

Chapter - II

Trauma of Postcolonial Experience

Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate.

-Edward Said

The legacy of colonialism has left a profound impact on societies across the world, shaping the course of history and influencing the development of nations. The trauma of the postcolonial experience is a complex and multifaceted issue that has affected individuals, communities, and nations in various ways.

As the countries gained independence, the dream of a new dawn for the marginalised sections was soon shattered as the women were forced to bear the brunt of the new power structures. The post-colonial era brought with it a new form of domination, which was no less exploitative than the one that preceded it. In this context, the nationalist leaders who had promised freedom and equality became the very perpetrators of the same injustices that they had fought against.

In many cases, the postcolonial era has been characterised by the ongoing struggles for liberation, self-determination, and social justice. These struggles have often been shaped by the traumatic experiences of colonialism, including the violence, exploitation, and cultural suppression that were used to maintain control over colonised peoples. In the aftermath of colonialism, many nations and communities have been left to grapple with the psychological and social fallout of these experiences, including the effects of intergenerational trauma, cultural dislocation, and political instability.

The trauma of the postcolonial experience has had a particular impact on women, who have often been marginalised and oppressed by patriarchal structures that were reinforced by colonialism. Women have faced a range of challenges in the postcolonial era, including poverty, violence, and discrimination, as well as limited access to education, healthcare, and other resources. The intersection of gender, race, and class has further compounded these challenges, leaving many women in a position of vulnerability and disadvantage. As a result, the postcolonial era has become a time of struggle and resistance for women across the world, who have fought to assert their agency and claim their rights in the face of systemic oppression.

The women were particularly vulnerable, as their voices were suppressed and their rights trampled upon. The trauma of the colonial era was further compounded by the double burden of patriarchy and nationalism. The freedom that men enjoyed was not extended to women, who continued to be relegated to secondary status and denied access to basic resources and opportunities.

This internalised colonialism perpetuated by fellow indigenous leaders is a complex phenomenon that requires deeper analysis. It reveals how power can corrupt even the most well-intentioned movements and how women continue to bear the consequences of such dynamics. The repercussions of this legacy are felt even today, as the struggle for gender justice continues to be an ongoing battle in many post-colonial societies.

Trauma studies are a vital field of investigation that delves into the multifaceted aspects of the rhetorical, psychological, and cultural implications of trauma in literature and society. The focus of this scholarship is to unravel the intricate web of factors that

shape one's perception and comprehension of a traumatic event and to explore the profound ways in which such an experience can influence and be influenced by language.

In this field of study, experts investigate the intricate interplay between the complex psychological and social elements that contribute to an individual's understanding of a traumatic event and the profound ways in which such an experience can transform and impact the very fabric of their being. Additionally, trauma studies also delve into the role that language plays in shaping people's perception and understanding of trauma, and how the use of language can either help or hinder the process of healing and recovery.

A key area of emphasis in trauma studies is the exploration of the various formal innovations in literature, both print and digital, that provide deep insights into the ways in which intense experiences can alter an individual's sense of identity, impact the unconscious mind, and shape the process of remembering. By examining the various formal techniques and strategies used by authors to represent trauma, scholars are able to acquire a deeper comprehension of the profound impact that trauma can have on individuals, communities, and societies as a whole.

Overall, trauma studies play a critical role in helping people to understand better the complex interplay between trauma, language, and culture, and provide them with the tools and insights that are needed to promote healing, recovery, and resilience in the face of fortitude.

The emergence of trauma studies occurred during the 1990s, drawing from Freudian theory to formulate a model of trauma that envisions an event so catastrophic that it defies language and shatters meaning altogether. This notion of trauma implies that

the suffering caused by such an event is beyond representation. According to Freud, trauma is a process of recollection that not only causes psychological pain but also confers significance to a hitherto repressed experience in the unconscious mind (Mambrol).

In other words, trauma represents an experience so overwhelming that it cannot be expressed in words or fully processed by the mind. Instead, it remains trapped in the psyche, causing ongoing anguish and distress. This conceptualisation of trauma suggests that the healing process must involve the retrieval and integration of these suppressed memories, thereby transforming them from sources of pain into sources of meaning. By acknowledging and coming to terms with the traumatic experience, individuals can regain a sense of agency and control over their lives, even in the face of profound suffering.

Beginning in the 1990s, a prolific surge of academic investigations delved into the intricate concept of trauma and its profound implications in various realms, particularly in literature and society. Esteemed scholars such as Shoshana Felman, Cathy Caruth, and Geoffrey Hartman spearheaded this initial wave of critical inquiry, which propagated the notion of trauma as an event that defies representation, exposing deep-seated conflicts between language and experience. This groundbreaking research paved the way for a broader understanding the far-reaching impact of trauma and highlighted its ability to illuminate fundamental tensions within human expression and perception.

Cathy Caruth's book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* published in 1996 delves into a particular interpretation of Freud's trauma theories to address a wider poststructural concern regarding the limits of language and history in referring to traumatic experiences. Her approach establishes a critical discourse on the

role of trauma in literature and the interconnectedness of individual and cultural trauma. Caruth states, “. . . that trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival. It is only by acknowledging traumatic experience as a paradoxical relationship between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the heritage of incomprehensibility that is at the core of catastrophic experience” (58).

As per Caruth’s viewpoint, the complex aftermath of trauma, marked by its latency and dissociation, acts as a barrier that obstructs an individual’s capability to grasp and articulate their traumatic experience fully. Furthermore, Caruth’s conceptualisation of Trauma is defined in the same book as, “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (11).

Caruth delves into the concept of “rhetorical potential” inherent in the recurrence of specific linguistic patterns in written works that attempt to encapsulate the fractured and disjointed nature of referencing the traumatic past. She argues that this phenomenon highlights the inherent “knowing and not knowing” of traumatic memories and unveils the traumatic nature of history itself. Caruth asserts in her book that trauma cannot be solely attributed to a singular, violent, or initial event in an individual’s past. Instead, it manifests as a haunting presence that persists long after the event because it was never fully grasped or processed in the first place. The elusive nature of trauma makes it a complex and multi-layered experience that can only be fully understood through exploring the recurring motifs and rhetorical strategies employed in narratives of traumatic experiences (17).

Caruth's Trauma model, also known as the Caruthian model, underscores the inherent interconnectedness between the individual and the cultural group in the experience of trauma. Her model brings to light the profound silencing and dissociative effects that trauma can have on individuals, which can result in the suppression of memories and an inability to process the experience.

Caruth's theoretical framework extends beyond traditional perspectives and encompasses broader issues such as race, feminism, and postcolonial theory. In doing so, her model provides a comprehensive and inclusive lens through which to view the complex and multifaceted nature of traumatic experiences. By highlighting the intersectional nature of trauma, Caruth's model invites a deeper exploration of the ways in which trauma is shaped by, and in turn shapes, societal structures and cultural norms. It opens up avenues for understanding the wider impact of trauma on groups and communities, as well as the individual.

An in-depth exploration of the cultural background that informs a person's or a community's traumatic experiences provide a more nuanced understanding of the portrayal of such events in various forms of literature and media. For instance, the depiction of traumatic experiences such as the Holocaust, rape, war, American slavery, racism, and colonial oppression requires a contextual analysis of the social, historical, and cultural factors that shaped these occurrences.

The field of trauma studies is continually evolving, with researchers and scholars adopting various theoretical frameworks such as poststructuralism, feminism, postcolonialism, ethnic studies, and ecocriticism to investigate the impact of trauma on literature and society. These different perspectives offer fresh insights into the relevance

of trauma in different cultural and historical contexts, helping to broaden our understanding of the multifaceted nature of trauma and its long-lasting effects on individuals and communities.

In essence, exploring the cultural context of traumatic experiences enhances our comprehension of how such events shape our understanding of literature, history, and society. By examining trauma from various perspectives, people can gain a deeper appreciation of the far-reaching impact of these experiences and work towards creating a more compassionate and empathetic society.

