

**CULTURE AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN NIGERIAN
FICTION: A STUDY OF EMECHETA'S *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD* AND
ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS***

BY

CHARITY OMONYE AZENABOR

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DECLARATION

I humbly declare that this dissertation is written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been submitted to any institution for the same purpose or submitted to any previous application for a high degree. All quotations and information used are indicated and all sources are appropriately acknowledged by means of reference.

Charity Omony Azenabor

CERTIFICATION

This dissertation, entitled *Culture and Gender Discrimination against Women in Nigerian fiction: A study of Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood and Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*, meets the requirements governing the award of Master of Arts in English (Literature) of Bayero University, Kano and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary study.

Professor Saidu Ahmad Babura

Supervisor

Date

Professor Muhammed O. Badmus

Internal Supervisor

Date

Dr. Amina Adamu

(Head of Department)

Date

Professor Sa'idu Ahmad Babura

(Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies)

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to God Almighty, fountain of knowledge by whose infinite merciesthis work is produced and who has been, is and will always be my strength. Also to my beloved husband Lawrence Azenabor who through God has been a source of encouragement and support to me, to this level of education. I want to say I love you.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines culture and discrimination against women in contemporary Nigerian fiction with special reference to Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1978) and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2006). The theoretical stand point of this dissertation is feminism and womanism. We worked from the assumption that African women are discriminated against and different forms of oppression weigh on them as a result of culture. It is the central argument of this work that Emecheta and Adichie have used their novels to identify, blame and condemn negative cultural practices that affect the woman. This work also investigates numerous forces militating against the rights of African women especially in the traditional setting and blamed them on some cultural beliefs and customs which are distinctive enough to keep women perpetually at the background. To do this, the dissertation has the major source of escape for such cultural practices as discovered through this study is education for both men and women.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

One of the problems women face in Africa today is the revision of some African cultural practices that denigrate the image and status of women in the society. Male and female children right from their birth are assigned different roles, values and status by the society where they are born. In many societies, preferences for sons are a powerful tradition, which manifest itself in neglect, deprivation and discriminatory treatment of daughters to the detriment of their physical, social and mental health. Male preference adversely affects females through

Inequitable allocation of food, education, and health care, a disparity frequently reinforced throughout life. This preference begins early in life and professional training is reserved exclusively for males while the females are given out in marriage at an early age. In many cultures, the tradition of marrying daughters at a young age is common; female children, already undervalued are often married to much older men. In such marriages, females have little power and sense of self-determination. Those who marry early cannot stay in school and often have little motivation or ability to plan their families. Mineke asserts that:

In the Igbo society, a woman is always owned by a man. First, she belongs to her father until she is of an age when she can be [married]. Pre-arranged marriages are normal. How the daughter feels toward her husband is of little importance. After acquiring her, she is only valuable in terms of producing offspring, preferably males (2008).

Debbie O'Neill also asserts that:

Igbo society upholds the notion of manliness as fundamental social norm. Violence against women is justified, African women languished on the fringe of their universe-neglected, exploited, degenerated, and indeed made to feel like outsiders (2009).

The reason for this priority placed over male offspring is due to “unbroken chain of Inheritance”(Mbat 142). Males are valued as the stronger and great achievers in contrast to the females, who are regarded as weak and non- achievers, and, are therefore, assigned minor roles. The number of male children a man has during his lifetime not only ensures the continuity of the family lineage but also is a form of social security for parents when they grow old. The woman represents the ultimate value in life, such as the continuity of the husband’s lineage (Steady 198). She does not therefore interrupt her ability to reproduce since a family’s wealth would depend on its number of children. Women without children are stigmatized and their sterility is punishment for past sins. Mbat concludes that negativism is traceable to African belief in male chauvinism, which, in, itself, has clouded African minds of the true nature, value, dignity and contribution of women in rural and national development.

Using an analogy of soul and body, Aristotle declares that:

Men are born to rule women just as the soul, which is superior rules the body, men are by nature superior, and the women inferior; and one rules while the other is ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all mankind (Quoted in Khan 21). Aristotle concludes that women represent a “defaced human nature”. The female, he argues, “is a mutilated male” (21)

There has been more interest in examining the ways in which men behave, particularly in relation to women. Consequently, a literary canon was developed in which women writers give a re-presentation of the female experience by depicting a different image of women in their works in variance with the earlier works by male authors.

In furtherance of the argument on the importance of women writing about the female experience in literary texts, Aidoo (1996) submits that “Women writers write about women because when we wake up in the morning and look in the mirror we see women”. Many

female writers try to bring into focus their femaleness/femininity and personal experiences in their narratives and in doing so highlight gender discrimination between men and women. As a result, women scholars and activists have pioneered a literary canon built on sexual politics aimed at stamping gender and feminism into both criticism and theory. This is with the aim of replacing a tradition that is viewed as masculine and domineering by female critics like Showalter (1985). She maintains that gender has become an analytic category whether the concerns are representation of sexual difference, (re)shaping masculinity, building feminine values or exclusion of female voice from the literary canon. Many African female writers like Nwapa (1966), Emecheta (1981), Dangaremba

(1988), Mugo (1988) and Aidoo (1977) among others in their narratives attempt to recast women in more positive roles away from their discriminated position(s). As a result, their texts are described by Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) as “spaces of strength within and between which they fluctuate”. Concurring, D’Almeida (1994) considers writing by women as a “weapon to destroy the ideas that perpetuate subjugation and inequality”. Many literary scholars on African literature such as Stratton (1994), Steady (1998), Ogundipe- Leslie (1987), Emenyonu (2004), Oyeronke (2009) agree that works by African women writers are rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in canon formation thus making much of the African literature appear male-centred. This makes Leek (1999) argue that African women have been indoctrinated to envision the world from a patriarchal perspective.

Gender discrimination is a social phenomenon that has been reverberating through society for decades and its prevalence could be seen both in the world of fiction and today society. Women in most African societies have been at the centre of gender discourse as a result of marginalisation and oppression by their male counterparts. Women have been excluded from public life, suppressed and relegated to the domestic sphere simply because of their femininity. Consequently, gender discrimination remains persistent due to some cultural

constraints, given the preference for men over women as seen in most patriarch high context societies, where gender equality has always been a far-fetched dream as discrimination manifests itself in different ways.

African female writers like their western female counterparts have over the years written about circumstances surrounding their lives and their living condition as women in African societies like Emecheta (1978) and Adichie (2007) have created awareness on the status of women in southern Nigeria and Nigeria in general and also shed light on how women can improve their status through writing.

Chukwuemeka (1982) in her article “Positivism and the Female Crisis”: The novels of Buchi Emecheta describes the preoccupation of Nigerian female writer’s this way: the writings of Nigeria female authors have filled the gender gap between male and female characterisation and has shown the other side of the coin ‘Chukwuma’ in this assertion believes that Nigerian female writers have taken the bull by the horn in their writings by portraying both male and female characters in positive light. She further opines:

The rural, black- house, timid, subservient, lack- lustre women has been replaced by a modern counterpart, a full rounder human being, rational, individualistic and assertive, fighting for, claiming and keeping her own (bidi).

In this study, Buchi Emechata’s *The Joys of Motherhood* and Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* same subject oriented novels with divergent perspectives on gender issues and set in two different periods are studied. This comparative study seeks to analyse the cultural discrimination of women as presented in these novels. African women suffer from subordination due to gender role differences in the society. This gender discrimination is further perpetrated by a number of cultural factors that tend to limit women’s opportunities in social life. The situation is exacerbated in their family and marriage life which is aimed at upholding the patriarchal

values of Nigerian culture. For women to be able to break through these obstacles and participate in public life, gender equality becomes an essential tool for their empowerment. Discrimination free society improves the well-being of families and society. Thus, the use of fictional texts in analysing cultural gender discrimination as a social tool entertains, educates and helps change attitudes. It is obvious that the present discrimination and inequalities that exist between men and women are based on cultured gender roles. Gender roles in effect, determine relations because it is through the designation of roles that women are the daughter, wives and mothers while men are sons, husbands and fathers. On this basis, women are therefore born into slavery of their gender/ sex. Gender inequality begets various forms of oppression and discrimination, all these make women marginalized and subordinated in society

African female writers normally focus on resistance to all forms of patriarchal behaviour and the belief that women can live their lives the way they want to and be responsible for their own livelihoods and future. The female novel as a protest novel against patriarchy shows the discriminations and abuses inflicted on women by patriarchal traditions whether they are Christian, Islamic or indigenous. In addition to the focus of these novels under study as a protestation against patriarchal dominance, they also portray the independent woman. African female novelists hold in high esteem womanist values which promote independence togetherness and survival. African female writers such as Ama Atta Aidoo, Bessie Head, Calixthe Beyala, Mariama Bà, Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dangarembga and quite recently, Chimamanda Adichie have led the way. Womanist criticism will be used in this investigation.

Feminism and womanism emerge over time to address gender/sex discrimination and social conditioning. The task of this work therefore is to investigate the dimensions of the cultural gender discrimination against the Nigeria woman in the light of the challenges she confronts in her marital home and in the society at large. Womanist criticism can be traced against the

backdrop of feminism. Feminism as a political advocacy, literary criticism, theory and fiction, explores the woman question. It depicts how culture and discrimination conspire to subjugate women by, making them inferior to man.. Therefore, feminists campaign for women's legal rights; rights to bodily integrity and autonomy, aborting and for reproduction rights, protection from domestic violence, sexual harassments and rape, for work place rights, including maternity leave and equal pay, and a host of other forms of discrimination.

Some critics term the current wave as Post feminism. It is now a label for a wide range of themes that take critical approaches to previous feminist discourse and challenges its ideas. Some post feminists even go their way to say that feminism is no longer relevant to today's society. This may not be unconnected with the fact that during much of its history, most feminist movements and theories had leaders who were pre- dominantly middle class white women from western European and North American. However, African, African/ American woman and other black woman who has proposed alternative to feminism in the name of womanism.

Therefore the need to decolonised feminism serves as one of the theoretical background of the womanist. Womanism still remains a variant of feminism that recognise race and cultural issues and the complementarity of both sexes, the refusal of the title 'Feminist' is a dominant feature of African Feminists, so it explains the more accommodative posture it takes concerning men, also the issue of complementarity of roles as opposed to outright radical rejection of men, as in the western world. Womanism accommodates man and gives prominence to motherhood and procreation, because marriage, family and women empowerment are central to womanism.

Womanism embraces man as a partner in progress and it seeks to end all form of discrimination: race, class, culture and gender. *Ogunyemi*, observes that womanism is

accommodationist because its objective is meaningful union between black women, men and children. This implies that womanists are family and children loving. They want to see every woman educated and economically empowered. In the selected texts all the heroine protagonists fit this frame. They are married and/or professionals who live in complementarity with their husbands and children. *Emecheta* and *Adichie* have also use characters that are weak and morally inferior so as to plead the case for discriminated women. Female characters in their novels are tolerant to the family of their men, an aspect which serve to help in conclusion that these writers are African womanist.

This study, as a contribution to a textual analysis to Emecheta's and Adichie's works, offers a womanist reading of Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. In other words, this study proposes to deflect from the dominant author based approach on Emecheta's and Adichie's works on textual analysis.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For decades the issue of women's status has attracted great attention in many societies in Nigeria. Literary writers, thoughtful leaders, government, lawmakers, individuals and critics are against such inhuman treatment against women.

African women writers have been subjected to western theories of interpretation and are thus being divorced from their socio-cultural milieu. In such reading and criticism, the writers have been misunderstood, misread and misinterpreted. Consequently, African female scholars strive to name and define their struggle, which is not exclusively sexist but inclusive of human problems. This study locates itself in the womanist discourse so as to explore how Emecheta and Adichie through their literary works highlight some cultural practises that discriminate against African women. This research is an attempt to examine the contributions of some female literary writers to the great struggle of discrimination.

Our study interrogates the two novels to establish the extent to which they are engaged in centring women issues as well as those cultural problems that discriminate against women.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to portray the existence of cultures and gender discrimination against women in Nigerian fiction and its depiction in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. This research is premised on the fact that literature is a chronicler of society through which societal issues are analysed with a view to making the society better. Culture and gender based discrimination is an endemic problem in the Nigerian society but underrepresented in many literary works represented in many literary works about women despite the fact that it impedes the growth and psychological well-being of the female who most women writers are preoccupied with in their works. Therefore, this study interrogates how this problem is depicted in the two selected novels and necessitated the impetus for this research which captures the essence of Gender discourse. Therefore, this research objectives are:

1. To expose and relocate *The Joys Of Motherhood* and *Purple Hibiscus* within the womanist criticism.
2. To demonstrate whether or not the texts selected for this study by the thematic preoccupation and character delineation show tradition and culture as strong factors in gender discrimination.
3. To determine if the two writers use their novels to blame and condemn cultural beliefs and practices that promote discrimination against women in Nigerian society.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Bearing in mind the role of the traditional African society as contributor to the oppression, subjugation and the underdevelopment of the women folk, it is significant to examine the realities of such social and cultural settings, mostly as these realities affect women generally. And to expose the numerous forces militating against the rights of African women specifically in traditional setup, cultural beliefs and customs which are discriminative enough to keep women perpetually at the background. In doing this, it is pertinent to consider the discrimination and injustices they suffer in this type of society. Attempts are therefore made in this respect to make readers see the efforts being exerted by some women writers towards the establishment of a just and egalitarian society that is poised to challenge the integrity of male supremacy and dominance.

This work will serve as a reference point to researchers, students and teachers of feminist literature in Nigeria and Africa. Again, this research work is hoped to help the Nigerian Society to have a re-think on the issue of gender discrimination, which is aimed at bringing out how cultural practices affect women, the pain it brings and the survival of women.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Although Emecheta's and Adichie's works can be interpreted from different perspectives, this research interrogates the nature of culture and gender discrimination against women as depicted in their two novels: *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Purple Hibiscus*. This study cross examines Emecheta's and Adichie's treatment of cultural relations and discriminations in these novels. Furthermore, the research explores the novelist's use of characterization and other literary devices to depict some of the social ills facing the society. The two novels treat different dimension of discriminations in the family and public sphere and then from the primary text that will be used for analysis, also articles and journals with related content to

the study will be analyzed. Consequently, the feminist/ womanist theory will be used as analytical framework because womanism subscribes to the appeal of universal human complementarity.

1.6 BUCHI EMECHETA: THE NOVELIST

Emecheta was born to Igbo parents in Lagos on 21 July 1944. She moved to Britain in 1960, where she worked as a librarian and became a student in London University in 1970, reading Sociology. She worked as a community worker in Camden, North London, between 1976 and 1978. She was appointed Senior Research Fellow in the Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Calabar in 1980. She was a teacher, a Librarian and a community worker. She has also written articles for the News statesmen, The Time Educational Supplements as well as plays for television. A member of Arts council of Great Britain, Member or Advisory Council, Home Secretary on Race and Equality in United Kingdom. Her Awards include Best Black writer in Britain 1978, Jock Campbell Award 1970 and Daughter or Mark Twain an American Literary Award. Much of her fiction has focused on sexual politics and racial prejudice, and is based on her own experiences as both a single parent and a black woman living in Britain. She has written many novels including *In the Ditch* (1972), *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976). *The Joys of Motherhood* which is an account of women's experiences bringing up children in the face of changing values in traditional Ibo society. Emecheta is also the author of several novels for children, including *Nowhere to Play* (1980). In 1983 she was selected as one of twenty Best of Young British Writers by the Book Marketing Council. She portrays her heroines as agitating for freedom of women from the hands of their oppressors that is the male in the society. She believes that women should have economic, social and racial equal rights as their male counterparts.

1.7 CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE: THE NOVELIST

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the fifth of six children of Mr James Mwoye and Mrs Ifeoma Adichie was born on 15th September, 1979 in Enugu, Nigeria Adichie's family's ancestral hometown is Aba in Abia state but she grew up in Nsukka and lived with her parents near the University of Nigeria. Adichie's father, who is now retired, worked at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He was Nigeria's first professor of statistics and he was the deputy vice-chancellor of the University. Her mother was the first female registrar at the same institution.

Adichie completed her secondary education at the University School where she received several academic awards. She went on to study medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria but later dropped out of the medical school to pursue her dream of becoming a writer. At the age of nineteen, she studied communication at Drexel University in Philadelphia under scholarship for two years. She went further to pursue a degree in communication and political science at Connecticut State University. In 2001, she did MFA courses in literature at Hopkins University, Baltimore. This formed the basis for her literary works. She was spurred by Chinua Achebe's work after reading his book *Things Fall Apart* at ten years old.

She started working on her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* which is the focus of this study, during her second year at Eastern Connecticut State University. The book was released in October, 2003, and it has received wild critical acclaim. It was shortlisted for the Orange Fiction Prize (2004) and was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best First Book (2005), her second *Half of a Yellow Sun* was published in August, 2006 in the United States. She is the author of the play *For Love of Biafra* (1998) a collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and a collection of poems *Decisions* (1998). Her third and recent novel is *Americanah* published in 2013. Chimamanda is now married and divides her time between Nigeria, where she regularly teaches writing workshop, and the United States.

1.8 LITERATURE AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN NIGERIA

Studies have shown that the origin of the modern African literature particularly literature in West Africa is closely associated with the activities of the colonialists. Through education and Christianity, modern literature evolved in West Africa. The colonialists painted Africa as barbaric, uncivilised and ignorant in their works, such as Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, Joyce Carry's *Mr Johnson*. They did this by making use of systematic distortions of facts and misinformation to justify their evil activities. This made the African man to lose confidence in him and now saw the foreign culture superior to his own. These were some of the issues early African writers set out to correct; especially about the stereotypical image of the black continent to the world.

The need to re-assist African confidence and restore her dignity gave rise to African literature. Consequently most early West African creative works were novels of counter actualisation. They explored issues concerning African life, giving voice to the African man by pointing out that Africa has a significant culture even before the coming of the colonialists. Achebe as a novelist clearly explains this in "*The Novelist as a Teacher*". Moreover, Achebe sees himself as one of the early West African writers with a purpose, which is to help teach his fellow Africans that there is nothing shameful in the African culture and tradition. He captures this in "*Things Fall Apart*" and "*Arrow Of God*". Camara Laye's *The African Child* celebrates the African culture as an epic although based upon the philosophy of negritude propounded by S.L Senghor.

Most writers of the early literature exploited literature as a tool for political satire. This was the reason writers like Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow Of God* to re-educate and regenerate Africans in order to help them put away the complexities of the years of degradation and self-abasement.

The post-colonial writing is the next trend of modern writers and West African writings that are mostly concerned with making analysis of the problems inherent in the society after independence. As prose fiction is a narration of what happened in the society at a particular time, it draws ample material from history. The post-independent writers reflected the West African political experience after independence while making some multi-dimensional attack on the West African leaders. They also condemned the masses for their cynicism and passivity. They made use of satire to ridicule the perpetrators of the societal predicaments and to capture the disorder, fragmentation and chaotic societal life of the modern West African man. Chinua Achebe's "*A Man Of The People*", T.M Aluko's *Chief The Honourable*, Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, just to mention a few who unleashed a satiric attack on a political corruption and ineptitude observable in the leadership of both the older and younger generation. On the other hand, Ayikwei Amah's *Fragments* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, project the level of disillusionment and alienation between the elite and the masses in the post-independence Ghanaian society.

Contemporaneously, while this trend of literary writing unfolded male writers consciously and unconsciously relegated the female characters in the stream of events in their texts. Female characters are presented in an inferior or derogatory light. The critical observation of this nature in modern African texts must have triggered commentaries by Chikwenye Okonjo in her article. She criticised Nigerian male literary male writers and that most texts were egocentric. This naturally concerns the male and is aimed at a predominant male audience. Such particular gender discrimination that is manifested in African novels can be traced to the sociocultural reality of African society where elements of culture like tradition and religion are used to perpetrate gender discrimination against women. Hence it is logical to state that there is a mediation of gender discrimination prevailing in African culture into literary characterization.

In response to such negative portrayal of women in male writings, female writings in West Africa began as early as the 1960's with Flora Nwapa as the pioneer. Flora Nwapa presented contrasting themes to those of male authors who celebrated pre-colonial traditional customs and practices, Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966 and 1970) presented different views of the pre-colonial and colonial pasts from that of the male authors like Achebe, Amadi, Ngugi and at the same time consciously correcting their attitudes and perspectives in the depiction of female characters. Since then, many female writers have equally reacted to the negative portrayal of African women by the male writers, Tess Onwueme, Buchi Emecheta, Andrey Ajose, Ama Ata Aidoo Sunderland, Tsitsi Dangeremba, Mariama Baa, Bessie Head, Chimamanda Adichie and a host of others have emerged from different parts of Africa to share the same concern in feminist issues as they cut across their respective regions and cultures. Man lives in a society that is subjected to change so "a writer responds with his total personality to a social environment which changes all the time". (Ngugi 1972: 47). This study therefore is an attempt to evaluate gender and cultural discrimination as presented in the works of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

The Nigerian born feminine writer, Adichie portrays certain key problems that women undergo in Nigeria in her novel *Purple Hibiscus*, she projects how religion becomes a manipulative tool in the hands of men as metaphorically represented by men like Eugene Achike. Eugene Achike is a depiction of patriarchal dominance against women.

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* on the other hand tries to project the concept of self-assertion against gender discrimination. Nuo Ego the heroine in the text is faced with a cultural system that tries to limit her life to the role it dictates for her. Nuo Ego self-assertion against such cultural practices is what Emecheta tries to project. It is obvious that the continuous trend of dehumanising female writers in most West African novels gave rise to modern female writers. These female writers have continued to antagonise culture and gender

discrimination as factors responsible for the misinterpretation of the female character in these West African novels. This perceived submission is what Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Adichie subscribed to as they endeavour to present such issues in their respective novels.

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* presents new issues fray. One of such issue is the plight of women in the patriarchal tradition. In this novel Buchi doggedly examines the question of childlessness in marriage with its attendant problems. Buchi maintains that the Igbo traditional society views with utter dismay and ridicule a marriage without issue. It was a curse not to have children... it was regarded as a failure. *The Joys Of Motherhood* was the most sympathetic novel of Buchi with this theme. Nuo Ego's acclaimed excellence in all affairs of domestic life does not save her from being abandoned by her first husband. Consequently she married a man that she never loved.

In response to assertions made by writers like Omotola Ogundipe-Leslie about the invisibility of women writers on the Nigerian literary scene, Helen Chukwuma (2000:101) explains that: "the men wrote about themselves, their wives, homes, their ideals aspirations and conflicts, their confrontation with the white man and his ways, in sum, their society at large. Can any being overtake the place of another? Can a male writer feel the depth of a woman's consciousness, sensibilities, femininity, impulses and indeed her weaknesses?". Chukwuma sees many male authored works as having an unbalanced view of society and one sided in their narration. Therefore, for a literary work to be authentic and realistic for a woman writer, she should be able to identify with her characters from a new perspective different from how they have been portrayed in male authored works which many female writers have claimed to be chauvinistic. Many female critics of male authored works tacitly agree that there is an inaccurate portrayal of the image of womanhood in literary works by men. Therefore women writers try to give a balanced view of the female experience. As a result, Ketu H. Katrak states that;

Women writers' use of oral traditions and their revisions of Western literary forms are integrally and dialectically related to the kinds of content and the themes they treat. Women writers' stance, particularly with regard to glorifying/denigrating traditions, vary as dictated by their own class backgrounds, levels of education, political awareness and commitment, and their search for alternatives to existing levels of oppression and discrimination often inscribed within the most revered traditions.

Their texts deal with, and often challenge, their dual-oppression-patriarchy that preceded and continues after colonialism and that inscribes the concepts of womanhood, motherhood, traditions such as dowry, bride-price, polygamy and a worsened predicament within a capitalist economic system introduced by the colonizers. Women writers deal with the burdens of female roles in urban environments (instituted by colonialism), the rise of prostitution in cities, women marginalization in actual political participation (2006: 240).

Some women writers have already gained high visibility as a result of the kind of critical attention they have gained so far from writing about the oppressions and discriminations of women on the continent. Writers like Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Bessie Head, Nawal el Sadaawi, Zaynab Alikali and new entrants to the literary scene like Seffi Attah, Chimamanda Adiche and Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo. These female writers have among other issues in their novels; discussed the gender problem through the eyes of a woman with a view of depicting problems they can easily relate to base on their gender. This makes Emecheta (2010) to opine that: 'Being a woman, and African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know'. In her works which include, *Second Class Citizen* and *The Joys of Motherhood* she talks about the female experience in a society dominated by patriarchal views and how women coped in the harsh environments they found themselves. Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys*

of Motherhood (1994) traces gender discrimination in the Igbo society, as hinging on the tenets of the gender socialization process, customary and traditional practices.

