

Resistance to Patriarchal Ideology and Colonial Legacy in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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Abstract: *Chimamanda (Ngugi) Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun, a novel set in the background of the Nigerian Civil War, exuberantly constitutes the postcolonial feminist elements. Adichie explicitly portrays the pains and pathos along with the resistance the female characters undergo amidst deep-rooted patriarchy as well as the colonial legacy. The sufferings these female characters bear throughout the novel itself provides strength to them to revolt against the oppression imposed upon them. There are several female characters who become the victims of the patriarchal system and male chauvinism. However, Adichie gives a new dimension to the novel imparting the colossal strength to her female characters who employ several tools to resist patriarchy and colonial legacy. Furthermore, these characters are themselves ready to take agency of their own bodies and assert their sexual rights. One step ahead, the protagonist even uses her sexuality as a means to resist against male chauvinism. By characterizing both types of traumatized and empowered characters, Adichie's novel mirrors double marginalization of females as well as the increasing awareness among the Nigerian females in postcolonial era.*

Key Words: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Patriarchy, male chauvinism, double marginalization

I. Introduction to Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a Postcolonial Feminist Fiction

This research article attempts to analyze how the notions of oppression and freedom are woven in the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in the light of postcolonial feminism. She explores the hidden issues of the third world females in this postmodernist novel. In a different manner, she has empowered the female characters of her novel and gives them strong voices in one way or the other, directly or indirectly to speak on behalf of their individualities. However, she also depicts the real picture of colonial dominance as well as male chauvinism in the postcolonial and under developed world.

Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun is a novel about moral responsibility, the end of colonialism, ethnic clashes, class and race and the ways in which love can complicate them all. The novel not only portrays the cruelty, horror and terrors of Biafran War but celebrates beauty, humor and tenderness even amidst the tension of warfare. The novel at the same time explores the gap between the performances of male heroes and their irresponsibility. The novel shrewdly observes the women, the wives, the daughters left dangling over the chasm. *Half of a Yellow Sun* takes a look at these questions through the twin's uneasy relationship. Like Nigeria's postcolonial peoples, their lives are involuntarily joined, both they and their nations must choose between a fractious unity and a fraught secession Adichie does not belong to the time of civil war, but her imagination seems to have been profoundly molded by it. Some of her own Igbo family members survived Biafra, others did not. Adichie approaches her country's violent past with a blend of generational distance and familial obsession. *Half of a Yellow Sun* speaks through history to our war-racked age not through abstract analogy but through the energy of vibrant, sometimes horrifying detail. The novel takes place in Nigeria during the Nigerian-Biafran War in 1967-1970. The effect of the war is shown through the dynamic relationships of four people's lives ranging from high-ranking political figures, a professor, a British citizen, and a houseboy. After the British colonizers left Nigeria, the lives of the main characters drastically changed and were torn apart by the ensuing civil war.

The book jumps between events that took place during the early 1960s and the late 1960s, when the war took place. In the context of early 1960s, the main characters are introduced: Ugwu, a 13-year-old village boy who moves in with Odenigbo, to work as his houseboy. Odenigbo frequently entertains intellectuals to discuss the political turmoil in Nigeria. Life changes for Ugwu when Odenigbo's girl friend, Olanna, moves in with them. Ugwu forms a strong bond with both of them, and is very loyal. Olanna has a twin sister, Kainene, a woman with a dry sense of humour, tired by the pompous company she is forced to keep. Her lover Richard is an Englishman who has come to Nigeria to study the arts.

Jumping four years ahead, trouble is brewing between the Hausa and the Igbo people and hundreds of people including Olanna's beloved auntie and uncle die in the massacres. A new republic, called Biafra, is created by the Igbo. As a result of the conflict, Olanna, Odenigbo, their daughter Baby and Ugwu are forced to

flee Nsukka, which is the university town and the major intellectual hub of the new nation. They finally end up in the refugee town of Umuahia, where they suffer as a result of food shortages and the constant air raids and paranoid atmosphere. There are also allusions to conflicts between Olanna and Kainene, Richard and Kainene and Olanna and Odenigbo.

