A Discourse of Cultural Diffusionism in the writing of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

K. Karthiga¹, C. Jothi², & D. Pandeeswari¹

Correspondence: C. Jothi, Faculty of English, Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education, Krishnankoil, Tamil Nadu, India.

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Abstract

This paper exfoliates the diplomatic situation that takes place in the house of Eugene. In third world countries: India, Africa, and Srilanka, etc., terms like culture, tradition, and religion plays a major role in promoting a society. Most of the Africans have a staunch belief in religious practices. Many of the articles mainly focus on the dynamic female characters like Beatrice, Kambili, Ifemelu, Olanna in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work. When assessing the religious practices. But this paper contracts with the ironic ideas of male characters about 'religion' in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*. A basic concept in every novel of Chimamanda is the role of religion and culture. In the novel, *Half of Yellow Sun* Odenigbo well-educated man bound himself in the name of religion and unable to rectify the fault. In African tradition, they believe that the supreme power of each tribe is their apical ancestor, who are considered foretellers. Then their way of prayer to God is based on the natural resources. During the colonization, the third world countries experience a different perspective of cultural beliefs and other social structures. This result in a drastic change in the continent in a way that left spaces for trans-culturalism cross-cultural studies, diaspora, etc.

Keywords: language, aborigines, diffusionism, writing, education, religion

1. Introduction

The objective of this study is to analyze the theories in anthropology. This paper deals with a specific study of diffusionism theory in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus*. It states that the cultural traits change from one period to another and the devastation caused by the changes in the society. The major findings were the character of Eugene and the role of religion that plays a foremost role in promoting the character of Eugene as a nefarious person. Then in the name of religion, the cruelty inculcates into society from the period of decolonization is explained. This study brings an idea of a new theory called diffusionism in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and it helps the research to know about the theories in anthropology. This study helps the reader to undergo further made a research paper in the anthropological field. The anthropological study is the recent trends in the research works. This article extends the idea of acculturation and diffusionism theories. This paper focuses on the cultural aspects that how culture molds a person's character. For more than two hundred years, the African continent was under the control of British rulers. After colonization, the language and culture of British people were infused into the heart of the African people. The changes mainly happened in the education system, devasting their religion and forcibly incorporate Christianity into the minds of the people. In the novels of Chimamanda, major characters are born in one particular community but to some extent, they started to follow other religions.

Diffusionism is a theory that gives a difference between culture and religion. Cristina De Rossi an anthropologist gives a definition for culture "culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behaved with loved ones, and a million other things". There is a similar difference between a culture and religion, culture means the behavioral aspects and the knowledge they learn from their childhood for years in a particular society. But religion is a belief of a person that differs from person to person depending upon their mental mind. Diffusionism is a major trend raised during this period. Kroeber elucidate diffusion, "As the process, usually, but not necessarily gradual, by which elements or systems of culture are spread; by which an invention or a new institution adopted in one place is *Published by Sciedu Press*141

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¹ Research Scholar, Department of English, Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education, Krishnankoil, Tamil Nadu, India.

² Faculty of English, Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education, Krishnankoil, Tamil Nadu, India.

adopted in neighboring areas and some cases continues to be adopted in adjacent ones until it may be spread over the whole earth"(). In the title itself, we came to understand that diffusionism played a major role in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Here in this thesis idea of forced diffusionism is identified. In the theory of diffusionism culture played a role, Edward Tylor, in his book Primitive culture gives an idea "culture or civilization taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (16)". In this point of view culture is a combination of traditional, art and belief, etc. It is a basic component that makes a man be a part of this society. In the name of culture, a person's mental and physical appearance is molded and it led to the devastation of a family. Chimamanda took culture as a major tool in her works. Some of the famous personalities of diffusionism are Edward Tylor, Ruth Benedict, Bronislaw Malinowski, Franz Boas, A.L. Kroeber, Clark Wissler, etc. Each of them expresses their idea about anthropology in their works. These paper scouts the nefarious formation of a particular culture and its devastation of old tradition and belief in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

2. Literature Review

This part deals with many studies related to diffusionism in other studies especially cultural beliefs and religious dogma. They are:

Mohammad Hussein Oroskhan, Esmaeil Zohdi in the paper "Doubleness of Identity in Adichie's *Imitation* "examines the theme of the diaspora in the short stories written by Adichie. Diasporic works mostly deal with the ideas of immigration, psychological problem, and the quest for identity. In the works of Adichie, people willingly migrate from Africa and settle in America for their livelihood, for higher education either by themselves or forcibly by their family's economic conditions. Many of the African people settle in European countries as refugees.

