefore an embodiment of the composite memory escape of the novel which is also informed by Adichie's awareness of the multiple consciousnesses and subjectivities that inform the war. These memories are found in individual and collective experiences that also account for Adichie's subjectivity as not only an Igbo author but also one whose genealogy is affected by the war. The notion of genealogy refers to Adichie's awareness of her familial lineage, but also a literary one. Ugwu is modelled after an actual houseboy who lived in the Adichie household called Mellitus. Moreover, Ugwu's eventual involvement as a child soldier in the war endows *Half of a Yellow Sun* with a composite account of it.

In this way, Ugwu connects *Half of a Yellow Sun* to a wider textual network on the theme of child soldiers, which include the protagonists of Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* and Chris Abani's *Song for Night*. The novel *Beasts of No Nation* is about an African boy named Agu who is forced to become a child soldier. His family lived in a small village. When war came, Agu's mother and sister had to leave on a bus but Agu, his father, and a shoe man try to escape and Agu's father is shot down and killed. Agu hides and is soon found by soldiers, who coerce him to join their rebel force. In a bloody initiation, the commander forces him to kill an unarmed soldier. As Agu is forced to leave his childhood behind, he reminisces about the past - his family, his love of reading and school, his dream of becoming an important doctor, and the way he used to read the Bible every day. He thinks about how he and his friend used to play at war and how this war is not the same. He fears that God

hates him for killing others but he soon forces himself to believe that this is what God wants because, he is soldier and this is what soldiers do in war. He befriends a mute boy named Strike and together they face the crimes and hardships of war: looting, rape, killing, and starvation.

Ugwu's Master, Odenigbo, is already being constructed as a 'vernacular intellectual' who is championing for Igbo nationalism. It can be regarded as an offshoot of Fareed Grant's idea (2003) of Black vernacular intellectuals (an extension of Gramsci's arguments) about intellectuals who in their critique of social justice stand both inside and outside of academic and conventional spheres. Ugwu's evolving literacy positions him inside the daily debates by his intellectual masters, yet outside it by virtue of his houseboy status. Odenigbo points out that "the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe", Master said. "I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am a black because the white man constructed *black* to be as different as possible from his *white*. But I was Igbo before the white man came" (HYS 20).

Ugwu's houseboy status and his historical voice and position in the novel compete with those of protagonists and classes who have hitherto been the main subjects of this war memory. Ugwu's voice as a houseboy can be argued as *sui generis* which means unique, *within* the vast representation of the Biafran war in African literature. He not only provides the open consciousness of childhood, but also a re-construction of the notion of daily life through his role as a houseboy. However it is interesting to see Ugwu being constructed as not only what Adichie has called the 'soul of the novel' but also as a problematic hero who is physically scathed and morally tainted by his involvement in rape. However, he is also redeemed, at the end of the text, through a very significant act of writing as a process of his expiation and

healing. While he is a hero, he is also an anti-hero. Ugwu starts as a naive, almost *tabula rasa* subject facing a new and rapidly advancing post-independent modernity. He is confronted, in his naivety, by an anti colonial consciousness, through his Master's conversations with his visitors. He has come into an academic community as a marginal observer. He is confronted by historical discourses and epistemological debates, in a manner that has him listen and watch in bemusing and naive bewilderment:

There are two answers to the things they will teach you about our land: the real answer and give in school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books.' Master stopped to sip his tea. 'They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park's grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo Park.' 'Yes, sah.' Ugwu wished that this person called Mungo Park had not offended master so much. (*HYS* 11).

Biafra war is started and made worse by the regal powers. Whenever the Igbo town falls, the BBC celebrates such moments BBC gives full support to the north dominance and it is very clear to everyone. Hence, the victims have to endure unpleasant situations. Adichie analyses the atrocity that characterises the war and the attempts to annihilate the Igbo community.

Odenigbo's act is symbolic of how the leaders of the new Nigeria betray the citizens by shifting their attention to other quarters and probably cohabiting with the imperialists. Independence to the Nigerians became a fraud since the benefits went to only a few individuals. As soon as the independence struggle was over and as the new

nation was born, the leaders forgot the pre-independence nationalist goals. The ills of corruption, nepotism, religious intolerance and tribalism are what Adichie blames to have diverted the interests of the Nigerian leaders immediately after independence. During the first coup we realise that the problem the new nation goes through is due to failure of the national leadership:

My dear countrymen, the aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a nation free from corruption and internal strife. Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society. (HYS123)

Adichie wants the national leaders to accept blame and take responsibility for their actions and failures. When Odenigbo requests Olanna that they marry so that Mama would leave them alone she instead informs him that she slept with Richard. Olanna wants Odenigbo to accept and take responsibility for all his actions. She is able to accept the fact that what happened between her and Richard took two and no party should be blamed in isolation. Her acceptance serves to bring about healing on the part of Richard who thinks he is to blame. It also shows that Olanna is a strong woman able to identify and accept her past mistakes. Adichie challenges African leaders through her allegories to map the destiny of their nations.

This is symbolised by Odenigbo's sexual intercourse with Amala and Alice and the tensions such actions bring to his relationship with Olanna. Mr. Ozobia's extra-marital relationship can also be interpreted as a metaphor with national

significance. Domestic betrayals are emblematic of the betrayal at the national scene where men who hold political positions have failed in leadership. The psychological agony experienced by Olanna, Kainene and their mother is equivalent to the sense of betrayal, hopelessness and pain experienced by the people who are let down by their leaders.