Cathy, in her preface to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), astutely notes that those who have undergone traumatising experiences carry within them an overwhelming history, one that is often impossible to comprehend or assimilate fully. “Yet what can it mean that history occurs as a symptom? It is indeed this curious phenomenon that makes trauma, or PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder], in its definition, and in the impact it has on the lives of those who live it, intimately bound up with a question of truth” (5). In fact, these individuals themselves may become the embodiment of the symptoms of this unclaimed history, as it has left a profound imprint on their psyche and emotional well-being. The enormity of the impact of trauma can be all-encompassing, shaping every aspect of their lives and leaving an indelible mark on their very being.

Caruth expounds upon the intrinsic connection between trauma and history, highlighting how trauma is integral to the formation of historical narratives. She argues that a history of trauma is inherently referential, but only to the extent that it remains incompletely understood at the time of its occurrence. This means that the process of

comprehending historical events is not straightforward, and instead requires an acknowledgement of their inaccessibility and the profound impact of traumatic experiences on individual and collective memory.

Undoubtedly, the exploration of “postcolonial trauma studies” serves as a valuable and constructive contribution to both the fields of postcolonialism and trauma. By undertaking a descriptive analysis of how these concepts are identified and understood, separate from the task of conceptual disclosure, people are able to delve deeper into the interconnectivity between them. This enables people to explore the intricate and complex ways in which their geographical, historical, and ethical implications intersect and influence one another (Nikro 13).

Nikro’s statement highlights the importance of recognising the interdependence between postcolonialism and trauma, and the significance of understanding how they are entwined. By investigating the contours of their relationship, people can gain a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which their understanding of the world is shaped and the impact they have on societal and cultural structures. In doing so, people are able to more fully appreciate the ways in which these concepts are intertwined and the role they play in shaping their perceptions and the world around them.

Rothberg has pointed out that in the exploration of postcolonial trauma studies, there is a tendency to create a conflict that is non-relational and binary, pitting the concept of the West against the rest. This approach can lead to a problematic oversimplification of the complex dynamics of trauma, particularly in non-western societies. The focus on the individual in the West can be at odds with the communal nature of trauma experienced by groups in non-western societies (qtd. in Nikro 13).

The discourse surrounding postcolonial trauma theory can be viewed as existing within the realm of transculturation, a dynamic process of dialogue and exchange in which each participant is transformed by the other. This process generates a reciprocal relationship that challenges the notion of cultural purity while remaining aware of the unequal distribution of power. Postcolonial trauma theory emerges from a new realm of contact, a space of colonial encounters where individuals historically and geographically separated from each other come into contact and establish ongoing relations, often under conditions of extreme inequality, coercion, and unresolved conflicts (Martinez-Falquina).

This perspective highlights the complex and layered nature of postcolonial trauma theory, which cannot be reduced to a simplistic dichotomy between colonisers and colonised. Rather, it is the product of a dynamic and ongoing process of cultural exchange, in which both parties are transformed and shaped by their encounters with each other. By recognising the inherently complex and dynamic nature of these interactions, one can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which trauma is experienced and addressed in the postcolonial context, and work towards more equitable and just outcomes for all individuals involved.

This chapter delves into the complex and multifaceted field of postcolonial trauma studies, exploring the many psychological, political, sociological, economic, and juridical dimensions of trauma, violence, and testimony as they manifest in both postcolonial regions and the landscapes of settlers. By examining this wide range of factors, this research seeks to gain a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the nature and effects of trauma, and the ways in which it is experienced and expressed in diverse postcolonial contexts.

Sefi Atta's debut novel *Everything Good Will Come* is an incredible tale of two young girls, Enitan and Sheri, whose unique friendship is portrayed against the backdrop of a society that is plagued with challenges and difficulties. The story delves deep into the complex issues of societal oppression and marginalisation, showcasing the harsh realities of a world where individuals from certain backgrounds are relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy. The novel presents a powerful reflection of the struggles and agonies of such individuals, and the obstacles they face as they try to navigate a society that is both noble and savage.

The impact of colonialism goes beyond the physical withdrawal of the colonisers and their institutions from the colonised land. The trauma of living under a system of oppression and exploitation lingers on and becomes embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of the colonised people. This trauma manifests itself in the everyday lives of the colonised people and creates a sense of unease, anger and frustration. The novel *Everything Good Will Come* portrays this trauma through the character of Uncle Alex, who expresses his resentment towards the British colonisers for dividing his country and imposing their ways on his people. He says, ““Them and their bloody empire. Come here and divide our country like one of their bloody tea cakes. Driving on the left side of the bloody road...”” (9). Through Uncle Alex's words, the novel highlights the ongoing legacy of colonialism and its lasting impact on the lives of the colonised people.

The process of assimilating foreign practices in their own land can lead to frustration and trauma, as it involves constantly trying to live up to the standards of the West and neglecting their own culture and way of living. The colonisers' influence on the colonised people leaves deep marks on their psyche, and this struggle is reflected in the

character of Enitan. She observes that her country is not just struggling with religious and government structures imposed on them, but also with foreign family structures. Enitan reflects on this aspect by saying, “If this was a country struggling with religious and government structures imposed on us, it was also a country struggling with foreign family structures” (EGWC 247). This highlights the complexity of the impact of colonisation, as it affects every aspect of a society’s functioning, even the most intimate ones like family structures. The struggle to reconcile these different influences creates a sense of displacement and uncertainty, which further fuels the trauma of colonisation.

The influence of language in the process of assimilation or acculturation cannot be understated. The language of the colonisers becomes dominant, leaving the colonised with little choice but to learn it in order to navigate the newly acquired foreign customs. This often leads to a dual existence where they use two accents and adapt to their environment accordingly. Enitan, the protagonist of the novel, experiences this firsthand when she becomes aware of her accent changing whenever she speaks to Nigerian friends. This realisation comes after an English friend points it out to her. Enitan says, “This never occurred to me, until an English friend once commented on how my accent changed whenever I spoke to my Nigerian friends. That was my natural accent, I told her. If I spoke to her that way, she would never understand. She looked stunned” (EGWC 260-61). It is a struggle to hold on to their native language and culture while simultaneously trying to integrate into a new environment and communicate effectively with the new people around them. This constant juggling of identities adds to the trauma of the colonised people as they strive to find a balance between their heritage and the expectations of their newly acquired culture.

In the post-colonial era, the effects of colonisation were still deeply ingrained in the minds and lives of the colonised people. This leads them to constantly seek the approval and acceptance of the Western world for their actions and way of life. Atta, through her works, vehemently opposes the portrayal of Africa as a continent only riddled with poverty and suffering, and the reflection of the early period of Nigeria, which struggled under the colonisers. The character of Enitan reflects this sentiment when she talks about the way Africa is depicted to the West.

Under-explained books, books that described a colonial Africa so exotic. I would want to be there myself, in a safari suit, served by some silent and dignified Kikuyu, or some other silent and dignified tribesman. Or a dark dark Africa, with snakes and vines and ooga-booga dialects. . . . But people concentrated on certain aspects of our continent: poverty, or wars. Or starvation; bush, tribes, or wildlife. They loved our animals more than they loved us. They took an interest in us only when we were clapping and singing, or half naked like the Maasai. . . . no sense of Africa presented outside. In a world of East and West, there was nowhere to place us. In a graded world, there was a place for us, right there at the bottom: third, slowly slipping into fourth world. (EGWC 261)

Atta's portrayal of the post-colonial perspective highlights the struggles of the colonised people, who are still grappling with the effects of colonisation and seeking their place in the world.

