

The Shifting Paradigms of Africa in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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ABSTRACT

The trials of African nations since independence are often marked by bloody civil wars, military rule, dictatorship, ethnic conflict and genocide, prolonged by continuing social inequalities. The countless episodes of war, anarchy, the social disorder and chaos that has existed in Africa is evident. The imperialist design portrayed by the Europeans had differences with the reality of Africa. Achebe was instrumental in making the unheard voices of Africa being heard in the literature. The issues of Identity in war driven Nigeria is another question of conflict. Adichie portrays the Biafran historical living experiences in the novel *Half of a yellow sun* depicting the late 1960's period. The tension between the communities results in violence often in *Half of a yellow sun*

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Defining traditional African values in postcolonial arena of Africa is a puzzle. *Half of a yellow sun* is set in the immediacy of the Nigeria - Biafra war. Joyce carol oates acknowledges; "vividly written, thrumming with life, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a yellow sun* is a remarkable novel. In its passionate intelligence, as in its capacity for intimate portraiture, this novel is a worthy successor to such twentieth century classics as Chinua achebe's *Things fall apart* and V.S Naipaul's '*A Bend in the river*'. The powerful memories of the author and the gift of storytelling blends together. The framework of the characters Olanna, Ugwu, Odenigbo is realistic and courageous" (13). Recounting history and the horrors of the war and the struggle passed on from one generation to the other is drawn in the work. The inhumanity of wars, the heightened screams of children and the bestiality of man in situations of war is highlighted by Adichie. Adichie was born in Nigeria. Her first novel, *Purple hibiscus* won the Commonwealth writer's prize and the Hurston/Wright Legacy award and it was shortlisted for orange price and the John Hewellyn Rhys prize. The main characters of Adichie develop as the story progress and the work explores the brutality and bestiality of war, raping young girls and the ravaging influence of war on humanity is expressed through the work. It is also a story of love and betrayal, of neglect and suffering. Adichie synthesizes the multiple views of war and the sense of loss and insanity in the history of Nigeria. The efficient usage of language and storytelling ability expands to indulge the reader completely into it. The anatomy of human relationships and disapproval related to Nigerian politics is sketched well through this work.

The indomitable spirit of filial bonding is expressed through the characters Olanna and Kainene. Survival becomes the ultimate human principle for each individual. Simple and fluid narrative style is used and she explores the lives of the ordinary citizens of Africa who are engaged in the effects of war and disillusionment. The attempt to hold humanity together disrupts at different points and the vicissitudinous nature of war on the lives of ordinary citizens is reflected. The unconventional structuring of the narrative with its fundamental flaws and sequences of events challenges the maintaining of the story line. Adichie's real voice merges with the voice of the characters and the profound commentaries about the war is heard. She writes in the narrative 'The world was silent when we

died. She writes about the world that remained silent while Biafrans died. She argues that Britain inspired this silence. The arms and advice that Britain gave Nigeria shaped other countries. In the United States, Biafra was under Britain's spear of interest. In Canada, the PM quipped, 'where is Biafra'? The Soviet Union sent technicians and planes to Nigeria, thrilled at the chance to influence Africa without offending America and Britain. Communist China denounced the Anglo-American Soviet imperialism but did little else to support Biafra. Adichie uses the word 'Free Biafra' in her work. Adichie writes " "This will be over soon, nkem and we will have all the parties in a free Biafra.

The Biafran war and the civil conflict makes it problematic and complicated. The racial, ethnical and cultural subjects are identified by the author and Adichie, as a third-generation Nigerian writer. Half of a yellow sun is a symbol of the rising sun on the Biafran flag. Disillusionment and destruction in the conflicts of war is represented in a critical view and Adichie identifies with the tragedies associated with the Igbo culture. Her work eventually deals with the subject of war. The black reports it this way, "The voice of America was reporting it, as was French radio, which Olanna translated. Tanzania was the first country to recognize the existence of the independent nation of Biafra. Finally, Biafra existed. Nyerere will go down in history as a man of truth, Of course, many other countries want to recognise us, but they won't because of America. America is the stumbling block!" Throughout history, injured people have had to resort to arms in their self-defence where peaceful negotiations fail. We are no exception. We took up arms because of the sense of insecurity of our people by the massacres. We have fought in defence of that cause. Nigerian politics and the insecurities in the country is poignantly noted by Adichie. In the work the women from the refugee camp says: "I take this opportunity to congratulate officers and men of our armed forces for their gallantry and bravery which have earned for them the admiration of the whole world. I thank the civil population for their steadfastness and courage in the face of overwhelming odds and starvation. I am convinced that the suffering of our people must be brought to an immediate end. I have, therefore, instructed an orderly disengagement of troops. I urge General Gowon, in the name of humanity, to order his troops to pause while an armistice is negotiated.

