



Reversal of dichotomy: Levels of feminist perspectives in Adichie's fiction

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Abstract

The fictional world of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is coloured by the nationalist ideas for Biafra and substantial strands of feminist perspectives, and these have established her as a coming of age feminist writer among the contemporary Nigerian writers. Feminist movements across the globe have brought about great historical changes pertaining to the position of women vis-à-vis men. Adichie aggressively portrays women characters (i.e. black women struggling for gender equality in their native societies, and precursors of equality of race and colour), and makes them black precursors of social change. Being a Nigerian, Adichie witnessed dual colonization in Igbo societies and therefrom portrayed the doubly colonized women in her native land as well as migrants to America in the quest for better future prospects. Adichie depicts the contemporary scenario where, women despite being educated and among the elites face tortures at the hands of their partners or husbands. They become the *aterite* or the other and men remain the “self”. Such marginalization of women takes place through violence, aggression, and mental subjugation by men in patriarchal societies, and Adichie’s protagonists scuffle their way out from violence and battering, adultery and deception. Thus, there is a reversal of dichotomies and the subjugated ones emerge powerful and resilient. This paper, therefore, adopts the post-colonial feminist theory as a theory as a framework for the critical evaluation of Adichie’s texts from the post-colonial perspective through her protagonists (heroines) of the post- colonial feminist society.

Keywords: nationalist ideas, patriarchal societies, feminism, historical changes, the *aterite*

Introduction

African feminism gave voice to the colonized and doubly oppressed black woman, who remained oblivious of their rights since times immemorial. It also helped in realizing the challenges black women face in the societies of the African subcontinent and those women of African descent, who have become a part of the global Diaspora. There are subtle differences between feminist approaches within Africa too because of multi-cultural regions within the continent. A critic elucidates possible reasons for such differences as follows:

For African women, feminism is very dependent on a temporal scale shaped by political eras. These eras are pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial Africa. These eras are highly dissimilar across African countries because of the histories of the liberation struggles are different for each country. The result of this is that, the definitions and experiences of feminism are different from region to region within Africa. (Goredema, 2014, p. 34) ^[9]

African feminist movement slowly and gradually dispersed throughout the continent and women leaders from majority of the African countries came forward and fought against colonial rule as well as patriarchal set up of their societies. But the international recognition came only after the declaration of UN decade for Women 1975 to 1985 and African feminism branched out as a socio-literary discourse around the world. In the present scenario, African feminist writers like Bell Hooks, Zora Neal, Buchi Emecheta, Leymah Gbowee, Joyce Banda, Simphiwe Dana, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and many firebrands have contributed towards the cause of socio-economic and cultural equality for women of colour. Bell Hooks especially is vocal about the worthlessness of white feminist movements in securing an equal status for black women because for the women of colour, prejudice of colour and race is a major hindrance. She says:

Women in lower class and poor groups, particularly those who are non-white, would not have defined women's liberation as women gaining social equality with men since they are continually reminded in their everyday lives that all women do not share a common social status. (Hooks, 2000, p. 15) ^[10]

For women in Black societies, simply being a feminist firebrand is not enough because the deep rooted sense of colonialism and slavery makes them different from the white feminists. Being women could mean one thing, but being a black woman is nothing short of double colonization. Salami is blunt in saying that even in the twenty-first century women are being marginalized at every step and these writers are contributing in re-structuring the female narratives and forming a woman’s point of view in the global societies.

While discussing feminism in Africa one cannot ignore the term “Womanism” which was coined by Alice Walker in her 1979 short story “Coming Apart” and this term applies to the metamorphosis a suffering woman undergoes as she rises up courageous, audacious and bold from the shackles of society as well the patriarchs. Walker later used the term “womanist” in her work *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* and explained the basic distinction between womanism and feminism by highlighting that womanism raised issues not only related to gender inequality but also colour and race based oppressions, faced largely by the African womenfolk. Womanism has an ingrained opposition towards racial and gender discrimination. It deals with the daily monotonous challenges a woman faces in her life but womanism aims to eradicate all social inequalities. Walker also generates a whole new discourse in which being an African woman and being an artist creates a very paradoxical situation for a woman because of the double standards of the black society which is the result of prejudiced folklore, oral tradition and the pre-existing literature which runs down African women. In this way she not only raised issues of dual colonization of black women but also the way they are marginalized and forgotten by the male dominant African societies.