Sefi Atta's 2010 novel, *Swallow*, provides a powerful and poignant portrayal of the challenges and struggles that modern women face in today's society. The novel delves deep into the ongoing struggle of women to establish their identities and assert

their voices in a world dominated by patriarchal norms and expectations. Through the story of the novel's protagonist, Tolani, Atta deftly navigates the complexities of modern female existence, addressing issues such as gender inequality, sexual harassment, and cultural expectations. The novel captures the tension and frustration of women as they navigate a world that seeks to silence and subjugate them, while also celebrating the strength, resilience, and courage that they demonstrate in the face of these challenges. Overall, *Swallow* is a powerful and thought-provoking work that offers a compelling insight into the experiences of women in contemporary society.

Tolani's childhood reaction to a European man's visit to her parents' compound can be seen as a manifestation of the historical and social tensions between colonisers and colonised people. As a young girl, she instinctively feels fear and mistrust towards the white man, or *oyinbo*, due to the legacy of oppression and subjugation that the colonial powers had imposed upon her homeland. Despite this, Tolani's family tries to reassure her that the danger is not real and that she need not be afraid. Her mother's attempt to dispel her fear can be viewed as an attempt to reconcile the reality of colonialism with the desire for peace and coexistence between different cultures. As her mother notes, "Your father came home with you and you started crying once you set eyes on Alex. 'Egungun! Masquerader!'" 'It's just an *oyinbo*,' I said, but you wouldn't stop. You thought it was a mask that Alex was wearing. ... You were still crying. 'Egungun, it's scary, it's scary'" (Swallow 166).

The mention of Tolani's childhood fear of the European man in the text is significant because it highlights the deep-seated sense of apprehension and mistrust towards the colonial powers and their influence that pervades the Nigerian psyche.

Although the physical presence of the white man may no longer pose an immediate threat, the lasting impact of colonialism on Nigerian society has created a legacy of inequality, oppression, and social division that continues to be felt today. Thus, Tolani's fear is not limited to the European man alone but encompasses a broader sense of unease and anxiety about the systemic issues that have resulted from colonialism. The reference serves to emphasise the ongoing struggle of Nigerians to navigate the complexities of their identity in the face of historical trauma and cultural dislocation.

The reference in the text is essential as it sheds light on the shift in the power dynamics that have occurred in Nigeria. While the fear at the sight of the white man was warranted in the colonial era, the new oppressors that Tolani and other Nigerian women face are not as visible. These oppressors are not solely white European men, but instead, they are men of the same skin colour as the natives of Nigeria, who have adopted a patriarchal mindset. The oppressive behaviour of these men is not restricted to a specific region or language but can be found all over Nigeria. They have embraced and combined the indigenous patriarchal practices with the colonial patriarchy to create a more sophisticated system of oppression, which is more systematic and subtle. Tolani's experience highlights the importance of recognising these new masqueraders and acknowledging the need to resist and challenge their oppressive behaviour.

The fact that the new oppressors are not easily recognisable puts women in Nigeria, including Tolani, in a precarious position. They need to be more vigilant and closely scrutinise the men in their lives to identify the ones who wear the mask of patriarchal deity and oppress them. Moreover, they must be vocal about protesting against such injustices, as Tolani does in this passage, to bring attention to the systematic

oppression of women under the new combined patriarchy that is a blend of indigenous and colonial patriarchy.

Although the trauma of European colonialism remains a significant backdrop, the central theme of these narratives is the consequences and aftermath of new nationalist attacks on women during the nationalist and post-colonial periods. These stories highlight how the colonial experience has been replicated and internalised by indigenous leaders who have become exploiters, resulting in new forms of oppression for women.

Through the use of the *palongo*, the anti-masquerade in this particular reading, Atta effectively demonstrates the concept that “women weave their path into, and out of, the nationalist script, as they take up, and then subvert, the positions into which they have been subjected” (Samuelson 236). As Kwame Anthony Appiah aptly observes in his work “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern”, “Post-coloniality is after all this; and its post, like postmodernism’s, is also a post that challenges earlier legitimating narratives. And it challenges them in the name of the suffering victims of ‘more than thirty republics’” in Africa (123). The project of post-coloniality is therefore a simultaneous pursuit of unity, plurality, and coherence, which entails challenging not only the dominant colonial and nationalist narratives, but also creating a space for indigenous women with diverse experiences to assert their existence, voice, and self-representation. These women have experienced the traditional and modern worlds, and their composite experiences demand acknowledgement, recognition, and validation. Thus, the project of post-coloniality is both a negation and an affirmation that recognises and addresses the legacies of colonialism and empowers the marginalised.

The narrative layout of Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* and *Swallow* appears to reflect the political situation explained by Fanon in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Nonetheless, the female protagonists in these novels develop a counter-masquerade that is centred around empowering and mobilising activists for the sake of building a more equitable nation, in contrast to the corrupt and gendered politics of their time. Through their actions, they seek to create a movement that can challenge and subvert the oppressive power structures that have long dominated Nigerian society, allowing them to forge a new path paved for themselves and future generations of women.

Moreover, Atta's first novel employs the powerful and revered dance of protest and spiritual liberation, known as *palongo*, as the counter-masquerade, which is not coincidental. The use of *palongo* highlights the importance of women's voices and agency in seeking liberation and empowerment. Through this dance, the women characters in the novel assert their identity and resist the patriarchal norms imposed on them by society. Atta's portrayal of *palongo* as a tool for resistance and spiritual expression further emphasises the importance of women's spiritual and cultural practices in the fight for justice and equality.

The impact of Western culture, language, and education on post-colonial countries cannot be overstated. These nations tend to look up to the West and often adopt their lifestyle, especially during citizens' travel to Western countries and encounter difficulties in the process of assimilation. However, this often leads to an identity crisis among these individuals, as they grapple with conflicting cultural influences. The multifaceted concept of identity encompasses a person's individuality and social

affiliations, including national and cultural identity. It is shaped by various factors, such as family background, language, education, and experiences, among others. In psychology and sociology, identity is defined as a distinct characteristic or trait that sets a person apart or a shared trait that is common among members of a social group. The adoption of Western culture and values by post-colonial countries often creates tension between their traditional customs and the Western way of life, leading to a complex and challenging process of self-identification.

Erik Erikson, a renowned developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst, coined the term “identity crisis” to denote a significant conflict individuals experience during their formative years. As per Erikson’s theory, an identity crisis is an intense soul-searching period and experimentation with several self-concepts. This struggle is particularly pronounced in the case of migrants who move to a new country where they are exposed to religious and cultural disparities. The process of assimilation and adapting to a new cultural environment can lead to a profound sense of disorientation and questioning of one’s identity. The migrants are often required to negotiate between their native cultural values and the expectations of the host culture, which may result in a conflict of values and beliefs. The complex nature of this experience often leads to a profound re-evaluation of one’s sense of self, social affiliations, and cultural identity (Kabouche).

Migration is often accompanied by a period of personal growth and introspection. The experience of living in a new culture and being exposed to different perspectives can lead to the development of critical thinking skills and a broader worldview. This can have a profound impact on a person’s identity, causing them to view their homeland and

traditional ways of thinking in a new light. However, when migrants return to their native land, they may experience another phase of an identity crisis as they struggle to reconcile their newfound perspectives with their cultural roots.

Despite these challenges, many migrants eventually develop a sense of Afropolitanism. This term refers to a cosmopolitan identity that transcends national borders and reflects the experience of living in a globalised world. Afropolitans are often well-educated and well-travelled individuals who have a deep understanding of multiple cultures and perspectives. They may feel a sense of belonging to many different places and cultures, rather than just one. This sense of identity can be both liberating and challenging, as Afropolitans navigate the complexities of belonging to multiple communities while maintaining their own unique sense of self.

