



Quest for identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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ABSTRACT :

The paper examines the search for identity against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War from the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. And it follows the novel's major characters, Olanna, Richard, and Ugwu, as they strive to define themselves in the midst of great social and political instability. It explores how war and warfare affect people's cultural and personal identities through their experiences. The journeys of the protagonists show how difficult it is to define oneself and find a place in the turmoil. It investigates how historical events influence the characters identities, as well as how *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents the difficulties of forming an identity in a world that is changing.

Keywords : Identity, Construction, Struggle, Nigerian Civil War, Biafran People, Hope.

Introduction :

African literature presents rich and varied tales from the continent's many cultures, histories, and experiences. It spans a broad spectrum of languages, literary forms, and subject matter, from contemporary written works to oral histories from pre-history. It has its roots in oral traditions, when myths, folktales, and stories were passed down orally from one generation to the next. These oral histories often served as historical records, sources of amusement, and moral instruction aids. Complex literary traditions were formed by African societies prior to the onset of colonization. This included writings in old scripts like Ge'ez in Ethiopia, African languages written in Arabic script in West Africa, and manuscripts in Arabic and Ajami.

Nigeria came under British colonial control in the late nineteenth century, becoming a British colony in 1914. The British referred to this area as a country, with three separate ethnic groups. Nigeria's three predominant ethnic groups are the Igbo in the southeast, the Hausa-Fulani in the north, and the Yoruba in the southwest. Nigeria obtained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. Its three ethnic groupings created three primary internal units, each with distinct cultural and governmental frameworks. The Igbo and other Easterners relocated to northern Nigeria for a variety of reasons, including less arable soil, an overpopulated eastern coast, and a desire to find work.

African post-colonial literature is a body of work created by African writers that represents the continent's experiences following the end of colonialism. This literature frequently delves into issues of identity, cultural heritage, societal change, and colonial legacy. It is distinguished by a critique of the colonial past and its long-lasting consequences, as well as a search for new cultural and political identities in the post-independence period. The prominent Post-colonial Nigerian author is Chinua Achebe he is the "father of African literature." His books, including "*Things Fall Apart*," show the conflict between colonial influence and traditional African culture. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, a prominent writer in post-colonial literature, writes in both English and Gikuyu, emphasizing the value of African languages and cultures, as well as decolonizing the mind. Wole Soyinka is a dramatist and poet, Soyinka's work frequently addresses concerns of political tyranny and the human condition. He was the first African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

They are tackling contemporary themes including globalization, migration, gender, and political upheaval in the dynamic and developing genre of African literature. Modern writers like Teju Cole, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have become well-known worldwide and have influenced the literature of many countries. There are many different genres of African literature, such as plays, novels, poems, and short tales. It is written in several languages, including colonial and indigenous ones. The fight for independence, the conflict between tradition and modernity, social justice, and the investigation of identity are all prevalent themes in African literature. The literary works frequently mirror the diverse cultural mosaic of the continent and the tenacity of its populace.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a novelist who is primarily concerned with the lingering impacts of colonization in Africa, particularly Nigeria. Adichie was born in 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. She grew up in Nsukka, a university town, where both of her parents worked. She began studying medicine, but stopped out after a year and a half to pursue her writing career. Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, was published in 2003 and gained widespread critical praise. Her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, was released in 2006 and takes place before and during the Nigeria-Biafra War. Adichie's short story collection, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, was published in 2009. Helene states that in The Times "Adichie uses language with relish. She infuses her English with a robust poetry." (Helene Dunmore)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one among the young African authors who has made a significant contribution in narrating the story that emphasizes many facets of African history, particularly in Nigeria. Adichie discusses topics including social classes, cultural attitudes, family concerns, race, and ethnicity. She has helped people across the world, particularly the younger generation, understand what happened in the past through her artistic efforts. It follows the search for identity in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Her novels and writings usually address the intricacies of identity creation and the search for self-awareness. She is a strong enthusiastic feminist whose writing frequently deals with the intersections of gender and identity. In her essay "*We Should All Be Feminists*," she addresses how cultural expectations and gender norms might limit people's ability to comprehend and express their identities. "*Half of a Yellow Sun*" is the novel set during the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970). The plot revolves around three characters: Ugwu, a university professor's houseboy; Olanna, the professor's mistress; and Richard, a British expatriate and writer. The novel delves into the impacts of the conflict on their lives, relationships, and society as a whole, focusing on issues such as love, treachery, and colonialism. The title relates to the symbols of the short-lived Republic of Biafra, which attempted to split from Nigeria.

