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Construction of Community as the Cause of Communal Violence:

A Study of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Surya Prasad Neupane has completed his thesis on **Construction of Community as the Cause of Communal Violence: A Study of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*** under my supervision. He carried out this research paper from August 2009 to January 2010. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled **Construction of Community as the Cause of Communal Violence: A Study of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*** submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Surya Prasad Neupane has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

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Abstract

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* belongs to the genre of postcolonial fiction. The novel centers on the trauma of 'communal violence' due to 'construction of community' making explicit link between colonialism and the ethnic and political strife of the new nation (Biafra). The traumatic legacy of colonialism is not only evident in search for 'collective identity' in the name of ethnicity but also in the daily lives of citizens from peasants to intellectuals, i.e. Ugwu to Odenigbo. The results out of colonial legacy in postcolonial situation decipher in multiple ways- -especially into historico-cultural trauma. Thus, the historico-cultural trauma in the form of Civil War resulted out of 'construction of community' is the main concern of the research. Major Nigerian tribes' -the Igbos and the Hausas'- -construction of community causes traumatic Nigerian Civil War. Adichie in her novel appeals for 'thin morality' and 'ethics of coexistence' for the 'working through' of historico-cultural trauma.

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I. Introduction to Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) draws the idea of anxiety out of Nigerian Civil War. The novel captures the traumatic disorder caused by legacy of racism cum colonialism in post-colonial Nigeria. The division of the plot, content and characters in fragmented order visualizes the disorder in post independent Nigeria. The novel not only deciphers the cruel chemistry that has all too often turned hope into despair in postcolonial Africa but also celebrates beauty, humor and tenderness. The novel at the same time most notably depicts the impacts of brutalities of Civil War on peasants and intellectuals alike, Ugwu and Odenigbo respectively.

The main concern of this dissertation is to show the traumatic disorder in post-independent Nigeria. The symbolic representation of the plot in fragmented order which moves from early sixties to later sixties, and again early sixties to later sixties, symbolizes the fragmented and disordered situation. The book-within-the-book: *The World Was Silent When We Died* is addressed to the pathetic condition of the people because of three years' Civil War in post-independent Nigeria. In the same manner, the variety in content represented by the post-independent debate between main characters, the horrendous effects of the civil war resulted out of ethnic tussle (between Igbo and Hausa) and transitional phase to modernity avoiding the tradition and blind-faith also creating disorder in the subject matter. The novel, at the same, time portrays the heart-rending picture of Nigeria integrating Kwashiorkor, the silent killer of children and the class-conflict in the post-colonial era. The variety in characterization from Odenigbo, a revolutionary lover, to Richard, a white man transformed himself as an Igbo is also the main concern of the novel. In short, Adichie employs the basic idea about the post-independence disorder in Nigeria

through the disillusioned variety in form, content and characters to dig-up the burden of colonialism showing violence within it which resulted into traumatic articulation.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) is about the religious hypocrisy and tyranny in post-independent Nigeria. She shows the domestic violence and its results through the character Kambali. Adichie draws us inside Kambali's world through her rich description of physical and domestic environment. Fifteen years old Kambali, the first person narrator, and her elder brother, Jaja, live harshly confined lives ruled by their tyrannical father, a wealthy factory owner and passionately devoted Catholic. In the name of class and religious faith, the father punishes them when they dare to transgress or fail. Eugene, as he is known at the local church, has been thoroughly corrupted by the white man. At the end, the end of tyrannism and hypocrisy is shown through the end of father. Thus, *Purple Hibiscus* intertwining the personal and the political hypocrisy shows domestic violence and religious colonial mission, opens with images of violent breakage and ends with the knowledge of freedom and future. Reviewing the novel, J.M Coetzee writes, "A sensitive and touching story of a child exposed too early to religious intolerance and the uglier side of Nigerian state" (Cover Page Review).

The latest fictional work of Adichie is *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). This work contains a dozen of stories about the lives of Nigerians at home and in America. The tension between Nigerians and Nigerian-Americans, and the question of what it means to be middle-class in each country, feeds most of these dozen stories. The collection of ten stories highlights the inconsistencies and strengths of a variety of relationships. Among ten stories, "Cell One", in particular is about the appropriation of American ghetto culture by Nigerian university students. The very fine "Jumping Monkey Hill" and the title of story both show Nigerian women

confronting white expectations. In “The Arrangers of Marriage”, a young woman arrives in New York with her brand-new husband, who seemed fine on paper but proves not to be quite what he claimed. “The Thing Around Your Neck” refers to loneliness, which nearly chokes a young immigrant woman working as a waitress, but she feels its grip loosening; and she remains wary of her new American boyfriend. Each story ends offering a degree of closure, but still leaving multiple possibilities regarding the continuation of the story for the readers to ponder. Reviewing this fictional work, John Madera mentions, “Adichie writes ‘postcolonial’ stories—that is, stories of women living between worlds, struggling with identity, with mapping, navigating, and trespassing boundaries”(The Chapbook Review 3).

The most groundbreaking novel of Adichie is *Half of Yellow Sun* (2006) which was the winner of the Orange Broadband Prize in 2007. The novel is about the post independence disorder and the horrors of civil war (1967- 70) in Nigeria. The novel basically is about the Biafran War of the 1960s, during which the southern region of Biafran fought unsuccessfully to secede. The book’s title comes from the Biafran flag, a symbol of the rebellion, or the symbol of rising freedom. We get clear description of the flag’s color from Olanna Ozobia, a beautiful, well-educated Igbo woman. The mixing colors of red, black and green respectively symbolize blood of the siblings massacred in the North, mourning them, and the prosperity Biafra would have. Finally, ‘half of a yellow sun’ stood for rising freedom and glorious future.

The novel centers on the issue of war. Mostly we learn of the war, the colonial history of its origins and the national politics that fueled it through the major characters Olanna, educated, wealthy, and fresh back home (Nigeria, Kano) from London; Odenigbo, her academic ‘revolutionary lover’; Ugwu, their houseboy or servant; Kanene, Olanna’s hard-as-nail sister; Richard, Kenene’s insecure British

lover who transformed himself into an Igbo; and Major Madu, an Igbo military man and lover of Kanene. From them and others, we understand what it was like to be Igbo at hard time in Nigeria, and to feel the terror of ethnic cleansing. All the characters throughout the novel are haunted psychically and wounded physically and culturally. People from different ethnicities constructed their own respective communities. Adichie's characters also face the conflict between tradition and modernity. Odenigbo takes himself as educated and revolutionary but his mother convinced him that Olanna is a witch. Thus, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is basically about the horror and trauma caused by Nigerian Civil War (1967-70) which started due to the massacre of Igbos in 1966 to create the republic of Biafra and then they fought an unsuccessful three-year war of secession.

About the novel and novelist, Chinua Achebe writes, "We do not usually associate wisdom with beginners, but here is a new writer endowed with the gift of ancient storytellers. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie knows what is at stake, and what to do about it [. . .] She is fearless, or she would not have taken on the intimidating horror of Nigeria's civil war. Adichie came almost fully made" (Cover Page Review).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* has been diversely criticized and interpreted by the various critics from the very outset of its publication. Many critics have focused on ethnic and inter racial conflict during Nigerian Civil War period. In this regard, E. Frances White views the novel from the nationalist point of view. She focuses on the futility of Nigeria's ethnic nationalism. She also blurs the boundary of master and servant, Odenigbo and Ugwu respectively. She further argues that Odenigbo and Ugwu are a fascinating pairing, and writes:

As Nigeria descends into bloody civil war, naïve Ugwu's experience helps him find his voice. [. . .] Many of the war's most harrowing

experiences are shown through Ugwu's eyes. In contrast to his servant, Odenigbo becomes more and more mute, as his idealism is dashed along with Biafra's hopes. At the beginning of the book he is a man sure of his opinions and place in the world. By the war's end, his narrow ethnic nationalism seems empty. With no defenses against slights to his manhood, he sinks into alcoholism. Yet Ugwu dedicated his book to Odenigbo but for Odenigbo, Ugwu would never have learned to read, write, or challenge the injurious values he learns in school. (10)

The concept of ethnic nationalism which Odenigbo raises turns out to be mere futility. His revolutionary attitude at the last fades with alcoholism and amnesia. Ugwu, on the other hand, though presented as a slave within the ethnic hierarchy, at last turns to be the hero of novel as he challenges the harrowing condition caused by civil war.

Alfred A. Knopf focuses on the partition of Nigeria most notably the impact of war's brutalities through the humanist perspective. Knopf focuses on the impacts of war and its damages at various levels. The harrowing and savagery of war is foregrounded with history of haunting intimacy. Knopf further writes:

[. . .] Adichie tells her profoundly gripping story primarily through the eyes and lives of Ugwu, a 13-year-old peasant houseboy who survives conscription into the raggedy Biafran army, and twin sisters Olanna and Kanene, who are from a wealthy and well-connected family. Tumultuous politics, power plot, and several sections are harrowing, particularly passages depicting the savage butchering of Olanna and Kanene's relative. [. . .] This is a transcendental novel of many

descriptive triumphs, most notably its depiction of the war's brutalities on peasants and intellectuals alike. (1)

For Knopf, the novel is all about the savagery of the war which is shown through the variety in narration. The most traumatic events due to racial conflict is shown vividly; like butchering of Olanna and Kanene's relatives and Ugwu's pathetic condition while conscripting into the Biafran army to fight the racial or ethnic riot of secession.

Commenting on the novel, John, Marie Elena, a novelist argues that the novel is not standard war account but it does not excel the horrors. She sees hope, future, unity and love out of such conflict in Nigeria. She further writes, "[. . .] Adichie insists on accountability and then forgiveness as the only option for redemption: "What will you do with the misery you have chosen? Will you eat misery?" By the end, after breaking our hearts, she uses her last sentence to blindside us with a gift. She offers hope in the future, which is what we imagine" (41). Thus, Elena sees forgiveness hope and love as Adichie's message.