Afropolitanism is a multifaceted concept that captures the essence of the African identity and their outlook on the world. It is an intellectual and cultural space where African heritage and traditions are explored and critiqued within the context of the modern globalised world. Afropolitanism is not limited to a specific geographic location, but rather encompasses diverse aspects of African cultures, such as social, psychological, and spiritual elements. It is a way of life that reflects the experiences of Africans who have migrated to other countries and have adopted a global perspective while still retaining their cultural roots. The concept of Afropolitanism seeks to redefine African identity beyond traditional geographic boundaries and establish a connection between African culture and globalisation. Sefi Atta is a unique writer who weaves an Afropolitan perspective into her writing, setting her apart from other authors.

Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*, published in 2013, centres around the life of Deola Bello, a Nigerian woman living in London, who defies traditional Nigerian values with her unmarried status and unconventional lifestyle. As a financial reviewer at an International Charity, she identifies herself as a Nigerian expatriate in London and considers it her preferred place of residence, despite Nigeria being her homeland. Deola embodies the concept of Afropolitanism, having attended a British boarding school, participated in summer camps in Switzerland, and obtained a degree from the prestigious London School of Economics. As a successful and cosmopolitan African woman, Deola is portrayed as a high-achiever who is adept in the ways of the world. Through Deola's character, Atta challenges the traditional notion of what it means to be African and explores the complexities of identity and belonging in the modern world.

The lack of empathy and social consciousness towards other fellow citizens is a common issue in many societies, including those in Africa. However, this problem becomes even more pronounced when it comes to migration. Migrants who have gained British education and speak posh English often consider themselves as the elite of the nation. This mindset can be attributed to the lasting impact of colonialism on the continent, which has created a society with significant class divisions.

In *A Bit of Difference*, Deola Bello suggests that Nigerians are as biased as the English and even more snobbish. She highlights how Nigerians often snub one another and the people of other races, including other Africans and blacks. Deola argues that Nigerians rank each other based on factors such as health, education, and formation, leading to ambiguous results. This creates a society where social mobility is difficult, and people are judged based on their socioeconomic status. These class divisions, combined

with snobbery and prejudice, can lead to a lack of unity among Nigerians and other Africans, further exacerbating social issues in the country. She says, “Nigerians are as prejudiced as the English, and more snobbish. Nigerians, given any excuse, are ready to snub. Without provocation and even remorse. They snub one another, snub other Africans, other blacks and other races. Nigerians would snub aliens if they encountered them (65). She also reflects on how people of postcolonial land are constantly discriminating among themselves on the scale of how westernized a person is. She says, “Nigerians constantly rank each other according to health, education and Westernization, with ambiguous results: this one is bush, that one is *oyinbo*. This one is local, that one is colonized” (157).

Deola’s observations shed light on the complex attitudes of Africans towards celebrities who engage in charitable work on the continent. While some might assume that Africans would be grateful for any form of assistance, the reality is more nuanced. Many Africans view these celebrities with suspicion and even hostility, accusing them of seeking attention or personal gain rather than genuinely wanting to help. This attitude reflects a deeper mistrust of outsiders and a sense that Africans should be the ones to solve their own problems.

Moreover, Deola points out that Africans are not always willing to help each other either, highlighting the prevalence of a lack of social consciousness in the continent. She notes that charitable aid is often squandered and that there is a general indifference towards the plight of others, even within one’s own community. She says, “I don’t see Africans helping each other that much either. . . . That is why charities annoy us so much. . . . We don’t care about each other” (ABD 206). This reflects the deep-seated social and

economic divisions within African societies that prevent meaningful change from occurring. Overall, Deola's observations demonstrate the complex attitudes and challenges surrounding aid and development in Africa.

In *A Bit of Difference*, the portrayal of Nigerian society is nothing short of scathing, with the author's sharp critique aimed squarely at the rampant corruption that pervades every level of the country's social and political structures. Moreover, the novel also exposes the pervasive lack of empathy and social consciousness among the citizens of Nigeria. The glaring inequality in the country only serves to exacerbate the situation, with those who migrate to the West further widening the chasm between the haves and have-nots.

Through her book, the author sheds light on the harsh realities of Nigerian society, painting a vivid picture of the stark disparities that exist between its various strata. The corruption that permeates every level of society, from the political elite to the average citizen, is shown to be a systemic issue that is both endemic and persistent.

In the field of contemporary literary criticism, gender has emerged as a complex and controversial topic. Judith Butler, an influential gender theorist, posits in her work "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity" that gender is not an innate quality but rather a social construct. Butler argues that individuals do not inherently possess a gender identity but rather acquire it through socialisation and cultural conditioning. Simone de Beauvoir also distinguishes between sex and gender, arguing that gender is a product of social and cultural influences rather than being determined by biology. Simone De Beauvoir's theory emphasises that gender is not a fixed or stable

characteristic but rather a fluid and constantly evolving aspect of an individual's personality (24).

Bandeled Davis, a character from *A Bit of Difference*, is another example of someone who abandons their native identity to assimilate into Western culture. He identifies himself as having ambivalent sexuality and leaves his home country to attend a college in England. Upon arriving, he quickly sheds his native identity to adopt the ways of his new country. The author paints a vivid picture of his swift adaptation, noting that he sounds completely English and that those who speak in that manner often look down on those who do not. Atta narrates, "He sounded completely English, and all she [Deola] knew about Nigerians who spoke that way was that they looked down on Nigerians who didn't" (45). This highlights the pressure that migrants face to conform to the cultural norms of their new surroundings, sometimes at the expense of their own identity.

Atta's portrayal of Bandeled Davis illustrates the negative impact of colonialism on African people, specifically those who are identified as homosexuals. Bandeled's move to England is an attempt to shed his African identity and assimilate into British culture. He quickly adopts Western norms and values, and even alters his accent to sound completely English. However, in doing so, he suppresses his true sexual identity and develops feelings of shame and contempt for his native land. This highlights how colonialism not only erodes cultural identity but also perpetuates a colonial mindset that views Western culture as superior to African culture, even though it may be rejected in his native land.

Banded's attitude towards Africa and African literature shows the impact of his colonial mindset. He dismisses the work of African writers as "postcolonial crap" and

accuses them of being overly preoccupied with the continent's problems as evident in the following conversation between Bandele and Deola:

Coetzee. . . writes the same postcolonial crap the rest of them write, and not very well, I might add.'

Deola laughs. 'Isn't our entire existence as Africans postcolonial?'

'They should give it a rest, the whole lot of them. Africa should be called the Sob Continent the way they carry on. It's all gloom and doom from them, and the women are worse, all that false angst. Honestly, and if I hear another poet in a headwrap bragging about the size of her ample bottom or likening skin to the colour of a nighttime beverage, I don't know what I will do.' (ABD 47)

This conversation reveals the conflict between Bandele's desire to assimilate into British society and his awareness of his African origins.

Upon returning to his homeland after living abroad, Bandele is met with mockery from Deola's friends. They taunt him for struggling to accept his black identity while living in a foreign country. The constant belittlement he faces deepens his aversion towards Nigeria, leading him to reject his motherland altogether and seek acceptance in a foreign country where his identity is not questioned.

In contrast, Deola initially struggles to navigate her Nigerian identity due to her exposure to Western culture. However, as she spends more time in her country, she learns to understand and appreciate its complexities, ultimately dissolving her previous differences in opinion. Bandele's Afropolitan thinking and ambivalent sexuality cause him to stand firm in his hatred towards Nigeria, while Deola's openness to learning leads her to appreciate and embrace her Nigerian identity.

Nigerian women writers have been playing a crucial role in addressing the country's social and political concerns through their literary works. The third-generation women writers, especially those in the diaspora, have challenged the norms and made a significant impact. They have shown the struggles and commitment of women in navigating the complexities of the postcolonial era. The renowned author, Sefi Atta, is a great example of this generation of writers who introduced new subjects including sexual orientation in African literature that were previously considered taboo.