When the novel jumps back to the early 1960s, we learn that Odenigbo slept with a village girl, who then had his baby. Olanna is furious at his betrayal, and sleeps with Richard in a moment of weakness. She goes back to Odenigbo and they take in his daughter, whom they call Baby, when her mother refuses her.

Back during the war, Olanna, Odenigbo, Baby and Ugwu are living with Kainene and Richard while Kainene is running a refugee camp. The situation is hopeless as they have no food or medicine. Kainene decides to trade across enemy lines, but does not return, even after the end of the war a few weeks later. The book ends ambiguously leaving the reader guess whether Kainene lives or not.

The novel, at the same time, portrays the heart-rending picture of Nigeria integrating kwashiorkor, the silent killer of children and the class-conflict in the postcolonial era. The variety in characterization from Odenigbo, a revolutionary lover, to Richard, a white man transformed himself into an Igbo is also the main concern of the novel.

Postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on indigenous cultures and society. From the late 1970s, the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various, political and linguistic experiences of societies that were former European colonies. Since postcolonialism is a wide terrain of study and analysis of European territorial conquest, it is increasingly used to uncover contemporary colonial legacies in both pre and post independent nations and communities. The field of postcolonialism is so wide and vast that various ideas and theories regarding it have come into being. Postcolonial Feminism is also one of the theories that emerged out of postcolonialism.

Postcolonial Feminism, often referred to as third world feminism, is a form of feminists philosophy which centers around the idea that racism, colonialism and the long lasting effects (economic, political and cultural) of colonialism in the postcolonial setting, are inextricably bound up with the unique gendered realities of non-white, non-western women. Post-colonial feminists criticize western feminists because the latter have a tendency of universalizing the history of women's issues, and their discourses to represent women globally. Also, it is believed by postcolonial feminists that mainstream western feminists ignored the voices of non-white, non-western women, thus creating resentment from feminists in developing nations.

Postcolonial feminist critics like Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Sara Suleri began to argue that "Western feminism, which had assumed that gender overrode cultural differences to create a universal category of the womanly or the feminine, was operating from hidden, universalist assumption with a middle-class, Eurocentric bias" (qtd. in Ashcroft et. al 102). They charged western feminism that failed to account adequately with the experience of third world women. The western feminist assumption that all of us of the same gender across classes and cultures are socially constituted as a homogeneous group is criticized by these third world feminists. They argue that this homogeneity is produced not on the basis of biological essentials but rather on the basis of secondary sociological essentials. It is at this point that the postcolonial feminist critics find an elision between woman as discursively constructed group and 'women' as material subject of their own history. Mohanty argues that "discursively consensual homogeneity of 'woman' as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women" (262).

Adichie was born in Enugu, Nigeria, on September 15, 1977. She was brought up in the university town of Nsukka, the location of the University of Nigeria, where her father worked as a deputy vice-chancellor and a professor of statistics and her mother was the university registrar. As a child she attended the university's primary and secondary schools. Growing up in a university environment nurtured her innate desire to write, and during these years she wrote a number of plays and poems that were performed at school. In 1995 she enrolled at Drexel University in Philadelphia for scholarship. Two years later, she transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic, Connecticut to study political science and communication. She continued to write during this period, and several of her short stories were published in literary journals, including *Granta*, *Other Voices*, *Calyx*, and *Iowa Review*.

