

Religious Beliefs Stand in the Way of Human Love and Relationship with Reference to the Novel Half of a Yellow Sun

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Abstract – It is a universal phenomenon that each individual is concerned with the satisfaction of profoundly felt needs and mitigating of torment. Well known otherworldly movements and their development spring from this universal longing (Albert Einstein 1930 pp 1-4). Homeopathic enchantment had its impact in the prior days in alleviating the dread and torment of the general population. Unsatisfied with the aftereffect of alchemists, the antiquated individuals surrendered to the monks and ministers for supernatural power and direction to have a superior existence without physical and mental affliction. This holy standing made deceptive creatures for the common men to offer penances to satisfy divine beings (Sir James George Frazer 1922). In the advanced field, the political pioneers and the religious position are abusing religion for their advantage. This article attempts to focus on how human love and relationship got choked and tangled up by the religious convictions in the contemporary society depicted in the novel Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

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1. NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR- A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Nigerian Civil War, known as the Nigerian - Biafra War was started on July 6, 1967 and kept going until January 15, 1970. Nigeria was a counterfeit demarcation originally made by the colonial forces. They neglected the religious, the etymological, and the ethnic contrasts existing there. There were various endeavors from the southeastern regions of Nigeria to disaffiliate and structure the Republic of Biafra. One of the foundations for the common war is the involvement of the British, Dutch, French and Italian oil organizations' fight for the rich Nigerian oilfields.

Religious contrasts embrace the strong separation between various regions of Nigeria. Nigeria has many diverse ethnic factions; the three prevalent factions were the Igbo in the southeast between 60 - 70% of population and they were all around Catholic Christians; the Hausa - Fulani in the northern part about 65% of the population were generally Muslims and the Yoruba in the southwestern about 75% of population belonged to the distinctive orders of Christianity and Islam. The semi-medieval and Islamic Hausa-Fulani in the North were traditionally led by a dictatorial, conservative Islamic pecking order of Emirs. The Hausa additionally exceeded expectations in the military field and made up the vast majority of the colony's military powers (Alexander Madiebo 1980). In contrast the Igbo in the southeast lived in for the most part self-decision, and justly sorted out networks.

These tradition-inferred contrasts were propagated and upgraded by the British arrangement of colonial principle in Nigeria. In the North, British thought that it was convenient to run in a roundabout way through Emirs. At the season of autonomy, the North was the most immature region in Nigeria with the proficiency rate of 2% when contrasted with 19.2% in the East. By 1960s Igbo political culture was increasingly bound together and the region moderately prosperous, with tradesmen and proficient elites were dynamic all through Nigeria. The British colonial ideology that separated Nigeria into three regions increased the effectively existing economic, political and social contrasts among various ethnic gatherings. It has been portrayed as an intentional ethnic and religious gerrymander to keep the nation powerless, shaky and open to the loot of its huge oil saves by the UK organizations, driven by British Petroleum.

Amid 1950s the Igbo and Yoruba parties joined to battle for autonomy from Britain. They likewise needed an autonomous Nigeria to be sorted out into a few little states with the goal that the conservative North couldn't overwhelm the other regions of the nation. Be that as it may, the northern heads who were worried about the possibility that that autonomy would mean political and economic domination by the more westernized elites in the South favored the continuation of the British guideline. As a condition of tolerating autonomy, they demanded that the nation continued to be isolated into three regions with the North having clear greater part. Igbo and Yoruba

pioneers, anxious to accomplish a free nation at all cost acknowledged the Northern demands.

2. COUP AND COUNTER COUP BY MILITARY OFFICERS

On 15 January 1966, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu and other junior Army officers attempted a coup. It was generally speculated that the coup had been initiated by the Igbo army officers and for their own benefit, because of the ethnicity of those that were killed. Claims of electoral fraud was one of the reasons given by the coup plotters. This coup resulted in General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo and the head of the army who becoming the President and the first military head of the state in Nigeria. The coup itself failed, as Ironsi rallied the military against the plotters. He then instituted military rule, by subverting the constitutional succession and alleging that the democratic institutions had failed. There was a lot of suspicion about the cause of the coup to benefit the Igbo people; however, the real reason for the coup has never been made clear.

The mistrust and disagreement relating to the coup and the military rule by Ironsi paved the way for another coup by the Northern army officers on 29 July 1966. This coup was led by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon. He was chosen as a compromise candidate. He was a Northerner, a Christian, from a minority tribe, and had a good status within the army. Ethnic tensions due to the coup and counter-coup increased. Mass pogrom in May 1966 repeated later the same year in July and September is known as the large scale massacres of Christians Igbo living in the Muslim north.