Atta's characters are a reflection of real-life situations, where people face discrimination based on their sexual orientation due to anti-LGBT laws, societal norms, and family pressure. These characters experience heightened identity crises and mental trauma due to this discrimination. However, Atta's self-assured characters, such as Deola Bello, manage to overcome these challenges and survive the crisis by embracing their differences.

Through her work, Atta beautifully highlights the concept of Afropolitanism, which encompasses the cultural, intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual spaces that define the African people's identity and their attitude towards the world. Atta's narratives are relevant to both Africans and foreign readers, as she sheds light on the characters' struggles to establish their own identities and overcome the post-colonial trauma they face. Her captivating storytelling style and mission to highlight Afropolitanism make her a unique and relevant voice in contemporary African literature.

The lingering effects of colonialism have left deep and unsettling wounds in the psyches and societies of postcolonial people. Sefi Atta's novel, *The Bead Collector*, poignantly captures the struggles of those who have endured the ravages of colonialism,

including the erosion of cultural traditions, societal norms, religious practices, and educational systems. The novel's narrative revolves around the lives of women in Lagos, with a particular focus on Remi Lawal, a Celebratory Card Shop proprietor. When an American expatriate named Frances Cooke arrives in Lagos to collect valuable beads, Remi and the other locals are understandably cautious and distrustful due to the turmoil and upheaval caused by the military coup in Nigeria following the Civil War. At its core, *The Bead Collector* illuminates the fraught and complex relationships between postcolonial peoples and the outsiders who come to their lands, often bringing with them a legacy of exploitation, subjugation, and violence. Frequently, people in postcolonial societies engage in assessments that measure an individual's appearance and characteristics against Western standards, resulting in constant comparisons and judgments.

The novel is set in Lagos, Nigeria, in January 1976, six years after the Nigerian Civil War. At this time, a new military coup has taken over for six months, and rumours of a counter-coup are rife. Remi Lawal, the protagonist, meets Frances Cooke, who introduces herself as an American art dealer. Frances claims to have come to Nigeria to collect rare beads during an art exhibition in the affluent Ikoyi region. Over the course of several weeks, they form a close friendship and discuss their dreams, marriages, loyalty, and motherhood. Despite the prevalent suspicion towards foreigners, Remi welcomes Frances into her social circle, intrigued by her enigmatic persona.

Tunde, Remi's spouse, cautions her about the possibility that Frances, like other Americans in Lagos, maybe there to gather intelligence for the CIA. Nonetheless, Remi remains unperturbed. She is disenchanted by the continuous instability of her country and

the arrogance of the city's wealthy residents, and she candidly discusses her beliefs and viewpoints with Frances. However, after the assassination of General Muhammed on February 13, Remi begins to re-evaluate a conversation she has had with Frances. Doubts arise within her, and she begins to question the true identity of 'the bead collector.' Her sense of disillusionment is superseded by a renewed sense of patriotism.

In *The Bead Collector*, Sefi Atta employs her trademark subtlety and wit to reimagine the global espionage narrative, deftly weaving in the intricacies and politics of family life. The novel delves into the story of a fleeting yet profound friendship, exploring the hopes and aspirations of a Nigerian mother who is keen on contributing to the development of her country amidst a backdrop of lingering violence and instability. Through her nuanced portrayal of the characters' struggles, Atta illuminates the complex legacies of trauma and uncertainty that continue to shape postcolonial societies.

The novel offers a poignant commentary on the intricate and delicate social fabric of Nigeria through the lens of the fleeting relationship between Remi and Frances. The novel is an exploration of the socio-political landscape of Nigeria during the mid-1970s, highlighting the interplay between westernisation and indigenous traditions, corruption, and the ramifications of colonialism. The conversations between the two protagonists traverse a broad spectrum of subjects, from motherhood and loyalty to patriotism and the nature of Nigerian identity, revealing the stark realities of a society torn apart by political turmoil and social upheaval. The novel is a thought-provoking and illuminating portrayal of the insular world of bourgeois Nigeria and the challenges of human interaction in the face of fear and uncertainty.

Atta begins the novel by invoking the words of Fanon, “In fact, the bourgeois phase in the history of underdeveloped countries is a completely useless phase” (TBC v). This statement serves as an apt introduction to the storyline of the novel. The trauma caused by the military coup and the historical implications of colonialism has instilled a sense of distrust in the people towards anything that is unfamiliar to their culture or land.

In a social gathering, Remi’s husband voices his disapproval of Americans with a derogatory comment, insinuating that they believe Nigerians are easily fooled. He is suspicious of all Americans in Lagos, believing that they may be gathering intelligence for the CIA, irrespective of their affiliations with the diplomatic community. Following Frances’ visit to their home, Tunde expresses his concerns to Remi, suggesting that they have been naive to invite a stranger into their personal lives and that the consequences of their actions could be dire.

“The woman is opening a dossier on you as we speak,” he said.

“She’s not a spy, Lawal.”

“I just hope she hasn’t bugged our house. Did you leave her alone?”

“Only for a few minutes.”

“Wonderful. We’re under surveillance.”

I laughed. He was insular these days and, like Frances, I was not used to being insular. (TBC 51-52)

Tunde’s unfounded suspicion towards Frances highlights the fragility of the Nigerian people’s trust and belief in foreigners, particularly those from former colonising nations. His familiarity with the works of Graham Greene leads him to easily accept the possibility of foreign espionage without any concrete evidence, revealing how the

country's colonial history and political instability have engendered a deep-seated distrust of outsiders.

The Nigerians have long harboured suspicions of espionage. Even Remi's American friend, Naomi, a healthcare educator committed to eradicating polio, was accused of being a spy by a state official. The official believed that Naomi was collecting data for the American government while preparing surveys for the polio eradication program. However, Naomi dismissed the allegations, pondering: "Why on earth would I want to collect data for the American government?" (TBC 37).

The looming fear of postcolonialism is palpable in the characters' psyches, influencing their actions and causing them to confront an internal struggle regarding their own identity in their homeland. As Remi rests in her abode, reminiscing about her old neighbourhood, she recollects, "Barely two years ago, Rolari and her classmates on stage, singing 'Blowin' in the Wind,' oblivious to its significance in the wake of the Civil War. We were at home in that neighborhood. Here, we were surrounded by so many foreigners we felt like foreigners in our own land" (TBC 32). The quote highlights the theme of alienation and dislocation that permeates the novel. Remi remembers a time when she felt at home in her neighbourhood, surrounded by her fellow Nigerians. However, the present-day reality is quite different, with the influx of foreigners making her feel like an outsider in her own land. The reference to the Civil War adds another layer to the quote, as it suggests that the trauma of the war has left a lasting impact on the characters and their sense of identity. Overall, the novel deals with the complexity of postcolonial Nigeria and the challenges of finding a sense of belonging in a rapidly changing world.

The effects of the bourgeois phase in colonialism are complex and multifaceted, with both positive and negative outcomes for the colonised people. On the one hand, it has brought them technological advancements, better transportation facilities, and economic opportunities that have aided in their daily lives. However, it has also created class conflicts among the colonised people. Remi expresses her disappointment over her driver's behaviour in front of foreigners when Frances visits her house. She reflects on the situation:

Evidently, she was aware we didn't pretend we were in a classless society. It was astonishing how much we relied on help for security, transport, to keep our homes clean, take care of our children, prepare what we ate and drank, even a simple cup of coffee. Nonetheless, we complained that Lagos was a stressful city to live in, partly as a result of having to deal with them. (TBC 40)

This demonstrates the dependence of the upper class on the lower-class workers, while simultaneously highlighting the frustration and tension that exists between them.

Later in the book, the pervasive classism that has taken root in Nigerian society becomes apparent when Remi encounters her mother's friend, Aunt Eugenia, who views those from interior tribes as "commoners." Eugenia believes that these individuals are not prepared for independence and should have been "better educated" and "more detribalized." She laments, "those were the days when people were people. These days, anyone can be anyone" (TBC 75).