Adichie's work includes themes of political and domestic violence, tolerance, loyalty, family, national identity, self realization, and the effects of colonialism on the collective and on individuals. In her play, *For Love of Biafra* (1998), she chronicles the expectations and shattered hopes of a Nigerian family around the time of the Nigerian civil war during the late 1960s. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* explores the birth and death of an African nation praises that skill of Adichie thus regarding the novel as a milestone in portraying the poignancy of African lives and circumstances: "It is this kind of unflinching insight into her nation and its peoples that makes *Half of a Yellow Sun* a profoundly humanistic work of literature that bears comparison with the best fiction of Nigeria and, indeed, the entire African continent. (San Francisco Chronicle, 5 September, 2006). The way Adichie handles the intertwined issues of nationalism, race, ethnicity, truth, heroism and betrayal has made this novel one of the acclaimed ones of the twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, this widely acclaimed novel has drawn the attention of several critics who have dissected the issues of the novel using several theoretical perspectives. The present researcher attempts to reveal the third world feminist issues in the novel. For this, the researcher will use the tools and methodology created out of Postcolonial Feminism. Postcolonial feminism has emerged out of the strong claims of the unavoidable indispensability of separate stream of theories to understand and interpret the issues of the females living in the third world countries. Issues of postcolonial feminism are apt here in the context of dynamic female characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* who are not merely submissive but also powerful and rebellious throughout the novel.

II. Resistance to Patriarchy and Colonial Legacy in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Patriarchal Domination over Females in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* remarkably delineates the double subjugation of post-colonial Nigerian females. Different women characters seek to subvert the colonial regime and local patriarchy in order to attain freedom and happiness in their lives. Both patriarchy and colonization manipulate the knowledge and hegemonize women to believe that they are unable to know and do anything the men would do.

The dominant power and discourses never provide women access to critical thinking about the field of possibilities. Some women who get privileges to exercise their minds and innate qualities of critical thinking questions and resist dominations and marginalization claiming their position in the center. The main characters of Adichie's novel, in hand, are in somewhat privileged position. They realize the domination imposed upon them. They resist and attempt to liberate themselves from the double oppression through whatever means they have access to. Otherwise, the female characters already trained in the patriarchal ideology are even contended to be subjugated by the patriarchy and are living their lives under the same model with happiness.

Patriarchy is the system whereby males are considered to be the primary one and female are subjugated in the secondary position. Feminism, a movement, as such arose its momentum against this male suppression and oppression demanding for equality between both the sexes. But still today from very advanced and developed to the least developed societies, patriarchy remains in one or the other form dominating women and grabbing their rights. Several feminist theorists have expressed their rage against this unjustifiable system alive in the society through several mediums like art, literature, painting and so on. Through this novel, Adichie traces a landscape and a mode of writing we have seen before in the works of female personalities like Bharati Mukherjee, Amy Tam and Jhumpa Lahiri whereby these female writers have successfully portrayed the dominant patriarchal structures into which females are compelled to adjust themselves bearing all the grudges of physical as well as mental domination however, they never stop to fight back against those injustices.

The female characters Olanna, Kainene, Anulika, Eberenchi, Odenigbo's mother, Edna, Alice and Mrs. Mouleko, all are the representatives of the African women who have internally as well as externally accepted the patriarchal values even though those norms seem to be largely unjustifiable to them. They are even victims to the set of those values. It is because of the conventional attitude of society towards the females that they have been relegated under the colonial-patriarchal grinder. The stories of these women reveal that their pains, pathos and traumatic experiences are the representatives of the entire female race that has been badly dehumanized by the patriarchal social conventions. One such instance, in the novel whereby Richard recounts how the African women in family have to undergo the physical as well as mental torture, is clear in what he states:

"I know Umunnachi people well, they find too much trouble", he said "My people warned my cousin not to marry an Umunnachi man but sdid not hear. Everyday they beat her until she packed her things and returned to her father's house." (152)

The story above of an unnamed character is more than sufficient to prove how women are treated like animals and given physical tortures in the African family. This anonymous character, here, is the representative of all the third world females living in suffocation and exploitation under the brutality patriarchy has been imposing upon them even at present in one or the other forms.

In this respect it can even be said that in order to subjugate women to the subordinate position the male dominated society has been a vampire of them. It neither gives attention to their physical and mental pains nor gives appropriate opportunity for their self development.