This piece of writing sheds light in the helplessness of civilians and the necessity to foster a culture of peace in the present-day Nigeria. Adichie tries to immerse the reader by portraying it through her own feelings and the fear and trepidation of war is narrated by the writer. "A shrub was growing at the gate of their compounds and he parked near it, his chest rising and falling, his breathing loud. The house still stood. They waded through thick drying grass to get it to it and Olanna looked around, half fearing she would see mama's skeleton lying somewhere. But his cousin had buried her, near the guava tree. There was a slight elevation of earth and a cross roughly made from two branches. The drove to Nsukka on roads pockmarked with bullets bookmark with bullets and bomb craters, Odenigbo swerved often. The buildings were blackened, roofs blown off, walls half standing. Curved profiles of flying vultures filled the horizon. They came to a checkpoint. Some men were cutting the tallgrass on the roadside, their cutlasses swinging up and down; others were carrying thick wood planks up to a house with walls that looked like swiss cheese, riddled with bullet holes, some large, others small. Odenigbo stopped beside the Nigerian officer. His belt buckles gleamed and he bent to peer into the car, a dark face with white teeth. "Why do you still have Biafran number plates? Are you supporters of the defeated rebels". His voice was loud, contrived; it was as if he was acting and very aware of himself in the role of the bully. Behind him, one of his boys was shouting at the labouring man. A dead male body lay by the bush. (375) The novel is located with the issues of marginality, history and conflict.

Adichie attempts to demonstrate the historical Nigeria and the integrated violence existed in the Nigerian history. The trepidation and perils faced by the characters in things fall apart is immense. The novel was published in 1958 and it is the most translated of any African novels. The novel also emphasizes on the arrival of white Christian missionaries. The life and livelihood of the village of Umofia and the uncertainty and doubt that existed in the social milieu is clearly depicted in the novel. The catastrophe and injustice that the tribes in Umofia face is intense. The novel begins with the hero Okonkwo. He wants to belong and that turns out to be one of the greatest tragedies of Okonkwo. The cultural divide that existed in the country poignantly emphasizes the African dilemma. They constantly had tussle with the neighbouring villages. The hostile relations experienced with the neighbouring countries fuelled the aggressions within the country. The people in the country experienced destructive violence and a line of misfortunes followed them. The work things fall apart challenges the long-held perspectives about Africa.

The new wave of thinking and writing gave him the honourable title the Father of African literature. He opened the doors for many more African writers and Achebe was the appointed founding editor of Heinemann African writers' series. Nelson Mandela's first published book "*No Easy Walk to Freedom*" was published as a part of the series. He tirelessly worked for the betterment of the African continent. It was the period of colonial power and Achebe wrote novels consciously to restore the sense of humanity. It presupposes that there is one absolute artistic standard. Consequently, good African literature is taken to be that which most approximates to Western literature. *Things fall apart* was the first anglophone African Novel and this poem foresees the changing patterns in advance.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
 and everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction,
 while the worst are full of passionate intensity. (Yeats: 1921)

The way the society defines masculine and feminine values is deeply flawed. Umofian way of life is symbolically portrayed in *Things fall apart*. Achebe also focuses on the *linguae Francae* of the colonizers, the oral traditions of indigenous cultures and the linguistics of African languages. Achebe elaborates on the significance of the role of the writer in African society. Achebe also writes about the future of African literature and *Things fall apart* is one of the foundational texts of postcolonial literature. Achebe examines the political and ideological representation in the novel and challenges the western notions. The religious practices and beliefs of Igbos, the scepticism associated with them and the traditional Igbo culture practiced in an immature Africa is represented by Chinua achebe. Michel Naumann in his essay *Semantic structure of Things fall apart* and its historical meaning argues about rehabilitation of African cultures and the anticolonial movement in Nigeria. The novel itself is placed within the politics of anti-colonial independence movement. The novel reflects the ambiguities of the times and the process of national construction. *Things fall apart* turns out to be the most influential work for generations of Nigerians and African authors.

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