Remi's words eloquently illustrate the pervasive influence of Nigeria's affluent and politically powerful class, and the pervading atmosphere of colonialism that haunted the 1970s. His statement, "Nigerians were unapologetically insular. We allowed

foreigners into our lives only if they didn't add stress, and abandoned them the moment they did" (TBC 43), encapsulates how this elite mindset had a stronghold on their society, where outsiders were embraced only as long as they did not bring disruption or discomfort.

Remi's words demonstrate the lasting effects of colonialism in Nigeria, wherein the people continue to revere and emulate western culture, even going as far as throwing parties for everything. This reveals an underlying mentality that still sees the colonisers as superior; a mentality which has been ingrained in the Nigerian culture and traditions. It is a stark reminder of how colonialism continues to shape contemporary society, and how the consequences of it still reverberate today.

. . . . My mother had a group of friends. My father called them tea-and-biscuit Africans. He had no patience for them. They were very colonial. Or should I say, they imitated colonial mannerisms. They never quite got them right. I didn't mind them, though. In fact, they were a source of amusement for me. I was too young to understand what colonialism was all about, and since I had no idea why they behaved the way they did, I just thought they were. . . .eccentric? (TBC 64)

Remi's father, a devoted pro-African priest, is representative of the post-colonial land and its people: firmly believing in the positives that colonisation has brought while actively trying to reject further influences of colonials on their traditional culture. He was adamant in his insistence to the Nigerian people that Christianity and colonialism be kept separate, advocating for an independent faith that embraced African roots. This outlook was shared by many of his peers, especially those in positions of power, as they sought to protect their heritage from any external interference or cultural dilution. The proud

Nigerian man is driven by his profound love and admiration for his Yoruba culture, disregarding any classism or other factors that might typically divide him from the homeland he holds so dear. He ardently denounces the tendency of Nigerians to bow down and revere foreigners or foreign officials; his loyalty to his native land and disdain for colonial ideals are plain to see in these words. “He mentioned the Queen only once in his church that I remembered, when he urged his congregation not to confuse the loyal visit, as other churches did, with the second coming of Christ” (TBC 78).

Remi reveals to Frances the stark reality of Nigeria’s social structure, saying that it is “blatantly elitist”, with no other objective than to preserve what the colonizers had done. She further observes “It has no other purpose but to perpetuate what the colonials did. . . . we’re materialistic and capitalistic to the core.” According to Remi, communism could not gain a foothold in Nigeria since “it goes against the instincts of the Nigerian elite” (TBC 79), revealing the staunchly capitalistic and materialistic nature of Lagos society and its continuation of the colonial legacy.

In the wake of the military coup, Remi is deeply unsettled and troubled by the lingering effects of colonial mentality and elitist lifestyle that continue to shatter Nigerian society. As she observes the society around her, she feels a growing sense of alienation and disconnection, even among the civilian population for whom she along with others has voted. She laments, “The civilians were not much better and we voted for them. I feel alienated. The alienation troubles me. It worries me. I look around and people are celebrating one event after another as if nothing else matters” (TBC 89).

The phenomenon of transculturation, which refers to the merging and blending of different cultures, has been widely observed in post-colonial societies. It is evident in the

novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, one can see how the characters are gradually adopting Western culture and behaviours, which have a profound impact on their native customs and traditions. The influence of colonialism and Westernisation on Nigerian society is evident in the way the characters dress, speak, and behave, with some even changing their names to Western ones. This process of cultural exchange and adaptation is complex and can result in a loss of cultural identity and disconnection from one's roots. Through the characters' experiences, it becomes clear that transculturation can both enrich and erode a society's cultural heritage.

Remi responds to Frances' query about domestic issues arising from the clash between Western and traditional cultures, stating that cultures do evolve and change over time and that the Western culture they have adopted cannot be considered modern. She further adds "Our cultures evolve. They change, you know, and you can hardly call the Western cultures we've adopted modern. . . . Actually, civil marriage may be the most damaging of Western traditions we've adopted" (TBC 115). This emphasises the idea of transculturation and how the adoption of Western traditions can have a negative impact on the native culture and its traditions. The statement also hints at the notion that modernity is not always a positive force, and can lead to cultural disintegration and a loss of traditional values.

In his seminal work *Orientalism* published in 1978, Edward Said argues that the world is divided into two distinct binaries - East and West, Orient and Occident. This dichotomy has been central to understanding the postcolonial world and the various struggles that newly liberated nations have faced in their search for a distinct identity. The concept of identity has been one of the most controversial and vital issues in

postcolonial theory and research. The challenge of constructing a new identity for these nations arose with the end of colonialism and the need to create a sense of national unity in a society that was divided by cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. The task of forming a national identity was complicated by the arrival of settlers who brought with them their own cultural traditions and by the creation of nations with diverse cultural backgrounds (qtd. in Dizayi).

According to Pieterse (2002), the issue of identity has been widely attributed to the impact of colonialism, as many researchers and critics believe that the decentering of imperial identities during the decolonisation period led to a heightened concern about identity. With the formation of new nations and the dismantling of colonial power structures, people were faced with the challenge of defining their own identities in the absence of a dominant colonial identity. This resulted in a complex and multifaceted discourse on identity, which continues to be a major theme in postcolonial theory and research (qtd. in Dizayi).

The concept of identity, particularly in postcolonial discourse, is heavily debated with regard to the complex relationship between the self and the other. This relationship exists within a liminal space that is often characterised by instability, as individuals struggle to reconcile their multiple and often conflicting identities. Scholars have made significant strides in exploring the multifaceted nature of postcolonial identity, recognising its importance as a key component of the complex issues that arose in the aftermath of colonialism. By examining the complexities of identity and its role in shaping postcolonial societies, researchers aim to shed light on the nuances of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

Cathy Caruth's remarks in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* regarding the trauma of identity crisis are significant in this context. The adoption of Western customs in Nigeria has exacerbated the identity crisis among its people. This crisis is evident in the inability to connect with individual and collective traumatic experiences directly. Instead, these experiences are known through a disrupted referentiality that only replicates or performs the significance of the past. The struggle to reconcile the past with the present in the face of cultural hybridity has resulted in a fractured sense of self and community, which is a common postcolonial predicament (11).

Remi responds to Frances' observation that she could not find a sense of national identity in Nigeria. She questions the possibility of a country like Nigeria having a national identity and attributes this to its complex history, particularly its struggle against colonial powers prior to independence and its position between the East and the West. According to Remi, foreign intervention has had disastrous consequences for the African continent, regardless of how one looks at it. Remi responds, "Is it even possible for a country like Nigeria to have a national identity? . . . But look at our history, our recent history even. Before independence, we had the colonials to contend with. Now, we're between East and West. Foreign intervention has been disastrous for the African continent, however you look at it. You have to admit" (TBC 155, 156).

The narratives of Remi effectively depict the fragmentation of Nigerian identities and the resulting confusion and uncertainty.

Foreigners in general were quick to call Nigerians arrogant, but what I observed in Lagos was a shocking lack of confidence. We had a history that was largely

undocumented until it was interrupted after all, and no clue as to how to govern ourselves. Our society was backed by new currency; men had to learn to play by foreign rules; and women were in two minds about which traditions to follow.

(TBC 310)

The crisis of identity and the struggle to locate oneself in a certain space is not only limited to post-colonial nations or the past, but it also exists in contemporary times. Developed countries, such as the United States, have played a passive yet prominent role in influencing the rest of the world. Post-colonial nations like India have gained substantial knowledge about the United States and its culture, far more than the average American might know about India. The economic and technological advancements of the United States have given it a dominant position, allowing it to be at the forefront of global affairs. This is evident in social media, where American culture and news tend to dominate, and even the data from the United States is considered more valuable than that of other countries. This has resulted in a global power dynamic that perpetuates the idea that the United States is the standard-bearer, causing a crisis of identity and a struggle for others to establish their own unique identities.