In the course of human history if there is one thing that has victimized the women from the ancient time it is the system of patriarchy. Patriarchy, that creates the logocentrism of the makes, has been ruling over the female race and especially over the female body. It has raped and mutilated the female image and has been ascribed the guilt to the females themselves. It has stood as one of the major hindrances in the path of progress and development of the entire female race. The female race from very ancient time has been relegated under patriarchy and has been so much hegemonized that they themselves follow the discriminatory convention without having any doubt of it. A typical conventional woman is either a sacrificing mother, or a submissive wife, or an obedient daughter or a loving sister to her brother. As Ketu Katak in *Politics of Female Body* points out:

My project attempts to name sexuality as the arena where patriarchal control is exerted most distinctively over the female body – whether in overt domination as rape, or in a variety of controls of the female body through traditions of the obedient wife, self-sacrificing mother, and in discrimination against girl children in terms of malnourishment, or as in the last twenty five years, technological development of aminocentesis being used as an instrument of female feticide. All these have a direct impact on women's bodies. (12)

Hereby it is clear that the women are bound to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the family and remain loyal to own familial duties. And the paradox with these women is that they feel pride for how they sacrifice their happiness and comforts for the sake of their family. In the novel, there are many instances where several mothers during the war undergo severe pains and difficulties in order to protect their children from getting harmed. The suffering of the Nigerian mothers to keep their children and family members intact of the terrible impact of the war is in abundance in the novel:

The dim hospital corridor smelt of urine and penicillin, women were sitting with babies on their laps, standing with babies on their hips, and their chatter mixed with crying (269). Such descriptions profoundly done over the whole novel elaborately depicts the pathetic state of worrisome mothers.

Adichie's novel presents multiple such instances whereby patriarchy has raised its hands high to dominate and exploit the females despite their colossal contributions to maintain the family. Furthermore Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' explicitly clarifies the deep rooted patriarch ideals even in the psychology of no men. In the patriarchal societies, not only the males but also the females who are grown up accepting the traditional patriarchal norms and values exploit the other females in their families and communities. Besides this, they readily bear the injustices imparted upon them in the name of tradition, culture, norms and values.

One of the victims of hegemony is the mother-in-law of Olanna, the mother of Odenigbo. She is such a female character who under the shadow of traditional typical African patriarchal norm is not easily ready to accept Olanna as her daughter-in-law. Moreover she abuses her instantly on her first visit.

Odenigbo's mother is a burning example of a woman well trained in patriarchal schooling. Though a woman, her opinions are shaped in the way that always degrade women to an inferior state and raise men to a superior one. She is even against educating girls: Too much schooling ruins a woman; everyone knows that. It gives a woman a big head and she will start to insult her husband. What kind of wife will that be? (98). In due course, Odenigbo's mother even dared to bring another village girl with the motive to let her sleep with Odenigbo and get pregnant.

Furthermore, the whole discourse of motherhood has also been a weapon via which the patriarchal society has its grip over the females. Giving birth to a baby and that too to borne a male child has greater importance for females to stabilize their position in the family. Motherhood as such has been "a key tradition venerated and glorified often outside of its realistic parameters (209)". Ketu Katrick in her booke *Politics of Female Body* elaborately describes it:

As a mother, her outsidersness to patriarchal power is slightly ameliorated especially if she bears sons who will preserve male authority. In most traditional societies, infertility is considered a woman's worst fate because her entire identity relies on bearing a child. If she cannot, she has no self at all, and is often seen as notworthy of living. She is considered a failure by her culture, and worse, since this failure in internalized, she believes it herself. (209-210)

The character into whose mind such patriarchal values and the importance of being a mother is deeply embedded is Anulika. A village girl, she is ready to marry at an early age and has a strong desire to have a baby boy first in order to secure her future.

Similarly, patriarchal society assumes females as the passive beings who do not have any decisive quality. Even in the matters of their personal life they cannot decide themselves and many a times become mere pawns at the hands of patriarchal norms and values. Amala, the innocent village girl is a burning example of such a helpless character who is obedient to Odenigbo's mother and readies herself to sleep with Odenigbo. She accompanies Odenigbo's mother as the house-worker and becomes pregnant after having sexual relationship with Odenigbo. She is a burning embodiment of patriarchal thoughts also in the sense that she has the strong desire for a baby boy as per the wish of Odenigbo's mother. And her rejection of the baby girl she gives birth to exposes her manipulated patriarchal psychology: "You know her mother has refused to touch her," the nurse said, as she handed the baby to Odenigbo. "What?" Olanna asked. "She has not touched her at all. We are using a wet nurse" (249). A mother's refusal to touch her baby only because she is a baby girl reflects the unavoidable deep-seated psychological manipulation of the Nigerian woman.