This chapter thus has extensively highlighted female protagonists and women who have been forced into a state of dysphoria on account of gender stereotyping. It explores how the family serves as a cosmos of the state and the authority of the father parallels that of the head of state. Women's struggle to subvert the patriarchal social order is mapped to illustrate the citizen's struggle to achieve their rights and true democracy. The twin sisters Kainene and Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are symbolic of the North Federal Nigeria and the South-Eastern Biafra. Kainene's inclination to the West is identified as a parallel to the Northern Nigerian ties with the former colonial masters. Olanna's leaning to revolutionary and freedom ideas symbolise the desire for identity that is characterised by the Biafran win. At the heart of the novels are gripping encounters that scream out in silence, the dysphonic state of women like Beatrice, Kambili, Kainene and Olanna. As victims of gender stereotyping, their position and perception unto themselves and in society is distorted like the vision through a prism that takes a ray of light and breaks into several tiny components leaving them fragmented, tiny and vulnerable.

CHAPTER – 3

THE PROTOTYPES - CREATION, TRANSFORMATION, SUSTENANCE

Every human being is provided with his or her rights to live in this world in such a manner that it does not disturb the norms of the society. If this freedom is hindered, then there arises the tendency to revolt. Many women writers, through their written word provide a strong voice for their compatriots who are forced to live in pathetic conditions. Giving voice to those unheard voices forced to live a life of submission and silence in the face of all atrocities, are the two novels chosen for the present study, namely *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. These novels encapsulate the relentless struggle of women who bravely try to achieve the much desired freedom from the clutches of tradition, socio-political and economic disempowerment and male oppression. The accidental facts of their lives are “being born an African and a woman”. Qtd.in “Women’s Struggles and Independence in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*”. The famous African poet Kofi Awoonor has drawn a very impressive thought about Africa and the orient:

We Africans are not thinking about what we are as a people. The orientals even though I disagree with them now and then have been able to keep a certain portion of their psyche intact. They have absorbed western technology---yes, everybody must; if you don’t do it you don’t survive---but have kept their philosophy of love, familial respect and relationship with God or the Ultimate Good. We also are taking on this Western technology which we need so desperately to solve the great problems of hunger and malnutrition, but we are scattered to the four winds in terms of our own basic nature.qtd.in “Portrayal of the African woman in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.”

Most of the African societies are patriarchal and are a part of the societies where men confine women and largely restrict their progressive growth. Men unleash their power sourced from the patriarchal patterns of society treating the women as inferior beings. According to Adeola James, in all societies, “men have traditionally been the subject of history”, qtd.in “Portrayal of the African woman in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Gender discrimination creates marginalisation of women. For instance, in Nigeria the national anthem calls all citizens to “serve their FATHERLAND”, which is rather strange in a scenario wherein one’s own country is often referred to as motherland.

Nigerian female writers mainly deal with general issues such as second –class status of girls at birth, early marriages, the plight of widows as seen in Nwapa’s *This is Lagos*. Bride price an interesting term is the subject of Buchi Emercheta’s *The Bride Price* and details the hardships undergone by single parents who want their daughter to get married. In *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, women struggle to achieve their freedom from the clutches of political as well as male chauvinism oppression. Adichie’s novels portray women who are buried in oppression and enslavement. Today, the Nigerian women are fearless, honest and have worked towards an exalted unbeatable better position than the yesteryears. Nigerian women have contributed greatly to the changes and transformations of the Nigerian society.

According to Akachi Ezeigbo, as quoted in Azuike’s “Women’s struggles and Independence in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of Yellow Sun* feminism is simply the awareness that women are subjugated and their determination to correct their subjugation (24). Adichie’s novels explore the exploitations and oppressions that become hurdles to the progress of the women protagonists. Female assertion has continued to be a compelling trend in modern literatures observes Helen Chukwuma

as quoted in Azuike's "Women's struggles and Independence in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of Yellow Sun*." She further states that female assertion is an ideological focus which sets out to correct the traditional image of women as "indeterminate human beings who are heavily dependent, gullible, and voiceless and stuck in the background of patrimony which marked most African societies (Azuike 80).

Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* deals with women who are dominated by men and gender discrimination which strike a similar note with Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus*. Emecheta describes the pathetic situation of women who overcome the male chauvinistic society and countless setbacks to achieve an independent life. The story starts out with the struggles of Adah, a young girl, and the survival of herself and her dreams. The shift of her life from a high class position in Nigeria to a poor class in the European society makes her to face the hardships of women in receiving their education and adapting to different religious beliefs, yet following the customs of her own people.

Similarly in the novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, women are portrayed as docile, passive and weak. In this novel, the women work hard to debunk this age long myth by asserting themselves and proving their mettle, regardless of the obstacles they face. Women are not new to the history of struggles in Nigeria. The mysterious women who fought tirelessly, alongside the men, in the 1950's and 1960's for Nigeria's independence are well documented in Nigerian history. Mrs Margaret Ekpo, Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Lady Yinka Abayomi, Hajiya Sawaba Gambo and Chief Mrs. Janet Mokelu were among the fearless women who struggled relentlessly to reshape Nigerian history. But the past few years has seen women became compliant and suffer from utter domesticity and deprivation. Consequently, young girls were to

stay at home to practice and perfect their domestic skills which included how to behave as appropriate Christian housewives who knew how to sew, cook and maintain proper hygiene.

The boys, on the other hand, were taught how to read and write. This ushered in one of the prominent factors in creating the gender gap between boys and girls that has persisted over the years, particularly in Africa. Similarly, Adichie explores the formation of identities and confronts various sources of oppression in her two novels. For instance, Beatrice and Olanna are abused in their own home by the people they love most. They also face polygamy, marital incompatibility and extremely harsh patriarchal laws. Such a condition totally devastates and harms the lives of women. In an interview with Kimber (2006), Adichie is quoted as saying that she wanted to write the story of war and love in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, because she grew up in the shadow of Biafra.