For instance, Oshia the son of Nnu Ego refuses to fetch water for his step mother emphasizing that he is a boy 'why should I help in cooking? That is a woman's job'. In that society, it was the norm for girls to be forced into early marriage and the bride price used in educating the boy child. Another illustration in the novel is where Adankwo, the widow inherited by Nnaife declares that Oshia is equal the worth of five girls put together. The patriarchal nature of many African societies foster the belief of the male child as superior to the female hence the relegation of the females to the background.

The discriminative nature of the African tradition is also visible in the marital institution. The importance attached to marriage in the sociology of African life both in real life and fiction, is perhaps, the most defining factor in the existence of an African woman. A woman is seen to be incomplete until she is married to a man. Marriage is meant to confer on the woman a shroud of respectability. Now, since the man is to pay a bride price for the intended wife, she becomes his property, bought and paid for. Thus, marriage becomes an avenue for discrimination and a plethora of injustice in this kind of society where the woman is seen as belonging to her husband. In the novels of Buchi Emecheta, there are many illustrations of this when in *Second Class Citizen* Adah's hope of fulfilment as a woman revolved round making a life with Francis who later turned her into a punch bag. NnuEgo fared no better in Amatogwu's hand who beats her for breast feeding the child of his younger wife and made NnuEgo to work on the farm because of her inability to bear children. In this novel, Buchi Emecheta breaks the myth of motherhood when her valued male children turned out as disappointments. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) one of Okonkwo's wives Ekwefi, was battered for not serving his food on time and he displayed his total disregard for the Week of peace by flogging his youngest wife Ojiugo. In this novel, women are viewed

mainly as child bearers and helpmates for their husbands. This is due to the phallogocentric notion that it is only a fertile woman who is able to bear many children especially males and she will be valued within her cultural milieu. Ekwefi is thus considered a cursed woman because after ten live births, only one child-a daughter-survives (Strong-Leek 2001). Against this backdrop, Anowa in Ama Aidoo's play *Anowa*, is worried of not seeing signs of a baby yet (p.25) and considers herself a 'wayfarer' without any belongings and family. Her sense of void and emptiness is re-emphasized by Kofi Ako who states "women who have children can always see themselves in the future" (p.36)

Buchi Emecheta in her novels describes how the Igbo traditional culture exploits women through a system that reduces the woman to nothing. Chimamanda Adichie also treads this path when she pits the character of Beatrice a diminutive woman against the brutish and domineering figure of her husband Eugene, who violently attacks her and their children at every opportunity. The under representation of positive females in past narratives by male authors like Chinua Achebe, Cyprain Ekwensi, Elechi Amadi among others highlighted the need for a re-examination of how the image of the female is represented in literary works. The need to study texts which border on gender conflict gave rise to a woman based literary canon known as Feminist Criticism.

A critic, Carole Davies (2007:565-567) observes that African feminist criticism grapples with the politics of male literary domination, as both textual and contextual criticism. She describes it as textual in the sense that it engages "close reading of texts using the literary establishment's critical tools" and it is contextual in the sense that it locates the text in 'the world with which it has a material relationship'. She sees the text as having a social value because no writer creates from a vacuum. Besides, she submits that African feminist critical activities is developing a canon of African women writers, examining stereotypical images of women in African literature, studying African women writers and the development of an

African female aesthetics, and examining women in oral traditional literatures which leads to gender identity, role and performance (Kehinde Amore, Gabriel Bamgbose & Abisola Lawani, 2011:204). This is because the African male writer is accused of writing from a culture that is biased against the female gender. Concurring, Jaggar (1983) asserts that “Culture is male...what it does mean (among things) is that the society we live in, like all other historical societies is a patriarchy and patriarchies imagine or picture themselves from the male point of view”. She opines that, there is a female culture, but it is underground, unofficial or a minor culture occupying a small corner of the human experience. According to her, culture is conceived from a single point of view; the male. But writing as a self-conscious male critic, Biodun Jeyifo (1993), called on women writers and critics to delegitimize the under-textualization of the stories of these foremothers of women’s creativity by male writers and critics.

This desire to recreate the woman’s experience through fiction has led to a proliferation of literatures on women by different writers, especially women writers. Therefore, women writing about women is not a new phenomenon on the Nigerian literary scene, in fact as far back as the seventies ,many writings like Flora Nwapa’s *Once is not Enough* ,Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* all addressed issues affecting females in patriarchal societies. In a typical writing by a female, there is often a flaw in the portraiture of both female and male characters. Male characters are often depicted as brutes and villains who relegate the female to the background .Characters such as Francis in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* ,Moudou Fall in Mariama Ba *So long a letter* ,Habu Adams in Zaynab Alkali’s *The Stillborn* are few in this category of writing. In contrast, female characters are often over glorified and portrayed as long suffering and patient, willing to bear any sacrifices and play the second fiddle. This nature of writing is subjective and paints an exaggerated picture of reality. In some situations some males can be described as effeminate because of

their physical stature, so also are some females described as masculine because of their physique. While some women can thus be bullies and villains at home, so also are men given to being at the receiving end of domestic violence. Paradoxically Chimamanda Adichie treads the path of the old generation of female writers in her negative portrayal of male characters like Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*.

In her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie talks about a violent father Eugene, who has turned cruel by practicing an extreme brand of Catholicism and the parallel abuses of a military government on its citizenry. In her novel, Adichie looks at the different issues confronting society like, unemployment, poverty, lack of press freedom, discrimination and how they affect women in the society. The character of Beatrice and Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* are contrasted to show women asserting their positions in their societies and challenging patriarchy with its several manifestations through different methods. According to Weber, (1947) most oppressive systems draw much of their strengths from the compliance of victims, who accept their image and get paralyzed by a sense of helplessness. Adichie in her novels, create positive female characters that are not submissive to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situation. This aspect of gender discrimination against women is often a taboo subject in many literary works and Emecheta and Adichie expose this ugly aspect in their works as one of the forms of oppression against women.

1.9 FEMINISM IN AFRICA

African feminism differs from western feminism even though they share the aim of fighting for the betterment of women's condition generally, yet African feminism does not accept the urge for sexual freedom, homosexuality, abolishing of marriage institutions as it is with radical feminists who are at loggerhead with churches and other constitutional authorities. The western feminism is fighting for equal opportunity while the African feminism

fight against colonization and neo colonialism and for true independence. "The life of pre – colonial African woman was not passive and supportive to men but dynamic and constructive. The evidence of such contribution to national development and their highly respected positions in their societies could be seen in the fragment of oral tradition, myths, legends and status erected at strategic places in cities as tributes." (Zaynab 1994:4)

African feminism has been defined as an "abnegation of male protection and a determination to be resourceful and reliant" (Davies. p.561). It has emerged as a response to what has been referred to by Philomina Chioma Steady (1987) *African Feminism, A Worldwide Perspective* as "the dominant voice of the feminist movement "which "has been that of the white female.' African feminism must be responsive to the needs of black/African women and must therefore take into account freedom from structures created by manifold oppressions. It must be "free of the shackles of Western romantic illusions" because the African woman lives for many things such as a sense of sisterhood and not just cultivating herself and enjoying sex. It also "tends to be much more pragmatic" Buchi Emecheta, 554 *Feminism with a Small 'f'*. Most significantly, "African feminism, unlike Western feminism does not negate men, rather it accommodates them. Men are central to their lives and so their continuous presence is assured" Maduka (2009) *Feminism, Womanism and Modernism in African Literary Discourse*. Steady calls for an African feminism which

"combine racial, sexual, class and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more inclusive brand of feminism thought through which women are viewed first and foremost as human, rather than sexual beings. She defines African feminism as "that ideology which advocates freedom from oppression that is based on the political, economic, social, and cultural manifestations of racial, Cultural, sexual and class biases" (2).

This definition by Steady shows that mainstream feminism has failed to theorize aspects of the struggles of black women and African women which do not affect white women. For example, white women only lace the struggle of fighting for sexual equality in opposition to

white men. On the other hand, African women must contend with oppression from their African male counterparts while also being suppressed economically, politically and racially by white patriarchal systems along with their men. She therefore calls African feminism "humanistic feminism" because it is dedicated to the total liberation of humanity.

This majority of black women in Africa and the Diaspora have developed characteristics of cooperation and rejection of male protection, though not always by choice. In Davies, 561, genuine African feminism regards self-reliance, cooperative work and social organization as values which must be treasured by African women while also, rejecting over burdening, exploitation and relegation of the African woman into a state of inhumane misery. It objectively looks at women in societies which have undergone the struggle for national reconstruction and encourages them to engage in another struggle against the African men they united with to fight for the liberation of their African countries.

African feminism must also embrace traditional and contemporary avenues of choice for women as it seeks to uncover other modes by which African women can access power other than the outward demeanours of submissiveness. The essence of African feminism is not antagonism towards African men, even though it promotes African men to recognize the subjugation of women, but a common struggle with African men to remove the yokes of foreign domination and European exploitation. It boldly admits to the role played by colonialism in enforcing certain inequalities that existed in traditional societies and therefore addresses the realities of the lives of African women.

Women were restricted to home affairs only and misconception of them as imbecile place them heavily at various socio-economic disadvantages. Women were not only cut off from the world relationship and political participation but also made to become subordinate docile and suffer untold hardship. In trying to fight these predicaments, the African women have set

a campaign on issues like freedom and liberty, equality in educational opportunity, professional development, preservation and respect for family laws, respect for love, friendship, marriage divorce, possession of property, social recognition, access to economic and political privileges.

The fact that African women have and will always address their own problems is a view strongly held by African feminists who also assert that some African societies have structures which give women equality. Institutions which promote the status of African women are given recognition within African feminism and those which do not are rejected. African feminism therefore sees usefulness in motherhood, polygamy and traditions which have been distorted by colonialism and continue to be distorted by urban settings (Davies, 564)

Different feminist theories abound which coordinate the activities of its adherents, such as liberal feminism. The proponent of these theories advocates equality between men and women through political and legal reform. Followers believe that equality between the genders can be attained if women are allowed to make their choices and take responsibility for their actions.

Amazon feminism is concerned with physical equality and is opposed to gender role stereotyping and discrimination against women. It disproves certain assumptions that women are supposed to look and behave as if they are passive, weak and physically helpless.

Marxist feminism is founded on the principles of Karl Marx's theory of class and capital distribution. Proponents believe that capitalist economy focuses on the maintenance of forms of inequality between men and women in the society. On the other hand radical feminism believes that women's oppression results from patriarchal activities in their society. Adherents believe that a change is only possible when there is a reversal of roles and uttering the structure of their society.

Radical feminists' view of the sex class system is being solely responsible for the subordination of women narrows the scope or looking at the specificity or oppression or women within different cultures. To this end, African women and other black women have proposed alternative to radical feminism in the name of womanism. Womanism accommodates men and gives prominence to womanhood and procreation because marriage, family and woman empowerment are central to womanism, this thesis will situate the two novels: *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Purple Hibiscus* under study within womanism.

1.10 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK: WOMANIST CRITICISM

Gender equality is a contending issue in feminist poetics. In a patriarchal society, men are at the helms of affairs. They are heads of households and other traditional institutions. Women thus find themselves marginalized and subjugated. To combat these power structures, Kate Millet (1979) calls on women to disabuse the patriarchal notion embedded in what she calls 'sexual politics'. This suggest a rejection of cultural norms and ideals that renders genders a social construct that defines roles and expectations between male and females. Men thus are expected to be dominating, aggressive and self-assertive while women are passive, meek and humble. By "politics", Millet signifies the operations of power relations in society. She argues that Western institutions have manipulated power to establish the dominance of men and subordination of woman in society. As Bressler observes Millet maintains that: 'women revolt against the power center: male dominance. In order to do so, women must establish female social conventions for themselves by establishing and articulating female discourse, literary studies and feminist theory.' (P147)

Miller's stance is the type of advocacy that scares African women from feminism. First, she wants a total dissolution of gender roles. Given that these roles are the culturally defined, some are nonetheless logical. Some roles can be carried out by men and women but some are limited by gender. For example, both genders can teach or be breadwinner but only

women can breastfeed and nurture children successfully. Millet's creed for women to revolt against male domination is uncalled for. She should instead advocate for women empowerment so that they can compete favourably with their male counterpart. The process of acquiring and sharing power should be gradual and is never automatic. Women should acquire the necessary leadership qualities before being entrusted. Lastly, Millet's feminism is at loggerhead with womanism. She is a separatist. She desires women separate discourse and criticism to the absolute exclusion of men. Womanism on the other hand includes men in all its spheres. Its cardinal principle is gender complementarity. Miriam in Gimba (1994) is of the view that 'there are things men can do and women cannot do and vice versa. By our constitution, men and women are different. (P92). This study demonstrates that gender equality is not on one-to-one but on complementary basis. As Achonulu says, the genders are complementarity opposites.

Feminist criticism rejects the hegemonic perspective of the male because of the stereotypes that go along with it are culture constructs, which defines the male as active, dominating and rational, whereas the female is passive, submissive, and emotional. Feminist theory identifies with female characters and their concern in order to provide a critique of these phallogocentric assumptions and an analysis patriarchal visions or ideologies inscribed in a literature that is male-centered and male-dominated. Womanist theory shares this view. Therefore, this study will examine how the authors reconstruct women's attempts to defy phallic constructions of their gender by creating heroine protagonist who match men in all endeavours. A comparison between the new woman and her male counterpart will be undertaken to assess her strength and weakness in the home and office frontier.

Womanist criticism evolves because African and African American women are not all together satisfied with mainstream white feminism which Zaynab Alkali observes: 'has the power to evoke an unpleasant, unfeminine image of stiff-necked, loud and aggressive man –

hater who is anti – marriage, among other domestic establishments’ (P8). From the perspective of black women sexism, classism and racism are inextricably bound together. Therefore, woman liberation or feminine should simultaneously combat racism, sexism and class oppression. The liberation of black women is the end point of all forms of exploitation. To correct the inadequacy of white middle – class feminism that ignores oppression based on racism and classism. Alice walker evolves the theory of womanism and situates it within the context of Black feminism. Alice Walker coined the term womanism in her collection of essays entitled *In Search of our Mother’s Garden: Womanist Prose* (1983):

the black folk expression of mothers to female children, ‘you acting womanish’ i.e. like a woman... usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or wilful behaviour. Wanting to know more in great depth that is considered ‘good’ for one. (A Womanish is also) a woman who loves other woman sexually and/or non-sexually Appreciates and prefers woman’s strength... committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male or female, not a separatist... Womanist is to Feminist as purple is to a lavender.

Alice walker insists that womanism should respond to feminism in order to project womanist demands and perspectives. Feminism must create space for the problematization of black woman’s predicament by expanding its horizon to include race and class issues. Walker’s conception of womanism is her attempt to locate the black woman in history and at the same time, she tries to erase the negative and inaccurate stereotypes that mask her. Walker conceives the black woman as a knowing/thinking subject who is always in pursuit of knowledge, ‘wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered ‘good’ for one,” thus, affirming the black woman as an intellectual. This portrait tallies with the depiction of the heroine protagonist in the selected texts. The black woman also emerges as an independent and capable being opposed to the gender separatism that bedevils feminine, womanism present an alternative for black woman by framing their survival in the context of the survival of their community where the fate of woman and that of men inextricably linked. As Patricia Hill Collins(1990), aptly notes “many black woman view feminine as a

movement that as best, is exclusively for women, and at worst, dedicated to address gender - oppression without attacking black men”.

Layli Phillips has also advanced a definition of womanism as a theory that is directly taken from the daily existence of black woman in the attempt to confront their social, natural and spiritual realities.

Womanism is a social change perspective rooted in Black women's and other women of colour's everyday experiences and everyday methods of problem solving in everyday spaces, extended to the problem of ending all forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance people and the environment/nature, and reconciling human life with the spiritual dimension.

Phillips's observation of womanism as a theoretical perspective that seeks social change in the lives of black women is an extension of walker's construction of black woman who proves herself an independent and capable person. This study will prove how woman display their abilities in both domestic and professional fronts. This is in tandem with womanism pro-marriage, education and economic independence. Phillips also constructs womanism as a theory that fights injustice whether of gender, race or class. This study locates injustices in gender relations in the home and in the office and woman's effort to overcome them through self-assertiveness and economic empowerment.

Looking into Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1996), construction of womanism her emphasis is on gender cooperation and complementarity. She maintains that:

Womanism is black centred; it is accomodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women like feminine; unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black children and will see to it that men begin to change from their sexiest stand (P65).

Ogunyemi's definition of womanism is a catalyst. It captures the similarities and difference between feminine and womanism, the sibling theories of this research work. It locates womanism in black and gender studies, the essentials of post-colonial studies. It proceeds to

underline the principle of womanism, which tally with the themes of the selected authors of this study. These are complementarity in this notion of womanism as an accomodationist theory, freedom, independence and the peaceful co-existence between men, women and children. All these are targeted towards the eradication of sexism. Ogunyemi tries to claim equal space and opportunity in the literacy sense and to acknowledge women as they complete the tenor of human experience and expression. Highlighting the complex situation inherent in African and the context of gender discrimination Ogunyemi (1996) opines:

Black women are disadvantaged in several ways: as blacks they with their men are victim of white patriarchal culture as women they are also victimized by black men, and as black woman they are also victimized on racial sexual and class grounds by white women (67)

Essentially, a black woman is a victim of interlocking forms of oppression and discrimination. This calls on the African to have a holistic approach toward discrimination and female subjugation and rejects the primacy of sexism as the main focus of female struggle against cultural domination. She challenges the wise black woman writer to be conscious of the helpless state of black people within the face of white patriarchal culture and empowers her male counterpart because she believes in him; as a result, the books womanists writer end in integrative images of male and female world.

While the feminist movement focuses on oppression based on sexism, womanism focuses on the black woman's experience of what the white men refer to as 'worse oppression' in the form of racism, sexism and classism. Ideally, womanism connotes a more orderly and polite term where women, especially blacks, are comfortable with their culture. Supportive of the male supremacy, a typical womanist is not ashamed of her gender role as a woman. She is appreciative of the fact that her role in creation as a mother and female specie is very important. To the womanist, men should be men and exhibit their roles while they (women) complement them. Their writings suggest however, that they should not be unnecessarily

marginalized or maltreated like animals. If men should go to school, then women should equally be allowed to go to school. Women should however, dress in their traditional attires that distinguish them as such, while men should dress in their own. Unfortunately, what is obtainable in Nigeria today is a situation where the western culture has seriously filtered into the Nigerian scene.

Thus, the key point of this study sourced from womanism is gender complementarity. This implies that men and women complement one another as separate parts that together make up a composite whole. This is the humanist and positive motive of gender relations. There is no need for gender conflict. The need for men to change and overcome their patriarchal cultural attitudes to gender is long overdue. Gender re-orientation should not be the preserve of the feminist only. Feminists, themselves should shelve their swords. This work will certainly access the discrimination against women in Igbo society and examine the entity of applying womanist theory to the selected novels, and this work basis its assessment criteria for the family. This is a fundamental pillar of womanism which this work investigates. As womanism is a theory that accommodates children, this study highlights the authors' notions of children and measures their correspondence to the womanist theory. And that through the novel formed the writers are able to demonstrate gender complementarity or mutual coexistence of the sexist as Acholonu, Chukwuma and Ogunyemi have advocated and proclaimed. Thus, Ezeigbo's statement; woman needs a man and man needs a woman.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the key issues and the direction of the study. Thus, having given an introductory explanation on why the study is imperative in the first place, the chapter has given biography of the novelist under study, feminism in Africa and review of literature and Gender discrimination in Nigeria. Having stated the statement of the problem and the aim and

objectives of the study, a polemical defense on why the study should be carried out has also been described under the segment entitled “the significance of the study”. One of the aims of the study is to investigate how the two writers portray the status of women in their patriarchal Igbo society. This chapter has equally given an insight into the theoretical frame-work of the study in which feminism/ womanism is highlighted as the chosen reading strategy for study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Fiction coming out of Nigeria is marked by attempts to depict social realities through literary representation of events and characters. The literary artist is perceived as a revolutionary thinker whose preoccupation is to change the world, channel the mind and consciousness of his people towards new sets of values and higher awareness of reality. The essence of literature therefore is to condition the mind of people to certain values, attitudes, tastes, feelings, emotional reactions and patterns of behaviour. According to Adeyanju (1999), “the power of art in transforming society lies in its potential by exposing a bad situation, the writer or artist suggests ideas that could correct such situations and leaves the final decision to the reader”.

2.2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Nigerian women are among the hardest working population, but have remained economically and politically marginalised. Women suffer gender discrimination in all aspects of social life such as politics, commerce, agriculture, industry, the military, religious and educational institutions and find it extremely difficult to advance in social status except through the status they gain from either their fathers or husbands Amadi,(1982), Alemika and Ogugua, (2001). Women have been stereotyped, marginalised and trivialised in such a way that whatever men know and do in the society is regarded as superior to that which women do and know.

Similarly, Nigeria as a patriarchal society is characterised by wicked social system of rule that is oppressive to the women because it is an exertion of male dominance over women. The underlying factor in patriarchy is power and status. Struggle over power and control are often struggle over whose words get used and whose do not and over who gets to speak and

who does not (Johnson 2008). For the men to assert their power over the women, the women are salient.

Gender inequality often stems from social structures that have institutionalised conceptions of gender differences. Cultural stereotypes are possible explanations for gender inequality and the resulting gender disparity. According to Margaret (1982), in her article written on the analysis on gender and the society, women have been traditionally designated to occupations which require such skills. While these skills are culturally valued, they are also associated with domesticity. So, occupation requiring these skills is not economically valued. Men have been traditionally viewed as “bread winners” and jobs held by men have been historically and economically valued and paid higher incomes. Gender inequality can further be understood through mechanism of sexism. Margaret further said in the same article that discrimination takes place in this manner as men and women are subjected to prejudicial treatment based on gender alone

According to Bukola (2007), gender discrimination is any distinction and exclusion made on the basis of sex which has the effect of impairing the recognition, exercises or employment by women irrespective of their marital status. Coleman (1987) opines that:

Gender inequality or discrimination remain pervasive in many dimension of life worldwide. This is so, despite considerable, advances in gender equality in recent decades. The nature and extent of the discrimination vary considerably across countries and regions.

Furthermore, on historical and cultural considerations, Ojo-Ade (1982: 71) opens his article with this quotation, ‘stating the passive and inferior positions of women’. He further identifies the impact of colonialism and the white world in general on black literature. This makes it the literature of the underprivileged and even though much effort has been made to decolonize it. This is juxtaposed with the place of the woman in relation to man and the society at large. Thus on feminism Ojo-Ade writes:

Feminism, an accidental phenomenon like many others, has spread ever slowly but steadily to the forbidden land of Africa. Forbidden, because the continent where man supposedly first surfaced prides herself on her tradition and resilience against foreign cultural intrusion. Such ‘aberrations’ as feminism are abhorred by many who are however, the very purveyors of the bastardisation of that culture whose contents remain confusing to their civilised minds. Criticism does not stop feminism from rearing its head; for society is a dynamic entity condemned to change from within and without. The war between male and female is now a contemporary constant, and new literary voices from among the once silent minority cry out to be heard, even if there is reason to doubt on whose behalf the revolt is being declared (Ojo-Ade 1982 :72).

This gives an insight into perception of Africans about feminism. This is the major factor that has affected African women’s acceptability of the term feminism, and consequently the coming of the Afro-centric feminist theory, which is more accommodative to men and preaches complementarity of both sexes. Ojo-Ade (1982: 72-73) identifies Buchi Emecheta as one silent minority, crying out to be heard. It is noteworthy that Ojo-Ade opines that her novel *The Joys Of Motherhood* “is filled with autobiographical elements, expressing as it does the novelist desires and dilemmas, tracing her life in a society caught between the established order of the past and the exigencies of the present”. (1982: 73). Despite Buchi’s revolutionary attitude to female emancipation, the conclusion of her *The Joys Of Motherhood* speaks of “... the inevitable and necessary complementarity of man and woman.” (p.85)

However, the woman has a place in culture and society, which is often acknowledged or misrepresented. Aina (1998: 3) writes, “Generally, each society delineates between what men ‘do’ and what women ‘do’ and the rewards which accrue to them respectively, in terms of ‘power’, ‘wealth’ and ‘prestige’...” Nevertheless discrimination and urbanisation have affected the social arrangement of the status and roles of the two sexes. Aina opines that Nigerian women face untold hardship often linked to their gender because of the inequality rooted in traditional practices, values and norms (p. 4). This has also led to educational imbalance placing the women at the disadvantaged position of total dependency on men. As

regard marriage relationships, the sphere of activities between the man and the woman is rather complementary even though it does not imply equality between the sexes (p. 6).

