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**WOMEN' S STRUGGLES FOR
INDEPENDENCE IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI
ADICHIE'S SELECTED NOVELS**

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DEDICATION

To my mother: Dègan Afiavi

My wife: Hounmabè Ruth

My precious daughter: Fifamè

And finally all those women who struggle for gender justice
all over the world.

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Introduction

Among the numerous challenges faced by humanity, there are problems related to socially constructed ideologies expressed through prejudices, stereotypes and controlled images which have real consequences on people's lives. Many have suffered from it since the dawn of times. Indeed if people are not denied the right to exist, at least they are ill-treated and marginalized by the so called privileged group. Women are among those who face this kind of situation all over the world owing to gender difference. Women in Africa to some extent are virtually regarded as 'second class' human beings who are meant to be seen and not heard or are simply a pair of eyes behind a veil in the Islamic world. Their lives solely revolve around procreation, motherhood, merging into the man's world without protesting and "brainwashed into accepting their slavish status"¹.

Acholonu opines that the African woman is "trapped in the claws of the taboos and the restrictions that only help to propel male chauvinism"². The oppression and suppression of women is not peculiar to the African woman alone. It is a worldwide phenomenon that women have to grapple with in the last centuries. Katrack has further stated that "as a female child grows from childhood to womanhood and to motherhood, she is controlled and owned by her father, her husband, and then her sons"³, thereby ensuring the continuation of the subjugation of women in the patriarchal society. For instance Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* published in 2003 through the character of Mama helps to understand women's humiliation in front of their children:

He (Daddy) unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather covered buckle. It landed on JAJA first, across his shoulder. Then MAMA raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse⁴.

¹-Fonchingong, Charles. 'Unbending Gender Narratives in African Literature' in *Journal of International Women's studies* Vol8 n°1 2006. p136

² -Acholonu, Catherine. '*Buchi Emecheta*'. *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the present* Vol 2 Guardian Books Nigeria Limited, 1988 p216

³ Katrak, Ketu. H. *Womanhood and Motherhood: Variations on a theme in Selected Novels of Buchi Emecheta*. *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*.21. 1. 1987.p 159

⁴ ADICHIE, *Purple Hibiscus* ;Lagos :Farafina 2003 p102

Moreover, in Mariama Bâ's *So long a letter*, Ramatoulaye, a widow, has sent her friend Aissatou a letter in which she narrates her struggle for survival in a household where her husband Modou has taken a second wife. One part of the letter goes as follows:

I survived. I overcame my shyness at going alone to cinemas; I would take a seat with less and less embarrassment as the month went by. People stared at the middle-aged lady without partner. I would feign indifference, while anger hammered against my eyes.⁵

Another part of the letter goes as follows:

I was not deceived, therefore. I no longer interested Modou, and I knew it. I was abandoned: a fluttering leaf that no hand dares to pick up, as my grandmother would have said. I faced up to the situation bravely. I carried out my duties; they filled the time and channeled my thoughts. But my loneliness would emerge at night, burdensome. One does not easily undo the tenuous ties that bind two people together during a journey fraught with hardship⁶.

The two quotations above suggest husbands' oppressive attitude towards their wives and the glaring sufferings married women are exposed to within their households.

In a bid to liberate themselves from male oppression and dominance and also to better their lot in society, women have tried to organize themselves into socio-political groups. Through this process, they strive towards emancipating themselves and ensuring the attainment of equal social status and equal access to the same opportunities as men.

Feminism among its numerous goals helps women to relentlessly struggle to lift themselves from their subordinate state and to carve out new roles and identities for themselves. And one way of achieving it, is through literature. The writer, therefore, has the responsibility of shaping the minds and social awareness of members of society in order to ensure the emergence of a society that does not discriminate on the basis of gender. Molaria Ogundikpè Leslie's STIWANISM, an acronym for "Social Transformation Including Women in Africa", seeks the transformation of society that fully integrates women. Female writers are therefore concerned with the amelioration of the women's unfavorable condition by trying to change all political, economic and societal beliefs, norms and values that are detrimental to women. These reforms and their enforcement will help reduce and eventually eradicate women's subjugation that drives them to extremes of anguish and despair so much so that some even resort to murder as the only option for the attainment of freedom. Among the

⁵ BA, *So Long a Letter*; Ibadan Heinemann 1981p51

⁶ Ibid p52

female writers who choose to undertake this task is Adichie who published *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006).

I have chosen her books because she has made African women's afflictions and fights her concern. She wishes to see men and women treated on an equal footing in cultural, economic, educational, traditional and social spheres. She presents women in general and contemporary African women in particular in ways different from men's; she helps to discover some aspects of domestic and social life that have not been raised by male writers.

At this level it seems convenient to say a few words about the author and the two novels under study. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born September 15, 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. She was raised in Nsukka at the University of Nigeria. She is from Igbo descent and her ancestral home is in Abba. She enrolled in Medical school and later on dropped out to pursue her dream of becoming a writer. When she was 19, she left Nigeria to study communication at Drexel University in Philadelphia. She obtained a degree in communication and political science at Eastern Connecticut State University. Adichie gives credence to Chinua Achebe; Igbo author with her literary success. She once lived in Achebe's house and believes his halo surrounds her. After reading his books at 10, she then realized that people who looked like her could exist in books. Her desire to write was sparked by Achebe's work.

In 2003 *Purple Hibiscus* was published to wide acclaim. The book reveals the continuous struggle of individuals who are trapped within some form of domination that exploits them and hence, curbs their freedom. These people are always subjected to violence, subjugation and discrimination. An impassioned desire for liberation is what motivates their struggle against the mammoth forces of power. Subjugation, resistance and freedom are dominant themes of the text. It was short listed for the Orange Prize and awarded the commonwealth writers' Prize for Best First Book in 2005.

She was awarded with the Orange Prize in 2007 for her second novel, *Half of A yellow Sun*. It is an epic novel that recreates the events of the 1967-1970 Nigerian-Biafran civil war. The subject is specifically the fate of Biafrans. It is a tale of war, suffering, and destruction told from a woman's perspective. During this period the Nigerian citizens especially women and children suffered a lot. Women have sacrificed everything at their disposal in order to sustain their families. The women's roles in all the stories negate the erroneous impression that women are merely weak, docile and vulnerable members of the society. On the contrary, women's efforts to an appreciable extent sustain the entire society. A collection of short stories entitled *The Thing Around your Neck* was published in 2009 by

Chimamanda Ngozi. Adichie tries to combat the image of Africans as portrayed by Western to media. She published *Americanah* in 2013. As reflected in her writing voice, Adichie's works wholly indict the patriarchal oppression of women and also encourage women to assert themselves irrespective of cultural norms and archaic traditions which have denied them their human rights and have largely promoted their subordination. She is a great feminist and uses her work through the injustices and unfair treatments she has faced as an African woman in the global literary community.

Adichie wrote *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* to help discover some aspects of domestic and social life that have not been raised by male writers. Her novels are full of women from all social classes, strong willed, aged mothers keeping to the village, wealthy traders, hawkers, female lecturers, quiet and passive housewives and chatty neighbours all of them doing a great deal in order to survive or making efforts to improve their own lives. Like African countries that fought colonial powers to get their independence, Adichie's women go through different ordeals and each of them find her own way to get through her dilemmas and become independent.

This study locates itself in the feminist discourses so as to explore how Adichie highlights the struggle by African women and how she imagines ways of their being independent. It also interrogates the two novels to establish the extent to which Adichie is engaged in centering women issues as well as the problems that Africans face.

Now what are the different struggles women undergo and how do they manage to get out of their different dilemmas? What are the weapons or tools Adichie provide them with in order to subvert their situations? Have education, knowledge, employment, determination and courage helped women in some ways achieve their goals?

My intention in choosing to deal with the topic **“Women’s struggles for independence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s selected novels”** is to explore how Adichie highlights the struggles by African women and how she imagines ways of their becoming liberated and emancipated. My study interrogates the two novels to establish the extent to which Adichie is engaged in centering women issues as well as the problems that Africa face. It also explores the latent source of resistance among women who are pushed to the margins both in familial and outside world. Many literary critics, novelists and essayists have written a number of reviews on both books. I therefore proceed to examine the literature related to the study with the intention of teasing out the knowledge gaps left by other scholars.

Literature Review

Many literary critics, novelists and essayists have written a number of articles and journals on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Here are some of these writings and their relationship with my work.

Bernard Dickson⁷ has written an essay on *Purple Hibiscus*. In this essay, he contrasts the lives of Eugene Achike and his sister Aunty Ifeoma. He affirms that Eugene because of Catholicism and western education cannot let his own father come to his house either in the village or in the city but Aunty Ifeoma delightfully visits him and carries him in her car to her house at Nsukka. Their father eventually dies at Ifeoma's house at Nsukka. Dickson sees this as a reversal of roles: Aunty Ifeoma assumes the role of the first son, as her father dies in her house while her brother Eugene is alive. He affirms that Ifeoma is a respectable trade Unionist and a fearless one at that. He reports how Ifeoma, at the height of the riots on the campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka refuses the security men to invade her home for a search unless they produce their search warrant for her to see. He concludes by saying that Ifeoma is a character to be reckoned with. The difference between his work and mine lies in the fact that he does not deal with how Eugene uses violence to silence his wife and children. He focuses on the lives of Eugene and Aunty Ifeoma and does not analyse Kambili and her mother's lives.

Besides, some scholars have made comparisons between Chimamanda Adichie's works and Chinua Achebe's. In her review, "Nigeria", Kwame Dawes⁸ suggests that *Purple Hibiscus* can be read as another salvo against colonialism and the attendant patriarchy that has been captured in much of West African fiction. It tells the reader of the quiet voice in *Purple Hibiscus* that bears the traumas of a tyrannical catholic father who abuses his family, a father who is completely predisposed towards western colonial ideals. However it is not his inclination towards western colonial ideals that makes Eugene beat his wife and children even though patriarchy is part of the legacy of colonialism. But it is his own domineering and violent attitude which makes him beat his wife and children. Dawes observes that Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* begins with Achebe's monumental narrative of a "clash of cultures" as the first sentence in the novel reads "things began to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja did not go for communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the

⁷ Dickson Bernard. 'Beyond the Rethoric of Female Victimization in Nigerian Women Fiction :A study of Nwapa's *One is Enough*, Ezeigbo's *The last of the strong ones* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

⁸ Dawes, Kwame. Review "Nigeria" *World Literature Today* Jan-Apr2005:84

figurines on the étagère”⁹. Dawes concludes his review by saying that what really falls at the end of the novel is the rigid Catholicism of Eugene Achike; Catholicism immersed in abuse and hypocrisy. The things which come crushing down in the novel are the edifice of Catholicism Eugene built up and its attendant horrors of patriarchy. The gist of Dawes work is that religion as part of colonialism has been used to harm people especially women. That is one aspect of my work.

Dawes observes that Adichie engages with ideological and political issues using metaphor and symbolism. These issues are central to the best of writings in Africa. *Purple Hibiscus* has a fresh and compelling voice that mirrors, including other things, the theme of patriarchy just as *Things Fall Apart* does. Dawes’ article uses *Purple Hibiscus* and *Things Fall Apart* to put to the fore brutalities and violence that have characterized African nations and families as a result of patriarchy. Dawes work parallels mine in that he deals with violence against family members. What makes a difference between his work and mine is that he puts more emphasis on the political and ideological aspects than the fight for liberation and freedom.

Furthermore, Heather Hewett¹⁰ reviews the new generation of Nigerian writers who are rejecting the long silence imposed by dictatorial regimes. In her review titled, “Finding Her Voice”, she notes that *Purple Hibiscus* is the coming of age of the trauma that leads to chaos in a family. This is because a father who seeks to dominate and subject his family to much violence sends the family into a period of trauma in which he dies, his son goes to jail and his daughter and wife have to find a way to patch the wounds that will not heal. Hewett’s article also touches on the issue of a “god-like” father who controls the lives of his children and wife. Hewett sees *Purple Hibiscus* as a life story of Kambili, the restrictions she faces under a patriarch of a father and the new ways of life she discovers in her Aunty’s home. Kambili finds strength to report her experiences at home which mirrors the state of the Nigerian society; a society governed by patriarchs. These experiences can be compared to what we read in *Things Fall Apart* especially when one considers the role of the elders and of the tragic hero, Okonkwo. The similarity between Hewett’s work and mine is that we all talk about the restrictions Kambili face under her father, how she finds strength and voice but I do not make a parallel between Adichie’s work and *Things Fall Apart* .

⁹ ADICHIE, *Purple Hibiscus*, Lagos, Farafina 2003p1

¹⁰ Hewett, Heather “Finding Her Voice”, *Women’s Reviews of Books*. London: Old City Publishing.21,(2004):9-10

Also, Mas Khan's¹¹ analysis of *Purple Hibiscus* titled, "No Hope in Nigeria", is quite different from Dawes' and Hewett's. The review informs readers that *Purple Hibiscus* is the story of fifteen-year-old Kambili whose country Nigeria is engulfed in political turmoil. In addition, she has a tyrannical father who cruelly beats up his wife and two children. Khan critically analyses the coup in *Purple Hibiscus* which results in the change of environment for Kambili and her brother Jaja. Their temporary stay with their aunt Ifeoma brings a wealth of experience. Kambili and Jaja together experience a home where debate is encouraged. "No Hope in Nigeria" gives an insight into the political unrest and corruption which is crippling countries like Nigeria. Khan also proposes that the novel contains a strong plea for religious tolerance. In the end, the fate of the family is the fate of the country and Khan says that the novel is generally a depressing novel. Khan's work resembles mine in that he talks of a tyrannical father who beats up his wife and children but differs from my work in that he embraces some political aspects like the coups and corruption what I do not do.

In addition, Ogaga Okuyadé's article "Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" focuses on the role of the patriarch father, Eugene Achike. In this article, Okuyade portrays Kambili's father as a religious maverick whose over-zealous attitude and clipped religious tones reduce members of his family to the size of midgets. In reading *Purple Hibiscus*, Okuyade maps the growth process of Kambili as she struggles to make her mouth function within totalitarian temperament of her father's home. So Okuyade focuses more on the patriarch father whereas I focus on Kambili and her mother's struggles.

Moreover, Ogechukwu A. Ikediugwu in her review "Feminist Inclinations in Chimamanda Ngozi ADICHIE's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*", posits that Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* has psychological dimension. She notes that the author has ears for interesting details and through vivid descriptions and analysis, the novel explores specific situations within each event and exposes the characters' anxieties, apprehensions, sufferings, losses both in humanity and property and how these have generally affected the lives of the people. The essay also traces the remote cause of Nigerian-Biafran war from the colonial masters' selfish interest in Nigeria which is evident in the ways they nurture, encourage and sustain the war for three years. While talking of *Purple Hibiscus* he focuses more on Eugene than the women

¹¹ Khan, Mas. Review: "No Hope in Nigeria" *Fortnight* Jan 2005:21. Jstor 22 December 2009

Georgiads Mboya Kivai(a Kenyan post-graduate student) in his thesis entitled “The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*” explores how Adichie through her characters defines and names the struggles of African women. He also explores how Adichie suggests a new vision where men and women collaborate in liberation efforts. That is what makes his work different from mine. Furthermore, in his work he has studied the two novels as political metaphors of the Nigerian Nation. All these make his work differ from mine.

In the same vein, Ogbeide O. Victor in his review “Violet without purple: The colour of spousal violence in Neshani Andreas’ *the Purple Violet of Oshaantu*¹²” declares that women are often the victims of spousal abuse which male writers, in their reductionist preoccupation with socio-political issues of the moment, often down play. He also argues that wife battering continues courtesy of the silence of the fairer sex themselves in deference to the oppressive yoke of patriarchy which has come to define their existence. He goes further and says that Shange’s(the main character in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu*) kindred spirit in the African novel is the fundamentalist Catholic sadist, Eugene in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*(2006). Eugene is both a religious zealot and a violent figure in his household where he submits his wife, Beatrice and two children, to severe battering and psychologically cruelty. His house is a luxurious prison where indices of battering abound. Like Kauna, Beatrice frequently gets “black eyes” and the brutal beatings and the acts of dehumanization she and her children suffer at the hands of her husband Eugene remain fresh in the reader’s mind. Purplish in colour are the bruises resulting from the series of beatings Eugene inflicts on Beatrice which make her lose two pregnancies like Kauna. Unlike the attractive purple in the violet of Oshaantu “purple” in Adichie’s usage, says Adeola¹³(2011) “symbolizes brutality, oppression, and dehumanization”. The difference between his work and mine lies in the fact that he deals with spousal abuse only whereas in my work in addition to spousal abuse I deal with with many other forms of oppression women undergo.

In regard to evolving realities in Africa, realizing marginalization and oppression of women in the male dominated society and writing to establish women as speaking subjects, African women writers have rejected western feminism as a vehicle for their struggle.

¹² Andreas N(2001). *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* Essex: Heinemann

¹³ Adeola, FO (2011). Colour Motif in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun*. Unpublished Long Essay; University of Ado-Ekiti, 2011

Kolawole¹⁴(2004) affirms that Africans should have theories which remove the gorges without glossing over cultural specificities in order to build meaningful coalitions. Such thinking is also championed by Kisiang’ani(2005) who draws our attention on the need to decolonize gender studies in Africa. Kisiang’ani¹⁵ says that all forms of knowledge authored and authorized in the west should be dismantled. He argues that gender studies in Africa provide a fertile ground upon which the West uses its immense economic resources to pit the African man against the African woman. He advises on the need for gender studies to embrace a new identity.

To make this research work very useful, I use the two novels as the main source of primary data. I have used the reader’s response theory in which “the reader’s activities are at the center of attention, where he is regarded, not as leading to meaning but as having meaning”¹⁶. Sharing this view, Chris Lang argues that “meaning does not exist out there somewhere. It exists rather, within the reader”¹⁷.

Consequently I account for how I view the message that is carried out by the novelist in her writings: *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. For I assume with Chris Lang that: “the text does not contain meaning: despite being written upon, it is a tabula rasa, a blank slate onto which the reader, in reading, actually writes the text;[...]. [So much so that] the locus of meaning is in the reader not in the text”.

Library research helped gather data on the African women’s writing. A self-interpellative reading looking at the circumstances around the history of Nigeria and Adichie’s biography is explored in an effort to get historical details or personal information likely to filter into the two texts. I should mention that my researches done on the internet via the worldwide web have also helped me a lot. Descriptions of action and scenes, analyses of characters and language provide data for this study and are used to present the main arguments of the study.

