



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

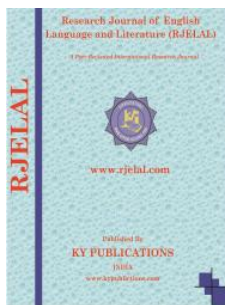
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## THE EVOCATIVE VOICE OF THE SUBALTERN IN ADICHIE'S NOVEL *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

R. REVATHI<sup>1</sup>, S. SURESH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English,

<sup>2</sup>Research Supervisor PG & Research Department of English  
Government Arts College, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, India  
<https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.7119.378>



### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the evocative voice of the subaltern in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, a story told in the background of Nigerian Civil War (Biafran War) that took place from 1967 to 1970. The war waged for power and superior identity played havoc in the lives of men and women of Nigeria. The war has witnessed brutal murders, bombing, raping and abusing children leaving a never ending scar in the psyche of the nation. The incidents surrounding the Nigerian civil war narrated in the novel are first hand information from the parents of Adichie and she has effectively built a story around that information. The paper will discuss and examine how the author has visualized the post-colonial issues of the civil War and violence thoroughly from the subaltern point of view, that has struggled by aforesaid war and violence which constructed with the unacceptable furious attacks of soldiers and government of Nigeria during Nigerian Civil War in her novel *Half of a yellow sun*.

**Key Words:** Post colonialism, Nigerian Civil War, violence, racial tension, murder, war background, child abuse, rape.

### Introduction

Most of the composite literary history extended in African literature that falls into four types of literature like oral African literature, pre-colonial African literature, colonial African literature, post-colonial African literature. Most probably African literature have been undertaken as contemporary society of Africa by the view of European which habitually anxious the art of separation. Authors of African writers have been focused the same point of view in their writings. Moreover the mentioned point of view reflects on the theory of post-colonialism which identified the study of subaltern designation. Subaltern literature enrolled in the theory of post-colonialism through

Afro- Americans' inferior rank of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religious tradition, positioned the colonial homeland. Belonging above mentioned the study of subaltern executes in the writings of post-colonial African literature.

One of the prolific Afro-American Writers of Nigerian origins Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie handled the post-colonial African literature perfectly within the perspective of subaltern identity in her writings. Especially her second novel *Half of a Yellow sun* execute the overview of subaltern characters and their abuses those have been abused by the dominant society evocatively in the social background of Nigerian Civil War (Biafra War).

Among all three novels of Adichie *Half of a yellow sun* demonstrate the speaking picture of the background of the Nigerian Civil War violently. The novel built with the primary experience of Adichie's parents due to the Nigerian Civil War. Due to the result of a million peoples' deaths and dislocation revealed in the novel that widely portrait the savagery of the war has been focused thoroughly by the small group of characters especially middle class Africans. All of that mentioned characters in that group executive one of subaltern novelty. Similarly the novel *Half of a yellow sun* manly contribute the violent background of Nigerian Civil War which held during from 1967 to 1970. Mostly the way of governments was arranged by the Igbo in southeast, southwest, Yoruba and Northern Hausa with the expectation of Nigerian wealth. Here the tyrannical Northern Hausa government has controlled a lot remaining governments cruelly. From that England begins to torture Nigerian by the action of oppressing and colonizing. Because of Nigerians' racial tension makes their own weapons were used by themselves (Genocide and starvation become their weapons of war). Consequently the soldiers of Biafran carry out their own murder upon the Nigerians and their own people. This background points out the role of subaltern orally with the reference of the story *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

The same elements of Biafran war background have been mentioned by Adichie in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* sufficiently well. The year of 1960's Nigerian society was focused in the story of the novel accurately. Adichie confined Biafra's struggle which struggled itself particularly on southern Nigeria while in late 1960s. Aforementioned period have been executed by the author with the experience of five characters; thirteen years old Uguwu who acted as houseboy of Odegnibo. Odegnibo contribute his role as a university professor; Olanna a beautiful woman appeared as a professor and charming lover of Odegnibo and finally who became a mistress of Odegnibo and Richard presents as an English man appeared as a writer his writings comes under the title of *The World was silent When We Died* take part in the novel who infatuated with Kainene (Olanna's twin sister). Apart from mentioned above

characters the novel *Half of Yellow Sun* story filled with enormously evocative one to illustrate about the prominent role of subaltern characters and theirs' abuses and also distress by the Biafran war without identification.

The first image has been described by Olanna about the woman who carried the cutted head of her child inside of her closed bag is the incident one of the important descriptions to exemplifies how much the war cruelly affected the ordinary people in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. During Biafran War the subaltern character focused through women's abuses, child abuses and murder action without sympathetically in this novel totally. Here through the passage, 'the forgotten victims', one of the records of women's abuses during the war which was meant by Adichie. Most of the scholars have criticized frequently the problem of social background of the Biafran War. For instance Nnenna argues that late Achebe in *The Trouble of Nigeria*.

