

*Purple Hibiscus, Half of a Yellow Sun and
The Thing Around Your Neck*
by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:
A Thematic Study

by

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Abstract

This is a thematic study of *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Thing Around Your Neck* by novelist and writer of short stories, and nonfiction Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The novel *Purple Hibiscus* is set in postcolonial Nigeria, beset by political instability and economic difficulties, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, her second novel (named after the flag of the short-lived nation of Biafra) is set before and during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), and *The Thing Around Your Neck*, her third book is a collection of 12 stories that explore the relationships between men and women, parents and children, Africa and the United States. Hence, it is argued in this work that besides writing beautifully and achieving a unity of ideas, a careful reading of the books reveals that the writer is not at ease with the conditions of women and thus, she places a spotlight on them via themes of feminism.

Key words: Women, education, marginalization, marriage, fertility, childbirth.

Introduction

Ohwovoriole concurs with Brown that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a social realist whose premium task is to paint a picture of African woman's condition (2010, 1981 respectively). Symbolically, her works are like the imaginary 'weapons' which are used to expose and shatter male hegemony (Nfah - Abbenyi: 1997); with the aim of transformation (Alijah. 1999). The condition of the African woman in terms of education, marginalization, marriage, fertility, childbirth and corruption deserve keen attention. Many of Chimamanda's predecessors: Emecheta, Aidoo, Mariama Ba, Darko, etcetera, and even some male writer's sympathetic of the plight of the woman in Africa, have in various ways portrayed this. Chimamanda Adichie, emerging at the dawn of the 21st century, sheds new light on feminism in a way that makes interesting reading. This work is a detailed discussion of the various themes on feminism as espoused in all three works.

The Education of Women

The first theme worth discussing is education of the woman, and most importantly the African woman. Until recently, it was widely believed that no matter the level of education that a woman receives, she will end up in somebody's kitchen. This ideology is clearly expressed in Mama Odenigbo's assertion that: too much schooling ruins a woman" (HYS. pg. 100) In her view, high education like the one her son has, when obtained by a woman ruins her. There is no wonder that, Amala, her choice of wife for her son is uneducated. There is again, no doubt that if this woman had two children, boy and girl, she would have the male educated and keep the female at home; in the kitchen.

Further in *PH*, Chimamanda juxtaposes the lives of two women: Mama Beatrice and Auntie Ifeoma. The lives of these two present two contrasting yet critical issues worthy of analysis. Mama Beatrice, wife of Eugene, is a house wife. Though she lives in a well-resourced house and has everything at her disposal, she has no say in anything that is decided upon in her home. The final decision on everything that happens around her rests with her husband. To her, marriage is very important for every woman and no matter what happens; a woman must stick to her marriage and do well to keep it intact. She is symbolic of our womenfolk who have given up under the yoke of gender segregation, resigned to fate and have resolved to live in masochism. Auntie Ifeoma on the other hand is a well-educated, enlightened and a liberated woman. Even though a widow, she works as a single parent and takes good care of her children. She believes that marriage does not make a woman whole, and with or without marriage a woman should be able to lead a full life. She tries to impart this knowledge to Mama Beatrice who won't have any of it. What is the impact of the lives of these two women on their dependants? The children of Mama Beatrice are constantly bullied by their autocratic father and so are timid. Those of auntie Ifeoma are bold, confident and independent.

There is no gain saying that if aunty Ifeoma were Eugene's wife, the narrative would have ended differently. The conclusion is that good education of the female child is an essential ingredient to development in general, and a healthy family in particular. It empowers the woman to contribute effectively to the progress and sustainability of the home (family) and the community at large. This affirms Kweigyir Aggrey's statement that: "...if you educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (cited in Dankwa.2011). Alijah (quoted above) concurs with Aggrey that the female figure occupies very important position in the African society. This is because; she provides crucial environmental experiences for her children and dependants. In addition, she is the bearer and nurturer of life and through their maternal instincts, the whole community is shaped.

Marginalization and Women

Again, marginalization is another major theme in these texts. Gone are the days when women cried out loud about marginalization by their male counterparts. Recently, marginalization has taken on a new dimension; women against women. This is one area the writer focuses on and through the interaction of women in her various texts unearths this canker. Mama Beatrice in *PH* regards ideologies on women liberations by aunty Ifeoma as: "University talk" (p.75) and in effect, disregards and distances herself from any such vagueness. This is of course the regard that most women have for those who take the lead in the fight for liberation.