Another critic Donna Seaman focuses on the psychological horror out of the war showing the psychic and ethical pressure because of the racial violence. She also portrays the neo-colonial mission; hungry to exploit oil and influence. She, in this concern, writes:

Half of a Yellow Sun is Biafra's emblem of hope, but the horrors and misery Adichie's characters endure transform the promising image of rising sun into that of a sun setting grimly over a blood-soaked and starving land. Adichie has masterminded a commending, sensitive epic about a vicious civil war predicted by prejudices and stroked by outside powers hungry for oil and influence. (39)

Seaman sees the psychological pressure that Adichie employs to depict the rising of hope. The half of a yellow sun represents the rising sun which is turned into the setting to the destruction. Thus, the main focus of *Seaman* is on the doomed breakaway of Igbo state and fate of Biafra. She sees the colonial motif in the very vicious civil war in some extent (for oil).

Regarding all these issues and commentaries, it is clear that Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be analyzed from various perspectives, but the present researcher prefers to analyze the novel as capturing the historico-cultural traumatic disorder in post-independence Nigeria. The cultural collective identity and disorder due to cultural root is at the core of the novel. If we scrutinize the novel pensively, the treatment of traumatic turmoil through the fragmented and cynical plot and characters can be found in the very novel. The main issue about the cultural collective identity and its disaster in the form of conflict has not been dealt with by any critic. Thus, this analysis will be focusing on the historico-cultural trauma caused by post-independence Civil War in Nigeria.

In the post-colonial scenario, like in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, cultural trauma has been created all around the world. The major events like September 11 attack at WTC, the Bombay attack, Tamil massacre in Sri Lanka, and the present cold-war between India and Pakistan are guided by the cultural identity, power or supremacy. This collective identity refers to the formation of "we" out of "I" and this is "a process both historically rooted and rooted in history" (Eyerman 74). Thus, the concept of cultural trauma directly establishes the collective representation because of some historical events and experiences. But in order for the event to become a cultural trauma, it has to be established as a shared value in recollected manner. This is a process that takes time and that requires agents, mediations and a community of

carriers and caretakers. The gap between event and representation is not always a free and open space that is accessible for intervention and agency. Cultural trauma is a social form of caring. It synthesizes all aspects like psychological, ethical, memorial, historical and subjective in a form of collectiveness. Cultural trauma therefore is a bridge of those traumatic historical experiences and events, where one has to suffer the traumatic past.

As mentioned above, in the post-independence context, people are traumatized due to the cultural tussle to form unique and universal identity. In such distinct identity, the collective memory plays the major role. This collective memory is full of traumatic events as depicted in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the cultural identity to establish Biafran State plays major role for the traumatized subjectivity. In this way, all over the world, especially in post-colonial era, people have been suffering from the traumatic disorders in the process of forming the distinct cultural or collective identity. Regarding the burning issue of the present situation, this dissertation focuses on the cultural aspects and its culturally traumatic situation in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

To prove the hypothesis, this dissertation has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory outline. The second chapter of this study will be devoted to the discussion of theoretical modality that is to be implemented in this research, i.e. the historic-cultural trauma with special emphasis on the post-colonial nation formation, ethnicity, and neo-colonialism with regard to the violence. The third chapter will be the analysis of the text in considerable length in the light of the concepts developed while setting up the theoretical modality. Some extracts from the text will be taken out as evidences to prove the hypothesis of the study. The fourth chapter will sum up the research. Basing on the textual analysis of third chapter, it

will conclude the explanations and arguments and will show how the novel depicts traumatic disorder in post-independent Nigeria because of 'construction of community.'

II. Historico-Cultural Trauma

Etymologically, the term 'trauma' is derived from a Greek medical term denoting a mental condition caused by a severe shock, especially when harmful effects last for a long time. The term trauma refers to the action shown by the abnormal mind to the body which provides a method of interpretation of disorder, distress, and destruction. Freudian concept of psychoanalysis is the major foundation for trauma theory with various accounts of memory and psychological disorder. Trauma theory, on the other hand, is a broad category which includes diverse fields with the specific focus on psychic, historical, cultural, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic aspects about the nature, subject and representation of traumatized events and situations. And, all these concerns of trauma theory "range from the public and historical to the private and memorial" (Luckhurst 497).

The etymological meaning of trauma is related to the physical laceration and wound but the meaning of the same term can be approved differentially. *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* defines 'trauma' as "emotional shock following a stressful event, something leading to long-term neurosis" which is extremely horrible and cause us to fell upset and anxious, often making him/her unable to act mentally (885). Gradually, the theorists extended trauma to denote those who were wounded and deeply infected by the problematic of complicated kind. Such a troubled psyche is called traumatic psyche and this psychic trouble of people is related with psychic trauma.

The analysis of psychic trauma does not complete without mentioning the ideas of Cathy Caruth, a leading trauma theorist. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, she argues about the idea of 'latency,' i.e. when trauma first takes place is uncertain, but that "the survivors' uncertainty is not a simple amnesia; for the event returns, as trend points out insistently and against their will" (6). She

emphasizes that trauma can hardly be forgotten. She states on the part of latency of the temporary delay, which should not be misunderstood as repression because trauma by its very nature displays with a vengeance over a period of time, especially when triggered by a similar event. The term ‘latency’ means the period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent in trauma event. It has been described by Freud “as the successive moment from an event to its repression to its return” (Breuer and Freud 7). Caruth opines that the victim of a crash is never fully conscious during the accident itself. The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can never be fully known, but “as inherent latency within the experience itself” (8).

Trauma, for Caruth, is incomprehensible by nature and by the same token it is referential as well. The subtlest fact concerning it is referential. Caruth claims that victim of trauma, however, reluctant to express one’s hidden traumatic truth, unknowingly reveals certain personal truth. Caruth in this concern writes:

By turning away as we have suggested, from a notion of traumatic experience a neurotic distortion, [. . .] Trauma is not experienced as a mere repression of defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event but it is also a continual leaving of its site. The traumatic re-experiencing of the event thus *carries with it* what Dori Laub calls the “collapse of witnessing”; the impossibility of knowing that first constituted it. (10)

Caruth identifies trauma as a momentous shock which is experienced throughout the passage of time. It is not ‘repression’ of the event but rather ‘re-experiencing’ of the event. Furthermore, Caruth argues that latency is not so much concerned with the

return of trauma as a departure from the knowledge and awareness of trauma: “For history to be history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence” (18). Rather than the historicity, she more actively focuses on the individual psychic disorder out of certain shock in the past.

Ruth Leys, one of the pioneer theorists of psychological trauma, elaborates the idea of Sigmund Freud- -anxiety and repression- -and Cathy Caruth- -latency- -and focuses on psychic distress in her book *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Moreover, for the more precise and specific knowledge about the psychic trauma, the idea of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) must be at the core. The concept of PTSD was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. PTSD is the human disorder of mind after the post-traumatic period like Vietnam War. Leys describes the concept of PTSD:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is fundamentally a disorder of memory. The idea is that, owing to the motions of terror and surprise caused by certain events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanism of awareness and cognition are destroyed. As a result, the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, s/he is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories. The experience of trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present. All the symptoms characteristics of PTSD- -flashbacks, nightmares and other re-

experiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt, automatic arousal, explosive violence or tendency to hyperpervigilance- - are thought to be the result of this fundamental dissociation. (2)

Furthermore, PTSD is the historical construct, which is the result of the traumatic event and experience in the historical period and its surrounding. In the post war scenario, people especially who were the observers suffered from mental breakdown, neurotic distraction, and the catastrophic hangover. Because of such horrific events they are still suffering from the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in psychic level.

For more genealogical and precise knowledge about trauma, an individual's psychic distress should be analyzed in relation to Historical trauma. The word 'historical' usually describes something that is connected with the past or with the study of history or something that really happened in the past and is likely to be remembered. The word historicism means the theory that culture and social events and situations can be explained in history.

While dealing with the historical trauma, Dominick LaCapra, a leading theorist of historical trauma comes to the fore. LaCapra, to clarify his intention about writing, in the preface of *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, writes:

In my account, moreover, not only should transhistorical or structural trauma be distinguished from historical trauma and its attendant losses; it should also be correlated with absence in contrast to loss, notably the absence of undivided origins, absolute foundations, or perfect totalizing solutions to problems. Failure to make these distinctions eventuates in a misleadingly hypothesized notion of constitutive loss or lack which may well be a secular variant of original sin. (xiv)

What does the writing of history have to do with the writing of trauma? How can a historical writing of trauma attest to the specificity of a past event while attending to its ongoing reverberation (echo) in the present? These are some questions examined in LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. As the comma between them suggests, writing history (writing about past) and writing trauma (conveying the past's resistance to writing) respectively symbolize his main concern about trauma: 'acting out' and 'working through' a traumatic past, on the 'inevitability of transference' and of 'second-hand trauma' in this past's reception, and on the impasses of deconstruction with regard to historical trauma.

LaCapra proposes a historical approach to trauma that would include the particularity of historical wounds, while recognizing the way in which this unguidable past continues to shape our current experiential and conceptual landscape. However, this past and its losses would also be subject to a collective process of mourning, 'working through' and moving on, a course that would finally release us from a cycle of continuous retraumatization and allow us to turn to future-oriented ethical and political projects. In this regard, LaCapra further writes:

[I]n post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes—scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop. In 'acting out' tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene. Any duality (or double inscription) of time (past and present or future) is experientially collapsed or productive only of aporias and double binds [. . .] 'Working through' is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as

well as transferential relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to a future. (21-22)

In traumatic memory, the event somehow registers and may actually be realized in the present. In acting out, a tendency to relive the past in the form of dreams or hallucinations creates traumas. And an aspect of working through includes both back there and here at the same time, and one can easily distinguish them.

LaCapra more actively associates working through as the medium of remembering traumatic event. Working through includes the channelization or obliteration of such traumatic acting out. These processes of working through include lamentation or mourning of critical thought or practices that are recognized as traumatic ones. It requires going back to problem, working them over and perhaps transforming the understanding of them. For instance, "Germans wanted to do what they did to the Jews because their culture had made them almost Hitlersque in their anti-Semitism, but they nonetheless bore full responsibility for what they did because they wanted- and not forced- to do it" (115). Thus, working through includes perpetrators and victims in the past, working with that at the present. LaCapra prefers 'working through' of trauma to 'acting out' because 'working through' helps traumatized community to decrease the intensity of trauma, whereas 'acting out' intensifies traumatic burden.

