

NIGERIAN LITERATURE AND THE FEMININITY QUESTION: A READING OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S PURPLE HIBISCUS

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Abstract

From time immemorial, male domination in all spheres of life, has created a sort of nightmare to the female folks. Men have chosen to dominate all the facets of humanity, leaving the female folks, either not to be considered, or left at the bottom of the social ladder. Thus, the voice of women is usually not being heard in the society. Through the lens of feminism, using gender as a basis of analysis, this paper touches on some social ills that have thwarted the smooth operations of the female folks in the socioeconomic and political development of the society. The paper, therefore, concludes that unless these social ills that have constituted a sort of social ineptitude are dismantled, the female folks can never have a place and space in the society, even though we are living in the 21st century.

Keywords: feminism, development, society female folks.

Introduction

A discourse on feminist tendencies in our society has been an age-long one. In spite of this, there still arises the need for continued discussion on feminism; especially as the present-day society has been male dominated in all ramifications. Thus, there

has been a continued silencing of the person and ego of the woman in the society. And over the years, male egoism has permanently placed the womenfolk in a disadvantaged position, thereby, instead of allowing them the room to occupy vantage leadership positions, their ideals are thrown to the mongrels on the grounds of gender, and their voices not heard. The patriarchal world is one that continues to suppress and subjugate the womenfolk socially, economically and even politically.

The status of women's authorship and the nature of its depiction within the Nigerian literary tradition are certainly issues of great importance. For the degree to which works are penned by women, the manner in which these works are received critically and the roles women occupy within the general body of Nigerian literature, are reflective of societal attitudes towards women. Unfortunately, the Nigerian literary canon is characterised by the inadequate representation of female-authored works. Moreover, the literature it is inclusive of often perpetuates the gender myth that typically downplays womanhood. Thus, in many instances, Nigerian women writers are most often than not, being marginalised by their male counterparts and their works either remain unacknowledged or tokenised by literary critics.

More so, characterisation is another domineering issue in the male authored works. According to Gilbert Muller (1985:72): characters are people in narratives. We generally know their sex, body features, age, jobs, education, status in society and family background. Yet, character is also a way of being, it determines how a person act. As such, the writer goes beyond outward appearances that tell us who the characters are. The author reveals the inner qualities that motivate people and make finely realised characters so memorable for readers. A good writer creates for the reader illusion that a character is real.

According to Michael Meyer (2003:98): the illusion of reality is the magic that allows us to move beyond the circumstances of our own lives into a writer's fictional world. We can encounter everyone from royalty to paupers, murderers, lovers, cheats, martyrs, artists, destroyers and nearly some parts of ourselves. The inner lives of characters mirror for the readers a glimpse of who they are. Although the experience is imagined, readers usually experience a powerful response to vivid characterisation.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie therefore, is known for creating characters who have stepped up of the pages of her work into imaginations and memories of her readers. Characters created by her are successful not only because readers might have encountered such people, but also because the characterisation is vivid and convincing. The action of the plot interests us primarily because we care about what happens to people and what do.

Gender Portrayal in Nigerian Literature

The 19th century Nigerian literature has been marred by its gender sensitivity; hence gender portrayal is a critical and sensitive issue in the writing and interpretations, constructions and deconstructions of works of literature. In this vein, several female critics have condemned what they consider as a weak depiction and presentation of female characters by male writers. The woman's role more often than not is seen in her leadership position as head of the kitchen, and being better placed within the confines of the kitchen in male authored works.

In such works, female characters are made marginal to the plot account of the stories while only a handful emerge as powerful and credible protagonists. In this instance, the ideal female character created by the male writers of fiction acts within the framework of her traditional laid down roles of being a complete housewife and a mother. So strong are the social values

that the respect and love a woman earns, is relative to the degree of her adaptation to these roles.

Patriarchy is commonly reflected in the works of the established and well acclaimed male writers who have earned national and international reputation. In such works, more often than not, the male character is usually the protagonist and antagonist who dominate all other characters, while the female are made peripheral and their characters hardly developed.

In this connection, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* easily comes to mind as a classic example of this trend where the males are active but the females are docile and helpless in their relationship with the male characters. They are seemingly seen playing little or no part in shaping their fate. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo beats up his wife for failing to provide his meal. In *The Concubine* by Elechi Amadi, Ekwueme attempts to discipline his wife, Ahurole to curtail her spirit of independence. Cyprian Ekwensi is not left out in this catalogue of first generation Nigerian male writers. His works, *People of the City* and the *Jagua Nana* series present 'women in a horrific light of the red-light district, who are simply used by men as distraction from the stress of life and commodities for transient pleasure. Ekwensi presents and represents the female as being totally dependent on the male for her survival.