Adichie's novels are populated by psychotic, rapist, religious fanatics and ruthless rulers, all of whom frighten women. She uses her writing as an instrument for self discovery and a healer for abused women in Nigeria who may have undergone traumatic experiences. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the character of Eugene Achike is "a ticking time bomb" that regularly explodes in his poor family, quoted in Azuike in "Women's struggles and Independence" in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of Yellow Sun*. His wife Beatrice leads her life in servitude and his children Kambili and Jaja gets a perpetual fear of him.

Kambili and Jaja are physically violated by their father and live in constant fear of his violent attacks. Although Eugene expresses his love for them and caters for their needs, the inhuman treatment he metes out to them at the slightest provocation far surpasses the love he claims to have for them. When Eugene discovers that

Kambili and Jaja stayed in the same house with his heathen father-Pa Nnukwu during their visit to Auntie Ifeoma, he douses boiling water on their feet scalding them completely. According to Eugene, ‘You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk into it’ (*PH* 194). Living with Papa Nnukwu, from Eugene’s perspective, is equivalent to willful evil. While leaving for Enugu, Amaka, Auntie Ifeoma’s daughter, gives Kambili the painting of Pa Nnukwu as a parting gift. Kambili suffers a brutal attack for bringing the painting of Pa Nnukwu to their house and trying to protect it from destruction. He is a control freak who controls his family with clenched fist for instance; he unleashes anger on Kambili, his only daughter, trying to forcefully restrict her visit to her grandfather Papa Nnukwu’s home without consent:

He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones. Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hellfire. The kicking increased in tempo, and... I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of painting...Kicking. Kicking. Kicking... More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet (*PH* 210-11).

Women are denied so many rights and privileges because they are sometimes regarded as second-class human beings. Traditional beliefs and myths ensure that she is permanently placed in the secondary position. The sole aim of a woman’s existence, according to this invalid belief, is to satisfy the man. It is believed that a woman has no worth or honour outside marriage in an African society because “A husband crowns a woman’s life, Ifeoma.”(*PH* 75). No matter the level of a woman’s

achievement, she is owned by her father or husband. Since the woman is meant to be seen and not heard, she remains invisible in a male dominated society.

When Pa Nnukwu in *Purple Hibiscus* expresses regret for allowing Eugene to follow the missionaries, Ifeoma is quick to remind him that she is also a beneficiary of the missionaries' sojourn in Africa, but she has not abandoned him like Eugene. In spite of Ifeoma's efforts towards providing the needs of her family and the old father, Pa Nnukwu tells her that 'But you are a woman. You do not count.' (PH 83). He fails to realise that achievements, whether attained by man or woman, are the same.

To Beatrice, a husband coronets woman's life and she cannot quit marriage despite the nudge from Ifeoma. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie uses the character of Beatrice to encourage women to react to oppression since being passive gives the oppressor impetus to continue his behavior. Eugene is a tyrant who rules his home with draconian measures. Living under him is a big struggle for Beatrice and she is always in danger of losing her body parts. Members of his household are petrified of him. This presents a striking contrast to the atmosphere in Aunt Ifeoma's house, "laughter always rang out in Aunty Ifeoma's house, and no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms" (PH140). The children are equally dumbfounded by their father's hard heartedness. They go through each day extremely careful not to agitate him; for fear of the grim consequences their actions might attract. Jaja is taken to task by Eugene on account of missing two questions on his catechism test and therefore was not named the best in his first holy communion class:

First Holy Communion Class. Papa took him upstairs and locked the door. Jaja, in tears, came out supporting his left hand with his right, and Papa drove him to St. Agnes hospital. Papa was crying, too, as he

carried Jaja in his arms like a baby all the way to the car. Later, Jaja told me that Papa had avoided his right hand because it is the hand he writes with (*PH* 145).

During the incident re-enacted above, Eugene had cut off his son's finger thus deforming the little boy's left hand. At that time he was ten years old. Beatrice, his wife accepts Eugene's brutal beatings and sexual abuses even though it results in her abortion on a number of occasions. This leaves her body constantly sapped of energy. This is how Beatrice narrates her experiences to Aunty Ifeoma, her sister in law who lives in Nsukka:

I got back from the hospital today. The doctor told me to rest, but I took Eugene's money and asked Kevin to take me to the park. I hired a taxi and came here"... "You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, *me?* Your father broke it on my belly"... "My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Anges. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it (*PH* 248).

Through the eye of young Kambili, the protagonist in *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie leads us into a typical example of the worst case of patriarchal tyranny prevalent in our contemporary society. She uses Chief Eugene Achike, Kambili's father to reveal the problems faced by women and girl children in the Nigerian society. Kambili's father is cruel, overbearing and upper handed. Uncle Eugene uses the facade of religion, culture and societal beliefs to commit atrocities against his wife and children.

Kambili's father has dual personality which can only be recognised by the discerning eye. On the one hand he seems to be a hero, the epitome of the good African. He is an exceptionally flourishing entrepreneur who whole heartedly

provides for his extended family, a perfect catholic who promotes the growth of the church in his local parish. Here he is also seen as a representation of civic qualities, dedicated to disparaging the excesses of the military government in Nigeria. He is also reputed to be the owner of the only trustworthy newspaper in the country, thereby becoming the mouthpiece of his society.

On the other hand, his real personality manifests at home under the cover of his roofs. His treatment of his family runs directly opposite to the image he projects outside and that becomes the other dark side of his personality. His deeds at home continually mirror the terrible aggression practiced by the military against the Nigerian people. He is a religious fanatic and it is no surprise that he uses religion and his misinterpretation of the same as a tool to make life unbearable for his family. He bears down with an iron hand on his family at the slightest chance. He is too eager to reprimand at the least consideration of threat to his authority. His children, Kambili and Jaja are regimented into terror by his rigidity and violent rages. He subjects his children and wife to severe battery and assault which leaves them physically and psychology maimed. Love and familial bonding is significant by its sheer absence in the home of Chief Eugene Achike. The children, Kambili and Jaja had to resort to an escapist world in order to experience real love and she comes alive only at Aunty Ifeoma's home.