The woman's major role is as a wife and a mother, Aina adds that:

As a mother, the woman was the primary custodian of the cherished values of her society. This she does by devoting her energies to life-preserving activities of procreation which meant having as many children as possible, while she enjoys higher social status and a sense of fulfilment by the birth of male children. (1998: 6).

In addition, there are clearly defined sex roles and patriarchy gives men control over female sexuality. To ensure conformity, with specific gender roles, taboos are put in place. Aina concludes that the society in which the Nigerian woman is born into is that which celebrates male superiority. This is not limited to fathers and husbands but also the 'male child' (p. 8). Thus, a woman's inability to bear a male child speaks of doom and could lead to her abandonment by the husband.

Economic activities in African societies which include farming, production and sales of goods and services has women actively involved. However, they still suffer inhibitions due to their level of dependency. On bringing strategic change to women's status, Aina (1998: 25) concludes that:

At the individual level, Nigerian women are not only responding to changes around them, but are also reshaping their own reality. For example, familiar relations tend to be losing their hold on the individual's life. Many women marry not for love and not because they are forced, and they freely go out of a relationship when it seems socially unbearable. The latter decision, however, still depends on socio-economic status, level of education and exposure.

This means, education and exposure will improve the socio-economic status of the woman thereby changing her subordinate position relieving the burden of gender inequality that culture has placed on her. Therefore African women have a greater struggle against domination and discrimination because of the circumstances that surround them mainly

because of culture. This is why feminist criticism has had a very slow impact on African literature. According to Frank (1984: 37), feminist critical theory in Africa did start with stereotypical feminist criticism because it wants to challenge the negative position of women in African society.

Gender relations in Nigeria operate under a patriarchal social organisation. Women prose fictions are written against the backdrop of the social relationship and power structures that patriarchy breeds. Abrams (1999) clearly states the relations between patriarchy and feminism:

The basic views of feminism is that (western) civilisation is pervasively patriarchal (ruled by father). That is it is male centered and controlled, and is organised and conducted in such a way as to subordinate woman to man in all cultural domains, familia, religious, political, economic, social, legal and (even) artistic Women themselves are taught in the process of being socialised, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology (that is the conscious and unconsciouspresupposition about male superiority) and so are conditioned to derogate their sex and cooperate in their subordination (Abrams: 235).

From Abram's angle, feminism is a western phenomenon. Outside the west, societies have witnessed their brand of feminism that have root in their civilisations. This signifies the departure point of western and African feminism or womanism. The western white feminists have included some postmodern tendencies that look weird to Africans. Postmodern notions of everything goes and its celebration of chaos are cases in point.

Feminists for instance accommodate lesbian, gay and transgender theories and practices that are yet to be integrated in African literary canons. Complementarity demands that both menand women should join to end all opressions – gender, race and class. Feminist should strive for a rethink of attitude from both men and women as some women have patriarchal mentality rather than castigate men only. Catherine Achonolu is relevant here because she is not even intimidated by notion of patriarchy. In her theory of “motherism” which she

categorically claims in her sub-title is Afrocentric alternative term to “feminism”. She observes that each gender has its domain and the two genders are, therefore, complementary opposites in traditional African society. She explains that while men are in control of socio-political spheres, women are in charge of spiritual and metaphysical segments. Economic power is shared by both gender and anybody with it commands respect; and this person is not restricted to any gender. As she articulates this point:

Patriarchy, the system that places men on top of the social and political ladder seems to be an inappropriate term for describing the organisation of social system of African peoples. This is because several African societies reflect systems with ranging degrees of dual-sex hierarchies in which men and women exist in parallel and complementary position and roles within the society (233).

2.3 LITERATURE ON BUCHI EMECHETA

Buchi Emecheta (1944) is a notable writer from the Southern part of Nigeria. She is widely recognised as one of the leading female voices in Contemporary African literature. Similarly, her compelling depiction of the female experience in African society has attracted international attention. Many critics describe Emecheta as a writer preoccupied mainly with the themes of marriage, childlessness and motherhood in her works. Hence “Emecheta’s works reveal Nigerian female characters who challenge prescribed understandings of their roles as ‘woman’, ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ (Nadaswaran 2012:47). She has on record eight published novels to her credit. These include *In The Ditch* (1972), *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977) which was awarded the “Jack Campbell Award”, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Head Above Water* (1986) among others. All her works centre on the plight of women and at the same time a contributor to society growth in the typical African society. She portrays her heroines as agitating for freedom of women from the hands of their oppressors that is the

male in the society. She believes that women should have economic, social and racial equal rights as their male counterpart.

Emecheta's major preoccupation like Nwapa is to cast women in positive light in the roles she assigns them. Emecheta's novels constitute hardworking and determination as the yardstick for liberating a women. Coupled with the usual problems of the Africa Emecheta's novels all try to focus on the challenges and struggles to overcome such problems. That is why Eustace palmer (1979:10) stated that "scarcely any other female African woman has succeeded in probing the female mind and displaying the female personality with such precision".

In her essay *Positivism and the female crisis: The Novels of Buchi Emecheta*, Chukwuma (1989:2) opines that "the novels of Buchi Emecheta have filled the gaping gender gap between male and female characterisation and has shown the other side of the coin." In furtherance of her argument, she state that:

The rural, back-house, timid, subservient, lack-lustre woman has been replaced by her modern counterpart, a full-rounder human being, rotational, individualistic and assertive, fighting for, claiming and keeping her own (Chukwuma, 1989:3).

Chukwuma indicates that Emecheta portrays a very negative image of men in her works with the women always suffering in the hands of men. For this reason, the male characters are often:

The men in Emecheta's works secure menial jobs as washer men, cooks, grass cutters and labourers. The effect of such jobs is to rid the men of their manhood, inner strength and assertiveness.

Nnolim (2010:120) shares the same view with Chukwuma as he argues that each title in Emecheta's novels reflects just one more phrase in the brutalised plight of women in the

hands of the “enemy man”. This shows that women are maltreated in all her works. This also makes critics conclude that Emecheta is a feminist because of her concern and the way she portrays the plight of the woman. It is against this background, Emenyonu (1991:76) attests that “Emecheta has become a powerful and influential feminine voice not only on the African scene but in the entire world.” Her creative vision as identified by Emenyonu (1991:86) is that “education is the solution of the problems of the African woman. This would secure her future and gives her the needed economic and emotional independence she craves for”. Mari (2007:15) on the other hand sees emecheta as not disregarding the male authors such as flora nwapka the first Nigerian female novelist claim to literary fame, Chinua Achebe, but she feels the African women are misrepresented in their works. Jones (1985:7) recognizes the revival of female consciousness as one of the most significant trends in development of the African novel. This, he asserts, to be

“The emergence of a very powerful feminist streak, the rise into prominence of a number of highly accomplished and articulate women novelists like Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba and Rebeka Njau”.

Thus, he sees Emecheta as a likely threat to the position of some established male and even female writers because she portrays the concept of feminism vividly in her works. Here Jones, fails to realize the fact that Emecheta is not posing any threat but rather she tries to point in the most liberal way she can and this she does through incorporating valuable elements of tradition in her works.

Ogundipe Leslie (2000:5) is another critic that maintains that “Emecheta’s writings are nothing but feminism and they portray the experience and fate of women in a society dominated and ruled by the men folk” she therefore gives a reason for the denial of Emecheta as a feminist to the successful intimidation of Africa women by men. Male ridicules aggression and back lash have resulted in making women apologetic and have given the term “Feminist” a bad name Ogundipe Leslie may have expected Emecheta’s kind of feminism to

be devoid of traditional elements this accounts for why she thinks Emecheta is denying being a feminist at all. But what Emecheta is doing, is to prove that male and female roles should not be Subordinate to each other.

Smith (1972:2), Submits that: Emecheta belong to the category of feminist known as feminist” who employs a predominately moral approach to the idea of feminist. she is one of the pioneers of this type of feminism, she believed “there was nothing special in the being of a man which cannot be compared to that of a woman” Emecheta is said to share similar view in her concepts of feminism and her works seek to redirect the African women towards a better way of life, by exploring issue like the brutality of polygamy: The unreasonable expectation of mothers who insist that their daughters adopt life styles similar to theirs. She also believes that certain aspect of tradition should be encouraged and respected rather than a total condemnation of tradition as preached by adherents of the western type of feminism.

2.4 LITERATURE REVIEW ON *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*

The Joys of Motherhood according to (Umeh, 1995;3) is the most complex and difficult of Emecheta’s five published novels. The books complexity arises out of the dramatization of the place of motherhood in igbo society. Umeh continues by saying that at the level of realistic narrative, emecheta tends to present a far more well-rounded and multidimensional character, emphasizing the problems that afflict a women because of her blind adherence to tradition. Of particular interest to this author are the problems of polygamy (jealousy among wives and the inequity of some husbands), the problems of the childless wife in a society that honours fertility, the problems of women married to weak men and the problems of widows. In her paper, “Representing the African Woman: Subjectivity and Self in the *Joys of Motherhood*,” Nnoromele (2002;182) re-assesses and redefines the images of the African woman in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Instead of seeing Nnu Ego as the typical African woman,

she asks the question, in what ways are Nnu Ego's experiences and responses to the events in her life representative of conditions of African women? She also asks the question, to what extent do cultural expectations contribute to her plight? And finally, she tries to find out whether there is room for the contemplation of individual responsibility. All these questions, she posits, are meant to show that *The Joys of Motherhood* is not a construction of a universal African motherhood. She makes this analysis by refuting the argument that Nnu Ego is the quintessential African woman (p. 182).

Osaka in her paper "Madness in Black Women's Writing. Reflections from Four Texts: *A Question of Power*, *The Joys of Motherhood*, *Anowa* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*," attempts to define madness in a literary perspective and analyzes the protagonists' failure to cope with life and reality. She says that the selected texts above make it clear that madness is a common problem among African women while also claiming that migrations to new societies are the causes of madness of African women (p. 4). Osaka is of the view that madness is a recurring theme in African and African American women's writing. She mentions Bessie Head, Ama Atta Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta and Alice Walker as among those who deal with the theme of madness in their novels.

Osaka's review is similar to Femi Ojo-Ade's (1979) "Madness in the African Novel" which distinguishes between two kinds of alienated heroes. Her paper focuses on the second type of mad person described by Ojo-Ade, the heroine branded mad or insane by society (p. 5). She identifies Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* as an autobiographical work that deals with Head's mental breakdown and subsequent recovery (p. 7). Osaka asserts that *Anowa* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* both deal with the theme of madness. Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* employs the theme of madness in the way she portrays Nnu Ego as a character who breaks down into madness. Nnu's Ego's first break with reality occurs when she loses her first son Ngozi because she fails to fulfill the expectations of the society. It is Nnu Ego's

determination to fulfill roles of an African woman which drives her mad (p. 10). In “Madness in Black Women’s Writing. Reflections from Four Texts: *A Question of Power*, *The Joys of Motherhood*, *Anowa* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*,” patriarchy and migrations to new societies are the causes of madness for women who otherwise would have been powerful figures in society (p. 17). This is the case for the first three novels *A Question of Power*, *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Anowa*. Osaka’s reading of *The Joys of Motherhood* borders on how Nnu Ego is dominated by Nnaife, and even her first husband Amatokwu because she cannot fulfill her role as a vessel for producing babies. Even when she does, she is turned into a male by the Igbo culture in the novel because she is the first wife of Nnaife.

In “Gendered Hauntings: *The Joys of Motherhood*, Interpretive Acts, and Post-Colonial Theory”, Stephane Robolin examines Emecheta’s novel as a feminist novel. According to Robolin, cultural, sexual, political, economic and religious forces affect the individual, with reference to Emecheta’s protagonist Nnu Ego, in a colonial setting. She suggests that Nnu Ego’s life reveals a narrative of pathos because she encounters many obstacles. Robolin suggests that Nnu Ego is plagued spiritually by her *chi* while she also struggles economically. The first of her plagues is caused by her father, a patriarchal figure within the novel. Nnu Ego’s gendered haunting is as result of her *chi*, the Slave Woman, who is treated badly by one of Agbadi’s sons before she is buried with Agunwa, Agbadi’s senior wife. The Slave Woman is Nnu Ego herself, asserts Robolin. The novel also demonstrates how the deep rooted hierarchy of power within society affects women (p. 84). Nnu Ego’s chances of survival are drowned by a society that is patriarchal as men dominate women.

Umeh (1995), in an article titled. “*The Joys of Motherhood*; Myth or Reality?” says that though the most celebrated female character in African creative writing is the African mother and Anglophone African writers from the sub-Saharan area esteem her as the epitome of love, strength and affection, one witnesses the collapse of this glorifying images of the

African mother in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*. In explaining further, Umeh asserts:

As a literary artist preoccupied with promoting change, author Emecheta and iconoclast, breaks away from the prevalent portrayals in African writing in which motherhood is honorific. Children do not always maintain strong and lovely ties with their mothers throughout adulthood. As Emecheta states in her novel, 'the joy of being a mother is the joy of giving all to your children'.

The title of the book, she says, which is taken from Flora Nwapa's novel, *Efuru*, is then significant and bitter ironic.

Dazzled by ambitious sons educated outside of traditional Igbo value, Nnu Ego breaks down and her old secure world gives way to a new one. Fully conscious of the irony in her life, she says, 'A woman with many children could face a lonely old age and maybe a miserable death all alone, just like a barren woman' (224) Emecheta, here, constructs a wholly different set of economic, socio-political and cultural imperatives which diverge from the existing literary models, and that the *Joys of Motherhood* as a model for other African women writers who wish to portray the actual condition of women and their response to their condition and the actual possibilities of overcoming barriers and achieving individuality, according to Umeh in another essay titled. 'Thematic Exploration of Buchi Emecheta *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Second Class Citizen* by Esther Nwachukwu Chikodili (2011), exposes the numerous forces militating against the rights of African, especially in traditional setup, cultural beliefs and customs which are destructive enough to keep women perpetually at the background. Esther discusses themes such as oppression and rigours of motherhood, polygamy, superstitions, exploitations and hardship to "raise the status of the African woman from just being child bearer to becoming independent happy woman". (23)

In addition, Derickson, T. (2012) in an article titled "Class, Culture, and the

Colonial Context": The Status of women in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* describes the violence against women in the Igbo society as a result of "Culture Collision" between the institutions of traditional society and the institutions of Western Europe. With this she implies that the hardship endured by the women- Nnu Ego and Adaku of Emecheta's novel emanated from a historical movement of political and economic transition, a historical movement in which the values and priorities of British culture clash destructively with the values and priorities of indigenous African in general and the Igbo society in particular.

He also asserts that:

The *Joys of Motherhood* bears out the fact that this transitional period was particularly disadvantageous for African women. As the plight of the novel's real character reveals colonialism was a costly reality for those who were forced to work a fine line between that which was demanded of them by their village community and that which was demanded of them by the rules of a European political regime. (203)

Nnu Ego is forced to adhere to the rules of her indigenous culture even though she realizes that such beliefs and practices were discriminatory to the woman-folk. Nnu Ego in her response to her husband's scolding for engaging in a cooking strike, says.

"Whenever it comes to sacrifice then everybody remains me about being the senior wife, but if there is something to gain. I am told to be quiet because wanting a good thing does not benefit my situation. I can understand the value of being a senior wife in Izuza... it doesn't mean a thing" (134)

Howard (1981:133) reviews *The Joys of Motherhood* and *In the Ditch* from a sociological point of view. She claims that the life of the "ordinary" English woman provided by nineteenth-century novels is a rather distorted way. In her view, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* presents heroines who are "representative of the lives of 'typical' African women". The novel, therefore, presents "a fairly common story of many women's lives in Nigeria" (p. 134). It conveys a sense of the enormous strength and love which so many

ordinary women have, and which is the backbone of their survival and that of their children. This is typical of African women who are sources of protection and care to their children.

According to Howard, *The Joys of Motherhood* reveals the superficiality of the myth to which some Western feminists subscribe that mere economic independence of women will remove them from the authority of their own husbands. The subordination of women, she writes, to men in traditional societies, is clearly maintained by other factors than those that are economic. She concludes that there are enough grounds in the novel to agree with this position. Interestingly, the subordination of women is deep-rooted in African culture that it does not take away the acquisition of wealth to erode it. It is suspected that education of women can make them empowered enough to be independent.

In her article, "Buchi Emecheta and the African Dilemma," O'Brien stresses that *The Joys of Motherhood* offers an interesting approach to dealing with the twinned forces of race and gender oppression. According to O'Brien, Emecheta does not treat multiple oppressions simultaneously; rather, the novel establishes a series of complex temporal and geographical displacements and divisions which ensure that the two discourses are kept separate from each other. O'Brien, on the other hand, reads *The Joys of Motherhood* as a description of the misery of being a black woman in a society which discriminates against African women. The novel, she asserts, deals with the conflict by confining different discourses to different time frames and locations. It addresses colonialist ideologies by valorising pre-contact rural African culture as authentic and ideal despite the fact that it is also sexist and patriarchal.

O'Brien also undertakes an analysis of gender and femininity as represented and constructed quite differently within contexts of traditional African culture and that of a post-contact colonial culture. Her discussion and comparison are confined to the character of Nnu Ego, as the only female character in the novel who is directly represented in both contexts. In

traditional culture, women are defined firstly by the men in their lives: initially by their fathers, then by their husbands, then their sons. They are defined secondly by their sexuality and their maternity. The first hint the reader has that femininity, masculinity and the relationship between men and women are changing, that they are not fixed or static comes from Agbadi, as he contemplates the choice of a second husband for his daughter.

2.5 LITERATURE ON ADICHIE

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is undoubtedly one of the most influential feminists in our time, a true leader to an equal world. The Nigerian born author, scholar and equal rights advocate divides her time between home in Nsukka and in the United States, but her prolific oratorical skills and ideas about gender reveal truths about humanity that transcend the opposing cultures. Adichie's writings cover the three genres of literature drama, prose and poetry. Like many African writers, she shows great commitment to happenings in her society. She represents fictional reality through true type characterisation and graphic use of language. Osofisan describes her thus on the back cover of her novel *Purple Hibiscus*; she beautifully manipulates syntax and trope, as well as controls irony and suspense to achieve great aesthetics and heighten effects. Her ability to manipulate language and apt analysis of her environment calls scholarly attention to her work. As one of the youngest members of this generation and as a writer whose career first began to unfold in the U.S, Adichie has thus far followed a trajectory slightly different from many of her peers, particularly those of whose career have developed primarily in Nigeria. This made Hewett (2005) to opine in an article "Coming of age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the voice of the third Generation" that Adichie's career is still developing, but in her work Adichie is a talented writer who has already gained a measure of success that eludes many writers both in the U.S and Africa. Furthermore, her work to date expands our understanding and characterisations of third

generation Nigerian writing. Adichie focuses her attention on women and what they go through in life, their love for the family, respect for their husbands even when they treat them shabbily, and how some of them were able to say no to discrimination or subjugation by the men folk Udumukwo (2007) in his introduction to his, signature of women affirms:

There is a sharp contrast between the real women in post-colonial Africa. Far from being the source of comfort and rest (the sweet mother as she is perceived in popular imagination), the “good” woman in sub-Saharan Africa happens to be that woman who suffers the effects of oppression, and neglect; and who must maintain a silence and passivity in order to remain good. Silence and passivity are two principal features of the good woman. In the media presentation of images from troubled regions of Africa, for instance, it is this “good” woman who bears the wicked children of war and disaster. Apart from being passive and silent in the face of radical change, she is also the embodiment of culture and tradition.... (Pg 3)

Most African women writers do not want to associate themselves with feminism but there are some that accept it to the extent of calling themselves ‘happy feminist’ in the likes of Chimamanda Adichie and Ama Ata Aidoo in a keynote address in which Adichie gave the opinion that when people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist- especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate independence for the African continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us, this is the crucial element in our feminism. (Adichie, 2007, p.47)

Similarly, Adichie affirms:

An integrated house constructed on a foundation, consisting of a myriad of African feminist thoughts, is expected to weather the raging storms and robustly play out amidst panoply of concepts and dialectics. And the feminist current remains relevant in this female phase as the women struggles with the stress-related thing around their neck that nearly chokes her before she falls asleep. (Adichie, 2006, pp.119, 125)

Adichie in an interview – (a fedxtalks speech) further expresses what her belief of feminism is, and why we should all consider ourselves feminist says,

“Culture does not make people, people make culture so if it is not in fact true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, we must make it our culture. A feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes there is a problem with gender as it is today, and we must fix it. We must do better’.

Indeed, Adichie is preoccupied with the fact that gender discrimination exists in many cultures today, and that it is in the best interest of people to eliminate the social and cultural barriers that prevent men and women from truly being equal.

One of the things that make Adichie’s writings and speech so influential is the way she draws from her personal experiences, and uses a simple accessible approach to broaching complicated topics like gender stereotypes. Her writings have a remarkable broad reach her fictional novels and social commentary prove equally important in contemporary feminist discourse. Her knowledge, honesty and accessible feminism will continue to help create a more equal world.

2.6 LITERATURE ON *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

Purple Hibiscus, Adichie’s first novel has received serious critical attention since its publication in 2003. The book has been critically reviewed in both Newspapers and academic journals and, recently scholarly readings have provided clear insight into some of the narrative’s prominent themes and motifs. For instance, critics have highlighted the connections that Adichie establishes between the violent atmosphere that pervades the home of the novel’s fifteen-year- old narrator, Kambili Achike, and the climate of fear maintained by the ruthless Nigerian military regimes of the late twentieth century, when the events of

Purple Hibiscus unfold (Beilke 2006, Hewett 2004, Okuyade 2005). Similarly, (Mtenje 2016) in his essay entitled “Patriarchy and socialization in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* asserts that Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* is a power narration of Kambili who together with her mother and brother, is a victim of domestic abuse at the hands of Eugene, her religious fundamentalist father . the three of them –Kambili, her mother, Beatrice and Jaja her brother- live in fear of Eugene’s wrath as he controls almost every aspect of their lives. Eugene’s extreme belief on how the family should behave leaves the members of the household with only one option of speaking with their spirits than their lips. (2005:16). Mtieye continued by saying that by this statement above, the narrator means that the members of the family cannot voice out their feelings. Other commentators, writing from a feminist perspective, have examined the alternatives to patriarchal oppression found in the narrative (Bryce 2008:58, Lopez 2008:89-92). Some articles have also focused on the metaphor of food, which is linked with abuse and emancipation in Adichie’s story (Highfield, 2006 —Refusing) or on the symbol of the *Purple Hibiscus* which, appropriately enough, represents the heroine’s and her brother’s blossoming and embodies the sense of serenity that the two adolescents acquire away from the paternal home (Highfield, —Blood; Cooper 124-29).

Ranti (2012) in his review praises the novel for bringing into the world of the traditional Igbo woman and the events that took place during the Nigeria military regime. She affirms that the novel is a complex picture of a man struggling with his demons, taking out struggles on those he loves: his wife, Beatrice, his son, Jaja and Kambili, (his daughter) the protagonist of the novel.

Yemisi, F. (2015) argued that Chimamanda Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* portrays a new and positive image of women that is different from the pictures presented by the society that is modelled along cultural ideals which defines women as marriage-oriented and dependent on

men for their survival and protection. (Selden 1989; Birket and Harvey 1991). Feminist writers like Adichie in their works depicts that some of the cultural values which oppress women are clearly visible in marital institutions. Similarly, Oriaku (1996) observes married life, both in real life and in fiction, is perhaps the most circumscribing factor in the life of an African woman.

In the same vein, Nwanjaku (2004) in her article, 'Representation of the Womanist Discourse in the short Fiction of Akachi Ezeigbo and Chinwe Okechuku', analyses the position of women and cultural factors that subjugate them, Nwanjaku further states that the womanist ideology is that of collaboration and complementarity. In addition, recent works by Nigerian women are not limited to the plight of women only, but have gone into discussing other socio-political and economic issues as it affects women, preferring solution to conflicting situations caused by these issues (pg 60) to a large extent, she tackles the question of power of the African women she identifies womanism as a tool for reading African writing and this is a strand we pursue in this study to find out how Nigerian women partner with men to tackle cultural discrimination and oppression.