3. BREAKAWAY AND THE CIVIL WAR

The military governor of the Igbo-dominated southeast, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu declared publicly in the southern parliament the secession of the southeastern region from Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra, an independent nation on 30 May 1967. Although the very young nation had an unceasing shortage of weapons to go to war, it determined to defend itself. There was much sympathy in Europe and elsewhere, yet only a few countries recognized the new republic.

Ojukwu managed at Aburi to get accord for a confederation of Nigeria rather than a federation. The Aburi agreement was soon nullified by the military government led by Yakuba Gowon. Hence Ojukwu started to plan for the war. The eastern region was very well prepared for war, outmanned and outgunned by the Nigerians. Their advantage included fighting in their homeland, support of the most easterners' determination and use of limited resources. The British and Soviet Union supported the Nigerian government while Canada and France helped the Biafrans. The United States seemed to be on the fence but helped the Biafrans through the Red Cross.

The Nigerian government launched a police action to retake the secessionist territory. The war began on 6 July 1967 when Nigerian Federal troops advanced in two lines into Biafra. After facing unexpectedly fierce resistance and casualties, they advanced onto the town of Nsukka. The Biafrans responded with an offensive of their own. The Biafran assault was led by Lt. Col. Banjo, a Yoruba. General Gowon assigned four divisions of Infantry. They easily recaptured many of their territories, but later with the help of foreign mercenaries Nigerians retook most of the towns.

From 1968 onwards, the war fell into a form of impasse with the Nigerian forces were unable to make significant advances into the remaining areas of Biafran control due to stiff resistance. But Nigeria began to close the ring around the Biafrans creating blockade of the surrounded Biafra. This led to a humanitarian disaster as there was widespread hunger and starvation in the besieged Igbo area. The Biafra government claimed that Nigeria was using hunger and genocide to win the war. It has been argued that by prolonging the war the Biafra relief effort contributed to the deaths of as many as 180,000 civilians. In response to the Nigerian government using foreigners to lead some advances, the Biafra government also began hiring foreign mercenaries to prolong the war. Even the volunteers, the doctors and the health workers were subjected to attacks by the Nigerian army and witnessed civilians being slaughtered and starved by the Nigerian military.

With the increased British support, the Nigerian federal forces launched their final assault named Operation Tail-Wind. The Biafra town of Owerri fell on 9 January, and Uli fell on 11 January. Only a few days earlier, Ojukwu escaped into exile by flying by plane to the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, leaving his second-in-command Philip Effiong to handle the details of the surrender to the General Yakubu Gowon of the federal army on 13 January 1970. The war finally ended a few days later with the Nigerian forces advancing into the remaining Biafra held territories with little resistance.

4. AFTERMATH OF THE CIVIL WAR

The civil war cost the Igbo individuals a lot as far as lives, money and infrastructure. It has been assessed that up to three million individuals may have been murdered because of the conflict, generally of yearning and infection. Reconstruction, helped by the oil money, was quick; notwithstanding, the old ethnic and religious tensions remained a constant element of Nigerian legislative issues. Laws were passed ordering that ideological groups couldn't be ethnically or ancestrally based; notwithstanding, it has been difficult to make this work by and by. Igbo individuals who keep running for their lives amid the slaughter and war came back to discover their positions had been dominated; and when the war was over the government did not want

to restore them, liking to see them as having surrendered. This reasoning was likewise reached out to Igbo claimed properties and houses. Individuals from other regions were sufficiently brisk to assume control over any house claimed by an Igbo. The Nigerian government legitimized this by naming such properties as abandoned. These prompted the sentiment of discrimination and were viewed as further economically handicapping the Igbo individuals even long after the war

5. PLOT OF THE NOVEL

The story of the novel is spun around three main characters. Odenigbo is introduced as the protagonist of the novel. He is from the Igbo community and works as professor of a university in Nsukka town. He lives with Olanna in relation before marriage. They constantly quarrel and nag each other. Their relation gets sprained when Odenigbo's mother brings a village girl Mala to their apartment and helps Odenigbo to sleep with Amala. This affair has brought Olanna great distress. She takes revenge on him by sleeping with an English journalist and her twin sister Kainene's lover Richard. Another important character introduced in the plot is the thirteen year old village boy, Ugwu. He is also from the Igbo ethnicity. He has been brought to the town by an old maid who was helping Odenigbo people. He becomes the trusted assistant and help to Odenigbo after the trial period in the house doing domestic work. He is also liked by Olanna and the Baby later. He becomes matured when he was forced to enroll the army during the war. He takes up writing after the war. He writes about the cruelty of war on the innocent people.