For a long span of time, patriarchy has remained as a black spot on women's self development and existence. However, in several of the developed countries the typical conventional practices have been removed and the females leapt a lot. At least they have been free from the superstitions and humiliating submission. But, still, in the countries of the Third World or in the underdeveloped countries the female race is still in the victimization. The outward development seen in the countries has made them more pendulums. In the countries like Nigeria,

there is the direct effect of the colonialism although Nigerians are politically free. They are badly colonized in terms of culture and economy.

The females' body have been used and abused by the patriarchy and colonialism side by side. Colonialism takes a control over the entire nation and patriarchy takes the control over the females. In course of control, they are curtailed, harassed and deprived of their rights. Hence, the females have been doubly victimized and marginalized by the legacy of colonialism and patriarchy. The legacy of colonialism has still remained in the form of neocolonialism even after the end of the direct political rule over the colonized countries. Neocolonialism, the term refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today.

Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the people they colonized. By the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the world was under the control of European countries. At one time, Great Britain, for example, ruled almost 50 percent of the world. During the twentieth century, countries such as India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Canada and Australia won independence from the European colonizers. The literature and art produced in these countries after independence has widely become the subject of study at present. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is also one of them that immensely reflects the postcolonial components moreover, emphasizing the females' role, that's how it is embedded in postcolonial feminism.

Resistance to Double Marginalization of Females in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* depicts both the victimized and empowered stance of women in the Nigerian society inflicted with the tortures and torments of Biafran Civil war. The novel delineates the double victimization of women. They are exploited by colonial legacy as well as patriarch. Besides this, Adichie also imparts the resisting power to her female characters thus depicting their collective revolt against the colonialism and patriarchy.

It is very well accepted that to change the system is quite harder nonetheless possible in long time but to transform the culture or ideology or thinking is a more complex process and even seems impossible in many cases. On the basis of this background it can be said that the deep rooted patriarchal and colonial ideologies are not easier to avoid from the people's mind. Yet, considerable efforts to resist the system will gradually spread the awakening among the people and one day the discriminatory system will end.

Adichie also shows several of the instances of the female resisting against patriarchal and colonial ideology and practices. Resistance and co-operation are the new ways to overcome against patriarchy and colonial domination for the third world females. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the main women characters Olanna and Kainene have shown the characters of postcolonial females and are resisting against patriarchal cum colonial legacy. Besides this, Adichie has genuinely endowed her female characters with the strong sense of love towards own community, ethnicity and culture, the female characters are ever ready to fight against those who are attacking the Igbo culture and people.

Love, war conflict and persistent inequality between the men and women are among the dominant themes in the potentialities which the patriarch structure has repressed. Women's struggles to free themselves from the shackles of male brutality and dominance are clearly seen in the novel. Apart from this, the female characters also employ silence as a tool in their lives to fight against the overt and covert patriarchy and the male chauvinism. Furthermore, the female characters also dare to challenge the patriarchy moving beyond the lines of norms and values.

Postcolonial feminism is an intervention of both colonial and feminist studies. It is the intersection of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race and sexualities in the different contests of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality and rights. It is identified with the work of feminist of the third world origins located in the metropolitan university and the agendas set by them to define a recognizable postcolonial feminism. Interlinking feminism and postcolonial feminism Ashcroft in *The Postcolonial Studies* writes:

Both feminism and post colonialism have after concerned with the ways and extent to which representation and language are crucial to identify formation and to the construction of 'subjectivity'. For both groups, language has been a vehicle for subverting patriarchy and imperial power inherital and has thus attempted to recover a linguistic authenticity through a pre-colonial language and a primal feminine tongue. However both feminists and colonized people like other subordinate groups have also used appropriation to subvert and adopt dominant language and signifying practices. (76)

The feminist and postcolonial studies get involved into a mutuality investigative and interactive reaction with each other. But when feminist perspectives are blind to issues related to colonialism and the international division of labour and when postcolonial studies fails to include gender in its analysis, then both theories fail to co-relate with each other to address the lives of women under colonization.