In reading *Purple Hibiscus*, Okuyade (2009), *Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as a Character in Purple Hibiscus*, 'maps the growth process of Kambili as she struggles to find her voice within tyrannous temperament of her father's home. African women have explored the aspect of silencing as a constituent of female oppression in literature. According to Uwakweh (1995) silence is: all imposed restrictions on woman's social being, thinking and expressions that are religious or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure'. Implicit from Uwakweh's point of view, silence of the female characters is a trope that cannot be excluded or underrated in trying to understand the African female novel.

Despite their divergent concerns, critics like (Beilke 2006, Okuyade 2009, Hewett 2004) recognize that one of *Purple Hibiscus's* most convincing features lies in its nuanced treatment of the notions of freedom and tyranny. *Purple Hibiscus* is a novel that x-rays the issue of violence both at the domestic and societal levels as a problem bedeviling the Nigerian society. Chimamanda Adichie looks at how violence leads to all sorts of psychological and physiological trauma. Her narrator, Kambili; in *Purple Hibiscus* takes the reader into the world of her family. She describes a world which revolves around her tyrant father Eugene who controls his family with iron fists. His control of the family breaks down all sorts of personal freedom of the individual members of the family. Mrs Beatrice Achike is described as not having any opinion of her own and speaks in little amounts as 'birds eat'. Kambili does not know how to talk in public because she has been brought up not to speak at all unless spoken to. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the socialization of daughters produces passive, submissive and tame characters due to the oppressive and very patriarchal environment they grow up in. To Papa, Kambili should be God fearing and a backyard snob' (p.42) as the girls in her class point out. She simply does things in a weird way; isolating herself from the other students and remaining silent. Okuyade (2009) affirms that silence in *Purple Hibiscus* is magnified to a level whereby it can be heard. Kambili, Jaja and their mother are so oppressed that they speak with their spirits.

At the societal level, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes a military regime that treated its citizenry like second class citizens. People's rights were trampled upon and silence suddenly becomes a virtue. Silence in Eugene's house is a rule but there is a lot of talk, laughter, singing and exchange at Auntie Ifeoma's house. In overlaying the two environments Adichie promotes the way Ifeoma brings up her children, where girls are not discriminated from boys and domestic chores are shared equally regardless of gender.

Dawes (2004) in his review 'Nigeria' observes that Adichie engages with political and ideological issues using metaphor and symbolism. These issues are central to any writing in Africa. *Purple Hibiscus* has a fresh compelling voice that mirrors the theme of patriarchy as in *Things Fall Apart*. Dawes article uses *Purple Hibiscus* and *Things Fall Apart* to illustrate to the brutalities and violence that have marked Africa Family and society as a result of patriarchy.

Similarly, (Hewett, 2004) submits that *Purple Hibiscus* is the coming of age of the trauma that leads to a chaos in the family as she reviews the new generation of Nigerian writers who are rejecting the long silence imposed by dictatorial regimes. This according to her is because a father seeks to subject and dominate his family to so much violence sends the family into a period of trauma in which he dies, and the family find a way to patch the wounds that will not heal because the father to dominate according to his own desires. Corroborating Dawes' argument that *Purple Hibiscus* resembles *Things fall Apart* in the manner in which Adichie begins her monumental novel saying, she estimates that the parallels between the two books can be viewed from the angle in which Adichie breaks down the family unit into pressures of religion and politics under a domineering father *Things fall apart*, she argues, is set in a time when Christianity has come to Igbo land while *Purple Hibiscus* begins when Christians has gain ground in the midst of Nigerian independence.

Khan, (2009) on the other hand, in his analysis of *Purple Hibiscus* titled, "No Hope in Nigeria" is quite different from Dawes and Hewett as he argues that the coup in *PurpleHibiscus* which results in the change of environment for Kambili and her brother Jaja as they stay with their Aunt Ifeoma brings a wealth of experience. Through this Kambili 'finds herself and so does Jaja. They both experience a home where meaningful debate and discussion are encouraged. "No hope in Nigeria gives an insight into the political unrest and corruption as tools crippling country like Nigeria" the novel for Khan depicts a plea for

religious tolerance. In conclusion, Khan's article recommends that *Purple Hibiscus* should be read more widely in the wealthy first class world, so that issues of poverty and migration can be understood in a different light. In Brenda Cooper's "Resurgent Spirit, Catholic Echoes of Igbo and Petals of Purple:the Syncretised World of Chiamamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*", she examines Adichie's holistic vision in her novel, a vision which integrates Igbo customs and language with Catholic ritual. She incorporates men into her gender politics and embraces the literary traditions of her elders - Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Alice Walker. In her opinion, Adichie attempts to represent the syncretised world through the material culture and everyday realities of life in modern Nigeria. In doing that, solid objects such as tables, chairs, grains of rice and ceramic ornaments are syncretised. They create a world where the boundaries between the living and the dead, the animate and the inanimate, the big and the small, the literal and the symbolic worlds and things are breached. She argues that what "we witness in the novel is the attempt to re-fetishise objects linked to precolonial rituals, but syncretised with the church and with European culture and integrated into a global modernity" (5). She posits that as Adichie juggles the pieces that make up the kaleidoscope of her vision, the pieces sometimes slip away from her reach. According to her, Adichie contradicts herself in the presentation of Eugene Achike as a man who brutalizes his family at home; yet, a champion of democracy who wins an international award. She believes that this contradiction may be as a result of Adichie's 'womanism' as opposed to feminism, and the influence of Alice Walker. As she posits, 'womanism' is "committed to survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female" (Walker xi).

Literary critics like Ogwude (2010), Ouma(2011) and Cornelliussen (2012) among others, have concentrated on the issues of religious ideology, gender conflict, use of symbolic figures and images, influence of colonialism on African women's fight for emancipation, racism, sexual oppression, religious fanaticism and cultural alienation in post- Colonial Africa in

Adichie's novels but there is an absence of works interrogating culture and gender discrimination against women as a central theme.

One can therefore see that none of these studies available on Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* deals with culture and gender discrimination against women in the novel, which this study seeks to unravel not only the forms of discrimination against women, but also its causes and consequences on the discriminated characters and groups in their fictive environments.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter dwells more on the review of some relevant literature of the study. From the readings of African literature by women, critics have left some questions unanswered which are central to the current study. To demonstrate whether the selected texts for this study by the thematic preoccupation and character delineation show tradition and culture as strong factors in gender discrimination and to determine if the two writers use their novels to blame and condemn cultural beliefs and practices that promote discrimination against women in Nigerian society. Answers to these questions lie in gender integration and complementation proposed by the proponents of Africa womanist theory discussed in this work.

It is clear also from the above literature reviews that most of the critics of Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* like Beilke(2004) Nwanjakwu (2004), Derksion (2012) among others and the critics of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* like Robin (1998), Onukaagu and Onyeionwn (2010), Okuyade (2005), Hewett (2004) Howard (1981) among others dwell more on patriarchy, feminism and violence against women not really focusing on their pain through discrimination. Regarding all this issues and commentaries it is clear that Emecheta's and Adichie's novels *Joys of motherhood* and *Purple Hibiscus* respectively can be analyzed from various perspectives, but this study focuses on culture and gender discrimination against

women in the novels under study which other critics have not talked about clearly in their works. It is this gap that this work tries to fill.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURES OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses one of the two novels under study. We examine themes of discrimination in *The Joys of Motherhood* and further investigate how female characters grapple with their subjugation and the oppression stemming from gender discrimination in the society they live in. We also survey the basic womanist aim in the universe of the novelist and the oppressive cultural structures which push women to the margins as well as how women navigate back to the centre.

3.2 DISCRIMINATION IN *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*

Buchi Emecheta's novel reflects the status of African women, trapped by the African traditions. *The Joy of motherhood* search deeply into the socio cultural and economic problems facing the Nigerian women in urban setting. The traditional African woman is the one that is submissive and compromising to what the traditional African society, customs, beliefs, norms and religion prescribed for her. Nnu Ego is the heroine protagonist of the novel. She is the only child of her parents and in fact the apple of the father's eyes. This novel is a story of Nnu Ego, Young, beautiful, illiterate and the industrious daughter of the great hunter, Agbadi who "rule his family as if he were god" (13), she has fair skin like the women from *Aboh* and *Itsekiri* areas.

It must be argued that the cultural discrimination of the traditional African woman is presented to us through the novelist characterization of Nnu Ego. She is given to Amotokwu,

her first husband and her first victimizer, who on discovering her barrenness, tells her she has to make way for another wife.

"I am a very busy man and I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile, and I have to raise children for my line." (26)

Nnu Ego's barrenness in her marriage to Amatokwu is a serious traditional disaster which led her to humiliation, rebuke and embarrassment. Nnu Ego's failure to bear children is a failure in fulfilling her function to pay back her cultural bride price to her husband.

And he gets himself a second wife and thrust Nnu Ego aside. She is reduced to a house maid and farm labourer in the house of her first husband because of her inability to give birth to a child. "If you can't produce sons at least you can help harvest yams". She is relegated to the background with the task of taking care of the home while her co-wife is showered with special treatment because she has a child. She appears a pitiable character who is abused and debased by the Ibuza traditions and patriarchal laws, which reduce the woman to a mere chattel in the hands of her husband. Her marriage breaks because she happens to be a helpless victim of a fate, which neither she nor anybody else could be held responsible except for the culture that terms her as the cause. Amatokwu also shows preference to his second wife when he gives birth to a male child. He even calls her into his hut before weaning her baby, which is a deviation from the polygamous setting, allowed by his custom and tradition. It is evidently clear that Nne Ego is unfairly treated by Amatokwu for his most terrible lack of considerations for female feelings in their marriage institution as a result of his cultural belief. Ogunyemi described Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* as a novel that "exposed the injustice of traditional male oriented African social customs that relegate women to a life of child bearing, servitude and victimization"

The story is not only that of Nnu Ego but by extension that of the problems all women encounter culturally when they experience delays in giving birth to children: the real joys of motherhood. When this happens, the African traditional man is quick to involve himself in the practice of polygamy in his bid to procreate and prove to the world that he is a man. This is where the problems of women begin. The problem of having to hold one's own when the sustaining interest of the husband is divided not only among his wives, both those he personally married properly and those he inherited, but also among his relatives and friends.

She is more or less bought by her first husband Amatokwu by virtue of the fact that he pays her bride price. As she is thrown in to this marriage by her father Agbadi, her ability to bear children becomes the social control mechanism upon her life. Her failure to bear children means that she is also called a 'failed woman'. Her culture dims a woman successful by her child-bearing exploits. Unfortunately, Nnu Ego's failure to bear children pushes her to the traditional system that imposes child bearing that determines womanhood. In fulfilling the dictates of this system, Amatokwu goes for a second wife to bear children for him: thereby Nnu Ego loses her status to a second wife because she cannot bear children. In her desperation to have children, she incurs the wrath of her husband.

When she thought no one was looking, she took the boy and went into her own inner room, forgetting to lock her door. She began to appeal to the boy to either be her child or send her some of his friends from the other world. Not knowing she was being watched, she put the child to her breasts. The next thing she felt was a double blow from behind. She almost died of shock to see her husband there (33-34).

Nnu Ego's desperation to have children of her own defines her life as a woman as she descends so low to beg the infant child who does not know what she is saying to be her child

or give her one of his friends as her child plight is not accidental but an answer to her mother's wish and the reality of a woman's life within Igbo society.

Enraged by Amatokwu's unfair treatment of her daughter, Agbadi runs to the aid of his daughter. He presides over her life and discusses with his friend Idayi, his next move concerning a second attempt at marriage by Nnu Ego. Nnu Ego, through this system of her father deciding who she would marry, and when, becomes a pawn in the hands of these men. Her father rejects suitors ...until he makes a shrewd but wise decision to send her from Ibuza to Lagos, to a man called Nnaife, the perception of women as vessels of production within the novel is rife. The problem with this perception is that even the women in the novel believe their lives are lived to produce children.

Thus Nnu Ego second marriage to the Ovulum family, in far away Lagos to Nnaife, her second husband and second victimizer, who is a servant to a white couple is primarily to fulfil the role of being a mother. Even though she finds Nnaife an unattractive man, who washes women's underwear, but she vows to respect him if he can give her children. She does not care so far as this new husband is able to give her children. The realization of that desire becomes apparent when she finds out she is pregnant and later she grows to love Nnaife as she gives birth to her first son Ngozi, a proof that she is not a barren woman, considering the social stigma attached to it. The joys of her motherhood come to an abrupt end when her first child dies. Regarding herself as a failed woman, Nnu Ego seeks to end her life. Emecheta appropriately titles this part of the novel "*A Failed Woman*" because in the eyes of the traditional society, Nnu Ego is a failed woman because she does not have children.

This belief of a failed woman sits deep within Nigerian society especially as the gathering of the crowd who gaze with shock and amusement at Nnu Ego's attempted suicide may come from different tribes. Even if not, the presence of people from the Igbo and Yoruba societies

at the scene supports the notion of a failed woman, a woman who cannot or does not have children. This is because "they all agreed that a woman without children for her husband was a failed woman" (65) Having pushed such notions of womanhood down the throat of women that same society would not allow Nnu Ego to commit suicide as Emecheta insists through authorial intrusion, that a thing like suicide is not permitted in Nigeria because the spirit of communalism presides over individual goals. This also portrays the novelist as a womanist. Clearly, Emecheta gives the momentum of control and dominance to males when Nwakusor becomes the rescuer of Nnu Ego. However, he does not just rescue Nnu Ego but reminds her of allegiance to her father, her people and her sons and these are all part of the system of patriarchy. In Nwakusor's eyes, Nnu Ego has shamed her womanhood because she refuses to live to the benefit of a male dominated society.

In line with this social stigma attached to barrenness, Emecheta creates the platform for her protagonist to have another chance at fulfilling the culture's definition of who a woman is. The arduous task of fulfilling such cultural dictate is highlighted by the fact that a woman must not just produce children but specifically, male children. In the Igbo culture, as projected in *The Joys of Motherhood*, sons secure immortality for men while daughters help in immortalizing men (185). And so Nnu Ego is met with grace and approval by her husband when she gives birth to male children. On the other hand, Nnaife does not show any interest whatsoever when his wife gives birth to female children. For women like Nnu Ego, the real woman and mother is the one who can produce male offspring. By extension, what this means is that male children help to perpetuate selfish patriarchal actions and ideologies as is the case with Nnu Ego's eldest sons, Oshia and Adimabua, with the name of the second son meaning "Now I am two" emphasizing Nnaife's importance as a man. The birth of his sons is therefore met with merry making and enjoyment. While the birth of his daughters does

bring regret, pain and disappointment not only to Nnaife but Nnu Ego also participates in such disapproval towards the birth of her girls.

Nnu Ego giving birth to several children of both sexes does not make Nnaife's behaviour toward her different, he takes on another wife to Nnu Ego's chagrin such arrangement whereby Nnaife inherits all his brother's wives on the later's death seems to be an economic panacea, which can lead to economic disaster. Nnaife, who is unable to see to his immediate family's feeding, adds to his burden by claiming the wives of his immediate brother upon his death. This situation inflicts misery and deprivation to Nnu Ego who has children to feed without any viable trade.

The novelist points obviously that this traditional arrangement leads to chauvinism and irresponsibility, in the urban areas. This is shown where Nnaife decides to take claim of his brother's wives and even take on a sixteen year old girl regardless of the economic and social consequences. Nnaife does not contribute a single penny for his children's education or upbringing; however, he has the audacity to blame Nnu Ego for their misbehaviors. Nnu Ego remains passive and submissive. As a typical traditional African woman she is obedient, devoted and remains with her husband and children. To expose some of the ugly and painful treatment the traditional African woman is made to undergo through cultural discrimination, on the occasion when Nnu Ego registers her complaint against the system, for instance, she pleads with her first husband. "Is it my fault that I don't have a child for you? Do you think I do not suffer too?" And also to her second husband; "I was a prisoner, imprisoned by love to my children and my role as a senior wife" (156)

Nnu Ego's agreement in the position on which culture places the female children is obvious when she gives birth to her first set of twins. Her reaction surprises her co-wife Adaku: "Your first set of girls, senior wife.'Adaku said by way of congratulation" (140). Nnu Ego replies:

"Hm, I know but I doubt if our husband will like them very much. One can hardly afford to have one girl in a town like this, to say nothing of two" (141). Within a womanist framework, Nnu Ego must be happy she has female children to balance the male children she has, but the difference is the case for Nnu Ego, there is nothing victorious about having female children. Her reason is that she cannot afford to bring up female children when the culture demands from her male children. Nnaife, who is a symbol of that culture which looks down upon female children, is not amused by such an uncalled for gesture of two girls at a go.

In the ensuing discussions between Adaku and Nnu Ego, the former chastises the later for being more traditional than the Ibuza people who live far away from Lagos. What Adaku means by this is far more than the word "traditional" Adaku's statement reflects Nnu Ego's willingness to act in conformity with patriarchal authority by rejecting her own female children. She is pre-occupied with pleasing her husband and rather, functionaries within male dominated society. As expected, Nnaife is not pleased with the arrival of the twins. He rebukes Nnu Ego: 'Nnu Ego, what are these? Could you not have done better? Where will we all sleep, eh? What will they eat? He did not even suggest their names.' Nnu Ego moaned (141).

Nnaife's questions render the girls as ordinary things that have no use. His questions are; a chastisement of his senior wife for not fulfilling the standard of producing male children, also demarcate the favours that go for male children as he suggests that male children will always have a place to sleep and food to eat in his house but not female children. Most importantly, Nnaife's refusal to name the twins is a statement of purpose to women to show that female children are not accepted and recognized by the society. In her determination to drive home her point of compliance with discriminatory order, Emecheta's only out spoken female within the novel. Adaku gives birth to a son but loses him. One would expect that Adaku, by branding Nnu Ego as traditional, will not be hit hard by the loss of her son. But, "The death

of the baby sent Adaku into deep depression. She became almost impossible to live with. She blamed everybody and everything for her loss (142). She also cries out: "... Oh God, why did you not take one of the girls and leave me with my male child? My only man child." (142). Her breakdown is a sign to show that Emecheta toes the line of non-confrontation with patriarchal order. Adaku would even gladly have her female child killed in exchange for having just one male child. Emecheta therefore drives home her point. No female, no matter how outspoken she is, can challenge and change the patriarchal system. And so, all women must participate in conforming to the male discriminatory system visible in this case through the preference for male children. Female children are not valued in African society as much as the male. Boys are given preference in society for both cultural and economic reasons. While a boy grows into a man to raise a family of his own and uphold the family name, a woman marries into another family to raise wealth in the form of children and labour for a family other than the one that brought her up. Little considerations for the personal benefit of the girl seems to be taken into account.

The value and importance Adaku places on a male child is evident in the cultural usefulness attached to female children. Within Adaku's culture, the bride price of females is used to further the progress of male children. That seems to be the only consolation for Nnaife as he refuses to accept the arrival of his girls. Adaku said: "In twelve years' time, when their bride prices start rolling in, you'll begin to sing another tune. 'Adaku put in, smiling broadly as if she did not mean to hurt anyone' (141). As a result of such cultural position of the girl child as an item of exchange for a bride price between two families, she also loses some privileges including formal education because her upbringing is geared towards training her to become an obedient wife within the culture. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, most of the female children do not receive any formal education except the basic. These include Taiwo, Kehinde, Obiageli, and Malachi except for Adaku's girls who are privileged because their mother

decides to break the norm and send her girls to school. Not only will Nnu Ego not give equal educational opportunity to her girls but makes it difficult for them by always reminding them of who they are. Nnu Ego insists that the boys, 'They have got to go for their lesson, Taiwo; and stop moaning. You are a girl'(195). Taiwo's response is: "I know that Mother, You remind us all the time" (196).

Emecheta repeats this same ideology sustaining male education and privilege through female hard work within the space of two pages (197) Emecheta is being her womanist self as she paints the situation as it is without trying to make it look any better. However, to keep on repeating the idea that girls do domestic chores and hawk items on the streets while boys go to school and come back home without doing anything attests to the fact that she is inclined to side with male dominance which derails the progress of the girl child. It also shows that she supports the idea of girls putting the boys into good positions in life believing that the boys will help the girls later on in life. This belief by Nnu Ego leaves her disillusioned when she realizes that her two sons are nothing but selfish boys who think about themselves and their well-being. Even to the extent of their mother who pays so much sacrifice to build their future.

For the purpose of bride price within the traditional society, Nnaife puts his hopes on receiving the bride price of his first set of twins, Taiwo and Kehinde. He is however undone by this expectation when he finds out that Kehinde has chosen to marry a man of her choice. Nnaife is surprised because the implications of Kehinde's choice dent his hopes of landing a big bride price for his daughter. The implications are that Kehinde's choice of husband to Yoruba man and the Yorubas do not pay huge bride prices but the fact that the Yorubas call the Igbos cannibals. As a result of this intention, Nnaife takes the law into his own hands and ends up in jail. The place of the senior wife is something to be revered within the Igbo culture. Nnu Ego, unlike her co-wife Adaku, is not allowed to think like a woman, talk like a

woman or behave like one. This restriction on her being is not self-imposed but cultural. That Nnaife stayed away from home after a misunderstanding troubles her. It is worsened by Adaku's fear that their husband is dead. As the senior wife of Nnaife, she is not supposed to entertain such fears. She quickly rebukes Adaku's fears:

Shh ... don't talk that way. He is not dead. You mustn't say things like that. Buther voice was far from convincing: she too was close to tears. She was frightened as well but her culture did not permit her to give in to her fears. She was supposed to be strong, as men were not permitted to open grief: she had to learn to hide hers as well' (156). She is expected by culture to play the role of a man.

Nnu Ego does not only have knowledge of her traditional position as a senior wife, but also reminded to fulfil her role. According to Adankwo, the position of senior wife has been bestowed on her by her *chi*. Not only does Nnu Ego have knowledge of her real status as a senior wife. Adankwo does not stop there. She reiterates what she means "You are the senior wife of your husband, you are like a male friend to him ... " (177). The wife, culturally, is a male friend to her husband. She has been masculinized by the society, either she rejects it or accepts it. Nnu Ego as submissive and conforming as she is accepts and runs back to Lagos to tend her husband's home and supervise his younger wife because she is not complete without her husband, another defining ideology of Igbo culture. Emecheta as a womanist is hereby propagating her dream of harmony through complementation of each other in the family.

The culture of senior wife is created by men in order to path for them as senior wives will do anything to have that position. As part of her authorial intrusion, Emecheta's observes the unfair treatment her co-wife receives at the hands of Nnaife's friends, the truth is Nnu Ego knows that she is in the wrong for treating Adaku's visitor with disrespect because the norms of courtesy within Igbo society, forbid a visitor to be treated in such a manner. The problem created here is that this social norm exists within the con lines of patriarchal authority and so, the men can uphold it or render it useless. The narrator observes:

‘... The men had been unfair in their judgment. She, Nnu Ego, had been 'Wrong all the way, but of course they (the men) had made it seem that she was innocent just because she was the mother of sons. Men were so clever. By admonishing her and advising her to live up to her status as senior wife. They made it sound an enviable position, worth any woman's while to fight for ...’ (187).

The sense of judgment of the two men tells Adaku that once she is a senior wife and has male children, she will be defended even if she is wrong. She, however, knows that she does not have any of these requirements of defence by male cultural discriminatory society. Even though Nnu Ego struggles in a discriminatory society, she benefits from it when she has a quarrel with her co-wife. The doubly traditional notions of production of male children as a woman's essence and the masculinization of the senior wife come to her aid as Naife’s friends use these to put Adaku in her rightful place within Igbo culture.

3.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF BUCHI EMECHIETA'S *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*.

Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* deals with the portrayal of the African woman focusing more in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The use of main characters in her novels show what it means to be a woman and a mother in Nigeriansociety. Her major concern in her works is the plight of the rural and urban women whose efforts to satisfy the man arc trivialized. The oppression and rigours of motherhood of the female folk is clearly portrayed as Buchi Emecheta shows how sexuality and the ability to bear children can sometimes be the only way by which to define femininity. Other sub-themes of the *Joys of Motherhood* include marriage, joy, betrayal, polygamy, superstition, exploitation, hardship, discrimination, frustration, childless marriage. The author attempts to raise the status of the African women from just being baby producing machine/factory and housewife, but as an independent happy woman. *The Joys of Motherhood* is set in a time of great political and economic change in Nigeria. It is in this novel that Emecheta’s main character defines validity of her womanhood

solely by the success of her children. The chapters titles, "the mother", "the mother's mother", "the mother's early life", "first shock of motherhood", follows the highs and lows of the heroine, Nnu Ego's destiny. The novel focuses on Nnu Ego's whole destiny which is centred on her as a mother. Buchi Emecheta also shows movement of women from traditional African world to a very different westernized world. For the purpose of this study, the themes of this work is viewed from the broad spectrum of exploitation, discrimination, frustration, superstition (Reincarnation) hardships, polygamy, parental choice of marriage.

One of the major thematic issues raised in the novel includes exploitation of the woman under the Igbo traditional society. This is seen in the dehumanization of women in a male-dominated society. In the first place, Ona, the daughter of Obi Umunna is used as an animal of sacrifice by her father to bring back the honour her father Obi Umunna has suffered as a result of his inability to have a male child to continue his lineage. The young woman is therefore denied the honour of being a married woman because her father desires to get a son through her. No wonder Ona at her death bed urges Agbadi to ensure that Nnu Ego married a man of her choice. Agbadi does not stick to his promise to Ona, he still sticks to the tradition of finding a husband for Nnu Ego. Even after her failure to get children for Amatokwu. Agbadi goes ahead to choose another man for her, a man she has not set her eyes on. This nearly breaks down her second marriage but for the fact that she desperately needs a child. Nnaife loses his job and abdicates his responsibility to the family in the hand of his wife who ultimately sacrifices her life for this responsibility. Nnaife abandons the upkeep of the children to his wife and goes about drinking wine. Even when he returns from fernandopo, instead of concentrating on the upbringing of the children, he continues to multiply the number of his women and consequently he gets more children. Adaku stays in the system but soon gets dissatisfied with it and absconds. Nnu Ego, for the sake of tradition submits herself for the exploitation, of her body and soul, receives blames of her husband for their ill-

behaviour, denies communication by her sons, condemns by the Ibo society and dies without any male associate nor does she enjoy any serious association with her female folk except the casual acquaintance with Cordelia, Mama Abber and Iyawa Itsekiri. Another example is the use of the black man's cheap labour for the luxury of the white man. Dr. Meers is exploitative: it is equally exploitative to use force to recruit the African labourers into the British Army and send them to far away India with just a large amount of money.

Another interesting thematic exploit in *The Joys of Motherhood* is the preference of male child to female child. Traditionally, most parents prefer boys to girls. Thus, right from birth women are viewed and treated as inferior or second class citizens. The moment a girl child is born in some culture, she starts to encounter discrimination. People who come to felicitate often greet the birth of a girl child with less glee than that of a boy. Some people even respond to questions on the sex of a new baby girl by saying it is another-‘sewo’, that is prostitute, especially if the mother had given birth to many female children in the past.

So the society cherishes and welcomes the arrival of male children and practices preferential treatment in favour of the boys. A woman who continues to have female children is denied her role as a woman in the family. The consequence is that the husband must marry another wife so as to ensure that his lineage does not go into extinction. We witness this in the Amatokwu’s family when Nnu Ego becomes relegated as a mere house maid. She takes care of the son of the second wife while the new wife goes to sleep with her husband. Adaku remains unhappy throughout her days with Nnaife because she has two daughters. Above that she receives series of insult from male folks for not bearing sons for Nnaife (166). Having only girls breaks Adaku eventually. This is partly why she becomes the wife gone astray. As she cannot produce a son to her husband and is belittled because of it, she makes a drastic decision to leave the cramped and hostile home (127).

Nnaife abandons and neglects all the female children of both Nnu Ego and Adaku, he does not even give them names as he does to the boys. This accounts for the reason why the first twins names are Yoruba names given them by their mother. Ironically enough, he desires to have the bride price as their father. They send the boys to study in better schools. Adaku realizes this on time and sends her daughters to good school. Nnu Ego realizes this very late and cannot remedy the situation. She laments that "my only regret is that I did not have enough money to let the girls stay at school" (213-214).

It is equally important to discuss the theme of hardship as portrayed by Emecheta in the understudy novel. Historically speaking, woman's position in traditional African life was seen more flexible than men's'. Amadiume (1997) emphasizes that the rotating periodic markets, shared ceremonies, marriage, organization and trade, not to forget other cultural activities, which men did not have access to (130). Similarly, what is present in *The Joys of Motherhood* is a shift from traditional secured communal way of living to an urban setting, which has had its negative impact on the social network. Having said that, we need to bear in mind that the protagonist. Nnu Ego has her share of hardship. This includes poverty, which deters her from participating in social events like the mass on Sundays and tribal women meetings because she literally does not have the proper outfit. Nnu Ego's hardship begins from the time Nnaife loses his job. He lacks foresight to look for another job when Ubani and others have been searching for alternative Jobs. Thus the family's responsibility falls on Nnu Ego. She begins to wander from Yaba to Marina in Lagos to look for sailors where she can buy cartons of cigarette at a cheaper price. Nnaife goes to Fernandopo, she falls into hardship catering for her pregnancy and the little boy Oshia. She suffers malnutrition and subsequently kwashiorkor. Nnaife's forced recruitment into the military spell serious doom on Nnu Ego who suffers loneliness and deprivation in the upbringing of her children. The decision of

offering family men the casual job of cutting grass without making them permanent staff and with a meagre income of five pounds a month is a measure of hardship.

In addition, a thorough analysis of the novel, *The Joys of Motherhood* may not be adequate without taking into account the level of frustration, the protagonist of the novel, Nnu Ego and some other characters went through. Thus the theme of frustration is another thrust of Buchi's *The Joys of Motherhood*. Matrimonial duties can form a solid reason for contempt or jealousy in a polygamous marriage among the wives, when a husband favours one wife over the other. Even in the lowest marriage Nnu Ego has with her jelly of a husband Nnaife, she cannot help her intense emotions of frustrations and agony suffered. When Nnaife had his second wife, he exercised his marital rite in their one room apartment also the very first night Adaku arrives. This caused great annoyance to Nnu Ego, which was by all means lessened by her husband's remark (124) as follows:

“My senior wife cannot go to sleep. You must learn to accept your pleasures quietly, my new wife Adaku, your senior wife is like a white lady: she does not want noise”. (53) Sexual pleasures are rarely stated in *The Joys Of Motherhood*, Nnu Egos case it is close to extinct. Her mother, Ona, superceded Adaku in her exhibit of sexual pleasure. Ona's lover, Agbadi, made love to her in the same compound when his wife tried to sleep. The following morning, his senior wife was very ill. She has had a seizure whilst listening to her husband whilst giving pleasures to his mistress Ona. The senior wife was so shattered that the seizure was fatal (21 - 22)

This is also seen in the effort Nnu Ego makes to bring up her children to please her husband. The father of these children receives praises when they are brought up properly while the mother is blamed for their wrong doing. Again the sons decision to stay away in the white men's country without any effort to remember their mother the sufferer even in writing for,

she does not need their money, frustrates Nnu Ego and consequently leads to her untimely death..

The theme of parental choice of marriage partner for their children cannot be left out in this analysis. It is the fathers who choose husbands for their daughters; Agbadi chose Amatokwu for Nnu Ego when that marriage failed, he chose Nnaife. The marriage is by proxy: Nnu Ego had never seen the man, but a good daughter would not reject the man chosen by her father like a good daughter Nnu Ego acquiescence to domesticity and wifehood to please her father, living with a man she loathes. When Nnaife tries to exercise the same right over Kehinde, he reasons with her:

You don't have to like your husband you don't even have to know him in advance you just marry him. You are lucky you know what job he is in. Things have changed before you might not have known him at all (204).

It is also significant to discuss the theme of polygamy; the institution of polygamy is something that affects greatly a woman's position as wife. Polygamy remains a common practice in many parts of Africa but it is usually welcomed by some women as well. Many Igbos still practice polygamy even today and it has tacit support from the society, since it is still a lawful form of marriage. If a husband gets a new wife, it usually means a relief from constant house work and ones matrimonial duties as in the case of Nne Ego and Nnaife's other wives. A man's status and wealth is greater with the more wives he has as culturally believed. This is probably why Nnaife was so excited to have a new wife. (120). 'Beaming like a child presented with a new toy, he showed Adaku as his new wife, round the yard'. Children are regarded as great wealth, therefore it is important to have several wives who produce more children (Gordon 1996;253).A woman may be free to have lovers but does not gain the social benefit of friendship from her co-wives and other women

Emecheta attacks polygamy as a cultural practice. Agbadi shows insensitivity, to the plight of his wives, who had anxiously watched him during his dangerous illness by dallying with his mistress immediately he showed sign of recovery. It is this irresponsibility that leads to the death of his first wife, Agunwa, Amataokwu is more callous than Agbadi. When he discovers Nnu Ego's barrenness, he tells her brutally to make way for a new wife and demeans her to the level of an unpaid laborer. When the new wife gives birth to a son, he prefers her to Nnu Ego and denies the latter of her conjugal rights. Even the undignified Nnaife inherits his brother's widow and brings her to share the one room accommodation where he is with his wife and many children. When Adaku found the condition unbearable and left, he salvages his masculine ego by inheriting Adankwo and marrying Okpo a sixteen year-old girl even though he does not have the means to cater for such a large family. It appears that society condones any misbehaviour by the male, but when children misbehave, it is their mother's fault. The culture of Ibo encourages men to marry more than one wife: this is as seen in the characters of Agbadi and Amotokwu.

Wife battering is one of the ways in which wives are maltreated by their husbands. Men beat women because; women are not respected and they are seen to be weaker than men. Emecheta portrays Nnu Ego first marriage as unsuccessful because of her inability to produce children. Amotokwu, Nnu Ego's first husband, shows his irresponsibility by beating his wife Nnu Ego. Nnaife confirms this: "pity your ordeal: Amotokwu almost beat you to death because you did not bear him a son". Amotokwu beats his wife, Nnu Ego so mercilessly that, "Nnu Ego's father Agbadi goes to take his daughter. Agbadi asserts: Amotokwu, I don't blame you for beating her so badly..."(35). Emecheta portrays men who beat their wives as irresponsible men. Agbadi says: I don't think much of people who ill-treat a woman, because she has not yet borne a child" (39) Amotokwu refuses to care for Nnu Ego who needs much

care because of her childlessness. Amatokwu drives his wife away for her childlessness and he says: "let her go... she is as barren as a desert" (39)

Dereliction of duties is another theme worth analyzing at this point. Emecheta portrays Nnaife as one who abandons his duties to his wife, Nnu Ego, Nnaife leaves his family to suffer and goes to join the army, making money, which he uses in marrying more wives, when Nnaife tells his wife that he wants his son. Adim to go to a cheaper school; she reports: "Cheaper? Nnu Ego's voice still raised, she asks: Is that because you have spent all your army money. The money you were busy making while the children and I were busy suffering? Oh Nnaife, you are a fool" (185). Nnu Ego struggles to feed the children and send them to school. Nnu Ego chooses her children above anything in the world. Nnaife maltreats Nnu Ego by blaming her for, her children's misbehaviour Nnaife says to himself: ...Her children. None of them had so far showed any loyalty to him, their father. God, what was he to do now? Send this woman away. Tell her never to come near him again? "Damn you and your food, Nnu Ego he repeated aloud (205),

When it comes to Nnaife taking up his duties as the father of the house, he refers his children to his wife. Nnu Ego. When the children do good they are his, and when they do bad they are their mother's. Nnu Ego declares: "When the children were good they belonged to the father when they were bad, they belonged to mother. Every woman knew this. But for Nnaife to keep hurling it in her face on the slightest provocation was very unfair" (206), Emecheta agrees that the love Nnaife has for Nnu Ego is turned into hate and so he doesn't want to see her, he says: "he opened his heavy eyes slowly, frowned at seeing Nnu Ego". Even in his sleep he hates men, thought, brittle-eyed as she watched that frown from her come and went" (208)

Additionally, the theme of the influence of the gods over the living is addressed by Buchi Emecheta in her novel under study. Almost everything seems to be explicable by spirit in the Igbo culture. 'Chi' the personal god is prayed to for a range of desires from fertility to success in work. The protagonist of the novel Nnu Ego often refers to her chi and clearly prays to her personal god as if the *chi* is omnipresent "oh my *chi*'. May his chi help him (212). If a woman or man has a great number of children, it also enhances her or his chances of becoming all ancestors. The ancestors are thanked and prayed for, as the dead are always a part of the lives of the living. This brings more importance to the patriarchal reproductive function of the female. It is due to the woman that men become ancestors. Therefore it is important to have children, to be blessed by one's chi.

The society believes in the existence of spiritual forces that occupy a superlative role over the living. In the novel, at the death of Agunwa Agbadi's senior wife, her slave girl was murdered to accompany her to the spirit world. Before her murder, the girl pleaded to inform Agbadi that she was coming back. At her early stage in life, Nnu Ego becomes sick and the diviner (dibia) divines that 'this child is the slave woman who died with your senior wife Agunwa'. She promised to come back as a daughter ... that is why this child has the fair skin of the water people and the painful lump on her head is the beating your men gave her before she fell into the grave ... my advice is that you go and appease the slave women (27). After her marriage, Nnu Ego finds it difficult to get conceived. She approaches diviners (dibia) who unanimously assert, that the slave woman who was her chi would not give her a child because she had been dedicated to a river goddess before Agbadi took her away in slavery. When at home Nnu Ego would take an egg as a symbol of fertility and kneel and pray to this woman to change her mind...

Please pity me I feel that my husband's people are already looking for new wife for him. They cannot wait for me forever. He is the only son

of the family and his people want an heir from him as soon as possible please help me (31-32).

These gods are so absolute in their influence that the livings are in a helpless condition to accept their dictates. Most often they refuse pleads as in this case. However at a later stage in the book, the goddess chi listens and offers her an opportunity to have as many children as she wants. Then in her doze she saw the woman slave, her chi on the other side of the stream. ‘Saying Yes, take the dirty chubby babies you can have them as many of these as you want’ (77). The above promise did not come until she has suffered untold hardships from the cruel hand of her "chi" woman slave. She makes her a failed woman when the chi takes away her only son Ngozi (dead). In consequence, Nnu Ego resolves to meet her in the sea, using Carter Bridge as an avenue. Fortunately for Nnu Ego, good Samaritans and Nwakusor rescue her.

Superstition (Reincarnation) is another theme in *The Joys of Motherhood*. This theme emphasizes the role of certain supernatural forces over the living. The writer makes us to believe that the society operates under the influence of a certain supernatural force known as chi for instance when Nwokocha Agbadi becomes injured as a result of his encounter with the elephant, sacrifices are made to appease his chi to ward off spirit of death. Again while playing with his princess Ona, his senior wife Agunwa becomes jealous and dies as a result. At her burial, a female slave pleads for her life to be spared but her son becomes hard on the girl and eventually tortures her to death. Before she gives up, she promised to return to Agbadi's family, the family believes that she acquires enormous influence over her is in the negative. At puberty, Nnu Ego is married to Amatokwu and finds it difficult to conceive. Agbadi makes repeated sacrifices to this slave woman for her to be pleased and forget about the torture she received from the family. He even liberated all his female slaves in order to please this woman. When Nnu Ego remarries, conceives and is about to have a baby, Agbadi again sacrifices to this chi whose abode is inside a big water. After the death of Ngozi, Nnu Ego's first son, she rushes out without informing anybody because this chi has made her to

fail again and the only option she thinks she has left is to meet her in the water to demand why she has decided to treat her mercilessly.

Similarly, the theme of joy is seen in Emecheta's work. Despite all her hardship and sufferings, Nnu Ego is fulfilled in the sense that she has laboured to bear and raise up children who can now rub shoulder high with the prominent people in the society, money or no money, "she realized that now, her joy was to know that she had brought up her children when they had started out with nothing and that those same children might rub shoulders one day with the great men of Nigeria" (202).

3.4 THE BASIC WOMANIST AIM IN *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*

The ultimate calling of the womanist writer is for her to show commitment to the survival of males, females and children; the willingness to show that the independence of women lies not in their breaking away from and rejecting the presence of men in that struggle but encouraging cooperation and unity to promote a world built on communal values rather than individual pursuit. For Emecheta, it seems, pre-occupies herself with this chief womanist theme and neglects the issues that derail female progress.

In her article "Feminism with a Small 'f'" Emecheta writes:

I write about the little happenings of everyday life. Being a woman, and African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small f. In my books I write about families because I still believe in families. I write about women who try very hard to hold their family together until it becomes absolutely impossible. I have no sympathy for a woman who deserts her children; neither do I have sympathy for a woman who insists on staying in a marriage with a brute of a man, simply to be respectable..." (Olaniyan & Quayson, p. 553)

In describing herself as an African born woman who writes about the little happenings of everyday life, Emecheta sets the agenda for her work to be characterized as womanist. Her work centres on the African woman as such, she shuns away from original agenda of mainstream feminism, radical feminism in this instance, which primarily focuses on women's struggle to attain equality with men. To call herself a feminist with a small 'f' implies that the concept of womanism, an outgrowth of feminism had not been espoused at the time of writing *The Joys of Motherhood* as such the only way to state her primary role as an African woman writer was to distance herself from the rigorous nature of radical feminism which was Eurocentric, exclusionary and controversial. It can be argued that Emecheta's use of the phrase "a feminist with a small 'f' is synonymous with the term womanist considering the issues she claims to write about in her work: her belief in African families and the fact that African women must strive hard to hold their families together as well as her addressing of sexual discrimination and oppression in Nigerian society. These issues are all womanist centred and so, even though Emecheta calls herself a feminist with a small 'f' what she actually ends up doing is her evoking of the womanist spirit in her works.

Emecheta's insistence on shying away from feminism leads her to brand herself a Feminist with a small "f". This means that she is not willing to participate in any individualistic pursuit of women's empowerment. In my opinion, the term Feminist with a small "f" is an indication of her womanist ideology, the very fact that she believes in families also signals her commitment to the general well-being of society rather than individual well-beings. She also claims that she writes about women who try very hard to hold their family together until it becomes absolutely impossible. This point is a testament to the characterization she gives to her protagonist, Nnu Ego.

At the centre of Nnu Ego's thinking and struggles is her commitment to see her family survive, especially her children. As a result, she compromises her right to certain things with

regard to Nnaife. This character trait of Nnu Ego is a sharp contrast to the way, Adaku is portrayed in the novel. For example, when the two women decide to demand more housekeeping money from Nnaife, Nnu Ego later changes her mind because of her love for her children. She is not ashamed to admit to her co-wife, "...I'm not going to play strike with my children's stomachs" (p. 154). Her love for her children, who are also children of Nnaife, is apparent in her decision to choose her children over money and clothes because she was trained to believe that children are parent's wealth.

Nnu Ego's womanist vision makes her lose sight of her sense of disappointment she feels after realizing that her hope, Oshia, has a different agenda of his own, to further his studies in America. And yet, the narrator reveals her contentment, having been able to help her son reach the heights of education in colonial Nigeria. The narrator tells the reader: Her joy was to know that she had brought up her children when they had started out with nothing, and that those same children might rub shoulders one day, with the great men of Nigeria. That was the reward she expected (p. 227).

This shows that Nnu Ego does not only contribute to her son's success story but also contributes to the population of national elite who take over the reins of government after colonialism comes to an end in Nigeria. Nnu Ego's contentment is, however, challenged by her second son, Adim, who poses a question which is at the centre of womanist discourse. Adim questions her mother, "But, Mother, could he not have helped in any way?" (p. 240). He, however, forgets that the basic problem is not his mother's words in defence of Oshia but the fact that "All men are selfish. That's why they are men" (p. 156). Therefore Adim is wrong in questioning his brother's decision even so when he travels to Canada and forgets about his mother, just like his brother, Oshia.

Even though Nnu Ego's contribution to her children's upbringing is vital in discussing Emecheta's womanist vision of the survival of men, women and children, I argue that Nnaife also plays a role in ensuring the realization of this aim. In a discriminatory culture that sees Igbo men act in ways that are detrimental to women and children, Nnaife decides to take a different path at a crucial point in the novel when he is forced to fight for the British. Even though he has been portrayed until now as an ugly, verbally and physically abusive man coupled with his washing of Mrs Meer's panties, he decides to give the money for his toils in the military for looking after his children. It can be argued that Nnaife had his two sons in mind when he made Nnu Ego the one to disburse the money. For Nnaife to have entrusted the money into Nnu Ego's hands, is an indication to commit to the welfare of his family while he is away. He is even committed to educating his brother's three sons. For him, it is an opportunity to pull his family from poverty so; he risks his life and reputation because going into military service is not approved by the culture.

In contrast to Nnaife's decision, his friend Ibekwe selfishly tells his wife to go back to the village as he entrusts his military money into the hands of his parents. His decision is born out of the selfish nature of male discriminatory society, the willingness and desire to keep women submissive. By taking such a course, Ibekwe risks the survival of his wife and children oblivious of what his parents will do with his money. Ibekwe is just like the officer who insults Nnaife for sending sixty pounds to his family. The officer shouts in abuse, "Women! Some of our men are so foolish, giving all that money to an illiterate woman" (p. 200) On the contrary, Nnu Ego is not just an illiterate woman but a woman committed to her children, her husband and her community.

Despite her commitment to the ultimate womanist aim, Nnu Ego's concedes that she finds it difficult to change from the subservient position given to the woman within Igbo culture. She finds it hard to re-orient herself that woman's essence is not based on her ability to give birth

to children, especially male ones. She poses the question: “God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody’s appendage?” (p. 209). In reflecting on what she has gained from fulfilling her role as a woman within the culture, she seems to say that she has gained nothing from her toils to see her children become better people in future. This is because her ability to nurture her children for them to become successful people in the future does not guarantee that she will be given a standing ovation by discriminatory Igbo society. Emecheta’s protagonist therefore becomes a prisoner of her “own flesh and blood”, her children. She also questions the ideology that only male children bring hope to a family. However, Nnu Ego remains the same character as she only contemplates womanist change without action. She is true to her traditional self in every way that gives her opportunity to contribute positively to her family’s survival.

Despite her contemplation of womanist change, Nnu Ego’s commitment to her family resonates in her life to a very large extent as she impacts her young co-wife, Okpo, with such a vision. Okpo says:

Yes we shall all work to see my little husband Adim through the nice school; and when he has finished, he will take care of his little brother here, and the one here will be his cook, and my husband, my little husband Adim will pay for his education. And my baby will do the same for his children. Is that not our philosophy, Mother? Is that not what you and my big husband and father Nnaife have been trying to teach me all these years? (p. 221).

The question – “Is that not our philosophy, Mother?” - is an indication of the unified and harmonious womanist community. For Okpo, this womanist community is made of herself, her children, Nnu Ego and her children, and Nnaife. She is therefore thinking of a family in which everyone is each other’s keeper. Such a vision could have only been imparted to her by Nnu Ego, who is a champion of such a cause.

In the final analysis, Nnu Ego carries out her utmost belief in society's recognition of the essence of helping each other to survive. Her hopes of seeing her male children cater for her needs and that of the family is dashed as they refuse to keep in touch with her. She therefore goes mad and later dies by the roadside, a death not befitting the sacrifices she makes for her children. At her funeral, many in the society agree that Nnu Ego is an ardent champion of sacrifice and dedication for the sake of communal whole being and survival. Her actions in death confirm this. Even though a shrine is built for her, she does not answer prayers for children because her sacrifice and commitment were not tailored towards a decent funeral for her. Her sacrifice was about the need for children, especially sons, to realize that the well-being, survival and wholeness of the family be put above that of selfish and individualistic ambitions. And so, even in death, Nnu Ego would not grant children to those who pray to her because her own sons Oshia and Adim have lost the essence of communalism, the same quality that characterized her quest to see her family survive.

3.5 REJECTION OF CULTURAL NORMS AND DISCRIMINATION OF A WOMAN

The modern African woman knows her rights and asserts them. She represents the generation of liberated women that feel a woman should not be unduly subservient to a man. Another remarkable female character in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* is Adaku, whose names means "daughter of wealth" an appropriate title for her. She is a pretty and ambitious woman.

