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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Dr. V. Asha Kumari**, Research Supervisor, Centre for Post Graduate Studies and Research in English, Muslim Arts College, Thiruvithancode. participated and presented the research paper titled "Daughters of Land: An Ecofeminist Interpretation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun" in the International E-Conference on Eco Ethics in English Literature on 07th May 2020 organized by the Department of English, A.P.C. Mahalaxmi College for Women, Thoothukudi.


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**Daughters of Land : An Ecofeminist Interpretation of Chimamanda Ngozi
Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun***

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Abstract:

Ecofeminism represents movements and theories that connect feminism with ecology. With the writing of *Feminism or Death* in 1974 by Françoise d'Eaubonne, the French Feminist, the word ecofeminism came into practice and engaged a crucial place in the ongoing argument on feminism and ecology. The ecofeminists study projects that there is deep bond between female and nature that arrives from their shared history of subjugation by male supremacy. This paper attempts to study ecofeminism in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Even the language, events and characters in this novel indicate a world that suppress and control both women and nature.

Key words: Ecofeminism, Nature, War, Sexuality, Biafra.

Daughters of Land : An Ecofeminist Interpretation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian novelist, essayist, poet, playwright, and short story writer. She also writes under the pseudonym Amanda N. Adichie. Adichie's second novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* was published in the year 2006. By combining the historical facts with imaginative writing, Adichie elaborately illustrates the civil war that happened in Nigeria between July 1967 and January 1970. Being a historical novel, the setting of *Half of a Yellow Sun* is real. The characters are both real and fictional. The hard fought civil war is used as the setting of the novel.

Ecofeminism vividly exposes the fundamental values feminism and ecology and emphasizing the similarities between women and nature. It insists the fact that both are abused and victimised by patriarchal society. These truths are clearly illustrated by the ecofeminist Ynestra King:

Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice...(it sees) the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors, and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns. It is the same masculinist mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies and our own sexuality and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its way" (King 1983).

Even though Adichie's works have been analysed by different perspectives, eco feminist ideas dominate over other ideas. Of course her works speak of African feminism, and post – coloniality, her profound bond for ecofeminism is vividly evident. While doing so, Adichie finds the inseparable bond that exists between nature and black women in Nigeria. A study of her selected work makes us understand the global concern for sustainable development and the challenges of global change. In particular the analysis paves the way for

understanding the black women's concern and interest for secure environment through the probing of the ecofeminist literary critic.

Eastern Region of Nigeria seceded got separated from the Federal Republic of Nigeria and become a new land called Biafra. As a consequence, on the 30th of May 1967, a civil war arose in Nigeria. Silent but horrible victim of war is environment. The war destroys forest, and natural resources that causes untold misery to the environment. Not only can war be destructive to the socio environment, but military activities produce extensive amounts of greenhouse gases, pollution, and cause resource depletion, among other environmental impacts.

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* pictures the horrible situations created by the air raids. Several commentators have condemned the indiscriminate air raids and bombing of civilian locations during the Nigerian civil war. Vast, greenish and beautiful forests were suddenly changed as the cloud of smoke. For Africans, tree stands between heaven and earth and is associated with creation as well as the underworld. The tree is a maternal symbol: a protector and provider who gives fruit, other foods and medicines. It provides a reservoir for water, protects against the elements and evil spirits.

In many African myths and stories, the tree is portrayed as an ancestral symbol of wisdom, authority and custom, providing a bond between the dead and the living. In the novel, the readers witness Richard showing Kainene a tree that has been split perhaps by air raid: " 'Look at the tree,' he told her, pointing. It had been cleanly split in two, from the branches down to the stem. One half still stood, slightly tilted, while the other lay on the ground. 'It seems recent,' Kainene said. 'My uncle flew a plane in the war. He bombed Germany. It's strange to think of him doing something like this.' " (HYS 312). In another occasion Richard sees, "His favorite orange tree was gone. Many of the trees had been cut, and the orchard now had stretches of cultivated grass." (HYS 426).