African post colonial discourse is that the line between resistance to the evil of colonization and resentment of the cultural world of the colonizer was largely blurred. There was therefore an exuberance of reactionary impulses. While in agreement with the discourse about the concerns of women's human rights, the researcher suggests that African feminism as articulated by African women thinkers must free itself of resentment in order to focus on creating flourishing communities in Africa.

The researcher dissects one of the most recent Nigerian narratives *Half of a Yellow Sun* as the example of work that seeks the flourishing of communities with the liberation of woman in the background.

Adichie remarkably dramatizes women's determination to survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, extreme observation, senseless brutality and careless threats to their lives and property. Through her main characters, she reveals how daring enough women are to maintain everything around them over amidst the very difficult circumstances created by the war. They are capable and mentally alert enough to handle all types of situations despite the negative effects on their own well-being.

In a way the principal character Olanna, as Adichie portrays is an independent and decisive from the very beginning of her life defying all sort of suppression imposed upon her. She owes her own mental caliber to decide for her life.

Olanna placed her spoon down. 'I've decided to go to Nsukka. I'll be leaving in two weeks.' She saw the way her father tightened his lips. Her mother left her hand suspended in the air for a moment, as if news were too tragic to continue sparkling salt. 'I thought you had not made up your mind', her mother said. 'I can't waste much too much time or they will offer it to somebody else', Olanna said. (31)

Olanna very happily announces how she has independently decided to move away from her home in order to make progress in her career. Though a Third World African woman, she is dominating and indomitable in her spirit even while confronting the horrors of war and its disasters.

Besides the patriarchal domination the female characters bear in the novel and the resistance they carry out, the other ample evidences to show how the postcolonial feminism can be an apt theory to study this novel is the tracing out of the indomitable courage shown by the female characters by participating in the war and standing out there against the enemies in favour of own community and secession. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, thus very well depicts the torture and tormented state of people in Nigerian society due to the wounds and pains inflicted by the (Biafran) Nigerian Civil War. An unsuccessful attempt of secession, the war that people thought long ago has been pictorially portrayed in the novel. Adichie's power lies at highlighting the important roles played by the females in the civil war.

Half of a Yellow Sun primarily revolves around the traumatic situation of Nigeria in pre-independence and post-independence era. The novel captures almost all real events and characters from 1960 to 1970. The novel basically focuses on the Nigerian civil war and the vibrant and pivot roles of females in the war in the post-colonial context. The novel is written in a chaotic structure which moves from early sixties to later sixties and again early sixties to later sixties. The book is full of poems and radio reports explaining the chaos during civil war. This chaotic situation one or the other way manifests the disorder in Nigeria because of the legacy of Colonization and Civil war. Furthermore, such state of turmoil is profoundly found in the female characters of novel who however strongly face the situation and struggle to survive as well as help their dearer ones to survive amidst the horror and terror of war. In nutshell, this novel is a detail history of Nigeria from the early-independence to the end of the Civil war with several testimonies.

Adichie elaborates the war and massacres highlighting the important achievement of female characters who successfully stood out as the good daughters, mothers and wives at their homes undergoing several difficult circumstances. Hand on hand, they also have proved themselves as a warriors in the warfare and displayed their unbounded love towards own tribe and community. Despite independence from Britain in 1960, individual and national identities in Nigeria remained scared by the inheritance of colonialism and oppression. In 1966, Igbo military officers led a coup, which was followed by a reprisal against the Igbo. The massacre of the Igbo led to the secession of Southern Nigeria, the establishment of the Biafran republic, and the beginning if the Nigerian Civil War.