When Adaku enters the scene as Nnaife's second wife, a new platform on which to examine Nnu Ego emerges. The two women's personalities exist on opposite poles. Though they are submerged in the same environment, the ways in which they handle it differ greatly. Adaku appears to be the image of strength and change, but while she accomplishes many feats.

While Nnu Ego abides strictly by her traditional customs and Igbo laws, Adaku is more aware of the necessity for change. She is willing to change regardless of whether it goes against her cultural beliefs: she is willing to face all consequences that may arise when abandoning her native tradition that are discriminative to the woman. Younger than Nnu Ego and having come straight from the tribal homeland, Adaku has a fresher outlook on Lagos and what it might offer a woman. Her acute sense of self and her willingness to accept change greatly set apart from Nnu Ego. Emecheta juxtaposes Adaku's character with that of Nnu Ego's character to show the difference between them. Nnu Ego fulfills discriminatory cultural expectations of Igbo society by being submissive and subservient even against her will. She lets go her ego to feed male dominance. She gives her husband male children to immortalize him and struggles through hardship to make them survive. In the eyes of Igbo culture, she is a good woman. Adaku, on the other hand, is none of these. She is outspoken, self-assertive and will not compromise her will.

There are instances in the novel that sets Adaku different from Nnu Ego. Initially, she is portrayed as the one character that just might make it. In the first case, she conducts the cooking strike, the way she handles the time Nnaife is away at war, and how she chooses to educate her daughters. These circumstances prove to show Adaku as a strong character and further highlight Nnu Ego's weak points. Her life's outcome however reveals that Adaku is just as traditionally inadequate and cursed as her senior wife.

Both of them differ in the level of tolerance each has for Nnaife's behaviour. The incidence of the cooking strike exemplifies this difference. Both gets discouraged with the amount of money their husband provides for the running of the home and Adaku initiates a strike. This is against Nnaife in order to get more money towards the house keeping (134). So they cook for themselves and the children but left him hungry, so he would realize how little money

goes towards their food in comparison to his expenditure on palm wine. Nnu Ego is reluctant to accept Adaku's idea although later agrees, this shows Nnu Ego's passivity as against Adaku's proactive mind but she does not allow the cooking strike to run its course, thereby sabotaging its success. This according to Nnu Ego is as a result of her love for her children who she feels will suffer from the action of the cooking strike Nnu Ego knows that Adaku does not believe that her own survival is contingent upon Nnaife, and she views this as dangerous. Adaku's response to the news is:

"He wouldn't let us starve. He would have given in the end. Anyway, it's not your right for you to make up something in secret and leave me in the dark. When a man starts showing preference to one wife, he is asking for trouble. I'm going to wait for him here and have it out with him this evening" (138)

According to Collins A. (2013), the wives' demand for more housekeeping money is a right. Since Nnaife only drinks to his pleasure. Emecheta's portrayal of her female character does not make them seem as women who are only asking for their rights, but regards them as 'rebellious women chasing and berating their husband' (151). As a womanist writer, Emecheta's female character cannot legally get their rights. She therefore looks into the financial position of Nnaife's wives because the economic independence of these women will definitely lead to an improvement and upgrade the lives of every member of the family. It is therefore clear that financial dependency of every woman is a major goal of womanism since it will give an opportunity for everyone including the children to have better hopes of survival.

Faced therefore with the betrayal from the 'food cooking strike' through Nnu Ego, Adaku opts for economic freedom and well-being, so sets off into her own work to define her destiny and

her children's from the cultural discrimination against them, to live according to her name, 'daughter of wealth', (109). The reality of seeing Adaku's financial independence makes Nnu Ego forget the cultural belief she has always held on to, that a woman's children are her wealth, Adaku's decision to seek for economic independence comes mainly from her complaints about the traditional system which gives priority to women who have children, especially male children, because of this system, a woman who is financially independent does not have the respect of the cultural society. Her financial position, she believes will be used to give her children good position through education in the society which is both unseen and unheard of in the Igbo culture Emecheta therefore through Adaku defines the discriminatory culture, Adaku sacrifices herself for her girls and breaks the cultural code of conduct, while Nnu Ego, her co-wife sacrifices herself for her children, but tows the line of conformity to patriarchal culture. The belief that the husband owns a wife is still the traditional view Nnu Ego holds unto and so concedes that 'she has been brought up to believe that children make a woman' (247) and this rules her until she dies an unfortunate death. From this belief, Emecheta's womanist commitment of the survival of both males and females can be extracted while Adaku sticks to her views of liberation for women.

3.6 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that this chapter has concerned itself with analysis of major area of realization of gender discrimination which has been highlighted to show the author's total rejection of some of the cultural practises that discriminate against women in the Igbo society. Adaku is portrayed as uncharacteristic of the expectations of the culture, who knowing that she does not have any of the requirements of defence by male society breaks free and defies cultural demand on the woman. The Joys of Motherhood is a story of fluctuating fortunes, of changes, of unfulfilled dreams and woman's determination to survive

in the tidal waves of misfortunes and uncertainties. Nnu Ego's dream of her son(s) living next door to her was never accomplished.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER VISION AND DISCRIMINATION IN PURPLE HIBISCUS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates Adichie's vision on women discrimination culturally. All literary artistic works encompass a vision since any author creates something from the way he/she perceives things whether real or metaphysical. Mugubi (1994) argues that an author moulds a work of art from his/her perception of reality, and all truth underlying that reality. He further contends that a writer uses the facts of reality to conjure up a vision of the future. Mugubi further affirms that the writer's vision can be deduced from the issues he/she explores and how he/she explores them. Mugubi's observation on authors' vision is insightful as we unravel the gender vision and cultural discrimination in Adichie's novel.

Adichie uses her literary work, *Purple Hibiscus* to bring to limelight, what is obtainable in many African homes. The tyrannical wicked and hypocritical life of Eugene Achike and how he rules his household, *Purple Hibiscus* captures the impact of patriarchy, domestic violence, religious fanaticism, discrimination and autocratic rule on a group of individuals, particularly women who are constantly marginalized, brutalized, discriminated against and victimized in postcolonial Nigerian society.

4.2 CONFRONTING THE CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION IN *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

Purple Hibiscus is Adichie's first novel and one of its major concerns is discrimination. Feminism is usually a reaction to discrimination. It is a measure taken by the victimized to gain his/ her acceptance. At the beginning of the novel, Mama, (Beatrice Achike) tolerates the brutality and victimization from her husband as a good woman for the sake of her society. In African tradition, it is a taboo to be a divorcee. From the opening of the novel one can

clearly predict the type of husband/father; Eugene Achike will be to his household. Adichie started the novel in this way to clearly describe the family as will be seen all through the novel. Kambili's voice is used in telling us the events as they unfold and the opening of the novel through her voice made us to realize the kind of father she has when she asserts:

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 'étagère'. We had just returned from church.
(11)

Women have always been on the receiving end when it comes to domestic discrimination and through the Character of Beatrice, this novel explores how wives are discriminated and subjugated by their husbands. The home is in turmoil and things are about to fall apart. Eugene from the opening of the novel is seen as an ardent Christian whose life does not reflect Christianity at home. In Catholic tradition, the missal is a sacred book that contains the words of God and for him not to have any regard for it clearly depicts that he is just a church goer and not a true Christian as we are meant to believe. It is assumed that he should have a forgiving heart for the sake of the word of God he has just heard from the church because through Kambili, we understand that they just came back from church. She shows how committed her father is in church, by helping to distribute ashes in church, a privilege for selected few in Catholic traditions. Papa's religious integrity, grit and courage appear to be at odds with his domestic crimes of discrimination and cruelty towards his family. His obsession to root out any surviving remnants of his indigenous culture means he also behaves abnormally towards his own father who he calls a heathen and disowns.

Beatrice's world is exclusively controlled by her husband. She is not entitled to any choice and feelings of her own. One confirms this when the family visits Father Benedict after Sunday service. Mama happens to be sick and thinks of waiting in the car.

“Let me stay in the car and wait, *biko*”, Mama said, leaning against the Mercedes. “I feel vomit in my throat” Papa turned to stare at her. I held my breath... Are you sure you want to stay in the car? Papa asked. (37)

Eugene’s words are final and he disregards the wife’s feelings and so, Beatrice hangs at the periphery of Eugene’s world. Even in sickness, she is forced to go for a visit in the priest’s house. At home, she has no choice over what colour of curtains to hang on the windows of the family’s house. Kambili notices that Kevin brought samples for Mama to look at and she picked some and showed Papa, so he could make the final decision (192). Such indecision as portrayed here by Adichie confirms the marginal discriminative position Beatrice occupies in relation to her husband. Beatrice struggles from the discrimination and emerges as the proactive character that decapitates culture by poisoning the husband and that way moves to the state where she is autonomous to make her own choices. Such pains that Beatrice go through can only be erased by removing Eugene and so the writer’s act is the final act of tearing down discrimination and its attendant violence. It does not mean destroying men since Beatrice’s desire is to have a loving man in her life. Such issue qualifies *Purple Hibiscus* as a womanist novel.

The breaking of the figurine is very significant in the novel in the sense that it serves as a source of consolation whenever Mama is heartbroken, she cleans it each time her husband beats her. Kambili said:

I meant to say I am sorry Papa broke our figurines, but the words which came out were, “I’m sorry your figurines broke, Mama”. She nodded quickly, and then shook her head to show that the figurines did not matter. Years ago, before I understood, I used to wonder... (18-19)

Now that the figurine is broken, one wonders how she will deal with her emotions whenever there is a quarrel. It is clear that Beatrice has no other choice but to look out for any means of

handling her pains and the discrimination she gets from her husband. Adichie possibly creates the breaking of the figurine at the beginning of the novel in order to look for a way to stand up and fight for her right. This is a deliberate attempt for the author to make sure that the woman does not always look for means of hiding discrimination, humiliation and subjugation she goes through but rather to look for a permanent way to say no to all forms of ill treatment as seen in the novel.

Eugene's attack on his pregnant wife is not only a manifestation of the evil face of discrimination but also the insensitivity of such practice to the basic principles of humanity. His personality is well described by Hewlett (2004) "as a strict Catholic who lives within the Manicheans dictates of unforgiving faith" (10). Eugene often batters his wife and Kambili (the protagonist) is always tensed when her parents exchange words over anything. The narrator observes:

I was in my room [sic] after lunch, reading James chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the anointing of the sick during family time, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parent's hand-carved bedroom door... I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count. There's blood on the floor," Jaja said (32-33).

This portrays the assault that Papa meets on Mama and at a higher level the violence that is directed towards women, therefore exposing the negative side of culture. The violence at the domestic front is degrading to Mama and her children. Mama has become weak, defenceless and powerless as described by the narrator who also says, "I followed her downstairs. She limped slightly, as though one leg were shorter than the other, a gait that made her seem even smaller than she was". (19) Mama is always captured by the narrator as having swollen eyes or face in tears, a jagged scar or bleeding from the violent assaults of her husband. The family is always experiencing nervous moments due to paternal brutality. They are silent or talk with suppressed voices.

In Igbo tradition, it is forbidden to be a divorcee. Beatrice is so much attached to her marriage with Eugene because she feels it is a source of spiritual, emotional and physical strength as culture has made her to believe. It is clear that their faith in the catholic church makes her to believe that divorce is not an option in marriage but rather, marriage should be for better, for worse and even the African community where she comes from sees the good woman as one who “suffers the effects of oppression, and neglects; and who must maintain silence and passivity in order to remain good. Silence and passivity are two principle features of a good woman”. (Udumukwu, 2007, 3), He also presents a striking balance between a good woman and the real woman which can be likened to the character of Ifeoma who ‘even in the face of tyranny will not remain silent’ (p3). Beatrice is presented as an epitome of a good woman who tolerates all kind of humiliation. She told her daughter how the villagers wanted her father to marry another wife when she couldn’t give birth and as a result, she feels indebted to her husband no matter what happens even to the detriment of her life. She posits:

God is faithful. You know after you came and I had the miscarriages the villagers wanted to whisper. The members of our *ummuna* even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else... ‘Yes “I said, Papa deserved praise for not choosing to have more sons with another woman, of course, for not choosing to take a second wife”. (28)

This show why Mama would stick to her husband even if it means death, her daughter sees reason with her and is also grateful that her father is a good man, though she feels that comparing her father to some men as Mama is ‘bringing down his reputation’.

Achike causes Beatrice to experience three miscarriages. This extreme physical beating of his wife leads to the miscarriages that plague Beatrice’s failure to have more children. According to Molaria Ogundipe Leslie (2007), “It seems that the woman *is seen* as subordinated in her very essence to the man, in quality and specifically in marriage, which is a major site of women’s subordination; her status and roles being multifaceted and varied outside marriage”

(209). The sexist oppression and cultural discrimination against women is a major issue for discussion in *Purple Hibiscus*. For an uneducated woman like Beatrice, she has been brought up to believe that her very essence lies in her ability to produce children for her educated and wealthy husband, as the social norms that define the Igbo culture determines a woman's worth by her ability to give birth to children, especially male children. Within Igbo discriminatory culture, sons are seen as much more important than daughters.

Beatrice knows that her inability to bear more children has been hindered by the beatings she has endured and has to endure in Achike's hands. He carries out his own kind of abortion by breaking a table on Beatrice's belly killing her unborn baby in the process. She laments to Aunty Ifeoma as she turns to Kambili, "You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, *nne?*, Your father broke it on my belly"...My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes". (253). Beatrice is less treated as a human being and a woman. What makes the whole situation undignified giving credence to the loss of her essence for living is her son -Kambili's observation- "Mama slid down to the floor. She sat with her legs stretched out in front of her. 'It was so undignified, but I lowered myself and sat next to her; our shoulders touching' (253). Beatrice's sitting posture suggests a sense of despair but most importantly it suggests that she seems to have lost everything that makes her a woman unlike her sister-in-law, AuntyIfeoma.

Ifeoma on the other hand is an example of a woman whose role is multifaceted outside of marriage. This means she does not see herself as a woman who can only live a meaningful life by virtue of the fact she is married to a man and bears children for him. She does not only exist to give birth to babies or fulfil cultural domestic needs. The woman whose roles are multifaceted outside of marriage can make a career for herself, contribute to discourse on the state of both the family, nation and society, freely express her opinion on critical issues without mincing her words and rule her family as well, more beautifully than what tradition

thinks only a man can do. She faces no constraint from any man, not even her brother, Achike. She takes every decision of the family by herself and will not succumb to her brother's demands even if she is in need. She resists the discriminatory male society by resisting Achike's abusive actions on his wife and children. Ifeoma's control over her home with her promotion of laughter and freedom contrasted to Achike's control over his household emphasizes the direct patriarchal dominance of the man within the family setting.

In contrast, Adichie presents another kind of woman whom Udumukwu (2007) refers to as the 'real woman'. Aunty Ifeoma is totally different from Mama, she stands up for her right no matter the consequences. She is of the opinion that things are not working the way it should in the school and can't keep quiet for it to get worse, she complains to her colleague:

We cannot sit down and let it happen, '*mba*'. Where else have you heard of such a thing as a sole administrator in a University? "Aunty Ifeoma said... 'A governing Council votes for a Vice Chancellor. That is the way it has worked since the University was built, that is the way it is supposed to work, Oburia (meaning- is it not like that?) (227)

Ifeoma is an epitome of a real woman who stands for her right despite the consequences; she refuses to be intimidated by those who feel they are at the helm of affair. She is very intelligent and can defend herself as such, she is not afraid of losing her job. Even when she loses her job, she starts making plans on how to relocate to a society that appreciates her real womanhood, unlike Mama who is so glued to her marriage and sees it as a privilege to be married to Eugene. It is obvious that Mama enjoys the treatment meted out on her by Eugene, because she refuses to stand up against the forms of discriminatory actions by her husband. One can concisely say that Mama is bound up in the marriage as a result of her faith in her religion and the culture of her people, the African woman is usually seen as an embodiment of her cultures and traditions and as such held bound by it. According to Ekwierhoma(2002) 'Man is the king, ruler and husband. He makes the rules and the woman is subject in all cases and must submit and obey without asking questions or else she faces the wrath of the

ancestral gods' (vii). Men make rules to suit their selfish interests and when these rules persist for a long time, they become traditions. Women are prevailed upon to keep these traditions or else face the wrath of the gods. This is to instil fear in them. Akorede (2010) asserts that: the subjugation of women is prevalent in all areas of Africa as the men hide under the transparent canopy of religion and culture to suppress women. (196)

Aunty Ifeoma is also in sharp contrast with her brother. She is accommodating, realistic and reasonable and she believes in freedom even in the running of her own family. Because of this, her children are socialites and freely air their views on issues concerning them. Though a Catholic, she does not discriminate against her father, Papa Nnukwu, because he is not a Christian. She takes a very good care of him and provides his needs to the best of her capability. Mama says that 'Aunty Ifeoma stopped speaking with Papa after he banned Papa Nnukwu from coming to his house, and a few years passed before they started finally speaking to each other' (73). She cherishes communal life, hence she calls Beatrice "*nwunye m*" – her wife, "the idea that it was the family and not the man alone that married a wife". (81). Aunty Ifeoma is a strong believer in Igbo culture. She takes Kambili to Abagana for the Aro festival... to look at the *mmuo*(masquerade) (82). She is not ashamed of speaking the Igbo language. While Eugene speaks English to her, she replies in Igbo. She does not believe that Papa Nnukwu is a pagan, 'he is a traditionalist' (89). Because of her tender cares for Papa Nnukwu, he appreciates her so much: "Where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter?" (91). This is ironical because the Igbos value male children more than daughters. Ifeoma is independent and assertive: When Papa Nnukwu is sick, she goes to Aba and brings him to her house in Nsukka and takes him to the "University Medical Centre" (163) and makes sure he takes all his drugs.

Aunty Ifeoma brings up her children teaching them how to do all sorts of household tasks. She does not discriminate against the children on cultural lines especially when assigning

domestic duties. Adichie appears to challenge society to bridge the chasm in the socialization process where boys are treated differently from girls. The experience that Eugene's children have at aunty Ifeoma's house in Nsukka leads to a revolution. There is increased awareness and desire for freedom at the domestic front as Jaja and Kambili head home from Nsukka. Jaja demands to have the key to his room and Kambili notes:

I wanted to tell Mama that it did feel different to be back; that our living room had too much empty space, too much wasted marble floor that gleamed from Sisi's polishing and housed nothing. Our ceilings were too high. Our furniture was lifeless: ...the glass tables did not shed twisted skin in the harmattan, the leather sofas' (199).

A considerable change in thinking and looking at the world has taken place because of their visit to Nsukka. Kambili is able to identify the high goals Papa sets for them contrary to Nsukka where Ifeoma allows the cousins to explore and scale their heights. Through the journeying motif, Kambili discovers her true self and her desire for freedom is heightened. The cousins have a voice to speak their joys, aspirations, sorrows and to explain their world, which are the things Jaja and Kambili miss at Enugu. Silence in Eugene's house is wicked but there is a lot of talk, laughter, singing and exchange at Aunty Ifeoma's house. In superimposing the two environments, Adichie advocates for upbringing like that of Ifeoma where girls are not discriminated from boys and domestic chores are shared equally regardless of gender. The home, according to Adichie should be a garden where different flowers bloom like Ifeoma's garden. Exaggerated religious rituals are also not very common in Nsukka as they happen to be in Enugu. Amaka has to choose a confirmation name and has insists on an African name but Kambili has Papa pick the name Ruth for her. The author pairs the two families to suggest an alternative upbringing and gender socialization. The socialization of daughters produces docile, submissive and unimaginative characters due to the oppressive and discriminative environment they grow up in. To Eugene, his son, Kambili, should be God fearing and a 'backyard snob' as the girls in her class point out. She isolates

herself from the other students and remaining silent. Okuyade (2007) agrees that silence in *Purple Hibiscus* is magnified to a level whereby it can be heard. Mama and her children are so oppressed that they speak with their spirits. Through the killing of Papa, Mama paves way for her freedom and that of her children from that of domestic servitude. This killing is symbolic in that it points to Adichie's desire of a world free of culture-motivated discrimination at home. The Biblical allusion of Jesus serves to free Mama from the killing since Jaja and Kambili believe that someone has to die for some other persons to be saved.

Kambili says:

‘God knows the best’, I said. ‘God works in mysterious ways.’ And I thought how Papa would be proud that I had said that...Look what He did to his faithful servant Job. But have you ever wondered why? Why did He have to murder his own son so we would be saved? Why did He have to go ahead and save us? (293).

For the freedom of African women to be fully realised, sometimes drastic and radical measures have to be taken. However Beatrice is not the kind of character feminist want. They want women who would stand up to their responsibilities and assert their right from men. Her actions negate the principles of feminism. African feminism never encourages women to murder their husbands but to tell them the things they do wrongly and to demand for their rectification. African feminists cherish vibrant women who will square up with men and tell them what they feel about them without fear or favour. Aunty Ifeoma is a good example. When some security men go to search her house in Nsukka, she demands for a search warrant which they show her before she allows them access into her house.

The poisoning of Eugene, however, is not as simplistic as it seems because the ultimate goal of womanism which is our concern in this thesis is not to take lives but to sustain and restore it. Beatrice's act must be subjected to the ultimate goal of womanism in the light of Achike's brutal force of discrimination and oppression. Beatrice as a woman must contend with the

cultural system of authority not just in her home alone but in the society at large. First and foremost, her primary role in the home, as fashioned out by the society, is for her to give birth to children. In complying to the tradition in which women are seen as reproductive vessels rather than human beings, Achike's family members put excessive pressure on him to find another wife for himself because it is not enough for him to have just two children. Also, Mama does not have any means of financial support for the family. She is economically tied to her husband's wealth. This makes her stay in a relationship in which she is regarded and treated as an unequal being. So, she is unwilling to leave the marriage despite the pains she goes through. In addition, Beatrice does not have any form of education which can give her opportunity to challenge her husband's cruel treatment unlike Aunty Ifeoma whose education gives her the power to earn a living.

Considering all these factors which stifle Beatrice's well-being as a woman, the only clear routes of escape from a wife-beating husband are not many. It is either she abandons the marriage and leaves her children behind or decides to stay in the marriage and gets beaten until death. Therefore, Beatrice as a human being and a woman cannot choose either option. So she chooses the remotest and extremist of solutions which results in the poisoning of her husband. Eugene's death, thus, is in line with the womanist writer's preference to tell of life as it is, sometimes of life as it is thought to be; life in the real world of human relationships. The killing of Achike is a unique case in womanist theory where bad men are sometimes eliminated for other men, women and children to survive. It is therefore a case of the reality of women oppression and discrimination in the society rather than the overthrowing of the ultimate goal of womanism. Again, Achike's death must be subjected to a thorough womanist analysis. Womanism calls for a holistic change that is geared towards survival and well-being. This change encompasses cultural, national, economic, racial and sexist issues that must be tackled to enhance survival and well-being. These are the various parts of

discrimination the womanist sees as it aims to advocate a sense of wholeness and unity which includes men, women and children.

Kambili's source of womanist inspiration, Ifeoma, also heads out of the country with her three children for greener pastures. Despite their relocation to the US, they still form a permanent part of Kambili through the letters and tapes they send to her. Father Amadi, Kambili's second inspiration at Nsukka, also leaves for missionary work abroad and still maintains contact with her. As the novel comes to an end, three major things happen. The first is the death of Achike, the second is Jaja's release from prison and the last is the coming together of two families, that of Aunty Ifeoma and the Achikes. The last two paragraphs of *Purple Hibiscus* are significant for a womanist analysis:

We will take Jaja to Nsukka first, and then we'll go to America to visit Aunty Ifeoma, I say. We'll plant new orange trees in Aba 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. Above, clouds like dyed cotton wool hang low, so low I feel I can reach out and squeeze the moisture from them. The new rains will come down soon (310).

These last words of Kambili bring out three womanist themes: the survival and unity of Kambili, Beatrice and Jaja together with Ifeoma and her children; self-healing and self-integration of Beatrice and Jaja; and the theme of hope, regeneration and rebirth partly aided by Achike's wealth and partly aided by Ifeoma's womanist character.

4.3 THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION OF ADICHIE'S WORK

Adichie champions the cause of women for a place in the society. So the issues relating to the woman's matrimonial, economic and social rights are raised. Nevertheless, the cultural and gender consideration in this work makes it confirm to the womanist writing. Consequently,

the treatment of the African woman within the milieu of her society, culture and tradition guarantees Adichie's work as womanist writing.