There are also those women who for want of selfish gain and pride undermine the dignity and integrity of other women and will do anything including conniving with their male counterparts to exploit other women and if possible force them into danger. For instance in *HYS*, the Ozobia's use their University graduate, Olanna, as bait to win contracts (pp.34-35) The irony is that her mother is involved in the ploy and urges the daughter to succumb. Yet, when her husband circumvents the situation and plays the same game on her by having a mistress at Lagos; she complains (ibid: pg.221). Assuming the idea to use their daughter as the bait is the husband's brain child, the mother plays a major role by aiding in carrying it out. The point here is that, if Mama Ozobia has any regard for herself and her daughter, never will she allow Olanna to be taken to the slaughter house of "man-kind" to be ripped off her dignity; neither will she complain when the situation is circumvented.

Again, in *A Private Experience* (TTAYN: 43-56), two women (one a medical student and the other an onion seller) are trapped in a room when riots spark up in Kano market. The latter woman, an illiterate Hausa Muslim in her small ways tries to comfort the former, a literate. But as has become the custom of the 21st century African elite woman, she begins to demean and down play the intelligence of the illiterate onion seller who has saved her life. Chika, the Medical student is forced into reality when the illiterate woman begins to query and subtly challenged her knowledge of medicine.

Additionally, in *The American Embassy* (ibid, pp.128-141) three strangers attempt to familiarize while waiting in a queue. These are: two women and a man. One of the women starts a conversation with the other but the latter seems unwilling to respond. The man too starts a similar conversation with her, but she still seems unwilling to talk. The man does not say anything but continues to make the efforts. The other woman refers to the in-respondent one as a “moo-moo” (ibid: 129). A moo–moo refers to a dumb person or literally, cow.

This is how a woman sees the other woman just because she has decided to be distant. *Tomorrow is Too Far* (ibid. pp.188-199) narrates the ordeal of a young woman whose space and place in the world is denied her because of her gender. The irony is that she becomes aware of this gender segregation from the two prominent women in her life: her mother and grandmother. These two shower favors, privileges and praises on her brother while she is always denied those favors and privileges.

How does she deal this seeming injustice? first, she murders the object of their joy and second breeds contention among them by telling them lies (ibid p. 194). At the end of the day, the two women who have denied her space are found fighting each other and battling with grief, while she battles with a greater kind of grief because of loneliness (without her mother, grandmother or Dodzie).

Further, there are those women who feel comfortable in the company of male counterparts than women. Such women will do anything within their power to rival the other woman and make her uncomfortable. In *HYS*, Olanna and Miss Adebayo are the only women in the company of some six men. However surprising is the fact that, they demean and detests each others company. Olanna, we read, found herself talking more when Miss Adebayo was there, desperately giving out opinions with a need to impress Miss Adebayo. Then, whenever Olanna begins to speak, Miss Adebayo on her part, will pick up a journal or pour another drink or get up to go to the toilet (p. 52).

The rivalry is taken on a higher level when it involves filial relationship, the encounter between Olanna and Odenigbo’s mother affirms this. Mama Odenigbo as she is affectionately called, before meeting Olanna had done enough research on her to know that she was surrogated. This clouds her judgment as she refuses to see any good in her son’s choice of wife. She calls her: witch, wawa, and Imo or Aro woman” (*HYS*.p.100). She uses well orchestrated means to get her out of the house so she could allow her son to marry her own choice. To ensure that she succeeds, she is willing to visit the juju man for potent medicine to keep his son away from Olanna, and perhaps, would not even blink killing her.

In matters of infidelity, the ‘other woman’ is always the accused. *Jumping the Monkey Hill* (TTAYN.pp.95-114), introduces the encounter between two women in a store. One of these women is a wife while the other a mistress, both to the same man. The mistress goes shopping at the store of the wife. The wife marshals her workers and they verbally and physically assault the mistress.

The question is: if this woman beater could do the same to her husband, the man in the center of the problem? Instead of directing her anger on her husband, she sees the other woman as safety valve for her anger.

There is no better way to conclude on the theme of marginalization than with Mrs. Muokelu statement of Kainene: ... it is not good that she smokes because women who smoke are prostitutes” (*HYS*,pg. 277). How about the men who smoke, what are they? Yes indeed, women in Africa, as illustrated from the cited texts above are far marginalized than their male counterparts, but the crust of the matter is that most of these limitations and restrictions are placed on the women by their folks. For instance, talk of widowhood rites, female genital mutilation etc, who are the perpetrators? Women! The fact is that though some of these core traditional practices seem to be dying out with time, they are re-emerging in different shapes even among the elites in work places, schools, houses etc.