African feminism encapsulates a set of collective thoughts, actions, and arguments aimed at changing the patriarchal power relations in Africa while respecting all positive African values and advocating complementarity between the genders. Carole Boyce Davies aptly argues that a genuine African feminism should firstly recognize the necessity of a common struggle with African men to reconstruct Africa. She states that the ideology is not “antagonistic to African men but it challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African peoples” (Davies, 1986, p. 9) ^[6].

Admissibly, women deserve appreciation for their various positive roles and contributions to society as both women and mothers. The politics of empowerment for African women that African feminism(s) proposes, searches for the full participation of African women in all spheres of the society while deconstructing all forms of suppression and discrimination against women in Africa. Therefore, contrary to widespread accusations leveled against African feminism(s) by its objectors such as anti-feminist critics as being a misandry's propaganda, African feminists strive to increase women's visibility and audibility in all social, cultural, and political aspects of living from which the strictures of patriarchy have kept them exempted. In addition to that, they aim to create spaces of female power in social and religious spheres and to transgress existing boundaries designed to perpetuate women's marginal position in the society. They seek to achieve this by illuminating and excoriating the forms and causes of issues of feminist concern and by highlighting their consequences as being detrimental to the wholeness of humanity.

Feminist discourse strikes men as being accusatory as it is meant to do; and in its most uncompromising manifestations it is unrelentingly intimidating”. However, it is pertinent to note that the opposition against the grounding of the feminist movement in Africa has come from both men and women who view feminism with anxiety. As Susan Arndt succinctly puts it:

We must become scholars and intellectuals in our right. That is the cutting edge. We must bring African traditions of thinking and problem solving to the Global Women's Movement and participate in the formulation of new theories and methodologies. We are bright and intelligent; we must write about ourselves and speak for ourselves. I am sick and tired of being written for and about; let us say it the way we want to say it. Let us know the new theories and contest the production and processing of knowledge. We can no longer be decorations in the Global Women's Movement, the exotica in our beautiful clothes. We must be our own spokespersons and not allow anyone to appropriate our experiences or our voice. We have nothing to lose by envisioning and crafting a new future, and we have every reason to want something different for Africa in the 21st century. So whatever we take from the past, let us be very discriminating and take only that which will enable us to shape an agenda, an identity that will reflect new ideals and new traditions (Arndt, 1997, p. 6).

Consequently, with more women that are African venturing into academia and the necessity to create their own voices both at home and in the diaspora, African gender theorists began to search for a name for themselves, their own shades of feminism. This act of indigenizing the feminist movement, as Susan Arndt believes, is as intractable as the dynamism of difference that propels it. Naming feminism is an act (agency) of resistance that sustains its dynamism and expands its horizon [...] Each of these African ways of naming feminism has a fundamental concern - the use of different aspects of African cultures, historical moments, and current global imperatives to make sense of feminist engagement (Arndt, 2001:12) ^[4].

Despite the need for a continental naming, due to the controversial nature of both western and black (African-American) feminisms, they are considered an anathema to most African men and women. Even notable gender scholars view them with suspicion, rejection, or denigration. The portrayal of women in the traditional and male-dominated literary corpus is decried for its perpetuation of a literary history characterised by either marginalised or stereotyped female characters. The image of women in the literary works by African men has always been formed solely on the traditional roles of marriage, motherhood, and feminine subservience as dictated by the patriarchal society. Through the feminist lens, patriarchy is considered a main factor at play in the oppression of women within social settings and in male representations of women in text. According to Gilbert & Gubar (2000, p. 12) ^[8], women as portrayed in male-authored texts in patriarchal societies “have been reduced to mere properties, to characters and images generated solely [...] by male expectations and designs”. This negative portrayal of women arguably has a negative influence on women readers by imposing traditional stereotypical

roles on them. Some of these stereotypes include false assumptions that women are intrinsically inferior, powerless, and dependent on men.