Adichie has treated some themes glaringly, which span the whole length of *Purple Hibiscus*. Having developed strong female characters, she has succeeded in showing the areas of cultural discrimination against women in the society, the effect of such practices and their likely ways of escape. One of the major or central themes in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is the theme of violence.

The United Nations, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. [unitednations.org](http://www.unitednations.org) (1993) n.p web. 20th January, 2011 states that domestic violence occurs when a partner purposely causes either physical or mental harm to the other or other members of the family. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene Achike revered as a model citizen and family man turns out to be extremely abusive in his home. He dominates, subjugates, batters and inflicts injury on his wife, children, sister and father physically and psychologically. Through this family, Adichie paints a graphic picture of the domestic travail in a traditional African family with a background of domestic violence and abuse.

To the outside world, Eugene is a devout catholic, pious and modest:

Papa always sat in the front pew for mass, at the end beside the middle aisle, with mama, Jaja, and me sitting next to him. He was first to receive communion at the marble altar with the blond life-size Virgin Mary mounted nearby, but papa did. He would hold his eyes shut so hard that his face tightened into a grimace. (12)

Eugene is held in high esteem by both Priest and Congregation of the church he attends regularly with his family- St. Agnes Catholic Church. He also features regularly in father benedict sermon, landed as a role model to be emulated and revered. Kambili reveals:

Father benedict usually referred to the Pope, Papa and Jesus in that order. He used Papa to illustrate the gospel. (12)

Eugene's irrational bouts of violence which strongly manifest in the beating of his pregnant wife until she miscarried; the scalding of his daughter's feet, and the deformity of his son's finger are written off as "accidents" to protect him from being exposed to the monster that he is. However, it is not by accident that Adichie highlights Eugene's inherent violence and the resultant symbolic destruction at the opening of the novel:

Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja did not go to communion and papa flung his heavy missile across the room and broke the figurines on the 'etagere'. (11)

In addition to physical violence, Eugene subjects his family to various forms of psychological trauma: a strict study regime which denies his children many of the little joys of childhood (such as wearing play clothes, watching television, or listening to music); Lack of regular contact with their aunt and cousins; disallowing them from developing a close relationship with their grandfather. Eugene does not only deny his family the joy of interacting with his father, he also denies his father the love, security and financial assistance that should have been his by virtue of his position as the legitimate father of a wealthy son, a right which in African society is accorded great respect and reverence. However, this situation persists until his father's death. Eugene absolutely refuses to have any contact with his father unless he converts to Christianity ironically, reminiscent of Nnu Ego in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, Eugene makes more than adequate provision for his father's burial. Auntie Ifeoma and her family should have also benefitted from Eugene's wealth, but this is not the case. As a widow and the single parent of three, she struggles to cater for her family while her rich brother often looks on passively.

As a direct result of Eugene's psychological violence, Kambili is severely handicapped in her interaction with others, lacking the ability to communicate confidently and openly with those around her. As such, she whispers, it takes father Amadi's attentions to repair her self-esteem and worth. With him, she smiles, laughs, runs and dreams because he instils in her self-

confidence and hope through his encouragement. He assures, “You can do anything you want Kambili”. (239). Kambili’s belief in Father Amadi’s encouragement and assurance lends credence, to Duvall (1970)’s assertion that children require a strong sense of self-esteem to find themselves as worthy persons. They need a sense of confidence to become what they are potentially capable of being... (24). It is therefore not surprising that in the absence of a father’s love, care, friendship and encouragement, Kambili turns to father Amadi, on whom she develops a crush to fill the void created by Eugene, her father. Jaja on the other hand assumes the role of protector, taking the blame where possible to shield his mother and sister from the wrath of his father. Jaja no longer regards his father as a model of manhood or fatherhood. Apart from reusing the ‘host’ at mass, he also fails to compliment his father on the production of a new cashew drink in his factory, saying; ‘...there are no words in my mouth’. (13), before walking out on the family during a meal, a situation which prompts Kambili to remark:

This had never happened before in my entire life, never. The compound walls would crumble; I was sure and squash the frangipani tree. The sky would cave in...something would happen... (14).

Kambili’s near death experience serves as the eventual catalyst that propels Beatrice to assert herself on behalf of her children or risk losing them.

It is also significant to discuss the theme of preference of male children to female children in *Purple Hibiscus*. In the African society, especially Nigeria, male children are preferred to female ones. Parents discriminate against female children. The children both male and female are not treated equally and not accorded the same human rights either at home or in the society. Adichie portrays this through Kambili’s family. The kind of regards and tolerance given to Jaja as a son is not given to Kambili by their father even though a senior. In an unpronounced

form, Jaja is preferred and well cared for, Eugene beats his daughter Kambili at any slight mistake but when it comes to Jaja, he keeps his voice low, the narrator says;

He knew I was looking at him, that my shocked eyes begged him to seal his mouth, but he did not look at me. It is the body of our Lord. “Papa’s voice was low very low...” (14)

Kambili expects her father to beat Jaja for not partaking in the body of our Lord, but Eugene does not beat Jaja he keeps his voice very low for his son because of his cultural position in the family. Eugene respects the decision of his son Jaja while his daughters and even those of his wife are not considered. Through this, Adichie shows that Eugene respects Jaja so much that he is afraid of what Jaja can do. Eugene says:

Have you nothing to say, gbo; Jaja?

Papa asked again

Mba, there are no word in my mouth,

“Jaja replied. What?” There was a shadow clouding Papa’s eyes, a shadow that had been in Jaja’s eyes.

Fear had left Jaja’s eyes and entered Papa’s (21)

Kambili though a little girl, yet sees the tight cultural tones of discrimination that prevents women from attaining certain height in her vicinity. It is obvious on the onset that she is placed on to play the second fiddle in the relationship between her father and the brother. Her position in the family is not as highly valued by her father as that of Jaja. Eugene is always interested in what Jaja utters and feels proud to have such a child as son kambili observes that Eugene is always proud of Jaja when she says:

He was voted neatest junior boy last year and papa had hugged him so tight that Jaja through his back had snapped..... papa had

revised his schedule but not mine and i could not want to have lunch with him (30-31)

Kambili cherishes the kind of love and respect Papa has for Jaja and would want to experience such love but she is not shown because she is a girl. When disappointed most is her father instead of hugging her after collecting her result from school, but he tells her to work hard. She says:

My form mistress, sister clara, had written “kambili is intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible”. The principal mother Lucy wrote “A brilliant obedient student and a daughter to be proud of”. But I know Papa would not be proud. (46-47)

The discrimination and preference for male child is so strong and portrays when Eugene also shows his son Jaja how much he appreciates his wisdom more than that of Kambili and also feels proud. The narrative says:

President assumed he was elected”, Jaja said. ‘Head of state’ is the right term papa smiled and I wished I had said that before jaja had. (33)

The African society most also Igbos regards the male children as those who inherit his father’s wealth while the female child is to be given out in marriage. Adichie through one of the woman Umuna says:

Nekene see the boy that will inherit his father’s riches; one woman said, hooting even more loudly, her mouth shaped like a narrow tunnel.... The girl is a ripe agbogho very soon young man will bring us palm wine (99-100)

Adichie is in the position that female children are not to be seen as commodity to be sold out for money, if Jaja can be in the position to inherit his father’s property, Kambili should also have equal right to inherit her father’s property. The female should not be discriminated against.

Another interesting thematic exploit in *Purple Hibiscus* is the theme of silence. “Silence represents the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as

patriarchy, that form of social organisation in the which males assume power and create for females an inferior status' (D Almenda, 1994) in a patriarchal society, many voiceless women abound and many have gone uncelebrated. According to Uwakwe (1995),

“Silence comprises all imposed restrictions on women’s social being, thinking and expression that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure”.

Several characters are gripped with silence throughout the novel. Kambili suffers the most, unable to speak more than rehearsed platitudes without stuttering or coughing. Her silence is a product of the abuse that she endures at the hands of her father. Kambili does not allow herself to tell the truth about her situation at home. When her classmates taunt her for being a backyard snob, she does not explain that she does not socialize out of fear. She is not allowed to delay after school lest she be late and beaten. She finally learns how to speak out her mind when she is taunted continuously by her cousin Amaka. Aunty Ifeoma encourages her to defend herself and only then can Amaka and Kambili begin their friendship. Kambili begins to speak more confidently, laugh and even sing. Kambili’s world is centered entirely on her education and family life where rules and orders are crucial leading stars:

Kambili was written in bold letters on top of the white sheet of paper, just as jaja was written on the schedule from above jaja’s desk in the room. Papa liked order. It showed even in the schedules themselves, the way he meticulously draws lines in black ink, cut across each day, separating study from siesta, siesta from family time, family time from eating....(23-24)

The atrocious violence is treated with a frighteningly casual attitude. Ogaga Okuyade(2009) explains this in the essay; *Changing Borders and Creating Voices*; silence as character in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*; when kambili narrates the issues of spouse beating, she does so with a sense of ordinariness and opacity that one can hardly describe Eugene’s home as a domestic war zone. From her narrative, it seems as if spouse beating is a normal

phenomenon (Okuyade 249). After one incident of Beatrice being brutally beating by Eugene, the children watch as he slings her limp body over his shoulder, dripping blood through the hallway and down the stairs to which Jaja remarks, “There’s blood on the floor, I’ll get the brush from the bathroom”. The children then sit and scrub their mother’s blood off the hallway floor and Kambili imagines to herself that it is simply paint from a leaking jar of red water colour (Adichie, 33). They have become desensitised to the violence and aggression and remain silent.

Jaja and Kambili only hint to one another about the obvious cruelty they suffer, speaking through what Kambili calls “the language of the eyes” (305), or through subtle remarks that need no elaboration. When discussing their mother’s pregnancy, Jaja says to Kambili “we will protect him and Kambili thinks to herself, “I knew what Jaja meant from Papa, but I did not say anything about protecting the baby” (31). Jaja does not have to explicitly name the threat from which they must protect the unborn baby; the meaning of his words is tacit.

In Heather Hewett’s article (2004), *findingHer Voice*, she expresses that Kambili has become so *paralyzed by fear* that she struggles to even speak about the most mundane of things. Hewett says, “These secrets weigh most heavily on Kambili herself whose frequent inability to speak suggests how deeply her fear has sunk (Hewett, 9). When visiting her aunty in Nsukka, Kambili often finds herself stuttering out muffled replies to anyone who dares ask her a question. When father Amadi makes a comment to Kambili about not having seen her smile even once during the whole day, she looks away and does not reply. She thinks, “I looked down at my corn. I wanted to say I was sorry that I did not smile or laugh, but my words would not come (139). Aunty Ifeoma steps in to save her by replying “she is shy”

The theme of empowerment through education is important in this study. Feminism aims at enlightening and educating women towards emancipation. Onyango (2001:55) and Dogara

(2002:37) in their research state this and see education as a tool for social change for the contemporary female. This research which is focused on women emancipation, see feminism as a movement for women emancipation. Stressing on the relevance of education, they maintain that education enables the woman to fit into the social and economic systems in the society. Education also helps the woman to know her rights as well as develop her intellect. Thus, Lawal (2000:36) agrees with these researchers that feminism encourages women to arm themselves with education as it leads to self-actualisation. Chimamanda Adichie is a writer who believes in women education. He reveals this in the character of Aunty Ifeoma who went through Education is therefore, one of the concerns of *Purple Hibiscus*.

Aunty Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* is educated and has a career. She is symbolic of the modern education woman who is independent economically.

Onyango (2006) also argues that abolishing illiteracy has been top on the women's agenda for emancipation. He however admits that in many patriarchal societies, in Africa educating a male child is more of a priority than educating a female child. In this study we argue that women's education is a strong socialization tool used by women in Adichie's novels to fight female subordination and oppression.

In Nwapa's novel *Efuru* (1986) Gilbert, a man of education restates the reason as to why women are rarely educated in patriarchal societies, "it is a waste sending girls to school he says. They get married before the end of their training and the money is wasted" (pg 191-192) Although most cultural discriminative societies have men who think like Gilbert in Adichie's novel female education is perceived differently. Aunty Ifeoma and Aunty Phillipa are educated and so liberated. Ifeoma does not want to marry again after the death of her husband and when papa Nnukwu informs her of his prayers for her to get a good man to

marry her, (83) Ifeoma discredits him because what she requires most is a promotion to the post of a senior lecturer.

She is free from male influence and determined to enjoy her freedom. Ifeoma's forthrightness and assertiveness are as a result of the power of education. She is educated and aware when things are going wrong. Aunty Ifeoma's education however gives her much more than a source of livelihood and she remains vocal and critical of Achike's treatment of his family, a trait she may have acquired through education system that women are as human as men. She therefore shows this unrelenting and unyielding quality in dealing with the family members of her late husband, who accuse her of killing her late husband Adichie use her so that she can contrast her with the sister-in-law Beatrice who depends on her husband economically. Due to lack of proper education and a pay job, Beatrice suffers all the effect of patrichal domination perpetuated by Eugene and the Igbo culture. Adichie portrays the relevance of education to women empowerment through projecting characters who are educated and others with less or no education so as to draw parallels and give some freedom to the educated ones. Adichie's novel resonates with Mariama Ba in *So Long A letter* and Zaynab Alkali in *Still Born* where education has the potential to provide women with the possibility of crafting new identity beyond that of womanhood and acquire consciousness of empowerment that impacts on their relationship with male at the family and societal levels.

Adichie celebrates the new breed of African women who are highly educated free thing, resilient and independent. It is the high level of education of the female protagonists of Adichie's novel which acts as their bulwark against the retrogressive cultural patterns that exacerbate the discrimination of women.

4.4 REGARD FOR RELIGION, CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Trying to promote womanism in place of Western feminism, Kolawole(1997) affirms her belief that Western feminism does not understand the peculiarities of African culture, she thinks that women fight for their rights for different reasons in different ways. She confirms that, ‘any African woman who has the consciousness to situate the struggle within African cultural realities by working for a total and robust self-retrieval of the African woman is an African womanist’. (34) Kolawole sees cultural identity as an important feature as African women struggle for the freedom of women and subsequent end of oppression. It is within the African culture that critics should understand the right location of the African women.

In Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, culture and traditions have a place with regard to oppression, discrimination and subjection of women. In our study, we survey the non-material aspects of culture and how some cultural practices have challenged for the freedom of the defenceless, especially women.

Tradition on the other hand is the process of cultural artefacts from one generation to the other. The way things are done is described as the tradition of a people. Culture and tradition guide actions and knowledge. It can be referred to as what Ojo-Ade (1983) calls the ‘established order and the exogenesis of the present’. (159) Adichie gives African culture and tradition the place it merits but at the same time challenge those norms which are oppressive and discriminative.

The beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church and its uncompromising manifestations are challenged by presenting it as an outrageously anti-woman institution. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Catholic faith does not include women in its Leadership hierarchy, such practice subjugate women and does not conform to what Adichie proposes for the women of African society. Adichie seems to propose freedom in areas like dressing and observation of church traditions

as in the case of Nsukka. She is totally against the teachings of Father Benedict and all that is in St. Agnes. Adichie proposes that characters like Papa who are overly rigid should be isolated while she calls for flexibility. Religion, according to Adichie should be a source of freedom instead of oppression and discrimination. She suggests that religion should not enslave its followers like it has done to Eugene and his family members.

African cultural practices are also examined in the novel. Respect for one another especially for the elders is seen in the way children are socialized and when Auntie Ifeoma bows to greet '*Igwe*'. Kambili observes:

I watched Auntie Ifeoma sink to one knee and say '*Igwe*' [sic] in the raised voice of a respectful salute, watched him pat her back... Amaka bowed deeply before him. (102)

Some of such cultures are held in great esteem as a part of the heritage of the African people and Adichie has a vision that they should be respected and maintained. Practices which strain women like the desire for babies and the value attached to boys are also challenged. Adichie emphasizes a habit, a holistic vision where culture should not be used to sustain and support a particular gender and degrade another. Some cultural practices like the titles of '*Omelora*' put men at special positions in the society and deny women similar chances. Such a practice is discriminative and Adichie suggests that it should be abolished from the Igbo society. It is the same as the ritual where boys are initiated through the '*ima*', '*mmuo*' whereas girls have no similar initiation process. Such cultural practices belittle girls and women and they grow up with feelings of lesser beings which eventually cement a sense of inequality.

The case of Eugene condemning and rejecting old Papa Nnukwu is contemptuous and against the traditions. When Ifeoma takes care of their aging father, a bigger role for daughters is highlighted. Ifeoma compliments the failures of her brother- Eugene and as a result their father does not suffer a sense of rejection. Papa Nnukwu observes, 'I joke with you

Nwam where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter? (91). Such assertions by Papa Nnukwu can be read as Adichie's own voicing of her suggested place for the female figure in the Igbo society. Ifeoma's act elevates daughters to the same level as sons who traditionally are supposed to inherit both the wealth and responsibility of aging parents.

Adichie also attacks the practice of wife-beating and the socialization of boys within a biased environment which portray men as superior to women. When Papa Nnukwu pronounces that Ifeoma is a woman and does not count, we immediately realise the discriminations in the Igbo traditions and culture, Adichie attacks the practice of discrimination since as the children watch the *mmuo* festival aggression is associated with the male spirit since they are the ones who chase women. Papa Nnukwu informs the grand children that female *mmuos* are harmless thus there is more joy in watching them than the male ones.

Language as an important element of culture that cannot be ignored in African literature is confirmed by Adichie's appropriation of Igbo language to fit in her English writing. In the use of Igbo words and phrases, she stresses the importance of complementation of languages and cultures. It is the language of her people that confirms the compatibility of humanity.

4.5 OPPOSING OPPRESSIVE CULTURES AND TRADITIONS

Culture is the bedrock of development since it determines the entire spectrum of relations and activities in any given society. Cham (1987) affirms 'any movement in society must have its feet firmly rooted in healthy cultural grounds if it is to be of any lasting and meaningful value to the welfare of individuals and society at large. A healthy culture is a culture of equality, a culture free from all forms of exploitation and above all, a culture rooted in the true traditions of the people (100)'. I present this argument by Cham in an effort to discredit some traditional cultures and more so those that propagate subordination of women in the world drawn by Adichie in her novel. We can then affirm that one actual tragedy of the African

women is a culture which hinders their progress and permanently sustains them in a state of submission and discrimination.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) identifies the socialization process which is gendered in that it connects macho strength and heroism to males and associates traditional roles of wife and mother with women. A woman's honour and dignity in most cultures in Africa consists of strict adherence to idealized norms of wifedom and motherhood. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for example, Okonkwo beats his wife for failing to provide his meal on time and also Ekwueme assaults Ahurole when she demands to know why he does not eat her food in Elechi Amadi's *Concubine*. These examples confirm that aggression and violence is a feature of men whereas acquiescence is associated with women in most African communities. In order to rethink the position of the African women in regard to limitations occasioned by culture and traditions Okoh, in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* who defines gender conventions which serve to decenter and disregard women and all their issues. Beatrice considers trivial and chauvinistic the idea that every woman wants a man to complete her" (88). Ifeoma confronts similar chauvinism when she suggests to the sister-in-law that life may begin at the end of a marriage in *Purple Hibiscus*. Catholicism is shown as patriarchal in Adichie's works and the voice of women is totally subsumed in its masculine system. Adichie dismantles this ideology when Papa reverts to praying through Mary Mother of God. Papa prays through Mary and he had designed his own title which is "our lady shield of the Nigerian people" (11). From such prayers Adichie undermines the patriarchal order characteristic of the Catholic faith. The prayers done through Virgin Mary do prop women to a considerable level of power in the Catholic Church circles. It is worth noting that the apparitions of Virgin Mary at Aokpe are the source of inspiration to push the quest for freedom a notch higher.

The illustration of the gospel by Father Benedict rarely mentions Mary-Mother of God, but through Papa, Adichie inscribes the name of a woman in his daily prayers. Consequently authority of women is realised and their state of subordination subverted. Since Catholicism accords a lot of respect to Mary Mother of Jesus, the failure to regard her and other women is a peculiar shortcoming of Father Benedict probably resulting from his colonial and patriarchal mindset. When Amaka suggests an African name for her Confirmation she goes against the traditions of Catholicism and draws an ideal world with stretched freedom. Beatrice goes against the mourning norms which maintain the widow at the traditionally inferior position. Kambili observes:

The compound gates were locked. Mama had told Adamu not to open the gates to all the people who wanted to throng in for *mgbalu*, to commiserate with us. Even members of our *umunna* who had come from Abba were turned away. Adamu said it was unheard of, to turn sympathizes away. But Mama told him, we wished to mourn privately (287-9).

This deviation from the mourning practices demonstrates how the author discards the oppressive norms. Mama also does not wear “all black or all white” (298) for a year and even does not cut her hair as custom demands. Mama’s desire to change the way of mourning serves to advocate for a situation where women are not subjected to senseless rituals and customs at the expense of their comfort. Adichie satirizes the activities of *umunna* which is a male caucus for enslaving women. Women are totally against what *umunna* does or says since it is an institution that serves to marginalize them. Members of Ifediora’s *umunna* say a lot of negative things about Ifeoma. And as mentioned earlier in this thesis Eugene’s *umunna* advises him to take a second wife so that he could have children since a man of his stature cannot take pride in only two children. Cultures are mostly created by men and that is why most of them are oppressive and discriminative to women making them act within male confines.

Bride-price, polygamy, picking partners for sons/daughters, desire for children and the value attached to boys are some of the practices and norms that Adichie challenges in her novel. She advocates for a world without such oppressive practices. Adichie's novels are a clarion call to all women to realise that "they can live comfortably without being attached to the cultural beliefs and obligations which control women's lives" (Muriungi, 2003:60). Some of the constricting believes which confer titles to males only (like *Omelora* and *ima mmuo*) are deconstructed and instead women made heroines in the two novels. Ifeoma does not attach too much importance to the *ima mmuo* ritual. In doing so she passes a message across that such titles serve to degrade women and they have no place in a progressive society. We therefore argue that Adichie's characters: Ifeoma, Amaka, Mrs Muokelu and are modelled to subvert the customs and traditions which continue to marginalize women in contemporary Africa society.

4.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we identify discriminations, restrictions, penalties and denials directed toward women in Adichie's novel. It emerged that tradition; religion, marriage, motherhood and the desire for baby boys among other factors are to blame for discrimination and subjugation of the African woman. Adichie strongly indicts these institutions and practices which perpetuate cultural inequality and continue to discriminate against women.

We also examined the different ways Adichie adopts to redeem women from the negative grip of cultural structure. Women's writing is taken and understood as a process of challenging the dominating powers and creating oppositional discourse so as to engender change since according to Kolawole counter discourse is a healthy approach in African woman's search for acceptable feminist aesthetics. The way Adichie's female characters

struggle to end their discrimination is an issue that has received special attention in this chapter. Speaking about traditions and culture that are discriminative and suppressive, strong female characters, challenging oppressive traditional practices and education are identified as the strategies that women and female writers use to fight discrimination and oppression.

Although, several other African female writers explore the cultural issues discussed in this chapter before, Adichie is a unique voice in the sense that her work is cast in wider human discrimination and not necessarily exploitation confined to sexuality and gender. Her approach to fighting discrimination confirms that despite the struggles by women to assert themselves in a world dominated by men through the ways identified by this chapter, the wars against cultural female discrimination in Africa is far from over.

CHAPTER FIVE:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD* AND *PURPLE*

HIBISCUS

This chapter focuses on comparative study of Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* by looking at the different ways both novelists deploy the elements of characterization, style (which includes language and diction, tone, mood among others) and how these elements show the differences in the authors' writing style. A continuity of womanist concerns is established from Emecheta to Adichie, in their texts.

Emecheta and Adichie employ the literary element of characterization to deploy their womanist stance. The characters in these works, especially the protagonists, act as the novelists' womanist aims and aspirations. Emecheta's womanist aim of promoting the survival of males, females and children takes over the portrayal of her female character especially Nnu Ego. This is not the case with Adichie female character that resonates with her womanist vision of challenge and change in their dealings with dominant discriminative society. Nevertheless, the male characters in the two novels all portray the dominance of discriminative Igbo culture except one character in *Purple Hibiscus*, Father Amadi.