In a way, women have become like the proverbial, “anomaa kokonekone” also called “Asunoma: wokɔ atifi kɔhono nsuo a na woaba anaafɔ abebisa” (AsEm, 2005:188). Literally, like the river bird that messes up the river at the source and comes to the mouth to inquire who caused the mess? This is what has become of women in Africa as portrayed in these texts. We allow ourselves to be entangled by physical and abstract “dos and don’t” and then turn round to cry foul.

Women and Corruption

Corruption and its associated social vices are recurring themes in these texts. Gone are the days when the vices mentioned above used to be the preserve of the male gender (Jefferson.2009: pg. 212). Now a days, women: young, old, educated and illiterates are culprits. Kainene in *HYS*, a well-educated lady from an affluent family takes up the contract to supply army boots to soldiers in the north (pg. 83). She boldly justifies her new job by the fact that the job must certainly be done by someone (ibid: pg. 351). We read of “some women” who are made corrupt by politicians who hire them to stuff their blouses with false votes and pretend to be pregnant during elections (ibid: 128).

The writer in some ways tries to justifies why some women seem to be slipping into corruption. For instance, Mama Beatrice in *PH*, writes huge checks to bribe judges and policemen and guards (pg. 289). To what end? So that her son, Jaja, is freed or well taken care of even at the prison. Also in *Cell One*, not only does Nnambia’s mother bribe the policemen, she goes a step further to give them Jollof and meat in black water proof bags. With what results: “they allowed Nnambia to come out of his cell and sit on a bench ...under an umbrella tree (TTAYN :pg. 10).

Also, sex has now become like the little wads of money that are occasionally stuffed in brown envelopes and passed under the table for favors. Therefore those women who have no money to offer, at least have their bodies ably described as “a convenient means of survival” (Darko 2010:32). Nkem in *Imitation* (TTAYN: pg.31) and Yinka in *Jumping the Monkey Hill* (ibid: pg.104) allowed their bodies to be toyed with by men in order to secure jobs or get monies to take care of their families.

Ugonna’s mother in *The American Embassy* (ibid.pp.128-141) is forced to perform a task amounting to aiding and abetting corrupt practice: driving her husband in the booth of a Toyota car to be smuggled out of the country (ibid: pg.131). This, she later, suffered severally for, though she is not a part of the crime committed.

In conclusion, it is obvious that corruption is no longer the preserve of some breed of people, most women are equal participants.

Women, Children and War

The plight of the woman and children especially at war fronts is a major theme in these texts. For the African woman, feminism does not eschew motherhood, nor does it dismiss maternal politics since motherhood plays a central role in a woman’s life. (Nnaemeka 1998:1-35, Steady 1981). In *HYS*, Mama Ozobia’s statement: “how can I leave my children and run to safety?, is an embodiment of the length a woman will go to protect her children (pg.194). These children are represented by the gold and diamonds Mama Ozobia stuffed in her bra and carried them everywhere she went. When children are ill, mothers go every length to protect them. Mama Dosie for instance, has to physically assault her husband and threaten to cut off his penis because he left to visit his mistress while their child is still ill (ibid. pg. 197).

Additionally, when the war finally comes to Nsukka, the entire University evacuates. Olanna, Odenigbo, Ugwu and baby are informed to leave as well. On their way Ugwu sees:

Women with boxes on their heads and babies tied to their backs, barefoot children carrying bundles of cloths or yams or boxes, men dragging bicycles... he saw a little child stumble and fall and the mother bend and yank him up...’(ibid. pg. 183) (bolds mine)

This is a vivid description of the woman at the war front; perhaps the condition of women at Sudan, Rwanda, Liberia, Afghanistan etc. They do all the heavy, dirty, jobs while their men; their protective overlords do virtually nothing under the guise of “guarding against danger” (Armah 2000:35).

At the heat of the war, Olanna takes the baby to the hospital and witnesses women "...sitting with babies on their laps, standing with babies on their hips and their chatter mixed with crying" (ibid.pg. 269). It must be emphasized however that, some women, out of extreme frustration abandon their children. There are countless stories on our media of babies left on rubbish dump, toilets and even how most women sell their children for paltry a sum every day. This is the story of the woman with a thin, jaundiced and squalling baby who abandons him to a stranger because she has no food to feed it. (ibid: pg. 276).