LaCapra, while focusing on the historical trauma, explores more specifically in his book *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*. He distinguishes between traumatic event and traumatic experience: "The event in historical trauma is punctual and datable. It is situated in the past. The experience is not punctual and has

an elusive aspect insofar as it is related to the past that has not passed away- - the past that intrusively invades the present and may block or obviate possibilities in the future” (55). Thus, trauma is related to anxiety which can be both the event and experience; only the difference is in the punctuation of occurrence. It is all because of the transitory nature of the history because “history in the sense of historiography cannot escape transit unless it negates itself by denying its own historicity and becomes identified with transcendence of fixation” (1).

LaCapra distinguishes historical trauma from the trans-historical or structural trauma. He shows different kinds of testimonies, events and traces to depict the real picture of traumatized history. While portraying the historiographic traumatic event and experience, he opines:

In historical trauma (or in the historical, as distinguished from trans-historical, dimension of trauma), the traumatizing events may at least in principle be determined with high degree of determinacy and objectivity. This would include the holocaust, slavery, apartheid, child abuse, or rape. In practice the determination of such events in the past poses problems of varying degree of difficulty for the obvious reason that our mediated access to such events is through various traces or residues- - memory, testimony, documentation, and representations or artifacts. (116-17)

Lacpra opines that in historical trauma, the event should objectify the certain historically traumatized situation with higher stress. Those events can be considered as historical traumas which can leave scars in present because of various reasons; like testimony, documents, memory or other artifacts. The traumatized events like Nazi

genocide, Nigerian Civil War, apartheid and slavery can be exemplified under historical traumas.

LaCapra in *Representing Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* describes two important implications of his view regarding the historical trauma. Firstly, trauma provides a method of rethinking postmodern and post structural theories with the historical context. LaCapra writes: “The Post-Modern and Post-Holocaust become mutually interwined issues that are best addressed in relation to each other” (188). Secondly, he provides the theories in order to elaborate historicity of the traumatized events and experiences. Canonical texts should not help permanently install an ideological but should, rather, “help one to foreground ideological problems and to work through them critically” (25).

James Berger, a critic, in “Trauma and Literary Theory,” writes that LaCapra is concerned primarily with the return of the repressed as discourse, rather than with physical returns (such as genocidal repetition in Cambodia and Bosnia). According to him, in the structure of traumatic experience the repressed is said to have returned in an uncontrollably wild way. The victim of trauma while undergoing traumatic experience works as if s/he is a puppet of his/her hidden urges and impulses. S/he hardly becomes the agent of his/her own experience instead of pursuing for certain creative and fresh venture, the victim of trauma repeats the similar things as though s/he is too compulsive to do it. Berger comments on trauma theory basing on *Representing Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* of LaCapra:

But “trauma” is not simply another disaster. The idea of catastrophe as trauma provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the events. Moreover, this dispersal occurs

across time, so that an event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later. This representational and temporal hermeneutics of the symptoms has powerful implications for contemporary theory [. . .] The idea of trauma also allows for an interpretation of cultural symptoms-of the growths, wounds, scars on a social body, and its compulsive, repeated actions. For instance, a sense of the dynamics of trauma offers a new understanding of the insistent returns of family disasters on talk shows that goes beyond discussion of market share and public taste. (572-73)

Following the idea of LaCapra, Berger treats trauma as an event which can be manifested variously as symptoms of dreams, amnesia, shattering family, fragmenting social structure and forming national disasters. Although trauma is not a distinct disaster, it is the regularity of the past catastrophe. Trauma, thus, is effect of past covering from private to public in the present.

Thus, LaCapra's theory of trauma focuses on three topics: the return of the repressed, acting out versus working through and the dynamics of transference in relation to the historicity of the events and experience. For the further analysis, it is necessary to deal with other trauma theorists like Kali Tal, Avishai Marglit, Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Neil J. Smelser, and other related critics and theorists.

Kali Tal in *World of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* defines trauma as the threat to life or bodily integrity or personal encounter with death and violence. Trauma is a life threatening event that displaces one's preconceived notion about the world. So, she writes about trauma:

The writings of trauma survivors comprise a distinct "literature of trauma." Literature of trauma is defined by the identity of its author.

Literature of trauma holds as it centres the reconstruction and recuperation of the traumatic experience, but it is also actively engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the writings and representations of non-traumatized authors. It comprises a marginal literature similar to that produced by feminists, African- Americans, and queer writers – in fact, it often overlaps with these literatures, so that distinct subgenres of literature of trauma may be found in each of these communities.(17)

The literary works on trauma basically revolve around the traumatized or disturbed events and situations. Generally, trauma writings are identified by those traumatized authors. Trauma writings are similar to those marginalized writings of females, African-Americans and third world people.

This brief survey indicates some of concerns that can be conceptualized under the category of trauma. It stretches from psychic life to public history, reading materials that can include romantic poetry, psychiatric histories, accounts of sexual abuses, memories, testimonies, documentaries, the symptoms, silences, omissions and so many other aspects in individual psyches and national histories. Trauma theory can be understood as a ‘terrain’ where different critical approaches converge. In a way, it is cross-disciplinary in which different disciplines contest with each other.

For the further analysis of trauma theory and its approach, the cultural aspect, and the necessity to study the cultural side of trauma is the most significant factor. Jeffrey C. Alexander, a professor of sociology at Yale University, foregrounded the concept of ‘cultural trauma’ through his essay “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma”. The main objective of Alexander’s cultural trauma is to show ongoing affair: “[S]ocieties expand the circle of the we” (1). According to Alexander, throughout the twentieth century, people always have focused on the traumatic

situation caused by an event, an experience, bloodshed, violence, and war in relation to certain organization or institution. The shift of concern from individual to collective, to a certain cultural location is the foreseen demonstration. Because of this kind of shifting, people think sociologically. In the traumatic level too, the common experience and event is internalized by certain community or group. Thus, trauma is something covering the matter not only minds: “For trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society” (2).

In general, psychologists and sociologists agree that trauma and event are ‘separate’. Trauma is an act of signification, hence something social, and event is an act of occurrence therefore something individual. Alexander, as a sociologist writes:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to horrendous event that leaves indelible mark upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

[C]ultural trauma is first of all an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and casual relationship between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions and actions. (1)

Alexander indicates that cultural trauma is a result of the group practising for distinct collective identity. The aim with Alexander’s notion of cultural trauma is to criticize both what he calls ‘lay trauma theory,’ which focuses that “traumas are naturally occurring events that shatter an individual or collective actors’ sense of well being” and to offer a perspective for considering social and cultural processes of collective traumas (2).

Moreover, Alexander gives cultural trauma an ethical dimension although he does not explicitly use the notion of ethics. So far, Alexander gives the social process

of cultural trauma as an ethical dimension though he does not address directly about ethics:

For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social cries must become cultural cries. Events are one thing, representation of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors "decide" to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go. (10)

Thus, Alexander's aim to deny that trauma is grounded in something objective (external or real), becomes a way of stressing the ethical character of the cultural trauma process. However, one of the key questions is how to expand the circle of 'we' and still withhold the ethical imperative.

The collective consciousness is not the final to determine the event and representation in 'trauma process' but it is agents who do. So, the crux of his idea can be as follows:

"Experiencing trauma" can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences. Insofar as traumas are so experienced, and thus imagined and represented, the collective identity will become significantly revised. This identity revision means that there will be a searching re-remembering of the collective past, for memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self. Identities are continuously constructed and secured not only

by the facing the present and the future but also by reconstructing the collectivity's earlier life. (22)

Cultural traumas are experienced, imagined and symbolized as a sociological domain. Collective identity is the main factor of such trauma. Peoples' search for the collective life in the present and future evokes cultural trauma. The identity revision is the symbol of the traumatic events ever seen.

Another prominent theorist Neil J. Smelser in his essay "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma" appreciates cultural trauma comparing it with psychological trauma. He brings the relevance and generates insights about cultural trauma. He stresses both the promise and limitation of theory and research at the psychological level for understanding it at the cultural level. He, in doing so, does not avoid psychological reductionism. He prepares the avenues of psychic trauma while defining cultural trauma. Smelser relates his idea with Sigmund Freud's psychic trauma and its relation to hysteria: "Freud conceived of hysteria as having a definite cause, course of development, outcome, and cure" (32). Smelser further supports that the memory related with an event or experience repressed from consciousness involves catharsis and working through which transfers into the memory of trauma as argued by Freud. Moreover, for Smelser some events like natural disasters, massive population depletion, and genocide are themselves traumatic.

Smelser shifts his idea to cultural trauma demanding prerequisites of cultural trauma. As he argues that several accomplishments should be made before an event gets termed as cultural trauma. These situations are as follows: firstly, the event must be remembered or made to be remembered. Secondly, the memory of such event must be culturally relevant, i.e. it must work as integrity in affected society. Finally, the memory of the event must be associated with negative aspects like disgust, shame,

filth, horror or guilt. For example, American history is full of such aspects, such as the institution of slavery qualifies for a cultural trauma. Thus, for cultural trauma, there should be traumatized historical events. In this concern Smelser adds:

The theoretical basis for the proposition is that the status of trauma as trauma is dependent on the socio-cultural context of the affected society at the time the historical event or situation arises. [. . .]

Historical events that may not be traumatic for other societies are more likely to be traumas in afflicted societies. [. . .] then, that cultural trauma is for the most part historically made, not born. (36-37)

Smelser expands cultural trauma relating it with psychological and social trauma. Some historical events can be regarded as both cultural and social as well as the psychological ones. For instance, The Great Depression of Thirties qualifies this kind of trauma. This historic event is not limited within the boundary as it traumatized at various levels: at social level, at psychological level, at cultural level and at national level: “Furthermore, once a historical memory is established as a national trauma for which the society has to be held in some way responsible, its status as trauma has to be continuously and actively sustained and reproduced in order to continue in that status” (38).