Confronted with this pre-existing alienation of women from the literary scene and under-representation of women by male writers in African literature the few emergent women writers join the literary train with enthusiasm to reappraise, revise, and rewrite the events of women's history and, most importantly, to redefine the perceptions regarding African female identities. Consequently, there has been an upsurge of debates in the literary terrain about women's role, place, and image in the patriarchal society. The effects of the relationships between men and women on these matters as well as gender inequality, domesticity, women in politics, and the binary situations of empowerment and powerlessness as they affect the African woman are now beginning to gain attention. To achieve and maintain the authorial voice of female empowerment in literature, emergent African women writers lean towards the feminist ideology of maintaining equality between different genders. This study is an attempt to evaluate and assess the feminist perspective in the literary corpus of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Being a Nigerian, Adichie has witnessed a dual colonization in Igbo societies and therefore, she sensitively portrays the doubly colonized women in her native land as well as those who have moved to America in quest of better future prospects. Adichie depicts the contemporary scenario where, women despite being educated and belonging to the elite strata of society face tortures at the hands of their partners or husbands. Hence women become the *alterite* or the other and men remain the self. Such marginalization of women takes place through violence, aggression and mental subjugation by men in patriarchal societies, and Adichie's protagonists scuttle their way out from violence and battering, adultery and deception.

Thus, there is a reversal of dichotomies and the subjugated ones emerge powerful and resilient. Reversal of Dichotomies in Adichie's narratives could be traced on three levels, as far as the man- woman relationships are concerned. In the first tier, the battered wife, Beatrice of *Purple Hibiscus* features initially as a victim of domestic violence but later she turns out to be an avenger of all the wrongs done to her by Eugene, her husband, thus leading to a reversal of victim/victimizer duality. In the second tier, adulterous couples like Olanna – Odenigbo and Kainene-Richard from *Half of a Yellow Sun* stand with their brand of being a one-time cheater. Adichie here adds novelty to such situation by describing how for Odenigbo's deception, his partner Olanna sleeps with her sister's white lover Richard and denies her victimhood. In the third and the final tier, experimental lovers like Obinze and Ifemelu in *Americanah* enjoy a no-strings attached relationship but here the woman wields a power and control over her sexual preferences, which is untraditional as well as defiant. Thus, Adichie's women characters are revenge seeking women, who do not believe in quiet weeping but they seek justice and equality in the patriarchal society of Nigeria. The first reversal of dichotomy happens in *Purple Hibiscus*, where the entire narrative reeks in gender based violence.

Gender violence has always been the first and foremost methods of suppressing women physically. When one moves from Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) ^[1] to *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) ^[2], the first decade of Nigeria's independence flashes in the mind. The turmoil is domestic in the first novel while it takes a national status in the latter. Also one sees a mixture of Post - independence ordeals in the twelve stories of *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and the country narrative takes a leap in *Americanah* (2013) ^[3] where Nigerians perform on the global centre stage-exiled, uprooted and isolated in search of their great American dream. In Adichie's literary corpus, the dichotomies are displayed first and then the plot boils down to a reversal of stereotyped roles - the victim becomes the victimizer, the son becomes mature before age, the slave (houseboy) becomes the actor – narrator of the civil war documentation and a wife avenges her husband's adultery by committing a similar act.

Nego-Feminism: Reversal of Dichotomies in Adichie's Fiction

A more recent variant of feminist theorising on the continent is that propounded by the erudite Professor of Gender Studies, Obioma Nnaemeka. She limns at an indigenously significant African feminism in a concept which she tags Nego-feminism and defines as following:

Nego-feminism is the feminism of negotiation; second, nego-feminism stands for "no ego" feminism. In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here, negotiation has the double meaning of 'give and take/exchange' and 'cope with successfully go around'. African feminism (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with, or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts. For African women, feminism is an act that evokes the dynamism and shifts of a process as opposed to the stability and reification of a construct, a framework. Feminism is structured by cultural imperatives and modulated by ever-shifting local and global exigencies (Nnaemeka, 2003, p. 378).

Like all the previously highlighted African feminist discourses, nego-feminism allows for the praxis of complementarity and inclusion. However, it deviates from the others in its recognition and openness to future mutations and its acceptance of possible dynamism and modulation along with shifting exigencies. It is important to note that although all the concepts under African feminism bear different names they build on the same principles and hinge on similar nexuses. These commonalities include firstly, the idea of a collaborative synergy of mutual respect, compromise, interdependence, gender inclusiveness, and complementarity. Secondly, the positive affirmation of motherhood and the appreciation of family, and thirdly, the conscientious rebuttal of patriarchal structures in various forms of manifestations in African societies, especially those inimical to the

advancement of a healthier gender balance. This means that although African feminism is respectful of African culture, in its criticisms of gender relationships it carefully sifts out traditional institutions and practices that are indisputably disadvantageous to women.

