

Postcolonial Feminist Analysis of Adichie's Selected Texts

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I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, **“Postcolonial Feminist Analysis of Adichie’s Selected Texts”** is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Discipline of English at the Sheno Goembab School of Languages and Literature, Goa University under the Supervision of Ms. Runa Menezes and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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This is to certify that the dissertation report “**Postcolonial Feminist Analysis of Adichie’s Selected Texts**” is a bonafide work carried out by Ms Aliya Mamlekar Shaikh under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MA English in the Discipline of English at the ShenoI Goembab School of Languages and Literatures, Goa University.

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Abstract

This dissertation 'Postcolonial Analysis of Adichie's Selected Texts' utilizes a postcolonial feminist framework to analyse Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The analysis explores how Adichie's writing reflects the experiences of women navigating the complexities of postcolonial Nigerian society. Through a close reading of the texts, the study examines how gender, race, class, and colonialism intersect within her narratives. Also by scrutinizing characters, plotlines, and narrative techniques, the dissertation reveals how Adichie challenges and subverts dominant discourses that perpetuate colonial hierarchies and patriarchal norms. This analysis sheds light on the concept of "double oppression" faced by women, highlighting their marginalization within a postcolonial context. Furthermore, Adichie's prominence as a Nigerian author empowers the representation of women's experiences and offers a powerful voice for change.

Keywords: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Postcolonial Feminism, Gender, Race, Colonialism, Nigeria, Feminism, Marginalisation, Patriarchy, Hybridity

Chapter 1: Postcolonial Feminist Theory and Adichie

1.1 Introduction

Postcolonial feminism is the study of the intersection between postcolonialism and feminism in literature. Postcolonial feminism is a vibrant and evolving field that challenges the limitations of both traditional feminism and postcolonial theory. Unlike established theories that often present a one-size-fits-all approach, postcolonial feminism recognizes the complexities of oppression. It argues that women from formerly colonized nations face a unique set of challenges due to the intertwined legacies of colonialism and patriarchy. It's more like a bridge connecting the well-developed ideas of postcolonialism and feminism. To truly grasp its concepts, you need to have a solid understanding of both postcolonialism, which analyses the lasting effects of colonialism on societies and cultures, and feminism, which examines gender inequalities and fights for women's rights.

1.1.1 Postcolonial Feminist Theory

The term "postcolonial" carries more than a simple meaning of "after colonialism." It's a vast field of study that dissects the lingering effects of European colonialism on the world. Though colonialism itself is a thing of the past, referring to the domination and exploitation of territories and people, its legacy continues to shape the world today. Postcolonialism is the study of this lasting impact, examining how colonialism affected colonized nations geographically, culturally, and socially. Postcolonialism goes beyond the simple idea of a time period following colonialism. It's an ongoing discourse, a way of examining the world, developed by those who were formerly colonized. It explores the dismantling of empires and the fight for independence, along with the ongoing struggles to overcome the deeply embedded inequalities left behind. (Shenmugasundaram 2017)

Throughout history, empires have expanded by conquering territories and establishing their populations in the conquered lands. European colonialism, for instance, involved armed displacement and political dominance over the Americas, Australia, and parts of Africa and Asia. Postcolonial theory examines the lasting effects of colonialism. It acknowledges the eventual demise of formal colonial rule, but argues that new forms of dominance and subordination, such as global economic empires, may emerge. Emerging in the latter half of the 20th century, postcolonialism is a multifaceted theoretical and philosophical framework that encompasses various disciplines like political science, anthropology, history, literature, and cultural studies. It explores the long-term social, cultural, political, and economic impacts of colonialism on colonized societies, and how these historical dynamics continue to shape the contemporary world. The ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples around the globe can also be understood within the framework of postcolonialism.

Feminism, at its core, is a collection of movements and ideologies that challenge the social, political, and economic inequalities faced by women. This encompasses legal equality (voting rights, property ownership) as well as dismantling social norms that confine women to specific roles (domestic sphere vs. public sphere). Feminist theory offers a critical lens to examine gendered power dynamics across various disciplines, aiming to empower women and promote social transformation (Hooks 2000). Importantly, feminism is not monolithic, with various branches exploring the complexities of gender through lenses of race, class, and sexuality.

Postcolonial feminists critique the limitations of Western feminism, particularly its focus on a universal female experience and the assumption of Western women's struggles as the norm. They argue that this overlooks the complexities of colonialism's legacy and its unique impact on women in formerly colonized nations. Unlike the "sameness and solidarity"

emphasized by Western feminism, postcolonial feminists highlight the cultural, social, and economic differences that shape a woman's experience. They draw parallels between colonialism's subjugation of entire populations and the historical subjugation of women. This broader lens allows them to explore issues like migration, slavery, and resistance through a gendered lens, revealing the multifaceted nature of women's struggles. By rejecting the idea of a universal female experience, postcolonial feminism opens doors to a richer understanding of women's lives globally. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of gender with other aspects of identity, such as race and class, and the crucial differences between the struggles of women in Western and non-Western societies. Postcolonial feminism further helps to shed light on the complex experiences that women face in postcolonial societies as they strive for empowerment, identity, and equality.

Literatures from Britain's former colonies in the Caribbean, Africa, and India is known as post-colonial literature. English-language post-colonial writers frequently address topics including childhood, national identity, emigration, national struggle for independence, and patriotism. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a notable modern Nigerian author, stands out as a relevant voice in this discourse. Her narratives intricately explore the multifaceted dimensions of postcolonial feminism. Adichie's works resonate with themes like colonial legacies, gender dynamics, and evolving roles of women in the African society. Her works transcend geographical boundaries, resonating with readers worldwide. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a prominent voice in contemporary literature, has garnered acclaim for her captivating narratives that delve into the complexities of Nigerian identity, particularly in the wake of colonialism. This paper explores the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a prominent Nigerian author, through a postcolonial feminist lens, aiming to illuminate the enduring legacies of colonialism on women's experiences and their struggles for self-definition.

1.1.2 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Life and Literature

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in Enugu, Nigeria in 1977. The Nigerian Civil War significantly impacted Adichie's family before she was born. She comes from a family of Igbo descent and grew up on the campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where her father was a professor and her mother was the first female Registrar (About - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie 2022). Adichie actually began writing after moving to America, but reading Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a young child was a driving force for her career as a writer. Achebe's novel had an evident impact on her since she has seen her own life in almost all the pages since she started reading the novel. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (Adichie 2003), won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Adichie 2006), won the Orange Prize. Her 2013 novel *Americanah* earned the US National Book Critics Circle Award and was designated one of The New York Times Top Ten Best Books of 2013.

Adichie have also given two historic TED talks: The "Danger of a Single Story" in 2009 and We Should All Be Feminists at TEDx Euston in 2012. The latter sparked a worldwide conversation on feminism and was turned into a book in 2014. "We Should All Be Feminists", this expression highlights the notion that everyone in society gains when gender equality is promoted and women's rights and opportunities are defended. While it doesn't advocate for a uniform definition of what it means to be a feminist, it does promote a common goal of eliminating discrimination based on gender and creating a more equal society. Gender equality is not just a women's issue; it is a societal issue that needs the support and involvement of all people, regardless of gender. Adichie has contributed equally to postcolonial studies and feminism. She is one of the few postcolonial writers who come about and spoken up on the issues of postcolonial feminism.

1.1.3 Highlighting Concepts Supporting Postcolonial Feminism

For a long time, feminism has fought for equal rights, but it often overlooked the specific issues faced by women in countries that were once colonies. Postcolonial feminism addresses this gap by combining feminist ideas with the ongoing effects of colonialism. This analysis will explore key concepts that explain the unique difficulties women face when living in a world shaped by both male dominance and the lasting impacts of colonial rule. This will explore some key concepts that support postcolonial feminist theory. These concepts will then be applied to analyse the texts written by Adichie.

Feminist theory has employed the concept of "sisterhood" to represent solidarity and support among women in the pursuit of gender equality. This concept emphasizes the shared experience of patriarchy that unites women despite their differences. It suggests a common ground where all women face some form of gender-based oppression, leading them to collaborate and support each other in achieving equal rights and opportunities. However, the concept of universal sisterhood has been critiqued for its limitations. Critics who study Intersectionality argue that it oversimplifies the experiences of women by neglecting the significant impact of factors like race, class, sexuality, and religion. For instance, the struggles for equality faced by a white, middle-class woman may not resonate with those of a working-class woman of colour, who is also colonized and encounters additional forms of oppression. Additionally, the concept doesn't adequately address power imbalances within the category of "women" itself. Women can perpetuate oppression against other women based on factors such as class privilege internalized prejudices, colonial history.

Intersectionality plays a crucial role in postcolonial feminism by providing a framework for understanding the complex and interwoven nature of women's experiences in the postcolonial world. The concept of Intersectionality was developed by Black feminist scholar

Kimberlé Crenshaw, it argues that social identities, such as race, class, and gender, are not experienced in isolation. It emphasizes on how these identities intersect, creating unique experiences of oppression and privilege for individuals. Crenshaw said “Intersectionality was a prism to bring to light dynamics within discrimination law that weren’t being appreciated by the courts” (Coaston 2019). In postcolonial Nigeria, intersectionality illuminates the complex web of oppression faced by women. Colonial rule didn't exist in a vacuum; it intertwined with existing patriarchal structures and class hierarchies. This created a unique situation where women were disadvantaged not just by their gender, but also by their race and socioeconomic status.

In the context of postcolonial feminism, hybridity becomes a tool to understand the identities of women caught between colonial and indigenous cultures. Borrowed from biology, hybridity refers to the mixing of different species or varieties to create something new. In postcolonial theory, Homi K. Bhabha uses it to describe how colonized people develop identities that blend elements of both their own culture and the colonizer's. Homi K. Bhabha argues that cultural identities are never pure but instead formed in a "Third Space" where colonized and colonizer cultures mix. This "in-between" space creates ambivalence and challenges the idea of fixed cultural categories. Hybridity, for Bhabha, is not just cultural exchange but a space of potential empowerment that allows cultural difference to thrive (Mambrol 2020).

1.1.4 Importance and Reason of the Proposed Research

This research paper is a significant component in the feminist and postcolonial fields of study. It seeks to examine how Nigerian politics, culture and gender relate to intersectionality. Adichie is a well-known Nigerian author best known for her feminist essays, but in the contemporary times her novels are not included in most of the western canon of literature. This research

endeavour anticipates her contributions to her contributions not only to feminist discourse but also to her homeland's cultural narrative. The potential impact is far-reaching. It could enrich literary appreciation, influence educational curriculums, and strengthen the field of postcolonial feminism. The results of this study have the potential to improve literature, educational curriculum, and postcolonial feminism as an area of study. This can also increase public understanding of women's hardships and resilience in postcolonial settings.

1.1.5 Scope and Limitations

This research focuses on a postcolonial feminist analysis of two of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Their focus on Nigeria positions them perfectly to explore themes of female agency, resistance, and empowerment within a postcolonial framework. The research will centre on Adichie's portrayal of female agency, resistance strategies, and the path to empowerment for these characters. Postcolonial feminist theory will be the primary lens through which the novels are examined. While *Americanah* is another significant work by Adichie, time constraints necessitate excluding it from this study. The research will explore Adichie's writing within the framework of Nigerian culture and history. However, acknowledging the intricate details and complexities of this context, a fully comprehensive analysis of every aspect may not be feasible. Hence the study is mainly focused on the lives of the female characters and their hardships in the society. So this study might not be able to include an in-depth analysis of all the intricate details and complexities of this context.

1.2 Research Problem/Question

How do traditional gender roles and colonial history intersect to shape the lives of women in Adichie's novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*?

1.3 Relevance and Necessity of the Research Topic

This study explores the intersection of gender and colonialism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels. Her texts are analysed via a postcolonial feminist lens to empower women, challenge stereotypes, and promote global feminism. It also deconstructs colonial legacies, promotes intersectionality and ensures the representation of African women's voices. Her writing imibes Nigerian roots and hence it is crucial to comprehend the cultural background and the difficulties associated with postcolonialism. This research has the potential to add depth and richness to the canon of postcolonial feminist theory and literature already in existence. In addition, it has the power to develop cultural understanding and to empower upcoming generations to tackle issues related to gender, identity, and intersectionality. In general, a feminist postcolonial analysis of Adichie's works may promote progressive social change.

1.4 Objectives

- To explore the postcolonial themes in Adichie's selected texts and consider how these themes connect with concerns caused by colonisation.
- To approach the chosen texts from a feminist theory, emphasizing on portrayal of women, gender roles, and power dynamics.
- To examine how race, gender, and colonial history connect in the selected texts and how these things affect the experiences of her characters.
- To analyse how Adichie's books question and modify established accepted gender norms and stereotypes.
- To provide an understanding of Adichie's literary contributions and her influence, in order to support the ongoing discussions in postcolonial and feminist studies.

1.5 Literature Review

After doing an extensive review of literature the following are the findings.