On January 1, 1901 Nigeria became a British protectorate, part of the British Empire. Nigeria was granted full independence in October 1960 under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary government. In October 1963, Nigeria proclaimed itself as federal republic. On January 15, 1966 a group of army officers, mostly southeastern Igbos, overthrew the NPC-NNDP government and assassinated the prime minister Sarduana and premiers of the northern and western regions. It is recognizes as the first military coup by Igbos. This kind of ethnic tolerance raised tension to the muslim Hausa community which led to another coup by largely Northern officers in July 1966 which established the leadership of major general Yakuba Gowon. The subsequent massacre of thousands of Igbos on the north prompted hundreds of thousands of them to return to the south east where increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiment emerged.

In a move towards greater autonomy to minority ethnic groups, the military divided the four regions into twelve states. However, the Igbo rejected attempts at constitutional regions and insisted a full autonomy for the cost.

On May 29, 1967 Lt Colonel Emeka Ojukwa, the military governor of the eastern region who emerged as the leader of increasing Igbo secessionist sentiment, declared the independence of the eastern region as the Republic of Biafra. The ensuing Nigerian Civil War resulted into an estimated one million deaths before ending in the defeat of Biafra in 1970. The novel in hand, *Half of a Yellow Sun* vividly portrays the traumatic events from the first military coup to the end of the civil war. The special focus of the novel also lies on how it foregrounds the roles of female characters who also had to resist both the patriarchy and legacy of colonialism simultaneously. The female characters though suffering, in many senses, have employed their intellect and education as well to handle even the hardest situation during the wars. In this context it is very much apt to mention how Ketu Katrak in her book *Politics of Female Body* opines about the women's role in the national liberation along with their own:

It is necessary, as Jayawardena has pointed out, "to demystify history from both colonial distortions and nationalist exaggerations." Women were always involved in resistances to colonial domination. Women's roles within the liberation struggles reveal the complex theoretical and practical dissonances between national liberation and women's liberation. (77)

Olanna Ozobia, the mouthpiece of the novel and her twin sister Kainene are the principal female characters in the novel. Olanna in the novel teaches about the flag which symbolizes the rising sun or half of a yellow sun, i.e. rising of the republic of Biafra: Red was blood of siblings massacred in the north, black was for mourning them, green was for prosperity Biafra would have, and finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future. (281) Such a description Olanna makes shows her strong favour for the Igbo culture and finally her voice represents a strong voice in support of secession.

In the novel, the direct and indirect participation of female characters in the war and they being the witness of the terrors and horrors of war, is shown in a picturesque manner:

Olanna sat on the floor of the train with her knees drawn upto her chest and the warm, sweaty pressure of bodies around her. Outside the train people were strapped to the coaches and sun stood on the steps holding on to the railings. She had heard muted shouts when a man fell off. The train was a mass of loosely held metal, the ride unsteady as if the rails were crossed by speed bumps, and each time it jolted, Olanna was thrown against the woman next to her, against something on the woman's lap, a big bowl, a calabash. The woman's wrapper was dotted with splotchy stains that looked like blood, but Olanna was not sure. Her eyes burnt she felt as if there were a mixture of peppers and sand inside them, pricking and burning her lids. It was agony to blink, agony to keep them closed, agony to leave them open. (148-149)

The above description during Olanna's travel shows how she closely observed and faced the warfares and its terrible consequences. There are several other instances in the novel depicting such stance:

Olanna told Odenigbo what she had seen. She described the vaguely familiar clothes on the headless bodies in the yard, the still- twitchy fingers on uncle Mbaezi's hand, the rolled- back eyes of the child's head in the calabash and the odd skin tone-a flat, sallow grey, like a poorly wiped blackboard- of all the corpses that lay in the yard. (156)

This heart-rending description of the consequence of war, Olanna made, comes from her own first-hand experience. Here, undoubtedly it can be said that she is a valiant character.

Besides Olanna, the other principal female character of the novel Kainene also undergoes the horror experiences of war. Her description of what she witnessed speaks a lot about how females in Biafran war involved directly making their best to succeed the secession though in vain.