Outside the shores of Nigeria, we have few outstanding exceptions where female are protagonists in male writings due to the socialist stance of such works. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novels, *Petals of Blood* (1974) and *Devil on the Cross* (1982) are a true demonstration of this fact. In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi depicts women who are strong-willed and determined to pursue a just cause. A character like Wanja, among others has contributed immensely to the success of the novel as revolutionary masterpiece. Thus, it is due to *challenges* faced from men that

female writers tend to foreground their female characters and experiences while male characters and experiences are backgrounded.

The Main Thrust of Adichie's Writing

The challenging issues that surround women's lives have gradually become issues of national and international concern. Writers, especially female writers have written extensively in this regard. Issues such as domestic violence, motherhood, girl-child education, freedom from the world of patriarchy among others have been highlighted at various times by various female writers. Adichie has over the years, taken it as a responsibility to expose the predicament that women confront with men in a relationship. She has drawn from her environment experiences that help her in creating fictional characters that make a lasting impression on the subconscious minds of her readers. Mostly, what she does in her sort of writing is what Remy Oriaku considers as:

Any text which subverts patriarchy because of its female world view is feminist, such text challenges male dominance of society and contradicts the idea of male superiority which is used to justify this to the extent that she questions male dominance of society and creates a more positive image of womanhood, therefore, Emecheta, even if she had not originally, consciously sought such a classification, qualifies to be called a feminist writer (76).

The above shows Oriaku's feelings and disposition for Buchi Emecheta another popular Nigerian female writer of the 20th century. It is the sort of ascription she gives to Emecheta largely due to her brand of writing that, we can also ascribe to Adichie. This then translates the fact that Adichie is a feminist writer of no small measure.

The circumstances that surround the life of the Nigerian *woman and* the inhibitions imposed on her by certain norms and living conditions do not give her that apparent opportunity of playing leadership roles and occupying leadership positions that will enable her to contribute meaningfully and in no small way, her own quota to national development. She finds herself in a Nigerian environment where a lot of stringent conditions are tied to her being as a human, whether at home or at her work place.

Women writers have over the years, implored their fellow women to be committed to their vision of not allowing themselves to play second fiddle, but to be in the mainstream. That is, women should dispel careless thoughts of some men with wrong conception about the nature of womanhood, and frown at them for taking advantage of the women's biological status over the ages.

There is thus a strong rejection of patriarchy by Nigerian women, especially in the 21st century. This has been of course, the basis upon which Adichie drives home her point in her literary works, especially the one under study.

Obi Nwankwo looks at patriarchy in the following light:

Patriarchy is a system in which men by force, through direct pressure, ritual, tradition, law, language, customs and usages, education and division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play and in which the female is always subsumed under the male (8).

The above explicates the fact that women no longer want to be relegated to the background. They long for a society where the voice of women will be heard and as such, be considered as heads and not tails when it comes to matters of family, national development and governance.

The Socio-Cultural Factors and the Nigerian Woman

When one looks critically at the Nigerian society, there is

the tendency of one being able to unveil the disheartening discriminatory practices that abound. These practices are being aided by other factors that trigger and stimulate the stagnation and marginalisation of women, and to which in effect serve as an impediment towards their contribution to national development.

The Nigerian culture and by extension African, has made it a point at the male child is given prominence than the female, all in the bid to preserve the family's lineage and name. As a result, sons are given more attention and value than daughters. This is exactly what happens in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where Okonkwo speaks of his favourite daughter, Ezinma, "She should have been a boy" (44). This is because of the belief that females are weak and worthless and anybody with good attributes should be a male rather than a female. Okonkwo again considers his worthless son Nwoye as feminine because he (Nwoye) possesses such character traits that he despises. In this novel, femininity and feminism are swept under the carpet. Oriaku again, has this to say:

If the women in *Things Fall Apart* (...) are "unimportant," the ones in *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People* are worse, they are negatively portrayed. Clara is not only Obi's concubine; she is an *osu*, an outcast. Elsie Mark offers to exchange sex for a chance to be interviewed for a scholarship. As if the name Elsie is synonymous with incontinence, Achebe has another Elsie in *A Man of the People* who is a nymphomaniac (74).

