

# ETHICS OF POST-COLONIALISM AND ENDEAVOUR OF WOMEN IN ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS* AND *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

**J. Shamem Banu<sup>1</sup> & Dr. SP. M. Kanimozhi<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>PhD Research Scholar, Department of English & Foreign Languages,  
Alagappa University, Karaikudi. ([shamemjain@gmail.com](mailto:shamemjain@gmail.com))

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of English & Foreign Languages,  
Alagappa University, Karaikudi. ([kanimozhisathya@gmail.com](mailto:kanimozhisathya@gmail.com))

## **Abstract:**

*This paper examines the endeavour of women to overcome marginalization in a patriarchal society. The majority of women are subordinated to men, but Adichie says "Some people will say a woman is subordinate to men because it's our culture. But culture is constantly changing". Love, war, conflict, and inequality between men and women are the dominant themes in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Adichie's works deal with the issue of feminism and how characters are humiliated which leads them to gain their freedom. She optimistically projects womanhood, what they undergo in life, and their love for the family even they were ill-treated by their husbands. Her novels have received a wide range of criticism which is significant to Nigerian novels. She describes women's struggles to free themselves from male domination and their determination to face violence, sexual assault, and extreme starvation. The main aim of this article is to show light on the withered status of women and how it reaches to bloomed status through Adichie's writing.*

**Key Words:** Patriarchy, Humiliation, Subordination, Feminism, Stiwanism, Biafran war.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a well-known Nigerian female writer. She published her debut novel, *Purple Hibiscus* in October 2003. She received the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book award in 2005. Her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* published in 2006. It was set at the time of the Biafran war like *Purple Hibiscus*; it was also released in Nigeria. It became an international bestseller and was awarded the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction in 2007. It also won the "Best of the Best" Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction award.

In *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, women struggle to achieve their desired freedom from the socio-political, economic disempowerment of women and male oppression. In Nigeria, women were under the domination of men. Adichie's novel put an end to deep-rooted oppression and senseless subjugation of women. Feminism also helps women to uplift themselves from their subordination and to create identities for themselves. When the education system was established in Africa, boys were benefited more than the girls.

Patriarchy plays a major role in Africa. Particularly in this country, young girls were not allowed to study, they stayed at home to practice and to learn perfect domestic skills to mold themselves as appropriate housewives. Most of the African novels portray women characters as sex objects and inferior beings.

The National Policy on Education says that access to education is a right for all Nigerian children regardless of gender, religion, and disability. Kate Millet is a radical figure in the second war of feminism states that “Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male, it treats the female as inferior to male and this power is exerted directly or indirectly in civil and domestic life to constrain women.” Women should come out of male domination and suppression. So Adichie concentrates on feminism. She talks about two kinds of feminism in her novels, one is African Feminism which is being liberal and tolerates men's torture and abuse. Another one is Radical feminism, which uses violence to gain their freedom.

African Feminism addresses cultural issues faced by all women of all cultures on the African continent. Stiwanism is one of the main types of African feminism, which is deeply rooted in the lives of African women. Molar Ogundipe, a Nigerian poet coined the term “Stiwanism” (Social Transformation in Africa including Women) in her book “Recreating Ourselves”. It also focuses on the structures that oppress women as a result of colonialism. She says that “African women must theorize their own feminism. There can be no liberation of African society without the liberation of African women.”

Stiwanism is a unique way to study African feminism, which relates to history, gender, politics, race, economics, and socio-dynamics. In her essay, she writes: “STIWA is about the inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation of Africa. Be a Stiwanist.” The marital incompatibility and extreme harsh patriarchal laws which left African women devastating and ruin their life. So Adichie’s novel acts as a healing process for the Nigerian women to overcome traumatic experiences in their marriages.

Nigeria struggled under the British Government. It has a history of English colonialism and oppression. It was a colony of the British for nearly a hundred and fifty years. Because of British control, it became a single nation and it won its independence in the year 1960. Eugene (Papa) is the head of the family in *The Purple Hibiscus*. He is known as “colonial product”, and brought up in the colonial mindset. Even though Papa is a Nigerian, he was impressed by Western and modern life. He doesn’t want to show his identity in front of Britishers. Eugene is a static character. He is certainly flawed to a dangerous extent. Adichie made her novel as a political one by expressing the legacy of colonialism, dictatorship, and corruption.

The most apparent aspect of post-colonialism in the novel is the political instability of Adichie’s Nigeria, mixed with coups and civil disorder. Adichie makes it clear that assimilation is the evil of post-colonial attitudes because it damages the person. Nigeria is a popular country in West Africa. It was colonised by the British. *Purple Hibiscus* takes place in Enugu, a city of political unrest in postcolonial Nigeria. In her novel, she focused on the scramble of families in the postcolonial setup. As a postcolonial text, it exhibits the violence of Christian religion, colonial forces, and patriarchal domination. This novel mainly exemplifies colonial Christianity as well as Igbo patriarchy and also the representation of the two as intertwined.