Smelser, in this process also, shows the difference between cultural trauma and psychological trauma in terms of the mechanism. The mechanisms related with psychological trauma are the intrapsychic dynamics of defense, adaptation, coping and working through but the mechanisms at the cultural level are mainly those of social agents and contending groups. Psychological adaptation, intrapersonal emotions, and working with individual’s depression are some major symptoms of psychological trauma. Anxiety, mental disorder, guilt, shame, humiliation, disgust,

anger are the category of psychic situation which, according to Freud, work to communicate between ‘perceptual apparatus’ and ‘adaptive apparatus.’ While, certain community, group of agencies/institutions, and mass affected out of some historical event is related with cultural trauma. Presenting all these ideas and evidences, Smelser gives the formal definition of cultural trauma:

A memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions. (44)

For a cultural trauma, a related group of same race evoking some horrible event or situation should be at the core. Furthermore, Smelser necessitates three kinds of requirements within such event: full of negativity, having irremovable motif, and the disorder of the fundamental cultural presuppositions.

Approving and repeating the above formal definition of cultural trauma of Smelser, the pioneer theorist Ron Eyerman comes with “Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity” where he explores the concept of cultural trauma dealing with the African American identity from the end of the Civil War to the Civil Right Movement. He basically shows the cultural trauma because of “[s]lavery, not as an institution or even experience, but as collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of people” (60). He has considered the Civil War and the Civil Right Movement as cultural process, and trauma is related to the same cultural process, when the people fought for identity construction out of collective memory. In his subject he writes:

The notion of unique African American identity emerged in the post-Civil War period, after slavery has been abolished. The trauma of forced servitude and of nearly complete subordination to the will and whims of another was thus not necessarily something directly experienced by many of the subjects of this study, but came to be central to their attempts to forge a collective identity out of its remembrance. [. . .] Slavery formed the root of an emergent collective identity through an equally emergent collective memory, one that signified and distinguished a “race”, a people or a community, depending on the level of abstraction and point of view being put forward. (60)

From the above abstract, it is clear that in post war period people who were traumatized by slavery fought for identity with the help of their collective memory. In this sense, trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all. In such situation, when the historical events establish significance, its meaning as traumatic must be established and accepted.

The main focus of Eyerman is in collective identity and collective memory which is traumatic one. And collective memory is defined as “recollections of a shared past “that are retained by members of a group, large or small, that experienced it.” [M]emory is always group memory [. . .] and individual identity is said to be negotiated with its collective shared past” (65). In the cycle of memory, articulation of individual memory and identity bond into collective memory and identity in relation to collective history; and this collective traumatic identity passes through the collective representation. This collective identity refers to the formation of “we” out of “I” and this is “a process both historically rooted and rooted in history” (74).

Moreover, the concept of cultural trauma directly establishes the collective representation because of some historical events and experience. Eyerman further adds:

The notion of cultural trauma implies that direct experience is not a necessary condition for the appearance of trauma. It is in time-delayed and negotiated recollection that cultural trauma is experienced, a process that places representation in a key role. How an event is remembered is intimately entwined with how it is recollected. (71)

The concept of representation is basically focused here. Representation can be analyzed along several dimensions of events remembered in recollected manner. The traumatic event is the recollection of that event which gives birth to trauma. Cultural trauma is not the result of direct experience; it takes long time to violate the pre-established cultural norms and search for new and distinct identity.

Eyerman sees time-delayed and re-presentation of cultural trauma through words and visual images: “Representations can refer to a political process covering how a group of people can and should be represented in a political body, such as a parliament or other public arena, from the mass media to museum” (72). So, representation is the major symbolizing agency of cultural trauma represented by various dimensions as mentioned above.

To demonstrate the real picture of cultural trauma, Eyerman raises the issue of slavery as a part of reconstitution of collective memory. He presents the poem entitled “Heritage” by Countee Cullen:

What is Africa to me:
Copper sun and scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,

Strong bronzed men, or regal black
 Women from whose loins I sprang
 When the birds of Eden sang?
 One three centuries removed
 From the scenes his father loved,
 Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
 What is Africa to me? (93)

From the above poem, it is clear that the speaker is in search of generation's identity. Africa, for him, appears not so much as a geographical place, somewhere to actually escape to, but as a metaphor for a long lost and forgotten past. The concept of heritage here signals the slave past by looking beyond it to something more glorious. The poem very clearly depicts the traumatic cultural aspect of slavery. "One three centuries removed" itself speaks of the past and present condition because of the practice of slavery in Africa. The speaker in the present is in disillusionment, and is unable to fix the absolute representational category of Africa to him. It is because of effect of slavery, which created cultural disorder in Africa for a long time. But in the present, the speaker rather than the culture of slavery focuses on the culture that is the heritage of African American. It is a different Africa that is called upon in the tragic reconstruction of historical memory. Thus, it is clear that succeeding generation of American blacks have rediscovered their slave past and their blackness with increasing intensity.

Eyerman, in his concluding part of the essay portrays the contemporary reworking of cultural trauma. Eyerman, in present, sees the integration rather than the separatism of the 1960s. To show this situation, he presents the African American integration caused by cultural trauma. He, in this concern, adds:

[. . .] The contemporary reworking of cultural trauma is the rejection of the separatism and Marxism that characterized the 1960s' nationalism and thus an implicit convergence through the idea of the African American as black American. This reveals the possibility of accepting the collective identification "African American" without necessarily accepting the linear form of the progressive narrative. (111)

From this kind of interpretation Eyerman advocates for the integrity among different cultures. He firstly shows the occurrence of cultural trauma guided by some related or racial group for distinct identity. At last, he necessitates the integrity, harmony and co-existence among the various cultures. He presents the example of African-American to spread the message of cultural brotherhood: "In the context of postcolonialism and resurgence of ethnic politics generally, this permits a reconciliation not only of an internal conflict, but also of cultural trauma" (111). And this can be achieved through the co-existence of different and relatively autonomous collective history and the progressive political and economical harmony all over the world.

Moreover, the historico-cultural trauma is the burning issue in the contemporary world. The concept of historico-cultural trauma is directly connected to the post- independence state. The post-independence state has often been known as post-colonial state. Such states usually faced instability and violence because the derivative secular notion of European nationalism could not bind the ethnic, regional and religious diversities. The growing nationalist assertiveness and attempt of self-determination in the part of minority group has also caused the situation of violence. Such kind of violence usually was/is guided with historico-cultural situations. And it results from a number of reasons: religious, social, economic, ethnic and so on. Often

identity politics is interwoven with these causes. Even the neo-colonial economic interest has been playing crucial role to invite such violence in the newly post-independence states.

The paradox of nationalism and postcolonial nation formation generally seems traumatic one because of exercise of violence based on the historico-cultural memory or identity. Nationalism is the desire of a group of people who share same race, culture, and language to form an independent nation. It also refers to a feeling of love for and pride in own country. After the Second World War in the 1960s, the people of the colonized state unified- -a sort of homogeneity in diversity- - to do away with common enemy, i.e. colonizer. Nationalism became a unifying principle. That is why, in the 1960s, nationalism was regarded as a feature of the victorious anti-colonial struggle in Asia and Africa. But paradoxically the contingency of nationalism has produced highly ambivalent legacies in post-colonial world. The problem of early postcolonial nationalism has been its exclusive preoccupation with homogenous or monolithic national identities. These tendencies lead to the historico-cultural trauma with the emergence of communalist and ethnic violence in grand scale. Those post-independent nations faced the legacies of colonialism and racism in the form of inferiority complex, humiliation, civil war or ethnic identity following the same colonial ideology within themselves.

To show the historico-cultural traumatic situation out of the colonial legacies, it is better to take the idea of Edward W. Said, a leading third world theorist. Said in *Culture and Imperialism* comes with the idea of Europe's representation or the discourses forwarded to the rest. He writes:

What are striking in these discourses are the rhetorical figures one keeps encountering in their description of "the mysterious East," as

well as the stereotypes about “the African [or Indian or Irish or Jamaican or Chinese] mind,” the notions about bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples, the disturbingly familiar ideas about flogging or death or extended punishment being required when “they” misbehaved or became rebellious, because “they” mainly understood force or violence best; “they” were not like “us,” and for that reason deserved to be ruled. (xi)

Following the same order, how the Europeans represented the rest, the native people of the post independent states advocated for the cultural supremacy relating with one ethnic group. Post-colonial states make hierarchy among their ethnic groups. They followed the colonial mentality, ‘they are not like us; thus, we should be the rulers’ within the ethnic groups or religious group. Because of colonial legacy of supremacy, the cultural existence in post-colonial world worked as boomerang effect. The historic event of colonialism directly established the unavoidable bond with the cultural supremacy among the different linguistic, ethnic or religious groups. And such kind of mentality revealed through the communal violence for distinct identity resulted into historico-cultural trauma.

As Said argued, the world-wide pattern of imperial culture (supremacy among all), in the recent period is approved by the colonized countries. This world-wide pattern of imperial culture can be seen within those countries which were once colonized; emphasizing one ethnic or religious culture as superior than the other. Said further writes about the concept of culture and imperialism:

[. . .] “Culture” means two things in particular. First of all it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social,

and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure. [. . .] Second, and almost imperceptibly, culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860s. Arnold believed that culture palliates, if it does not altogether neutralize, the ravages of a modern, aggressive, mercantile, and brutalizing urban existence. [. . .] The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrations. (xii-iii)

As argued by Said, at the present context, in post-independent nations, the concept of culture is functioning radically. All ethnic or religious groups are demanding their own autonomous land, economy and government. Matthew Arnold's concept of culture is also at the core. In the name of culture, people instead of neutralizing the concept of aggressiveness kept on ravaging the other's culture. Almost the same, like in colonial period, the recent independent countries are privileging colonial mentality within their cultures, trying to rule over the different ethnic groups. This kind of concept, more actively is boosting up the concept of "I" rather than "we." Likewise, imperial mentality is also working simultaneously. Capturing the certain territory of land and establishing the autonomous government of certain ethnic or racial group is in practice (like in Nepal). Because of such practice the historico-cultural traumatic disorder is working all around the world in the form of collective identity fueled by communal violence or civil war.

Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* brings the idea of in-human communal violence of India. He focuses on the memories of violence in 1947. He more than 1947 stresses on the partition of Bengal or the cultural war in India. According to him, “Radio and films played key part in this process” (140). He sees no more the concept of diversity because of search for cultural identity and ethnic tussle. He further writes:

At the heart of these histories and memories of violence is not so much the political-institutional history of the nation—although this still remains important—as the question of how humans create absolute others out of other humans. There is no act of human cruelty that is not accompanied by a certain lack of identification. In this sense, studies of the violence of the partition are studies of the politics of difference. The ideologies that both the perpetrators and the victims of collective and social violence used to justify/ understand the act of violence involved this process of “othering”. (141)

Chakrabarty signals out the fact that all the histories or memories are guided by the act of ‘othering.’ This othering is fueled by the ethnic or religious supremacy. Here, Chakrabarty trying to show the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. The politics or history of difference always creates othering. To demonstrate the fact, he presents religious conflict in relation to partition of India. Pakistan, as a Muslim kingdom, says to their Hindu neighbors, “We won’t allow any Hindus to stay here” and the Hindus say, “We won’t allow any Muslims to stay this side of the river. “We will push them to the other side” (145). By this address, it is clear that Pakistan and India have been facing historico-cultural traumatic situation from the very beginning of partition to the present time.

Chakrabarty sees the ethnic consciousness in India which has been fashioned under circumstances in which the politics of cultural differences has been of preeminent value. In India ethnic structure is marked with pluralism so the cultural strife has created the disorder and death in India: “Ethnic strife in India has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands in the past hundred years. Recent skirmishes in Assam, Punjab, and Kashmir have been particularly deadly. What, then, is the difference between the recent Western and the contemporary Indian experience of ethnicity?” (91).

Gyanendra Pandey, in his essay “The Prose of Otherness,” focuses on the result of colonial legacy in India. He argues that colonial India has underlined the distinction drawn by British colonial historiography between the violence of the state and the violence of the people. He focuses on the violence of people which more often turned into the ethnic/ cultural issue. He says that violence generally has grouped people into religious ethnicities: Hindus and Muslims. And this violence of the people shares the colonial traces in the form of superiority among the cultures exists in the state. Pandey adds:

British colonialism in India regularly represented the ‘native’ as the primitive other, and violence –and, at other times, its exact opposite, complete passivity—as his history (‘her’ being subsumed in ‘his’).

Indian nationalism in its turn represented certain kinds of violence, and most kinds of mass violence, as the work of the ‘backward’—people who were unfortunately ill-educated and insufficiently enlightened. It is my contention that historians’ history has maintained this tradition, especially in respect of sectarian or ethnic violence. The catchwords in

the colonial account of 'native' violence were terms like 'religion', 'fanaticism' and 'ignorance'. (195)

The extract, in deeper level, brings the historical trauma. Historical identity given by colonial rule is working in the present. The representation of native as violent and religious can be seen through the ethnical violence. This kind of representation is working as strategy of neo-colonialism- -divide and rule. On the other hand, the colonial depiction of native as primitive other or cultural backwardness is in its initiation, though it has changed its form into the ethnic hierarchy within the natives. The historians' history till the date has been maintaining the colonial tradition of representation in respect of ethnic violence. In the name of religion, people are creating boundary within themselves. For example, Hindus depicted Muslim communities as ignorant and fanatic. Their fanaticism can be always being found in the Koran. The entire Muslim population is divisible, therefore, on the one hand, a mass of disloyal ignorant fanatics, on the other a small class of men, educated in narrow fashion and highly fanatic. This kind of colonial statements in the present is creating the cultural trauma (like Hindu-Muslim conflict in India).

Pandey in his essay "Constructing Community" further elaborate the concept of partition trauma of India. According to him, the 'revenge' and 'aggression' are major factors for creating violence in postcolonial countries like India. He sees outsiders or the 'colonial agents' responsible to create such ethnic or communal violence: "'Nothing happened in our community.' It was 'outsiders', 'criminals', 'politicians', 'madmen', the demented and the temporarily crazed who were responsible for the 'storm'" (199). He argues that the trauma of constructing community related to certain ethnic group like Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims results on the collapse of lived community. Pandey further adds:

Nations, and communities that would be nations, seem to deal with the moment of violence in their past (and present) by the relatively simple stratagem of drawing a neat boundary around themselves, distinguishing sharply between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and pronouncing the act of violence an act of the other or an act necessitated by a threat to the self. [. . .] Face-to-face local communities have to live with disturbing memories of this kind more uncertainly, and continuously, than nations and states. (177)

Here, Pandey shares the colonial mentality of the people of a newly independent states who mark the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ like the ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’, where the collective memory plays the vital role. And it is because of the temporal structure of collective memory; people deny the pastness and live merely in the present through revenge motive. Because of such kind of collective identity in limited location, people live in historico-cultural trauma of community construction with certain ethnicity or religion.

Veena Das in her book *Life and Words: Violence and the Decent into the Ordinary* comes with the same issue, i.e. the communal or ethnic violence in India in post independence scenario. In “Revisiting Trauma, Testimony and Political Community” she especially focuses on the communal violence of 1984. She considers 1984 as the major marker of communal violence in India. Basing on the 1984, she writes:

One important point was established about communal riots in India by the labors of various civil right groups, lawyer activists, and university teachers (including myself) in 1984, namely that far from the state’s being a neutral actor whose job was to mediate between already

constituted social groups and their factional interests, several functionaries of the state were, in fact, actively involved as perpetrators of violence or at the very least, were complicit with the violence against the Sikhs. [. . .] Unfortunately, though, there is still a tendency to work with models of clear binary opposites in the understanding of violence—state versus civil society, Hindus versus Muslims, global versus local, etc. (207-8)

The hierarchy among the various ethnic groups is still working. Many activists, including state actively, evoke violence. In the case of 1984, violence against Sikhs constituted the same hierarchy from the side of state mechanism as well. The superiority complex is the main background for such communal violence all over the world. The survivors of communal violence even face the threats and harassment from the bureaucrats and police officers if they belong to the ‘other’ than they.

The subjectivity formation is also shaped by the violence through the collective bodies. The historico-cultural sufferings are always characterized by the search for the collective identity or collapse like Holocaust, slavery and apartheid and so on. As the communal or ethnic violences are rooted in history thus, they are unavoidable in the present.

Avishai Margalit in *The Ethics of Memory* focuses on the ‘morality of memories.’ According to Margalit, memories play tricks on us, and that we can recover these memories through the hard work of analysis. Margalit focuses on the discussion between his father and mother about the mass massacre of Jews in Nazi concentration camp at the time of Holocaust. But Margalit’s main concern is about the philosophical debate about the ethics of morality regarding the haunting memories of that Holocaust. About the remembering, Margalit writes:

Memory is usually contrasted with history. The contrast is somewhat like that between common sense and science. Just as science is regarded as a systematic and critical common sense, so history is regarded as a systematic and critical collective memory. But collective memory is really more akin to conventional wisdom than to common sense. Altogether, the analogy does justice to collective memory as a form of shared memory. (63)

Memory is the aspect of 'past continues' which haunts in present in the form of collective memory. The collective memory is always related with the memory of history. For example, holocaust is about the history of memory which is in the present shared with personal and collective memory, for which Margalit calls the 'ethics of memory.'

Margalit's concept of 'morality of memory' comes very close to Edward Said's idea of 'critical humanism.' The ethics of memory, according to Margalit, are of two kinds: microethics (the ethics of individuals) and macroethics (the ethics of collectives). And he promotes to develop the macroethics which is very closer to critical humanism. Margalit differentiates between 'ethics' and 'morality'. Morality is greatly concerned, for example, with respect and humiliation; these are attitudes that manifest themselves among those who have 'thin relations.' Ethics, on the other hand, is greatly concerned with loyalty and betrayal, manifested among those who have 'thick relations'. People are living with 'thick ethics' and 'thin morality' in the present time is faded with the communal violence. Margalit, in this concern, writes:

[W]hile there is an ethics of memory, there is very little morality of memory. [T]his in turn is based on the distinction between two types of human relations: thick ones and thin ones. Thick relations are

grounded in attributes such as parents, friend, lover, fellow-countryman. Thick relations are anchored in a shared past or moored in shared memory. Thin relations, on the other hand, are backed by the attribute of being human, such as being a woman or being sick. Thick relations are in general our relations to the near and dear. Thin relations are in general our relations to the stranger and the remote. (7)

We usually lack an attentive concern for the well-being of most members of the human race. We usually care about our parents, children, spouses, lovers, friends, and by extension about some significant groups to which we belong. But by no means do we care about everyone. For most of humanity, most people most of the time are pretty much indifferent. Thus, for the equality among all human races, there is the need to develop thin relations or morality without any bias.

Margalit sees politics in memory in the form of negative emotion. Memory of negative emotion is dealing with the memory of emotions in general and the role of negative emotion is related with the negative politics. And he argues that those negative emotions leave scars that are the 'master-metaphor of trauma.' Thus, Margalit objectifying memory in the present that contains politics in relation to negative and positive emotions; and negative emotions leave scars that are strong analogue to memory traces in the form of trauma. Margalit, in this matter, opines:

Trauma, like a covered stain, still has effects. It makes the traumatized person react disproportionately to a present trigger on the strength of the injury from the past. Or it displaces that which the trauma about with a different object that is somehow associated with the object of the past. These are the two pathological manifestations of reliving the past. (126)

Margalit compares traumatic experience as wound having some tracepasses which makes the person distracted or weak. Trauma is a pathological object of past which brings living and reliving an emotion vis-à-vis traumatic past.

Edward W. Said's idea of Critical Humanism which opposes the monolithic notion of liberal humanism provides the floor for the post-traumatic situation. Said in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* comes with the concept of humanistic culture as co-existing and self-realizing one rather than forming binary oppositions. Akeel Bilgrami, in foreword basing on Said's critical humanism, writes: "the 'other', therefore, is the source and resource for a better, more critical understanding of the 'self'", as Vico stresses on history to the fully cosmopolitan basis for self-criticism (xii). The concept of 'other' as hierarchical order is blurred with the idea of 'self criticism'. Capacity for self-criticism in the third person mode evokes to learn the 'Other' forming own self as other. Thus, "to know ourselves in history is to see ourselves as objects; it is to see ourselves in the third person mode rather than to deliberate and act as subjects and agents in the first person" (xii).