This thesis is structured into three chapters. Chapter one entitled the causes of women’s oppression and subjugation in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* pinpoints how through patriarchy, colonization and religion and economic disempowerment women are

¹⁴ Kolawole,Mary. Re-conceptualizing African Gender theory, Feminism Womanism and the *Arere Metaphor*” *Rethinking sexualities in Africa*.(Ed.) Signe A. Uppsala:Nordiska Africa Institute,2004:251-66

¹⁵ Kisiang’ani, Wasma. Decolonizing Gender Studies in Africa, *African Gender Scholarship: concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms.*”(Eds.)Edward Kisiang’ani,Bibi Bakari et al. Dakar:CODESRIA, 2004:24-36

¹⁶ Fish Stanley *Is There a Text In This Class? :The Authority of interpretive communities*, Havard University Press, Cambridge, 1980

¹⁷ Lang, A Brief History of Literary Theory, in <http://www.xenos.org/essays> accessed 21st may 2012

oppressed in both novels. Chapter two: Oppression of women in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This chapter firstly shows how men have made use of violence to subjugate and silence women and secondly the different stages women have gone through in order to subvert the situation and become independent. The third and last chapter entitled Adichie's solutions to women's oppression and perspectives for women's empowerment is about the different tools Adichie provides women with in order to overcome their oppression and subjugation. Having structured the work, I think that the way is now paved for the different chapters that my work comprises. So the next step of my work is the displaying of the first chapter which will deal with women's oppression and subjugation in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Chapter1: The Causes of women's oppression and subjugation in *Purple Hibiscus*.

The causes that contribute to women's oppression and subjugation are manifold. But only the most important and essential causes are going to be discussed here.

1.1-Patriarchy

Gender is one of the three major groupings of the human world. It cuts across the two major groups of races and classes. Whether one is black or white or yellow, poor or rich, one must be either male or female and from the dawn of history, the predominant thing that has always created conflict is the issue of power. The questions are: who dominate the other? Who is superior to the other? Who dictates the tune and who dances to the tune? Gradually, the struggle for power or dominance between man and woman brings patriarchy into existence. What then is patriarchy?

Patriarchy is a social system in which society is organized around male authority figures. In this system fathers have absolute authority over women, children and property. It simplifies the institutions of male rule and privilege as is dependent on female subordination.¹⁸

Patriarchal thinking holds that men are naturally superior to women. Such ideology justifies male domination and forms the firm foundation of patriarchy. A patriarchal society such as African society is an unjust social system that is oppressive to women. It is a society where the woman is relegated to the background in every sphere of life. It is a society that upholds the ideology "that a woman is seen and not heard". She is inferior to the man both spiritually and physically, a man's intelligence surpasses hers, therefore she should rely on a man for guidance and protection. She does not have a say so to say in her society. Her place is in the kitchen and she should sacrifice everything to make her man happy.

Patriarchy undervalues female experiences and knowledge and is a strong ideology that controls women in several societies. Women being the muted group are compelled to follow and accept what men devise and formulate. The basic pillar of the patriarchal power within the African context is the silencing of women including their loss of control of their own bodies. In an effort to empower the African woman, Adichie writes stories with female subjects pursuing female interests. She also structures her narratives to contest the male power

¹⁸ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia(2014). "Feminism",consulted on 9 August 2014
Web.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism

with its violent manifestations. Her exercise is an invention of gender power discourse that serves to inspire the female struggle against male domination.

Kolawole(1997) believes that African women are products of multiple forms of subjugation: ‘patriarchy, tradition, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and gender imperialism all combine to act against the African woman’s self assertion’¹⁹.

In this study therefore, I argue that Adichie is involved in the creation of discourse meant to push women from the margins to the centre. Adichie confronts patriarchy and other forms of marginalization of women in her works. My study is informed by the proposition that African women operate within the paradigm of dominated-periphery defined groups and so they are actively engaged in production of oppositional ideologies to counter the overriding patriarchal principles. In this regard, Olanna’s sexual intercourse with Richard and Kainene’s living in a room on her own are illustrative examples. I therefore consider Adichie’s writing to be a form of protest literature subverting the male order and I strive to explore how she achieves a voice for her female characters.

Patriarchy compels women to believe that their inferior position is natural and irredeemable. Adichie’s writing is an effort to voice internal knowledge and needs of women in a way that challenges the status quo. For example none of her women characters is in a polygamous house and they all prevent their husbands to have mistresses. She reworks earlier images of African women projected by patriarchal order and figures female characters as speaking subjects in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This is in line with Kristeva(1980) who develops a semiotic language challenging paternal discourse and seeking a return to identification with the mother. Kristeva endeavours to subvert male hegemony and patriarchy and probably herald new thinking, a basic deconstructionist principle. The African woman writer’s goal, thus, is to redefine the woman’s exercise of authority and seek entry into the public sphere since women’s voice has been largely marginalized. Adichie’s desire to investigate the marginal and liminal position taken by women marks the birth of her narratives.

Furthermore, Mabura (2008) in her reading of Adichie’s novels concludes that the texts are forms of Gothic fiction where the female characters are often terrified, oppressed and driven to psychological disintegration by powerful tyrannical males who embody patriarchal

¹⁹ Kolawole Modukpè Mary E. ‘Womanism and African consciousness’ African world Press(1997)

oppression²⁰. In *Purple Hibiscus* one can argue that Eugene fits the descriptions of a Gothic patriarch and Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja the suffering subjects of his authority. These victims of paternal patriarchal authority do everything possible to claim their free space in the oppressive circumstances occasioned by Eugene. Women are exploited in their different identities in the cosmos of the two novels. That notwithstanding, women courageously and continually challenge the patriarchal ideology in various ways. In the two narratives, women are wives mothers, daughters, or mistresses and these positions allow them to use the domestic space and the prescribed female identity to contest male power. 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.

Ogundikpe-Leslie²¹ (1994) identifies oppression at the matrimonial level as one of the mountains that keep the African women in subordination. Adichie's novels therefore hit at the glaring inequalities so as to engender the required change likely to bring equity among husbands and wives. Her writing seeks to collapse what Ali Mazrui²²(1990) calls the 'triple custodial role' of remaining in trusteeship of fire, water and earth and probably push them to the public sphere which has in the past , a male preserve. As a mediating process Adichie's writing can be understood within the assertions of Wartenburg²³(1990) who argues that power is mediated by social alignments which are dynamic. He maintains that the subordinate agent is always in the position of being able to challenge the aligned agents' complicity in her disempowerment. Auntie Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* is an example of woman asserting her position in the society and challenging patriarchy with its several manifestations. Any system of oppression draws much of its strength from the acquiescence of its victims who accept their image and get paralyzed by a sense of helplessness. Characters in Adichie's novels are not acquiescent to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situation: Auntie Ifeoma challenges violence at the state level; Beatrice poisons Eugene Auntie Ifeoma tells her husband that she would cut off his genitals if he humiliates her with mistresses; Olanna has slept with Richard to take a revenge on Odenigbo for having impregnated Amala and so on. Adichie's two stories explore numerous societal structures through which women are oppressed. She identifies domestic violence, religion, traditions, family life in-lawism, civil

²⁰ Mabura, Lily, *Breaking Gods: An African Postcolonial Gothic Reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun. Research in African Literatures*39(1)2008:202-222

²¹ Ogundikpè Leslie *Recreating Ourselves: African women and Critical Transformation*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press,1994

²² Mazrui, Ali. *Cultural Forces in World Politics*. Nairobi E. A. E. P, 1990

²³ Wartenburg, Thomas. *The Forms of Power From Domination to Transformation*_Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

unrest, extended families, polygamy, preference of male child over female, racism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism as being responsible for unequal gender relations forming the basis of women's exploitation. She decries unfriendly masculine actions like rape in times of war, sexual exploitation of children as shown when Father Marcel exploits underage girls sexually in exchange for food during the Nigerian-Biafra war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*²⁴ and domestic violence that characterizes Eugene's household in *Purple Hibiscus*. Adichie interrogates polygamy, demand for sons and religious fundamentalism and how they negatively bear on women. In the two texts, she prods society to review the way it treats women. The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* contains many instances that show the patriarchal aspect of the society they are in. Odenigbo because his fiancée is away for a few weeks sleeps with Amala and goes to the extent of impregnating her. As if this is not grief enough for Olanna, he also sleeps with Alice who is by far less attractive than Olanna in all fields. Not only are Odenigbo's actions disgraceful and humiliating to Olanna but he also dares have the coital act on his matrimonial bed with her friend. These actions of Odenigbo portray him as a sexual beast that is incapable of controlling his sexual appetite and therefore fails to keep his marital vows. However, this should not surprise us so much when we remember that we live in a patriarchal society where men are in control and as such can do anything and get away with it. They do not apologize to their wives because their wives are their properties which they can use as they wish and discard when they no longer count or matter, marital vow notwithstanding. How can a man who commits adultery a first time and gets a child out of wedlock dares repeat it? And worse still the child that comes from his first illegal sexual act is being kept by his fiancée because the biological mother refuses to keep the baby. This is ungratefulness on the part of Odenigbo but from a patriarch's point of view this is nothing but maleness or gentlemanliness. This is psychological and emotional torture to Olanna. Adichie by making Olanna sleep with Richard is calling on women to fight patriarchy. Also Mr Ozobia proposes many men to her to choose. As much as Olanna is well educated and enlightened, her father still wants to impose a man on her by displaying her to the public for men to see and have her in exchange for money or tenders, this is public patriarchy. But patriarchy alone cannot account for the actual predicament of African women; we also have colonization and religion which favour women's oppression and subjugation and is the next step in my discussion.

²⁴ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun*, Lagos, Farafina:2006 p398

1.2 Colonization and religion

Akachi Ezeigbo's *Vision and Revision* written in 1998 is challenging the literature written by female authors for "been largely focused on family issues and on the survival of their husband and children... that they have kept to their roles as nurturers"²⁵. But in order to construct an integrating, whole, female subject of African literature, one must de-construct the "threefold oppression" of the Black woman of Africa: "by virtue of her sex she is dominated by man in patriarchal society; by virtue of her class she is at the mercy of capitalist exploitation; by virtue of her race she suffers from the appropriation of her country by colonial or neo-colonial powers..."²⁶ From the above excerpt, I can deduce that colonization in one way or the other has contributed to women's suffering and current predicament of African woman. But how does this happen?

Colonization of Africa by European countries was a monumental milestone in the development of Africa. The Africans consider the impact of colonization on them to be perhaps the most important factor in understanding the present condition of the African continent and of the African people. Moreover in the conventional wisdom western influence has "emancipated" African women through the weakening of kinship bonds and the provision of "free choice" in Christian monogamous marriage, the suppression of barbarous practices, the opening of schools, and the introduction of modern medicine and hygiene and sometimes of female suffrage. But colonization did not influence African women only positively. It has harmed them more than it helps them. Not only were they oppressed in terms of being colonized, but they were equally oppressed in their own traditional society. Anthropologist Oyeronke Oyewumi states that "African females were colonized by Europeans as Africans and as African women"²⁷. They were dominated, exploited, and inferiorized as Africans together with African men and then separately inferiorized and marginalized as African women"²⁸. If native men were reduced to heathens and savages, the women were stereotyped either as virgins or whores in the colonists' eyes.

²⁵ Theodora Akachi Ezeigbo, *Vision and Revision :Flora Nwapa and the fiction of war, apud Marion Pape, Nigerian war literature by women, From civil war to Gender war*; Amsterdam & Union NJ: Editions Rodopi, 2005 p.233

²⁶ Awa Thiam, *Black Sisters Speak Out: Feminism and Oppression in Black Africa*, Pluto Press, 1986, p.118

²⁷ Oyewumi Oyeronke. 'Colonizing body and mind'. *The post-colonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, 1995:257

²⁸ *ibid*

One of the most important tools colonizers used to discriminate against women is the missionary education, so it is convenient to say a few words this educational system. It is by keeping to colonial ideals that Eugene Achike in *Purple Hibiscus* oppresses his wife and children.

The western missionaries' most important goal in Africa was to civilize and enlighten the natives in line with their religious beliefs and ethical principles. Regarding the natives as savages and under-class citizens, the missionaries found it necessary to convert the natives to Christianity and to teach them a civilized Christian way of life. Fostering young native 15 was an effective solution; by raising young Africans on the missionary stations Government secured an obliging submissive staff of African civil servants who eventually served the government's interest. The relationship between Christianity and the traditional religions was tense; the missionaries resented the natives' traditions. They sought to convert the natives according to the western view of godliness where prayers, purity and fasting play important parts in the Christians' rituals. All these can be noticed in *Purple Hibiscus* where prayers, novenas, penance, purity and fasting are the order of the day. Kambili and her mother undergo severe punishments for having broken the Eucharistic fast. The contrasts between Christianity and traditional religions caused not only conflicts between the missionaries and the natives but also alienation towards the indigenous culture:

The colonial ideology is that of domination and exploitation of the colonized, intended to derive maximum profit from maximum investment. To realize this objective, the colonizers went ahead to deny the being of the colonized, their person, their culture, their worldview. In its place was installed the person, the culture, and the universe of the colonizer for the realization of the interests of the latter. The successful implementation of this ideology alienated the colonized²⁹.

So the missionaries' idea was not only to convert the natives, but also to transform the colonized's culture. Education and Christianity were closely related but the colonizers did not open schools for African until 1920, and then it was preferably for boys³⁰. If the parents could afford it, girls occasionally could attend school. Christian ideology influenced the children who received missionary education, but had a particularly negative impact on the girls who were educated in the Victorian spirit where women were anticipated to follow their husbands' as faithful servants. In this way, the missionary education for girls trained them exclusively to be good housewives. Moreover some religious injunctions are sometimes deployed to subjugate women. In some other instances, women are not even reckoned with

²⁹ Donatus, Upkong Pius. *The Presence and Impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*.2012

³⁰ Weinrich, A. K. H. *Women and Racial Discrimination in Rhodesia*.Paris : Unesco,1979

and are therefore excluded when children are numbered. An illustration of this can be found in the Holy Bible where Jacob had thirteen children, twelve boys and one girl.

But throughout the passages where the names of the children of Jacob were mentioned, the name of Dinah the only female was always excluded. Also among the twelve apostles of our Lord Jesus and the prophets there is no woman. This situation further exacerbated the ‘feminization of poverty’ syndrome because female children have no right of inheritance especially on landed property and this has further disempowered women economically.

In the Islamic faith certain injunctions are often relied upon as justification for confining women in ‘Purdah’ (house seclusion of women) as is usually practiced in some muslim regions.(e.g: northern Nigeria). The implication of this is the deprivation of female children from being adequately educated like their male counterparts and this undoubtedly affects their pattern of socialization into active participation in leadership positions both at the private and public realms.

The history of religion in the Nigerian post-colonial space is interesting. While Nigeria has clear ethnic differences that contribute to a turbulent past, the presence of religion has come to be recognized as a major determinant alongside tribal identities. Falola Toyin³¹(1998) considers religion as a major part of the formation of identity within the Nigerian post-colonial arena. His study on how the secularity of the state is threatened by the over-determination of religion reveals interesting insights into the concept of religious fundamentalism in Nigeria. In his introduction he maps out how religious fundamentalism has developed since the independence of Nigeria in the 1960s.

What I draw from Falola’s(1998) discussion is the view that religion has historically permeated the Nigerian socio-cultural and political fabric to the extent that it plays a major role in shaping some of the individual attitudes represented in characters like Papa Eugene in the text. While Falola(1998) relocates religious over-determination within the macro-spaces of state machinery and politics, such influence trickles down to the space of the family. What I see in *Purple Hibiscus* is not only the manifestation of fundamentalism through Papa Eugene but also its impact in the familial space. What makes it even more interesting is Papa

³¹ Falola Toyin(1998) *Violence in Nigeria : The crisis of religious politics and secular Ideologies*. Rochester ,N.Y: University of Rochester Press

Eugene's public image: he owns *The Standard* a newspaper that criticizes the military governments through its editor Ade cocker, fighting for freedom in terms of championing for dialogue. Yet Papa Eugene's intentions are according to Father Benedict captured in the following words:

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. How many of us have stood up for the truth?³² .

Papa Eugene is indeed in the public sphere a champion of the freedom and space for dialogue within the public political spaces. The biggest irony of course is that this fundamentalism that manifests itself in the public space as a seeker of truth manifests itself within the familial space as a silencer. While the Nigerian military government does all it can to gag the press, Papa Eugene gags his household through rituals like penance, worship, confession and general prayer.

Bossard and Boll³³ (1950:9) give a comprehensive definition of ritual paying attention to how it develops as a process:

We shall speak of ritual here as meaning a pattern of prescribed formal behavior, pertaining to some specific event, occasion or situation which tends to be repeated over and over again. As it develops, it tends to demand relatively punctilious observance, admitting of no, or at least few, exceptions or deviations. As time goes on it often becomes ceremonious and sometimes solemn. Ritual is something to be done, not something to be thought out.

Papa Eugene's obsession with ritual is something that Kambili pays attention to. Kambili describes the prayers Papa Eugene makes before meal times and is precocious at pointing out the lengthy prayers for food and how Papa Eugene in fact localizes his own invented rituals even within prayer:

For twenty minutes he asked God to bless the food. Afterward, he intoned the Blessed Virgin in several different titles while we responded, "Pray for us", his favorite title was Our Lady, Shield of the Nigerian people. He made it up for himself. If only people would use it every day, he told us, Nigeria would not totter like a Big Man with the spindly legs of a child³⁴ .

Kambili has been cultured to know these things by heart and she is keen at observing violations of the rituals especially by Jaja most of which shock her to the point of silent disbelief: "I turned to stare at him. At least he was saying thanks the right way, the way we

³²Adichie, Purple Hibiscus. Lagos, Farafina 2003 p5

³³ Boll Eleonor & Bossard James (1950) *Ritual in Family Living*. P.UP

³⁴ Adichie, Purple Hibiscus, Lagos, Farafina 2003p11

always did after a meal. But he was also doing what we never did: he was leaving the table before Papa had said the prayer after meals”. (p.14)

The rigid nature of these rituals and the way in which they have manacled her, the way they have made her believe in them and in their rightness, as impressed upon her by Papa Eugene, expose how the familial space has been silenced. What familial ritual does to Kambili is to silence her. Familial ritual cages her mind and body and as it happens in most cases when she wishes to say something, words fail to come out. As a matter of fact ritual actually reproduces itself in more violent forms through Papa Eugene’s beatings of Kambili and her mother on several occasions. This is illustrated by the following excerpt: “Get up! Get away from that painting!...He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes...Godlessness, heathen worship. Hellfire”³⁵.

In the excerpt we notice that Kambili suffers physical abuse for having brought home from Nsukka a painting of her grandfather Papa Nnukwu. All these are manifestations of religious fundamentalism or fanaticism. How can one reject one’s father whereas the commandments in the Holy Scriptures ask us to respect our father and our mother? Never have we read in the Holy Bible or heard that Jesus or any of his apostles beat people for the sake of religion. There is no violence in Christianity. It is Eugene who has made home hellfire for his family. Another excerpt that illustrates Eugene’s violent actions goes as follows:

Has the devil asked you all to go on errands for him?”... He turned to Mama, “You sit there and watch her desecrate the Eucharistic fast, maka nnidi?”...He unbuckled his belt slowly... Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse³⁶

Once again Eugene beats his wife in front of her children. The children have eaten at a time they are supposed to fast. All the harsh treatments meted out to Mama and her children are due to Eugene’s rigid way of interpreting Catholicism. For him people and especially women need to be beaten into submission to worship his revengeful God. Papa Eugene Achike’s family, in the words of Althusser³⁷ (1976) is a school-church family but it dons a public face through Papa Eugene, the owner of *The Standard*, a paper that fearlessly criticizes the military state³⁸. Kambili’s narration of the violence visited upon her by her father is

³⁵ Ibid p206

³⁶ Ibid p102

³⁸ Althusser, Louis(1976) *Essays on Ideology*_London

related to the ritual processes that have become a character in this family. What is really interesting in this particular familial space is the capacity for religion, ritual, and call for piety and confession to co-exist with violence. Within this perpetual mood of meditation within Eugene Achike's family is not only the psychological tension that Kambili faces and struggles with but also the muted physical violence. An example of his unnatural state of affairs is the following incident:

I was in my room after lunch, reading James chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the anointing of the sick during family time when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand curved bedroom door.... Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty. I was at nineteen when the sounds stopped. I heard the door open. Papa's gait on the stairs sounded heavier, more awkward, than usual.³⁹ .