Aunty Ifeoma, a widow with kids, has a prominent role in the novel. The death of a loved one, especially a spouse is one of the most distressing and stressful experiences in life. At a time when she needed all the emotional and physical support to endure the permanent loss, she was made to go through traditional mourning rituals which did nothing to calm her down. She is accused of killing her husband, and to prove her innocence, she is made to drink the water that has been used to wash her

late husband's corpse and to take an oath. The belongings of the family are confiscated by members of the dead husband's extended family and the bereaved family is expelled of their inheritance. Family relations abandon the widow and the children for fear of relying on them for financial or material support.

Kambili and her cousins and his 'heathen' grandfather are the only listening ears Jaja has. He derives pleasure from visiting memorable scenes and places. He exchanges gifts and experiences with his cousins which are disliked by his father and mother. His home is cruel and cold; he wishes to be with his grandfather whose love for him radiates as he drills them through moral folk tales than with his father who would want him to make the journey to heaven by foot. This assertion is actualised in her recreation of the female prototypes who vanquish male chauvinism and emerge victorious in being able to be seen and be heard in a way that matters to the functioning and well being of the society. These women have successfully held their own by demystifying the man-figure and elevating the status of the women.

Eugene's ineluctable end is brought upon by his constant abuse of Beatrice. He was not an ideal Christian husband neither he is a good example of father role in the novel. Gloria quotes Mercy Oduyoye's words in her article in "Portrayal of the African Women in *Purple Hibiscus*":

The church's deafening silence in the face of indescribable cruelty to the girl-child...is...an indication that the whole church has yet to wake up to its calling. The global challenge of the church's solidarity with women is particularly acute in Africa. It is up to women to demonstrate why the status quo is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ (500).

Ironically, Jesus Christ was friendly and tolerant to women. He loved women and worked with them. He never coaxed, intimidated, subordinated or patronised

women- because like men, God His father, made women in His own image (Gen. 1:27) and saw them as children of God. Jesus did not treat women as cheap goods to be commercialised; neither did He treat women as wood to be battered and be broken by men. Eugene eventually pays dearly for the constant abuse of his family in the guise of leading them on the paths of righteousness.

Beatrice takes Eugene's life at the end of the novel *Purple Hibiscus* and declares to her children, "They did an autopsy", she said. "They have found the poison in your father's body". She sounded as though the poison Papa's body was something they all had known about something had put in their to be found ... "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 (*PH* 290). Here Beatrice decides to end her miserable existence and that of her children, a type of existence that cannot be justified by any faith or norm in society. The indispensable position taken by women in *Purple Hibiscus* points to the need to centre women issues in Adichie's society. For instance, the novel "*Women at Point Zero*", by Nawal Elsadawi depicts how the Firdaus society portrays the helpless victims of male oppression. Eventually she murders the pimp who exploits her sexually as well as financially. This action shows how Firdaus is destroyed by a society which allows free reign for immoral activities like the sexual abuse of women. Beatrice kills her husband by making him ingest rat poison without his knowledge, adding it to his food and tea in small doses in order to free herself from years of severe torture and psychological enslavement. This action in the novel is an unconventional way of seeking freedom from oppression, probably a way that may not be glorified in the eyes of law but nevertheless that stands justified in its entirety on its own. Adichie, thus reveals the resilience and sheer determination of women to break through the layers of oppression into freedom.

Kambili and Jaja seek their own identities. The task of young Nigeria is to rebuild a nation after the destruction of the war. Kambili and Jaja are the allegories for burgeoning post colonial –Nigeria which face identity crisis. They are ethnically Igbo, who have witnessed their culture being ripped apart by violence. Eugene’s ‘tea’ is the suitable example, it refers to the symbol of both colonialism and his love for his children, ‘The tea was always too hot, always burned my tongue, and if lunch was something peppery, my raw tongue suffered (*PH* 8). Kambili accepts his father’s superficial motivation and she believes that he acts well. Eugene lives his life with the arrogance of a man whose powers are unchallenged, and boundless. His arrogance is so extreme that while compared to Auntie Ifeoma, “O joka! Eugene has to stop doing God’s job. God is big enough to do this own job” (*PH* 95). Jaja never perceives his father as God like; he challenges his father’s words directly and protects his sister against punishment.

Ifeoma makes a correct observation about him when she says that “Eugene quarrels with the truths he does not like” (*PH* 95). The hypocrisy of Eugene comes out very clearly when he talks about the freedom of speech in the country. Deler quotes in “Denigrating Influence of Western Thought and Christianity on the Status of African Women as represented In *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie”(115). “*Standard*, spoke out so much on the part of truth and justice that *Amnesty World* thought it fit and proper to confer on him the human rights award. Yet in his home paradoxically, there is no freedom”. His family members are not allowed to express their feelings. The fear of violence always haunts them.

The violent and inhuman treatment that family members suffer in the novel *Purple Hibiscus* seem exaggerated and unreal to some Western readers. But these seemingly unreal situations are the fact of life for some people in certain societies

which are even acceptable and usual there. Commenting on the situation, Fwangyil says:

The oppressive and dehumanising situations women undergo in this novel seem extraordinary, but these are real life stories that have been modified and recreated for the society's awareness. This novel is, in effect, a dramatic indictment of the oppressive attitude of men towards women and children that they are supposed to love and care for. It therefore has direct relevance to our contemporary society (Fwangyil 262-63).