Olanna and Kainene were the twin sisters of the minister family. However they disliked the pompous style of their parents. Both followed their own way of leading a romantic life. They underwent lot of hardship even before the civil war begun. They were all due to the internal conflicts in their relation to each other. There was no such loss of life due to the conflict in their relation. The ensuing civil war between the Biafran army and Nigerian united army changed their entire life circle into complete disarray. After the British left Nigeria, the lives of main characters drastically changed and were torn apart by the ensuing civil war and decisions in their personal life. The novel jumps between events that took place during the early 1960 and the late 1960s, when the war took place. In the early 1960s, the main characters are introduced. Jumping four years ahead, trouble is brewing between the Hausa and the Igbo people and hundreds of people die in the massacres, including Olanna's beloved aunty and uncle. A new republic called Biafra is created by the Igbo. As a result of the conflict, Olanna, Odenigbo, their daughter Baby and Ugwu are forced to flee Nsukka, the University town and the major intellectual hub of the new nation. They finally end up in the refugee town of Umuahia, where they suffer as a result of food shortage and the constant air raids and paranoid atmosphere. There are also

allusions to a conflict between Olanna and Kainene, Richard and Kainene and Olanna and Odenigbo.

When the novel jumps back to the early 1960s, we learn that Odenigbo slept with a village girl, who then had his baby. Olanna is furious at his betrayal, and sleeps with Richard in a moment of weakness. She goes back to Odenigbo and they take in his daughter, when her mother refused to take care of her Baby. Back during the war, Olanna, Odenigbo, Baby and Ugwu are living with Kainene and Richard where Kainene is running a refugee camp. The situation is hapless as they have no food or medicine. Kainene decided to trade across enemy lines, but does not return even after the end of the war a few weeks later. The book ends ambiguously with the reader not knowing if Kainene still lives.

Impact of Religious Conflict on Human Love and Relationship

The relationship between Mohammed and Olanna is quite strong before the war. However, there arises a rift in the smooth friendships due to their different affiliation of religions. Olanna reminds him always about her ethnicity and religious identity whenever she gets a chance. Mohammed was left helpless at the massacre of her relations including her aunty Arize. Though he helps Olanna escape from the violent mob, she does not trust him as he belongs to the other religion. She rejects his love saying she was a Biafran first.

Adichie was born seven years after the war ended; however, her imaginative recreation of the events seems to suggest that the war has perhaps permanently affected the identity of generations of Igbo people in Nigeria. Half of a Yellow Sun, which is set before and during the Biafra war, is told from the perspective of the relation between two couples namely Odenigbo and Olanna and Kainene and Richard. The novel raises political questions as well as many challenging gender, race, class related issues. It provides a sensitive portrayal of the characters and of their relationships with each other. The relationship portrayed between different characters is not smooth even before the element of conflict is introduced in the novel. For example, there is a crisis between Odenigbo, his lover Olanna who lives with him without marrying him, and Amala a village girl who has been used as bait by Odenigbo's mother to avenge Olanna. The relation between Kainene the twin sister of Olanna is either strong as the lover of Kainene Richard, the British journalist has slept with Olanna. She does this affair as revenge against her live in partner Odenigbo for having an affair with Amala. Since all these characters are from Igbo Christians, except Richard who also is a Christian, they have learnt to tolerate and have adjusted themselves for a life together in spite of their illicit relationships.

6. CONCLUSION

Religious conflict isn't the only reason for the common war in Nigeria however the vein of its impact runs so profoundly in the psyches and hearts of the general population. The Christian elites in the nation dependably took pride in their education and amassed riches and nearly turned into the decision class in Nigeria. It ought to have played the card at the back of the psyche of the mass of uneducated Hausa Muslim population a profound established jealousy that was spontaneously insulted at the season of common war. Secondly, survival turns into a definitive objective for every individual even with affliction. In this way, they go to any degree to dispose of others in their push to endure. The government officials and the decision class have made a difference this strategy to meet their personal closures. This is even clearer in the 2002 uproar in Gujarat. It was dependably said that the uproar against the blameless Muslims was a spontaneous reaction of the Hindus to the murdering of fifty nine Hindus on a train in Godhra (Markandey Katju). Another point to be noted is that the ethnic gatherings are equitably separated in following distinctive religions. The Hausa individuals are on the whole Muslims and they owe their regard to the Emirs and Sultans. On the other hand, the Igbo individuals are for the most part Catholic Christians who owe their devotion to the papacy. The common war was over in 1970 yet the crack between these two ethnic gatherings is as strong as it was previously. It is because of their religious difference that they are not ready to fix up their difference and work towards an assembled Nigeria.

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