This is an instance of Beatrice's beating by her husband. Kambili counts up to nineteen blows administered to her mother. This is unbearable for a girl of fifteen years old. An instance such as this one is preceded by Kambili's description of her mother's reluctance to visit Father Benedict (as is the family ritual) after mass. Apparently Kambili's mother is pregnant and her reluctance is genuine because feelings of nausea accompany her condition. What is interesting though is Papa Eugene's interpretation of the pregnancy and Mama's reluctance to visit Father Benedict after the Mass:

When Papa started his prayer, his voice quavered more than usual. He prayed for the food first, then asked God to forgive those who have tried to thwart His Will, who had put selfish desires first and had not wanted to visit His servant after Mass. Mama's "Amen!" resounded throughout the room.⁴⁰(p.32).

Such a prayer is a way of tormenting psychologically one's spouse and the above case, in the words of Joyce Nyairo presents a crucial issue: 'tormented sexuality'. Religion, particularly Catholicism and sexuality are major concerns in *Purple Hibiscus*. Quite lucidly Nyairo points out that:

But also in his tormented sexuality we realize that Catholicism may also be responsible for sexual inhibition, a tendency to regard sex as unclean and debasing which results in Eugene reacting so violently to the sight of his pregnant wife⁴¹.

And I want to recall at this very level that it is the same papa who causes the abortion of the pregnancy by beating her wife.

³⁹ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*. Lagos, Farafina p32

⁴⁰ Ibidp32

⁴¹Nyairo, Joice Context : 'Mission and Masculinity' an Unpublished Paper

In a nutshell, religion is partly to blame for what Papa becomes since he is brought up by a priest and as a result his world is structured in Biblical terms of evil versus righteousness. The familial space, occupied by Beatrice and her children especially her daughter is so packed with catholic rituals and religious activities that they have no time left for anything else. However this constriction of people's freedom dictated by religion exists only at St Agnes in Enugu. The character of Eugene thus serves to drive home the role of colonial education 20 degrading the role and position of women inside the home and society. While tradition upholds the importance of the female in the society, Eugene under the influence of missionary education, mistreats the women in his family. He worships the Christian beliefs and rejects his roots. In this process he imbibes the false ideals and notions of Christianity rather than going for the actual teachings of the religion and emerges as the hybrid who cannot sort out his loyalties. Especially his treatment of the women establishes the association between the low status of women and the colonial education for men which try to mould them in the framework of the Western thought.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* many women such as Chioke, Nnesinachi, Arize, Anulika have not taken part actively in the development of their society the way Olanna and Kainene have because of their educational background. Moreover most of the oppression women endure is due to the civil war. The war is between Igbo on one side and the Hausa and Yoruba on the other. This war is started and exacerbated by the imperial powers. During this war the colonial powers side with Northerners by supplying weapons, war vehicles and planes which serve to destroy human lives.

Historically the Igbo massacre of 1945 has been precipitated by the British colonial government who has encouraged anti-Igbo sentiments. This later culminated in the 1966 Igbo pogrom which resulted in the civil war of 1967-1970. I am made to know that the tribes of the North and the South have long had contact at least as far back as the ninth century, as some of the magnificent beads discovered at the historic Igbo Ukwu site attest⁴².(Adichie;166). So, one can say that it is colonials who have provoked the war and fuelled it which resulted in women's oppression. During the war when times are hard, Father Marcel a white man serving the white God impregnates a teenager Urenwa. Father Jude is another expatriate who sees the misbehavior and condones it by revealing it. Both Marcel and Jude are religious priests who are supposed to educate people the God way, help needy ones with their foodstuffs and prayers. But unfortunately they are the ones profiting from poor girls' conditions adding to their sufferings. All this shows that the white man and his religion are not reliable and since

⁴² Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun*, Lagos; Farafina 2006 p166

the religion comes with colonization, colonization can be held responsible for women's misfortunes. What examples are Father Marcel and Father Jude giving ordinary people? Also, the white mercenary in charge of the Biafran Army sleeps with women in the open. By so doing he is telling other soldiers to do the same. Patriarchy and colonization are not the only phenomena that account for women's actual predicament. We also have socio-political disempowerment.

1.3-Socio political and economic disempowerment

1.3.1-Socio-political disempowerment

The development of any nation requires the contribution of both men and women. Interestingly, there is a growing recognition all over the world of the untapped resources in women required for achieving sustainable socio economic and political development. However women have been historically marginalized politically, economically and socially, culturally and otherwise and this has had and still is having serious implications for their level of involvement in public decision making. The marginalization of different kinds women have suffered in Africa and particularly Nigeria over time has undoubtedly hampered them from taking a big shot in the public political realm. In fact, the situation of women in Nigeria is precarious and this cannot be divorced from various practices which have limited them from realizing their potentials. First are the theories that have successfully confined women (Nigerian women inclusive) to the position of submission and subordination owing to their biological and psychological attributes. For instance, the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1952) generated theoretical controversies between biological and cultural explanations of women's subordination⁴³. It is commonly held that the biological traits of women account for their tenderness passiveness and submissive tendencies. Again Talcott Parson's structural functionalist theory provided another theoretical perspective to the study of women and their challenges of participation at the public realm. He undertook a division of labor within the family system and consequently assigns the primary responsibility for the adequation and goal attainment functions to the husband-father who he calls the "instrumental leader" while he appropriates the functions of integration within the family and the community and pattern maintenance responsibility to the wife-mother otherwise known as the "expressive leader"⁴⁴. These theories have created a clear demarcation between men and women, and reflect them as belonging to opposite ends of bipolar adjectives in which men have desirable qualities while

⁴³ Afolabi Abiola(2013)Women and Political Empowerment in Nigeria through Changing Scenes. From pre-colonial to Present. *Ibadan Journal of Peace and Development*.Vol2 N°1 June.

⁴⁴ Parson Talcott(1940) *Essay in Sociological Theory*. London

women have undesirable ones⁴⁵. This provided enough opportunities for societies to construct stereotypes that portray women as inferior and unfit for leadership at the public arena. Enemu (1999) puts it thus: “What is to be reiterated of male and female are not determined by nature but have been constructed by society. Their overall impact has been to put women in a subordinate position vis à vis men.”⁴⁶

Second, are the cultural and traditional societal practices that subjugate women, devalue and dispossess them of their potentials? Some of the cultural and traditional practices are products of societal structure and composition as a result of commonly held norms while some others were foisted by colonial experiences. Dominant among these is the patriarchal societal system in Africa and Nigeria in particular. It is a common belief in most African societies that men are the heads of the family and are therefore responsible for providing for the needs of the family members and also play the gods since they are the custodian of final authority. This also has bearing on the division of domestic responsibilities in which female children are assigned domestic roles while their male counterparts are allowed to play around. This patriarchal relation at the family level reinforces the devaluation of women works at the public realm. Pogoson observes usefully thus:

Patriarchy has also been identified as a major social system which has legitimized the domination of women by their male counterparts. Patriarchy is a social system in which the role of man as the main authority person is fundamental to societal groups and associations⁴⁷.

The damaging effect of patriarchy on women’s political participation in the public arena is summarized by Egbue in the following terms:

...the patriarchy relations at the household level and the consequent lack of adequate male participation in family domestic work, as well as current non provision of adequate and affordable child care and other care facilities, constitute the background within which the devaluation of women’s work at the public level is facilitated⁴⁸.

Still within cultural traditional barriers are marriage norms that confine women to the private realm. The idea is that women are traditionally imbued with capacity for kitchen/home management and child rearing since social dispositions ascribe family domestic roles to female children, marriage institution thus provides the necessary latitude for this home

⁴⁵ Udegbe, I. Bola (1998) *Gender and Leadership images and Reality*. Faculty Lecture, University of Ibadan. Ibadan: Vintage Publishers. (pp3-4)

⁴⁶ Enemu Francis (1999) *Gender and women Empowerment. Elements of Politics*. Lagos; Malthouse Press Ltd p228

⁴⁷ Pogoson, A. I. *Gender, Political Parties and the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Nigeria: A Reflexion on the Democratization Process in Nigeria 1999-2011*. Journal of African elections vol2, n°1, June

⁴⁸ Egbue Ngozi G. (2010) *Gender Division of Domestic Roles :Implications for Social Equity in Nigeria*. Nigerian Journal of sociology and Anthropology. Vol8

training to be practiced. They are to prepare foods, ensure the maintenance of home and environment as well as rear and nurture children. These cultural practices on the whole have excluded women for many years from leadership positions and this has consequentially robbed mankind of their unique potential for governance ⁴⁹. The resultant effect of this is the perpetration of gender inequality in different aspects of Nigeria's social life, a by-product of gender insensitivity in the planning design and implementation of public policies.

Furthermore when I consider the experience of Igbo women under British colonialism, it shows that western influence can sometimes weaken or destroy women's traditional autonomy and power without providing modern forms of autonomy or power in exchange. Igbo women had a significant role in traditional political life. As individuals, they participated in village meetings with men. But their real political power was based on the solidarity of women as expressed in their own political institutions, their meetings, their market networks, their kinship groups and their rights to use strikes, boycotts and force to effect their decisions. British colonial officers and missionaries generally failed to see the political roles and the political power of Igbo women. The actions of administrators weakened and in some cases destroyed women's bases of strength. Since they did not appreciate women's political institutions, they made no effort to ensure women's participation in the modern institutions they are trying to foster. The dominant view among British colonial officers and missionaries was that politics was a man's concern. Socialized in Victorian England, they had internalized a set of values and attitudes about what they considered to be the natural and proper role of women that supported this belief. British tried to create specialized political institutions which commanded authority and monopolized force. In so doing they took into account, eventually Igbo political institutions dominated by men but ignored those of the women. Thus women are shut out from political power. All in all, the barriers to women's political participation in Africa and especially Nigeria's historical trajectories are multifaceted combining cultural and traditional, marital, economic and religious factors all of which have debased the position of women in the scheme of power equation.

When we come back to *Purple Hibiscus* Eugene Papa is always meeting business people, government officials and his Standard editor to discuss seemingly very important national issues. Mama's influence is limited to the domestic whereas that of Papa is the public space (international) since Amnesty World gives him an award for speaking against oppression. The fact that Mama is not involved in political affairs is something common in Nigeria and even beyond. Many people still think that politics is reserved for men and do not

⁴⁹⁴⁹ Enemuo, Gender and Women empowerment. Elements of Politics. Lagos; Malthouse press Ltd p232

allow their wives to attend political meetings. Unlike Beatrice, Amaka and her mother are politically conscious and self assertive women. Political commitment enables Amaka a teenager to write to the office of the Nigeria Embassy to denounce the oppression and the injustice of the dictatorial regime on power in Nigeria. It is true that Ifeoma and Amaka endure oppression to the extent of leaving the country but what happens to Beatrice cannot happen to them. They are aware of the fact that one can complain and take a man to court if need be and even live freely without a man.

As far as the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* is concerned, political disempowerment can clearly be noticed in it. Women like Auntie Ifeka, Amala, Odenigbo's mother, Mrs Muokelu, Anulika, mama Dosie, mama Adanna are not politically conscious. They ignore many things and are imbued in patriarchal thinking. Amala is victimized by Mama and Odenigbo. Her ignorance makes her reject her own child. Anulika who is sixteen thinks that she should marry quickly otherwise she would expire. She wants to keep up with her mates who are already counting their children. Auntie Ifeka on her part thinks that Odenigbo by sleeping with Amala has acted typical to all men. The different reactions and reasoning of these women show that they have not been to school at all or that they have not stayed there for long. And this represents a serious disadvantage on the political field because politics and education are closely related. On the other hand, Olanna and Mrs Adebayo often take part in the intellectual discussions in Odenigbo's house. The attendants to these meetings discuss important matters of the country especially the prevailing political situation. During one of these discussions Mrs Adebayo said: "Firewood or no firewood, the important thing is to find a way to make peace before things explode"⁵⁰. Through this excerpt Mrs Adebayo is foreseeing the danger that lies ahead for them all if they don't make peace. Unfortunately nobody listens to her plea and what she has said come true. Also when Olanna's mother is threatening Maxwell for having stolen some cups of rice, Olanna witnesses the scene and recounts to Odenigbo: "My father and his politician friends steal money with their contracts but nobody makes them kneel to beg for forgiveness. And they build houses with their stolen money and rent them out to people like this man and charge inflated rents that make it impossible to buy food."⁵¹. The excerpt shows that Olanna is politically conscious and knows how things happen in the country. It also shows that her father has political connections whereas her mother does not. What is more, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, we read names like Gowon, Ojukwu, Balewa as political leaders, there is no mention of a woman name and the situation is the same since independence up to now. Women have played the role of outsiders in politics. When men

⁵⁰ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow*; Lagos. Farafina 2006 p158

⁵¹ Ibid p221

have excluded women from the political set up or reduced their participation by assigning them secondary roles they have not stopped there. They go further in disempowering women economically. This is what I will try to discuss in the next session.

1.3.2- Economic disempowerment

The struggle for emancipation cannot reach its actualization if political and economic systems would remain the same. As the backbone of many rural economies throughout the African continent, women remain the chief producers of Agricultural foodstuffs and cash crops. Primary agricultural production however is not the only role for which African women are responsible. Women in various countries of Africa are often refused the opportunity to own land or hold farming or grazing permits to land in their own right. Access to resources and services of production and distribution is linked to direct land tenure in many African countries. As a result, in countries where women do not maintain direct access to land, female are often unable to obtain credit, cooperative membership and marketing facilities. Denied direct access to land, women have little control over the products of their labor in many countries of Africa. Without access to resources and the fruits of their labor, women in Africa are often left to provide for their families without substantial educational, agricultural and financial support. Traditionally in Benin, women are not taking into account while sharing lands to the children of deceased person. And knowing that farming was the most important activity women are disadvantaged and hire land and cannot work to the fullest of their potentials. Engels, in his famous book, *The Origin Of The family, Private Property And The Same* (1942), analyzed women's position in the capitalist economic system. He argues that women lose power and importance when they are denied ownership of private property or where placed in the capitalist control of economic mode of production. Men's control of private property and affluence changes the family form to a patriarchal one and subjects women to dependence, unwaged labour and the property of the father and husband. In addition to those tasks directly related to agricultural production, women in Africa perform a variety of daily chores It is the sexual division of labour on productive and reproductive work that makes women unequal to men and allows capitalists to exploit women's unpaid labour .

As far as *Purple Hibiscus* is concerned, economic disparity between the rich and the poor is a central theme which sends feminist signals of class oppression and its equivalent gender oppression. Aunty Ifeoma, a widow, a university lecturer and a younger sister to Eugene Achike, a powerful businessman who is always out having deals with important personalities is victim of class oppression. Being in the employ of a dictatorial government that devalues education, and living without a husband, her wage labour is underpaid which

negatively affects her standard of living. This informs her attempts to break free from the tyrannical grip of traditions as she refuses to submit to her brother's capitalist demands. She refuses to tell Eugene how much she suffers as a result of her unpaid salary, even though she desperately needs help. Throughout the same novel no mention is made of Beatrice's job. She relies only on her husband's fortune. He is the breadwinner who owns everything and makes all decisions without consulting his wife whereas Mama to choose even a curtain must request her husband's approval and consent. It is true that Beatrice gives birth to children, takes care of them and cooks meals. This is the reproductive work and there is no wage for it. If Beatrice were the vice manager or the accountant or hold any other key post in her husband's factory she could not be treated the way Papa always treats her. Nowadays times are hard and the role of breadwinning cannot be left to the husband only. Mrs Yewande Cocker after her husband's death would starve to death if Papa were not there. Adichie uses these two women to denounce women who do nothing and rely only on their husband for survival. If a woman does not bring her share in the house budget, she cannot be respected; her consent will not be required by the husband on any decision. After the death of Aunty Ifeoma's husband she is able to resist her in-laws on many occasions and confront his brother Eugene in spite of his wealth. When her father Papa Nnukwu prays so that she has a good husband, Ifeoma refuses and asks him to pray so that she gets promotion to become senior lecturer. For, her job is more important than a husband because it enables a woman to be independent and respected by her husband. Ifeoma's reaction reminds me of Beatrice Okoh in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the savannah* who affirms: ... "That every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinist bullshit I had completely rejected before I knew there was anything like women's Lib"⁵².

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* apart from Olanna, Kainene and Miss Adebayo who have a reliable job all the other women are reliant on their husband for survival. They have just been doing petty trade. It is when the war dragged on that they have started cultivating land because some commodities are getting scarcer and scarcer.

Having dealt with the causes of women's subjugation and oppression, I think that the way is now paved for the next chapter which is going to deal with oppression and subjugation in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

⁵² Achebe Chinua, *Anthills of the Savannah*: London Heinemann 1987

Chapter 2: Oppression and subjugation of women in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Every individual born in this world has a right to freedom. However, freedom seldom comes without the journey of struggle. Resistance is one of the best tools of struggle for freedom from oppression. *Purple Hibiscus* captures the impact of patriarchy, domestic violence, religious fanaticism and autocratic rule on a group of individuals, particularly women who are constantly marginalized, brutalized and victimized in Post-colonial Nigerian society. The novel is a tender first-person narrative of a young girl, Kambili who explores and exposes oppression and violence prevalent on different levels of Nigerian society. She narrates her journey of transformation from a silent victim to a strong voice of resistance. Her narration is built around the lives of her oppressed mother, Beatrice, her silent brother, Jaja and herself. These characters, along with Papa Nukwu, Aunty Ifeoma and her children, are in a state of relentless struggle against the domination of different kinds. Efforts of resistance and desire for freedom are conspicuous in the way all the victimized characters gradually stand up against violence and oppression. Moreover, *Purple Hibiscus* tells us the story of Eugene Achike who is a wealthy businessman and influential person within his community. He is a major tool of oppression that is depicted as a religious fanatic. Apart from that, he is an inconsiderate patriarch who resorts to violence, even at the slightest provocation from his wife and children. Eugene does not spare even his sick and elderly father, whom he denounces as a 'Godless' man. It is shocking to know when he punishes his own children for sharing room with their grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu. Furthermore, *Purple Hibiscus* explores the exploitation of women in both familial and socio-political domain. All women characters go through an endless suffering perpetrated by either male oppression or State tyranny. One of the most important tools used by men to silence women in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* is violence.