The character of Eugene thus serves to drive home the role of colonial education in degrading the role and position of women in home and society. While tradition upholds the importance of the female in the society, Eugene, under the influence of missionary education, mistreats the women in his family. He worships the Christian beliefs and denounces his roots. In this process, he imbibes the false ideals and notions of Christianity rather than going for the actual teachings of the religion and emerges as the conflicted hybrid who cannot sort out his loyalties. Especially his treatment of the women establishes the association between the low status of women and the colonial education for men which tried to mould them in the framework of the western thought. Ironically, this leads to the emergence of half-breeds who are neither Africans nor English.

Gloria Ajami Makokha quotes Kandiyoti's cited by Walby in "Portrayal of the African Women in *Half of a Yellow Sun*" that:

Private patriarchy is based on the relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life other than the household and the appropriation of their services by individual patriarchs within the confines of the home.

Public patriarchy is based on employment and the state; women no longer excluded from the public arena but subordinated within it. More collective forms of appropriation of their services supersede the individual mode of private patriarchy (1993, 377).

During the war time Biafra ‘was a horrific and traumatic experience whose shock waves were felt throughout the Nigerian Federation’ (149), Azuike Maureen Amaka quotes Johnson’s words in “African Research Review”. For instance, a young girl is raped by a group of soldiers who overpower her and force her to have sex with them. That experience entrenches the girl’s memory for her whole life,

On the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her. He did not look at her face, or at the man pinning her down, or at anything at all as he moved quickly and felt his own climax, the rush of fluids to the tips of himself: a self-loathing release. He zipped up his trousers while some soldiers clapped. Finally he looked at the girl. She started back at him with a calm hate (*HYS* 365).

During the war, human beings become more animalistic unleashing turmoil on the lives of others. Sadly the women are the main target of those who use terror in war. Rape has always been one of the often used weapons of violence against women. Abundant illustrations can be seen in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* as to how the Igbo woman of East Nigeria have held on to their values, giving importance to the voice of reason and rationale and have thereby been forced to take painful decisions. For instance the extremely intelligent, self-sacrificing widow Auntie Ifeoma has so many similarities with Olanna and Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

All the three women have experienced significant suffering and strive to overcome the same.

The author projects women characters struggling to keep their families hopeful even when the country is going through a civil war. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* women are depicted as resolute and progressive. They give direction when and where necessary and guide their men and society in time of difficulties. Alice is depicted as eccentric and anti-social. She is always sheepishly takes herself into very unfulfilling relationships. Even though she complains against the army officer who dupes her, it is quite unfortunate when she lures Odenigbo while Olanna is at Orlu. Adichie uses the character of Alice to rebuke women who betray other women resorting to infidelity or in polygamy.

Infidelity on the part of men is a serious challenge women have to often grapple with in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Mrs. Ozobia is a victim of negative masculinity since her husband has a mistress, a Yoruba woman for whom he has bought a house in a neighbourhood where Lagos socialites live. The adjectives used to describe the Mistress: ‘The worst part of it is that a woman is common riffraff,’ her mother said, twisting the handkerchief. ‘A Yoruba goat from the bush with two children from two different men. I hear she is old and ugly’ (HYS 218). These descriptions make the readers share in loathing women who take other women’s husbands. Mariama Ba’s *So Long a Letter* (1980), is a semi autobiographical novel written originally in French. The novel deals with the condition of women in western African society. As it begins, Ramatoulaye Fall is writing a letter to her lifelong friend Aissatou Bâ. The occasion for writing is Ramatoulaye's recent widowhood. As she gives her friend the details of her husband's death, she recounts the major events in their lives. Ramatoulaye's husband, Modou Fall, died suddenly of a heart attack. Following the structures of her

Muslim faith, Ramatoulaye must remain in isolation for a period of forty days.

Aissatou, to whom the letter is written, immigrated to the United States and pursued a feminist, monogamist relationship. The novel is often used to focus on women's roles in post-colonial Africa. It is out of such humiliation that Mrs Ozobia cries when telling her daughter, Olanna, about the father's mistress:

Her mother held a glass of tonic water in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. She was crying. She was telling Olanna about her father's mistress", 'He has bought her a house in Ikeja', her Mother said, 'My friend lives on the same street'... 'Have you talked to him?' Olanna asked. 'What am I to say to him? *Gwa ya gini?*'... 'There is nothing I can say to him. I just wanted to let you know what is happening so that they will not say I did not tell somebody (HYS 217).

Mrs. Ozobia's confiding to a woman could point to the idea that it is cooperation amongst women that will aid in their liberation from patriarchal chains. When Mrs. Ozobia says, "There is nothing I can say to him. I just wanted to let you know what is happening so that they will not say I did not tell somebody" (HYS 217), it suggests that the society does not approve of Chief Ozobia's behaviour. The above incident points to the desperate situation women find themselves in when playing the role of wives. When Mrs. Ozobia informs the daughter that, there is nothing she can discuss with the husband regarding his infidelity it confirms her inferior position in the arrangement. She fears her husband which in turn implies the unequal gender relationships that characterise marriage and the position of African women in patriarchal societies. The fears Aunty Ifeka has about Uncle Mbaezi getting involved in affairs with other women demonstrates the prevalence of male infidelity and the negative effects it has on married women. Despite male infidelity women are positive

about life as is shown by Aunty Ifeka, Mama Dozie, Edna Whaler, Kainene and Olanna.

The situation that Gloria mentions in “Portrayal of the African Woman in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*”, resembles what happens in Nwapa’s *One is Enough* (1990) where Amaka’s relationship with her husband Obiora is strained by the mother-in-law who accuses her of being barren. Children take care of parents and carry on the family name. This explains why women and society are controlled by the desire to have many children so as to carry the family name and enlarge the husband’s *umunna*. This in itself points to the patriarchal nature of Adichie’s society that ties a woman to the husband’s *umunna* by virtue of having mothered boys.