These African states have fallen prey to the British- American Imperialist conspiracy to use the committee's recommendation As a pretext for a massive arms support for their puppet and Tottering neocolonialist regime in Nigeria.... (Adichie 266).

Biafra was a separate state in southeastern Nigeria that existed between 1967 and 1970. It declared independence in response to ethnic, economic, and political tensions, notably among the Igbo people, following a series of atrocities in northern Nigeria. The Nigerian government tried to prevent the independence which sparked the Nigerian Civil War. Despite its early achievements, Biafra experienced serious humanitarian disasters, including widespread hunger. The war ended with Biafra's recovery into Nigeria in 1970. The struggle left lasting wounds and had a huge impact on Nigeria's history and ethnic relations.

"Identity is a prison you can never escape, but the way to redeem your past is not to run from it, but to try to understand it, and use it as a foundation to grow" (Jay -z).

The search for identity is a major theme in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel "*Half of a Yellow Sun*," which is set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) and is expressed through the experiences of several people. The struggle for identity is a prominent theme portrayed through the characters' individual and collective travels. Olanna, she is the protagonist struggles with her wealthy upbringing and her involvement in the war. Ugwu progresses from a country boy to a politically informed person. Richard struggles to find his position as a foreigner in Nigeria and in his relationship with Kainene, Olanna's twin sister. The backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War heightens these personal pursuits, reflecting the larger struggle for a Biafran identity distinct from Nigeria.

"Olanna moved to Nsukka on a windy Saturday, and the next day Odenigbo left for a mathematics conference at the university of Ibadan" (Adichie 47). Olanna's story is around adapting to her new life in Nsukka and later being a refugee in Biafra after leaving her wealthy background. Her ties with Odenigbo and her twin sister Kainene complicate her search for identity. The establishment and eventual fall of Biafra serves as a vehicle for the novel's examination of the larger struggle for national identity. The individual experiences of the protagonists are entwined with the group's fight for independence, as Biafran people attempt to claim their identity in the face of armed and political opposition. In "*Half of a Yellow Sun*," the search for one's identity is portrayed as a complex and dynamic process. The personal narratives of the people are with the broader historical background of the Nigerian Civil War, emphasizing the relationship between personal and societal identities. Adichie examines issues of displacement, loyalty, and the pursuit of meaning in a turbulent society.

Olanna's search for identity enhances as she navigates her relationship with Odenigbo, an independent university lecturer. She relocates to Nsukka to be with him, seeking a purpose beyond her family's wealth and prestige. This shift signals the start of her increasing involvement in the political and social upheavals around her. Her quest continues as she confronts personal and societal problems throughout Nigeria's Civil War. The conflict leads Olanna to face terrible realities, such as displacement, loss, and the necessity to survive in the midst of turmoil. These encounters help her to develop a stronger sense of self or a better knowledge of her cultural history. Olanna's connection with her twin sister, Kainene, also plays an important role in her identity search. Their complicated relationship and eventual reunifying indicate Olanna's changing sense of self and place in her family and community.

Olanna's twin Kainene battles her doubts and feeling of distancing. Her sister is idealistic, whereas she takes a more practical approach to life and business. The personal toll that the war took on Kainene is highlighted by her relationship with Richard and her final abduction, which add dimensions to her complex personality. Richard Churchill, a British immigrant and writer, becomes deeply involved in the Biafran cause during Nigeria's Civil War. He is forced to face his own sense of purpose and belonging as a result of his romantic engagement with Kainene and his dedication to the Biafran cause. Richard's continuous effort to figure out where he fits in the world is reflected in his battle to write a book on the war.