According to Said, the Western colonial powers deliberately imposed their belief systems of knowledge and dominance on Eastern subjects. This imposition of power forced a new identity onto the people of the East, which was neither authentic nor malleable. Therefore, Said believes that true identity can only be formed in the face of colonial oppression by rejecting the imposed image and returning to the traditional realities of Eastern character (qtd. in Dizayi). However, one of the biggest obstacles to recognising one's sense of identity is the tendency to mimic Western or colonisers'

behaviour and style. This has particularly affected immigrants and exiles who have struggled with a sense of inferiority and homelessness, causing them to feel alienated and ambivalent in establishing a true identity. This struggle for authentic identity continues even in the contemporary world where postcolonial countries still face the remnants of colonial oppression and the influence of Western culture.

Despite the decline of physical colonisation in contemporary times, many intellectuals worldwide still find themselves succumbing to the idea of mental colonisation. This entails revering the white race, aspiring to be fluent in foreign languages like English, and imitating the customs and traditions of the colonisers while devaluing their native culture. This mindset creates a sense of inferiority in these individuals, causing them to overlook the richness of their own cultural heritage and instead emulate the colonisers. This attitude is dangerous because it perpetuates a belief in the superiority of the coloniser and devalues the authentic identity of those subjected to colonisation. As a result, it is essential to acknowledge the value of one's native culture and reject the imposition of foreign beliefs to maintain a genuine sense of identity.

An interesting perspective on the concept of mind colonisation can be found in a post shared on Tumblr by an account called "nympholouis." The post appears to express a thoughtful reflection on the topic, and it reflects that the exact problem lies in the mindset of the present generation imitating the westerners:

you know what i know too much about america. Social media is so american-centric i could probably tell you more about there than my home country. I would like to forget some information about america please. I would like for someone to

say “I am from Oregon” and for me to reply “haha is that some kind of herb?”.

Please erase america from my knowledge. Thank you. (nympholouis)

The notion of decolonisation is a crucial aspect that must be embraced immediately following colonisation. The establishment of a sense of unity and nativeness must be deeply embedded in every individual to comprehend and follow one’s own culture. This does not require a complete estrangement from globalisation. Instead, it necessitates the amalgamation of positive elements from Western exposure and an improved comprehension of one’s native culture and tradition to enable ideal human evolution to progress gradually. People should acknowledge and be thankful for the good differences that colonisation has brought and learn to differentiate between those and other demeaning influences that have stemmed from colonisation. It is essential to filter out the goodness in everything and embrace the roots to develop a robust sense of identity, taking pride in one’s culture. The feeling of the nativity is what makes an individual unique and allows them to break away from being mere reflections of others.

The Bad Immigrant offers a poignant depiction of the transcultural struggle of a Nigerian family attempting to create a new life in a foreign country, the United States. The novel illuminates the hopes and aspirations of immigrants, while also highlighting the myriad challenges they face as they try to adapt to an unfamiliar country. The central character, Lukmon, a former professor and failed writer, arrives in America with his nurse wife, Moriam, and their children to have a better life in 1999. As the family welcomes visiting relatives from the United States, Ismail captures the mindset of many Nigerian immigrants who migrate to the United States in looking for better opportunities and success. Ismail believed that the way to advance in the business world was to reject

his minority identity. His words perfectly encapsulate the quintessential American Dream, which Lukmon and his family are determined to achieve:

“In America,” he said, as he drove us to his house, “every opportunity is given to immigrants to make it, wherever they are from. Those who don’t take advantage of the opportunities are not meant to be here. They might as well get in their banana boats and paddle back home. They’re failed immigrants. Now, those who persist and succeed are true Americans. But! But! They were born in the wrong countries.” (TBI 3)

This, even more, frightens Lukmon regarding his decision of living in the United States. It strikes the fear of alienation throughout the nights in the US. He wonders, “The idea that we’d made the wrong decision by coming to America kept me up long after she fell asleep. Apart from our children adjusting to a new schooling system, I was worried about how they would adjust to the culture. . . .it was unsettling not knowing when and where I would find a job” (TBI 15).

The prospect of being alienated in a foreign land instills fear in Lukmon, causing him to reconsider his decision of moving to the United States. He is haunted by the idea that he and his family made the wrong choice, a thought that keeps him up at night even after his wife, Moriam, has fallen asleep. He wonders, “The idea that we’d made the wrong decision by coming to America kept me up long after she fell asleep. Apart from our children adjusting to a new schooling system, I was worried about how they would adjust to the culture. . . .it was unsettling not knowing when and where I would find a job” (TBI 15). Lukmon’s worries extend beyond his children’s adjustment to the new

schooling system, as he is also concerned about their cultural adaptation. The uncertainty of securing a job adds to his unease, leaving him in a state of restlessness.

Despite the acknowledgement of the United States' history of racism and slavery, discrimination is still present in modern times, even though it is often viewed as a 'progressive country.' The nation has made strides to address issues of inequality and prejudice, but these biases still persist in the minds of some individuals. It is a reminder that progress towards a truly equal society is an ongoing struggle. The struggle of making a living in a foreign land often takes a toll on immigrants, pushing them to the brink of their humanity. Bisi, who works alongside Moriam, sheds light on the issue of murders that occur in minority communities, specifically Nigerian immigrants in America. These crimes, she explains, are often committed by individuals who are employed in healthcare - a particularly disturbing fact. For instance, one man crushed his wife's hand in a garbage disposal unit, despite his wife being a nurse. Another man, who happened to be a pharmacist, beat his wife to death with a baseball bat. And yet another man shot his wife, who was a doctor, to death. These brutal crimes are a sobering reminder of the immense pressure and stress that immigrants face when trying to make a living in a foreign land.

Lukmon is gradually coming to grips with the idiosyncrasies of racism that exist in America, and his understanding of the subject is based on the information he has gathered by keeping abreast of the public discourse.

One. Racism went in one direction only, white to black, which meant I could say anything I wanted about white people and it wouldn't count as racism.

Two. It was very American, quintessentially so, to deny an accusation of racism. If Jill [Lukmon's employer] were English, she would simply blink at her accuser and say, "Don't be silly."

Three. By definition, other minorities could be racist, but their racism was downgraded to prejudice because they had no power. (TBI 113)

The issue of the misconstrued identity of Black people in a foreign land is a persistent problem that continues to plague them. Rather than recognising the diverse range of countries and ethnicities that they belong to, they are often lumped together as simply "Africans." This is compounded by the fact that even in educated circles in the United States, there is a prevalent prejudice that portrays Africans as impoverished and living in huts, with little to no proficiency in English. Bashira's classmates believe that Africans have body odour because of the food they eat. This stereotype is indicative of the lack of interest that white people have in educating themselves about other cultures and people, which reflects their attitude of superiority over others. It is a disconcerting display of negligence towards other people, and an unfortunate manifestation of the deep-seated racial prejudices that continue to persist in society.

Not only do Nigerians face the daunting challenge of racism in their adopted country, but they also confront a significant amount of discrimination and prejudice within their own community. Sadly, the immigrants consistently malign the reputation of their fellow Nigerians in the foreign land and attempt to degrade those related to them by race. Instead of supporting each other in unfamiliar territory, they allow their prejudices to dictate their behaviour, failing to coexist peacefully in their new home. A particularly

obstinate personality who perpetually denigrates his own race is Ismail. He unabashedly asserts that Black people are indolent and worthless, bluntly declaring:

“Black people are lazy by nature,” he said. “It’s in their DNA. it’s time we just admitted it and stopped being politically correct about it. If I had a business, I wouldn’t employ a black person to work for me. I would find an Asian to fill my minority quota. Watch the Asians. Study their ways. Hard work and economic power is what gets them ahead. Blacks? They’ll end up ruining your business.”