Kainene got up again. 'He was killed in Port Harcourt. They were bombing and shelling us, and a piece of shrapnel cut off his head, completely beheaded him, and his body kept running. His body kept running and it didn't have a head.' (344)

Kainene's words amply suffice to manifest the vital roles of women in Biafran war.

Apart from this, the females are fully capable enough to bear the household responsibilities and take care of their homes and family members even at a time when war has left the main member of the family, the breadwinner wounded. One such character, Mrs Muokelu, expresses her stance of such plight.

I have twelve people to feed,' she said. And that is not counting my husband's relatives who have just come from Abakaliki. My husband has returned from the war front with one leg. What can he do? I am going to start Biafra attack and see if I can buy salt. I can no longer teach. (293)

Innumerable women during Biafran war underwent such difficult situations like Mrs Muokelu when they had to be both the breadwinners and the bread makers because of the massive negative consequences of the war. In this sense, one or the other way, women's role is the important one in the war.

Besides this, the suffering of the Nigerian mothers to keep their children and family members intact of the terrible impact of the war is in abundance in the novel:

The dim hospital corridor smelt of urine and penicillin, women were sitting with babies on their laps, standing with babies on their hips, and their chatter mixed with crying. (269)

Such descriptions profoundly made the novel elaborately depict the pathetic state of mind of worrisome mothers. In a way, saving their children, these mothers have fulfilled their vital role in the Nigerian society. Olanna is the illustration of a protective and responsible mother who is always consumed with anxiety of her baby in her mind: Her (Olanna's) greatest fear was that baby would die. It was there, the festering fear, underlying everything she thought and did (266).

Olanna simultaneously takes good care of the baby in fear of it would be the victim of the warfares. Adichie more vividly describes the scenes in the relief centre whereby the mothers queue up to get some amount of food for their children and family members. In this way, Nigerian women, in one way or the other, played unavoidably important role in the Biafran war and manifested the traits of daring postcolonial females.

III. Conclusion: Voice for the Empowerment of Postcolonial Females in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Dissecting Adichie's novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, using the lens created out of the postcolonial feminist theories and concepts, this research throws spotlight on the newer aspects of the third world females. They are portrayed not only as oppressed and brutalized victims of the patriarchy, colonial legacy and the warfares in this novel but they also stand out as the prominent ones to give larger voices to their dissent against this structural oppression. Besides, their strategic use of both their bodies and actions to resist patriarchy adds a new dimension to this research work. To see how the principal female characters celebrate their lives of own though they are not untouched of the bad effects of patriarchy and colonial legacy in intersection adds a new dimension to this research under the rubric of postcolonial feminism.

The other remarkable aspect is the unbounded female bonding between the female characters. Almost all of the female characters undergo same type of patriarchal oppression thus can feel the pain and pleasure of each other very easily. The relation of love and hate between twin sisters, their very close bonding with their mother whom they remember time and again in their lives and the sense of motherhood that the women carries within them are clearly portrayed in the novel.

Furthermore it is wonderful to notice how the female characters play vital roles during the time of war in both the war-fields and family. On one side they feel pride of their community and employ their full efforts to fight against the attacks in the grounds of war while on the other side they attempt their best to protect their family members from the severe impacts of war and are worried of them fulfilling their roles either as mothers or sisters or daughters.

This research therefore opens up a new avenue for those who want to carry further studies regarding the powerful stance of the third world women in other regions. Especially it would be interesting to see how women are encountering the dominating and oppressive situations around them turning their struggles into more powerful one to assert their own positions and empower themselves. Moreover, the principal female characters' assertion of their own bodies and sexuality opens up the new possibilities to explore out the very less talked matter sexuality of the third world women. Women are merely regarded as the passive sexual creatures but this analysis shows how women can strongly exercise their sexual rights and even employ their sexuality as an effective tool to resist patriarchy. This area of study can be significant one to enhance the voices of the third world women.

IV. Works Cited

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