In the paper "Postcolonial Feminism" (Al-Wazedi 2020), Al-Wazedi gives insights about the multiple natures of postcolonial feminism and its significance in understanding the intersections of oppression. The paper argues that postcolonial feminism is not limited to exploring patriarchy as the sole source of oppression. It also highlights how social inequalities are intricately connected to political, historical, cultural, and economic factors. The author cites Bandana Purkayastha and Susan Stanford Friedman, which states that intersectionality is vital in locational feminist theory, highlighting inequalities among women due to multiple oppressive systems. The author while examining cultural and social practices says that, this particular framework highly differs from other identity aspects such as race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and nationality, even though interconnected. Within the context of postcolonialism and diaspora he says that, it's essential to explore power dynamics in these intersections.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's book "We Should All Be Feminists" (Adichie 2014) challenges misconceptions surrounding feminism. She argues for a broader understanding of the movement, emphasizing its goal of equality and dismantling rigid gender roles for both men and women. Adichie utilizes personal anecdotes to illustrate the impact of stereotypes and reframes the conversation to position feminism as beneficial for everyone, encouraging men to become allies in the pursuit of gender equality.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty's journal article named "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (Mohanty 1988), critiques the tendency of Western feminist scholarship to produce universalizing and essentializing representations of "Third World women." She argues that these portrayals often erase historical, cultural, and

geographical specificities. Mohanty calls for a nuanced understanding of women's experiences that acknowledges the power dynamics inherent in knowledge production and challenges the idea of a monolithic "Third World woman."

Jane Haggis in her work "White Women and Colonialism: Towards a Non-Recuperative History" (Haggis 1988), critiques the simplistic portrayal of white women in colonial history solely as victims. She argues for a more critical analysis that acknowledges their complicity in colonial power structures and their roles in benefiting from these systems. Haggis emphasizes the intersections of race, class, and gender, urging scholars to consider how white women participated in and profited from colonial hierarchies while simultaneously facing limitations within those systems.

Sara Mills offers a fresh perspective on gender and power dynamics in postcolonial contexts in her work "Gender and Colonial Space" (Mills 1996). She critiques the dominance of psychoanalytic approaches within postcolonial theory, advocating for a materialist analysis that examines how physical spaces – landscapes, architecture, and movement – shape and reflect power relations. Mills highlights the concept of "gendered geographies," where colonial projects relegate women to domestic spaces while public spheres are reserved for men. This analysis provides valuable insights into the ways spatial dynamics reinforce gendered power structures.

The paper "Purple Hibiscus: A Postcolonial Feminist Reading" (Dube 2018) Dube examines how race, gender, and class interact with the colonial narrative. The paper examines the narrative's opposition and imitation of colonial legacy using a postcolonial feminist framework. The author makes reference to Ngugi's work "Decolonising the Mind" to discuss the idea of "cultural bomb" that teaches survivors to despise themselves and their cultures while

praising their colonizers. This research also highlights the various strategies used by women to oppose colonialism and patriarchy as a whole.

In the article “Divergent Struggles for Identity and Safeguarding Human Values: A Postcolonial Analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” (Muhammad 2018), Muhammed states that the works published during or after colonialism are included in the category of postcolonial literature. He makes a reference to Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*, which asserts that the idea of “them” and “us” is what that led the Westerners to split the globe into two groups. The article also addresses the instability that followed Nigeria’s independence, with the local Igbo people feeling that their identity has been lost, as a result of Northerners holding important government positions and infiltrating the nation with corruption. While the protagonists in *Half of a Yellow Sun* search for their identity, which has been destroyed by the Europeans. This article also discusses the cultural hegemony between Westerners and Easterners, as the Biafrans’ believe that supporting the coloizers would settle everything.

According to the journal article “Women’s Struggles and Independence in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*” (Amaka 2009). Amaka says that Adichie’s novels: *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, portray Nigerian society where women are increasingly uniting against oppression. Western colonization had little respect for women, this led to a traditional image of a patriarchal society. She says that feminism has empowered women to break free from traditional roles imposed by the Western colonizers. It also states that Adichie’s works highlight the need to transform these long-held stereotypes that affect African women’s progress.

Adichie reflects in her work “African ‘Authenticity’ and the Biafran Experience” (Adichie 2008) focuses on her personal journey of identity shaped by the Biafran War and her

exposure to literature. She grapples with the lack of representation of her own experiences in British children's books and the transformative power of encountering Chinua Achebe's work, which reflected her own cultural background. Adichie challenges the notion of a singular "African authenticity" and critiques the limitations of stereotypes, emphasizing the complexity and diversity of African experiences.

In a magazine article titled "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A decade of literature, politics and cultural activism" (Mgbeahuru, Okondo 2020). Okondo says that the new decade brings more recognition for Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The writer states that Adichie's impact spans literature, feminism, fashion, and human rights, making her a force for positive change globally.

The works examined in this review collectively shed light on the multifaceted experiences of women navigating gender, power, and identity in the aftermath of colonialism. Mohanty and Haggis illuminate the limitations of Western-centric approaches, while Adichie offers a powerful critique of gender stereotypes and the need for a more inclusive feminism. Mills' materialist analysis provides valuable insights into the role of space in reinforcing patriarchal structures, and Adichie's personal reflections highlight the complexities of identity formation in a postcolonial world. This literature review establishes a foundation for further exploration of the intersection between feminism and postcolonialism in Adichie's work. Furthermore, it will investigate how Adichie's work challenges these legacies and contributes to the ongoing conversation at the intersection of feminism and postcolonial discourse. By examining how Adichie depicts the struggles and triumphs of women in a specific postcolonial setting, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between gender, power, and the legacies of colonialism.

1.6 Formulation of Hypothesis

In postcolonial Nigeria, women's lives are shaped by the intersection of traditional gender roles and the colonial history. This affects women's cultural identity and their social and economic standing in the society.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research paper will engage in a qualitative analysis of two significant texts: *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This study will focus on Adichie's works, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, as they offer valuable insights into postcolonial feminist themes. The research will investigate Adichie's portrayal of female agency, resistance, and empowerment in postcolonial contexts, focusing on how her characters challenge or adapt to societal norms. The study is undertaken through the lens of postcolonial feminism. It will primarily involve a contextual Analysis, delving into the intricate historical, cultural, and social landscapes that shaped both the creation and the settings of these literary works. Along with the analysis of Adichie's primary texts, this study will also provide insights on what other writers have to say about her writings (secondary research).

1.8 Chapterization

Chapter 1: Postcolonial Feminist Theory and Adichie

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Postcolonial Feminist Theory

1.1.2 Chimamnda Ngozi Adichie: Life and Literature

1.1.3 Highlighting Concepts Supporting Postcolonial Feminism

1.2 Research Problem/Question

1.3 Relevance and Necessity of the Research Topic

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Chapter 2: Historical Context and Colonial Legacy of Nigeria.

2.1 Pre-colonial Societies of Nigeria.

2.2 The Hausa Community

2.3 Igbo Civilization: A Cornerstone of Nigerian Identity

2.4 British Colonial Rule in Nigeria

2.5 Nigerian Civil War and Military Rule

Chapter 3: Colonialism and Women's Agency in Half of a Yellow Sun

3.1 Summary

3.2 Education and the Subversion of Colonial Norms

3.3 Sisterhood and Solidarity

3.4 Impact of War on a Postcolonial Society

3.5 Resilience and agency of women

3.6 The legacy of Colonialism

Chapter 4: Purple Hibiscus- Female Awakening in a Postcolonial Context

4.1 Summary

4.2 The Duality of Colonial and Patriarchal Oppression

4.3 Religion: A Powerful Force

4.4 Female Interactions: Cause for a Change

4.5 The Standard: A Beacon of Hope

4.6 Women's Agency and Empowerment

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Chapter 2: Historical Context and Colonial Legacy of Nigeria.

In the heart of Africa lies a land steeped in the echoes of centuries past, where the rhythm drums dances with the whispers of history. Nigeria, a nation as diverse as its landscapes, unfolds a tale of resilience and change woven into the very fabric of time. As we step into the its historical background, we are bound to explore the paths of old kingdoms, witness big battles, and see how different cultures came together to create a now lively nation. This chapter aims to bring into light part the successes, struggles, and the strong spirit of the Nigerian people that is painted on the colourful canvas of their past.

Initially, Nigeria didn't have a specific name. The nation was originally referred to as the Royal Niger Company Territories before being renamed as Nigeria. The area which comprises the now Nigeria, was home to many different ethnic communities, kingdoms, and city-states before it acquired the name. Each of these groups had its own name and identity. Before British colonial rule, there was no single, unified entity known as "Nigeria". It is said that British journalist Flora Shaw, who afterwards married British colonial administrator Baron Frederick Lugard, came up with the name in the late 19th century.

2.1 Pre-colonial Societies of Nigeria.

Nigeria, a country on Africa's western coast, is home to more than 123 million people, representing 250 distinct ethnic communities. Nigeria's geography is varied, but its people are what make the country most diverse. The term "pre-colonial societies of Nigeria" refers to the diverse groups and kingdoms that existed in the region now known as Nigeria before European colonization. This period stretches back thousands of years, encompassing a rich tapestry of cultures, political systems, and artistic achievements.

Around 1500 BC, a remarkable civilization known as the Nok culture emerged. Flourishing in central Nigeria, the Nok people were ironworkers who left behind impressive

terracotta sculptures. These intricate works depict human figures, animals, and even elaborate hairstyles, hinting at a complex and well-developed society. Though the Nok undoubtedly possessed the technology to smelt iron, the fact that they also employed stone tools instead of metal indicates that metal resources were limited and not widely available. The Nok were one of the few civilizations that made the direct switch from stone to iron tools without first learning how to make copper or bronze tools. (*The Nok Culture*)

Due to the mystery surrounding their identity and origins, it is difficult to determine the legacy of the Nok people. Some people think that the Nok's artistic talent influenced the Ife people, who later lived in the Nigeria, and produced their exquisite metalwork. The Ife people, who flourished between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries CE, were renowned for their intricate and realistic metal sculptures of human heads. Many of the characteristics that set Nok art apart were also present in later Nigerian artistic developments created in places like Benin City, Ife and Igbo Ukwu.

Following the Nok a new era dawned in Nigeria with the rise of powerful kingdoms. One such kingdom rose between the 11th and 15th centuries known as the Kingdom of Ife. Renowned for its sophisticated art, particularly its naturalistic bronze figures and terracotta sculptures, Ife's influence extended beyond its borders. While Ife flourished, Oyo Empire emerged in the 14th century and was renowned for its cavalry and highly organized political structure. Oyo Kingdom grew into a strategic trading hub. Its location facilitated the exchange of goods between the northern and southern regions.

These artistic achievements of Ife people laid the groundwork for the later flourishing of the Benin Empire. The Kingdom of Benin was founded in the 13th century in the forested areas of West Africa. Historical accounts tell us that the Edo people, who lived in the southern parts of Nigeria, established the kingdom of Benin. Dissatisfied with the rule of their previous kings, the Ogisos (people of Benin) sought a new leader. They turned to a prince from the prominent

West African kingdom of Ife. This prince's son, Eweka, became the first oba, or king, of Benin, ushering in a new era for the kingdom. According to a legend, there was a kingdom that were ruled by the line of female queens, one of whom married an adventurer from Baghdad (modern-day Iraq) and their sons would rule over a couple of city-states. (*The Kingdom of Benin*)

The arrival of Islam in the north around the 11th century, brought about by the Kanem-Bornu Empire, significantly impacted the region. Kanem's elite used their wealth to acquire luxurious imports like embroidered cloth, silk, jewellery, and even iron weapons. The empire embraced Islam and became a centre for Islamic scholarship and trade. The kingdom adopted the Islamic religion after long time contact with Muslim clerics and traders. In contrast, Christianity entered southern Nigeria through European missionaries in the 15th century. While its initial influence was limited, it laid the foundation for the future spread of Christianity in the region. This interplay of religions further enriched the cultural tapestry of pre-colonial Nigeria (Cartwright 2019).

2.2 The Hausa Community

Within West Africa, the Hausa people constitutes of the largest ethnic group. Notably, the term "Hausa" encompasses the language and it also has a massive number of native speakers. The Hausa language is spoken by roughly 25 million speakers, Traditionally, the Hausa people have been concentrated within the northern Nigerian savannah region, extending into neighbouring regions of Niger. However, due to large-scale migrations, Hausa communities can now be found in communities scattered across various African cities, reaching as far south as the Atlantic coast. Since it was founded on the centuries-long blending of numerous peoples, the Hausa nation has a long history of immigration and invasion. Islamic language and faith bind them together. The "true" seven states—of which Daura is the most senior—are believed to be the ancestral homelands of the Hausa people. A legend says that Bayjidda, son of a Baghdadi

ruler killed the snake that obstructed water access. As a reward, Bayajidda got married to the queen; their son Bawo was the progenitor of six sons, thereby founded the states of Daura, Katsina, Zazzau (Zaria), Gobir, Kano, and Rano. The seventh state, Biram, was founded by Bayajidda's son that he had with his first wife.

The story of Hausaland begins with a blend of cultures. "Strangers" arriving in the region intermixed with the local people, forming the foundation of the seven initial Hausa kingdoms. These kingdoms established powerful capital cities, solidifying their control. For centuries, Habe kings reigned supreme. However, in 1804, the power dynamic shifted dramatically as the Fulani, another Islamic African ethnic group people took over. By the mid-19th century, a clear social hierarchy emerged within the Hausa community. The Hausas were divided into three tiers: hereditary ruling Fulani, appointive ruling class dominated by Fulani and the Habe commoners. Despite these internal shifts, the Hausa people have always been deeply connected by their shared history as traders and their faith in Islam. This connection transcends borders, as even scattered Hausa communities, far from their homeland, hold onto their cultural identity with pride and continue to share it with future generations.

In Niger and northern Nigeria, the Hausa people still hold a dominant position. Given that the Hausa-Fulani fusion has dominated Nigerian politics for the majority of the country's independent history, their influence within the country is immense. They continue to be among West Africa's greatest and most firmly established civilizations.