2.1- Violence as a means of silencing women in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Adichie in these texts identifies various violent acts done to women. Some of these are discussed below. There is domestic violence which comprises spousal violence and child abuse. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (2011) defines spousal abuse as "a pattern of abusive behavior by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family or cohabitation". Also known as Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA), spousal abuse is the mistreatment that a woman or a man may experience at the hands of a marital partner. It may

happen at any time during a relationship including while it is breaking down or after it has ended. Spousal abuse is slightly different from domestic abuse. This is because while the former involves only the couple, the latter may include everything in the home including the children.

Spousal abuse occurs in all countries and it transcends social, economic and cultural groups. Domestic violence is not peculiar to one society. It is not peculiar to any race, tribe or any nation. It is an international phenomenon. It happens in Africa, Asia and the other continents just as it happens in Africa. The “Awake Magazine” for example, states that “every year in Russia, fourteen thousand women die as a result of domestic violence”⁵³. All forms of spousal abuse have one purpose which is often to gain and maintain control over the victim. Abusers use many tactics to exercise power over their spouse or partner. On account of their weak constitution which often conspires with many oppressive patriarchal cultures in many parts of the world, women are often the hapless victims of spousal abuse. According to Obioma, “Abuse of the female body is global and should be studied and interpreted within the context of oppressive condition under patriarchy”⁵⁴.

In a study carried out by Fawole and Aderounmou⁵⁵ on “Intimate Partner Abuse among Civil Servants in Ibadan, Nigeria” for example, 78% of females were found to have been assaulted by their intimate partners compared to 18% of male victims. The precarious situation of the fairer sex is compounded even more by the fact that 68.7% said that they had decided to remain in the relationship because “they did not want their children to suffer” if they divorced their husband while 78.8% said they were still in the abusive relationship because of their hope that their partner would change. Unfortunately, the African novel, a genre dominated by men whose constant focus is the socio – political issues of the day hardly reflects the harrowing lot of women in the society. In fact, according to Saadawi, the marginal attention to woman by men in their fiction is to feature her either as one of a series of stereotypes like a dutiful wife and a whore or as a mere prop for the ambition of the man. In her assertion, the standard female stereotype in male fiction is a capricious vamp, a seductive mistress captivating in her passion... Woman in all the aspects of the roles she is made to play, whether it be that of a queen or a slave bought from the market, remains a

⁵³ Awake Magazine “How to make a Marriage Successful”, 4 November, 2011

⁵⁴ Obioma N. (2007) ‘Bringing African Women into the Classroom : Rethinking Pedagogy and Epistemology’ (Eds) Olaniyan T. and Quayson A. *Afri.litera.Anthol.Crit.Theory.MA. USA*; Blackwell pp571-577

⁵⁵ Fawole O. Aderomou A (2005) ‘Intimate Partner Abuse’. A research paper presented to the Department of Epidemiology and Medical statistics, college of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

slave⁵⁶. Nwapa (2009) corroborates this rather phallogocentric cultural ascendancy inspired view when she states that “Nigerian writers such as Achebe, Ekwensi, Soyinka, Clark and Amadi have all in their earlier works played down the powerful role of women”⁵⁷. Wole Soyinka (1995), has however, argued that women should pick up the challenge to write about themselves if they feel that they have not been convincingly and realistically portrayed in fiction by men.

It is no gain saying that over the years many African women have become creative writers not only to deliberately subvert the perceived androcentric picture in the African continent but also to use their characters as witnesses to their oppression and opposition. Notable among such African women writers that deal with domestic issues affecting women are Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Zainab Alkali, Adaora Ulasi, Mariama Ba, Ama Ata Aidoo and recently Chimamanda Adichie, whose novels form the spine of this paper.

2.1.1. - Wife battering.

Adichie exposes wife battering through the character of Eugene, Kambili’s father. He is a man who fights for political freedom. This is confirmed by Reverend Benedict who says: “When we let our light shine before men, we are reflecting Christ’s triumphant Entry”, he said that Palm Sunday.

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.”⁵⁸

It becomes surprising that a man who fights for the political freedom of his people through his journalistic ventures could practice what he attacks on his wife. Eugene disrespects his wife and beats her. Kambili witnesses it and refers to it thus:

I stepped out of my room just as Jaja came out of his. We stood at the landing and watched Papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder like the jute sack of rice his factory workers bought in bulk at the same border...there’s blood on the floor, Jaja said. I’ll get the brush from the bathroom”⁵⁹.

Wife battering brings pain upon women. Beatrice, Eugene’s wife loses the pregnancy she

⁵⁶ Saadawi N.E.(2007). “The heroine in Arab Literature” Olaniyan, T. and Quayson, A.(Eds) African Literature. An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, M.A: Blackwell Publishing.

⁵⁷ Nwapa F.(2009) ‘Women and Creative Writing in Africa’ Olaniyan, T. and Quayson, A.(Eds) African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

⁵⁸ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*. Lagos ; Farafina 2003 p5

⁵⁹ Ibid p33

has been nurturing and expecting. She discusses it with her children. “There was an accident, the baby is gone, she said”⁶⁰. Eugene beats his wife with his children because she allows his daughter to eat, when she is supposed to fast. He complains: “You sit there and watch her desecrate the Eucharistic fast, maka nndi?” Kambili says: “He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with sedate leather covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm”...⁶¹. Mama’s act of raising her hands while being flogged together with her children is symbolic of surrender and helplessness that grip women once exposed to male violence . Another instance of wife battering is described on page (243) by Mama thus:

You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly...My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to st Agnès. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it...I was six weeks gone.

This is a criminal way to deal with one’s wife. Worse still this act is committed by a freedom fighter. Eugene’s attack of his pregnant wife is not only a manifestation of the evil face of patriarchy but also the insensitivity of such practice to basic principles of humanity. His personality is well described by Hewett (2004) as “a strict catholic who lives within the Manichean dictates of unforgiving faith». The author condemns Mama’s failure to speak about her situation since the silence re-energizes Eugene resulting to several misfortunes that would have been averted. Although Mama is abused and unloved, she is subservient to her husband as expected in her marriage. She can only respond to her predicament by crying. Kambili observes that:

She cried for a long time. She cried until her hand, clasped in hers, felt stiff. She cried until Ifeoma finished cooking the rotting meat in a spicy stew. She cried until she fell asleep, her head against the seat of the chair. Jaja laid her on a mattress on the living room floor⁶².

Crying makes Mama’s situation starkly hopeless and irredeemable. As readers I pity Mama and sympathize with the anguish she is going through. Mama cries in front of violence. She represents the deplorable condition of African women who lack economic independence. Thus their life is exclusively controlled by men. It is well manifested by a scene where Beatrice is quite unwell and wants to take a rest in the car. Her husband’s answer to her is extremely shoking: “Let me stay in the car and wait, biko”, Mama leaning against the Mercedes. “I feel vomit in my throat”. Papa turned to stare at her... “Are you sure you want to stay in the car?” Papa asked. Mama was looking down; her hands were placed on her belly,

⁶⁰ Ibid p34

⁶¹ Ibid p102

⁶² Ibid p244

to hold her wrapper from untying itself or to keep her bread and tea down. “My body does not feel right”, she mumbled. “I asked if you were sure you wanted to stay in the car?” Mama looked up. I’ll come with you. It’s really not that bad”⁶³. It is ironical that despite the constant brutality of her husband, Beatrice validates his action as something normal and hence acceptable. In fact, she feels a sense of gratitude towards her husband for not bringing a new wife even after several miscarriages: “The members of the umunna even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else... But your father stayed with me, with us...” (20). In addition to spousal abuse, there is another form of violence Adichie displays in *Purple Hibiscus*: child abuse. What is it?

2.1.2- Child abuse.

Child abuse is human rights’ violation that ranges from child marriages, incest, rape, female genital mutilation, physical abuse and lack of parental love and care amongst others. This usually leaves a negative psychological effect on the victim. Some children die in the process while others, after surviving the traumatic experience, usually feel insecure and mistrust people because they were abused by close relations and people they trusted in their days of unwary innocence. These aspects of child abuse as portrayed in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* form the subject of this section. Kambili is physically violated by her father and lives in constant fear of his violent attacks. Although Eugene expresses his love for her and caters for her needs, the inhuman treatment he metes out to her at the slightest provocation far surpasses the love he claims to have for her. There are three episodes in which Eugene punishes his daughter, each one escalating what is at stake and heightening the reader’s empathetic response. The first as the enraged Eugene raises a belt, Kambili’s mind jumps to a scene she has witnessed many times:

Sometimes I watched the Fulani nomads, white jellabas flapping against their legs in the wind, making clucking sounds as they herded their cows across the roads in Enugu with a switch, each smack of the switch swift and precise. Papa was like a Fulani nomad –although he did not have their spare, tall body-as he swung the belt at Mama, Jaja and me, muttering that the devil would not win⁶⁴.

The juxtaposition of peaceful, rural nomads with Eugene’s violent rage startles, but the image does more. By slowing down the moment, it increases the tension, enabling us to see through the eyes of a young narrator who possesses acute powers of observation. The second time Kambili is tortured by her father for spending time with her grandfather,

⁶³ Ibid p29

⁶⁴ Ibid p102

Papa Nnukwu. Eugene pours water on her feet in order to teach her that she should not “walk into sin” (194):

I wanted to say “Yes, Papa”, because he was right, but the burning on my feet was climbing up, in swift courses of excruciating pain, to my head and lips and eyes. Papa was holding me with one wide hand, pouring the water carefully with the other. I did not know that the sobbing voice –I’m sorry! I’m sorry” was mine until the water stopped and I realized my mouth was moving and the words were still coming out⁶⁵.

Living with Papa Nnukwu, from Eugene’s perspective, is tantamount to willful evil. The excruciating pain severs Kambili from her words, an experience shared by many victims of torture. In *The Body in Pain* Elaine Scarry argues that torture is world destroying: “In the most literal way possible, the created world of thought and feeling, all the psychological and mental content that constitute both one’s self and one’s world, and that gives rise to and is in turn made possible by language, ceases to exist”⁶⁶. In the moment of torture, Kambili is barely conscious of her words or of herself; she is fully subjectified to her father’s power, a subject in all senses of the word. The effects of his abuse permeate her sense of herself and of the world: She believes that she deserves to be punished, that her father tortures her for her own good, that he cannot be wrong because he is like God and unlike other mortals. By the third time, however, Kambili has begun to change. After visiting her freethinking Auntie Ifeoma and her spirited cousins, Amaka, Auntie Ifeoma’s daughter, gives Kambili the painting of Papa Nnukwu as a parting gift. The picture symbolizes the growth of Kambili’s world to include not only her forbidden grandfather but also her aunt, her cousins and Father Amadi and with the expansion of her world; she has begun to question her father’s omnipotence. Kambili suffers a brutal attack for bringing the painting to their house and trying to protect it from destruction.

Eugene kicks her and:

The metal buckles on his slippers stung like mosquito bite. He talked non-stop, in a mix of Igbo and English...Godlessness. Heathen worship, Hellfire. The kicking increased in tempo... The stinging was raw now, even more like bites because the metal landed on open skin by my side, my back, my legs. Kicking, kicking, and kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy... More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet (p206).

Kambili remains unconscious for some days and is hospitalized as a result of this cruel attack from her father. This is because Eugene does not want any heathen object in his home, not even the painting of his father.

⁶⁵ Ibid pp194-195

⁶⁶ Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain* : The making and Unmaking of the World. New York and Oxford, Oxford UP,1985

When I think of abuse, it is often physical violence that springs to mind but in Kambili's case she suffers equally from psychological abuse. She is more or less a prisoner in her own home and she is under constant surveillance from her father and others who report to him. She lives in a large house in a very nice area but is hardly ever let out on her own. She is not even able to see the street from her house because the high walls that surround the property prevent it. "The compound walls, topped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could see the cars driving past on our street"⁶⁷. The walls surrounding Kambili's school are equally high but instead of coiled electrified wires they were topped by pieces of green glass with sharp edges jutting out. Papa said the walls had swayed his decision when I finished elementary school. Discipline was important he said. You could not have youngsters scaling walls to go into town and go wild, the way that they did at the federal government colleges⁶⁸. In order to implement his surveillance, Papa needs help and is assisted by his driver, Kevin, who spies on the rest of the family. He reports to his employer even minor irregularities. Kevin waits with the car outside the school gates and every day Kambili runs to the car straight after her last class so that Kevin will not tell her father that she was late. This makes her unpopular with the other girls in school. "May be after school you should stop running off like that and walk with us to the gate. "Why do you always run, anyway?"⁶⁹. Her schoolmates do not realize that she lives so quickly every day out of fear for being punished, they think she is snobbish and that she does not want their company. In the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, violence is not observed only at the domestic level. It can also be noticed at the socio-professional level. That is the subject of my next discussion.

2.1.3-Violence at the societal or professional level

Aunty Ifeoma is the only independent woman in *Purple Hibiscus*. In spite of her educational level she does not escape violence in the country. She is a lecturer at the University of Nsukka. When students are fed up with the state of affairs in the University and the country they decide to organize a riot and show their disagreements and unhappiness. The administration of the University thinks that some teachers among which Ifeoma must have instigated it. As a matter of fact, they send soldiers to search her house. When they have come she has the courage to ask who has sent them and if they have any papers to show her. But instead of answering her kindly they have pushed her aside and go inside for their search. This is not the best way to deal with a civil servant of her rank. Even if they have no respect for civil servants they could at least have thought of her status as a widow. If things are managed

⁶⁷ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* ; Lagos ; Farafina p9

⁶⁸ Ibid p45

⁶⁹ Ibid p51

the right way, she should get financial assistance from government. The violence at the societal level does not spare even widows; it shows what scale dictatorship in the country has reached. Before leaving her house one of the soldiers has told her to be very careful; a way to say that they have their eyes on her. This is a tangible evidence of intimidation and oppression. And as if all these are not grief enough, the administration has sent her a termination or sack letter. This is additional mental or psychological torture. This is too much a burden for a widow who has been catering for her children without anybody's help. All these happen to Ifeoma because she doesn't side with corruption, falsehood and always criticizes and denounces the evil practices of the administration. Adichie suggests that women should do something to change the way society functions through the character of Ifeoma. Ifeoma wonders when people would speak out against oppression:

When do you speak out, eh? When soldiers are appointed lecturers and students attend lectures with guns to their heads? When do we speak out? Aunt Ifeoma's voice was raised. But the blaze in her eyes was not focused on the woman; she was angry at something bigger than the woman before her"⁷⁰.

Ifeoma is angry at oppression, violence and lack of freedom at both domestic and public levels. Violence is not used against women in *Purple Hibiscus* only. It is also used to oppress women in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. But it takes a different form. It is mostly sexual violence that is used to oppress women in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

2.2-Women's oppression in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Half of a Yellow Sun is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's second novel. It is an epic novel that recreates the events of the 1967-1970 Nigerian-Biafran civil war. The subject is Nigeria's civil war specifically the fate of Biafrans. It is a tale of war, suffering and destruction told from a woman's perspective. The story is set in different Nigerian societies. The geographical settings cover both rural and urban communities in Nigeria. The author uses the settings to make her work as realistic as possible. The novel was written during a period of political upheaval in Nigeria. At that time Nigerian citizens especially women and children experienced a lot of unimaginable hardship. Women sacrificed everything at their disposal in order to sustain their families, the soldiers and the society at large. Just as in *Purple Hibiscus*, the atmosphere in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is very suffocating and downright destructive. The novel presents the multiple struggles of women to free themselves from sexual abuse, exploitation, corruption, humiliation, civilian attacks, mass evacuation, depression, hunger,

⁷⁰ Ibid p218

disease and death. Among the aforementioned conditions, sexual violence against women remains the most traumatic and the most shameful of women's experiences.

2.2.1- Sexual violence in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

The Nigeria-Biafra war 'was a horrific and traumatic experience whose shock waves were felt throughout the Nigerian federation'⁷¹ . During this period girls and women are sexually exploited not only by enemies but by tribe's men who take advantage of their vulnerability. No wonder Akachi Ezeigbo(1996) contends that the woman's sex is used against her "she is ridiculed, raped, calumniated condemned and sometimes abandoned"(p174). Let us see the kind of torture which teenage girls, for instance, have to undergo at the hands of soldiers and civilians recruits. In the following extract, a young bar girl is gang-raped by a group of soldiers who overpower her and force her to have sex with them. For sure, such an experience will be ingrained in the girl's mind for life:

The bar girl was lying on her back on the floor, her wrapper bunched up at her waist, her shoulder held down by a soldier, her legs wide, wide ajar. She was sobbing, 'please, please, biko...' Between her legs, High-Tech was moving. His thrusts were jerky, his small buttocks darker coloured than his legs. The soldiers were cheering... [Next] Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. He entered her... Finally, he looked at the girl. She stared back at him with a calm hate⁷².

Here, Ugwu and his gang brutalize and rape an innocent girl who is in a bar working for money in order to survive the war's hard time. They are countless women and girls who undergo such humiliating treatments during the Biafran war. And if they are unlucky, this may happen more than once. Such scenes of rape are common nowadays because many countries are in trouble. There is for instance Syria, Irak, South Sudan, Central Republic of Africa, Somalia to name but a few. The incidence of Ugwu and his fellow soldiers' raping a bartender calls to mind Darfuri women's experiences in the hands of Janjaweed militia who routinely invade Southern Sudan in order to kill the men and rape their women. Adichie's vivid allusion to this event brings fresh tears to my eyes as I, in turn, remember Kivou women in the hands of rebels in Democratic Republic of Congo, the women of Kidal and Gao in the hands of Jihadists and more recently the many young students that have been kidnapped by Boko Haram in the North of Nigeria. Also on September 28, 2009 when some activists organized a peaceful gathering to claim for more democracy in Guinea Conakry the militaries invaded them, beat and killed men but raped more than one hundred women. (radio soleil FM news)

⁷¹ Johnson, Alex(1980). "Sunset at dawn: A Biafran on the Nigerian Civil War" in African Literature Today: Myth and History, Vol. 11. Eds. Eldred Jones. London: hebooks

⁷² Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun* ;Lagos :Farafina 2006 p365

As things degenerate during the Nigeria-Biafra war, human beings in turn, become more animalistic unleashing mayhem on the lives of fellow humans. The abuse of more and more women also rages out of control. The raping of women by soldiers is usually perceived ‘as a sign of victory’ in war situations and remains a sort of ‘unwritten law’ which many women pay dearly for; even with their lives⁷³. We also read the pathetic story of young Urenwa who Father Marcel impregnates in exchange for the food he is supposed to give to the people at the relief centers.