Some of these retrogressive gender discriminatory cultural practices engaged in across Africa include female genital mutilation, forced brides and underage marriages, exclusion of girls from education and inheritance rights, virginity testing, widowhood practices, breast ironing and sexual ritual cleansing by 'Hyena men' (also known as Kusasa fumbi) to mention a few. Finally, all strands of African feminism aim at discussing gender roles in the context of diverse mechanisms of gender oppression such as racism, neo-colonialism, (cultural) imperialism, women's sexual and reproductive rights, socio-economic gender exclusion and exploitation, political disengagement, religious fundamentalism and extremism, as well as in conflict situations.

Man - woman relationship in *Purple Hibiscus* is majorly depicted by Eugene Achike and his wife Beatrice. The marital bond is specked with gender violence, display of tyrannical male behaviour with an air of religious purity thus leaving little space for Beatrice to breathe. Here not only the man versus woman dichotomy is present but one also observes that the tyrants versus victim and religious versus sin, etc. dualities are pervading the plot. The inferior position in such dualities is not only held by Beatrice but her two innocent children Jaja and Kambili are also crushed under their over bearing father. Eugene treats his children in the same way he was treated by religious pastors at St. Gregory (Adichie, 2004:196). For a religious zealot like Achike, the domestic world is ruled by the twin concepts of sin and punishment. Also one finds a sub-surface imagery of colonial victimization through religious conclusion and indoctrination of the natives so that the native becomes a white man personified in black skin.

During the climax when this dichotomy is reversed, it is Ifeoma, Eugene's self - willed and upright sister who stands for freedom and hope, while Eugene sinks in violence and self - destruction. It is Ifeoma who is the bringer of light and life in the suffocated lives of Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja. Also, the role of the young priest Father Amadi in ushering optimism and love in Kambili's life needs to be taken note of. It is Father Amadi who teaches her the beauty of freedom and helps her to come out of her introvert behaviour. He not only coaxes her into wearing shorts and lipstick without seeking her father's permission but also takes her to get her hair braided (Adichie, 2004:238). Moreover, he is concerned about her when she gets hospitalized after Eugene kicked her recklessly.

Thus if one divides the man-woman relationship in Adichie's narratives, into a three tier dichotomy, then the first tier is occupied by the basic conjugal relationship of Beatrice and Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*, which appears to be frayed and interspersed with abject aggression and violence. Here the man-woman belong to rich elite class and happen to be of same race and colour. Both Eugene and Beatrice are of Igbo- Christian descent from Nigeria, yet there is an incompatibility between them because of the dual-colonization. In a typical Christianized Igbo household, the winter takes the readers on a journey of abuse and injuries. But this dichotomy is reversed when the wife decides to kill her husband.

Maureen Amaka Azuike mentions that since Adichie's texts are replete with "psychopaths, rapists, religious fanatics and ruthless rulers" (Adichie, 2004, p. 81), her novel is a tool for self- discovery of these victims and it acts as a balm for the tortured women. Eugene Achike is not the ideal Christian husband, instead he is a "ticking time bomb who regularly explodes on his poor family" (Adichie, 2004, p. 82). Beatrice's drastic action of murdering Eugene is the only way she could resort to because of the endless torture he inflicted on the family. Her attempt could be compared to the actions of abused women in most of the radical African feminist texts. Azuike also states instances from Nawal El Sadaawis's *Woman at Point Zero*, where Firdaus, the helpless victim kills the pimp who exploits her sexually and financially, but Firdaus is destroyed by her own society.

Similar instance could be traced in Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures*, when Dikeledi and Kebonye castrate their abusers who also happen to be their husbands. Thus the radical African feminist texts are authored by women who can readily explore the dehumanizing situations that abused women undergo at the hands of their intimate partners or their husbands. Moreover they are quick to implore readers to examine the circumstances surrounding the murder" (Adichie, 2004, pp. 83 - 85). Thus, Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* comes before the readers as a writer of radical African feminist text, who is aware of the agony and pain of thousands of Beatrice who are married to fanatics like Eugene and they silently undergo tortures only because they are afraid of their ethnic societies. Adichie not only justifies the murder of Eugene by Beatrice but also makes the readers hear the victim's version of the narrative.