The pictures above, show that women, educated or uneducated are the primary victims of war and its associated vices, it is quite ironic however that these are the very people who in their meager ways fuel wars. Kainene does not only supply army boots but also donates money to the course of the war. Some groups of women, though, have nothing themselves, choose to supply yams, plantains and fruits to the soldiers, all in the name of winning the war. (ibid: pp.187-8)

Not only do they offer food, there are those who offer their children to the soldiers free of charge to be sexually used in a bid of their win the war effort. Eberechi we read, is pushed in to the room of a soldier by her parents as their "win the war contribution"(ibid. pg.205). Yet there are the unfortunate ones especially girls, who by no fault of theirs suffer grave consequence of mob rape during wars. (ibid: pp.434, 374). For others, theirs is the psychological break down after going through such an ordeal. Olanna, for instance, suffers a psychological break down after witnessing the war in the north.

Then too, on the chemistry or connection between women and children, a catalogue of the activities of a mother in *Cell One* paints the numerous things a mother contends with daily to protect the integrity of her children:

When, at eleven, Nnambia broke the window for his classroom with a stone, my mother gave him the money to replace it and did not tell my father. When he lost some library books in class two, she told his form-mistress that our houseboy had stolen them. When, in class three, he left early every day to attend catechism and it turned out he never once went and so could not receive Holy Communion, she told the other parents that he had malaria on the examination day. When he took the key of my father's car and pressed it into a piece of soap that my father found before Nnambia could take it to a locksmith, she made vague sounds about how he was just experimenting and it didn't mean a thing. When he stole the exam questions from the study and sold them to my father's students, she shouted at him but then told my father that Nnambia was sixteen, after all, and really should be given more pocket money' (TTAYN:pp.6-9).

These explicitly exhibit the length to which a mother will go to protect her children. Even when her own son steals her jewelry she pretends otherwise and takes consolation in the pretence. Not only does she send food to the prison guards at the prison her son is held for his involvement in occultism but also bribes them from time to time to ensure that her son is well taken care of.

Nkem in *Imitation* recalls times when her mother “improvised food” (ibid:pg. 33). This, she did by plucking leaves that nobody ate and made a soup with insisting they were edible. Improvisation is a trait of many women in Africa who struggle to provide basic necessities: food, shelter and clothing for their children. For instance in HYS, in their attempt to provide food to feed their children, women at the war camps wash their peeled cassava in water which had previously been used to soak cassava for days and is being reused. According to the narrative, the smell from that water is “rotten, awful, nose-filling, that of dirty toilet, rancid steamed beans and boiled eggs gone bad.” (pg.295). Yet, the women cook with them, eat and insist their children eat because they are edible. For most of these women, after struggling to ‘improvise’ food for their children, they bear a heavier guilt if anything happen to their children.

This is the experience of the women at Nnewi who lost all their children after drinking some milk (pg.:347). *The American Embassy* (TTAYN:128-141) portrays a mother’s greatest shame in an attempt to save her life. In this narrative, a confused young mother in her attempt to protect her husband abandons her son in the face of death. Perhaps, this is the condition of the woman on the train who carries the head of her dead child with her even as she struggle for space on a train to survive (HYS.pg. 152). The head of her dead child symbolize for her the emotion and love she has built up in her child. At a certain point in her life, though she may let go off the head, its memory will hold, hurt and burn in her heart forever.

We hereby conclude that so far as there will continue to exist the family, mothers will continue to play prominent roles in this enterprise (Awumbila et el. 2011) The changing roles and pressure on the family demands cooperation and help from their male counterparts.

Women, Marriage and the Self

Even in the 21st century, women in African, majority of whom are uneducated, view marriage as a sacred institution and a married woman is seen as being in a privileged position to the unmarried one. For most of these women, not only does “a husband crown a woman’s life” (*PH*:pg.75) but “like a guinea fowl’s egg, a husband must always be guarded” (TTAYN:178) and “pampered” (Darko: 57). The rational is that since two captains cannot sail one ship, the self of the woman must kowtow so that of the man can be upheld. This act of self-denial, in addition to childbearing and home keeping in marriages are noted to be strong forces sustaining male authority (Therborn, 2006).