Without mincing words, what we see running through the above, expounds the hard but bitter truth that femininity in Nigerian literature has been relegated, thus, making the question of being a woman unimportant if not neglected in a literary work that is male dominated and male conscious.

Forced and Early Marriages

The injustices of denying women their choice of life partner is a discriminatory practice in the form of premature marriages. It is a kind of violence which stems from the consideration that virginity at marriage is important. As a result these child-wives are traumatised psychologically by the adults for sex and they usually bear children before they are biologically ripe enough. The side effect of this sort of trend is WF - Vesico Vaginal Festula where their bodies can no longer control their flow of urine and faeces. This condition leads to their being ostracised by the society.

The more attractive a girl is, the higher the chance of a wealthy man or a chief marrying her so soon and cutting her chance of a decent education. For those who are fortunate to have been educated, there is the myth attached to their behaviour as not being "good/submissive wives" to their husbands. The practice of forced marriage goes against the marriage Laws of Nigeria which states that parties"[...] have the same right to freely choose a spouse and enter into a marriage only with their free and full consent" (Hodges, 200).

Inheritance Practices

Among the various cultures that cut across the geopolitical Nigerian entity, a woman is not allowed the right to inherit her parent's or husband's property without qualms. Under the Statutory Law, a widow is entitled to one third of the property with the children taking two-third, although the widower usually reserves the right to inherit everything that belongs to his late wife. This legal provision is contradictory and therefore, provides a breeding ground for discriminatory practices. Hodges further states that the widows in Islamic Law are entitled to $\frac{1}{4}$ of their husband's property or $\frac{1}{8}$ if there are children. Even among the children, daughters receive half the share of the sons. In the

Customary Laws the wife is viewed as a property and has no expectation (240).

In fact, some cultures make provision for the widow to be considered as property to be inherited while others create scenario where the widow is accused of killing her late husband, and is forced to go through humiliating rituals either to prove her innocence or for purposes of cleansing her. Meanwhile, the late man's relatives will be seen carting away the man's property to the detriment of his widowed wife. Therefore, the man's heir is usually his uncle, brother, male cousin or son. If the son is not of age, an older relative takes possession of such property and keeps same in his custody as caretaker until the child who is a son becomes of age. In many cases, the property is misused before the son is fully grown into maturity. These sort of attitudes limit the woman's economic and financial independence which consequently cripple her capacity to actively utilise her potentials and channel same towards nation-building, national development and governance.

Synopsis of the Novel

Purple *Hibiscus* tells the story of fifteen-year-old Kambili as she comes of age in a time of great turmoil for both her country Nigeria and her family. Charles Nnolim (2005) vividly explicates that the third generation of writers in Nigeria which include Adichie exhibits "a literary jungle - rich with varieties of life and growth, awe-inspiring and full of breath-taking surprises . . ." (8). To tell the true story of the real situation of woman as a whole prompted the emergence of Kambili. She is seen as a new voice for the voiceless majority of the womenfolk. One observes, surprisingly though, how this naive character reveals in somewhat innocent "silence," the painful realities in her society and the world around her. While Kambili's father, Eugene is a prominent businessman, a leader in the community and a devout Catholic,

within the confines of his home, he is seen as a bully and an abusive tyrant. Kambili and her brother, Jaja must consciously struggle to define themselves beyond the rigid and joyless world that their fate carved out for them.

Polymic Analysis

From the opening of the text, one is immediately thrown into being inquisitive as it starts with "Things started to fall apart at home." Chimamanda tells a story of an active first person narrator whom through her experiences; the woman's helpless world is being exposed to us. The position of the woman is brought to limelight through Kambili Achike who tells the story of *Purple Hibiscus*, in a flash back and from her experience as a young teenager until the actual time she tells it. Kambili point of attack – the narrative time where the novel begins is midway. She starts where the Achike family that is being headed by their father, begins suffering a fatal family disintegration. This brings us to why the novel opens thus:

Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere. We had just returned from church. Mama placed the fresh palm fronds, which were wet with holy water [...] (3)

The above, which signals the sort of dark cloud that is pregnant with uncertainties only waiting to be delivered of Eugene's high-handedness of his family, gives us a peep into the world of Kambili and her brother Jaja *and* the sorts of ill-treatment that their father will be willing and ready to let out to them. It further shows that due to Jaja's offence, Eugene is ready to rain on his entire family, their mother inclusive, fire and brimstone which will automatically put every member of the family in an appressive and sorrowful mood.