2.3 Igbo Civilization: A Cornerstone of Nigerian Identity

Igbo people contributes upto 18% of Nigeria's population. They are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. Their ancestral homeland lies in the southeastern region, a densely populated area known as Ala Igbo (Land of the Igbo) that straddles the mighty Niger River. Traditionally, the Igbo were subsistence farmers, cultivating staple crops like yams, taro, and cassava to

sustain their communities. This deep connection to the land and a focus on self-sufficiency continue to be one of the important aspects of the Igbo culture.

The Igbo language has many dialects, which has developed because Igboland was an aggregation of many different towns and villages which were separated from each other by forests. Before the 20th century, it would be wrong to call Igbo people as a single entity as it comprised of several groups. Most of the migration took place during the colonial period. After the migration, many thought they spoke different languages but they were different dialects of the same language. All the Igbo speaking people had the same sense of cultural, social and political organization. Therefore Chinua Achebe had said that the concept of a common identity is a product of the twentieth century.

The Igbo creation myth believes that when the world was built, it was filled with water and had no human existence. Then one day Chukwu (God) created a man, his wife and their sons and daughters. They lived on the top on an anthill because everything else was submerged in water. They were in a very miserable condition and didn't have anything to eat as well. Then the man gave his wife a piece of yam and claimed it to be edible. And hence they started to pray for more yam and Chukwu blessed them with yam seeds and asked them to sacrifice his oldest son and daughter and plant these in their graves. Shortly afterwards yams and cocoyams started to grow. This story brings forth the Igbo people's belief in a supreme god, Chukwu who created the food and humans. It also suggests that religion serves as an essential part of the Igbo life.

The Igbo culture was seen to be Pantheist. Because they had a wide range of spirit symbols that they believed to see in various natural phenomena. They worshipped the 'giver' that is the river, forest, streams, hills, caves, earth, iron, fire, lightning, soil, strength, fertility and witchcraft. Along with that they believed in life after death and reincarnation. They argued

that nothing happened by chance- good health or illness, fortune or misfortune- everything happens through the will of God. They acknowledged the idea of Chi (personal god or a guardian angel) and said that one must be true to themselves.

The Igbo lived in autonomous villages and towns that lacked in centralized politics but were ruled by the elders/ancestors. The family name and wealth used to be passed down from a father to his son. Their relationships were blood tied. The community emphasized on personal achievements, titles and hereditary succession. Some Igbo men were titled as Chiefs and they were immensely respected in the societies for being strong and providing for their family. On the other hand women were treated as someone made to support men. At young ages they were thought to do the household chores and take care of the offspring. They had their own customs and rituals related to marriages and funerals.

The Igbo story is not solely one of tradition. Over time, they have demonstrated remarkable adaptability. A significant portion of the Igbo population has pursued higher education, leading to prominent positions in Nigeria's civil service and thriving businesses. This entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to education have fuelled the nation's economic development. Furthermore, over a million Igbo have migrated throughout Nigeria. This internal diaspora signifies their willingness to embrace new opportunities and enriches the national cultural tapestry. By sharing their traditions, language, and cuisine, the Igbo people strengthen the social fabric of Nigeria and foster a sense of unity in diversity.

2.4 British Colonial Rule in Nigeria

British colonial rule in Nigeria, spanning roughly from the mid-19th century to 1960, left an indelible mark on the nation's history. This period witnessed significant changes in political, economic, and social structures, with lasting consequences that continue to resonate today. Initially, British involvement in Nigeria was primarily focused on trade. The colonial

authorities who came to these parts of West Africa in the years between 1862 and 1960, sought to define, protect, and realize their imperial interests. European merchants, particularly interested in palm oil and other resources, established relationships with coastal communities.

The slave trade in the fifteenth century marked the start of Nigeria's colonial era. According to "Nigeria: History," a Commonwealth article, the Portuguese were major traders in Nigeria and helped to establish the slave trade. They bought weapons and spices in other places by selling slaves. But according to John Edward Phillips' paper "What's New About African History?" Nigerians themselves were the ones who supplied the slaves. Conflicts among various ethnic groups and tribes resulted in "prisoners of war," who were later sold as slaves to the Portuguese. This was the primary source of income for a large number of Nigerians. And with the arrival of Portuguese they became involved in the inception of the transatlantic slave trade. From the 1500 to 1800 many of the kingdoms of this region became extremely wealthy through the trade in precious metals and slaves. ("Niger Delta Black Gold Blues: Colonial History of Nigeria: Slave Trade, Resource Extraction, and the Invention of a National Territory")

However as the abolishment of the slave trade became widespread throughout the western world their fortune began to stagnate. When the transatlantic slave trade was outlawed in the early 1800s, Britain developed an interest in dominating what is now Nigeria, despite the fact that Europeans had been travelling to West Africa since the 1600s. British traders established themselves in Nigeria, settling in the Lagos region that surrounding the Niger River. The important event when the British really "intervened in the region" was after the abolition of the slave trade. They concentrated on both converting the predominantly Muslim locals to Christianity along with obtaining goods to improve their trading system.

In 1804 the Sokoto Caliphate -also known as the Sultanate of Sokoto, was a Sunni Muslim caliphate in West Africa- would conquer and unite the hausa kingdoms. The Caliphate, which united over 30 distinct emirates and was home to over 10 million people at its height, was the most powerful state in the area. Approximately 2.5 million non-Muslim slaves were taken prisoner during his conquest and forced to labour on large plantations, with plenty of incentive to convert to a life of greater comfort.

In order to acquire additional commercial commodities, the British gradually moved around the region as they colonised it, eliminating various power leaders. In 1861 under the pretext of ending the slave trade in the kingdom of Lagos, the British bombarded the city and installed a ruler they favoured. 10 years later they annexed the city in 1861 establishing the crown colony of Lagos. Lagos has been a prosperous commercial centre ever since. The Royal Niger Company was set in 1879 to administer the region and by 1900 it had conquered all of the southern Nigeria, hence destroying much of the fabled walls of Benin. The company was disestablished in that same year. The Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was formed and the conquest of the Sokoto Empire began in 1900. And by 1903 all of the modern-day Nigeria was under British control. The colony and Protectorate of Nigeria lasted for 46 years and was governed through a system called Indirect rule. Through indirect rule, which involved local leaders enforcing British laws, the British maintained their hold on Nigeria. In this way, the British could avoid interfering with ethnic relations while also benefiting from Nigeria's economy, which was predominately focused on the export of various goods like peanuts, cocoa, and palm oil as a result of the British getting involved. This also gave regional Amir's and local rulers were given wide authority as long as the colonial government was allowed to conduct its business and gather taxation.

The British developed a "divide and rule policy" to deal with a variety of communities in the region they had effectively colonised and defined as their territory. This policy was intended to keep various Nigerian groups as far apart as possible. The fact that "traditional authorities" controlled the north and that Islam subsequently resisted the spread of Christianity caused further splits within the nation. Due to better living conditions and opportunities Christianity grew rapidly, dividing people in the community on the basis of both politics and religion and escalating tensions in the society.

A series of short-lived constitutions followed World War II as demands for self-government increased. The 1954 constitution introduced a federal system of governance, significantly expanding the powers of the local governments. In May and June of 1957, the constitutional convention decided that the Eastern and Western regions would have immediate self-government, with the Northern region to follow in 1959. The colonized began retaliating against the colonists as things became brutal. Nigeria was difficult for the British to retain control over, in part because of between groups' strife as well as Pan-Africanism and the fight to free Black people from racism and European dominance. The first political party in Nigeria was founded as a result of the movement, and it used the youth, the media, the educated class, and the farmers to fight against British control. As part of their response, the British slowly modified Nigeria's political framework to give the country's citizens greater authority. But this just made Nigerians more divided and hostile towards one another. Many Nigerian communities were afraid of independence in the middle of the 20th century because they believed the main ethnic groups would take control of the new nation. Nonetheless, Nigeria gained its independence by 1960.

2.5 Nigerian Civil War and Military Rule

Nigerians acquired political authority from the British administration between 1948 and 1960. Decolonization occurred during significant shifts in Nigeria's international political economy that resulted from World War II. The Nigerian federal government and the independent state of Biafra fought each other in the 1967–1970 Nigerian Civil War, sometimes referred to as the Biafran War. Nigeria gained independence on 1st October, 1960 and became an independent nation. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who had already been leading the country as Prime Minister since 1957, continued in that role. This meant he was the head of the government during that time span. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the first President of the Senate. This was a very prestigious position, but it didn't hold much of an actual power. (“History of Nigeria - Embassy of Nigeria Sweden”)

In 1961, the northern part of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons joined Nigeria's Northern region. By October of that year, the Southern Cameroons united with Cameroun to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Three years later, in 1963, Nigeria transitioned from a parliamentary system to a republic. This meant the country no longer had a Prime Minister. Azikiwe became the first President, but the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, still held more real power despite the title change.

A number of things led to the Civil War. Growing mistrust and competition between the three main ethnic groups was one of the numerous causes. The first cause was when Nigeria was divided into three large regions ruled by different ethnic groups: the Yoruba people in the west, the Igbo people in the east, and the Hausa-Fulani people in the north, in 1963. The Mid-West region was set up to prevent conflicts between ethnic groups. Constant fights occurred between these regions and the leaders in each area wanted to stay in power. The south felt subjugated by the north and the north worried the south would overrule them. By the early

1960s, regional tensions in Nigeria had escalated to a dangerous point. The western region's government had completely collapsed in 1962, a sign of the deep dysfunction within the country. The second reason of the war was a controversial 1963 federal census and the third factor was the disputed post-independence elections in 1964 and violent regional elections in the West in 1965. The widespread refusal to participate in the democratic process exposed the deep fractures in Nigerian society and brought the nation to the brink of collapse. ("History of Nigeria - Embassy of Nigeria Sweden")

The first military coup on January 15 was a outcome of these events, 1966, and was commanded by Major Chukwuma "Kaduna" Nzeogwu, an Igbo from the eastern region and it consisted mainly of young army officers. There were no casualties in the East despite the deaths of well-known northern politicians, which reinforced the widespread perception, particularly in the north, that the coup was carried out with ethnic motivations to establish Igbo dominance over other ethnic groups. Following the failure of Nzeogwu's revolution, Major General Ironsi, an Igbo, carried out a countercoup that eliminated the federal structure and replaced it with a unitary system of government. Thus, on July 29, 1966, Nigeria's head of state, Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi, was killed in Ibadan during an official visit to the western region as a result of a "revenge coup" carried out by officers mainly from the north.

In the north, some Igbo officers and citizens were also killed at this same time, and their belongings were either taken or destroyed. Ethnic tensions in Nigeria exploded into violence in 1966. More than 50,000 Igbo people had died by October 1966, thousands more had suffered injuries, and an estimated two million had fled eastward from other parts of Nigeria. On May 30, 1967, Ojukwu unilaterally proclaimed Biafra's independence from Nigeria, alleging the government's responsibility for genocide and citing its incapacity to safeguard the lives of Easterners. Biafra, which included the East-Central, South-Eastern, and Rivers states of

Nigeria, got its name from the Bight of Biafra. In reaction to Biafra's declaration of independence, the Nigerian federal government declared war on the country.

The Nigerian Civil War that was mainly fought in the southeastern region of the country, and because of that millions of unarmed citizens lost their lives and a great deal of property was destroyed. The quality of life in Biafra declined as the war raged. Fighting against a force that was both numerically and materially superior, the Biafrans were basically surrounded and cut off. The Nigerian government, with superior military might, besieged Biafra, cutting off vital supplies and inflicting heavy casualties. The Biafran military forces occasionally staged strategic raids into federal territory, but their lack of resources often caused them to withdraw. Igbos suffered from famine, mass murder, and relocation as a result of a combination of military operations, —by land, air, and sea—an economic ban against Biafra, and the Nigerian federal government's destruction of its agricultural life. (WILLIAMS)

Critical goods and services could not be shipped to the east because the Nigerian government blockaded the Biafran territory from the sea. The government also recaptured Rivers state, cutting off oil revenue for Biafra's war finance. The Biafran civilian population suffered severely as a result of the severe lack of food, medication, clothes, and housing. A million Biafrans died from starvation. Locally displaced people or refugees numbered more than three million Igbo people. Aside from a little amount of humanitarian aid, the international community abandoned the Biafran people. Due to claims of genocide, Biafra gained sympathy from throughout the world. Nevertheless, no evidence of organised property damage or genocide was discovered. The suffering in Biafra increased as a result of claims of hunger and genocide that contributed to the war's extension. 14 thousand people were stated to have been dying in Biafra per day in December 1968, according to estimates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The tide of the war turned decisively in early 1970. With the fall of Owerri, Ojukwu, the leader of Biafra, fled to the Ivory Coast. The Biafran chief of army staff, turned himself in to the federal government on January 12, 1970. Colonel Yakubu Gowon, the president of state of Nigeria, acknowledged Biafra's complete surrender. This signalled the end of the war, leaving Biafra's military with no choice but to surrender.

In the war's aftermath, the Nigerian government created the Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation programme following the war in order to address social and economic issues, relocate displaced people, rehabilitate soldiers and civilians, and rebuild governmental institutions and infrastructure. In addition to providing food, shelter, and medication, the federal government also pledged to construct twelve states, reorganise the armed forces, conduct a national census, write a new constitution, and hold elections before transferring control to a civilian government.