Said presents the traumatic event of September 11, 2001 to focus on critical humanism. He highlights the cultural or religious animosities after September 11 and critically sees both the "West" and "Islam" as culprits. He finds that the ethics of co-existence and sharing is not working on them. He, in his preface, writes:

[. . .] A much exacerbated conflict between what have been called "the West" and "Islam," labels I have long found both misleading and more suitable for the mobilization of collective passions than for lucid understanding unless they are deconstructed analytically and critically. Far more than they fight, cultures co-exist and interact fruitfully with each other. It is to this idea of humanistic culture as coexistence and

sharing that these pages are meant to contribute, and whether they succeed or not, I at least have the satisfaction of having tried. (xiv)

The ethics of cultural co-existence is highlighted here. The cultural conflict between the West and Islam is guided by the collective identity and misrepresentation. Unless they form the capacity of self critiquing and cultural coexistence, this cultural hatred would not turn into the ethics of humanism and critical practice, i.e. co-survival and self-realization.

Said argues that cultural distinction is guided by the ‘thick ethics’ of binary opposition. The major conflict between two cultures is because of the lack of self-criticism. The thick ethics in the form of hierarchy among the cultures or religions, presenting the other as trivial and superficial turning into the clash of civilization:

Since September 11 terror and terrorism have been thrust into the public consciousness with amazing insistence. In the United States, the principal emphasis has been on the distinction between our good and their evil. You are either with us, says George Bush, or against us. We represent a humane culture; they violence and hatred. We are civilized; they are barbarians. Mixed in with all this are two flawed suppositions: one, that their civilization (Islam) is deeply opposed to ours (the West), a thesis vaguely based on Samuel Huntington’s deplorably vulgar and reductive thesis of the clash of civilizations; second, the preposterous notion that to analyze the political history and even the nature of terror, in the process trying to define it, is equivalent to justifying it. (8)

The hierarchical opposition as good and evil is the process of such cultural trauma. Canonizing own culture as superior and humiliating the other is guided by the thick ethics; as a result, the cultural hatred is in continuum. He also criticizes the outrageous

notion of analyzing terrorism of clash as to defining it, is to justifying it. He calls such concept as monolithic, superficial and worthless. He finds such analysis as misleading one.

To rid off from the cultural misrepresentation and clashes, there should be the spirit of ‘critical humanism.’ According to Said, humanism is democratic and open to all classes and cultures and ethnicities. To him humanism is to know ourselves and accept the coherent co-existence opposing the elite formation of narrow humanism:

[. . .] To understand humanism [i]s to understand it as democratic, open to all classes and backgrounds, and as a process of unending disclosure, discovery, self-criticism, and liberation. [. . .] humanism is not about withdrawal and exclusion. Quite the reverse: its purpose is to make more things available to critical scrutiny as the product of human labor, human energies for emancipation and enlightenment, and, just as importantly human misreadings and misinterpretations of the collective past and present. (21-22)

Thus, humanism gathers its force and relevancy by its democratic, secular and open character. It is to co-existing and interacting peacefully with each other in the normal converse of event. So, humanism is to changing the concept of misrepresentation, treatment of history, injustice, imperial plan and collective identity to form a unity among diversity. Change is the law of nature, so, there is nothing beyond change. He advocates for change in human perception to accomplish emancipation, enlightenment and coexistence avoiding misrepresentation and collective past and present guided by the thick ethics of binary opposition, to which we call ‘ethics of co-existence.’

In this way, the historico-cultural trauma processes the semiotics of trauma. It takes place in ‘in-between event and representation.’ But in order for the event to

become a historico-cultural trauma, it has to be established as politically shared values in recollected manner. This is a process that takes time and that requires agents, mediations and a community of carriers and caretakers. The gap between event and representation is not always a free and open space that is accessible for intervention and agency. Historico-cultural trauma is a social form of caring. It synthesizes all aspects like psychological, ethical, memorial, historical and subjective in a form of collectiveness. Historico-cultural trauma, therefore, is a bridge of those traumatic historical experiences and events, where one has to suffer the irreducible traumatic past.

To sum up, trauma theory has aroused a vivid interest among the literary, cultural and historical theorists. Trauma theory is not one or absolute, it lives in paradox. As traumatic memory is politically infected, socially constructed, psychologically aroused, historically experienced and culturally sublimated, the real emotions and feelings of those sufferers cannot be expressed completely in reality. All the traumatic experiences are expressed through distortion and exaggeration because of the biases and politicizing tendency. Moreover, when chance comes even the traumatized or oppressed groups do not reveal the real traumatized situations and experiences because of politicizing effect: ethical, cultural, memorial, and preoccupied mind. Trauma theory is intrinsically interdisciplinary as well as cross-disciplinary. The present researcher will apply historic-cultural trauma to Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, to demonstrate 'construction of community as the cause of communal violence' in the succeeding chapter.

III. Construction of Community as the Cause of Communal Violence:

A Study of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Half of a Yellow Sun tells a story of the Nigerian Civil War from the point of view of characters living in Biafra. The novel's third-person narration follows closely four characters: Odenigbo, a lecturer before the war at Nsukka University; Olanna, a beautiful well-educated Igbo woman; Ugwu, her husband's houseboy, and Richard, the British lover of Kainene, Olanna's twin sister. The novel belongs to the genre of postcolonial trauma fiction because of its focus on the massacre of Igbo, the ensuing civil war, and the death and starvation of a million or more Nigerians and because of its exploration of the difficulty of recounting and voicing that trauma caused by Nigerian Civil War.

Half of a Yellow Sun basically revolves around the traumatic situation of Nigeria in pre-independence and post-independence era. The novel captures almost all the real events and characters from 1960 to 1970. The novel primarily focuses on the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70) and its trauma although it started in the post-colonial context. The structure of the novel is very chaotic which moves from early sixties to later sixties and again early sixties to later sixties including the books-with-in book, many poems and the radio reports within it. This chaotic structure symbolizes the disorder in Nigeria because of the legacy of colonialism and Civil War. In short, this novel is a detail history of Nigeria from the early-independence to the end of the Civil War with several testimonies.

Adichie situates the war and the massacre in relation to an additional site of trauma: the lingering effects of colonialism. Despite independence from Britain in October 1960, individual and national identities in Nigeria remained scared by the inheritance of colonialism and oppression. In 1966, Igbo military officers led a coup,

which was followed by a reprisal against the Igbo. The massacre of the Igbo led to the secession of Southern Nigeria, the establishment of the Biafran republic, and the beginning of the Nigerian Civil War.

On January 1, 1901 Nigeria became a British protectorate, part of the British Empire. Nigeria was granted full independence in October 1960 under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary government. In October 1963, Nigeria proclaimed itself as a Federal Republic. On January 15, 1966 a group of army officers, mostly southeastern Igbos, overthrew the NPC-NNDP government and assassinated the prime minister Sardauna and premiers of the northern and Western regions. It is recognized as the first military coup by Igbos. This kind of ethnic intolerance raised tension to the Muslim Hausa community which led to another coup by largely northern officers in July 1966, which established the leadership of Major General Yakubu Gowon. The subsequent massacre of thousands of Igbos in the north prompted hundreds of thousands of them to return to the southeast where increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiment emerged.

In a move towards greater autonomy to minority ethnic groups the military divided the four regions into twelve states. However, the Igbo rejected attempts at constitutional revisions and insisted on full autonomy for the east. On May 29, 1967 Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, the military governor of the eastern region who emerged as the leader of increasing Igbo secessionist sentiment, declared the independence of the eastern region as the Republic of Biafra. The ensuing Nigerian Civil War resulted in to an estimated one million deaths before ending in the defeat of Biafra in 1970. The present novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* captures the traumatic events from the first military coup to the end of the civil war. Throughout the novel, we can find the real characters and events bounded very vividly foregrounding the religious and ethnic

intolerance among Igbo and Hausa especially turn out to be historico-cultural trauma resulted out of the legacy of colonialism in the form of neo-colonialist motif- -‘divide and rule.’

The title of the novel comes from the flag of the Biafran Republic. One of the major characters, Olanna Ozobia, the mouth-piece of author, teaches about the flag which symbolizes the rising sun or half of a yellow sun, i.e. rising of the Republic of Biafra: “Red was the blood of siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for prosperity Biafran would have, and finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future” (281). From this kind of symbolic representation of author and the naming of the title proves that the author herself is advocating for the cultural bias. The text itself is written from the Igbo perspective rather than the inclusive one. The flag serves the traumatized setting of constructing independent community. Being the mouthpiece of author, Olanna taught her children to create religious gap for forthcoming generation:

She taught them to raise their hands in flying salute like His Excellency and she asked them to copy her drawing of the two leaders: His Excellency was burly, sketched with double lines, while Gowon’s effete body was outlined in single lines. [. . .] Nkiruka, her brightest student, shaded contours into the faces and, with a few strokes of her pencil, gave Gowon a Snarl and His Excellency a grin. [. . .] ‘I want to kill all the vandals, miss,’ she said, when she came up to hand in her drawing. She was smiling the smile of a precious child who knew she had said the right thing. (281)

This excerpt is enough to dig-up the issue of cultural trauma. Olanna, despite of being a well-educated woman, boosts up the religious hatred among the children. It is clear

that the children are eager for the revenge attack. This kind of cultural antagonism serves the Western representation proving 'African as ancient tribal hatred and prone to violence'. Simultaneously, the prose of 'otherness' is valorized through the depiction hierarchy between two leaders of different community.