We are made to come face to face with the story of Kambili's life and that of her brother. Her brother, through defiance and rebellious act stands up to his father and irrevocably changes the course of the family's life. Kambili from whom we get to know the events that bring about not only her brother's rebellion, but also her own life escapades, is one whose life is circumscribed by her father's fanaticism and the wall of their prison-like home. One cannot help but to observe with keenness, the narrative stance of the dumb character who exposes several oddities with the eyes of an innocent observer. One sees this clearly when Kambili asserts:

I lay in bed after Mama left and let my mind rake through the past, through the years when Jaja and Mama and I spoke more with our spirits than with our lips [...]. Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Auntie Ifeoma's experimental Purple Hibiscus, rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one crowd the crowds waving green leaves chanted [...]. A freedom to be, to do (16).

Without mincing words, one can easily say that the kind of toughness with which Eugene handles the affairs of his family had been one that does not allow the family members to breathe any air of freedom. They are repugnant about the way Eugene does things that are closely related to the family, and so, instead of speaking with their lips as a way of dispelling the imprisoning thought, they speak with their spirits for fear of Eugene's stinging rebukes.

Again, the point the novelist depicts is that gone are the days when women would be easily swayed, and at the same time, being reduced to the position of being docile which was seemingly a nincompoop sort of stance. The nitty-gritty of this depiction

therefore, is that women be allowed that freedom and chance to lead when it comes to matters of governance. This is clearly exemplified by the novelist through the use of her stereotype character, Kambili.

The male chauvinistic tendencies as demonstrated in Eugene's attitudes towards his family, surely, are part and parcel of the nexus that trigger-off the anger of the 21st century Nigeria women. Men in their noxious behaviour, have tended to relegate the womenfolk to the background for centuries. Thus, the despicable assault on the womenfolk by the menfolk, simply leave the women in a desolate and emotionally tensed Bair, environment and atmosphere.

This is characteristic of Kambili's life. She knows very little beyond her father's roles as head of the family, her schedules and anger. It is not until she visits Auntie Ifeoma, a widowed university lecturer, who lives with her three children in the town of Nsukka, that she begins to view life from a different perspective. She recounts her experience during this:

I looked out of the window as we drove counting the blackened hulks of cars on the roadside [...] about forty minutes into the drive, I saw a sign on the roadside that read University of Nigeria, and asked Kevin if we were almost there (110).

This visit of hers to Nsukka gives her a new hope, a new beginning, a new lease of life and finally a voice of her own. Her aunt's house is cramped though and money is scarce, yet it has everything that is missing in her home. There is love, laughter and family warmth. For Kambili, her aunt's home is a place "where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished" (20). Much of Kambili's life which has been characterised by a vehement atmosphere of silence that is occasioned by her father's continuous and consistent

ranting, makes this particular visit a rapturous one for her. She therefore, begins to develop a stronger sense of herself and a voice of her own that could possibly put an end to her father's vendetta.

It is Eugene's religious fanaticism that brings about domestic violence, and the family falls apart as everyone is under his spell. He directs and controls every person's movement and actions. For this reason, the novel in a most holistic approach, questions fervently the rigidity in religion and the highhandedness of bringing up children, especially the female, in a modern world that should allow room for dynamism and freedom of expressing one's own standpoint in any matter at all. The sight of violence Beatrice could no longer keep living with and keep being with it, and so, she is not left with any choice but to poison her husband's tea at the end of the novel, and he kicks the bucket.

Kambili thus gathers all that she learns from those around her and from her experiences to shape an entirely new identity that is all her own and that can equip her effectively towards carrying out the task of governance as far as her father's house in particular is concerned and the society in general. Like the purple hibiscus from which the text derives its title, she begins to blossom. As a way of governing her new home in the absence of Eugene, she says: We will take Jaja to Nsukka first, and then we will go to America to visit Auntie Ifeoma, I says;

we'll plant new orange trees in Abba when we come back, and Jaja will plant purple hibiscus, too, and I'll plant ixora so we can suck the juices of the flowers. I am laughing. I reach out and place my arm around Mama's shoulder and she leans towards me and smiles (298).

Feminist Concerns in *Purple Hibiscus*

Adichie being a social catalyst in the world of female writing raises several issues that border women's lives through her

book, *Purple Hibiscus*. These experiences are peculiar because they reflect the experiences of other countless women from different parts of Nigeria and particularly the Igbo society. Feminist issues such as freedom, gender, innocence and girl-child education among others are represented and presented in the novel.