With the second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Adichie, 2006), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie delves into a war chronicle which takes the readers on a journey of 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil war, but that does not mean that *Half of a Yellow Sun* is only besotted with war-time hungers, murders, rapes and communal violence. With this novel, Adichie unravels the second type or the second tier of man-woman relationship of lovers who have transcended the barriers of race, colour, nation and even adultery for the sake of their love. The twin sisters Olanna and Kainene are hypocrites, but their non-conformist attitude also carves a revolutionary out of them thus adding a romantic colour to the plot. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the typical examples of Utopian couple are Olanna and Odenigbo and later on it is their conjugal love which stands the test of time. On the contrary, the older twin Kainene and her white lover Richard epitomize a no strings -attached-kind of relationship but theirs is a love across the barriers of race, class, colour and nation.

Olanna and her revolutionary lover share a passionate relationship which according to her was a love at first sight as she was moved by his anti-racist demeanor outside the ticket queue of the University theatre (Adichie,

2006, p. 36). But their “crackling magic in the air” love receives a setback when Odenigbo’s mother calls Olanna an “educated witch” who was not nursed by her own mother (Adichie, 2006, p. 101). However Odenigbo pacifies her by saying that she is the bi-product of post-colonial world:

That is the only way she can understand it. The real tragedy of our post-colonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather it is that the majority have not been given the tools to negotiate this new world. (Adichie, 2006, p. 129)

Olanna receives a shock when she comes to know that Odenigbo has slept with Amala the village girl who came along with Mama. Moreover she could not overcome this grief when the news of Amala’s pregnancy reaches her. For Odenigbo, this “brief rash moment of lust”. (Adichie, 2006, p. 225) did not matter much, but for her it cleaved their blissful love bubble. Her decision to seek refuge in Aunt Ifeka’s house in Kano does not really help her from getting rid of this excruciating pain of Odenigbo’s reckless adultery but here Aunt Ifeka comes before the readers as a courageous woman who has surpassed the bitter truths of marriage. She not only consoles Olanna but also shares her experiences after marrying Uncle Mbaezi:

When your uncle first married me, I worried because I thought those women outside would come and displace me from my home. I now know that nothing he does will make my life change. My life will change only if I want it to change. (Adichie, 2006, p. 282)

Here Aunt Ifeka emerges as a feminist who though uneducated, yet believes that her body and her life are not tied to her husband like a yoked animal. Instead she exhorts Olanna that “you must never behave as if your life belongs to a man” (Adichie, 2006, p. 226).

It is interesting to note that the beautiful and faithful Olanna retaliates by committing an adulterous act in order to avenge her lover’s momentary adultery. Such revolt gives a feminist colour to the plot of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, since Olanna was aware that Odenigbo’s adultery is a way to subjugate her. Olanna’s feminist move is proved well by Akachi Ezeigbo comment that, “feminism is simply the awareness that women are subjugated and their determination to correct their subjugation” (Adichie, 2006, p. 24). Thus Olanna not only stands for the rights of women who were denied fidelity by their husbands but also fulfills the role of a radical feminist who knows how to avenge a man’s adultery.

Olanna is a twenty-first century educated Igbo woman who happens to be one of the protagonists of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and her relationship with Odenigbo is reduced to gender strife. During the course of the novel she too plays the role of a patriot of Biafra, hence could be compared with the society building heroines like, “Dora Akuniji, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Ndi Okereke Onyiuke and Oby Ezekweili”, who have always worked towards the benefit of Nigeria at the same time upholding their self-esteem high (Azuike, 1990, p. 78).

Olanna’s behavior generates a feminist discourse since she is neither ready to subjugate herself under her lover’s adulterous act nor she is the product of colonial missionary education where girls are trained to be good Christian wives. She believes in living on equal terms and conditions with Odenigbo. Her confession to Odenigbo is ruled by the feeling that “distrust would always lie between them” (Adichie, 2006, p. 244), but she realizes that life is too ephemeral after seeing grief stricken Edna, hence she forgives Odenigbo and moves back with him.

Thus, Olanna and Kainene not only reverse the dichotomy but only rise to the occasion as real heroines who are independent and emotionally strong vis a vis their relationship with their male counterparts. As they avenge their lovers for being infidel they are brazen and unremorseful. They are truly the coming of age progressive women and true harbingers of the third wave feminism. With Olanna and Kainene, Adichie shakes out the blind superstitions from the reader’s mind.