The nation of Nigeria was severely scarred by the Nigerian Civil War. The infrastructure was in ruins, millions died, and millions more were displaced. Results from the displayed post-war reconciliation programme were not entirely positive. While some initiatives were successful—such as the establishment of new nations and the shift to civilian rule—others failed. Though the war may be over, the tensions between different ethnic groups haven't disappeared. These divisions, which originally sparked the conflict, still exist but are hidden from plain sight. They serve as a constant shadow, reminding everyone of the war's lasting impact.

The analysis of the novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus* will benefit from a comprehensive understanding of Nigerian history. Examining the pre-colonial era sheds light on the harmonious existence of various tribes and communities and offers insight into the social and political structures of Nigerian communities before British influence. This context is important for understanding how colonial rule may have impacted these structures and

potentially contributed to later conflicts. This chapter particularly focuses on the Hausa and Igbo communities, due to their significant roles in the Nigerian Civil War, a pivotal event explored in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Understanding British colonial rule in Nigeria is crucial, as it laid the groundwork for ethnic tensions that ultimately led to the war. This chapter has also explored the military coups that followed Nigeria's independence because it portrays the aftermath of colonialism. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War, highlighting its devastating consequences. *Purple Hibiscus*, on the other hand, takes place in the aftermath of the war, exploring themes of resistance against a newly established, corrupt military government.

Chapter 3: Colonialism and Women's Agency in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* offers a multifaceted exploration of the intersection between colonialism and women's agency in a postcolonial Nigerian society. This chapter explores the multifaceted experiences of women within this context. It delves into the impact of colonial education on women's ability to subvert established norms. Furthermore, the chapter analyses the ways in which women forge bonds of sisterhood and solidarity in the face of war and societal upheaval. The impact of the conflict on a society still grappling with the legacy of colonialism is a central focus. Through the experiences of the female characters, the narrative highlights the resilience and agency displayed by women as they navigate displacement, violence, and the struggle for survival. Finally, the chapter explores the enduring impact of colonialism on women's lives and the challenges they face in a newly independent nation.

3.1 Summary

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's historical fiction novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, is set in the 1960s, just before and during the brutal Nigerian Civil War as known as the Biafran War (1967-1970). The story centres on four main characters: Ugwu, a young Igbo houseboy for Odenigbo a university professor; Olanna, Odenigbo's wealthy lover; Kainene, Olanna's twin sister; and Richard, Kainene's British expatriate writer boyfriend.

A few years in, the narrative takes a sharp turn as the Nigerian government collapses. Then there's another coup, and a lot of Igbo soldiers get killed this time. As tensions rise between Nigeria's ethnic groups, particularly the Igbo people in the east and the Hausa in the north, the country inches closer to civil war. Amidst this political turmoil, Adichie explores the complexities of identity and relationships. The main characters are pulled into the chaos of the

escalating conflict, where they face loss, displacement, and see the shattering of their pre-war lives. Through their individual experiences, the novel reflects the larger issues of nationalism, colonialism, and the devastating consequences of political upheaval.

The late sixties see Biafra fall into rapid decline. People are initially enthusiastic about the prospect of an independent Igbo nation called Biafra but as it proceeds they become disillusioned by the growing violence and corruption. Starvation and violence grip the region as Nigeria ruthlessly blocks aid and most foreign countries turn a blind eye to the conflict. Despite the crisis, Richard throws himself into writing articles about the suffering Biafrans, while Kainene takes charge of a refugee camp. Ugwu, stripped of his choice, is forced to join the army.

One fateful day, Kainene ventures across enemy lines in a desperate search for food, but never returns. Richard and Olanna frantically search for her, but their efforts are in vain. The war finally reaches its end with Biafra's surrender, leading to Nigeria's reunification. Ugwu, haunted by his experiences, begins to write them down, revealing himself as the author of "The World Was Silent When We Died." However Kainene's disappearance remains a mystery.

3.2 Education and the Subversion of Colonial Norms

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's powerful novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, explores the complexities of a postcolonial world, where the legacy of colonialism continues to shape lives and societies. Education, a seemingly straightforward concept – defined by Merriam-Webster as "the action or process of educating or of being educated" – takes on a multifaceted and often subversive role in this context.

Colonial education actively suppressed the colonized people's heritage by prioritizing the colonizer's culture and lifestyle. In this context, education can become a tool for reclaiming a lost sense of self. By learning about their own history, traditions, and cultural narratives, characters can move beyond the imposed colonial perspective and develop a stronger sense of their own identity. In the initial part of the book, Odenigbo tells Ugwu that, "Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?" (Adichie HYS 12). The quote specifically mentions "exploitation," likely referring to the economic and social exploitation that often occurs during colonialism. By understanding exploitation, people can work towards dismantling it. Education empowers individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and build a more just and equitable society. Odenigbo highlights that education is a need rather than a luxury. It gives people the "tools"—knowledge, ability to analyse, and historical perspective—necessary to fully understand the exploitative institutions they face. Lack of awareness leaves people vulnerable to manipulation and constant domination by those in positions of power. Without this knowledge, individuals become easy targets for the colonizers' deception and continuous oppression.

Odenigbo also says that "There are two answers to the things they will teach you about our land: the real answer and the answer you give in school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers" (Adichie HYS 12-13). Here this quote highlights the existence of two narratives about Nigeria: the "real answer" representing the true history and experiences of the Nigerian people, and the "answer you give in school to pass," which likely reflects the colonizer's perspective. This also lays emphasis on the educational system that teach from the colonizers' perspective. By promoting this narrative, the colonizer can potentially shape and manipulate the identity and loyalty of the colonized population. By learning both narratives, Odenigbo wants Ugwu to develop his own understanding of history and challenge the dominant colonial view. Hence it is understood that education, in the hands of the colonized, isn't only

means of acquiring knowledge it becomes a means of empowerment. By exploring their Igbo traditions and values, characters actively subvert the colonizers' gaze. This exploration allows them to potentially discover a moral framework that differs from the one imposed by the colonial education system.

In the novel, there is a scene where Olanna meets a whole family at the airport as they are waiting for the son of the house to return from abroad. His grandmother says that, “My fellow women are jealous, but is it my fault that their sons have empty brains and my own son won the white people’s scholarship?” (Adichie HYS 29). The author also states that the villagers are happy and proud of him because he was the first person from the community to be granted this chance. This instance reveals the high regard the local villagers hold for foreign education. However, they remain unaware of the colonizers' true motives behind offering it.

The novel highlights a stark reality – the privilege of formal education is often bestowed upon males, while females are largely excluded. The novel portrays a society where women are not only denied priority for formal education but in some cases, regarded as entirely unfit for it. This inequality is a reflection of larger social prejudice that assigns women to household roles and eliminates their potential. The lack of access to formal education creates a significant barrier to their intellectual and social development. Ugwu, who comes from a tiny community, is given the opportunity to learn, but many females, like Anulika, Ugwu's sister, are not even exposed to Western education. In the text there is an instance when Arize, Olanna’s cousin tells her that, “It is only women that know too much Book like you who can say that, Sister. If people like me who don’t know Book wait too long, we will expire” (Adichie HYS 42). This dialogue reveals that women from lower-class households lack access to education as a means of escape. They have limited options and are often pressured to marry and start families at a young age. The dialogue also suggests that these women admire accomplished women like

Olanna and aspire to a similar life, but their circumstances prevent them from achieving such dreams.

Adichie uses the contrasting characters of the Ozobia sisters, Olanna and Kainene, to highlight the spectrum of experiences faced by women in Nigeria. After finishing her sociology studies in London, Olanna actively chose to return to Nigeria. She even secured a job as a lecturer in the sociology department at Nsukka. She is described as the more conventionally attractive and feminine sister, Olanna embraces a life centered on human connection and intellectual pursuits. Kainene, on the other hand, has built emotional walls to shield herself from the outside world. She has also completed her education in London, and she plans to take over her father's company in Port Harcourt. Traditionally, taking over the family business falls to the sons, ensuring the continuation of the family legacy. However, Kainene subverts these expectations. Kainene also prefers to date white men because that is not what most of the Nigerian women do. She ventures outside the confines of her prescribed gender role, takes charge of her father's company and her own life. This act of defiance demonstrates her ambition and her unwillingness to be confined by expectations solely based on her gender.

Half of a Yellow Sun portrays a spectrum of characters actively challenging colonial ideals. The "subversion of colonial norms" unfolds gradually throughout the novel. While the characters may not dismantle the entire system overnight, their acts of rebellion plant the seeds for future revolution. Through acts of defiance, acquiring knowledge, and reclaiming their identities, these individuals contribute to a larger movement striving for a more just and equitable future. The novel itself can be seen as an attempt by Adichie to subvert or challenge the singular narrative imposed by colonialism and present a more nuanced portrayal of the "real" Nigerian experience.

3.3 Sisterhood and Solidarity

In a newly independent Nigeria, the weight of oppression on women is multifaceted. Women are seen to face societal limitations imposed by traditional patriarchy, racial prejudice, and the lingering effects of colonialism. However, the concept of feminism offers a path towards unity for these women, despite their existing differences. As the quote by Salem suggests, "we come together not because we may identify as women; rather, we come together because we believe that we can only be free and live better lives with the end of capitalism, white supremacy, Western empire, and patriarchy" (Salem 2019). This lay emphasis on dismantling broader systems of power. The novel portrays how both capitalism and patriarchy restrict opportunities and limit freedom, particularly for female characters. By uniting against these structures, women can create a more just and equitable future for themselves and their nation.

During the suffering of postcolonial Nigeria, the concept of "sisterhood" takes on a powerful new meaning. Women in *Half of a Yellow Sun* face a web of oppression – societal expectations rooted in patriarchy, the sting of racial prejudice, and the lingering effects of colonialism. Yet, amidst these challenges, sisterhood emerges as a potent weapon and a source of strength. Women, like Olanna and Kainene with their unwavering bond, transcend their differences and forge a powerful alliance. Despite their personal differences and opposite personalities (Olanna is more idealistic and Kianene is more pragmatic) they share a very deep bond. Both the sisters didn't want to the rules that they were allotted to, instead they preferred to go out and make a name for themselves. In the initial phases they are shown to be distant, but as the story proceeds they are seen to grow closer. The beginning of the novel reveals a strain on the closeness between Olanna and Kainene. This tension stems from their dysfunctional relationships with their parents. (Both) rebel against their parents' values, yet fail to recognize the similarities in their own rebellion. They are further seen to rely on each other

for emotional support, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging in a world on the verge of collapse.

Their bond turns bitter when Kainene discovers that Olanna slept with Richard. She expresses her deep disappointment in Olanna, stating, "It would be forgivable if it were somebody else. Not my sister" (Adichie HYS 265). Her anger stems not just from Richard's infidelity, but from Olanna's betrayal of their sisterly bond. But they still get ahead of this and together help other women who have been suffering due to the war, by teaching their children and providing food. When Kainene goes missing Olanna is very concerned and blames herself for everything. "She raged at herself for not waking up early the day that Kainene left for afia attack and for not knowing what Kainene wore that morning and for not going with her" (Adichie HYS 443).

Half of a Yellow Sun goes beyond portraying traditional sisterhood based on blood ties. It explores the powerful concept of "women supporting women," forming a foundation for a feminist perspective. This is also seen through various characters from the text. Olanna displays deep protectiveness towards her young cousin, Arize. She strongly urges Arize to delay marriage due to her young age. After many years, when Arize is pregnant Olanna steps in to fill a maternal role for her. She cares for her throughout her pregnancy, as evidenced by her statement, "I don't want to do anything that will be difficult for you" (Adichie HYS 131). This quote highlights Olanna's commitment to her well-being. Furthermore, Olanna takes on the role of godmother to the unborn child, and Kainene even sends money to purchase baby supplies. These actions showcase the strong bond between the women and their unwavering support for Arize during this important time.

Olanna's neighbor in Nsukka is Edna Whaler, a Black American woman who becomes a close friend after Odenigbo cheats on Olanna. Edna acts as a supportive sister, urging Olanna to be strong. "You think he's spending his day crying like you are...Look at you, you're the

kindest person I know. Look how beautiful you are. Why do you need so much outside of yourself? Why isn't what you are enough?" (Adichie HYS 239). By this dialogue the readers understand that she wants Olanna to stop blaming herself, reminding her of her inner strength and beauty. Edna suggests Olanna deserves better than Odenigbo, implying he doesn't appreciate her worth.

The war intensified as well as the hardships women had to face. They struggled to find even a single meal for their children. Olanna's own baby fell ill, she was struggling on her own fearing that her child wouldn't survive. Preoccupied with other matters, Odenigbo seemed to busy to notice his own child's suffering. Desperate, Olanna joined a long queue to obtain some kind of assistance in terms of money. Mrs. Muokelu, an elementary school teacher, came to be of help. Understanding a mother's worry when a child is sick, she gave some egg yolk to feed the baby, which helped with the baby's recovery. After this encounter they became close friends and later in the novel it is seen that they are working together in teaching the children of Biafra.

By showcasing the power of women working together, the novel suggests that women can empower each other and challenge the patriarchal structures that limit their opportunities. As the novel progresses, the women recognize that their liberation is intertwined with dismantling larger systems of power. Their "sisterhood" becomes a force for collective action, pushing back against the stranglehold of capitalism, white supremacy, and the legacies of colonialism. Through their unity, they strive to create a future where Nigerian women, and the nation itself, can finally breathe free.