Motif of Freedom

Kambili makes use of the draconian ruling pattern of her father, Chief Eugene Achike, to reveal the insensitivity nature of the majority of men Howards women's being in the society at large. What is seen and obtainable in her family before the demise of Eugene, is a microcosm of a male dominated society. Rushdie (1991) sees this type of people (Kambili's father) as "translated men" who get things mixed up because of obstinacy and the translation of values (17). The unnecessary religious conflicts that make Kambili's father to hate Papa Nnukwu, her grandfather also shows the high-handedness of many more African people who use religion as a means of creating and sowing the seed of discord in their families. This also serves as an attack on those leaders in Nigeria and Africa in general, who use or allow religion and religious sentiments to create problems in their respective countries, thereby, not having room for effective governance of the people. The religious riots in most recent times, especially in the Northern part of the country and the neglect of African values and culture are all being criticised.

Kambili though a child, questions her father's excesses and the unnecessary prohibition which deprive them of steadfast love. By her constant questioning of these, she therefore, represents the voice for womenfolk that cries out loud against the sanctimonious attitudes of men as exemplified by that of Eugene. She in turn feels that men's ways and attitudes should not be seen as being sacrosanct. Her standpoint is a demonstration of the fact

that women should reserve the right to question whatever wrong that is being meted against the womenfolk, especially within the family circle. That a time has come when women of the 21st century should begin to make it a point to compel men to begin to treat them with some form of sagacity.

From Kambili's standpoint in the novel, we cannot help but quickly conclude that the 21st century women no longer see themselves as belonging and living in the past, but would always want to see themselves as carving a new world for themselves that would be devoid of men's excesses. This informs why Eugene dies at the end of the day to pave way for this air of freedom.

In discussing the position of womenfolk' overtime, Mbaiver Nyitse extrapolates that:

It was no longer necessary for women to work and even when they did, the work was now a subordinate part of production. Women subsequently became relegated into the background as dependents. The introduction of a monogamous system of marriage for women further compounded matters. While women produced legitimate heirs for man, he provided them with a home to care for (112).

Kambili sees the contrast between her father and the military government when she critically asserts:

Of course, Papa told us, the politicians were corrupt, and the standard had written many stories about the cabinet ministers who stashed money in foreign bank accounts, money meant for paying teacher's salaries and building roads. But what we Nigerians needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was a renewed democracy (24-25).

What this translates into is that in a military dispensation there is

no love and care for the people, and so it is with Kambili in her home. In view of this, she expects a renewed approach to the affairs of family first before hoping for a renewed governance in the country.

Love thrives where freedom blossoms. Kambili never experiences 'real' love beyond the sipping of their father's hot tea as Kambili cries out, "the tea was always hot, always burned my tongue, and if lunch was something peppery, my raw tongue suffered" (88). It is Aunty Ifeoma's home that provides the needed environment for them to experience the sort of love that is lacking in theirs. Kambili sees the love of a sister who teaches her how to cook meals, care for others and above all accommodate people around her.

Kambili falls in love with Father Amadi. But the love between these two goes smoothly. Both of them realise that love is the passage way of freedom. Kambili plays, talks and thinks affection because she sees a new ray of hope that breaks the silence in her rigid and fragile home at Enugu.

The Motif of Innocence

Kambili seems a naive but functional voice in the revelation of realities. Yes, Adichie achieves a striking success in creating a sensitive character in the person of Kambili. She neatly gives a presentation and representation that one notices much sensationalism. She depersonalises herself from the work thus lifting it from the slump of personal social commentary as most of our novels have been. McElhatton Heather captures her innocence thus:

Kambili is like a war correspondent embedded within her own family, anaesthetised to the violence and familial masochism (loving hurt, hurting love) that create a constant tightrope the characters must walk. This consistency and

reliability of first - hand account helps create the emotional authenticity and air light atmosphere (1).

This shows that this sort of innocence draws in limitation of all human activities. She has a limit to her exposure. In the house, Kambili and Jaja eavesdrop to be able to obtain facts about the society in which they live in, and even on family matters. Kambili is not a contributive character. She never acts to change neither her situation nor that of those around her. Like the proverbial child in a folktale, she must not talk or else, she would evoke the wrath of a wicked father whose main love is only a sip of hot tea and peppery soup. What we see in Eugene Achike's family is a bonded home without life. Like a helpless child who is full of despondence and who admires instead the situation she cannot change, Kambili accepts what she is told to accept and rejects whatever is not acceptable by her father.