Emecheta's protagonist, Nnu Ego does not go through any form of womanist transformation. She is portrayed as an adult woman who is aware of her surroundings and realizes the social restrictions on women and the cultural impositions of ideal womanhood. Nne Ego finds it hard to change and will not challenge the dominant male culture, not even her husband. She is loyal and submissive to gender discriminative culture even when her life is at stake. When she gives birth to her first set of twins, she admits to Adaku, "The trouble with me is that I find it difficult to change" (141), change here refers to her reluctance to challenge the culture's preference for male children as opposed to female children. Only a few times in the

novel that she challenges the abusive behaviour of her husband. Emecheta portrays a positive image of polygamy, by allowing it to function in Nnaife's household as the culture demands. Her submission within her home sends her to madness as she dies a sacrificial death. Femi Ojo-Ade (1979) in "*Madness in the African Novel*" affirms that:

The African novel in dealing with the question of alienation has depicted two types of alienated heroes: the one who has managed, in spite of overwhelming pressures of his situation, to stay on what could be termed 'the right side of the fence'; that is he does not belong to the mainstream of social order, he is a 'stranger', albeit a 'sane' stranger. On the other hand, there is the hero who goes overboard, so to speak. Finding it totally impossible to adjust to inhuman situation existing in his society, not satisfied with mere utterances of protest or with a fairly 'sane' life on the fringe of society, he pushes himself mentally to the limit, and even beyond it, and finally reaches a point where society ostracises him and deems it fit to put him away in a madhouse (Ojo-Ade, 134).

As the second type of heroine, Nnu Ego goes mad. Overwhelm with her affection for her children mostly her sons; she is full of hope in them. When her sons abandon her, she is caught with disappointment as she loses touch with reality. She is now on the contrary, driven to madness because she is not satisfied with "mere utterances of protest" or "with a fairly 'sane' life on the fringes of society". Nnu Ego drives herself emotionally and mentally to the limit since she cannot understand why culture should define her womanhood based on her ability to produce male children. Her plight is that it is these same male children who fail her.

Adichie chooses Kambili, a sixteen-year-old girl, as her protagonist as well as the narrator of *Purple Hibiscus*. She undergoes a womanist transformation even as a young child, as her perceptions of life and attitude to things around her change. Adichie fulfils one of the features of womanist writing through her portraying Kambili in this way, the transformation that happens in an adolescent girl when she comes to a sense of herself as a woman. Kambili through such change is discovered not the same voiceless, timid, shy and emotionless girl that she is at the beginning of the novel when she tells of events in Achike's household. The

maturity that comes with her womanist growth is clear in the way she sees the affairs in her family after Jaja refuses to go for communion. Because she realises that the things happening around her symbolizes a falling apart of things, of the family and of their lives (11). For instance, she perceives the difference that resonates in the house of Auntie Ifeoma in Nsukka as against the silences in her father's house in Enugu.

Kambili transforms into the sociable girl she desires to become from the unsociable backyard and snob of her class. Kambili now sets the example of defiance and resistance when she holds on to her Papa Nnukwu's portrait amidst the kicking of legs and belt knuckles from her father. She seeks for an opportunity to set herself free and does so at the cost of her life. In the end, she becomes a source of inspiration for her emotionally troubled mother and imprisoned brother. She also becomes the link that keeps the bond between her father's family and that of her Auntie, Ifeoma. She looks to the future with hope while her mother and brother follow her example.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, although Adichie finds womanist resource in the family, she does not put the demands of culture above. Beatrice is a very submissive and compromising wife who defends the actions of Achike, even if his actions are harmful. She is grateful to Achike for refusing to bring in a second wife as culture demands. She also praises Achike for living up to his title "Omelora"- the one who does for the community. So, she endures the physical abuse and torture in the hands of Achike who is the cause of her many miscarriages. Until she poisons Achike, her portrayal does not indicate her willingness to subvert Achike's discriminative authority. Beatrice does not engage in a visible sexual power tussle as she recognizes Achike's power, both physically and financially. So she chooses the option of poisoning him slowly, a path Nnu Ego refuses to tread. It may be argued that Nnaife's discriminative character is not as brutal as Achike's. But for Nnu Ego to refuse to leave the marriage like her co-wife Adaku does, or challenge Nnaife's abusive authority makes her

different from Adichie's Beatrice. On the other hand, both women believe that a husband crowns a woman's life and gives her social and cultural recognition.

There are two women characters within the two novels whose attitudes and responses towards discriminative culture contribute to addressing sexism within African literature. These are Adaku, in *The Joys of Motherhood*, and Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*. They both question and defy discriminative authority in different ways within the two novels.

Adaku's challenge to break away from discriminative domination is to the extreme as she chooses an egocentric path for herself and children. Adaku with purpose and desire to be free from the negative grip of culture becomes a prostitute. This is as a result of the disgrace she received from Nnaife's friends, Nwakusor and Ubani for confronting Nnu Ego, a senior wife turned male by the culture, because of her lack of hospitality towards Igbonoba's wife. In Adaku's thinking, she either remains under these men who are representatives of Nnaife submissively or refuse to be a part of a culture which drives women mad as in the case with her co-wife. In becoming a prostitute, Adaku does not only gain her economic independence but she also asserts her independence as a woman, a life which angers Nnaife's friends. Emecheta, in making Adaku rebel against the societal expectations, seems to be pushing for a feminist view that supports prostitution as a valid choice for women. She pushes for a sex work perspective which sees prostitution as a legitimate business for women who are faced with the outlaw perspective which views prostitution as an opportunity to a better career. Adaku's decision seems forced rather a wilful desire to become one of the women on Montgomery road. She is forced by her inability to produce male children made visible by the scornful treatment meted out to her by Nwakusor and Ubani, and economic deprivation that her children will encounter because they are girls. Emecheta, shows the extent to which Adaku's decision causes a stir in the Lagos Community as well as in Izu suggesting that Adaku and her children will be stigmatized by the society for the rest of their lives.

With regards to Ifeoma, she challenges her brother's excessive control over his children. She does not understand why Achike will not allow his children to meet her own children. She does not understand why Achike crams his children's lives into a tight schedule. Adichie uses Ifeoma to speak against the cultural pressures exerted on women who are not married. Ifeoma would rather be unmarried than to be married. This is because she sees marriage as a means through which men exert their control over women even though she had been married. She creates an independent way for herself and their children through her education and her good job. These will give her the necessary resources to look after her children. Her involvement in sexual power tussle in the novel is carried to the extreme when she vehemently insists that Mama break up her marriage with Eugene. It therefore does not come as a surprise when she provides the womanist inspiration to Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice to challenge and subvert Eugene's authority.

Ifeoma is therefore like Adaku, realizing that a woman with economic independence can achieve anything without a man. Apart from taking this bold and urgent decision, Adaku also comes across as a character that is ready to speak her mind and this she does without any regrets challenging the culture of approval for male children but refusal and lack of recognition of female children. Adaku inspires change that only aggravates discriminative change.

The male characters in both novels either function to promote culture or refuse it. Sometimes portray their ambivalence towards discriminative culture. From the family perspective, the two novels portray two different figures with different reasons for acting the way they do. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, Nnaife's discriminative thinking takes precedence. His beliefs on the Igbo culture make him to subjugate his wives. He believes that a woman's ability to give birth defines her role in the society, especially her ability to produce male children. So, he consistently abuses Nnu Ego reminding her to be appreciative because he delivered her from

societal disgrace and shame by giving her children. He also contributes to Nnu Ego's hard life by pushing the family's responsibility on her claiming it is a woman's responsibility to feed their children. Emecheta portrays Nnaife as a man who always does a job not befitting to him by the culture. He first starts out with washing Mrs Meer's underwear and is later forced into the military to fight for the British. Ironically, he secures to a certain extent, the well-being of his family when he gives out most of his military earnings for his family's upkeep. This is his contribution to womanist survival and hope in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Adichie portrays Achike as a capitalist whose wealth gives him power and influence within Igbo culture. He rules his family through abuse and coercive force, brutalizing his wife and children. But in the eyes of the church and society, he appears amiable and responsible. The ambivalence of his character is compounded by the fact that he owns a newspaper which speaks against the chaos caused by the military regime. He also balances his brutal treatment of his family with remorse. Despite his shortcomings, he provides the family's financial needs and this becomes the foundation for the womanist hope that resonates at the end of the novel. Nnaife is very different from Achike. He is not a wealthy; he is not also an influential member in the church and society. He is just an ordinary servant feminized by colonial rule. Though he beats his wives, he is not as brutal as Achike.

Through characterization, Emecheta and Adichie conjure integrative endings in their novels. While Emecheta's protagonist goes mad and dies at the end of the novel, Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* does not match up to the integral ending which resonates in *Purple Hibiscus*. Nnu Ego's children give her a decent burial after abandoning their mother. Her eldest son borrows to give her a decent burial and spends three years paying for that loan. In death, Nnu Ego refuses to honour prayer requests for children because of her children's inability to realize that survival of families must be put above selfish ambition. In the end, Nnu Ego's family seems scattered. Nevertheless her commitment to the womanist aim of the

survival of males, females and children cannot be questioned. Adichie's protagonist, Kambili, becomes the source of recovery for her mother and brother. However, what is evident at the end of the novel is the fact that there is spiritual growth, healing and integration into society in the lives of Kambili, Beatrice, Jaja, Auntie Ifeoma, her children and Father Amadi.

Adichie's stance towards men within the novel seems quite favourable as compared to Emecheta's portrayal of the male characters in her novel. Jaja contributes to the change that occurs in the Achike's home after he defies his father's authority by undermining his Catholic beliefs by calling the body of Christ, wafer instead of the host. His most outstanding womanist character is his willingness to sacrifice his life for his mother's crime. Jaja's sacrifice is used by Adichie as a way to show that the works of the womanist writer ends in integrative images of male and female worlds. The picture created at the end of the novel is the unity of two families, and a friend. Adichie then achieves the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing as the extended family becomes part of this healing process.

Father Amadi is also given a good portrayal within *Purple Hibiscus*. He is a liberal Catholic whose beliefs are parallel to the ones held by Achike. He is the reason for Kambili's emotional transformation as he encourages her to break free from her speechlessness. In the long run, Kambili falls in love with the Catholic priest who is faced with either choosing to remain true to his Catholic calling or fall in love with Kambili. He chooses the former and undertakes his missionary journey to Papua New Guinea. Nevertheless, he becomes an integral part of Kambili's life through the letters they exchange.

Emecheta and Adichie have different writing styles. One of the features which distinguish Emecheta's writing style from Adichie's style is the element of authorial intrusion and ambiguity (Jita Allan, 96). This is because she frequently moves between rebellion and submission through Nnu Ego, her protagonist. Emecheta uses Nnu Ego to indicate her

consent to the Igbo culture which discriminates women. Nnu Ego becomes her mouthpiece as she is not willing to engage in great ideological issues like male children as the defining yardstick for womanhood. While Adichie is not ambiguous in any way as her first sentence in the novels shows that she is interested in the falling apart of discriminative system which privileges men over women. And so, Kambili does not coil within her shell when she has to defy and usurp Achike's discriminative authority. Aunty Ifeoma and Mama act in the same manner to defend their rights as women. Emecheta's hardly makes use of proverbs and allegories in her work. She uses a few Igbo words like "chi" and "Nnua" in *The Joys of Motherhood*. This style suggests that she is not pre-occupied with giving too much attention to the language and folklore of Igbo culture.

Adichie takes off in *Purple Hibiscus* by connecting the way she writes to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. She does not just seek a connection with Nigeria's literary great novelist but infuses *Purple Hibiscus* with proverbs, folktale and allegories, just like Achebe does. A good example is when, Achike shows disrespect for Anikwenwa and orders him to leave his house, the old man retorts, "You are like a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave" (70). For Achike, this means nothing to him since he does not regard the tradition, if that even means barring his father from coming to his house because he is a traditionalist and giving him meagre sums of money as he deems fit. Stylistically, apart from Anikwenwa's use of this proverb, all other proverbs and allegories are used by Papa Nnukwu, Ifeoma and her children as a result of their closeness to Papa Nnukwu. When Papa Nnukwu dies Aunty Ifeoma and Obiora speak of his death in figurative language. Aunty Ifeoma shouts, "*Ewuu*, he has fallen asleep. He has fallen asleep", while Obiora comforts his mother, "He has joined the others" (189). The story of why the tortoise has a cracked shell is told Kambili, Jaja Amaka, Obiora, and Chima, as a way of educating their minds to the absence of integrity in the society as people would always act selfishly and greedily. Adichie makes her work genuine within the

eyes of Igbo culture as her characters mix Igbo words with English sentences. She uses Igbo words either at the beginning of her characters' sentences or at the end. Auntie Ifeoma for instance calls out to Mama "Nwunye, *m*, come and sit down. You look tired. Are you well?" (110). Igbo words like "Biko", "O' maka", "O' gini", "Nne", "Nekwa", "Makana", "O nkem", "Okwia" are used in *Purple Hibiscus*. These are instances of the phenomenon of code-switching in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Buchi Emecheta opens her novel, with flash forwards as the reader encounters Nnu Ego in distress after she finds her son Ngozi dead in their room. As a way to confront her *chi* for taking away her son, Nnu Ego ran from her room, through the compound into the streets and heads to Carter Bridge to commit suicide. Emecheta's narrator gets into the life of Nnu Ego as through changing manner goes through the events that have marred her life. Emecheta goes beyond her protagonist's life to starting of her mother's relationship through flashback.

The reader encounters the audacious and arrogant Ona, through this same technique. Ona, Nnu Ego's mother goes into a relationship with Agbadi, a great local lord of Ibuza and Nnu Ego's father. The relevance of this flashback going on in Nnu Ego is used to establish a contrast between Nnu Ego's character and that of her mother. It also provides the novelist with the only character who comes close to breaking down discriminative authority but gives up at the end. Nnu Ego's changing experience at Carter Bridge features her mother's tragic death, her failed marriage to Nnaife. At this point, her life seems to have taken the right course as she sees herself fulfilling the desires of her father with the birth of Ngozi her first son. Seeing the son's stiff dead body the history of life ends.

Emecheta's omniscient narrator then reverts to the present and it is in this light that the story comes to an end after Nnu Ego has had three sons and four daughters as a way of fulfilling the dictate of the cultural society. Comparatively, the novel does not end on a note of

womanist hope as it happens in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* because Nnu Ego's struggle to keep her family united is not realised even as she dies in the end. What ensures at the end of the novel when Enu Ego's children lead by Oshia organized an expensive funeral for her is an African predicament where family members refuse to carter for the needy in their families and then wait to organise expensive funerals for them when they have passed away. Questions can be raised from Enu Ego's children's attitude with regards to their understanding of the sacrifice their mother makes to give them not just a means of survival but also a future that beams with hopes.

Emecheta and Adichie are of second and third generation writers with the former belonging to the second generation and the latter the third generation writer. Emecheta as a second generation writer sets her novel in two settings, rural and urban. *Ibuza* as the rural setting where life is traditional and simple. The economy in *Ibuza* is agrarian and the houses are built with clay. *Ibuza* is also portrayed as a peace society ruled by the lords of the land with Agbedi as one of them. The other setting in *Joys of Motherhood* is Lagos. Lagos, from the novel appears to be a no-man's land with the predominance of at least more than two tribes. It is also the seat of power for colonial authority in the early 1930's. An indication of Emecheta's preference for traditional and rural ways of living as opposed to modern ones is the fact that *The Joys of Motherhood*, ends in *Ibuza*.

Adichie sets her novel in mid 1990s urban Nigeria where capitalism rules the economy, Enugu and Nsukka are the two major place settings in *Purple Hibiscus* though Aba appears progressively. The houses are modern and life is modern. This type of setting is an indication of the growth of colonised societies. Adichie's urban settings also show the fact that most third generation writers in Africa spend their lives living abroad. As a result they would hardly be conversant with how life is lived in rural communities.

Emecheta and Adichie draw out the womanist view of their novels, through the tone of their works. Emecheta adopts submissive seriousness in *The Joys of Motherhood*. This is suitable for her to create her stance of compromised conformity to discriminative culture. Her tone is filled with agreement and contentment with the lot of women in Colonial Nigeria. It is possible that Emecheta's tone is much in line with the womanist writer's preference for telling of life as it is, sometimes as it is thought to be and rarely as it ought to be. The tone in her voice shows that she is more concerned with the ethic of surviving than the aesthetic of living. The mood in *The Joys of Motherhood* is sad and solemn as the reader encounters Nnu Ego going through the hardships in life just to give her children a better chance of success in the future. Sadly, her hope placed in her two sons fades as they neglect her only to organize an expensive funeral for her.

Adichie packs her novel with a serious, sarcastic, satirical and ironical tone which continues until Achike is poisoned by Beatrice. In her quest to criticize, question and usurp discriminative authority through the characters she portrays and the situations they find themselves in, she combines the above different levels of tone. It is also aimed at showing the chaotic state of Nigerian society as the nation's progress becomes stunted through the selfishness and greed of her leaders. However, the reader is also filled with admiration for Kambili's growth. Auntie Ifeoma's outspoken character and Jaja's bold decision to take punishment for a crime committed by his mother.

CONCLUSION

With values embedded in communalism as opposed to individualism, womanism as a variant of African feminism, gives a holistic view of works of literature by African women writers. Emecheta fails to confront and challenge patriarchal society in her novel. Nnu Ego, her protagonist is filled with desire to compromise and willing to remain under discriminatory

authority even though she creates two other female characters in Ona and Adaku, the focus in her novel is seen as that of agreement with culture that discriminates against women

On the other hand, Adichie is committed to the womanist goal of survival. She is also committed to challenging discriminative culture. She imbues her female characters with strength, resilience and courage while undermining discriminative authority. The final analysis of her novel shows how womanist hope permeates her agenda as Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice get another opportunity to begin their lives afresh.

It is also the case that the generational differences between the two womanist writers generate different womanist outlooks. All in all, Emecheta and Adichie remain committed to the unity and survival of African men, women and children all under one umbrella. These novelists' ideas are those espoused in the womanist world view as theorized by Ogunyemi (1985) and Kolawole (1997) a theory that is black-centred and highly regards the freedom of women while seeking for a meaningful union and collective effort between black women, black men and black children as they tackle oppression and cultural discrimination of the African people.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

This study titled “Culture and Gender Discrimination against Women in Contemporary Nigerian fiction” has emerged from the analysis of Buchi Florence Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. In this final section of the study, we recapitulate the major arguments advanced during the study.

This dissertation is premised on the notion that all literary endeavours essentially investigate social and cultural processes of a given society. And the preoccupation of most African female novelists is to create awareness in the society. We argue that Emecheta, Adichie and their female characters are informed by personal experiences and/ or historical truths. They are voices against oppression and exploitation. They criticise different forms of oppression and discrimination that muzzle the woman spirit and demean the soul. In the two novels, Emecheta and Adichie examine woman oppression, discrimination and indignity suffered by women and African people in the cultural post- colonial dispensation. We realise that the martial failing, romantic relationships, maternal miscarriages, poverty, discrimination and death have symbolic meanings in the two novels.

Womanist criticism is the guiding principle and analytical framework of this study. This criticism preoccupies itself with ‘the woman question’ in literary representations. It seeks women equality with men in all spheres of life and to dismantle all sexist and discriminatory structures against them. In literary discourse, womanism denounces stereotypical images that depict the male as active, dominating and rational whereas the female is passive, submissive and emotional. Womanist writers create self-actualizing women with positive identity and strong female personality. They reveal their heroine protagonist as an ‘accommodative woman’. The accommodative woman is the feminist notion of a woman whose frontier is not

limited. She operates both at home, in the office or at another income earning vocation. In the selected texts characters such as Adaku and Auntie Ifeoma fit the womanist description of an ‘accommodative woman’.

Furthermore, this research differentiates the traditionally empowered woman from the new woman. The newwoman is educated and is economically empowered and self-independent while the traditional woman is often illiterate and has no means of holding on her own. She has to depend on somebody usually her husband. This dependence is the main cause of marital crisis and women subjugation, which the new woman overcomes. The traditional woman is weak and submissive and docile while the new woman is assertive, voiced and well exposed. In the selected text the writers demonstrate how some traditional women like Auntie Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* transits from the traditional woman to a new woman because of education and self-empowerment. This implies that women are capable of changing and determining their social realities from the discriminated gender positions.

This study reveals that Emecheta, Adichie and their female characters form the progressive voices calling for change in the way society treat women and the marginalized. Adichie’s writing is identified as a contemporary voice from the margins which requires serious consideration as the Nigeria society grapples with gender, culture, class and other social discrimination. It is established that culture is an ideology that seeks to show that a woman’s main purpose in life was to be a mother and a wife and this categorization affects different women in the society. In both *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Purple Hibiscus*, the novelists present a complex rather than simplistic view of their characters. They effectively work to dismantle the cultural position of African women as a homogenous group of hard-working, powerless and self-sacrificing victims complacent in their subordinate positions. Through the characters of Nnu Ego and Beatrice, they paint pictures of an African woman that is burdened by the double yoke of culture and illiteracy, unable to redefine themselves or stand up for

their rights. Nnu Ego finally dies without the help of the children (male children) she had so desired, while Beatrice resorts to murdering her husband, Eugene to liberate herself and her victimized children. Their inability to stand for themselves early enough in the novels leads to the tragedy of their lives.

This study argues that Nigerian women in particular and African women in general are still oppressed, exploited and degraded by a mix of traditional cultures and modern forms of discrimination. Violence, against women and children, desire for sons, in-law problems, polygamy, tradition, illiteracy and religious intolerance are isolated as core challenges that still burden the African women. Emecheta and Adichie also project causes of feminism and womanism as a variant of African feminism, gives a holistic view of works of literature by African women writers, amongst whom are these novelist under study, with values embedded in communalism as opposed to individualism. The analysis of Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* undertaken in this study portray Emecheta and Adichie as womanist writers. Their womanist aspirations and values however differ. While Emecheta fails to challenge and confront discriminative society in her work, her protagonist is filled with a desire to compromise and the willingness to be submissive to discriminative tradition. Even though she creates two female characters in Ona and Adaku, the agenda in her novel is seen as that of agreement with culture of male-dominated society. Her novel, even though it also end on a note of survival of the family based on Nnu Ego's sacrificial life, cannot be seen to be said to be imbued with womanist hope as compared with Adichie's.

In both novels, Emecheta and Adichie discuss discrimination against children in their different forms and how it gains expression when the victims are often encumbered by various cultural or religious obligations which are often unchallenged because of the victim's beliefs, educational and social status. Adichie illustrates that the only difference is that the western educated women are able to free themselves from the cultural discrimination quickly

because of their ability to stand on their rights and economic power as seen in the character of Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*. Therefore, women's education and economic viability are emphasized as means of women's liberation and empowerment.

They present the developmental nature of the female character through a varied exploration of the theme of female assertiveness, in the various societal facets, which enslave women. They do not only locate traditional society that supports polygamy as a sole source of African women's oppression but also on the colonial government that excludes women from power. Basically, the thematic message is that even in the face of an oppressive system, of deep-rooted norms and practices that foster female subordination, the female must strive to assert her. These writers' messages are for African women and all women to take charge of their own destiny, refusing to be denied freedom or reduced to a depressed state. By doing this they will disrupt the predestined patriarchal hierarchies.

Through Emecheta and Adichie's writings, it is established that culture is an ideology that seeks to show that a woman's main purpose in life was to be a mother and a wife and this categorization affects different women in the society. In both *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Purple Hibiscus*, the novelists present a complex rather than simplistic view of their characters. They effectively work to dismantle the cultural position of African women as a homogenous group of hard-working, powerless and self-sacrificing victims complacent in their subordinate positions. Through the characters of Nnu Ego and Beatrice, they paint pictures of an African woman that is burdened by the double yoke of culture and illiteracy, unable to redefine themselves or stand up for their rights. Nnu Ego finally dies without the help of the children (male children) she had so desired, while Beatrice resorts to murdering her husband, Eugene to liberate herself and her victimized children. Their inability to stand for themselves early enough in the novels leads to the tragedy of their lives.

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My concern up to this point has been to show how they use elements of traditional African structures of oppression to portray the unfairness that still exists between genders in African traditional societies. 'My great hope for African women', South African author Sindiwe Magona(2007) writes, "one day they will come to their own" As African women struggle to claim their rightful place in African society and in the world, male and female writers, put the course of this struggle in a rich variety of artistic works. Through writing, African women speak their thoughts and share their perceptions about their lives and their societies. Our problem, Adeola (2007) writes, in her introduction to *In Their Own Voices* is that "we have listened so rarely to women's voices, the noises of men having drowned us out in every sphere of life. Yet women too are artists, and are endowed with a special sensitivity and compassion necessary to creativity.

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