

**Imprints of Post-Colonialism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's
*Purple Hibiscus***

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Abstract

The paper deals with the theme of post colonial life in Nigeria. It gives a clear set of theoretical approaches that focus directly on the effect and aftermath of Colonialism. It alters our understanding of history, political economy, cultural studies and literary evaluation in the country. Though colonization is essentially materialist, the colonizer also justifies the takeover in religious, spiritual and civil terms. It also brings out the agony of natives who suffers under the sudden changes that question their own ideas and ideologies of life in their own land. Memory acts as a bridge between colonialism and the establishment of cultural identity but they are in total chaos to understand their own self which is because of an impact of post colonised imprints in their mind.

Key words: Post colonialism, identity crisis, feminism, suppression, agong of colonised people.

Introduction

Africa remained for so many years undiscovered, before it was colonised by the Europeans. The colonisation of Africa has a long history which took place between the nineteenth century and twentieth century. The colonial period began at the end of the 1950's and fully come to an end in the 1970's. North Africa was colonised by the Greeks and the Phoenicians in the early historic period. After the seventh century Arab trade with sub-Saharan Africa led to the colonisation of East Africa. Early European expeditions

concentrated mainly on occupying uninhabited islands such as Cape Verdes and Sao Tome Islands. This was practiced until the early nineteenth century and as days went by the settlers advanced their territory to the whole Africa.

Nigeria and Nigerian Literature

Nigeria is a populous country in Africa. It was colonised by the British. The natives were exposed to a completely new outlook from their culture and tradition. The western religion severed the natives from performing their ancestral practices which was the pulse of African people. Literature produced during their colonised period reflects the sufferings of African people. Days went by many started to convert themselves to the western religion and culture but a few remained firmly to their tradition and culture. Africa, the coloured continent had attempted the art of documenting even during the pre-historic period. The Egyptian Hieroglyphics, found around 3200 BC to about 400 AD serves as an example for their literature. The growth of African literature was known through the oral tradition of narrating stories, myths, dramas, songs and proverbs which was passed through generations down to give them the ancestral ideas and culture. Nigeria is located in the West Africa. The land has many prominent literary figures to its credit. Like any other literature, Nigerian literature was also initiated by art of storytelling tradition. Oral tradition was the root of African literature. The natives transferred their experiences and values through oral tradition to guide the younger generation until they are exposed to the written literature during the colonial period.

During colonisation Nigeria was exposed to the English language and started to produce many literary works. Like any other colonised country writers' even Nigerian authors started writing in English as well as in their native language too. In 1938, Fangunwa wrote *Ogboju ode ninu igbo irunmale* in Yoruba language which was the first written novel in native African language. This novel was translated by Wole Soyinka later into the English in 1968. It contains the themes and ideas of African folklore traditions and supernatural elements in them. Igbo language, Pita Nwana wrote *Omenuka*, which is considered the first Igbo epic. The rich impact of the oral tradition was

prominent in all early Nigerian literature. The western education helped them to bring out their tradition and culture in written form.

The written language in Nigeria initiated in the fifteenth century by the coming of Arab traders. The interaction between them gave insight knowledge and religious awakening to the natives of Africa. This also resulted in the adoption of Hausa language into Arabic script. This genre was called *ajami* and further this tradition was enhanced by the arrival of Christian missionaries. It gave rise to new ideas and emergence of numerous works which had fantastic characters, stories, fairies, and folklore based on tradition.

The Nigerian literature transformed and started depicting the reality in its work. The movement was first indicated by the literary scholars of Ibadan in 1948. This movement was targeted to bring in the new dimension in writing by producing the reality in the writings apart from supernatural elements and folklore. They started adapting the universal themes such as religion, labour, corruption and justice were employed. But this new dimension of themes never put a stop for some writers from writing about their tradition.

Authors like Chinua Achebe brought in their myth and life in his writing. The first novel in English language was published in 1952 in Nigeria by Amos Tutuila. Later the emergence of Chinua Achebe and his contemporaries in 1940's marked the birth of a new era in the Nigerian literature. Writers like Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, T. M Aluko, Christopher Okigbo, John Pepper Clark and Crypian Ekwensi contributed a lot to the literature and brought a fame and focus internationally to the Nigerian literature.

Myth and Culture in Literature

A myth in any genre is accepted to be narrative. It can even be argued that myth are scared narrative in which Gods and supernatural elements hold the centre stage and is often addressed to human beings. In Africa religious beliefs and history passed through

oral tradition where it became their way of life. The natives retain their identity despite their various influences by the colonisers brought out in their writings.

Literature of postcolonial period concentrates on the culture and family set up in Africa, which was torn between nativity and western culture. It successfully presented the conflicts and contradictions within African politician. The modern technologies brought by the western education and menu consequences such as stress and alienation from the nature and culture were the main themes in their writings.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian writer, was born on 15 September 1977 in Abba, Anambra State, Nigeria. She was educated in primary school and secondary school in Nsukka, Eastern Connecticut State University and in John Hopkins University where she completed her post-graduate studies in creative writing. She was attracted towards the internationally acclaimed writer Chinua Achebe. In 2008 she was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. She was married and divided her time between Nigeria and her job in the USA. She teaches writing workshops.

Adichie published a collection of poems in 1997. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, was released in 2003 and won many awards. She was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship and went to study in Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University. She has displayed a keen awareness of the importance of ethnicity in Nigeria and also she was well aware of hardships endured by the immigrants in the United States and England. Several of her stories portray the problems faced by first-generation immigrants in the west that is ranging from the abuse and financial difficulties in an alien land.

Purple Hibiscus

Purple Hibiscus takes place in Enugu, a city of political unrest in post Colonial Nigeria. The story is narrated by the protagonist Kambili Achike, a teenager and lives with her elder brother Jaja, who excels in academics like his sister but is withdrawn and

sullen. Kambili's father **papa** is a charming but a strict authoritarian whose adherence to Catholicism overshadows his parental love. He often punishes his submissive wife Beatrice and his children when they fail to live up to his impossibly high standards. He ruled the family with a rod of iron, yet he was respected and liked in the community.

Due to a military coup, Kambili and her brother Jaja are sent away from Enugu where they realise the right way of living during their stay at their aunt Ifeoma's place in Nsukka. Kambili is introduced to a new world filled with love, joy and laughter. They are exposed to freedom and engage in identifying their own self. Ifeoma is the opposite of her brother Eugene. She is caring, loving and daringly questions the authority and the culture of the colonial power. Her daughter is also like Ifeoma, a rebellious teenager who stands up against the natives who have adopted the coloniser's religion. The introduction to a different way of life when Kambili lives with Ifeoma changes her view of life. Jaja undergoes a complete transformation and attains maturity to distinguish between good and evil. The novel ends when Jaja's need for his own existence overpower Papa's strong hands. He takes the blame of killing his father and goes to jail for the sake of his mother who had originally killed the father, unable to bear his tortures at home.

Families in the Postcolonial Set Up

Adichie in her novel focused on the scramble of families in the postcolonial set up. She has thrown the limelight upon the lack of heritage and self-identity in the people of commonwealth countries. She has made novel as a tool to voice out the African's suffering and their traumatic experiences. It is a myth that nations are imagined communities that hardly know each other. The novel analyses the sufferings, pain and agony of postcolonial impacts and such as hegemony, hybridity and in the concept of "the other". The novel also analyses the themes like feminism and identity crisis.

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