Odenigbo, the revolutionary lover, always sees the continuity of colonial legacy in newly independent country. He always seems haunted by the historical trauma of colonialism. He is named as revolutionary lover by Kainene because of his radical attitude towards the whites. He takes the concept of pan-Africanism as purely the European construction:

'You know, pan-Africanism is fundamentally a European notion.' [. . .] Only authentic identity for the African is the tribe. I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed *black* to be as different as possible from his *white*. But I was Igbo before the white man came.' [. . .] 'The pan-Igbo idea existed before the white man! Go and ask the elders in your village about your history.' (20-21)

Odenigbo views that colonial legacy is still working. The African identity is not free; it is associated with the traces of colonialism. The historically traumatized subjectivity of the blacks is constructed in binary opposition with white. Here too, Odenigbo is more concerned with his ethnicity, Igbo rather than Nigerian identity or humanism. He sees pan-Africanism as the European construction but the pan-Igboism as the original one. At the same time, his statements work in two levels: historical and cultural. On the one hand, he is troubled by the historical trauma of colonization and on the other hand, he is excluding the other ethnic groups focusing on Igbo. This kind of attitude is guided with the cultural hierarchy among the Africans. He seems to be

guided by 'thick ethics' rather than 'thin morality' or critical humanism. His statements voice the collective identity of Igbo eliding the ethics of co-existence. Superiority-complex is working in him.

One reason behind Olanna's attraction towards Odenigbo was his revolutionary manner. She noticed him for the first time in a queue while buying a ticket outside the university theatre where he was shouting at the ticket seller against the hierarchy made by him between white and the native: "'You ignoramus! You see a white person and he looks better than your own people? You must apologize to everybody in this queue! Right now!'" (29). It is the burden of colonialism that the inferiority complex is still working on the side of native people. Another or the main reason behind Olanna's attraction towards him was the ethnic one. Being an Igbo woman, at that time, she was in serious relationship with Mohammed, a Hausa man so, she overshadowed him following her own ethnic man, Odenigbo. It is more clear in the dialogue of Olanna's cousin, Arize(Uncle Mbaezi and Aunt Ifeka's daughter), who was also in love with a Hausa man: "'If only Mohammed was an Igbo man, I would eat my hair if you did not marry him. I have never seen a more handsome man.' [. . .] 'Papa would kill me first of all if he knew I was even looking at a Hausa man like that'" (42). From this, it is clear that the major characters are directly obsessed with the ethnic bias in practice.

In the same manner, Richard Churchill, a white character, though he was in relation with a white lady Susan, later chooses Kainene, an Igbo lady as his wife. He was a writer and was interested "in the land of Igbo-Ukwu art, the land of the magnificent roped pot" (56). Kainene, on the other hand, was in relation with Major Madu, an Igbo soldier but she continued the hierarchy between white and native calling him "a modern-day explorer of the Dark Continent," which is paradoxical in

itself to which we can claim as the traces of colonialism (62). In this concern, while drinking with Kainene, Richard and Major Madu, Major Udodi comments:

[. . .] Our women who follow white men are a certain type, a poor family and the kind of bodies that white men like.’ He stopped and continued, in a mocking mimicry of an English accent, ‘Fantastically desirable bottoms.’ He laughed. ‘The white men will poke and poke and poke the women in the dark but they never marry them. How can! They will never even take them out to a good place in public. But the women will continue to disgrace themselves and struggle for the men so they will get chicken-feed money and nonsense tea in a fancy tin. It’s a new slavery, I’m telling you, a new slavery. But you are a Big Man’s daughter, so what are you doing with him?’ (81)

The above lines very clearly depict the historicity of the colonizer and colonized’s subjectivity. The trauma of exploitation of black women is foregrounded here. Udodi sees the historical trauma of slavery which is changed into the new form. He also is mocking whites naming them “fantastically desirable bottoms” (81). He also opines the fact of poor black girl who struggles to get little survival from the side of white people. He also is ironizing the educated people who are still following whites for their individual interests, forgetting the historical traumas they gave to nation. The trauma of colonization and neo-colonial mission in its changed form is the major concern in these lines.

Odenigbo, the freedom fighter clarifies the real postcolonial trauma that the large numbers of people are not recognized with this new world, they are still living on the life of cocoon, no way out, in the context when his mother calls Olanna a ‘witch’. “The real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that the majority of people

had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the tools to *negotiate* this new world” (101). He sees the early-independence time the most dangerous and evil one:

‘We are living in a time of great white evil. They are dehumanizing blacks in South Africa and Rhodesia, they fermented what happened in the Congo, they won’t let American blacks vote, they won’t let Australian Aborigines vote, but the worst of all is what they are doing here. This defence pact is worse than apartheid and segregation, but we don’t realize it. They are controlling us from behind drawn curtains. It is very dangerous!’ (110)

The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the main result out of colonialism in psychic level of a person but it can be seen in the physical level too. PTSD in the form of neo-colonialism creates more white evil in the postcolonial countries like Nigeria. The programmes like ‘defence pact’ are nothing more than another form of colonization. These kinds are only the hidden factors and they are more dangerous than the sacrificial one.

Richard, being a journalist and a writer, more actively mentions about the history of different ethnic groups and their characteristics in his book-with-in-book: *The World Was Silent When We Died*. He writes about the partition of Nigeria by River Niger into two: the North and the South having density of major different ethnic groups, Hausa-Fulani and Igbo-Yoruba respectively. He writes:

[T]he British preferred the North. The heat there was pleasantly dry; the Hausa-Fulani were narrow-featured and therefore superior to the Negroid Southerners, Muslim and therefore as civilized as one could get for natives, feudal and therefore perfect for indirect rule. Equable

emirs collected taxes for the British, and the British, in return, kept the Christian missionaries away. The humid South, on the other hand, was full of mosquitoes and animists and disparate tribes. The Yoruba were the largest in the Southwest. In the Southeast, the Igbo lived in small republican communities. They were non-docile and worryingly ambitious. Since they did not have the good sense to have kings, the British created 'warrant chiefs', because indirect rule cost the Crown less. Missionaries were allowed in to tame the pagans, and the Christianity and education they brought flourished. In 1914, the governor-general joined the North and the South, and his wife picked a name. Nigeria was born. (115)

It is all about the historical condition of Nigeria; which is separated into two: North and South by River Niger. These two parts from the past were distinct in ethnicity and religion as well. In the North, the Hausa and Fulani were the major ethnic groups and Muslim was the religion, and in South, Igbo and Yoruba were the major and Christianity was prevalent. The British established the colonial government or empire in the North because it was pleasantly dry whereas, South was full of mosquitoes and animists. The Igbo people were republicans and they hated monarchy or parliamentary government. It was the great cultural binary between North and South.

When British Empire granted Nigeria independence in October 1960 under a constitution that provided parliamentary government, the Southern officers were not happy because they were searching for the Republic. As a result, on January 15, 1966 a group of army officers, mostly Southeastern Igbos committed military coup and assassinated the prime minister. This was the formal initiation of cultural trauma in Nigeria, which resulted into three years horrendous Civil War.

Odenigbo, Miss Adebayo and Professor Ezeka , the intellectuals of Igbo advocated for such kind of coup. Odenigbo is feeling pride on Major Nzeogwu, the main planner of coup: “‘If we had more men like Major Nzeogwu in this country, we would not be where we are today. He actually has a Vision!’” (125). Ethnic hatred among the Hausa and Igbo can be seen at its peak. When Olanna visited aunt Ifeka, she was laughing at the assassination of Sardauna:

‘Our people say that the chorus sounds like *mme-mmee-mmee*, the bleating of goat.’ Aunty Ifeka chuckled. ‘They say the Sardauna sounded like that when he was begging them not to kill him. When the soldiers fired a mortar into his house, he crouched behind his wives and bleated, “*Mmee-mmee-mmee*, please don’t kill me, *mme-mmee-mmee!*” [. . .] ‘The Sardauna was an evil man. He hated us. He hated everybody who did not remove their shoes and bow to him. Is he not the one who did not allow our children to go to school?’ (130)

Certainly, the people were fed-up with tyranny. Aunt Ifekas’ utterances of hatred are borned out of the hatred given by Sardauna. The barbaric and pathetic condition of the haunter and the haunted is clearly shown by the above lines. How inhumanistic is the sense of revenge? It is clear from the dialogue of aunt Ifeka. No doubt, it is the result of the denial of ethical co-existence.

Cultural trauma is marked by the sense of revenge. The Hausa people also followed the same order with the help of another coup: “Northern officers have taken over. The BBC says they are killing Igbo officers in Kaduna. [. . .] On the radio, the breathless British voice said it was quite extraordinary that the second coup had occurred only six months after the first” (137-38). It was the real beginning of the

heart rendering massacre of Igbos and the worthless Civil War. The revenge attack turned out to be finishing the opponent:

Many Igbo officers were dead. The killings were organized; [. . .] the Northerners picked out all the Igbo soldiers and took them away and shot them. [. . .] ‘They killed Colonel Udodi Ekechi’. [. . .] Northern soldiers put him in a cell in the barracks and fed him his own shit. He ate his own shit.’ Kainene paused. ‘Then they beat him senseless and tied him to an iron cross and threw him back in his cell. He died tied to an iron cross. He died on a cross.’ (138)

From the above expression, it is crystal clear that the revenge attack in the form of ethnic segregation among the Nigerians brought the horrendous effect of colonial mentality that of superiority complex. In the same order, the narration of butchering of Major Udodi, an Igbo soldier in barbaric and humiliating way, exhibits the fact that there is no rule in war.

The most pathetic condition of people out of such cultural intolerance is starvation. Richard writes about the condition in Civil War especially focusing on the starvation in his book:

Starvation was a Nigerian weapon of war. Starvation broke Biafra and brought Biafra fame and made Biafra last as long as it did. Starvation made the people of the world take notice and sparked protest and demonstrations in London and Moscow and Czechoslovakia.

Starvation made Zambia and Tanzania and Ivory Coast and Gabon recognize Biafra, starvation brought Africa into Nixon’s American campaign and made parents all over the world tell their children to eat up. Starvation propelled aid organization to sneak-fly food into Biafra

at night since both sides could not agree on routes. Starvation aided the careers of photographers. And starvation made the International Red Cross call Biafra its gravest emergency since the Second World War. (237)

This excerpt from a clever book-within-a-book, confronts the reader with one of the novels' central ironies. Enforced starvation, that crushed Nigeria's breakaway southeastern region, briefly independent and known as Biafra, also brought it the international attention that sustained its rebellion for three years. Starvation, as a weapon to recognize the cultural trauma, also reminded the people the historico-cultural ordeal of Second World War. Starvation, the result of cultural suffering, also managed the Western consciousness to pierce neo-colonialism in the form of different aids. The trauma of starvation, in the same order fueled many countries like Tanzania, Zambia and Ivory Coast to recognize Biafra, an Igbo Independent State.