The novel also explores the multifaceted concept of solidarity, starting with its role within society. A strong sense of unity emerges among the Igbo people who were being targeted during the Nigerian Civil War along. Characters like Ugwu and Olanna actively band together,

sharing resources and supporting the fellow Biafrans through the hardships. This solidarity extends beyond the Igbo community, as a character like Richard is seen to go out of their way to help others. However, solidarity is not without its complexities. The novel acknowledges that Olanna receives special treatment due to her wealthy background, highlighting the limitations of unity. Furthermore, ethnic divisions within Nigeria weaken national cohesion, ultimately benefiting those holding power.

3.4 Impact of War on a Postcolonial Society

The Biafran War, a brutal conflict between the Igbo people seeking independence and the Nigerian government, lasted from 1967 to 1970. The war stemmed from long-standing tensions and violence against the Igbo. The Igbo people in southeastern Nigeria declared independence as Biafra in 1967 after facing massacres and violence. Nigeria responded with military force, igniting a war that lasted over two years. Both sides initially lacked resources and experience, leading to a stalemate. Nigeria then imposed a blockade, causing a horrific famine that killed millions of civilians.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie employs a multi-perspective narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. By shifting between characters' experiences, she confronts readers directly with the pain of the war and its unimaginable violence. Adichie's approach aligns with what Pius Adesanmi, a scholar of African literature, termed the "aesthetics of pain" characteristic of the "third generation of African writers." According to Adesanmi, these writers move beyond a purely anti-colonial focus. Instead, they delve deeper, exploring the complexities of the postcolonial experience in Africa, including the profound silences imposed by past traumas (Simoes da Silva 2012).

Despite the war's scale, Adichie focuses on the personal lives of ordinary people caught in the midst of the tragedy. The first part of the novel introduces a group of Igbo families and their everyday lives before the war. This establishes a sense of normalcy that is shattered by the outbreak of violence in the second part. The second part depicts the characters' reactions to the 1966 coup, the counter-coup, the massacres, and the declaration of Biafran independence. There are instances from the text that back up the violence and the hardships faced by the people, especially women.

News of "Northern officers...killing Igbo officers in Kaduna" (Adichie HYS 140) foreshadows the dangers Igbo people face throughout Nigeria. A character named Madu, stationed in Kaduna, narrowly escapes death due to the intervention of a Hausa man, highlighting the existence of compassion amidst the violence. However, the brutality continues, with reports of "five hundred Igbo people...killed in Maiduguri" (Adichie HYS 145) underlining the large scale of the massacres. "Passengers were crouched behind the chairs. Men got on their knees to lower their heads to the floor..... there were more soldiers now, more shots, more shouts" (Adichie HYS 156). The inaction against these killings emphasizes the chaotic and dangerous atmosphere for the Igbo people. People were trying to move to other places, in order to be safe.

The outbreak of anti-Igbo violence in Kano, in this text is depicted through Olanna's experience (Adichie HYS 150). Seeking refuge with her ex-boyfriend Mohammed, a Muslim, Olanna is advised to wear a headscarf as a disguise. The rising tension is emphasized by the mob's chants: "The Igbo must go. The infidels must go. The Igbo must go." Witnessing the brutal reality of the violence, Olanna sees her uncle's house burning, "Uncle Mbaezi lay facedown in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Something creamy-white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head" (Adichie HYS 150). This horrific scene underscores the indiscriminate nature of the killings. The character of Abdulmalik serves as a powerful symbol

of the war's capacity to corrupt. Initially presented positively as Mbaezi's neighbor, Abdulmalik's participation in the violence is a shocking revelation. His act of callously stepping over a woman's headless body exposes the complete transformation of his personality (Adichie, 150). This transformation highlights the war's ability to exploit pre-existing ethnic tensions and turn people against each other.

Odenigbo and Olanna attend an independence rally on the university campus, where people wave the new flag and listen to speeches. Odenigbo, gives a speech full of hope at a rally celebrating Biafran independence. He talks about safety and leadership for Black Africa "Biafra is born! We will lead Black Africa! We will live in security! Nobody will ever again attack us! Never again!" (Adichie HYS 167). However, the war doesn't end as of yet, making Odenigbo's words seem very wrong. This scene suggests that overly optimistic ideas, especially from intellectuals, can be misleading and lead to disappointment.

Due to the course of the War there were multiple displacements that took place. Characters like Olanna and Odenigbo decide to leave their comfortable life in Nsukka and head to the perceived safety of their village, Enugu. This early move foreshadows the constant displacement they will face throughout the war. "Richard, we should hurry, the shelling sounds very close by" (Adichie HYS 325). In the text this dialogue said by Kainene shows the sudden urgency to escape the capture of Enugu by Nigerian forces. It emphasizes the unpredictable nature of the war and the constant threat of displacement.

There were air-raids that took place "Olanna jumped each time she heard the thunder. She imagined another air raid, bombs rolling out of a plane and exploding" (Adichie HYS 270). Olanna had an ingrown fear of being knocked down by a bomb so she used to avoid walking in open place and always used to run to get a thick shade under a tree that would give good

cover in case of an air raid. Even their wedding ceremony is destroyed by an air-raid. All the guests are scared and they run for their lives.

Edna rushes into Olanna's house crying and telling Olanna that, "Edna came in crying, her eyes swollen red, to tell her that white people had bombed the black Baptist church in her hometown. Four little girls had died" (Adichie HYS 253). When Olanna visited Kainene's refugee camp she felt a wave of horror wash over her as she entered. The sight was devastating. Dozens of people were sprawled on makeshift beds or directly on the floor, too weak to even swat away the flies buzzing around them. A young boy, clearly malnourished, sat by the door with his bony arms folded tightly. The air itself felt heavy and foul, making Olanna struggle to breathe. In another classroom, she saw a mother cradling two children so thin their skin hung loose on their bodies. The only signs of life in the room seemed to be the flies, flitting around with a disturbing vibrancy compared to the suffering she witnessed (Adichie HYS 358).

The war's horrors seemed to recede as a shared pain, a senseless act of violence echoing far beyond Biafra, united the people in grief. Professor Ekwenugo informs Odenigbo that the invading forces in Enugu have descended into acts of barbarity. He describes that loots have extended been beyond just valuables, and reached to the theft of "toilet seats". He further states that he has heard an even more disturbing thing that, "they choose the best houses and force people's wives and daughters to spread their legs for them and cook for them" (Adichie HYS 294). Okeoma describes the white mercenary's actions by saying, "He throws girls on their backs in the open, where the men can see him, and does them, all the time holding his bag of money in one hand" (Adichie HYS 332). This reflects a disturbing portrayal of public sexual violence. High-Tech was a thirteen-year-old boy in the Biafran army who does reconnaissance missions and befriends Ugwu. He rapes an Igbo bar girl. She was not only raped by high-tech but also by many men including Ugwu.

Half of a Yellow Sun depicts the war's brutality on a large spectrum, not only through cultural battles but also through the targeted suffering of women. While men face the physical dangers of combat, the novel emphasizes the additional layers of trauma inflicted upon women. They endure physical violence, sexual assault, and emotional abuse, highlighting the war's disproportionate impact on their lives.

3.5 Resilience and agency of women

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the author explores the experiences of Nigerian women during the Biafran War. The novel depicts the challenges they face, including social constraints and economic hardship. Despite these difficulties, the women in the story demonstrate remarkable resilience. They find ways to create opportunities for themselves and their families, taking on leadership roles within their communities and advocating for their needs. The novel also highlights their strength in overcoming violence and navigating complex cultural expectations. This resilience and agency are crucial for their survival and contribute significantly to the well-being of their communities.

Half of a Yellow Sun explores the concept of agency for women with limited power. Some characters, particularly those with less social standing, may navigate their circumstances by utilizing their sexuality. Additionally, the novel depicts women engaging in sexual activity for reasons beyond procreation (Nwokocha 2019). Adichie utilizes contrasting characters to explore the spectrum of female agency within the patriarchal society depicted. There is a character who is briefly mentioned named Chinyere, an uneducated housemaid, asserts her sexuality by controlling her visits to Ugwu (Adichie HYS 130), highlighting a form of defiance against societal expectations. Amala, on the other hand, initially appears to be a victim of manipulation. She is forced by Odenigbo's mother to sleep with Odenigbo, and she becomes

pregnant (Adichie HYS 258-259). She tries to kill the baby in the womb by eating peppers, because she can't seem to do anything about it. "She also exhibits some level of agency by consenting to sex but not necessarily motherhood" (Nwokocha 2019). However, she is seen to demonstrate a flicker of agency by refusing to raise the child, this is her small act of rebellion against the forces that have controlled her life. These portrayals suggest that even within a restrictive social structure, these characters find ways to exert some degree of control over their circumstances. Their agency is manifested through their acts of sexuality.

Adichie establishes Olanna's agency early in the novel. Unlike many female characters who might passively accept arranged marriages, Olanna actively chooses to pursue a relationship with Odenigbo. This instance serves as a foreshadowing element, hinting at Olanna's future capacity for making independent decisions throughout the narrative. Even Kainene as a character who challenges traditional gender roles. Unlike expectations of feminine passivity, Kainene exhibits confidence and initiative in her sexuality. The novel includes scenes where she takes the lead in intimate encounters, suggesting a comfort with her own desires and a disregard for societal pressures to conform.

In the face of escalating conflict, Adichie portrays Kainene's unwavering commitment to the Biafran cause. She actively contributes to the war effort by establishing and managing a refugee camp in Orlu, directly addressing the needs of displaced civilians (Adichie HYS 353). Kainene dedicates herself to working with refugees in Orlu, organising seminars, providing frequent doctor visits, and assisting with health and education. This leadership role demonstrates her dedication and resourcefulness in the face of hardship. Furthermore, Adichie highlights Kainene's resilience through her passionate advocacy for Biafra. Her proclamation, "Do you understand me? We are all Biafrans!" (Adichie HYS 329) serves to motivate and inspire the refugees, fostering a sense of unity and purpose even amidst displacement and

despair. Through Kainene's actions, Adichie emphasizes the nature of female agency during wartime, showcasing both acts of practical support and expressions of unwavering cultural identity

In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna's relationship with her mother-in-law, Mama, highlights the tension between tradition and modernity. Mama embodies conservative views, evident in her disapproval of Olanna's education: "These girls that go to university follow men around until their bodies are useless" (Adichie HYS 102). Mama views educated women like Olanna as abnormal, believing "too much schooling ruins a woman." This clashes with Olanna's independence and self-assuredness. Rather than passively accepting Mama's criticism, Olanna decides not to take what her mother-in-law is telling her and asserts her agency by choosing not to conform to Mama's expectations. Olanna is also seen to have a slept with Richard but she doesn't seem to have any feelings towards him. "Olanna does not regret the sexual satisfaction which she derives from sleeping with the white Richard" (Amaka). She entirely is seen to do this to gain a sense of freedom.

Adichie portrays Olanna's act of teaching refugee children in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a demonstration of both cultural preservation and a commitment to the future. Despite the hardships of war, Olanna chooses to educate the children in core subjects like mathematics, civics, and English. This not only provides them with valuable knowledge but also emphasizes the importance of maintaining their cultural identity. Olanna's statement, "We will teach them to speak perfect English and perfect Igbo...We will teach them pride in our great nation" (Adichie HYS 301), highlights this dual focus. She recognizes the importance of education in rebuilding their lives while simultaneously fostering a sense of national pride in the young generation.

Adichie portrays the women in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as extending their focus beyond just their own survival. Olanna's actions exemplify this as she not only teaches but also provides support to other mothers, fostering a sense of connection within the community. Similarly, Kainene demonstrates compassion and a strong commitment to the collective well-being by taking in refugees. Faced with the hardships of war, these women actively make choices about how they can contribute to their society, showcasing their agency and a desire to create a sense of normalcy and support amidst the chaos.

3.6 The legacy of Colonialism

In the past, powerful European countries took control of other lands, sometimes forcing people to move. They believed their way of life was best and treated the people they conquered unfairly. "Colonialism" changed how things were run in these conquered lands. Europeans were in charge, and local leaders were given special privileges to keep them happy. This created problems later when the conquered lands became independent. Colonialism also messed with how women grew food for their families. Traditionally, they were in charge of the crops, but the Europeans focused on growing large quantities of a single crop to sell for money. This left women with less control and less food to feed their families. Even after these lands gained independence, they often relied on their former rulers for economic help, keeping them tied to the old system in a new way, which is called neocolonialism. (Saneda and Field)

A university professor educated in the British system, Odenigbo embodies disconnect between the colonial education and the realities of postcolonial Nigeria. He feels alienated from his Igbo heritage and struggles to find his place in the new world. He says, "The real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the tools to negotiate

this new world” (Adichie HYS 105). This quote by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie directly critiques the legacy of colonialism and its impact on the postcolonial world. The novel was set during the Nigerian Civil War which in turn exposes the devastating consequences of colonialism and the challenges faced by newly independent nations. (Jiang 2016)

The characters are seen to inherit a world shaped by British colonialism. Ethnicities like the Igbo, who felt marginalized under colonial rule, sought independence. However, it implies that simply gaining independence doesn't guarantee a smooth transition. The people lack the "tools" – education, infrastructure, and a unified national identity – to effectively navigate this "new world." Nigeria is a product of colonialism, formed by the British merging various ethnic groups with distinct cultures and languages. The artificial borders that were previously drawn by colonial powers still exist even after independence. This led to the lack of unified national identity further leading to internal conflicts, as seen in the Biafran War.