Olanna adopts Amala’s child and cares for her because the mother rejects her immediately she is born. The same happens with Mrs. Ozobia in that Aunty Ifeka nursed Olanna and Kainene because her breasts dried up soon after they were born. As a result, Olanna thinks that Aunty Ifeka is as good as her mother. It is Aunty Ifeka that Olanna runs to when she has problems with Odenigbo. Olanna also feels glad when the nurse asks her how many children she got. Her feelings emanate out of what society demands from women: motherhood. A similar societal obsession with the desire to have children is what makes Arize’s mother-in-law disgrace her by demanding to know how many abortions she has had before marriage. Nnakwanze also is worried when Arize does not become pregnant the first, second and third year of their marriage. Arize’s misfortune is a source of oppression from her mother-in-law. Amala suffers in the hands of Odenigbo’s mother, in that Odenigbo’s mother wants to use her to get a grandson. Such a situation puts women under a lot of pressure, curtails their freedom and makes them slaves of societal demands leaving them without choice or control over their own lives.

Both Olanna and Kainene are well educated, each of them has a Bachelor degree and Master degree from London University in the United Kingdom. With the approval of their parents, Olanna wants to marry a rich family man for secure their wealth. But Olanna rejects all alliances. “She refused to marry Okaro’s son”... “So will you be spreading your legs for that elephant in exchange for Daddy’s contract? Kinene asked” (HYS 35). As she is well educated and pretty, her father sees her as an enticing instrument to attract good business. But Olanna constantly stands firm in her decision to marry Odenigbo. This can be perceived as a little yet a strong definitive step taken by women who are brave enough to resist any form of exploitation and are determined to choose character over all other materialistic gains.

Odenigbo’s elderly mother, popularly called mama, abhors Olanna for being well educated, polished and highly independent. Adichie celebrates the new breed of African women who are highly educated, free thinking, and independent. In her works female protagonists have a high level education which acts as their protection in the culture pattern that makes worse the subjugation of women. Olanna, Kainene, and Auntie Ifeoma are well educated from prestigious universities. With their sound education and higher levels of reason, they are able to deal with the irresponsibility of men in their lives and also try to cope with the tragic happenings around them. The women are strong and dynamic individuals who allow nothing to come in between in achieving their set goals.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna does not regret the sexual satisfaction which she derives from sleeping with Richard, “It made her feel like she was throwing shackles off her wrists, extracting pins from her skin, freeing herself with the loud, loud cries that burst out of her mouth. Afterwards, she felt filled with the sense of well-being, with something close to grace” (HYS 234). What Olanna actually feels

here is equivalent to the freedom to do which Adichie describes in *Purple Hibiscus*. It is a kind of freedom which satisfies and relaxes and refreshes one and sets one free from one's anxieties.

During Olanna's experiences of sexual encounters with Richard, she struggles with the mental and psychological problems which only a traumatic marriage can inflict. The new concept of freedom comes under the assertive spirit that has been hidden in Olanna which is common of all Adichie's female protagonists. Male administration and massive corruption are the bane of most African Universities. Both lecturers and their students continue to pay for the atrocity that is committed by the people who are in authority and who are ironically trusted to protect their interest. For instance, salaries are not paid to staff members and students are made to pay for ill prepared hangouts which leave them more confused and dissatisfied with their educational pursuit.

In the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna and Kainene's assertiveness speaks volumes of their fearlessness. The women are seemingly different in their countenance and in their temperament but their loyalty to the Biafran war stands singled out. Kainene leaves her sister one morning, 'she told them she was going on *afia* attack, to trade across enemy lines, and that she would be back by late afternoon' (*HYS* 407). Olanna is naturally devastated. The novel ends with tragedy, leaving Olanna heart broken, 'A day passed, then a second day. Everything remained the same; the dryness in the air, the dusty winds, the refugees tilling dried soil, but Kainene was not back' (*HYS* 407). Kainene's life ends abruptly. However Olanna's traumatic journey through the Nigeria Biafran war is the symbol of the state of Biafra itself: ravished, abandoned, violated, and in need of healing. Olanna strives harder to deal with her loss and she gives her mourning for her sister's loss. Olanna's image is

shown as a beautiful, intelligent self-willed and ultimate mother and nurturer. She plays a truly independent woman in the novel. Adichie expresses through Olanna that every woman must create her own individuality and be confident in the society and world.

This chapter thus shows how Adichie's novels under study have a complete vision that aspires to see an end to oppression, exploitation, degradation and suffering of human beings especially women. In her vision, the unfair treatment of women is condemned and she suggests a balanced treatment of everyone in society. These patriarchal practices like polygamy and domestic violence, which are retrogressive and unfriendly to women, should be discarded. She also suggests that African men suffer other problems that emasculate them and demean their personalities and thus she proposes a collaboration and association between men and women as they fight both gender wars and other forms of oppression that muzzle African people and their dignity.

These novels also glimmer with accounts of hope and promise when a few of the women characters strive to become prototypes admonishing all aspects and practices of society designed to abuse and gender stereotype women. They become true trail blazers for future generations instilling lessons in hope, strength, bravery, and last but not the least celebration of the self.

Chapter - 4

Summing Up

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* explore the plight of women who are victimised by gender stereotyping. It also assays how Adichie's women strive to become a progressive voice, prototypes heralding change for the better. Adichie's writing encapsulates the contemporary voices in a society that grapples with gender, class, ethnic and other social inequalities. It is thus a voice of agency that seeks to challenge the already established structures of the oppressive male order at both domestic and national levels.