The first three chapters of this novel bear the subtitles "Palm Sunday", "Before Palm Sunday" and "After Palm Sunday" indicates the organizing power of the religion, highlight the importance of Roman Catholic in Kambili's family. The first sentence emphasizes Kambili's Papa Eugene's emotional and authoritative power as a Christian.

"Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Iaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere. We had just returned from church." (1)

He is powerful, controller of his home, exemplary in his worship. He dislikes Igbo language and culture but likes only the white people and the English language. He hates traditional African tribal religion. Kambili is the narrator of this novel and the first daughter of Papa. Throughout her story, she repeats the phrase "my words would not come", she fears for her father punishments. She seldom speaks. She only whispers. She does not laugh or smile. Her tongue is bound by the rule of her father, whose power mixes pain and love. Eugene's violence toward his wife and children has clearly shown his own subjugation to the colonial mission.

"Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict. He was gracious, in the eager-to-please way that he always assumed with the religious, especially with the white religious."(46)

In contrast to Kambili's dominating father, her aunt Ifeoma represents an alternative mode of Christianity. Ifeoma is Eugene's sister, a widowed university professor. She has three children and raises them in a small house with a meagre amount of salary. Her parenting style is the opposite of Eugene. Her house is full of laughter and chatter; her children feel free to speak their minds and even discuss Christianity's ties to imperialism. Ifeoma "de-colonizes the home, the African body, mind, and soul" (114). Ifeoma's family practices an Igbo Catholicism full of critical thinking, humor, and even joy. Ifeoma is fully-independent when compared to Kambili. Even though Nigeria gained its independence from British colonialism in 1960, Kambili's family was not able to gain their liberty and freedom from their head of the family, Eugene.

Even after independence, Nigeria faced a brutal civil war seven years later which is described in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This novel deals with the events of the Nigerian Civil war also called the Biafran war. Even though it gained independence from the British Empire, but its existence as a country, it was an arbitrary structure set up by Britain and contained many different cultural groups. And then massacre began between the Igbo people in 1966, which lead to the creation of the Biafra war. This war lasted from 1967 to 1970, for three years. At the end of this war, more than a million civilians died due to famine and fighting during the war.

*Half of a Yellow Sun* was published in 2006. This novel was set in Nigeria. The largest parts of this country were the Igbo in the Southeast, the Yoruba in the Southwest and the Hausa in North. Adichie gives us the viewpoint of Nigeria from the white Englishman Richard, a colonizer. Richard's perspective is one of the three used to recount to the tale of the novel. In spite of the fact that the story is described as an outsider looking in, the

storyteller on the other hand recognizes the perspective with that of three characters: the school speaker Olanna, the houseboy Ugwu and the white British exile Richard. Richard is a British essayist who has come to Nigeria to expound on Igbo workmanship and winds up engaged with the Nigerian-Biafran strife. Richard feels like a genuine Biafran, however at last, he perceives that as a white man he will consistently be a pariah to the Igbo's torment. Throughout the novel, the characters struggle with navigating identity in the post-colonial world.

During the civil war, women suffered under different forms of violence such as military raids and rape. In literature, Rape is to force someone to have sex when they are unwilling, using violence or threatening behaviour. The term rape originates from the Latin rapere, "to snatch, to grab, to carry off." Rape symbolizes Nigerian and Gowon's superiority over ojukwu and his soldiers. This can be seen in Anulikpa's rape. "They forced themselves on her. Five of them... They nearly beat her to death." (Adichie, 2006:421). They use rape to oppress any woman they come across. It is an expression of colonial oppression against women and the African nation. Kainene became infuriated and shouts at the Nigerian superiors who raped women. So Adichie emphasizes sexual freedom for her female characters in Nigeria.

England started all the trouble by colonizing and oppressing Nigeria, stirring up ethnic tensions, and supplying arms to Nigeria during the war; Nigeria used starvation and genocide as weapons of war, and the Biafran soldiers committed their atrocities against the Nigerians and even their people. The strength of the novel is then to show human countenances of various parts of this contention, and to depict individual disasters and triumphs that enliven occasions most Westerners aren't even mindful of. The novel utilizes the monetary, ethnic, social and strict strains among the different people groups of Nigeria and draws out the passionate and mental results of the contention to build a multidimensional form of this war.