Through a discussion between Odenigbo and his companions, Adichie explore the complexities of belonging. Odenigbo argues that the tribe represents the "only authentic identity for the African". He views national identities like "Nigerian" as artificial constructs imposed by colonial powers. He emphasizes his Igbo identity existed since a very long time even before the concept of colonialism was introduced in Nigeria, stating by saying "I was Igbo before the white man came" (Adichie HYS 22). However, Professor Ezeka offers a counterpoint. He argues that even tribal identities were shaped by colonialism. He suggests, "The pan-Igbo idea itself came only in the face of white domination". Ezeka thinks the Igbo people's feeling of being one big group might have come about because their identity was threatened by the colonizers. Odenigbo strongly disagrees to this and believes that Igbo people have always had a connection, even before the white men came. (Adichie HYS 22). This demonstrates how the colonists claimed credit for an achievement that they may not have made

at all. This conversation also demonstrates how each individual had their own theories about who they were. While some people praised colonists for unifying certain groups, others despised them because they caused chaos throughout Nigeria as a country.

Adichie utilizes the character of Madu to explore the lingering effects of colonialism on Nigerian self-perception even amidst the brutalities of the Civil War. Madu approaches Richard, to write about the plight of refugees, believing a white perspective will hold more weight with the international community. His plea, "Of course I asked because you are white. They will take what you write more seriously because you are white" (Adichie HYS 314), highlights the internalized belief in Western superiority despite the hardships inflicted by colonialism. Madu views Richard's whiteness as a form of cultural capital, the only way to ensure that the outside world acknowledges the suffering of the Nigerian people. This encounter underscores the complex legacy of colonialism, suggesting that the colonizer's gaze still holds a certain power in the postcolonial world.

Adichie employs a narrative twist to dismantle the earlier notion of Richard's privileged perspective. It is later revealed that the book, initially believed to be authored by Richard, titled *The World Was Silent When We Died*, was actually written by Ugwu. This revelation emphasizes the problematic assumption that Richard, solely due to his whiteness, possessed a more valuable perspective on the war. In contrast, Ugwu, a primary character who directly experienced the hardships of the conflict, becomes the true voice of the narrative. This shift in authorship challenges the earlier suggestion that a white voice is inherently more credible or impactful when documenting the suffering of Africans.

Adichie demonstrates how the long shadow of colonialism continues to shape the lives of characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The war becomes a battleground where unresolved tensions and inequalities, fostered by a colonial past, erupt with devastating consequences.

Chapter 4: Purple Hibiscus- Female Awakening in a Postcolonial Context

This chapter aims to explore the experiences of women in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus*. It explores the multifaceted nature of female oppression within the text, considering the lingering effects of colonialism intertwined with patriarchal structures. It explores women's journey of self-discovery within a society with the legacy of colonialism and the persistence of patriarchal structures. The chapter delves into the interconnected nature of these forces, analysing how they shape the experiences of women. The chapter delves into various themes including the duality of colonial and patriarchal oppression, the influential role of religion, the dynamics of female interaction as a catalyst for change, the representation of "The Standard" as a potential beacon of hope, and ultimately, the novel's portrayal of female agency and empowerment.

4.1 Summary

Purple Hibiscus is a coming-of-age story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It is set during the 1980's, when the wounds of the coups and the civil war of the late 1960s were still healing. It explores themes of family, religion, and finding your voice. The novel follows the life of a character named Kambili Achike, a fifteen-year-old Nigerian girl living under the thumb of her strict and religious father. Eugene, Kambili's dad (Papa), is a wealthy man who enforces a rigid Catholic lifestyle on his family. Papa is a respected figure who runs factories and he is the publisher of a local newspaper, the Standard. Instead of showing love, Papa enforces strict rules and high expectations on his family. The house Kambili lives in is described as being cut off from the outside world, with high walls and tall trees.

Kambili's world changes when she and her brother (Jaja) are sent to live with their Auntie Ifeoma for a few days. Even though she is Eugene's sister, she is a strong-willed woman who offers a very different life. Auntie Ifeoma's home is filled with laughter, music, and a more relaxed approach towards religion. She fosters a respectful environment where her children feel comfortable expressing their opinions and having open discussions.

Back home, tensions rise as the government targets Papa's newspaper. He becomes more abusive, even towards his wife. Kambili witnesses her grandfather's peaceful rituals and starts questioning her father's narrow views, when she is back home. Papa discovers their connection with his ostracized father and punishes them brutally. Kambili finds solace and explores her feelings towards Father Amadi. Auntie Ifeoma loses her job and decides to leave for America with her children and begin with a new life there. Mama, after another miscarriage caused by Papa's violence, decides to poison him. Jaja takes the blame for the murder and goes to prison. Kambili dreams of a future where they reunite with Auntie Ifeoma, plant trees in their hometown, and embrace a life filled with freedom.

4.2 The Duality of Colonial and Patriarchal Oppression

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, explores the oppressive nature of colonialism and patriarchy. The seemingly peaceful life of Kambili Achike's family disintegrates due to the intertwined forces. Colonial influences continue to shape religious practices and social norms. It also shows a strong tradition where men, like Papa Eugene, have all the power in the family. This idea of men having more control is similar to what Kate Millett wrote about in her book "Sexual Politics." she states that "men have established power over women, but this power is based on a social construct rather than it having any innate or any

biological foundation”(Millet). This backs up the point that patriarchy is a product of social norms, traditions, and institutions that have been built over time. These norms can further include expectations about gender roles, power, behaviours, and access to opportunities. And this power of being a man can manifest in various ways, such as control over resources, decision-making authority, and social status.

Adichie through this novel paints a powerful portrait of the lingering effects of colonialism on Nigerian society. " In an online article by Casper Andersen, he quotes Ngugi and argues that, “Colonialism detonated a ‘cultural bomb’ that almost annihilated people's belief in their language, heritage and environment and made them regard their own cultural background as ‘a wasteland of non-achievement’ that had to be left behind as quickly as possible” (Andersen 2018). This portrays colonialism as a giant bomb that made people doubt their own traditions, language, dislike their own land and made them want to be like the colonizers. Basically, colonialism made people feel like everything about their own culture was a waste and they should just copy the colonizers instead.

This legacy is most vividly embodied in the character of Eugene Achike, who serves as a prime example of a "colonial product" as stated by Eugene's sister Ifeoma (Adichie PH 13). Eugene's worldview and behaviour are profoundly shaped by the education and religious systems imposed by the colonizers. He is seen to exhibit a deep respect and admiration for Catholicism, a religion introduced during the colonial period. This high regard towards colonizers religion serves as a disdain for his own traditional Igbo religious practices, which he then dismissed as a "heathen." This highlights a key aspect of colonialism's impact: the marginalization and devaluation of indigenous belief systems.

Furthermore, Eugene's linguistic preferences reflect the colonial hierarchy that positioned English as the language of power and prestige. "Papa liked it when the villagers made an effort to speak English around him. He said it showed they had good sense" (Adichie PH 65). He exhibits a clear preference for English and even adopts an affected British accent. This reveals a sense of internalized inferiority regarding his native Igbo language, a direct consequence of colonial attempts to erase or diminish native cultures. Eugene's attitudes and behaviours demonstrate the lasting influence of colonialism on Nigerian society. His internalized sense of Western superiority serves as a barrier to embracing his own heritage and fosters a sense of alienation from his Igbo roots.

The novel also portrays a deeply patriarchal society where men hold significant power over women. This manifests in control over finances, education, and even basic freedoms. In her book *'The Second Sex'* Simone De Beauvoir argues that "Man occupies the role of the self, or subject; woman is the object, the other" (De Beauvoir 1997). According to this, men are seen as the active doers, definers of the world, and the standard against which everything else is measured. They are the "self" – complete, independent beings with agency. Women, on the other hand, are seen as passive objects, defined in relation to men. They are the "other" – incomplete, dependent beings who exist in reference to men.

Eugene is not only a colonial product but also a patriarchal figure in the text. "Eugene's controlling behaviour and extreme beliefs create a climate of fear in the household. He dictates every aspect of their lives, leaving Kambili, Beatrice, and Jaja unable to express themselves openly. Adichie uses the phrase "speaking with their spirits than with their lips" to emphasize how they are forced to keep their true feelings hidden" (Astrick 2018). The text shows a horrible pattern of abuse by Eugene. He hurts his wife Beatrice, causing her to lose pregnancies several times. He also punishes his daughter Kambili in cruel ways. Once, he even poured

boiling water on her feet because she didn't listen to him. Another time, he beat Kambili with a belt so badly that she had to get admitted in the hospital. No one in the family dares to argue with Eugene because they are too scared of him. This shows how much control he has over them, and how they have to suffer in silence.

Colonial rule often reinforced patriarchal structures within colonized societies. This creates a situation where women face oppression not just from men, but also from the systems of power imposed by colonizers. Papa Eugene's control extends to silencing Beatrice, this is seen when he forbids her and the kids from speaking Igbo in the public. Kambili narrates that Papa told her, "to sound civilized in public; we had to speak English" (Adichie PH 13). Mama's forced compliance with Papa's rigid religious practices further demonstrates her lack of agency. Furthermore, Beatrice and Kambili are financially dependent on Papa. They are denied the opportunity for further education or employment, leaving them with no voice or agency within the household. This economic dependence mirrors the power imbalance created by colonialism, where colonized nations relied on the colonizers for resources and remained subordinate.

Eugene's image as a charitable man crumbles under closer inspection. His insistence on outward displays of piety, like excessive praying and restrictive clothing, reflects a superficial understanding of faith. He holds the title "Omelora," meaning "The One Who Does for the Community," but his actions contradict this title. While he spends lavishly on religious organizations like Daughters of the Immaculate Heart and St. Nicholas (educational institutes), but in reality he does it because he doesn't want "other children to come first" (Adichie PH 30). This reveals his true priorities. He condemns pagan rituals as barbaric, yet his own treatment of his family with violence is arguably worse. He disguises his abuse as a way to save them from sin, creating a mask of righteousness that hides his cruelty. He does everything in his interest that directly or indirectly helps him to protect his status within the community.

On the contrary to Eugene, there is Aunt Ifeoma. She serves as a powerful counterpoint to the stifling environment of Papa's household. She is an educated woman who challenges societal norms. In the context of the novel, Kambili says that, "Papa spoke English, while Aunty Ifeoma spoke Igbo" (Adichie PH 58). This shows her strong sense of identity, she has no intentions to fit in Eugene's family traditions as she is self-dependent. Her defiance to the people with power, is symbolized by her refusal to remain silent about corruption at the university which leads to her losing the job. This act highlights the struggle for self-determination that many women faced in a postcolonial world, where traditional patriarchal structures were often reinforced by the influence of colonialism. The novel also subtly critiques the societal judgment of Aunty Ifeoma as "a single mother", her hard work in raising her children and providing for their education goes largely unnoticed. Even addressing the argument between Papa Nwuku and Ifeoma, He says that "I should not have let him follow those missionaries..... But you are a woman. You do not count" (Adichie PH 62). Papa-Nnukwu complains that his son is a product of missionary schools, he has become rich but ignores his father because of the difference in beliefs. He insists sons have a responsibility to their aging parents. Aunty Ifeoma counters by pointing out that her own missionary education didn't sever her familial ties, unlike her brother. Papa-Nnukwu brushes her aside with a dismissive "women don't count," suggesting that women lack the agency to make independent choices. This exposes his belief that women, regardless of their actions, are not equal to men. This reflects a broader societal issue where women's labour, especially within the domestic sphere, is often undervalued. The novel portrays a world where the characters are trying to get out of the bounds of patriarchy, in a world still grappling with the legacies of colonialism and patriarchy.

4.3 Religion: A Powerful Force

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* explores the complex and multifaceted role of religion in a postcolonial Nigerian society. Adichie portrays a stark contrast between Catholicism, associated with the colonizers, and the traditional Igbo religion, representing the colonized people's belief system. Religion serves as a central force that both liberates and oppresses characters, particularly within the context of a postcolonialism.

In an online article *Was Religion a Tool for Colonialism in Africa?* Takudzwa Chiwanza argued that “Colonialism was put in place with the goals of “enlightening” Africa via the spread of Commerce, Civilization, and Christianity” (Chiwanza 2022). The idea that British colonialism in Nigeria aimed to "make the colonizers more humane" is a misleading simplification, often masked by phrases like "The White Man's Burden" popularized by Rudyard Kipling. This concept ignores the darker motivations of colonialism, which were primarily economic and political. The British may have introduced education, the English language, and Christianity, these were merely tools to solidify their control over the colonizers. Education systems often focused on European history and values and English became the language of administration and the elite which hence marginalized the native languages. Christianity, was presented as a more civilized religion which could be used to undermine traditional belief systems and weaken social structures.

“Through the process of colonial domination, Africans viewed their spirituality as lacking in depth and salvation, barbaric, evil, and irredeemably primitive. African indigenous religions lacked any soulful sense whatsoever. This is what Africans internalized in their collective psyche, and this is what still obtains. Christianity taught the Africans to hate themselves”.

(Chiwanza 2022)

The spread of Catholicism in Africa had a complex impact on traditional belief systems. Some Africans embraced Catholicism, while others maintained their traditional practices, and some even blended elements of both. But people like Papa Eugene, who converted, try to defame others by claiming to be the superior one. *Purple Hibiscus* is structured by Christianity: the first three sections bear the subtitles "Palm Sunday," "Before Palm Sunday," and "After Palm Sunday," indicating the organizing power of the religion over the temporality of the narrative" (Wallace 2012). Papa's brand of Catholicism is rigid and he used as a tool of control. He believes that he doing the best for his children, he says "Everything I do for you, I do for your own good" (Adichie PH 143). This also shows a glimpse of the colonizers' burden. He thinks that his children's lives are in his hand i.e. he holds the authority. Also his extreme piety masks a violent and abusive nature. He uses his interpretation of Catholicism to justify his control over his family, dictating their every move and suppressing any form of disagreement.