The female characters are busy handling their personal experiences and weighed down by the socio cultural norms. In the two novels under study, Adichie examines how women are forced into a dysphonic life replete with abuse and oppression on account of their gender. The two novels run parallel to the national situation offering symbolic significance to the narratives. This argument that Nigerian women in particular and African women in general are still oppressed, exploited and degraded by a mix of traditional cultures and the modern forms of patriarchy holds good as the works under study provide umpteen examples of violence against women and children, polygamy, illiteracy. Adichie challenges women to have a voice so as to confront their oppression. Silence in *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, is to blame for the suffering that Beatrice and her children go through. In the two novels, Adichie expresses the need for women to talk back to their oppressor, so that their condition may be redeemed. It affirms that women should employ several strategies to battle with the patriarchal order in their societies. In confronting patriarchy, women are not adversarial but work tirelessly to keep their households intact. This is evident in the lives of the various female characters.

Adichie does not destroy her male characters despite their weaknesses and in doing so she advances the womanist idea of complementation. Women literacy, adoption, female solidarity, voicing oppression, strong women characters and challenging oppressive traditional practices are sampled as strategies that give women the capacity to fight cruelty and exploitation. Female characters in her texts are tolerant to the failings of their men, an aspect which serves to help highlight how spousal relations and peace in domestic front are something that is valued immensely by African women.

In the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, it is notable that Beatrice, on thinking about her divorce to Eugene, feels that her life has become a pandemonium of hell. It is only when things go drastically out of hand and she is pushed to a corner that she poisons him. Ifeoma is also determined to safeguard the honour of her husband even when he is dead. She has a lot of positive feelings about him. Olanna in *Half of a Yellow sun* sticks to Odenigbo despite several trying situations of betrayal. Olanna's radical sister Kainene suggests that she attacks Odenigbo over his alleged affair with Alice. Olanna does not attack Odenigbo because their suffering as refugees in the Biafra conflict is out of the failure to accommodate and forgive others in the bigger Nigeria. Both male and female characters that populate the pages of the two novels share a sense of compromise, accommodation, negotiation and cooperation. Adichie's ideals advocate women which are theorised by Ogunyemi and Kolawole. Ogunyemi says that black women are the victims of white patriarchal culture. Ogunyemi tries to claim equal space and opportunity in the literary scene and to acknowledge women as they fulfil the core of human experience and expression. Kolawole argues that for a long time women are excluded in decision making in the public activity and appreciated only for their home keeping and reproductive abilities.

Adichie's characters are symbolic of the third world people as they tackle the odds of colonialism, neo colonialism, misrule, ethnic strife, religious fundamentalism and other tyrannical forces. The novels can be said to fit well in the Nigerian historical situation in that the Biafra war, Aburi declaration and deaths like that of Sani Abacha is captured by that of Big Oga effectively. These identifiable historical moments in Nigerian history make the novels partly factual and partly fictional. Adichie says in an interview, "Many of the stories we tell have already been told. It is the freshness we bring to the re telling that matters" quoted in "A Hibiscus Blooming under the African Sun," her interview with Adaure Achumba in "*Prospect: The Leading Magazines of Ideas*".

Purple Hibiscus commends the signature of women because it adopts the element of voice as a veritable strategy for the constitution of the interplay of subjects and interpellation. Accordingly, the novel negotiates the tension between the two aspects of voice, that of who sees and that of who narrates. Through this, Adichie presents a dialectical situation between characters understood as subjects, with the eventual emergence of Kambili to self knowledge and condition of social responsibility. The Nigerian women in this postcolonial patriarchal political setting experience double colonisation, the first time by the British colonialists, and the second time by the Nigerian man in postcolonial Nigeria. The African woman has been presented as having been colonised in the mind, and therefore having embraced patriarchy, hence having placed the African man on a pedestal, a position socially higher than hers. Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* tells the story of the well-educated Nigerian woman as being viewed as a disgrace to society by her fellow, uneducated women. Odenigbo's mother called 'Mama' dislikes Olanna because of her infertility, blaming it on her level of education for she had a Masters from the United Kingdom.

Mama prefers that Odenigbo marries an unschooled woman or one who only had basic education so that she could always take her place as second to Odenigbo. This construction of the African woman, in the researcher's view serves as an eye-opener for the African woman, whose mindset has been colonised by patriarchy. Therefore an attempt to decolonise it and embark on supporting the progress of fellow women in all ways becomes essential.

The African woman has also been portrayed as the man's commodity. Olanna's father offers her to wealthy businessmen in exchange for business deals. Olanna's mother blindly supports her husband, and even attempts to convince Olanna to sleep with these men to gain favours for her father. The African woman is presented as determined and hopeful for a brighter and better future. Olanna is hopeful of a better future for her as a woman, and for the return of her sister Kainene, who by the end of the novel, has not returned home from Lagos where she had gone to look for food. As Olanna, Ugwu, Richard, Odenigbo and Baby Chiamaka start their lives afresh at the end of Biafra, Olanna is grateful for having spent happy moments with her twin sister, Kainene before she left. Olanna lives with the hope that her sister would soon join them in the peaceful Nigeria after the three year long war, and that the Nigerian woman would finally be embraced as a strong and productive member of the society.