In the third tier of the reversed dichotomy in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s narratives, the uncommitted lovers find a place and the discourse largely looms over Ifemelu and Obinze of *Americanah*. Such lovers though ardently exercise their free will but establish a bond with each other, which could be called ‘wantonness’ or ‘opportunistic relationship’ in ethical perspective. Ifemelu, the protagonist is a go-getter who comes to America in search of better prospects of education and a secure future. She is young and perceives that an entire ocean of opportunities lie before her. Through *Americanah* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie paints the dark and somber shades on the canvas of the American continent. Through Ifemelu, Adichie portrays a feminist character who has been the beloved of Obinze, Blaine, Curt and Fred but she refuses to wipe away her identity as a woman for the sake of procuring a husband. For, her identity lies in the kinky Afro hair and not the straight ones treated with chemicals and relaxers. She keeps on moving from one relationship to the other but without compromising with her identity as a Black woman. Ifemelu comes before the readers as a non-conformist, a woman full of defiance – against society, against men and she believes in living her life on her own terms. Her love encounters with men lack commitment, sometimes on their part and often, she fails to do so.

Obinze and Ifemelu belong to the third tier of man-woman relationship where they exercise their “free will” while choosing partners. Theirs is a no strings attached love where both of them get in and out of relationships while still belonging to each other. Such a status happens to shock traditionalists but for these lovers the quest for “each other” makes them experiment “love” with other men and women. It is Ifemelu who wields an upper hand in her bonding with Obinze as she decides when to and when not to have intimacy with him. She refuses to become “the other woman” and thus changes situations, lest she be called a wanton woman. But at the same time she is empowered and liberated enough to claim her share of love with her high school lover, Obinze. Thus *Americanah* not only explores the roller coaster life of Ifemelu and Obinze across three continents” but also, “explores various manifestation of differing cultural values; what is held in esteem and what is stigmatized”. In

Americanah, Adichie portrays the contemporary Nigerian woman who has shunned away the orthodox notions about love and marriage where woman was the seeker and man was the giver and believes in “opportunism” of relationship.

Conclusion

With heroines like Beatrice (*Purple Hibiscus*), Olanna and Kainene (*Half of a Yellow Sun*) and Ifemelu (*Americanah*), Adichie gives voice to the silent women of Nigeria from all works of life. They might be incorrigible but they refuse to be dominated and tortured by men. Women from these three narratives represent the tortured and domesticated one (Beatrice), the educated and aggressive ones (Olanna and Kainene) and the empowered and experimental one (Ifemelu). All these women are Igbos and follow Christianity and their instincts rule them to the extent that they tumble down the patriarchal setup of their surroundings if their identity and womanhood is threatened.

Adichie in her speech entitled, *We Should all be Feminists*, states that, “the twenty first century woman should not shy away from her femininity and should be respected for the choices she makes”. Thus, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie not only displays the man-woman dichotomy as tropes in her narratives but also reverses these dualities to give a radical colour to her novels. Her women and men are real characters from day to day lives and one almost feel a human bonding with Ifemelu and Obinze, Beatrice and her children, twin sisters Kainene and Olanna – their lovers Richard and Odenigbo. The three tier demarcation of man-woman relationship not only helps in examining the various facts of relationship but also highlights the contemporary intimate partner trends. Adichie takes the readers into an ocean of emotions and feelings through the display of different levels of man-woman relationship and renders her literary corpus a bold hue, thus establishing Adichie as a true feminist. Adichie’s fiction has a global appeal as she deals with the problems and challenges faced by émigré Nigerians. Rootlessness, exile and the status of an immigrant generates a dilemma of choices in her characters as they face discrimination in a foreign land. Adichie has carved a niche for herself in the literary scene in Africa and the diaspora. A discussion of contemporary African feminism without a mention of her name would be much the poorer. Arguably, Adichie is presently the foremost contemporary African female writer. She is indisputably the most appreciated and ideologically engaged African female writer on the continent and the rest of the world. This is not surprising because, since the beginning of her literary career over a decade ago, she has demonstrated passionate affiliation to societal and feminine trends and issues.

Her literary creativity offers fresh insights into women’s issues and the developmental goals that African feminism seeks to affirm. This is a positive turn of events from what has been obtainable in male literary creativity. And let it be said that she has not earned this authorial feat by merit of her gender but by the intricate content and context of her creativity as well as the overall artistic principles and creative philosophies expressed in her novels. This study therefore posits Adichie as an African feminist icon whose style of creative commitment to feminine issues is worthy of emulation by aspiring writers while, for the critical reader, as shown here, it offers a wealth of feminist analysis and insight.

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