*Purple Hibiscus* as a post-colonial text has projected the diminishing of African Culture as a result of the introduction of the foreign culture. The novel revolves in an investigate of the Christian religion, adjusting frontier whiteness, traditionalist Catholicism, and patriarchy of the father, and uncovering their ruinous force in the mind (and body) of the novel's young storyteller Kambili just as her sibling, Iaja and mother, Beatrice. Adichie over and over connections experiencing quiets, and she interfaces healing both to a risky penance as-reclamation and a coming-into-voice predicated on an engaging, contextualized enchanted political Catholicism.

While for many contemporary Western readers the novel may present enough evidence of the suffering caused by the colonially-inherited Roman Catholicism in Kambili's family for us to desire disapproval of that faith, the marked development in her confidence, and her eventual final voicing of "No" to her father in a scene of horrific abuse, develops not as Kambili rejects Christianity altogether, but as she affirms another version of Christianity, one that values the body and Igbo language and culture. Ultimately, both the care and examples of Aunty Ifeoma and Father Amadi, and her mystical vision of the Virgin Mary, empowers Kambili for the difficult days that end the novel, granting her hope on its final

page. It is a critically re-appropriated Igbo-Catholicism, one that values that body, the feminine, the African, that empowers Kambili to resist her father's oppression and the suffering it causes. She narrates the story in the first person, so as a reader we can directly understand what it is in the narrator's mind. Through the third part of the novel "The Pieces of Gods after Palm Sunday," Kambili expresses the events which lead his father's death. There is an oppressive silence in the house. Kambili foreshadows his death.

"Everything came tumbling down after Palm Sunday. Howling winds came with an angry rain, uprooting frangipani trees in the front yard. They lay on the lawn, their pink and white flowers grazing the grass, their roots waving lumpy soil in the air. The satellite dish on top of the garage came crashing down, and lounged on the driveway like a visiting alien spaceship. The door of my wardrobe dislodged completely. Sisi broke a full set of Mama's china. Even the silence that descended on the house was sudden, as though the old silence had broken and left us with sharp pieces." (257)

Beatrice's choice finally to protect her children and herself: she poisons his British tea with tribal medicine. *Purple Hibiscus* highlights not only the hopes but also the difficulties of faith in a postcolonial location. Kambili has a spiritual awakening. It begins this way:

"We stood underneath a huge flame-of-the-forest tree. It was in bloom, its flowers fanning out on wide branches and the ground underneath covered with petals the color of fire. When the young girl was led out, the flame-of-forest swayed and flowers rained down." (274)

Adichie's novel deviates significantly, high hopes for taking education similarly, Ugwu eager to learn the English language very confidently. Notwithstanding, implications for there is not all that much, the war is an indication of this. In the hour of war, good and bad times prepared in the life of Ugwu. He joins refugee camp to protect the Nigerian but takes a different turn and rape. Then there was no destruction of the character but in war conflict and people were dying. There was a vanishing of Kainene. The troopers have passed away in the war. The objective of the story Kainene is lost when she went on of assault. When the Biafran war erupts; the Igbo loses thousands of lives and their property and bank accounts are confiscated or destroyed. The tale effectively makes a war outline with an envisioning anecdotal history of loathsomeness, dread and disappointment.

The Ozobias, for example, lose their family home in the dominantly Yoruba capital city of Lagos and after the fall of Port Harcourt, Kainene's house. During the war, the Igbo are beaten back to interior Igbo towns like Abba, Odenigbo's hometown, where he and Olanna seek refuge from advancing government force (Mabura 207). The tale effectively makes a war outline with an envisioning fictional history of horror, dread and disappointment. Her bank account in Logos was gone... since she had lost her savings, then she could not possibly lose her sister,... (Adichie 432). Olanna has lost her savings bank account.

Here, her frustration portrayed easily just as certainty and high trusts in misfortune Kainene. I do have confidence in it. I have confidence in all things. I have faith in anything that will bring my sister home," she stood up and went to the window. „Uwam, uwaozo. At the point when I return my next life, Kainene will be my sister" (Adichie 433). This last

articulation by Olanna and toward the finish of the novel Kainene never returns. It demonstrated that the expectations - disappointment. The tale lamentably finishes with the loss of Kainene. Adichie attempts at the causes - effects of the war conflict, but also acknowledge the hope for the future and the immediate need for a peaceful environment. Olanna, Kainene and Mrs. Muokelu are the active participants and the main reason behind the victory of the Biafran war. So Adichie emphasizes the struggle of women and their achievement in the Biafran war.

### **References**

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Purple Hibiscus*. New York: Anchor, 2003. Print.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 2006. Print.

Dube, Musa W. "Postcoloniality, Feminist Spaces, and Religion: Post-colonialism, Feminism, and Religious Discourse." Eds. Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui Lan. New York: Routledge, 2002. 100-120. Print.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Post-Colonialism*. United Kingdom: Manchester, 2000. Print.

Young, Robert. *Post-colonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. Print.