Lawal M. Olusola Lawal, Fatai Alabi in their paper "Language and Ideology in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" explain the language and ideology used by Adichie in her novel Purple Hibiscus. Adichie uses language as her tool to express her feelings in the book. The native speakers use many Igbo language words colloquially, this shows the love for their tradition (Hariharasudan, 2020). The extremist characterizes a staunch believer of Catholicism. Eugene plays power politics among his family members, here comes the theme of gender discrimination also, the pathetic situation of the Africans and their necessity for their day-to-day life.

Akin Olaniyi and A.A. Akinwale in their paper "Rethinking feminist episteme in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*: an agenda for social re-engineering" the title of the book half of a yellow sun is taken from the image of the Nigerian flag. She encompasses the novel with my literary techniques. The major idea of the novel is love, war, betrayal, and politics. Women characters in the novel can face their problems on their own. And follow some strategies to overcome their obstacles.

3. Methodology

The methodology incorporated in this study is the notable diffusionism theory and exploration method. According to Karl Menninger, the definition of a theory is that a theory will lead to confirmation or rejection' (Menninger, 1985). The importance of religion and the role played in aligning the family of Eugene is explained in this paper. This part deals with an analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works *Purple Hibiscus* related to diffusionism. Diffusionism covers vast areas of culture, religion, kinship, and family. Here Diffusionism theory is explored to find out the elements of diffusionism is presented in her novel. Through diffusionism theory in the name of culture people are split up into private groups and they started to forget their traditional beliefs and practices. Through the diffusionist theory, a passive character is converted into a heinous person and, the social condition of the protagonist family. This exploration method discussed the sarcastic events that happened in the family of Eugene. Adichie has visualized the events that elaborate the idea of diffusionism. Diffusionism means changes in the habitual and behavioral beliefs of a particular group. This part categorized as follows:

3.1 Cultural Beliefs in African Tradition

In Africa, the tribes prevail most of the places of the country. Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Oromo, Amhara, Fulani, Zulu, etc. are some of the major tribal communities. Igbo as an old and fascinating tribe follow certain rules and regulations. Igbo are well noted for their cultural beliefs and food habits. They have the tradition of worshipping nature and considered god as a supreme being named Chukwu and Chinera. Many of the Igbo people led their wealthier life in Africa, but they follow their tradition of celebrating festivals such as the Yam festival which means a period of cultivation of Yam from the field. Then they serve the Yam to the deity. Yam is considered a king of crops in Africa. People who are engaged in other countries would assemble in their village during this period. This Yam celebration period indicates the blooming of the new season. Mmanwu festival is another major ritual described in the book.

Every year this is held in the center of the town or the empty field. Many masks are made with wood and fabric. People wear masks of god and act as a prophet. They consider this as a holy act. The food habits and the dressing sense of the Igbo are entirely different from other cultures. They have their discrete language which is different from western ideas. British people are being cursed by the Africans for the demolition of their society.

People of Africa learned the language to promote their culture and to introduce their thought about culture to the world countries. Many ages passed after the period of independence men and women started gaining knowledge through education. It is powerful in conveying information to gather knowledge. During the pre-independence period, only a few of them learn the language through schools and colleges offered by the missionaries. At that time many African overthrow their idea to learn the other language for survival in society. This substantiates the importance of learning the English language all over the country. This is the first victory for the British people for spreading their emperor to the world nations. They slowly elongated their mission of spreading their religious belief in Christianity. The missionary did their job of promoting the ideas. There occurs a modification in learning the language by the people. By reconstructing, the way of learning women has an obstacle in the process of learning is expressed in the book church of today (Tucker, and Leland 1987).