Purple Hibiscus explores the complex relationship between tradition and modernity in Nigeria, particularly through the lens of religion. Papa Nnukwu embodies the traditional way of life. As Ifeoma declares, "he is a traditionalist" (Adichie PH 61). His beliefs likely stem from the Igbo religion, a system of practices and customs passed down through generations. It is seen that Papa Nnukwu believed in Chi, he worshipped idols, offered food to the ancestors and the High God- Chukwu. Papa Eugene, on the other hand, represents the stark contrast of modernity. Papa Eugene's rejection of these traditions highlights the tensions between imposed religion and indigenous belief systems in a postcolonial context. The newfound faith fuels his disdain for the Igbo beliefs, hence leading him to label Papa Nnukwu a "heathen" (Adichie PH 47). His rigidity is further emphasized by his declaration that "heathens were not allowed in his compound" (Adichie PH 47), even refusing to make an exception for his own father. "Papa-Nnukwu had told the umunna how Papa had offered to build him a house, buy him a car, and hire him a driver, as long as he converted and threw away the chi in the thatch shrine in his

yard” (Adichie PH 46). This offer clearly represents Eugen’s attempt of Christianity, introduced during colonialism, to replace indigenous beliefs. Papa uses material incentives (house, car, and driver) to pressure Papa-Nnukwu to give up his cultural identity.

In this text there are two types of priests who teach about religion. One is Father Benedict, who is a lot like Eugene. He represents a conservative and orthodox interpretation of Catholicism. He strictly adheres to the doctrines and rituals of the Catholic Church without much room for flexibility or adaptation. People at the church referred to him as “our new priest” (Adichie PH 6). His approach to religion is authoritarian, emphasizing obedience and adherence to traditional practices. The other is Father Amadi, who is a younger priest and more open-minded. He embodies a more liberal and inclusive interpretation of Catholicism. He incorporates local customs and traditions into his religious practice, blending Igbo culture with Catholicism. This aspect is seen when Kambili narrates that, after Lord’s Prayer he started singing Igbo songs instead of asking to offer the sign of peace (Adichie PH 173). He encourages dialogue, tolerance, and a broader understanding of spirituality, showing a willingness to adapt to the cultural context of his congregation. Father Amadi is also very approachable unlike Father Benedict. So, the two priests show us different ways that religion can be taught. Father Benedict represents the strict, traditional way, while Father Amadi shows a more flexible and modern approach. This juxtaposition between Father Benedict and Father Amadi underscores the broader thematic tension between tradition and modernity, authority and liberation, as well as the clash between rigid dogma and flexible interpretation within the realm of religion.

However, characters like Auntie Ifeoma and Father Amadi demonstrate the potential for a harmonious co-existence. Her blending of Christian faith with Igbo traditions suggests the possibility of creating a more holistic and meaningful spiritual identity. They represent a more joyful and compassionate form of faith. They integrate their Igbo traditions with their

Christianity, creating a space for cultural expression. Kambili describes Aunt Ifeoma's dining table as "a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone" (Adichie PH 89). This resonates with Kambili's yearning for a faith that is uplifting rather than suffocating. Aunt Ifeoma presents a contrasting perspective on religion. Her faith is more personal and emphasizes compassion and understanding. She integrates her beliefs with Igbo traditions, demonstrating a way to reconcile faith with cultural identity. In contrast to Papa's rigidity, Aunt Ifeoma's faith provides her with strength and resilience, allowing her to navigate a world stacked against her as a single mother. Being a Catholic she follows Igbo rituals and culture, this can be interpreted as an attempt by Adichie to decolonize the faith. Her daughter Amaka once said that "The white missionaries brought us their god, which was the same colour as them, worshiped in their language" (Adichie PH 191). By pointing out the racial and linguistic aspects, she casts doubt on whether this adopted god is truly relevant to their African context. The reliance on the colonizers' language for worship also implies a potential loss of traditional spiritual practices and languages. Here, religion becomes a source of empowerment and a tool for challenging societal expectations.

"You mix the cowpea flour and palm oil, then you steam-cook for hours. You think you can ever get just the cowpea flour? Or just the palm oil?" "What are you talking about?" Father Amadi asked. "Religion and oppression."

(Adichie PH 126)

Obiora (Aunt Ifeoma's son), compares religion (cowpea flour) and oppression (palm oil) to ingredients in a dish. Just as these ingredients are mixed together and cannot be easily separated after cooking, Obiora suggests that religion and oppression become intertwined. People may be drawn to the positive aspects of religion without really recognizing the potential for oppression.

Kambili's spiritual journey through the novel is a testament to the transformative power of religion. She embarks on a journey to find her own faith. Initially, her experience with Catholicism is one of fear and repression. Papa's distorted interpretation leaves her feeling judged and constantly striving for salvation. However, upon exposure to Auntie Ifeoma's more compassionate faith, Kambili begins to find a personal connection with God. She experiences a sense of liberation through Auntie Ifeoma's open expression of faith. Like the vibrant purple hibiscus flower which serves as a symbol of Auntie Ifeoma's faith, represents this newfound connection – a faith that which is beautiful, joyful, and liberating.

Religion in *Purple Hibiscus* is a powerful force that shapes the lives of the characters. While Papa Eugene's distorted faith breeds fear and oppression. Also Papa's insistence on European religious practices reflects the lasting impact of colonialism. Whereas Auntie Ifeoma's example and Kambili's awakening demonstrate religion's potential to liberate and empower. The clash between generations, highlights the impact of colonialism on Nigerian society. Through the contrasting characters of Father Benedict and Father Amadi, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie offers a nuanced exploration of the complexities inherent in religious teachings and their impact on individual and societal dynamics. The novel ultimately suggests that a personal and compassionate interpretation of faith can be a catalyst for individual and societal change.

4.4 Female Interactions: Cause for a Change

Purple Hibiscus explores how women, through their diverse relationships with each other, find the strength to grow and challenge the status quo within their communities. Witnessing the struggles of loved ones or other women ignites a desire for change. They are driven by a sense of solidarity and a yearning to create a more just and equitable world, not just for themselves, but for the women around them. Many different types of relationships could be explored

through the text, like the motherhood bond, sisterhood or a bond of friendship and solidarity. These relationships between women are not merely interpersonal bonds, but they become powerful catalysts for their individual growth.

Kambili and Beatrice's mother-daughter bond in *Purple Hibiscus* is complex and marked by both love and strain. Due to Papa's controlling nature, Beatrice suppresses her emotions and avoids open communication with Kambili. This creates a sense of distance between them. When Papa would turn his violence towards Beatrice, Kambili wondered what Mama did to have been receiving punishments “I did not even think to think what Mama needed to be forgiven for” (Adichie PH 28). Kambili yearned to provide some form of assistance. Similarly, when Papa would inflict harm upon Kambili, Beatrice experienced a profound sense of helplessness, feeling unable to shield her own children from harm. One of the cause of poisoning Papa could be because Beatrice didn't wanted her kids to live their lives in such a toxic environment. When Jaja is prisoned on behalf of Mama Beatrice, Kambili tells her that, “Jaja will come home soon..... You must believe this” (Adichie PH 215). This dialogue reflects the complexity of the mother-daughter relationship. Despite the challenges they face, there is a deep sense of longing for understanding and reconciliation, suggesting the potential for transformation in their relationship.

Another mother-daughter bond is that of Ifeoma and Amaka. Their bond is characterized by warmth, mutual respect, and shared cultural identity. Amaka shares her mother's intelligence and independent spirit. When Amaka says that she is “not interested in choosing an English name” (Adichie PH 174) her mother does not question back. Allowing her freedom to make her own choice. Ifeoma comes across as a supportive and nurturing mother to Amaka, providing her with encouragement and guidance as she navigates adolescence. She, in turn, respects her mother's wisdom and relies on her for advice. They often collaborate on household

tasks and family activities, working together harmoniously. Their partnership reflects a shared sense of responsibility and teamwork within the family.

Beatrice and Ifeoma's relationship in *Purple Hibiscus* is a powerful portrayal of sisterhood. Beatrice's life under Papa's control is a stark contrast to Ifeoma's independent and outspoken nature. Beatrice, embodies the stifling effects of patriarchy. She endures Papa's abuse in silence. In contrast, Ifeoma, challenges societal norms. She advises her to take a stand for herself, she tells her "This cannot go on, nwunye m. When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head" (Adichie PH 154). This forceful metaphor acts as a wake-up call for Beatrice. It emphasizes the urgency of leaving a dangerous situation. Beatrice gains a little strength from her sister-in-law, Ifeoma. Ifeoma's outspoken nature and independent spirit challenge Beatrice's submissive behaviour. Witnessing Ifeoma's defiance against societal expectations and her control over her own life ignites a spark of rebellion in Beatrice. This interaction ultimately empowers Beatrice to take a stand against Eugene, both for herself and for her children.

Kambili and Amaka's relationship is an evolving one, marked by both initial awkwardness and ultimately, a deep bond of friendship and mutual influence. Kambili, raised in a strictly religious and controlled environment, discovers a sense of freedom and self-expression through her interactions with her cousin Amaka. She made her realize that one doesn't receive everything via money, one needs to have the right to speak and dream. Her rebellious spirit and love for life exposes Kambili to a world beyond her father's rigid rules. The painting of Papa Nnukwu given by Amaka is more than just art to Kambili; it's a cherished piece that evokes deep emotions. She's even willing to defy her father to keep it safe. Their shared experiences and secrets form a bond that allows Kambili to question her father's authority and eventually find her own voice.

The relationship between Sisi, the househelp and Beatrice is more based on friendship and closeness. This interaction portrays the solidarity among women. Despite the hierarchical nature of their relationship, Sisi and Beatrice share moments companionship. Sisi is aware of Beatrice's private struggles and becomes a confidante, offering emotional support and comfort to her. Sisi and Beatrice's relationship is shaped by their shared struggle for survival within the oppressive environment of Eugene's household. Their bond portrays more of a silent communication. When Mama gets fed up of Papa's tragic and extreme abuse she decides to slowly poison him. The act of poisoning suggests a level of desperation and suffering that Beatrice had never openly exhibited. The poison was brought by Sisi, and her participation adds in more confidence in the execution of the murder. Despite their differing positions within the household hierarchy, there is a sense of mutual dependency and cooperation between them, especially in moments of crisis or desperation. This indicates a level of complicity and collaboration between the two women, suggesting a deeper bond or shared motivations.

4.5 The Standard: A Beacon of Hope

In the context of the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, "The Standard" is a fictional newspaper. It was run by Eugene Achike and his editor, Ade Coker. "The Standard" stands out in post-colonial Nigeria. Unlike other media outlets, Adichie portrays this newspaper as a lone voice bravely criticizing the corrupt, independent government and demanding a return to democracy. This is seen when Kambili says that "Papa told us, the politicians were corrupt, and the Standard had written many stories about the cabinet ministers who stashed money in foreign bank accounts, money meant for paying teachers' salaries and building roads....But what we Nigerians needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was a renewed democracy." (Adichie PH 20). In the past, colonial empires used media like newspapers, radio, and even schoolbooks as

weapons. They carefully controlled the stories people heard and read, creating a fake image of colonization as good and peaceful, while portraying any resistance as violent and savage. Leaders fighting for independence were painted as villains, and uprisings were either ignored or called acts of terror.

“Look at Brother Eugene. He could have chosen to be like other Big Men in this country, he could have decided to sit at home and do nothing after the coup, to make sure the government did not threaten his businesses. But no, he used the Standard to speak the truth even though it meant the paper lost advertising. Brother Eugene spoke out for freedom.”

(Adichie PH 07)

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie shows a powerful counterpoint to these colonial tactics through the fictional newspaper "The Standard." Unlike the government-controlled media, "The Standard" dares to challenge the existing order and expose the injustices happening in Nigeria. By revealing corruption and unfairness, it shatters the government's image of being good and helpful. It also gives a platform for different stories to be told, stories that highlight the struggles of ordinary people. The very existence of "The Standard" under the threat of government punishment shows a refusal to be silenced. It represents the fight for a free press and the right to disagree with the government, a right that was denied under colonial rule.

Adichie uses "The Standard" to highlight the dangers of speaking out in a repressive regime. The constant fear faced by the newspaper and its editor, Ade Coker, makes it clear how fragile freedom of speech can be under such a government. Coker's arrest by the soldiers and torture serve as a brutal reminder of the high stakes involved in challenging those in power. Yet, despite the threats, "The Standard" refuses to be silenced. It stands as a symbol of the unwavering spirit of those who fight for truth and justice, no matter the cost. For Kambili and Jaja, raised in a sheltered and privileged world, "The Standard" becomes a gateway to a whole

new reality. The newspaper exposes them to the harsh realities of their country that exist far beyond the comfortable confines of their lives. This exposure acts as a spark, igniting their own rebellious spirit and a yearning to challenge their father's oppressive rule. Through its pages, they learn about the rampant corruption, the abuse of power by those in charge, and the ongoing struggle for a better Nigeria. It is also seen that Father Amadi speaks well and says, "The Standard is the only paper that dares to tell the truth these days" (Adichie PH 101). Aunt Ifeoma actively praises the work of the editor and her brother associated with the newspaper.