Kainene who is in charge of the centre and who labors to get the foodstuffs says in fury, ‘he fucks most of them before he gives them the crayfish that I slave to get here’⁷⁴. Urenwa is not the only victim of his shameless act; he equally takes advantages of other starving girls. All the same, some girls and women are lured into prostitution in order to negotiate a living. Adichie narrates how Special Julius’s brother, a director in one of the relief centers treats young girls ‘that crawl around looking for sugar daddies’⁷⁵. According to her he takes advantage of them and takes up to five of them into his bedroom at the same time’⁷⁶. Another instance of raping is the raping of Anulika by federal forces. Nnesinachi narrates:

They forced themselves on her. Five of them’... They said the first one that climbed on top of her, she bit him on the arm and drew blood. They nearly beat her to death. One of her eyes has refused to open well since (421).

All these show how women are maltreated, vulnerable during wars. But a very important thing about the excerpt is when Anulika bites a soldier and spits blood. This single act shows that women are ready to fight oppression whenever and wherever it occurs with the means at their disposal and get free. Anulika’s act of biting the soldier is a clarion call to all the women who are being oppressed. They should not keep quiet and not react like Beatrice of *Purple Hibiscus* in front of violence and oppression.

Women are also sexually exploited by the men in power, and left on their own despite the risk of pregnancy or contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, at a time when they need utmost care and protection. The commander of the Biafran army a Whiteman mercenary rapes young, defenseless girls at his own pleasure. Okeoma says: “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”⁷⁷.

⁷³ Isidoro, Loi(2005). Men.Santiago: Random House Mondatori p142

⁷⁴ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun* ;Lagos ;Farafina 2006 p398

⁷⁵ Ibid p278

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow*, Lagos :Farafina 2006p323

As the whole Biafran army relied on his leadership, this man used his authority to sexually abuse the young girls publicly causing embarrassment to the girls whose vulnerable nakedness would be exposed to everybody. Likewise the leader of Biafra, colonel Ojukwu, abuses married women whenever it pleases him after sending their husbands to prison on account of being saboteurs. This is ironic because the women who are supposed to be protected by the soldiers are the same women being sexually abused by both their Biafran leaders and soldiers. Chinua Achebe gives a similar incidence in *Girls at War* and tells us about Gladys, a young girl full of dreams, who Reginald Nwankwo once respected because 'she wasn't going to make an exception even for one who once did her a favour'⁷⁸. But as the war progresses and with much stress and hardship Achebe tells us that 'she gave him a shock by the readiness with which she followed him to bed and her language'⁷⁹. We found that as a result of the untold hardship these young girls lose sense of direction and become victims of circumstance. Women are sadly the main target of those who use terror as a tactic of war. And rape has always been a gruesome pattern of violence against women.

2.2.2-Women bringing children up alone.

In times of war starvation is one of the predicaments that befall people because men who constitute the main workforce are all fighting. Oftentimes men are conscripted and die on war fronts. As a result, women are loaded with extra responsibilities in order to sustain their families. They undergo a lot of self denial in order to keep their families going. Women willingly sell their belongings in order to save their beloved ones from starving. Adichie tells us that there were women who were willing to work in exchange for food. Nnidi in "Daddy, don't strike A Match" exchanges an ebony head a cherished artifact for four tins of ovaltine so that her children will not be malnourished. She does not drink the remaining ovaltine she prepares for her daughter Ifeoma, so that the family will not run out of beverage on time. Unfortunately, Nnidi's extraordinary sacrifice is not made by John, her husband. He buys and smokes cigarettes at will. After smoking he leisurely drinks the remaining ovaltine that Nnidi reserves exclusively for the children. This is also the case with Odenigbo, Olanna's boyfriend. Adichie tells us that while Olanna constantly worries about the food shortage, Odenigbo the head of the family is calm to the extent "his calmness bewildered her"⁸⁰. Women have to scramble for food at relief centers. The rations are usually meager but they have no other option. Some even spend the night outside the gate of the relief center. I am moved to sympathize with these women as they rush from one queue to another dodging the

⁷⁸Achebe, Chinua. *Girls at war and other stories*, Heinemann: Ibadan,2002.Print. (p106)

⁷⁹ Ibid (p118)

⁸⁰ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow*;Lagos:Farafina (2006)p319

swinging canes of the militia at the relief center just to fend for their children (330). When Mrs Muokelu, Olanna and many other women crowd the relief centers and are informed of the hijacking of lorries carrying the relief foods, they have become so desperate and disturbed, for their families back home are waiting and relying upon their arrival with some food to eat. When Chiamaka, Olanna's adopted child suffered from kwashiorkor, it was Olanna's duty as a mother to go to the relief center and scramble her way to the front to get some egg-yolk for her⁸¹. What could be more painful for a woman than to watch her children die slowly of starvation or contract kwashiorkor, a disease caused by lack of protein? Also some mothers sold local goods like pepper and salt with children tied to their backs. They have to be on alert so that when vandals attack, they will run for their lives and that of their children on their backs. During these times they cry with their children⁸². Lazy women are not entertained during the war. Adanna's mother, for example had the habit of begging other women for food whenever they cook in their shared kitchen, but Mama Oji discouraged the other women from helping her because of her laziness: "Stop giving her your food" Mama Oji screamed. "This is what she does with every new tenant. She should go and farm cassava and feed her family and stop disturbing people..."⁸³. That is to say that Olanna should not give Mama Adanna anything. She should go and farm herself.

Patriarchal thinking makes men believe that they can use their sex the way it pleases them and control that of women. As a result a lot of men resort to having mistresses outside wedlock. This phenomenon which affects women very much is the object of my next discussion.

2.2.3- Women coping with men's infidelity

2.2.3.1-In Ozobia's household.

Men's infidelity is a serious challenge women have to often grapple with in *Half of a Yellow sun*. Mrs Ozobia is a victim of negative masculinity since her husband has a mistress, a Yoruba woman for whom he has bought a flat in a neighborhood where Lagos socialites live. The novel also reveals that Ozobia's mistress is not a woman of worth. This is how she is portrayed: 'Two children from two different men...common riffraff... A Yoruba goat...old and ugly'⁸⁴. These descriptions make the readers share in loathing women who snatch other women's husbands. In *So Long a Letter* (1980), Mariama Ba captures unfaithfulness in the

⁸¹ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun*, Lagos:Farafina p337

⁸² Ibid p363

⁸³ Ibid p 411

⁸⁴Ibid p218

marriage institution when she submits that for the sake of variety, men are unfaithful to their wives. Such actions are a source of humiliation and frustration to the wives. It is out of such humiliation that Mrs Ozobia cries when telling her daughter Olanna, about her father's mistress:

Her mother held a glass of tonic water in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. She was crying. She was telling Olanna about her father's mistress. "He has bought her a house in Ikeja," her mother said, my friend lives on the same street... 'Have you talked to him?' Olanna asked. What am I going to say to him?... There is nothing I can say to him. I just wanted to let you know what is happening so that they will not say I did not tell somebody⁸⁵.

The above incident points to the desperate situation women find themselves in wifehood. When Mrs Ozobia informs her daughter that there is nothing she can discuss with the husband about his infidelity it confirms her inferior position in the arrangement. She is almost confirming that she fears her husband and so he can do whatever he wishes. Such fears imply the unequal gender relationships that characterize marriage and the position of African women in patriarchal societies. When Mrs Ozobia says '...so that they will not say I did not tell somebody'⁸⁶ it suggests that the society does not approve of Chief Ozobia's behavior in one hand and on the other hand some women's passivity in front of injustice.

According to the novel, what gives Mrs Ozobia a great concern is not actually that her husband has a mistress but because he keeps the mistress in a neighbourhood where her friends live. The implication here is that Mrs Ozobia is used to her husband keeping mistresses; that is why it no longer disturbs her but she does not want to celebrate it either. She does not want her friends to know about her husband's infidelity as this will lower her prestige before them. But Chief Ozobia does not care a bit because he is living in a patriarchal society where wives are properties of their respective husbands: they own them and what they have and, as such, they do not have right to ask questions or to investigate their husbands' actions on anything at all. But Olanna tells her father:

It is disrespectful that you have a relationship with this woman and that you have bought her a house where my mother's friends live.... You go there from work and your driver parks outside and you don't seem to care that people see you. It's a slap to my mother's face.... I am not going to tell you what to do about it, but you have to do something. My mother isn't happy (218).

Adichie through Olanna's portrayal is calling women to charter male injustice and not remain silent in front of injustice. Not only that she is more sensible than Chief Ozobia, her speech establishes her as her father's superior both in morality and otherwise. She bluntly tells her

⁸⁵ Ibid p217

⁸⁶ Ibid

father what he does and its implications. To still show her father respect, she does not go on dictating to him what he should do but subtly makes it obvious to him that he has to do something to ratify the anomaly because her mother is not happy. Her priority here is that her mother is sad and she wants what keeps her sad ratified. Her subdued tone gives her words some weight which implicitly makes her speech a command. With this incident, the author makes the point that wives deserve respect from their husbands just as husbands deserve respect from the wives and unless this is done, there will be no peace in the home. In a marriage man and woman should live as equals; one should not seek to dominate the other. Mrs Ozobia's inaction should be condemned since she is the one enduring the situation; it is only her that can subvert it. The excerpt also shows that there are many handicaps on the way to independence for women. The fears Aunt Ifeka has about uncle Mbaezi getting involved in affairs with other women demonstrates the prevalence of male infidelity and the negative effects it has on married women. Mrs Ozobia is not the only woman affected men's infidelity. Other women are also entrapped in this mess. I have for example the case of Olanna which is going to be displayed in the following session.

2.2.3.2-In Odenigbo's household

When Odenigbo and Olanna become lovers it is a healthy relationship from the onset. Odenigbo is genuinely in love with Olanna. They live together and promise to marry each other. But when she is briefly away in London for a few days, Odenigbo sleeps with Amala, a timid girl his mother brought from the village. By going in to a timid illiterate village girl, Amala, the author presents him as an indecent character that is not focused in his choice of bedmates. Amala does not compare in any way with Olanna: Olanna is far more elegant, naturally intelligent, and wealthy and above all, far more academically a giant than Amala. What then is Odenigbo's attraction to Amala? Aunt Ifeka has answered that question. She says to Olanna: 'Odenigbo has done what all men do and has inserted his penis in the first hole he could find when you were away. Does that mean somebody died?'⁸⁷. Here Adichie portrays men as a group of people that lack self-control and that is why they enter any holes they see when their genuine partners are not around, their education backgrounds notwithstanding. The authenticity of Aunt Ifeka's stance is further proved when, later in the novel, Odenigbo has a sexual affair with Alice when Olanna is away in Orlu to spend a week with Kainene, her twin sister. Nature has not been very benevolent to Alice: 'She was small-boned, petite, and Olanna felt gawkily over-grown just looking at her, there was something

⁸⁷ Ibid p226

childlike about her light-skinned, almost translucent complexion and tiny hands'⁸⁸. What then is the attraction in Alice that makes Odenigbo betray Olanna?. The very day Olanna leaves for Orlu with Baby, the novel has it that:

Master came home from work earlier than usual and did not go to the Tanzania Bar. Ugwu hoped that their (Baby and Olanna's) absence has pulled him out of the ditch he sunk into when his mother died ... The next day, she(Alice) was sitting on the bench beside Master. Then she stayed until the whole yard was sleep. Then Ugwu came around from the backyard, days later and found the veranda empty and the room door firmly shut ⁸⁹.

Not only are Odenigbo's actions disgraceful and insulting to Olanna, but also he dares have a sexual affair on his matrimonial bed with Olanna's friend. These actions of Odenigbo portray him as a beast that is incapable of controlling his sexual urges, and therefore, fails to keep his marital vows. This is ridiculous!

However, this should not surprise us so much when I realize that Nigeria(the setting of the novel) is a patriarchal society where men are in control and, as such, can do anything and get away with it. They do not have any apologies for their wives because their wives are properties that they can use as they wish and discard when they are no longer useful to them, marital vow notwithstanding. That is for *Oyigbo* people and it is not significant for Africans. M. Toma-Ikoma posits that 'Husband is socially superior as compared with that of wife's status in African traditional marriage relationship. The African woman must serve, respect and honour her husband. In support of Toma-Ikoma⁹⁰, Omolara Daniel writes that '... in the patriarchal society, the male is expected to always be in control. Thus, power is exercised in this sort of social relation to maintain the existing pattern of social inequality...' ⁹¹. Under this type of setting, women are expected to be silent, obedient and submissive to their husbands. But this is entirely against the principles of feminism and women empowerment should mean something different and which is in resonance with what Lloyd describes as "the ability to control one's destiny rather than have it determined by others"⁹².

Adichie in order to make men feel what their wives feel when they sleep with other women makes Olanna sleeps with Richard who is her sister's boyfriend. Olanna's action of sleeping with Richard is aimed at avenging herself on Odenigbo but it widens the distance between her and her twin sister Kainene, Odenigbo rejects the blame and puts it on his mother but Olanna tells him: 'It's you not your mother. It happened because you let it happen. You

⁸⁸ Ibid p328

⁸⁹ Ibid p353

⁹⁰ Toma-Ikoma M. *Before and after Marriage* . Benin: Mufti, 2004. Print.p124

⁹¹ Omolara, Ideology, Power and Pictures of women, Journal of Nigerian English Studies Association 2011p124

⁹² Lloyd, P. C. *Power and Independence: Urban Africans' perception of Social Inequality*. Boston: Routeledge and Kegan,1974. Print (p11)

must take the responsibility (240)'. That is the kind of reaction women are expected to have in order to overcome male oppression and dominance. They should not stay speechless and complain like Mrs Ozobia. In addition to her reaction Olanna sleeps with Richard as a way of avenging herself. As a result Odenigbo decides to harass Richard but Olanna thinks that Odenigbo has no right to harass Richard. The narrator points out:

They sat on the sofa in the living room. He had no right to harass Richard, to direct his anger at Richard, and yet she understood why he had. I never blamed Amala, she said, it was to you that I had given my trust and the only way a stranger could tamper with that trust was with your permission. 'I blamed only you'⁹³.

Olanna in this excerpt shows that women should not easily accept the blames of everything that go wrong in a household. Also the idea that men can sleep with women anyhow even if they are married and that women who sleep with two different men are called adulterous is wrong and should be fought. Olanna informs Odenigbo about her sexual adventure with Richard when he proposes her that they should get married so that Mama would leave them alone. In our African society, it is a common belief that married men never commit adultery no matter how many mistresses they sleep with but when a woman who is already engaged with a man dares have doubtful relationship with another man, she is treated as a whore or prostitute. The same society that condones men's adulterous act seems to forget that when the man would contract a sexually transmitted infection or impregnate a mistress the consequences will be felt by the whole household (the husband and his wife). Adichie is telling readers that the behaviors that men expect from their wives they themselves should not adopt such behaviors. Faithfulness must be reciprocal in a couple.

In addition to unfaithfulness within couples women are also confronted with something worth mentioning: gender discrimination. How does it affect them?

2.2.4- Preference of male over female child.

In Africa and especially Nigeria parents prefer male children to female ones. Girls and women are discriminated against. Children are not treated equally in accordance with human rights. As much as women in patriarchal postcolonial Nigeria are identified by their ability to give birth, bearing a male child is considered more significant than bearing a female child. A woman with a son is more respected than a woman with a daughter. Anulika, Ugwu's younger sister who has just started developing breasts had already been taught about the value of bearing a boy when she gets married. She tells Ugwu: "I want to have a baby boy first, it will

⁹³ Ibid p246

place my feet firmly in Onyeka's house"⁹⁴. Amala who is impregnated by Odenigbo gives birth to a girl and is rejected. Both Amala and Odenigbo's mother do not want to keep the child. After a long discussion with his mother, Odenigbo told Olanna that Mama does not want to keep the baby because she wanted a baby boy. Mama therefore has resorted to have the baby taken to Amala's people but Olanna decides that she and Odenigbo will keep the baby and raise her on their own. They will tell her the truth about her real mother when she grows up. By making Amala give birth to a female child, contrary to Mama's expectations, Adichie in my view attempts to portray the fact that girls do not choose to be born as girls, therefore they should be treated with respect and love, in equal measure just like the boy child is treated in the patriarchal African society. With regard to the valuability of the boy child in patriarchal Africa, Adichie expresses the value of the girl child in this same society by making the two major characters, Olanna and Kainene, females and twins. To add on this, they are the only children to their wealthy parents. Kainene's father says "Kainene is not just like a son, she is like two"⁹⁵. His businesses in the East, his factories and new oil interests would be managed by Kainene, who despite the fact of being a woman, was very capable of managing her father's businesses efficiently. In fact, Chief Okonji says, "Whoever said you lost out by having daughters is a liar"⁹⁶. These two girls would have been thrown away at birth, as the traditional Igbo culture demanded of newly born twins, who were viewed as 'bad omens' to the society. However, Adichie by assigning them a bourgeois family makes them successful, well schooled, and intelligent and gives them the best life a child would have. This breaks the traditions of patriarchal Nigeria, and elevates the Nigerian girl child to the same level as the Nigerian boy child in postcolonial Nigeria.

2.2.5- Women as business sexual baits.

There are many ways through which women are degraded in our African society. Many people continue to think that women are assets through which one could satisfy one's financial needs or tie business connections. In earlier novels like *Things Fall Apart* and *The Joys of Motherhood* characters like Okonkwo and Nwokocha Agbadi are used to choosing husbands to their daughters no matter what their say in the matter might be. All the same Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* portrays a female character Beatrice prominently who has chosen her husband when it pleases her and through her character, revised that way of doing things. It means that he was calling the public at large to do the same. In the same vein Olanna Ozobia, one of the main characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is treated by her

⁹⁴ Ibid p121

⁹⁵ Ibid p331

⁹⁶ Ibid

parents as an object of trade. Her father expects her to accept a relation with the powerful and wealthy Chief Okonji, minister of finance because he needs a contract to be signed. And, after all, Olanna was used to this, being grabbed by men who walked around in a cloud of cologne-drenched entitlement, with the presumption that, because they were powerful and found her beautiful they belonged together”⁹⁷. It is the low image of women in the patriarchal society that makes Chief Okonji use money as a bait to make her quickly succumb to his amorous advances. He makes the whole rubbish look legal by involving Olanna’s parents because he believes that once he has the parents’ approval, the whole thing is easier for him since the patriarchal society demands a complete obedience and submission of girls to their parents especially their fathers. Olanna has refused to be used as sex bait by her parents.

To demonstrate her resolve, she rejects a lucrative job offer from the minister and chooses a teaching appointment at the department of sociology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She also refused the lace given to her by chief Okonji. This is a self-assertive and self-conscious woman who is open-minded who openly tells the finance minister that she is not interested. By standing firmly on her feet, Olanna is able to scorn the patriarchal order and teach men that women have rights of independent existence; they are not objects which men can transfer from one hand to another to actualize their selfish interests. She has earlier rejected marriage proposals from both Igwe Okagbue and chief Okaro’s families. Adichie portrays Olanna that way to tell parents who are still choosing husbands for their girls that the time has come to leave these degrading practices. Rather than do as the parents’ wish her to do, she chooses to work at Nsukka to enable her marry Odenigbo, a senior lecturer in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She fails to heed her parents’ advice that “Odenigbo was crazy and wrong for her, one of those hot-headed university people who talked and talked until everybody had a headache and nobody understood what had been said”⁹⁸.