Most of the countries in the world were under the control of the British colonizers for the past two hundred years. Countries like India and Africa suffered a lot in the subjugation process. The British people consider them as superior beings, they treat people with black skin as inferior and consider them as savage. When the child is born black immediately, they are branded as lower-class people. Here, starts Racial Discrimination. From this, there come a lot of theories. According to Kakali Bhattacharjee ".... Writers down the ages in all religions have taken up literature and its various forms to voice their thoughts and give their color to the various occurrences and happenings in this world". After the decolonization, the black people begin to express their sufferings in the form of writings. In African Literature only men will be allowed to produce their work. Within a short period, women writers are emerged to express their grief. Due to this theme such as double marginalization, gender discrimination, identity crisis, conflict in culture, political and social changes in the country are emerging.

Many youngsters are encouraged to have their higher studies in European countries. Both genders have encountered problems in immigrant countries. Those who are settled in other countries produce their work about the themes of alienation, loneliness. Diasporic writing slowly gained its popularity during the twenty-first century (Hariharasudan & Gnanamony, 2017). In the new trend there arise a genre in the study of obstacles and sufferings that occur to them for the past few decades are called subaltern studies. Comparing with European literature, African and Indian literature is on the same path means by expressing the sufferings of the people. Many of them adapted themselves to follow certain rules and restrictions laid during the pre-and post-colonial period. After the period of colonization, people engage themselves in westernization and their tradition. Day to day changes happens gradually.

3.2 Forced Diffusionism

The idea of diffusionism was majorly started during the colonial period. The British government handled the technique of splitting the people in the name of religion. This technique was successful in the continent of Asia and Africa. They first introduced the step of fulfilling the basic needs of the people. They offer education free through the missionaries and paved the way for the split of the nation. Next, the second instrument is the language. Language played a major role in promoting one culture. Being an Igboian girl Chimamanda represents her tradition in her works. In the novel *No Longer at Ease*, Chinua Achebe has utilized proverbs of Igbo, but it suggests revenge on them by neglecting their language (124).

As a strict activist, he engages their children with daily activity and framed a timetable to be followed by them. Eugene prefers English as a language of communication rather than the Igbo language. According to the custom, a religion should preach to a human being how to behave in society in a dignified manner. But in the novel, *Purple Hibiscus* by Adichie, Eugene had control over his family members. In the house, there would be decorum but they never love their father wholeheartedly. Whenever they are deviating from Eugene's jurisdiction they would be crucially attacked by their father. Due to religious conviction, Eugene lost his love from his family. Allison Dorothy (2012) examines the freedom given to men in his work "Men could do anything ... violent or mistaken and it was viewed with humor and understanding". His first cynical behavior towards his daughter about her rank card scoring that she scored the second position in the exam and he fetches Kambili to her classroom to see that girl who got the first mark the character of papa Eugene is understood by his talk "How many heads do you have, go?" papa asked, speaking in Igbo for the first time. "one" "the girl has one head, too, she does not have two. So why did you let her come first?" (46). Then his vicious activities increased day by day against his family members. Eugene justifies his act of strangling his family members and tell that "Everything I do for you; I do for your own good" (196).

3.3 Religious Dogma

The religious dogma elucidates that the anguishes the rupture of the familial bond and norms of that religion, violent vehemence against his family members. In name of religion, the family collides and split into a part.In the belief of Christianity, there are a lot of groups. Fukuyama Yoshio (1960) indicts the word 'cult dimension' which means strict follower. They are seen in the cultural practices in the church. They follow strictly follow what they practice. They decorated the house for the sermon that is going to be held at their home. Things that indicate that Eugene is a voracious follower of Christianity Palm leaves, Figurines.Kayongo -Male,and Onyango (1984:128)illustrate their idea about religious practices. In all of the ceremonies and practices father played a dominant role and assist that without him their social status will be reduced. They played power politics in their family. On every Sunday in the Christian tradition, they have to appear for the mass that is to be held in the church. Everyone should attend the mass by following the religious practice by wearing a white dress and without gulping water. Ania Loomba's idea about Christianity that "Christianity became the prison through which the knowledge of the world was refracted" (105). In the novel, *Things Fall Apart* Achebe's idea about the British people and Christianity.