But later in the course of the novel, Ade Coker had been bombed and murdered. Only because he spoke out commonly against the current Nigerian government, he was killed by a package bomb in his house. It is assumed that the government wanted him dead because Ade was an instrumental part of the paper that criticized them. In response to Ade Coker's bombing, Papa took charge. He arranged Coker's funeral, secured a trust fund for Yewande and her children, and even bought them a new house. Additionally, he gave the Standard staff generous bonuses and sent them all on extended leave (Adichie PH 150).

"The Standard" becomes more than just a symbol of dissent; it embodies the hope for a brighter future. The newspaper's continued existence, despite the constant threats and deaths, suggests that the fight for justice will never truly die. "The Standard" remains a powerful symbol. It represents the yearning for a society where truth prevails, difference of opinion is taken into consideration, and the public is empowered through knowledge. It also represents the immense power of the written word to inspire change and challenge the existing order. In the larger context of postcolonial Nigeria, "The Standard" reflects the ongoing struggle for a free press, a fight that began with breaking free from the shackles of colonial control of information. By portraying this fight, Adichie reminds us of the critical role a free press plays in fostering a truly democratic and just society.

4.6 Women's Agency and Empowerment

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* tackles the complex issue of women's agency and empowerment in a patriarchal Nigerian society. The novel explores this theme through the contrasting experiences of the female characters. Syed Hajira Begum in her article, *Women Empowerment in Purple Hibiscus* states that, "In an effort to empower the African woman, Adichie crafts stories with female subjects pursuing female interests. She also structures her narratives to contest the male power with its violent manifestations. Her exercise is an invention of gender power discourse that serves to inspire the female struggle against male domination" (Begum). This supports the point that Adichie prioritizes female characters with their own desires and goals, giving voice to perspectives that are often sidelined. Her narratives actively confront the violence and oppression of male dominance, sparking a critical discourse about gender roles.

The protagonist, Kambili, grows up in a strict and abusive household controlled by her father, Eugene, who is a religious fanatic. At the beginning of the novel, Kambili is deeply entrenched in her father Eugene's strict and oppressive regime. Throughout her childhood, Kambili's understanding of the world has been shaped by her father's rigid interpretation of Catholicism. This strict religious doctrine permeates every aspect of her life, dictating her behaviour, clothing, and even who she can interact with. Kambili attended school, but anything less than first place wasn't good enough for her father. Education wasn't about her own growth but Papa prioritized the outward success and social standing. Desperately seeking for his validation, she constantly strives to make him happy. However, these rigid expectations had a devastating impact on her, leaving her trapped in a struggle to fulfill an impossible standard set by her father. However, as the story progresses, Kambili's encounters with her aunt Ifeoma and her family offer her glimpses of a different way of life. She supports her to challenge societal

norms and inspires Kambili to question the limitations placed upon her. Along with her independence and resilience, she becomes a role model for Kambili, showing her that there are other ways to exist beyond the confines of her father's control.

Ultimately, Kambili's empowerment is catalyzed by her mother Beatrice's decision to stand up to Eugene, breaking the cycle of abuse and repression in their family. Beatrice's act of defiance inspires Kambili to find her own strength and agency, leading her to speak out against her father's violence and control. As Kambili matures, her voice strengthens. She confronts her fears and defies expectations. This is evident in her defiance of her father's rules, some of which are when she starts liking Father Amadi and starts getting along with her grandfather. By the end of the novel, Kambili emerges as a confident and assertive young woman who has found her voice and is no longer afraid to challenge the patriarchal norms that have oppressed her. Her journey towards agency and empowerment is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of self-discovery and resistance. It offers hope for young women navigating patriarchal structures, inspiring them to fight for their own space and claim their agency.

“Adichie surveys the identity of women as wives and highlights different forms of gender oppression linked to such identity. Women become wives through marriage whether monogamous or polygamous” (Begum 2017). Beatrice's identity as Eugene's wife becomes a source of her oppression. Her role is limited to fulfilling his expectations, with no agency or control over her own life. At the beginning of the novel, Beatrice is portrayed as a devout Catholic whose life is completely controlled by her husband. She has no freedom to make choices or express her feelings so much so that she can't even choose the colour of the curtains. There is an incident in the text, when she feels unwell after church service and wants to rest in the car. But a mere glance at her husband's face forces her to join the family, silently enduring her pain (Adichie PH 23). He dictates everything, completely ignoring her wishes. As a result,

she's left powerless and marginalized within her own marriage. Also Beatrice has to deal with the societal expectations, it is essentially believed that a woman's worth hinges solely on fulfilling the "biological duty" of motherhood. Beatrice has this constant fear of replacement, that Papa might seek new wives, women who can give him more kids.. In this society, a woman's security and standing rest on the number of children she bears, especially sons. Beatrice's story unfolds against this backdrop, highlighting the constant pressure to conform to a system that reduces her value to her procreation abilities.

Initially Mama Beatrice believed that there is no life of a woman without a husband, this ideology is seen through her conversation with Ifeoma when she sarcastically says, "A woman with children and no husband, what is that? How can a woman live like that?" She also believes that, "A husband crowns a woman's life" (Adichie PH 56-57). The story slowly reveals Beatrice's growing defiance against Eugene's controlling behaviour. As the novel progresses, Beatrice becomes increasingly disillusioned with her husband and starts to subtly resist his dominance. She secretly practices her Igbo traditions, defying his strict Catholicism. Beatrice even empowers her children by encouraging them to be independent thinkers and question their father's control. These seemingly insignificant acts represent a critical turning point in Beatrice's journey. They expose her developing inner strength and her fierce determination to shield her children from the oppressive environment she endures. The climax of Beatrice's transformation arrives when she poisons, hence defying the potential repercussions. Hajira Begum comments on the same context and says that, "The suffering that Beatrice goes through can only be eased by removing Eugene out of her space and so the writer's act is the final act of tearing down patriarchy and its violence" (Begum). This courageous act signifies Beatrice's claim to agency. She seizes control of her own life, refusing to be a prisoner in an abusive relationship any longer.

Ifeoma's story is a transformation in action. She actively claims her agency, step by step, to shape her own future. As the text proceeds one is made to witness her awakening to the limitations placed upon her and her determined fight to break free from them. This fight starts subtly as Ifeoma is depicted as an independent and educated woman, working as a university professor. Her career signifies a form of empowerment, as she has pursued her own path and achieved success in a male-dominated profession. Her commitment to education is also significant, as it symbolizes her belief in the power of knowledge to empower individuals. Perhaps she challenges the traditional gender roles within her family or community. These initial acts of defiance, though seemingly small, sow the seeds of rebellion.

The turning point in Ifeoma's journey, pivotal moment where she faces a significant challenge is when she experiences a personal loss, the death of her husband, Ifediora. He who always supported her dreams, but then she was forced her to rely on her own inner strength. She doesn't even care to listen to his side of the family. The people in his 'umunna' claimed that she had taken all his money and "one of the women from their compound even told me I had killed him" (Adichie 56). The society have been harsh towards widow especially widows with kids.

As Ifeoma gains confidence, her resistance intensifies. She challenges traditional gender roles and patriarchal expectations through her actions and beliefs. Unlike many women in the novel who conform to societal norms, Ifeoma is outspoken and assertive, refusing to be silenced or controlled by men. Ifeoma once said that "being defiant can be a good thing sometimes" (Adichie HY 107). Her defiance of patriarchal authority is evident in her interactions with her brother, Eugene, whom she openly criticizes for his oppressive behaviour. These bolder actions demonstrate her growing sense of self-worth and her refusal to be confined by external forces. The culmination of Ifeoma's empowerment is her own doing. She

achieves a long-held dream, overcomes a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, or forges her own path in life. She tries to leave Nigeria and move to America. This final act signifies her complete liberation, a testament to her unwavering spirit and her journey to become the maker of her own destiny. *Purple Hibiscus* blooms with stories of strong women. Their fight for voice and education shows how women can break free. The novel ends with a hopeful image: women empowered, ready to write their own futures.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research has undertaken a postcolonial feminist analysis of the selected texts by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who is known as a prominent contemporary African author. Through close readings of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie's portrayal of intersections between gender, race, and class within the context of postcolonialism has been explored.

The study suggests that the settings of Adichie's works depict a social environment where women may hold a diminished social standing compared to men. Their opinions and perspectives are accorded less weight within the social sphere. This aligns with the concept of a patriarchal society, where power and authority are primarily concentrated in the hands of men. This aspect is seen through *Purple Hibiscus*, the character portrayal of Beatrice, can be used to illustrate how societal expectations may confine women to a more domestic role, prioritizing obedience and deference to male authority figures within the household. Additionally, the economic dependence of some female characters on their husbands could be interpreted as a reflection of potential restrictions on their financial agency. The study suggests that female characters in Adichie's novels encounter a complex interplay of oppressive forces. These forces include societal patriarchal norms and the lingering effects of colonialism, which pose challenges for both men and women. This dynamic adds up with the concept of intersectionality, where individuals can experience oppression based on overlapping social entities.

Adichie's selected texts depict instances of solidarity and support networks among female characters within Nigeria. These relationships could be interpreted as a form of sisterhood, where women provide mutual encouragement and assistance in navigating their hardships. Such relations contribute to the development and journeys of these characters.

Adichie's work explores the potential of education as a tool for women to challenge societal stereotypes. Characters like Kainene, Olanna, and Ifeoma could be interpreted as examples of how education potentially empowers women and grants them a platform for self-expression. Adichie's work also examines the complexities of religion within Nigerian society. Characters like Papa Eugene represent a potentially negative influence of religion on some individuals. However, characters like Ifeoma might present a contrasting female perspective, suggesting that religion can offer a positive framework for others. By presenting contrasting characters like Eugene and Ifeoma, Adichie in a way encourages the readers to delve into the complexities of religious interpretations and their impact on individuals.

Adichie's novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War, this depicts instances of women exhibiting agency and resilience in challenging circumstances. Characters like Olanna and Kainene could be interpreted as demonstrating independent decision-making and taking initiative to support those in need, even amidst the chaos of war. Similarly, *Purple Hibiscus* might portray female characters navigating their place in the postcolonial society. Characters like Auntie Ifeoma can be seen as demonstrating resilience by balancing the responsibilities of single motherhood, caring for an elderly parent, and pursuing a professional career. On a smaller scale, the novel also depicts the gradual assertion of agency within a restrictive household. Characters like Mama Beatrice and Kambili could be interpreted as exhibiting a growing sense of self-determination within their oppressive environment.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, actively implements the theme of cultural hybridity. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the internal conflict between Igbo traditions and Christianity unfolds within a Nigerian family. Kambili's journey embodies this negotiation as she struggles with her father's restrictive beliefs and the liberating potential

of new ideas. Papa Eugene exemplifies complete conversion to Catholicism, while Papa Nnukwu clings to the long held Igbo traditions. Whereas Auntie Ifeoma, a Christian who maintains her Igbo roots, embodies a middle ground and portrays hybridity. *Half of a Yellow Sun* expands the concept of identity to a national scale. Characters confront the clash between traditional customs, British colonialism, and Nigeria's emerging postcolonial identity. Characters like Odenigbo and Ugwu represent the Igbo way of life, with its emphasis on lineage, community, and ancestral reverence. Characters like Olanna and Kainene represent a growing sense of Nigerian nationalism. They yearn for a nation free from colonial influence, where they can define their own identity. The fight for Biafran independence reflects this desire. Even the relationship between Kainene and Richard, a Nigerian woman and a British man, who bridge cultural divides in their love and wartime experiences. By portraying characters caught between cultures, Adichie highlights the challenges and opportunities of cultural hybridity. While it can lead to conflict and confusion, it can also be a source of personal growth and societal transformation. Adichie's work suggests that embracing cultural hybridity, rather than clinging to rigid traditions, is key to navigating the complexities of a globalized world.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a renowned author celebrated for her powerful storytelling and insightful exploration of social issues. Her narratives skillfully weave social and political commentary through contrasting characters. Notably, Adichie avoids taking sides, instead she presents a neutral narrative voice. However, her characters themselves become agents of empowerment, particularly for women who confront injustices and take a stand. This approach allows readers to develop their own perspectives. While Adichie provides an open-ended approach, readers become deeply connected to the characters and the story, often feeling as if they are participants in the narrative. This fosters a sense of empathy, leading readers to

believe the characters' actions are driven by a genuine desire for what they perceive as the best outcome.

Adichie challenges stereotypical narratives about Africa, particularly through her nuanced portrayal of characters and cultures. This dismantles preconceived notions and fosters a more informed and empathetic global audience. By centering the experiences of women and those marginalized by colonialism, she gives voice to often unheard perspectives. This empowers individuals and communities to claim their narratives and advocate for themselves. Adichie's characters, particularly the strong and resilient women, serve as role models. They inspire readers to challenge the status quo, fight for their rights, and work towards a better future.

Adichie offers a unique and powerful perspective on Africa, countering stereotypical narratives often perpetuated in Western literature. She portrays the continent's rich cultures, complex histories, and the experiences of its people with authenticity. She has been garnered with numerous prestigious awards. These include the Orange Prize for *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book for *Purple Hibiscus* (2005), and the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Americanah* (2013). Her work has been translated into over 30 languages, establishing her as a major figure in contemporary world literature. Through her writing and public speaking engagements, she becomes a prominent voice for feminism. She is not only known in the literary circle but she is also the global icon for fashion. Adichie tackles critical social issues and sparks conversations about race, gender, and identity on a global scale. She herself belongs to the Igbo community and as woman she serves as a right voice to bring out the feminist perspective within the context of postcolonial Africa. Her insightful portrayal of issues about intersection of gender, race, and class offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by many, in Nigeria.

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