Although university lecturers are fond of speaking *big oyibo grammar*, what bothers the parents is not that Odenigbo is a talkative person or that he talks *nonsense*. It is none of these. Their concern is actually how much money enters into his pocket after blowing the *big oyibo grammar*. Is it this grammar that their daughter, Olanna will eat? They cannot understand anything that does not attract millions of naira, pounds or dollars. Mr and Mrs Ozobia are virtually illiterates. Both are in business and have made billions of money in it. Their yardstick for measuring a good husband is the amount of money that flows into his pocket monthly or yearly as the case may be. That Odenigbo has a Ph.D or that he speaks English language fluently does not impress them. In a traditional Igbo family, parents choose

⁹⁷ Ibid p33

⁹⁸ Ibid p38

husbands for their daughters and the daughters have no choice than to marry the husbands chosen for them by their parents. By rejecting the suitors selected for her by the parents, Olanna has rejected the old patriarchal order that authorizes the father to choose husband for his daughters and she embraces the modern civilized order of marriage which gives young people the prerogative of choosing their own spouses. Very often, women who are pushed in such relationships suffer from sunrise to sunset in the man's house. I have the example Nnu Ego in *The Joys of motherhood*. In many areas such degrading malpractices are still going on and Adichie through her story is urging people who do such things to stop them.

Another example that is worth mentioning is that of Eberechi in *Half Of a Yellow Sun*. In fact Ugwu's lover Eberechi is offered as a gift to a colonel in exchange of her brother's posting who considered her as a deserved good. She narrates her sexual encounter with the colonel to Ugwu.

He did it quickly and then told me to lie on top of him. He felt asleep and I wanted to move away and he woke up and told me to stay there. I could not sleep so the whole night I looked at the saliva coming down the side of his mouth... He helped us. He put my brother in essential services in the army."⁹⁹

From Eberechi's speech, I can clearly understand that she is given to the colonel as a reward to the colonel. What else could be more humiliating and more degrading than that? Adichie through the character of Eberechi is denouncing such malpractices on the part of some parents who use their female children as sexual objects. What would these parents do if they have only male children? A girl is not an asset through which one could get a business contract, a job or a favor of any kind. A human being is not an object. Like Eberechi many women are given out in marriage or forced to marry people they don't like as compensation to their parents' debts or as a means of alleviating financial problems. By making Olanna reject chief Okonji, Adichie is denouncing parents who engaged their daughters in such doubtful relationships.

In front of problems one must think of solutions. It is in this regard that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has prescribed some solutions to women's oppression in her novels under study. That is what I am going to focus on in the next stage of my discussion.

⁹⁹ Ibid p339

Chapter3: Adichie's solutions to women's oppression in *Purple Hibiscus* and in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and perspectives for women empowerment.

3.1- The journey from resistance to freedom in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Every individual born in this world has a right to freedom. However, freedom seldom comes without the journey of struggle. Resistance is one of the best tools of struggle for freedom from oppression.

3.1.1 -Nsukka as a Symbol of Womanist Change and freedom.

Ifeoma's home in Nsukka becomes the agent of Kambili's metamorphosis or growth in various ways. Every change that occurs in the lives of Kambili is instigated by Ifeoma's liberalism and fierce character. The womanist change that is engendered in *Purple Hibiscus* is initially instigated by Kambili's first stay in Nsukka when she still has her eyes closed after Aunty Ifeoma has finished saying grace. Her Aunty says with a chuckle, "We do not say Mass in the name of grace like your father does"¹⁰⁰. The most significant observation Kambili has made, however, does not have to do with how different Ifeoma's grace is from Achike's grace. She observes that:

Laughter floated over my head. Words spurted from everyone, often not seeking, often not getting any response. We always spoke with a purpose back home, especially at table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak and speak¹⁰¹.

Kambili's reaction to this happening is almost unbelievable as she mentally disappears from what is going on at the dining table. She is only surprised by Ifeoma's question of whether she likes the food or not. Ifeoma realizes that Kambili and Jaja have both been living within a particular environment in which domestic silence is the only audible speech they are accustomed to. Kambili says that, "I had felt I was not there, that I was just observing a table where you could say anything to anyone at any time, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished"¹⁰². This is a stark contrast to the presence of economical speech making in Achike's household. For Kambili, the only words she manages to say while eating with her parents in their father's house must be either three sentences of thanksgiving to "God, Papa and Mama" or a sentence approving one of the products from Achike's factory.

¹⁰⁰Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, Lagos : Farafina p119

¹⁰¹ Ibid p120

¹⁰² Ibid

The fact that she can hear words being used without purpose yet acceptable by her cousins startles her. This is how the transformation of Kambili's stuttering speech begins even though it takes time for her to muster courage to say what she really wants to say without seeking for approval from anybody. Aunty Ifeoma's role can therefore be compared to that of a coach who fosters team work, unity, consensus and proper use of talent while also insisting on discipline as a recipe for success. Kambili describes the way Aunty Ifeoma looks at her children whenever there is laughter and free speech as the proud-coach-watching-the-team way" (p.131). Apart from teaching and demonstrating to Kambili how to laugh and be free minded, Ifeoma also teaches them to sing when they recite the rosary in Nsukka for the first time. When she questions Kambili for not joining in the singing the answer she gets is "We don't sing at home" (p.125), an answer that almost irritates her Aunty.

Another tool Aunty Ifeoma uses to 'educate' Kambili is to make her niece read a book entitled *Equiano's Travels*. This has implications for an analysis of the dictatorial and oppressive atmosphere that exists within the Nigerian nation and Achike's house. The reference to this pioneering work of African literature also emphasizes the womanist idea of togetherness and inclusiveness in the sense that Ifeoma chooses to thrust a novel written by a male, and not that of a female, into the hands of Kambili. According to S. E. Ogude, Equiano's first name Olaudah meant "having a loud voice, and well spoken"¹⁰³. The meaning of Equiano's name is the fundamental crisis of Kambili's teenage years, the fact that she does not have a loud voice, cannot speak well and cannot say the words she really wants to say. Adichie places this detail in the novel as a way of inspiring Kambili to break forth from her silence, the silence that is sustained by brutalities unleashed mercilessly, without fear and compassion by her father.

Equiano becomes an inspiration for Kambili because he himself, a slave under difficult and inhuman conditions, lived, spoke against and fought for the abolitionist cause. Even though *Equiano's Travels* acts as a womanist propagandist tool to rekindle in Kambili the need to speak and be free, it also becomes a therapeutic tool for Kambili to gain strength and hope that her father's oppression will come to an end one day. Like Kambili, Equiano is a Christian whose narrative is full of his belief and trust in God. It is his belief in God that sustains him in his survival of the inhumane treatment carried out against him. Kambili therefore acquires two weapons to stand against her father's ill treatment: the spirit to speak out and be free and the hope she must have in God in the midst of her traumatic experiences.

¹⁰³ Edwards, Paul.(1967). *Equiano's Travels*. Edinburgh, Harlow Essex: Heinemann (p.17)

In contrast to the silence that exists in her life and that of her home in Enugu, Kambili sums up life under Auntie Ifeoma's care in this way:

Laughter always rang out in Auntie Ifeoma's house, and no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms. Arguments rose quickly and fell just as quickly. Morning and night prayers were always peppered with songs, Igbo praise songs that usually called for hand clapping. Food and little meat, each person's piece the width of two fingers pressed close together and the length of half a finger. The flat always sparkled. Amaka scrubbed the floors with a stiff brush, Obiora did the sweeping, Chima plumped up the cushions on the stairs. Everybody took turns washing plates.¹⁰⁴

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A strong believer of religious liberalism, Auntie Ifeoma also taught Kambili not to look at her grandfather as a heathen the way her father calls him but as a traditionalist.

3.1.2- A quest for Voice and Identity.

Purple Hibiscus depicts the contrasting ideas of silence and resistance overlapping and intertwined in the lives of Kambili, Jaja and their mother, Beatrice. Though they begin their journey as voiceless individuals, all of them gradually, find their voice through resistance in their own different ways owing to their encounter with Auntie Ifeoma. Kambili describes the abundant silence that runs in every part of their family life this way:

Our steps on the stairs were as measured and silent as our Sundays: the silence of waiting until Papa was done with his siesta so we could have lunch...the silence of driving to the church for benediction afterwards. Even our family time on Sundays was quiet...(31)

The rift in the novel begins when Kambili and Jaja returned from Nsukka while they were mid-way in their metamorphosis. Kambili brings the uncompleted painting of her grandfather. This item represents freedom from the rigid lifestyle of their father's world. With this item she is to sustain a steady link with her aunt's airy world en route liberation. With this item she hopes never to plunge into the border of frustration, disillusionment, alienation and the existential solitude of the world she knows very well. But unfortunately Kambili's painting is discovered by their father as she and her brother are admiring their grandfather. Like the extremist that he is, Eugene takes the painting from his child who claims ownership automatically.

¹⁰⁴ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, Lagos : Farafina p136

Stunned by this development, Eugene destroyed the painting as if it is Papa Nnukwu himself he is destroying. Kambili could not hold back anymore. She is not ready to watch her father tear something she holds sacred just like that. She is not willing to observe her father truncate the stable transition of her development which the painting will help her realize even within the circumscribed radius of her father's walls. The painting symbolizes freedom to her and at the same time the remains of her grandfather which she has never had when he was alive. She hurriedly begins to piece the destroyed painting on the floor together solemnly. Her father cannot believe his eyes. Kambili remains in her solemn state in order to string the pieces together. The furtiveness with which she handles the painting embarrasses everything her father stands for. He becomes stunned at the confutation of his conservative religious standards; an occasion where he is completely subdued by the first shocking witness of the result of his rigid religious matrix. Kambili's handling of the pieces of the painting symbolizes the collapse of his father's system. To have pieced the torn portrait of her grandfather destroyed by her father is a potent statement of her assertion of her identity and an indication that she has transversed her limitations.

Through this incident Kambili succeeds in breaking out of the social and religious silence of her earlier life. She disinclines to acquiesce the status quo escaping from her entrapment, by debunking her father's authority, a definitive statement of rebellion against the phallogocentric and autocratic set up. Kambili goes through a transformation from a silent worshipper of her father to someone who defies his authority after visiting Nsukka. She admits that "Nsukka began to lift the silence" from their life. Her exposure to freedom in her aunt's home in Nsukka and her affection for Father Amadi entirely changed her perception of her Papa and the superficial domestic world he had built for his children. So Kambili's stay with her aunt transforms her from a passive victim to a conscious and assertive human being. What about Beatrice her mother?

Beatrice, Eugene's wife, is gentle, soothing and speaks with calm voice: "she stared at the figurine pieces on the floor and then knelt and started to pick them up with her bare hands...*nne, ngwa*. Go and change, Mama said to me, startling me although her Igbo words were low and calming" (3-4). She is unduly calm and respects her husband so much, no wonder he does not challenge him in any way but unfortunately she has been beaten many a time by the latter. She is not treated as a life partner by him. However, Adichie attempts to push Beatrice from the margin to the centre by entrusting her with the final act of self-assertion. She kills her husband by poisoning his tea. Eugene's unending, but impenitent violence leaves her with no choice than take such an extreme decision.

One feels immensely outraged and appalled when Beatrice describes an episode of her husband's brutality: "you know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly"...My blood finished on that floor..." (243). This last physical and psychological abuse of Beatrice by her husband causes her to take drastic actions which lead to Eugene's ineluctable death. It is rather sad because Eugene is not an ideal Christian husband –neither is he a good example of what a father should be. He is instead a sick, demented man who is caught between the archaic African culture which permits wife battery and the true Christian doctrine which does not.

The tragedy of theology in Africa today is that cultural garbs have beclouded true scriptural beliefs and practices¹⁰⁵ which in turn tend to favour men in all things. As a result Gwamma further observes that the African heritage of subordinating women has been implanted in Christian tradition in Africa (40). Mercy Oduyoye¹⁰⁶ a Ghanaian feminist also condemns the brutal experience of women, especially in Christian homes like Eugene's. She reports that:

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

Ironically, Jesus Christ has been friendly and tolerant to women. He loved women and worked with them. He never coaxed, intimidated, subordinated or patronized women because like men, God His father, made women in His own image and saw them as children of God. Jesus did not treat women as cheap goods to be commercialized; neither did He treat women as wood to be battered and broken by men. Eugene eventually pays dearly for the constant abuse of his family in the guise of leading them on the paths of righteousness. Beatrice takes Eugene's life at the end of the novel *Purple Hibiscus* and avows to the children that: "They did an autopsy...They found the poison in your father's body...I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor (290).

Although the act of killing cannot be appreciated or justified, however, it can be interpreted as –an only alternative to atrocity, an extreme form of resistance, an act of strong defiance or a voice of self-assertion. Nevertheless, her final act opens the door to freedom

¹⁰⁵ Gwamma, Je' adayide(2000). Feminist Agenda and its challenge to Theological Discourse in Africa in *Journal of women in Academics*, Vol1, n°1. Jos:Deka. Enterprises(p43)

¹⁰⁶ Oduyoye, Mercy(1996) "*The church of the future, its Mission and Theology : A View from Africa*" in *Theology Today*. Eds. Thomas Long & Patrick Miller, Vol.54, n°4. Princeton

from patriarchal oppression. Beatrice's decision to end her husband's life recalls the actions of abused women in most African feminist texts.

In Nawal El Sadaawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, for instance, I recall how Firdaus, the helpless victim of male oppression eventually murders the pimp who regularly exploits her sexually as well as financially. For this singular act, Firdaus is destroyed by the very society which allows and even condones the sexual abuse of women. True, she has committed the crime of murder, even though she does it in self defense. However, men in Firdaus's society beat and rape women; torture and victimize them daily yet nothing is done to such men. It is worthy of note that Firdaus loses her life: "Because women who refuse to be men's slav 51 who do not passively let themselves to be discriminated against, oppressed and cheated by men, represent a danger for men."¹⁰⁷. Bessie Head's Dikeledi and Kebonye also present us with a similar story in *The Collector of Treasures*. Both characters are responsible for cutting off the genitals of their abusers, who incidentally, are their husbands. Kebonye particularly gives the following reason for castrating her husband: "Our men do not think we need tenderness and care... My husband used to kick me between the legs when he wanted that. I once aborted with a child, due to this treatment"¹⁰⁸. The authors of, African feminist texts, where men are murdered by women are quick to implore readers to examine the circumstances surrounding the murder. Often the women in question are caught in extremely de-humanizing situations where they constantly undergo the most barbaric treatment in the hands of men. Therefore, African-feminist texts tend to argue that men inevitably and in principle: Discriminate against, oppress and mistreat women. The men characters are 'by nature', or because of their socialization, hopelessly sexist and usually deeply immoral... A further fundamental characteristic of these texts is their use of tragedy and violence. In such novels, the women characters suffer physical and psychological violence at the hands of men. In most texts, the woman protagonist finally kills a man, who represents the violation of women's rights.... Thus, the killing of male abusers in African-Feminist texts like *The Collector of Treasures* and *Purple Hibiscus*, in my view, connotes the putting an end to men's abnormal acts of cruelty and torture of women. It also suggests that societal reformation can only be achieved if such men are done away with.

¹⁰⁷ Arndt, Susan(2002). *Paradigms of African Feminist Literature : A classification in the Dynamics of African Feminism*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press.p159

¹⁰⁸ Bessie Head, *The collector of Treasures*: Heinemann p89

3.1.3- Sex¹⁰⁹ and freedom in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Purple Hibiscus is a novel about growth, and thus a story of maturation. It chronicles the transition from self-ignorance to self-discovery and self-awareness. Most critical readings however focus on Kambili's discovery of her "voice", emphasizing the psychological independence she achieves and de-emphasizing the very vital part of her person that finds expression later in a sexual metamorphosis. The regime under her father had not only prevented her from speaking her mind but also from feeling her own body. As a teenager, this is perhaps the most heinous abuse her father could have doled out to her. Teenage years⁵² particularly unforgettable for many people because they represent their transition from childhood to adulthood. The sexual hormones at this time work overtime, and it is the sole privilege of the teenager to feel the rush of these hormones and deal with them. Success or failure in this very fundamental issue goes a long way in determining the sexual or mental health of an individual later in life. What Eugene Achike thus denied Kambili is a chance to recognize her sexuality, a chance to realize that she is female and at some point or the other may have an interest in male. It might seem to the casual reader that Papa Eugene's sole reason for being so callous to his own children stems from a purely religious desire to keep them away from sin. But it becomes evident that his callousness emanates from a desire not to let the children experience the bodily pleasure he was denied by the priests who brought him up. He therefore assumes that any opportunity or little freedom given to his children would be in pursuance of such pleasures. He then does not only lock up their minds, but he also locks up their bodies. As mentioned, Eugene's callousness is couched in the garb of religion, and in his view anything that draws attention to the body or makes it attractive to look at is considered sin. Kambili therefore must cover her long and beautiful hair; she must conceal her lovely athletic legs; she must in no way embellish her face; and she must not look at the nakedness of another person, male or female for all these were sin. Furthermore, attention was to be totally drawn from the body, from sexuality. This is why *Purple Hibiscus* is seen as an indictment against that fanatic brand of Catholicism or any other religion that seeks to suppress the development of the total human in the name of "holiness".

However, Kambili's discovery of herself evolves in gradual phases. First she learns to look at the nakedness of another human like her by staring at Papa Nnukwu's naked form while watching him pray. She stands fascinated by his nakedness, even taking particular note that "his nipples were like dark raisins nestled among the sparse grey tufts of hair on his chest" (p166). This is a far cry from her initial reaction at the sight of someone's nakedness.

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Seeing Amaka undress on her very first day in Aunt Ifeoma's house, "she could only imagine that she looked like a Hausa goat: brown, long, and lean" (p25), a rather unusual comparison stemming from her non-familiarity with such a sight. Of course, she quickly looks away because "it was sinful to look upon another person's nakedness" (p166). However, after only a few days in the house, she peeps at Papa-Nnukwu and confess: "I did not look away, although it was sinful to look at another person's nakedness (p166). Kambili's initial reaction is not surprising, considering she had even been brought up not to look at herself let alone look at someone else. As much as she wanted to, she couldn't bring herself to look at and admire herself in shorts because it would be vanity, and "vanity was a sin"¹¹⁰. It is worthy to note that Kambili becomes well on her way to emancipation only when she becomes comfortable of that of others. Her fast movement towards the break from the mental chains her father had put on her is premised majorly on her decision to lay aside her religiosity and let her body respond to the attractiveness of another person. Undoubtedly, we also learn that Kambili's attraction to Father Amadi is from the very beginning a physical one. During his second visit to Aunt Ifeoma's, she notices "the way his hair lay in wavy curls on his head, like the ripples in a stream. By the time he comes to pick her up for the soccer game, her awareness of him had graduated:

His shorts seemed longer the last time I saw him in them, well past his knees. But now they climbed up to expose a muscular thigh sprinkled with dark hair. The space between us was too small, too tight. I was always a penitent when I was close to a priest at confession. But it was hard to feel penitent now... I could not focus on my sins, could not think of anything except how near he was¹¹¹.