The White Man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with the religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (152). In the Christian tradition, an act of beating women is considered a sin. In the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, the act of beating Beatrice took place and the event is narrated in the voice of Kambili in this book "When I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door. I imagined the door had gotten stuck and Papa was trying to open it" (32). "There's blood on the floor", Jaja said. "I'll get the brush from the bathroom" (33).

Consequently, in the novel, *Things Fall Apart* the protagonist Okonkwo beats his wife "he had a slight stammer and whenever he got angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists" (4). Kambili got her period's mama advised her to intake some food to have her pills. When the time of Kambili's breakfast it had been interrupted by Eugene. He imposed punishment pitilessly against his daughter "He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather-covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm" (102). Anthony Chennells in his article expresses a trait of the Catholics *Inculturated Catholicism's in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*.

The missionary tradition in which Eugene had been raised encouraged mimicry of all things European because these possessed a particular power to invoke the true god. His parish church is built to a European design, 'that god's presence dwelled more in St. Agnes [than in any other Nigerian Church], the iridescent saints on the floor-to-ceiling stained- glass windows stopped god from leaving'. God, however, is not tied to stained glass and attar steps that 'glowed like polished ice blocks' (28). (Chennells 269). Eugene follows many rules and forced his family members should follow that without opposing him. Eugene is a superior being and others want to obey the order. A home is a place in which everyone shares their bond and love. But, the house of Eugene is a confined place. Likewise, Duncan in his work *Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in public and private spaces* defines the word house "where aggressive forms of misogynous masculinity are often exercised in impunity" (131). In one situation by coincidence grandpa and grandchildren met in the house of Ifeoma. Kambili notice her grandpa action she adage her grandpa implores to god for the goodness of his son Eugene and to exonerate his immoralities.

An event that proves the nefarious character of Eugene is his father's death. The information passed out Eugene's father died. Eugene reaches Ifeoma's apartment at that time and informs that "Eugene, our father has fallen asleep" (188). Suddenly Eugene asserts a note of Christianity "I cannot participate in a pagan funeral, but we can discuss with the parish priest and arrange a Catholic funeral" (189). It is a tradition in every society that a son should compile his father's death funeral but as a sadist, Eugene missed to fulfill his duty as a father. Eugene's atrocity reached its zenith during the period of his children's visit to Ifeoma's house. He torched his wife Beatrice mentally and physically and so she went off to Ifeoma's place. Eugene thought that Beatrice wants the help of their husband both economically and financially. Okuyade in his work explains the character of Beatrice "an embodiment of the traditional African Woman, who is unsophisticated and content with the economic security her husband guarantees" (Okuyade 205). According to Salami- Agunloye (qt in cooper, 2010) "In many African Societies, being a wife is nearly as bad as being a slave or a bondwoman as has been illustrated by many African Writers". On the next day, children were playing cards in the room. They had a phone call from Mama that "It's your father. They called me from the factory, they found him lying dead on his desk" (286).

These intricacies led Mama to kill Eugene. Diala- Ogamba expresses his thought for the cruel religious follower that "Dehumanization, patriarchal and biased religious laws lead to the debasement of humanity and the enslavement of

mind". Everyone rushed like a bee in the house Mama silently explains the incident to them "I started to putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor" (290). During the police investigation Jaja admits that he is the murderer, then consequently police imprisoned him. After few years, Jaja returned home and the family led a happy life.

From the part of methodology, diffusionism theory is applicable in the works of Chimamanda. She has explored so many ideas related to the theory of diffusionism through the topics of cultural beliefs and religious dogma.