Kambili's silence is louder than Amaka's loudness. One expresses much in the heart than with the lips. At a point, Amaka becomes aggrieved with Kambili's silence and at some point we sense fear between them. There is the fear of the unknown and of extreme reasoning. Kambili does not talk but enjoys the company of Father Amadi. Amaka talks but detests the company of Father Amadi. Dangerous atmosphere lingers among them but at each point, Kambili's silence quenches the supposed trauma expected and at some other, her silence breeds hatred for her. Jaja on his part seems indifferent while creating time for just flowers and freedom. He is defiant of the things around or maybe Kambili makes him to appear so. He reacts only when Kambili reacts.

The motif of innocence helps Adichie to achieve concrete realism devoid of exaggerations. In Kambili's child world, details are not quite the matter, but the truth that is hardly denied and that is bitter, for they say "truth is bitter". *Purple Hibiscus* is shrouded

in the reality of odds of pains of women in the Nigerian society. It shows that women instead of being given accolades are usually being given very strong critique that depresses them emotionally and which often leaves them in a desolate state.

Girl-Child/Women Education:

Aunty Ifeoma as we can see from the novel is a woman with great potentials and ambitions. She is in fact, a paragon of the sort of Nigerian woman Adichie dreams for all Nigerian women. Despite all odds, she attains the height of a Professor and lectures at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Though widowed, she is able to bring up her children in terms of giving them enough motherly and parental love and at the same time, training in school. She single-handedly makes her home, a happy, noisy and outspoken one. Therefore, a sharp contrast is drawn by the author between her home and that of Eugene Achike. She uses her education as a tool to challenge the excesses of Eugene and his patriarchal disposition, thereby, becoming Papa Nnukwu's favourite as he wishes that she were a man.

Also in the life of Kambili, we are afforded the opportunity of seeing how education is used as an instrument to mould her. Despite Eugene's bad family policy and high-handedness, we see him encouraging her in education. The following statement captures this as it states: 'Kambili,' Papa said, breathing deeply. You didn't put in your best this term. You came second because you chose to" (41).

The importance of girl-child education is being demonstrated in the novel. In Eugene's anger, he follows Kambili to school to really see the girl who has taken the first position. On reaching the school, he demands:

Where is Chinwe Jideze?" Papa asked, when we got to the front of my class. A group of girls stood at the door, talking. I looked around feeling a

weight around my temples. What would Papa do? Chinwe's light-skinned face was at the centre of the group, as usual (46).

This singular event makes Kambili to improve her lot and she later takes the first position and becomes her father's pride. Adichie stresses on the education of the girl-child because it helps a girl or a woman to discover the potentials in her. Education is therefore seen as the medium through which a woman pulls herself out of patriarchy and patriarchal environment and tendencies as Kambili later discovers herself. The sufferings or the plight of women are put off with a good educational background and they run through the door as love, freedom and happiness sneak in through the window. By the time this becomes the order of the day in our Nigerian society, we can rest assured of a vibrant Nigerian nation where women can affectively play their roles in matters of nation building, national development and governance.

Conclusion

This work which examines the experiences of women at various levels of their interaction in the society, takes into cognizance issues of gender, female characterisation in Nigerian literature and above all, that of absolute freedom of the womenfolk. The ethics of human relationship emphasises the correction of odds and the actualisation of truth. Adichie draws from the sociological front, the idea of exposing the odds as a way of effecting the truth. The unnecessary parental caging as we have seen here shows that, it affects the minds of the children negatively. Therefore, the family should be made a beginning point in the correction of all the crimes against women, so that when the families get better, the society as a whole gets better.

Religion should be a guide to good life and good living, and not a prison wall. Efforts by leaders in various regimes at various levels in the nation to eradicate odd religious dogma,

troutous home training of especially the female children, and certain traditional customs be intensified in order to ensure tremendous developments in the nation. Even though efforts have been made to solve the femininity question, much still needs to be done in this regard. In most parts of the nation today, especially the Northern part of the country, the female constitutes the majority of the illiterate population and as such, development and governance from the womenfolk are impaired. The quicker all of these are improved upon by our various government officials and communities, the better for the Nigerian nation as a whole.

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