In the African society, marriage and childbirth are never an individual's decision, rather, that of the community. Against her wish, the woman will have to forgo all of her dreams and fulfill those of society. The writer, in her attempt to vividly portray the burden of the African woman juxtaposes the situation of two women in *HYS*. On one hand is Anulika, an illiterate girl of sixteen while the other, Olanna is a second degree holder of about thirty two years old. Anulika is pregnant and about to marry because all her mates have started to marry. Olanna, despite all her education has to give up her desire of not having a child and succumb to the threat posed by her mother-in-law and decide to have a baby so as to seal her relationship with her lover (pp:107,109). Not only must she have a baby to bind her relationship with her lover but like Anulika, must have a baby boy first, so that it will put her feet firmly in her suitor's house. Odenigbo's mother, despite all her desire for a grandchild and her fondness of Amala, deserts her and refuse to take charge of the baby because it is a girl; a gender of her kind (ibid: 256).

For some women, marriage means a contract on the peril of one's life and servitude and satisfaction to the other party, the former obviously the woman and the latter the man. Nkem in *Imitation* (TTAYN,pp. 22-42) lives a fulfilling life in a lovely American suburb with her children and a maid servant until she receives a phone call from a friend who has just returned from Nigeria.

Nkem's knowledge that her husband keeps a mistress in their Nigerian apartment is enough for her to reject the luxurious life in America so she can join her husband in Nigeria. In addition, the informant's claim that the mistress keeps a short hair is enough for her to trim her long hair so as to perhaps look like the 'supposed' mistress and in addition win the love of her husband. This is the extent to which some women who have no belief in themselves go to please their husbands who as it were, do not feel fulfilled as we see in Obiora questioning Nkem's decision to trim her hair. He suggests she grows back the hair. To safeguard their marriage, thousands of women like Nkem, deny themselves the pleasures that life gives in the name of marriage. Such women live on the whims and caprices of their husbands. For instance, Nkem takes a computer course because Obiora says it's good for her (ibid.pg. 26). She liked wine which tasted sour in her mouth because Obiora says it's good for her. Even her pubic hair is waxed to the taste of Obiora (ibid. pg. 27). So does Ukamaka in *The Shivering* who builds her life around that of her lover Udenna for years, we read:

...arranging her life around his for three years...bother her uncle, a senator, about finding her a job in Abuja after she graduated because Udenna wanted to move back when he finished graduate school and start building up what he called "political capital" for his run for Anambra state governor...she cooked her stews with hot peppers now, the way he liked.... (ibid. pg. 148)

What do these women do when the ‘rock’ on which they rely on becomes unreliable? From the text, such ones take consolation in the absurd. It is no wonder however, that Nkem rejects her dream world and Ukamaka, we are told, begins “to walk aimlessly” (ibid). Research has proved that most women lose their mental faculties in such situations and that about 80 percent of women in mental homes find themselves there as a result of such situations.

Further, like Nkem or Ukamaka, Kamara in *On Monday of Last Week*, a second degree holder, may not consider taking on a job as a nanny, yet she is pushed into doing it by her husband. So is Tracy, a clearly deranged woman pushed to stay constantly at the basement of their apartment. To communicate her situation, Tracy repeats: “I’m stuck...it’s stuck here in my throat... I’m so stuck” (pointing at her throat) (TTAYN:74-84). This is indicative of the difficult situation she finds herself in but can’t voice it. This is somehow indicative of the situation of millions of women the world over, who are stuck in the throat; with no voice to air their grievances. The same applies to Chinaza Agatha Okafor renamed Agatha Bell in *The Arrangers of Marriage*, a victim of an arranged marriage (ibid: 167-186). In all these, the writer although pointing at the problem, provides a way out at the same time. This is evident in *The Thing Around Your Neck*.

The Thing Around Your Neck is the seventh story in the collection of twelve stories and is the story whose title is borne on the cover page. This story is significant and symbolic in a number of ways. In this narrative, we meet a young woman who through winning the visa lottery comes to live with an uncle in America.

This kinsman, though married, makes sexual advances on her. She vehemently refuses and vacates his apartment. Alone, she struggle to make ends meet. And when she finally meets a young man, she never hesitates to air out her views on matters, for instance, when he does not acknowledge her position in his life, she exhibits her displeasure. Also, she openly rejects his accompaniment to her native land, Nigeria. When she does these, the symbolic “something” that used to choke her when asleep begins to abate. The symbolism in this narrative is gleaned from the fact its only when the woman: whether married, in a relationship or whatever, develops a strong will to say yes and no, will the ‘thing’ stuck in our necks like that of Tracy in on *Monday of Last Week* or that of Akunna abate.