4. Discussion

This part deals with the comparison and evaluation of diffusionism and cultural ideas in Chimamanda's works with other studies. They are:

In Chimamanda's works, she infuses many words from the Igboian language. Every work of Chimamanda used a native touch. Meanwhile, in the novel *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe also expresses his thought of learning the second language and love for his tradition known through the voice of protagonist Okonkwo that Does the white man understand our customs about land? How can he when he does not speak our tongue? (176). The words'Diffusionism' and 'Acculturation' are interrelated to one another. Diffusionism is the process of the clout of one culture and their beliefs in another culture by destroying their root. Acculturation means a radical change in the culture, society, and behaviour of a particular community. A father character must be a preacher of knowledge and kindness and optimistic thoughts. Klein and white (1996: 27) examine the familial relationship, and their involvement, individual character. Then physical violence over their family. This view eludes exact happening of the novel. Eugene is a sarcastic character who was born as an Igbo and he did his studies asa Christian missionary. He prefers the English language learning more than the native one (Hariharasudan & Pandeeswari, 2020). He encourages people to learn the second language "He spoke English with an Igbo accent so strong it decorated even the shortest words with extra vowels. Papa liked it when the villagers make an effort to speak English around him. He said it showed they had the good sense" (60). comparison with the novel *Arrow of God* the Igbo priest agrees to send his son to the missionary school.

In the novel "The Land's Lord" by Echewa the protagonist Philip suffers a lot from the religious belief and customs followed by his father Ahamba belongs to Catholic Community. "Come Ahamba said, leading him by hand to the water's edge. 'kneel!' taking him by the scarf on the neck. Ahamba immersed his head three times in the dirty foot water of the river, re-baptizing him." (141). He terror his boy in the name of religion, this makes him hate that custom. Likewise, in the novel Purple Hibiscus, Eugene a voracious follower of Christianity. Eugene got married to Beatrice and he had two children Kambili and Jaja (Priyadharshini, Mohan, Hariharasudan & sangeetha, 2021). On Sunday Beatrice is getting ready for the prayer "She would knot the palm fronds into sagging cross shapes and hang them on the wall beside our gold-framed family photo" (1). He blindly follows the cultural beliefs of the Christian tradition and insists on his family members to follow the rules. According to Bill Ashcroft, when colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to "mimic" the colonizer, by adapting the colonizer's cultural habits (Pandeeswari, Hariharasudan & Kot, 2021), assumptions, institutions, and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer that can be quite threatening (125).

McDowell explains the word home in his work *Undoing Place: A Geographical Reader* "Ideally the term is associated with safety, with familiar protective boundaries, with the family, with the exclusion of others, with privacy, a haven in the heartless world" (13). But the novel *Purple Hibiscus* is just a contradiction to that idea because everyone is scared of staying at the home. Eugene considers his father and his sister as heathens. Eugene follows Christianity but his father belongs. Cooper (2008) also analyzes his idea about religion in his work "between the modernist Christianity of Roman Catholicism and the traditional beliefs in the spirits of the Ancestors". The works of Chimamanda expose the idea of the Biafran war, which is held between the four major tribes of Nigerian society (Pandeeswari, Hariharasudan & Nawaz, 2021) In the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, an incident appears that by assassinating the minister of Igbo tribe, which brings serious issue in Nigeria. Eugene as a rationalist expresses his opinion about the totalitarian government in his magazine 'standard' along with his editor Ade Coker. He gives foremost importance to cleanliness and punctuality.

5. Conclusion

This paper aims to focus on the theory of diffusionism and then to identify the cultural diffusionism in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Cultural diffusionism is new concept that is to be identified in Adichie's works. This article is unique in presenting its idea. No research article is produced in the theories of anthropology. This paved the way for the new researchers to do their research effectively. This article begins with the democratic rule of Eugene.

The novel winds up with the thought of resurrection. God creates men and women on earth to balance the problem and to solace each other. In this world, there is a social constraint that a woman should obey her men. Women are considered menial objects and submissive. Here, Beatrice doesn't have the freedom to worship her religion and, to express her thoughts and feelings. Always she had been monitored by her husband. Beatrice in her exhausted mood made a retaliated by poisoning her husband. Everyone has his/her way of worshipping a deity. The family of Eugene did their prayer with the enforcement of him. Eugene has done his duty successfully as a father, but he lost his human values. In the name of religion, he exploits his family's happiness. There is a proverb "As you sow; so, you reap" likewise Eugene took Christianity as a tool to preach religion and died because of the religion.

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