Deadlines the issue that impede the socio-economic political development of Nigeriatio include, tribalism, false image, leadership's problem, lack of patriotism, social injustice and mediocrity; indiscipline and corruption. This issue according to Achebe shows down the wheel of development.. (Nnenna, 2011:14)

The passage clearly distributes the account of women's misuse purposely silenced during the war. In the novel *Half of a yellow sun* the narrator point out the pessimistic force of the Biafran war on subaltern women of Nigerian Igbo. For instance while in war women had been considered as a subject through the attacks of variant violent actions by military coup. Women were raped evocatively by the soldiers that had been shown as a metaphor. In literature rape is used as a metaphor because it helps the narrator to emphasis the discrimination of women during the war and which is frequently undertaken by men's weapon in opposition to subaltern women. Silva Riberio quotes the definition of rape as: An act and a social institution which perpetuate patriarchal domination and which based

on violence, rather than specifically as a crime of violence. (da silva Riberio, 2005: 21)

The same point of view the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* discussed the issue of rape that argues Georgiads Mboya Kivai:

Rape is an expression of power and authority. It is a form of violence and most of assert their authority over them. Rape can ever be a symptom of inequality and the desire on the part of those who wield power to assert it on the powerless. It is an action rooted in masculine behavior that serves to perpetual patriarchal order. The basic argument here is that in Adichie's novels rape has a deeper political significance than just men forcing themselves on women sexually. The several episodes of rape identified by Adichie serve to communicate the plunder, misuse and destruction characteristic of the ruling class. It is the men who are depicted as powerful and they rape women who are seemingly powerless.... (Kivai, 2007:87)

Same like Adichie illustrate the speaking picture of women's rape with the expression of heartless men's characters. During the war soldiers of both Biafrans' and Nigerians' were contribute their dominant role on ordinary women. Aforesaid persons have been illustrated as oppressors by the narrator in the novel *Half of a Yellow sun*.

The context of rape symbolizes through the domination of Nigerian and Cowen moreover of Ukuwu and other soldiers. With the findings of Anulika's rape by the focus of federal in the novel exemplify the elements of cruel attack: They focused themselves on her. Five of them... The nearly beat her to death. (421) One more instance that mentioned by author in her novel to depict the army of Nigeria react against the women of Biafran with oppressive machinery. They raped pregnant women before they cut them up. (191) Rape is one of the significant elements as per Biafran soldiers that indicate their strong desire to hold up with the mortification of their adversary. The attacked women's role was subordinated by the Nigerian soldiers while in the background of Biafran war

mentioned visibly in the narrative of Adichie. In the same line border, the small boy Uguwu who introduces as a house boy of Odegnibo at the beginning of the story forced to join army where he rapes the little girl with the encouragement of remaining soldiers at the spot. No persons were there to help the girl to escape from that cruel abuse. The following passage shows the incident that was conducted by Uguwu at the bar which has mentioned in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* emotively.

When he finally went back inside, he stopped at the door. The girl was lying on her back on the floor, he wrapper bunched up at her waist, her shoulder held down by a soldier, her legs wide, wide ajar. She was sobbing, please, please, bika. Her blouse was still on. Between her legs, High-Tech was moving. His thrusts were jerky, his small buttocks darker-colored than his legs. The soldiers were cheering. 'High-Tech enough: Discharge and retire'..... 'The food is still fresh 'Target destroyer, aren't you a man? I bakwan woke. On the floor, the girl was still. Uguwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her.... (365)

Likewise most of the unacceptable elements examine the subaltern women's abuses because the subaltern women were served as waitresses in a bar. That identity witnessed the soldiers used them as their sexual object when they were drinking too much alcohol. Soldiers are expecting and enjoying the mentioned cruel action themselves for their psychological peace inbetween army pressure.

Although rape is an expression of colonial oppressive this forced against women and African nation. Okeoma narration shows the picture of white man mercenary: He throws girl on their backs in the open, where the men can see him and does them, all the time holding his bag of money in one hand (323). From this passage one can understand that white men, women and African countries are considered as worthless one by white man.

During the war time women were suffered not only by the abuse of rape they had been abused by some other violent action. Here children were also faced a lot of suffering by the soldiers of superior country. Before unravel about the psychological part of the element, Adichie reveals the war and violence which affects individuals, subaltern group of people especially women in that group severely in the novel *Half of a yellow sun* habitably.

#### Reference

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Lagos: Farina Books, 2006. Print.
- da Silva R., Celia, M. "*Representation of Rape in Selected Fiction by African Women*". Master Dissertation, Departamento de Linguas e culturas, Universidade de, 2005. <http://ria.ua.pt/bitstream/10773/2758/1/2005001739>.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravarty. *A critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Towards a history of the vanishing present*, Harvard University press, 1999. Print.
- Kivai, G. M. *Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun*. Master of Arts, Master Thesis. Kenyatta University, 2010. <https://irlibrary.ku.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/123456789/1556/kivai%20mboya.pdf?sequence=3>
- Nnenna, I. E-I. *Afikpo Women and the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*. Master of Arts Thesis. Nnandi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2011. Print.