When a woman from the refugee camp dashed into the yard, shouting, waving a green branch, Olanna is in wonder where she got it. Because “the plants and trees around were scorched, blown bare by the dusty winds. The earth was sallow.” (HYS 411). Thus Adichie clearly describes how the environment has become a sympathetic victim of war. Consequently it brings adverse effect on the people of Nigeria. Where it is possible to gloss over the destruction of the forests, the importance of forest to ecological stability and to humanity makes it necessary to reflect on the significance of its destruction. Health of forests has an impact on the health of soils and the availability of ground and surface water for irrigation and drinking.

When war occurs, people lose most of their croplands because of bombings, ashes of weapons and intentional burnings. Soil becomes useless for farming. The soil quality reduces considerably and Kainene’s farm fails to yield good harvests. Adichie describes, “the crops failed. They failed because the land was poor and the harmattan was harsh and ... there was nothing to plant” (HYS 405).

There exists an intensive bond between woman and nature. Women seem to know the secrets of nature. While men become indifferent to changes that occur in nature, women are highly sensitive to them. Having a deep sense of understanding over the natural world, they excel in the management of natural resources, including soil, water, forests and energy. They take actual role in farm works and in the production of food materials. Anita Nair, popular Indian-English writer, believes that there are some connection between women and nature that men do not possess. She, ideologically, does not support any kind of essentialism, but feels that women are more affected by both the positive and negative impacts of nature. She says, “[W]hether it is environmental protection or anything, women are the primary agents of change. Whatever rules are made, ultimately, women are the practitioners of change as they

are engaged with the daily aspects of life in a daily basis.....[W]omen, whether they belong to rural or urban areas, they can initiate change.” (Krishna and Jha, 148)

Nature comforts and consoles people who are often disturbed by various problems. To poet like Wordsworth, Nature is like a mother or a nurse and it gives solace to the disturbed mind. To forget their personal problems and sufferings, women involve them in farm related works and they become one with nature. In many African societies, women lead from the front in their gardens, and toil hard in the production of food. In the novel, Kainene “launched a Plant Our own Food Movement” (HYS 389). Thus refugees are encourage to stand on their own leg by cultivating the food they need. These activities and involvement with nature will make them self-dependent and self-confident. This proves women’s close bonding with nature and how they consider it as a solution to overcome their problems.

Eco-feminists strongly advocate that there exists an inseparable and perpetual relationship between women and nature. In time of insecurity and suppression, women seek refuge in the lap of nature which offers them solace and happiness. After Mohammed shoves Olanna onto a crowded train, she sits on the floor of the train beside a woman with a calabash on her lap. Throughout the journey, Olanna bumps against the calabash and at a point, “she liked the firm feel of the wood. She edged her hand forwards until it was gently caressing the carved lines that criss-crossed the calabash.” Thus holding the natural element gives her some comfort and peace (HYS82). Olanna had gone through a tragic life journey of exploitation and dishonour and sought refuge in the lap of nature for ultimate solace and happiness. This strengthens the ecofeminists view that women established a strong and eternal bond with their nature unlike men who exploited nature.

The children of Biafra are experiencing severe starvation as a result of civil war. Olanna makes an effort to sharpen the intellect of these starving children. She teaches these children under the flame tree. Olanna “taught them under the flame tree, away from the

horrible smells towards the back of the buildings. She would have them memorize one line of a poem (HYS 389). It is under the flame tree that they take actions to light up their difficult war world. The flame tree then comes to represent the urge of Olanna to maintain her worth as human irrespective of the war.

Adichie, being an eco-feminist author, shows great respect for nature and woman. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she express her grief and mental agony for the injustice done to nature and woman by people who fail to have proper vision and take sudden decision that become detrimental to human survival, natural well- being and stability. Through her writing, the writer makes an earnest plea to humanity to preserve nature and respect woman. So that the world may become secure, healthy and free.

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