(TBI 39)

Lukmon keenly observes the behaviour of minorities towards each other and notices a sense of barely-there tolerance among them. While there might be some animosity between them, it pales in comparison to the animosity they all share towards white people. This observation strikes a chord with Lukmon, prompting him to pity white people momentarily.

As immigrants adapt to the culture and way of life in a foreign land, they often find themselves emulating the people around them. In their desire to fit in and be accepted, they begin to adopt the mannerisms and behaviours of those they interact with. However, this process of assimilation can sometimes lead to an identity crisis, as they may feel disconnected from their roots and culture. Lukmon experiences this firsthand as he observes his children, Bashira and Taslim, imitating their classmates and being influenced by the media they consume. He specifically mentions how commercials have a negative impact on their behaviour. He narrates, “Now that I was at home, I realized how much they imitated their classmates, but the programs they watched were changing their mannerisms as well. Commercials were the worst influence” (TBI 139). This

highlights how the pressure to assimilate and conform can sometimes lead to a loss of one's cultural identity.

The pressure to comply with the Western standards of beauty takes a significant toll on the mental health of immigrant women, especially teenage girls. This is because the beauty standards in Western countries are often unrealistic and unattainable for many women. As Nia explains to Moriam, teenage girls like Bashira may struggle with body image issues as they try to fit in with their white classmates who may conform to these standards more easily. Nia's suggestion that Bashira should receive counselling reflects the seriousness of the problem, and how it can lead to eating disorders or other mental health issues. Furthermore, the pressure to conform to these standards can also result in a loss of cultural identity and disconnection from one's heritage. Immigrants may feel that they have to give up their own cultural practices and values in order to fit in with the dominant culture. This can be especially challenging for women who are expected to uphold traditional cultural practices and values, while also conforming to Western beauty standards. She says:

“Listen, getting counseling is nothing to be ashamed of. The teenage years can be hard on a girl. When I was about Bashira's age, my sister and I used to take part in beauty pageants and she would always win. She was naturally skinny. I didn't starve myself, throw up, or any of that, but I would exercise my weight off. You know what I mean? I was good at track. I trained like mad and won medals. Winning sports medals was my thing. . . . Teenage girls here have major image issues. It's all that pressure to conform to the blond and blue-eyed ideal—which, by the way, even white girls can't live up to.” (TBI 143-144)

Overall, Nia's advice to Moriam highlights the trauma of the psyche when trying to live their entire lives assimilating to Western culture can have on the mental health of immigrant women. This pressure to conform can lead to serious mental health issues and a loss of cultural identity. The longing for acceptance and recognition by the white community drove the immigrants to extreme lengths, completely disregarding the existence of their own community. The irony lies in the fact that despite their efforts to assimilate into the white community, they were still subjected to racial discrimination and prejudice. This highlights the harsh reality of racism in America and the impact it has on immigrants trying to navigate their way through an unfamiliar environment. It is important for individuals and communities to address these challenges in a supportive and compassionate way.

Lukmon fears losing his cultural identity to American life that he only pursued for economic betterment. He dreads the thought of his children and wife fully assimilating into American culture, leaving him feeling torn between his desire to retain his roots and native culture and his desire to fit in with his family. His apprehensions are eventually realised when he realises that his children and wife have adapted to American life and customs entirely, leaving him to feel alienated from them. Lukmon's predicament is a common struggle for many immigrants, who feel the pressure to assimilate while simultaneously holding onto their cultural heritage. It is a complex and emotionally taxing process that requires a delicate balance of adapting and retaining one's cultural identity.

Colonisation is a process that has brought in a lot of changes and transformations to the colonised people, both positive and negative. While the negative consequences of

colonisation, such as identity crisis, abandoning the nativity, and constantly living up to Western standards, are widely discussed and documented, there are also some positive outcomes of colonisation that are often overlooked.

One of the most significant positive impacts of colonisation is education. European colonial powers introduced formal education to their colonies, which created a new class of educated elites in the colonised societies. This education exposed the colonised people to a vast array of knowledge and ideas beyond their local traditions, customs, and beliefs. This, in turn, allowed them to engage with the rest of the world and gain new perspectives, broadening their understanding and thinking.

Education also empowered the colonised people to question and challenge the colonial authorities and their oppressive policies. The educated elites were instrumental in leading nationalist movements that eventually led to the independence of many former colonies. The benefits of education can still be seen in postcolonial societies today, as the most successful countries in Africa and Asia have well-educated populations that can compete in the global economy.

Women have sought empowerment through the use of effective indigenous coping mechanisms and accumulated knowledge. The European education they have received has also contributed to their exposure and knowledge of the rest of the world, providing them with a better standard of living. As a result, they have developed a composite consciousness, combining their traditional values and the more versatile approaches they have learned. This allows them to create a supportive and empowering environment for women.

In *Swallow*, Tolani's emancipatory approach is informed by this composite consciousness, enables her to control her life and help other women. She embraces both Nigerian traditions and European education, creating new empowering possibilities for herself. This approach is a reflection of the resilience and adaptability of Nigerian women, who have had to navigate a complex and changing world while maintaining their cultural identity. Through their experiences, they have developed a unique perspective that allows them to overcome challenges and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The womanist movements are multifaceted as they reflect the diverse linguistic, social, economic, and political contexts of gendered individuals who exist within national societies. Women use various approaches to assert their agency and address different forms of oppression that may not be easily recognisable by outsiders. It is crucial to acknowledge the multiple lived experiences of women because culture-specificity is significant in nation-states that were artificially created during colonial European rule. The nation-state remains the first point of reference for the study of women's lives, as it is the primary political and geographical container that frames their existence.

Women's national identity is crucial, and it is through this lens that they build solidarity across the nation and the world. Despite the nation-state's artificiality at its inception, women frame their lives as citizens of a nation and reference their culture within that nation. Women's culture-specific consciousness is central to their identity and shapes their experiences, perspectives, and interactions with the world. Therefore, acknowledging and understanding women's culture-specific consciousness and lived experiences within the nation-state is essential in building solidarity among feminist movements and creating effective strategies for empowerment and change.

According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty's perspective presented in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, women from diverse backgrounds, including Black, white, and women of third-world, have varied past histories shaped by the inheritance of post-fifteenth-century Euro-American hegemony. These histories include enforced migration, plantation, slavery, and indentured labour, imperial conquest, genocide, and colonialism, which have impacted each group differently (10). These experiences have created a diverse range of characters and communities that are represented in post-colonial women's literature, and this literature provides a platform for using the concept of composite consciousness as a theoretical tool to study literature worldwide. The concept of composite consciousness can help to identify points of intersection and convergence, as well as traditionally oppositional standpoints, which can lead to solidarity among women from different cultures and backgrounds.

Using composite consciousness as a theoretical tool provides an opportunity to examine the complexities and nuances of the experiences of women living in post-colonial societies. It recognises the diversity of women's lived experiences and allows for an intersectional approach that acknowledges the ways in which factors like gender, race, class, and others intersect and influence women's lives. By using this approach, one can move beyond essentialist notions of femininity and understand the unique challenges faced by women from different cultures and backgrounds. Moreover, composite consciousness enables women to find common ground and solidarity, even when their experiences may seem vastly different. It opens up new avenues for exploring the possibilities of feminist movements that are rooted in the specificities of culture-specific

gendered beings and that respond to the diverse challenges that women face across the world.

Nigerians have already endured the weight of post-colonial trauma, but in addition to this, Nigerian women are also forced to contend with oppressive societal norms that restrict them from living their lives to the fullest. These women are expected to adhere to rigid gender roles and submit to patriarchal expectations. This gender-based subjugation perpetuates a system of inequality that hinders the advancement and empowerment of women, depriving them of the opportunity to reach their full potential.