There is no doubt that it is Kambili's never to be-consummated attraction to Father Amadi that helps in unlocking her potentials. His notice of her legs made her join the volleyball group on the second day of school, in spite of the whispers and ridiculing laughter from her fellow students. Adichie therefore juxtaposes the Catholicism of Father Benedict and Papa Eugene with that of Father Amadi, and amongst several other things, demonstrates a major difference in their willingness to acknowledge the role that sex and sexuality play in the life of humankind. Father Benedict and Papa Eugene's religion taught Kambili never to admire herself, to cover up anything that made her attractive as a woman, thus causing her to suffer low self-esteem. Father Amadi's Catholicism on the other hand, recognizes the woman in Kambili and acknowledges the need for her to utilize her potentials to the fullest. It is this kind of religion that Adichie preaches: a religion that does not stifle that major part of an individual's personality. Hence, Adichie raises this crucial concern in another dimension through the character of Amaka as she plays with the possibility of having optional celibacy,

¹¹⁰ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, Lagos : Farafina p187

¹¹¹ Ibid p172

or at least part time celibacy where priests would be permitted to fornicate once in a while. Thus, suggesting that even for a priest, religion should not demand the absolute sacrifice of the sexual component of his being. In spite of the centrality of the concern for sex in the novel it is noteworthy that Adichie does not dwell on explicit descriptions of the act. In fact the word sex is only mentioned three times in the entire novel and it is in a reported speech by Amaka towards the end. Kambili's growing¹¹² sexual awareness is not expressed erotically but in a simple, innocent, and chastely manner. It is thus easy for the casual reader to miss the intensity of Kambili's feelings. It would elude the reader how such an innocent statement as "you have good legs for running. You should practice more" can evoke in the mind anything sexual. To Kambili, "it seemed too close, too intimate, to have his eyes on my legs, on any part of me"¹¹³. Sexual anticipation is expressed very simply as in "His body touching mine was tense and delicious"¹¹⁴. It is also subtly expressed with metaphors as in "He picked up the water bottle, drank deeply from it. I watched the ripples in his throat as the water went down. I wished I were the water, going into him, to be with him" (p221). The lack of pornographic descriptions does not take anything away from the intensity of the sexual tension in the following lines. Indeed, it seems to add to image of foreplay, only in an abashed manner:

Father Amadi ran his hand over the loosening braids, in gentle, smoothing motions. He was looking right into my eyes. He was too close. His touch was so light I wanted to push my head towards him, to feel the pressure of his hand. I wanted to press his hand to my head, my belly, so he could feel the warmth that coursed through me¹¹⁵.

It can be argued that Adichie's depiction of sex is rather virginal because she is indeed Kambili. Written in the first person, *Purple Hibiscus* sees the world through the eyes of Kambili, a scarred teenager, battered under the religious restrictions of her father. She there would naturally, not possess explicit knowledge about sex and related issues.

3.1.4-Ifeoma's liberalism

As far as Auntie Ifeoma is concerned she is a hard fighter. She never believes her elder brother's unnecessary hardline attitude towards their father. She is accommodating, realistic and reasonable and she believes in democracy even in running her own family. Because of this, her children are socialites and freely air their views on issues concerning them. Though she is a Catholic, she does not discriminate against her father, Papa Nnukwu, because he is not a Christian. She takes a very good care of him and provides his needs to the best of her

¹¹³ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, Lagos: Farafina 2003p174

¹¹⁴ Ibid p176

¹¹⁵ Ibid pp221-222

capability. Beatrice says that Aunty Ifeoma stopped speaking to Papa after he banned Papa Nnukwu from coming to his house , and a few years passed before they finally started speaking to each other”(p65). Her presence in Aba during the Christmas celebration is fumigating because the vector of silence that has clipped Kambili’s lips and the cyst shielding rays of humanity from her life begins to shade into a mincing voice. Kambili’s aunt, Ifeoma, becomes a symbol of the iconoclastic identity and demystifier of patriarchal and despotic establishments. Though a catholic devotee like Kambili’s father, she creates the leeway that would give her brother’s family leverage from domestic servitude. Since her perception of religion is at variance with her brother’s, it is not surprising that the conflict between the two of them subtly detonates on the dining table. Eugene almost blinds his family with prayers during lunch. It is the only ebullient Ifeoma who is able to express the implication of lengthy prayers at meals: “Did you want the rice to get cold, Eugene?” She belongs to the category of women who Rosemary Moyana(1996) describes as “women who refuse to be compartmentalized into their chiseled up roles”(p30). It is Ifeoma who gives Kambili and Jaja the exclusive benefit of knowing their grandfather beyond the atheistic portraiture their father has cartographed in their mind. Ifeoma is able to discern the cosmetic life her callow nephew and niece are leading. She observes that their expressions are glacial unlike her children who have plenary rights to converse inside and outside their home. She never believes that a woman must depend on a man for her future to have meaning. She has had rugged experiences since she lost her husband many years ago. This experienced has prepared her for the future. She fearlessly worked her way out of the University. She fought relentlessly with all her breath against the injustices of the military dictators in her country. She is Amaka’s motivator and model. She is a sharp contrast from Beatrice, very resolute and independent minded. She says:

Six girls in my first year seminar class are married, their husbands visit in Mercedes and Lexus cars every weekend, their husbands buy them stereos..., and when they graduate their husbands own them and their degrees”...(p75).

She does not believe that marriage is unnecessary but expects that marriage should give the woman some measure of independence. By this masculinity will be made slightly irrelevant. Acholonu (1995) says “masculinity or male chauvinism is really a disease of the present generation..., which unfortunately is spilling over to infest women”.(p109) Ifeoma independent and assertive: Eugene wants her to stop wearing make-ups, join the knights of St John and send Amaka her daughter to convent school so that he will buy her a new car but Ifeoma refuses the conditions and goes on with her lifestyles. Aunty Ifeoma feels that her elder brother’s unnecessary imposition of rules is not acceptable. How can a man be so hard

on his father, wife and children in the name of discipline and religion? She never agrees with Uncle Eugene in his excesses. From a very vantage angle, it is possible to regard Auntie Ifeoma as a womanist. She represents the women who act within the dictates of cultural values to permeate their belief about love, relationships and the essence of human values. Adichie presents Auntie Ifeoma as a character that is stable, firm, focused, reasonable and realistic. She is not alienated like her brother. She has succeeded where a man has failed and this is because she follows her Igbo traditions and cultures.

3.1.5- A new generation of African women.

Auntie Ifeoma and her children are truly speaking the only independent characters of *Purple Hibiscus*. Amaka is a strong voice. She seems to be one the strongest female voice in our contemporary fiction. Adichie places Amaka as a contrast to Kambili from the initial stages of the story so that the reader can realize the transformation that takes place in Kambili's life. Kambili introduces Amaka to readers:

Amaka was a thinner teenage copy of her mother. She walked and talked even faster and with more purpose than Auntie Ifeoma did. Only her eyes were different; they did not have the unconditional warmth of Auntie Ifeoma's. They were quizzical eyes, eyes that asked many questions and did not accept many answers...¹¹⁶.

Amaka is a girl-womanist whose views on African culture are as mature as her mother's. She influences Kambili with her culturally conscious music. In doing so, she distinguishes herself from other teens of her age group who listen to American Pop music. Kambili narrates her encounter with Amaka's culturally conscious music:

She turned the cassette player on, nodding to the polyphonic beat of drums. 'I listen mostly to indigenous musicians. They're culturally conscious; they have something real to say. Fela and Osadebe and Onyeka are my favourites. Oh, I'm sure you probably don't know who they are. I'm sure you are into American pop like other teenagers.' She said teenagers as if she were not one, as if teenagers were a brand of people who, by not listening to culturally conscious music were a step beneath her.¹¹⁷.

She refuses to take an English name for her confirmation because she sees no need for such colonial necessity. She was never forced to accept this necessity. Not even from Father Amadi whose closeness to the family ought to have given the necessary touch for Amaka to choose an English name:

¹¹⁶ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, Lagos : Farafina 2003 p78

¹¹⁷ Ibid p118

“I told you I am not taking an English name, father”, she said

“And have I asked you why?”

“Why do I have to?”

Because it is the way it's done. Let's forget if it's right or wrong for now”, father Amadi said and I noticed the shadows under his eyes. When the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptized. Shouldn't we move ahead?¹¹⁸

Amaka represents the new hope for the coming generation of African women. Amaka is young, resilient, outspoken and unbending in the things that touch her African pride. Kambili her thus: “She walked and talked even faster with more purpose than Auntie Ifeoma did” (78). She is a rare breed of the new generation of youths. She is creative accommodating, honest, outspoken and a dogged fighter. Kambili's silence represents the restless silence of the African people in their inability at challenging those things that trample on the personality of African peoples. Even when Amaka left the country with her mother, she never stops her protests against those things she finds unpalatable in the Nigerian society.

In contrast to Kambili, Amaka has had the pleasure of knowing her grandfather, a traditionalist who has passed down the myths and histories from their ancestors. His knowledge and storytelling has made Amaka very conscious and proud of her African heritage which is reflected through her constant battle to change things to the better. She manages to see through the injustice of the system in which she lives and has despite her young age a nuanced view of the western influence she experiences in Nsukka: Brought up close to her own culture, Amaka is conscious about holding on to her native Igbo language. Kambili notes that “she hardly peppered her speech with English words when she spoke to Papa Nnukwu , as the rest of us inadvertently did.” (p172) Even if Amaka appreciates the modern comfort following the Western influence, she determinedly holds on to her African origins and refuses to adapt to western female ideals. By loudly claiming her identity as an African woman, she represents a strong voice who dares to speak out about the injustice she experiences.

Amaka's political commitment is strong and even from her new home in America she continues to involve herself by writing letters to the office of the Head of the State and the Nigerian ambassador in America. Kambili tells us that:

¹¹⁸ Ibid p266

Amaka used to write to the office of the head of state, even the Nigerian Ambassador in America, to complain about the poor state of Nigeria's justice system. She said nobody acknowledged but still it was important to her that she does something (300).

Amaka belongs to a new generation of post-colonial young women that dares and demands the right to be heard in society. Courageous, outspoken and fighting for her rights, Amaka in every aspect stands out as a modern heroine. She thus represents the greatest hope in this novel: the hope for a better future for the next generation of young African women.

3.2- Women as Agents of Social progress in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Children take care of parents and carry on the family name. This explains why women and society are controlled by the desire to have many children so as to carry the family name and enlarge the husband's *umunna*. This in itself points to the patriarchal nature of Adichie's society that ties a woman to the husband's *umunna* by virtue of having given birth to boys. In an effort to bring about change in the institution of motherhood, adoption is suggested as a more progressive way to tackle childlessness. Olanna adopts Amala's child and cares for her because the mother rejects her immediately after her birth. The same happens with Mrs Ozobia in that Auntie Ifeka nursed Olanna and Kainene because her breasts dry soon after they were born. As a result, Olanna thinks that Auntie Ifeka was as good as her mother. It is Auntie Ifeka that Olanna runs to when Odenigbo betrays her. Olanna also feels glad when the midwife asks her how many children she has. Her feelings emanate out of what society demands from women: motherhood. A similar societal obsession with the desire to have children is what makes Arize's mother-in-law disgrace her by demanding to know how she has had before marriage. Nnakwanze also is worried when Arize does not become pregnant the first three years of their marriage. Arize's 'misfortune' is a source of oppression from her mother-in-law. It is what Amala suffers in the hands of Odenigbo's mother, in that Odenigbo's mother wants to use her to get a grandson. Such a situation puts women under a lot of pressure, curtails their freedom and makes them slaves of societal demands and desires leaving them a voice of their own.

The characters of the old women in the text shows that patriarchy has conditioned women to accept demands put across by the male order. In accepting the patriarchal demands and forcing fellow women to follow suit they have become perpetrators of their own suffering. Through the characters of Olanna and Kainene, Adichie shows that motherhood can be revised in order to stop women oppression and suffering. In the portrayal of Kainene and Olanna Adichie revises the perception that women on the issue of motherhood. Whatever is captured in *Half of a Yellow Sun* in terms of women and motherhood is progressive unlike

what we get in *Purple Hibiscus*. Kainene do not value motherhood so much and Kainene remains in her relationship without a child for the entire life of the novel. Olanna adopts Amala's child. Kainene and Richard are happy and prosperous despite childlessness. This is the world that Adichie proposes whereby women are less burdened by their biological duties of mothering.

Arndt (2000) in an interview with Ogunyemi highlights how women find solace in unattached living¹¹⁹. She explains recent studies which hint that young women find concubinage a better deal than marriage in some African countries. What she does not explore is how women are exploited or exploit other women in such relationships, something which preoccupies Adichie in her current works. *Half of a Yellow Sun* investigates concubinage through the characters of chief Ozobia and the Yoruba woman he is keeping in one of the Lagos neighborhoods'. The characters Kainene, Richard, Susan, Olanna, Mohamed, Ugwu, Eberechi, Alice and the army colonel are examined and how concubinage is a possible source of female oppression and exploitation. The narrator observes:

She seemed more like a mistress: her brazenly red lipstick, her tight dress, her smoking. But then she didn't smile in that plastic way the mistresses did. She didn't even have the generic prettiness that made him inclined to believe the rumor that Nigerian politicians swapped mistresses (57).

Women are so marginalized that being in dignified social spaces unaccompanied by a man is 'abnormal'. Going to such places for Kainene is a pointer that she has a choice and thus she is exercising her freedom. In the following excerpt from her blog In an interview with the Guardian, Adichie recounts her own experience as she has been a victim of male chauvinism:

Some weeks ago I walked into the lobby of one of the best Nigerian hotels. And a guy at the entrance stopped me and asked me annoying questions. Because the automatic assumption is that a Nigerian female walking into a hotel alone is a sex worker. In Lagos, I cannot go alone into many reputable bars and clubs. They just don't let you in if you are a woman alone.¹²⁰

Adichie highlights the episode above to show that the progressive contemporary woman has the ability to be in social gatherings unaccompanied.

Adichie discredits those women like Odenigbo's mother, Nnankwanze's mother, Alice and Amala who are perpetuating practices that degrade and oppress fellow women. Although African writers like Emecheta, Aidoo, Nwapa and Mariama Ba argue that wifhood and motherhood are the major sources of oppression, it is palpable from this study that other

¹¹⁹ Arndt, Susan. "African Gender Trouble and African Womanism. An Interview With Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Wanjira Muthoni" *Signs*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000:25(3)709-726.

¹²⁰ C. Adichie, I decided to call myself a Happy Feminist, interview, with the Guardian, 17 October 2014

relationships with men are also oppressive. In such relationships women, unconsciously exploit fellow women as they cohabit with their husbands or boyfriends and that way such women help the institution of patriarchy to continue subordinating them. Adichie through such observations wants the conscience of the women in such liaisons to feel guilty so as to reduce the suffering of fellow women.

Adichie in *Half Of a Yellow Sun* also sees women as progressive elements in society in the sense that they are the promoters of their society during hard times like the Biafran war. Women desperately and continuously search for food and medicine during the war and that way sustain their communities. Kainene introduces the idea of growing crops to feed the refugees at a time there is no food forthcoming to the Biafrans. Olanna goes ahead to try and get alternative job for her husband who has withdrawn himself as the war presses forward. With her friend Mrs Muokelu she also set up a school to teach children such that there would be continuity after the war.

3.3-Female bond: a weapon against women's oppression in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chioma Opara (2004) in *Her mother's daughter* advocates for female bonding which she views as 'a facet of female power'. Opara's views agree with the earlier views of Akachi Ezeigbo that "In Africa in the period before recorded history women found close ties which helped to strengthen their position. In this way, they were able to take decisions and uphold them in matters that concerned their welfare"¹²¹. The above quotations show how important it is for women to come together and fight for their cause. It has become a common feature in feminist's writings. As a result men and critics of African literature have dealt in various ways with female bonding in their different books. In the same vein, Chimam¹²²anda Ngozi Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun* has portrayed female characters that forge helpful relationships to better their situation as they tackle the problem of patriarchy. Forming groups to attain a purpose is the process by which traditional Africans acquired an energizing spirit. African communities presented a strong sense of communalism also called 'weism' and the individual experience was better realized in a group. Oyewumi(1996) affirms that organizing to attain a political goal speaks to the issue of forming political alliances and constitutes group identity.

¹²¹ Ezeigbo A.A. Gender Issues in Nigeria :A Feminist Perspective.Lagos :Vistas Books. 1996 P37

In Adichie's novels, cases of women coming together to challenge the effects of oppression or to aid one another to overcome men-created injustices are noticeable. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Ifeoma forms friendship with the sister-in-law Beatrice and attempts to put her out of a violent marriage. Ifeoma is ready to take the children to Nsukka so that Beatrice can think independently and quit domestic abuse. It is on the same scale that women at the University of Nigeria-Nsukka are concerned about the management and the problems bedeviling the 61 institution and people like Phillipa opt out of troubled waters. This movement out of Nsukka probably to America serves to expand the space for women to challenge domination. Ifeoma bonds well with those women she is working with and she is given information about the list of disloyal lecturers long before she is sacked. It is out of her closeness with the female students that they even inform her about their plan to marry. Beatrice is close to Sisi and it is her who gets Mama the poison that kills Eugene. This is a case of a woman helping a fellow woman to overcome oppression. After Eugene's death, Sisi is married but spends a considerable amount of time instructing Okon; the new family steward. Kambili also forms a strong bond with Mama and at one point she comments:

Silence hangs over us, but it is a different kind of silence, one that lets me breathe. I have nightmares about the other kind, the silence of when Papa was alive. In my nightmares, it mixes with shame and grief and so many other things that I cannot name, and forms blue tongues of fire that rest above my head, like Pentecost, until I wake up screaming and sweating¹²³.

This serves to celebrate the freedom that mother and daughter enjoy after Papa's death. The silence that grips this family can afford them some freedom that lets them breathe. Kambili's support for her mother in her trying period of widowhood can also be analyzed as a trope of heralding female bonding. Kambili comes out as a character who exhibits strength before adversity and an inspiration for the much desired change.

Although Kainene and Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun* have drifted apart considerably they come together during hard times and help each other to surmount the effects of war and starvation. Kainene welcomes the sister and is ready to stay with Olanna and her family as the war rages. The same friendship can be said of Mrs Muokelu and Olanna. Mrs Muokelu helps Olanna when she is in a crisis. She is ready to sacrifice some egg powder for Olanna's family when Baby falls sick. She even teaches Olanna how to make soap when the commodity becomes scarce.

We notice the same kind of solidarity between Olanna and her mother when they meet at the ladies parlour and we realize that it is here where Mama Olanna narrates to the daughter

¹²³ Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* ;Lagos, Farafina 2003 p305

about the father's mistress. When the mother confides to her daughter about the father's affairs with another woman we witness the formation of a bond that is very strong and a likely source of comfort to suffering madam Ozobia. This is what moves Olanna to confront her father and talk about her mother. The talk solves the problem that would otherwise have led to domestic confrontation. Mrs Ozobia's house has a parlor where ladies congregate and it is here that sisterhood and female solidarity are crafted. When Olanna has problems with Odenigbo's mother she turns to One Whaler for consolation. Olanna observes that Edna 'cultivated zinnias in for front hard and finally she cultivated a friendship with her'¹²⁴. She speaks to Olanna and informs her to stop pretending that things are okay during the time when she has problems with Odenigbo. She encourages her to seek help from someone and even suggests the Priest at St Vincent de Paul. Edna's story of the man who left her a week before her wedding at Montgomery serves to reduce Olanna's suffering.