In *Jumping the Monkey Hill*, Ujunwa’s story bothers on a woman who beats up her husband’s mistress. With what results, the husband angrily packs up his belongings and leaves the house. The sisters of the woman, three women: Auntie Elohor, Auntie Rose, and Auntie Uche come up with one proposal to help solve the problem: “we are prepared to go with you to beg him to come back home or we will go and beg on your behalf” (ibid. pp.104-105). Of course it is no wonder that these women take such a stand, because it is been accepted that marriage is the life breath of a woman without which the woman cannot live a fulfilled life. It is a shame, the poor woman’s business begin to shrink forcing her to stock the store with cheap goods instead of the usual ones from Dubai.

Moreover, in marriages and relationships, it is 'normal' for the men to cheat on the women but unheard of for the woman to do same. So in *HYS*, Odenigbo's unfaithfulness is treated lightly in the text, but when Olanna does same, it's treated with strings attached: what matters now is that nobody else should ever know. (pg. 250)

In conclusion, it clear that the writer is particularly concerned with this theme because all the other issues: education, childbirth, etc may somehow be optional but the self in marriage is constant since its one institution highly esteemed in Africa. Her voice is sound on this: ... never behave as if your life belongs to a man. (ibid: 230). And as Chinedu in *The Shivering* queried: Udenna did this to you and Udenna did that to you, but why did you let him? Why did you let him? Have you ever considered that it wasn't love? (TTAYN: 161). She concludes: how can a person claim to love you and yet want you to do things that suit only him?

Women and Fertility/Infertility – 'Over Fertility'

Writing on the preoccupation of women in Ibadan, Geoffrey Parrinder notes: a great preoccupation of women in this country is how to obtain children. (1953:61) he adds:

...some literate African women today who seem not to wish for children... but the great majority have a natural desire for offspring...a marriage that produces a child in the early months is likely to be more stable than a childless union. (ibid:pp. 165,167).

Alijah (1999) adds:

Maternity is sacred and a high premium is placed on children's insurance for the continuity for each lineage or family... a woman's importance as a wife is dependent on their ability to bear children.

Ekwensi humorously adds to the tirade with his: when woman no born pickin, however she fine, she be notin. Woman mus' to born pickin" (pg. 37).

Infertility in marriage is seen solely as the bane of the African woman. In *HYS*, when Arize does not conceive after some years of marriage, her mother in law brought concoctions to her to drink. The narrative makes it clear that even at a point the mother-in law said that her childlessness might be due to numerous abortions committed (ibid:pg.133). Again, Olanna we read suspects she is the cause of their infertility and therefore had to fly all the way to London to have her body checked.

This story is further corroborated in *Jumping the Monkey Hill* (TTAYN, pg. 106) where a couple suspects that their infertility is due to the fact that the woman's womb has been tied up by witches. Also, though it is generally known that a taboo committed in Obierika's family is a cause of infertility in their family, his wife, Nwamgba, in *The Headstrong Historian*, blames herself for their infertility to the extent that she suggests to the husband to, if possible take up another woman for procreation. Yet, when it is suggested to her to rather take a lover in order to procreate for her husband she shapely rejects that idea because "a woman can't do that but a man can" (ibid.pg.201)

What happens when in the face of these economic hardships, children keep on popping up from the womb? It is obvious, the woman is 'too fertile/over-fertility' (Darko: 126). Kamara, in *On Monday of Last Week*, is given pills to prevent conception by her husband. It seem a general norm that whenever contraceptives are mentioned, the focus is on women because "men are dead against condoms" (Darko: 85) and rarely use the commonest of their contraceptives because it takes away some of the pleasure they enjoy in sex.

These are a few of the tricks women play on themselves. They turn to believe that all the problems affecting humankind come from the woman because they have somehow managed to accept the myth that their great, great, great grandmother is the cause of all problems.

Therefore, even if a husband leaves his wife, it is seen as the woman's fault; may be her cooking is bad, maybe she does not respect him, maybe she does not wash, iron, trim and make his cloth, bed, handkerchiefs etc.

Conclusion

We have so far been discussing various themes espoused in three works by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. These themes include: education, marginalization, marriage, childbirth, infertility, etc. Africa in the 21st century is a continent of emerging opportunities for the woman. It takes only education and a self will to secure a place in this emerging boom of opportunities.

One woman cannot fulfill all that; neither can just a handful do that. There is therefore the need to hold each other's hand and shake off the unnecessary absurdities. This when done, will not only break the bonds of customs, taboos and antiquated traditions to which women are chained, but also deal a heavy blow to that age-old reality of male chauvinism.

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