His character development is centered on his search for identity, as well as his relationships with Olanna and Kainene. He arrives in Nigeria with a shallow awareness of the country's complexity. He begins to immerse himself in the culture, learning Igbo and researching Nigerian art and history, which allows him to build a stronger bond with the land and its people. Richard's attempt to produce a meaningful book about Nigeria reflects his desire to better understand his place in the country and his own identity. His writing allows him to absorb his experiences while also contributing to the Biafran cause, despite his sense of inadequacy and outsider position. His relationships with Kainene and Olanna are important in his search for identity. Through these relationships, Richard faces his own privileges, biases, and feelings. This paper deals with the search of identity using three characters in the novel.

Ugwu begins his travels in a small village, representing traditional Igbo village life. His early identity is influenced by his rural upbringing, simplicity, and his family's expectations. When Ugwu moves in with Odenigbo, he is exposed to new ideas, people, and ways of life. Odenigbo, a revolutionary scholar, introduces Ugwu to books, political talks, and the concept of Biafran nationalism, which broadens his worldview. His desire to find knowledge becomes an important part of his identity search. He actively reads the volumes in Odenigbo's library, absorbs the intellectual

arguments surrounding him, and is very interested in education. This phase represents his transformation from a naive rural lad to a more knowledgeable and conscientious adult. The Nigerian Civil War has an immense effect on Ugwu's identity. As he is recruited into the Biafran army, he encounters the harsh realities of war, which question his former beliefs of heroism and nationality.

During the conflict, Ugwu encounters moral quandaries and makes poor decisions, including participating in the rape of a bar girl. This conduct haunts him, adding to his deep sense of remorse and shame. It compels Ugwu to confront the darker sides of his humanity, as well as the intricacies of his moral identity. After the conflict, Ugwu seeks confession for his conduct and the terrible events he witnessed. His efforts to recreate his life and find a feeling of normalcy are critical for his identity restoration. His choice to write a book about the Biafran experience represents his final step toward self-realization. By following the battle and its aftermath, Ugwu not only deals with his own pain, but also expresses his voice and perspective. His book represents his journey from passive observer to active participant in constructing his narrative and history.

"The slaves became as fearful of the tar as of the lash. They find less difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep" (360). The lives of a number of individuals are followed, including young houseboy Ugwu, elegant and well-educated Olanna, and writer and British exile Richard. Their individual experiences, which range from moments of resiliency and hope to displacement and grief, are indicative of the war's wider effects. The conflict causes the characters in "Half of a Yellow Sun" to undergo significant personal losses and changes. Relationships between Odenigbo, a university lecturer, are strained as he grows more belligerent and patriotic. Olanna goes through horrific situations that have a lasting impact on her mental health, such as seeing massacres and losing family members. Houseboy Ugwu grows from naïve to a war-weary soldier as he mulls over his acts throughout the fighting.

Massive displacement is brought on by the war: Olanna and her sister Kainene are among the several individuals who are compelled to escape their homes, undergoing the refugee crisis and the struggle for existence. One recurrent subject that illustrates the instability and confusion brought about by the war is the loss of home and security. Deep psychological wounds are caused by war: The characters struggle to deal with their experiences and losses and suffer from PTSD, anxiety, and sadness. The story illustrates how conflict has a lasting effect on people's mental health both individually and in communities. Gustav Ronnhede states that, "I did not consider this paper's other factors that influence the result of these hybrid identities, such as the trauma of war. Even though I think I've illustrated what I've proposed, Adichie's book does, on the whole, have a wealth of instances that might have been included in this paper some of which were even omitted so there is still a ton of study that uses Half of a Yellow Sun as its major source". (30)

Conclusion :

This paper depicts the painful process of attempting to find one's identity during a period of struggle in Half of a Yellow Sun. It illustrates how historical and social upheavals have a profound impact on personal and collective identities through the interwoven lives of Olanna, Richard and Ugwu. The way in which Adichie depicts the Nigerian Civil War highlights the malleability of identity, demonstrating how people adjust and reassemble their sense of self in reaction to shift conditions. It makes the that the search for one's identity is a continuous process that is molded by flexibility, resilience, and the human spirit's persistent ability to find purpose and connection in the face of difficulty. It highlights the need of understanding identity as a fluid construct rather than viewing identity as a static concept formed by the dynamic interaction of individual experiences and larger historical reasons.

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