Olanna receives advice from Aunt Ifeka who narrates her own experience about when she first married uncle Mbaezi and troubled she was by the thoughts that another woman would come and displace her. The words from Aunt Ifeka revigorate Olanna who is having problems in her relationship with her fiancé. Aunt Ifeka has a strong bond with Olanna since she is the woman who breastfeeds Olanna and Kainene when their mother's breasts dried immediately after their birth. We note a bond of women who nurse babies for others like Olanna's mother and Ifeka. Adichie uses these episodes to spread the idea of bonding among women so as to overcome oppression and exploitation occasioned by motherhood or mothering.

Women also come together for the sake of their communities such as when they supply food and singlet to the Biafra army. Women supply things to the army in their win-the-war effort: colonel Madu says there is a group of women at the barracks every other day, from all sorts of backwater villages, bringing yams and plantains and fruits to the soldiers¹²⁵. In another episode Olanna joins a sewing group in Abba to make things for the army. Women organize a seminar in Nsukka called 'In Case of War', in an effort to prepare fellow women in case war breaks out. Such groups are empowering because the knowledge they deliver lessens the suffering of women in the events of such situations. Olanna creates a relationship with Alice and gives her soap when she gets some supplies which make life bearable for Alice during hard times. When Olanna exchanges with Alice sensitive information about their men, the narrator observes that, 'they laughed and she sensed, between the vulgar and delicious

¹²⁴ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun*, Lagos; Farafina 2006 p228

¹²⁵ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun* ;Lagos, Farafina 2006 p183

female bond'¹²⁶. These bonds help women transcend difficult situations. Female bonds allow women to talk about their most immediate problems including domestic issues. Kolawole(1997) argues that womanism highlights female bonding and collective action as a part of struggle of all women. Adichie therefore advocates for collective action so as to achieve things for women. Ants constitute an example in this regard.

In Sefi Atta's *Everything good will come*, Atta is of the view that if women come together they could fight for the common goal of the women and the society at large. A group of Army wives had founded a program for women in a village. They promised to train the village women to eradicate infant dehydration¹²⁷. Here, like Adichie, Sefi Atta is calling on women to adopt female friendship, bonding or sisterhood as these would be one of the ways they can win the war against inequality, oppression and all patriarchal dictates. The two heroines of the novel form a good example of sisterhood. African women have always come together to pursue a way that is aimed at challenging domination and oppression. The case of women joining hands to pursue a common goal in the novels of Adichie is laudable since there triumph in groups. Adichie appears to suggest to women to come together because there is strength in numbers and there are higher chances of succeeding. In Benin for instance women are 52% of the population and they have never reached the highest decision making post, the presidency. If all the women of the country could vote for a woman, she would become president.

3.4-Motherhood and Adoption in *Half of a Yellow Sun* .

The woman in the postcolonial society was expected to be a mother once she started living with a man whether legally or illegally. A child is what identified a real woman from a 'spoilt' one and lack of children was perceived as a sin. Mama(Odenigbo's mother) is furious at Olanna because she has not given birth since she started living with Odenigbo, even though they are not yet married . She calls her a witch and shouts at her: please go back and tell those who sent you that you did not find my son. Tell your fellow witches that you did not see him"... "Did you hear me? Tell them that nobody's medicine will work on my son. He will not marry an abnormal woman, unless you kill me first. Over my dead body!" (Adichie; 2006). This mentality leaves barren women without an identity in the society. Even though both Odenigbo and Olanna long to have a child of their own, her barrenness is an obstacle. Mama therefore brings a young girl Amala from the village and uses charms to make Odenigbo have unprotected sex with her resulting in pregnancy. All that Olanna suffers is

¹²⁶ Ibid p336

¹²⁷Atta, S. *Everything Good Will Come*, Lagos, Farafina 2006 p211

typical of African women who cannot have children. Nnu Ego's first husband told her she is as barren as a desert in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Flora Nwapa also demonstrates in *One is Enough* that woman's barrenness is a cause of her suffering in marriage. This can be clearly seen from these words Obiora has addressed his wife Amaka.

You are being senseless....How many mouths were we feeding? You barren and senseless woman! You forget that you are childless. You would not raise your voice in this house if you were sensible. You should go about your business quietly and not offend anyone because if you do, one would be tempted to give you one or two home truths¹²⁸.

Through these words, Obiora as a husband accuses his wife Amaka of being responsible for their failure to have a child. His words also reveal that childlessness is a shame no African society will accept and the wife in the childless home is exposed to insults and mockeries. So what Olanna endures on the part of her mother-in-law is common with barren women. As a matter of fact Odenigbo impregnates Amala and their offspring is unexpectedly a baby girl and both Amala and Mama refuse to keep the baby. Adichie through these two characters show how some women underestimate the female child's potentials. Patriarchy has put in their head that a baby girl is not worth a baby boy. This mentality has to be changed. Paradoxically it is the barren Olanna who accepts to keep the child and care for her. Adichie through Olanna is calling on women who cannot bear children to adopt as many children as they can and stop complaining about their situations. They are countless children all over the world who are abandoned and have nobody to take care of them. Why not take one and adopt it and be called mother instead of remaining in loneliness throughout a lifetime? Everybody can never have children. Those who are unable to have them should adopt orphans or children who are abandoned to balance the situation. So child adoption is Adichie's solution to barrenness.

3.5. Perspectives for women's empowerment.

According to Omolara,¹²⁹ "determining one's fate by one's self and expressing it in a forceful way to be noticed should be what true empowerment is all about. This is why power is all about being able to assert oneself in all ramifications. It suggests the ability to maintain one's dignity in the face of factors that seek to undermine it... Power is asserting and occupying one's own space without having to concede it because one is made to see it as illegality. It is being oneself, and without feeling apologetic about it. Assertiveness of the self is consequently the measure of woman empowerment in a patriarchal social context" (124).

¹²⁸ Nwapa, Flora, *One is Enough*, Enugu, Nigeria : Tana Press, 1981 :19

¹²⁹ Omolara, Daniel. Ideology, "Power and Pictures of women." *Journal of Nigerian English Studies Association (JNESAS)*14.2 (2011):120-140. Print.

3.5.1- Women's educational empowerment.

Onyango(2006) argues that abolishing illiteracy has been top on the women's agenda for emancipation. He however admits that in many patriarchal societies in Africa educating a male child is more of a priority than educating a girl child. In this study I argue that women's education is a strong socialization tool used by women in Adichie's novels to fight female subordination and oppression.

In Nwapa's *Efuru*(1966) Gilbert, a man of education restates the reason why women are rarely educated in patriarchal societies, 'It is a waste sending girls to school he says. They get married before the end of their training and the money is wasted'¹³⁰.

Although most patriarchal societies have men who think like Gilbert, in Adichie's novels female education is perceived differently. Odenigbo informs Ugwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun* that, Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?(p11)'. This statement is quite applicable to the education of women because through education women would understand the structures that oppress them and strive to end their predicament.

Miss Adebayo, Ugwu notes, is not the soft African woman who is quiet but rather argumentative and firm. She is knowledgeable on numerous issues and able to actively and progressively engage male scholars. She is well-informed and challenges other professionals who meet at Odenigbo's house. Olanna's entry is spectacular and Ugwu is carried away by her spoken English since she speaks 'the kind of English Ugwu heard on Master's radio' (p22). Olanna has a master degree from the University of London. Abdulmalik holds Olanna with lots of respect and when he is introduced to her, he portrays that 'expression of people who marveled at education with calm certainty that it would never be theirs' (p40). We learn from Arize that education for women delays marriage and the subsequent subordination of that institution. The narrator observes:

Arize's round eyes were admiring and bewildered. It is only women who know much Book like you who can say that, sister. If people like me who don't know Book wait too long, we will expire'. Arize paused as she removed a translucently pale egg from inside the chicken. I want a husband today and tomorrow, oh! My mates have all left me and gone to their husbands' houses' (p41).

There is a strong statement in that education delays a woman's entry into marriage. Frank (1987), Emecheta(1982) and Nwapa (1981) argue that by getting education women enter into

¹³⁰ Nwapa, *Efuru*, London :Heinemann Educational Books ;1966, p191-192

the public sphere and favourably compete with men as equals in job market. Olanna is employed as a lecturer at the University of Nigeria-Nsukka and when she quarrels with Odenigbo's mother she goes to her flat and continues to do her job. Kainene informs chief Okonji that *she* would manage her father's businesses in the East and that way she will put her degree to good use. Kainene's education is not a waste of precious time and money. Her education is not only beneficial to her as an individual, her family, her relatives but also the society at large. The author's exposure to education has proved Bernard Dickson and Frank right. Franck, according to Dickson, says:

Education gives women a vision of humane experience beyond the narrow confines of their own lives; it bestows a kind of imaginative power and awareness of beauty, dreams, possibility. Even if they cannot literally escape the imprisoning restraints of their patriarchal world, they can imaginatively transcend them through the means of books (p253).

Olanna chides her cousin Arize to concentrate on her sewing training so as to be independent. Adichie's writing therefore makes a strong point that education makes women acquire some autonomy thus competing favorably with men outside the confines of patriarchy.

Olanna's mother who is less educated clings to the husband and is terribly depressed when she learns of her husband's mistress. The least educated girls like Anulika, Nnesinachi, Amala and Arize are most likely to suffer the oppression of the patriarchal order. Anulika is ready to marry when she is barely sixteen and Amala is used by Odenigbo's mother to sleep with Odenigbo and give her a grandson. The desire for boys which is a feature in the world of the two stories seems to afflict the less educated since Olanna, Kainene and Ifeoma do not suffer such gender misgivings.

In *Purple Hibiscus* Auntie Ifeoma and Auntie Philipa are educated and thus liberated. Ifeoma does not want to marry again after the death of her husband and when Papa Nnukwu informs her of his prayers for her to get a good man to marry her, Ifeoma discredits him because what she requires most is a promotion to a senior lecturer. She is free from male influence and determined to enjoy her freedom. Ifeoma's forthrightness and assertiveness are as a result of the power of education. She is educated and aware when things are going wrong. Adichie uses her so as that she can contrast her with the sister-in-law Beatrice who depends on her husband economically. Due to lack of proper education and a paying job, Beatrice suffers all the effects of patriarchal domination perpetuated by Eugene and the Igbo culture. Adichie portrays the miracle of education to women empowerment through projecting characters who are educated and others with less or no education so as to draw parallels and give some freedom to the educated ones. Educated women in the two nov 67

are able to escape male oppression unlike the uneducated ones. The theme of women education in Adichie's novels resonates well with Mariama Ba in *So Long a Letter* where education has the potential to provide women with the possibility of crafting new identity beyond that of womanhood and acquire consciousness of empowerment that impacts on their relationship with males at the family and societal levels.

3.5.2- Women's sexual empowerment.

Adichie's female characters always dictate the pace in sexual acts. Apart from their abilities to go for, and get, men who catch their fancy, they always take the lead in the coital act. When Olanna seeks to win Odenigbo's heart after the event at the theatre in Ibadan, she demands and gets his attention effortlessly. She has been swept off her feet by Odenigbo's sense of order. The same can be said of Kainene when she meets Richard at the cocktail party. She tells Richard that she is available for any 'prospective' bachelor:

Have you ever been to the market in Balogun? They display slabs of meet on tables, and you are supposed to grope and feel and then decide which you want. My sister and I are meat. We are here so that suitable bachelors will make the kill (p59)

Even in bed, both ladies always have their ways over men. While Olanna 'directs' sex over Odenigbo and Richard, Kainene 'acts' the man over Richard. Thus in Adichie's creative hands, men are object to be exploited to satisfy women sexual urge. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu¹³¹ are of the opinion that Adichie's female characters are not to be relegated to the background in the act of sexual intercourse. They depict her female characters as "strong, proactive and confidently assertive when it comes to the sexual act proper". They argue that her Western orientation and exposure have provided impetus for her literary outlook. In order to realistically drive home their liberation from sexual exploitation, Adichie's female characters discuss sex with impunity. They are active discussants in sex related matter and not passive onlookers. Besides her penchant to initiate sex, they are vulgar in their assertive claims on sex. Olanna is distraught at Odenigbo for sleeping with Amala while she is away. When she expresses her displeasure, Aunt Ifeka goes vulgar, submitting that Odenigbo has only acted typical of men. He "has inserted his penis in the first hole he could find when you were away"(p226). In the same vein, the deprivation of war does not prevent Adichie's female characters from expressing their 'humanity'. In a discussion between Alice and Olanna, men's sexual prowess is described with impunity. Similarly Olanna and Kainene are not left out in direct reference to sex and sexual organs. Both of them have just discovered the

¹³¹ Onukaogu A. & Onyerionwu, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie :the aesthetics of commitment and narrative. Ibadan:Kraft Books 2010

infidelity of their spouses. When Odenigbo tries to blame his mother for his 'sin', Olanna is not impressed. She wonders if "your mother pulls out your penis and inserts it into Amala as well" (p241). Also Kainene's vulgarity knows no bound when she discovers her sister's escapade with Richard. She is of the opinion that "the good one shouldn't fuck her sister's lover" (p254). As if the unrestraint sexual urge of Adichie's characters in *Half of A Yellow Sun* is not enough, the coital act is described with impunity and without a modicum of decency. This justifies Uko's¹³² postulation that contemporary women writers in Africa are all out to depict African women as equally "free to love and express love" like their male counterparts, thus "essentially surmount all sexist depictions and picturesque portrayals". One of such occasion is between Odenigbo and Olanna:

His tone was gently teasing. But his hands were not gentle. They were unbuttoning her blouse, freeing her breast from a bra cup...After Ugwu served drinks, Olanna watched Odenigbo raised his glass to his lips and all she could think of was how those lips had fastened around her nipple only minutes ago. She surreptitiously moved so that her inner arm brushed against her breast and closed her eyes at the needles of delicious pain¹³³

Adichie's heroines Olanna and Kainene do not behave the way traditional women behave in front of sex. They take the lead and take part in the coital act shamelessly. This is sexual independence.

3.5.3- Economic empowerment.

Traditionally, women are the appendages of their husbands and as such they take no decision without the husband's consent and approval. They stay at home and nurture children while men go to farm land. So men are the breadwinners the only people to fend for the family. In modern times this pattern has been modified. Women no longer stay at home and do household chores and nurture children only; they go out to look for money. Nigerian new generation of writers especially female ones incorporates all these in their writings. Womanists portray women as people who are educated and have a career on their own. They no longer rely only on their husbands for their financial problems. It is in this regard that Adichie portrays Auntie Ifeoma a University lecturer who earns her living by teaching. Though a widow she takes care of her children's financial needs without anybody helping her. She waits for no exterior hand to help her and refuses to marry again. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the two heroines Olanna and Kainene are truly independent. Olanna is graduated from a prestigious University in England and is a second degree holder in Sociology. She refuses to marry wealthy men proposed to her by her father. She prefers to go and teach at the

¹³² Uko, I. *Transcending the margins* : New directions in women 's writing.African Literature today 2006p 93

¹³³ Adichie, *Half of A Yellow Sun* ;Lagos :Farafina 2006 pp49-50

University of Nsukka in order to be free. A woman with a job deserves respect and her husband has no choice than to respect her. Even in times of war she does not wait for her husband Odenigbo to feed Amala or herself. Also Kainene Olanna's twin sister is a character to be reckoned with. She is strong, fearless, courageous and seriously minded. She takes over her father's business and is really determined to make her father's factories grow and to do better than she has done. Her business precedes over anything else. She runs around, gets and executes contracts independently. Such a woman does not need to wait for any husband before buying anything. In view of all that precedes I can say that Adichie's heroines are all economically independent. This forces men's respect on them. In *One is enough* when Amaka realizes her incapacity to bear children with Obiora, she resolves that if she cannot find success through marriage she would be in business, she would make money and her sisters, friends, and age grades would respect her¹³⁴ This simply means that an economically independent woman deserves respect from peers and the public at large. In Kainene and Olanna Adichie shows that women are highly dependable, courageous, creative and the most responsible set of living things. They are not weaklings and inferior beings as men portray them. Daniel Eluke concurs when he says that the contemporary woman unlike her sister in the traditional era believes that she is the provider and not the consumer of wealth which patriarchy portrays (113).

¹³⁴ Nwapa, Flora, *One is Enough*, Enugu, Nigeria :Tana Press, 1981 :10

Conclusion

All over the world, women still live in societies that support or enforce female oppression and subjugation. In addition, the marital institution continues to be nothing less than slavish and tormenting for women. From the above discussion, the core solution for societal transformation is change. Adichie's novels focus on this. There is need for the transformation of deep-seated, stereotyped and long held attitudes which tend to hinder emancipation and progress of African women. In other words, it is crucial to address all oppressive structures and situations in our societies in order to encourage and to sustain lasting peace in our homes and in the world at large. My study concludes firstly that they are three fundamental causes for women's oppression in our societies: Patriarchy, colonization and political and economic disempowerment. In colonization, I include Western religion because it is colonization which brings about religion and religion contributes greatly to women's suffering in Adichie's novels. Patriarchal thinking holds that men are naturally superior to women. A patriarchal society such as Nigeria is a society where the woman is relegated to the background in every sphere of life.

What is more, colonization had an adverse effect on the position of women in African societies. Colonials have shown little respect for women and have endorsed patriarchal attitude through various channels. With the establishment of a formal system of education by missionaries in Africa, patriarchal ideologies and notions which in a way have lowered the status of women have been infused into the educational system. On the political field, women have played the role of outsiders. All these three factors have contributed greatly to the actual predicament of women in African societies.

Secondly, there are different types of women oppression in Adichie's novels. While some women are victims of physical abuse, others are oppressed in their psychology. Also oppression can be encountered in the domestic level or at the professional level. Beatrice and Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* face oppression in the domestic level whereas Aunty Ifeoma faces it at the professional level. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, characters such as Anulika, the bartender, Eberechi and many other women are confronted with sexual violence which is included in physical abuse. Others such as Mrs Ozobia, Olanna, Alice, Aunty Ifeka, Mama Dozie are confronted with other forms of oppression.

Thirdly, most of the oppressed women resist oppression and fight tirelessly to overcome it. Some resist to the extent of taking drastic measures that end the life of their

oppressors. So, Adichie through her characters is calling on women not to keep quiet in front of oppression but to resist and combat it with all their strength. In addition to resistance Adichie advocates female bonding or sisterhood. She also urges women to take actions that can contribute to the progress of their society. All in all the women's struggle for independence cannot reach its actualization if economic and political systems remain the same. Women should also be educated and schooled because one cannot fight oppression if one doesn't have the tools to fight it and education is one of these tools.

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