To add on to her efforts of fighting for the freedom of the African Woman in postcolonial patriarchal Africa, Adichie also incorporates the support of the men towards this course. Adichie elaborates on a passionate sexual experience between Olanna and her lover, Odenigbo. Whenever Olanna is distressed, she always finds her comfort through physical intimacy with Odenigbo. When Odenigbo's mother dies during the Biafra war, he resorts to alcohol to relieve himself of stress. He is not

responsive to the intimate needs of Olanna which leaves her disappointed: ‘She kissed his neck, his ear, in the way that always made him pull her close on the nights that Ugwu slept out on the veranda. But he shrugged her hand off and said, “I’m tired, *nkem*’, She had never heard him say that before. He smelled of old sweat, and she felt a sudden piercing longing for that Old Spice left behind in Nsukka” (*HYS* 417). When Olanna’s legs went numb after she saw the mutilated body of her pregnant cousin Arize, Odenigbo was by her side, giving her the hope of a better future. He had willingly shared physical intimacy with her whenever she wanted: “‘Touch me’. She knew he didn’t want to, that he touched her breasts because he would do whatever she wanted, whatever would make her better” (*HYS* 201). Later, Olanna regains her strength and walks again. These two instances clearly show the huge impact Odenigbo had on Olanna’s wellbeing.

The problem of patriarchy and domination of African women can be solved if the men resorted to treat women as their counterparts. The already mentally colonised women should also decolonise their mindsets, and support the twenty first century African woman in her struggle to gain freedom from abuse and empowerment.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* history, Adichie attempts to represent the daily reality of these characters from multiple perspectives. She applies the historical events to the characters, but the historical element never presides over the personal one. It is the emotional truth that forms the central part of the story, and is highlighted throughout the novel. The characters live through the events of the Nigeria-Biafra War, but what takes priority are their personal issues. Adichie is also concerned with the after effects of the period of British colonisation that are still present in Nigerian society today. By making Ugwu the author of the novel, instead of Richard, Adichie not only

substantiates her own role as a writer but also speaks out strongly about who has the authoritative voice to represent the past of Africa.

Adichie's projections of her society are largely visionary. She goes beyond mirroring the contemporary Nigerian society in that in exposing our current existence, she emphasises what one could become. Masters and houseboys relate as human beings and not as masters and slaves; the woman of the house does not need to be accepted by her mother-in-law or to prove her usefulness as a child bearer before she can confidently take charge of her house. Thus we see that Adichie is delightfully progressive and liberating.

In conclusion, the researcher discovers that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a delight to read and research. For women to rise above these traditional constructs, especially as 'good women,' they need to understand themselves and, having done this they equally need to express themselves vehemently. Accordingly, self-knowledge and self-expression become *sine qua non* for action. This dissertation examines how Adichie's first novel becomes a paradigm for demystifying forms of patriarchal violence and breaking the stereotypical submission demanded of women. According to Gustav Geiger, "The position of women in a society is an accurate index of the development of that society". Quoted in "Women Empowerment: Myth and Reality" by Dr. S. C Joshi. Gender equality and destereotyping is fundamental to achieving people centred development. The root of all prejudice is ignorance. "Women are a great power of society, but if they a misuse their power, it can shatter to bits the whole fabric of society" said Mahatma Gandhi in "Women's liberation and voluntary Action" by Kalpana Shah. Unfortunately even today women are taught to bear up with every humiliation be it physical, emotional, mental or verbal. Thus the women become vulnerable to violence within the four walls of her house away from

public gaze. This situation can be improved by facilitating a refinement in thoughts and sensibility of the people.

Faith has been misinterpreted in myriad ways in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*. Eugene's mode of faith can be considered as an example. He believes that women, according to his religion, are forbidden to study; instead, they exist only to do the household works and looking after the families. Hence, he does not encourage his wife Beatrice to develop herself and come out of her cocoon. This kind of a belief is invalid in any religion and sarcastically explored effectively. Such meaningless beliefs lead to the illiteracy of women. Eugene does not allow Beatrice to educate herself. Moreover she has to face shame and torments from her husband.

The question of 'if' can be made predominant in this context. What 'if' Beatrice had not poisoned Eugene? What 'if' Beatrice was educated? If she was a literate, she could have raised her voice against Eugene for the sake of her life and her children. Even 'if' she had to abandon Eugene, she could have been able to stand on her own feet. If she had been brave, Eugene would not have been murdered, and Jaja would not have been imprisoned. But in the novel Beatrice is uneducated and weak. She cannot support herself if she leaves Eugene. Her bravery and courage goes unrevealed. Hence, she has to suffer under Eugene's domination.

Wars generally have a negative impact on the society. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the lives of the people are put to tests and trails because of the war. They are traumatised mentally and physically. They had to face several losses as seen when Odenigbo loses his mother and Olanna loses her sister Kainene. But, in *Purple Hibiscus*, war plays a vital role in the lives of the children. Colonisation is the aim of the wars which breaks havoc in the lives of the people. They are first colonised by the white mainstream society. Later, the Nigerian men rule the land left over by the

British men further inflicting a long period of torments, tortures and dominations. It is due to such scenarios that the children in *Purple Hibiscus* are moved to their Auntie Ifeoma's home where they understand the real meaning of love and care. Kambili and Jaja are pictured as helpless children who regret the nature of their parents who failed in parenting them holistically. Love places an influential role in binding a family and ensuring that the children grow up to be responsible members of society. Lack of love from their father and the silent nature of their mother force the children to be emotionally traumatised and disturbed.

When pondered over, the plight of women is a recurring problem. Solutions are unlikely to be in effective practise and all pervasive in this bizarre world. Yet, a possible reprise for the wounded souls is to reach out to the world through pen and paper. Writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie offer solace, strength and support through their writings that create awareness, build support, create strength thus helping women and society in general to take that first definitive step towards breaking regressive gender stereotyping. A study of such works helps one to not only be aware of the universality of the challenges that women face throughout the world specifically in countries like Nigeria but also instills hope that the very challenges that force women into succumbing to stereotypical moulds of submission can be broken if sensitisation to such issues are facilitated and if women empower themselves and strive to become prototypes in a changing world.

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