When the cultural or ethnic brawl between Hausa and Igbo changed into the Civil War, Northern officers under the leadership of Major General Yakubu Gowon followed the strategy of Starvation to finish-off the opponent. Mrs Maokelu, a neighbour to Olanna, opines, "Gowon sent them to bomb Awgu Market in the middle of the afternoon while women were buying and selling. He has refused to let the Red Cross bring us food, refused *kpam-kpam*, so that we will starve to death. [. . .] Those heathens have bombed our school" (279). From this, we can claim that Gowon's mission was targeted to eliminate the existence of Igbos. Olanna, being the eye-witness of those attacks, describes the pathetic condition of a mother: "A women had thrown herself down near the body of a child and was rolling around in the dirt, crying. 'Gowon, what have I done to you?'" (280).

The colonial agents are the major power to brush up such ethnic tussle. They are using the native civilians and their war instruments for their own interest: divide and rule and the natives are behind them ‘bombing’ their own people. In the dialogue of Mrs. Muokelu to Olanna it is clear: “This was done by a common civilian with his hunting gun! You mkonw, it is as if the Nigerians are so stupid that whatever works for them becomes stupid too. They are too stupid to fly the planes that Russia and Britian gave them, so they brought in white people, and even those white people can’t hit any target” (278).

The Medias also played the major role to perform such kind of historical distress in the form of cultural fragmentation in newly independence countries. Radio Biafra collected Odenigbo’s interest and support, when it commented: “These African States have fallen prey to the British-American imperialist conspiracy to use the committee’s recommendations as a pretext for a massive arms support for their puppet and tottering neocolonialist regime in Nigeria” (266). The newly independent countries like Nigeria and the more other African states are plotted by hegemonic interests. On the one side, they heavily criticize the violence; on the contrary, very paradoxically they recommend massive arms and bullets to perform such violences. Thus, such nations are like the puppet in front of the neocolonial inheritance.

The savage butchering of Olanna’s relatives at Sabon Gari performs the actual trauma. Olanna was with Mohammed, a Hausa lover when the Northerner Muslim Hausa rioters begin the anti-Igbo mission but she was helped by Mohammed. Olanna faces with the assassination of her Uncle, Mbaezi’s family:

She stopped when she saw the bodies. Uncle Mbaezi lay facedown in an ungainly twist, leg splayed. Something creamy-white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head. Aunty Ifeka lay on the Varanda.

The cuts on her naked body were smaller, dotting her arms and legs like slightly parted red lips. [. . .] ‘We finished the whole family. It was Allah’s will!’ one of the men called out in Hausa. The man was familiar. It was Abdulmalik. He nudged a body on the ground with his foot and Olanna noticed, then, how many bodies were lying there, like dolls made of cloth. (147-48)

During the conflicts, ethnic symbol also turn into a sign to distinguish a friend or enemy. People let only those people live who are recognized with the same ethnicity. Abdulmalik, a Hausa man, though he was familiar with Uncle Mbaezi’ family, was proud to perform such butchering. From his dialogue it is clear that he was doing all with Allah’s will or God’s will. Warfronts used rape as an instrument to torture women. From the above description, Aunty Ifeka also faced the same torture before murder.

The most traumatic episode is faced by Olanna in the train at calabash while returnig to Nsukka from Sabon Gari. This episode, which is recounted three times in the novel, has brought psychic trauma which paralyzes Olanna:

A liquid – urine – was spreading on the floor of the train. Olanna felt it coldly soaking into her dress. The women with the calabash nudged her, then motioned to some other people close by. ‘*Bainu*, come,’ she said. ‘Come and take a look.’

She opened the calabash.

‘Take a look,’ she said again.

Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl’s head with the ashy-grey skin and the plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open

mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed. (149)

The description of the event verifies the horror of such tussle. It shows how war survivors lived with. This event is enough to burrow people into psychic disorder and dream haunt.

The secessionist sentiment and search for collective identity grew-up among the Igbos. The leader of the Igbos' secession mission, Ojukwu encourages his people to be ready to wage war against Hausa. He screams for 'Power' among the Igbos using memory to fulfill it, for the revenge attack. He groans:

[. . .] Shall we ignore the thousands of our brothers and sisters killed in North?' [. . .] 'If they declare war,' he said. 'I want to tell you now that it may become a long-drawn-out war. A long-drawn-out war. Are you prepared? Are we prepared?' [. . .] 'Yes! Yes! Ojukwu, Give us Guns! There is anger in our Hearts!' (170-71)

Memory plays the central role to enhance the revenge attack. Ojukwu, here is preparing his people to fight against Hausa in the name of the killed siblings in North. The mission 'Power' of Ojukwu is supported by the Igbo civilians because there is the sense of reprisal on them. And Ojukwu is desperately confident that Biafran Republic will be established one day and "even the grass will fight for Biafra" (171).

Richard, transforming himself as an Igbo, writes about the independence in his fragment of book: *The World Was Silent When We Dead*. He clearly mentions that the colonial independence necessitated Southerners the same order within them. He, in his fragment, writes:

The south, too eager for independence, accepted this constitution. With the British gone, there would be good things for everyone: 'white'

salaries long denied Nigerians, promotions, top jobs. Nothing was done about the clamour of the minority groups, and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies. At independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of fragments held in a fragile clasp. (155)

To boost up the communal violence, the concept of independence fueled to grasp the opportunity as the colonial regime provided for the selected people. These aspirations lead people to the clash among the natives. The power politics worked for the related ethnicity or community dashing behind the minority group. Thus, functioning of thick ethics after independence brought fragmentation in Nigeria in the form of construction of community.

The communal violence further forced the white representation of African people. Collective identity and the unique independence state, the dream of the Igbo people lost somewhere in the bog of Civil War. On the one hand, black people blamed the whites. Professor Achara argues that their fellow Britishers evoked natives to bring such cultural intolerance, “who collected the firewood first place” (158). It is more obvious, when a Biafran soldier blamed Richard: “‘Are you sure you are not an agent of the Nigerian government? It is you white people who allowed Gowon to kill innocent women and children’” (181). On the other hand, the white people like Susan views on such violence as:

‘These people never fight civilized wars, do they? So much for calling it a civil war.’ Susan paused ‘I rang the British Council in Enugu and I can’t believe our people there are still going off to play water polo and have cocktail parties at the Hotel Presidential! There’s a bloody war going on.’ [. . .] Nothing is going to clear up; this war will drag on for

years. Look what happened in the Congo. These people have no sense of peace. They'd sooner fight until the last man is down.' (182)

This citation covers two kinds of reality about the whites and blacks. How the whites are enjoying the period when the bloody war is going on, and how the same white representing those blacks who are fighting for independence. The communal violence is represented as never ending phenomena like of colonialism. Simultaneously, Susan is presenting the absurdity of colonized and colonizer stressing on neo-colonial legacy and the win-the- war effort.

Generalization is ever working on the side of such violences. Odenigbo, despite of being a well-educated man, is unable to see the positive sides of the opponent. He also accuses Mohammed of creating violence. He opposes the idea of Olanna about Mohammed who was upset because of communal violence. "What the matter is that you are saying that a bloody Muslim Hausa man is upset! He is complicit, absolutely complicit, in everything that happened to our people, so how can you say he is upset? [. . .] Can you imagine what must happen to Arize? They raped pregnant women before they cut them up!" (191). War trauma and people's barbarism is well portrayed here. The vandals even raped the pregnant women like Arize before they murder.

Moreover, the communal violence, in the form of cultural supremacy, is more intensified by the colonial interests at the phase of decolonization. Special Julius, an Igbo man and friend to Odenigbo is radical towards those colonial agents. The homelessness condition because of war displaced Odenigbo and his family including Olanna and Ugwu from Nsukka to Abba, and to Umuahia. Special Julies comments on the news reporting of BBC radio:

Look at their dirty English mouths. “Astonishing move by Biafra”, indeed! They are surprised because the arms Harold Wilson gave those Muslim cattle rearers have not killed us off as quickly as they had hoped!’ ‘It is Russia you should blame, not Britain. ‘Definitely Britain. Our boys brought us some Nigerian shell cases from the Nsukka sector for analysis. Every single one had UK WAR DEPARTMENT on it. We keep intercepting British accents on the radio message too. Britain and Russia, then. That unholy alliance will not succeed.’ (199)

The construction of community in Nigeria after independence is fueled by the Britishers. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson is directly associated to this kind of communal violence. He supplied weapons to create such violences in the form of ‘UK War Department.’

The novel does not concentrate on those at the centre of the conflict- -soldiers fighting in battle- -but on the effect of traumatic events on the daily domestic lives of civilians. As the novel progresses, each of its three main characters undergoes, along with daily fear and hunger, a traumatic encounter: Olanna witnesses the murder of Igbos in the street of Kano, including some of her family; Richard sees the murder of Igbos in the airport while waiting for a plane; and Ugwu is conscripted into the army where he observes and perpetrates the violence of wartime. As a result, each of these characters shows classic traumatic symptoms of dissociation and withdrawal including the inability to locate the words to recount their experience. Olanna finds that “[she] wanted to ask him to stop being ridiculous, but her lips were heavy. Speaking was a labor. When her parents and Kainene visited, she did not say much; it was Odenigbo who told them what she had seen” (157). Olanna exhibits classic characteristics of the traumatized in her struggle and inability to discuss the past.

Similarly, Richard tries to write about his experience “but he stopped because the sentences were visible. They were too melodramatic. They sounded just like the articles in the foreign press, as if these killings had not happened and, even if they had, as if they had not quite happened that way. The echo of unreality weighed each word down” (168). And towards the end of the novel, Ugwu, after he is wounded and returns from his service in the army, also seeks solace in language:

Ugwu thanked him and shook his head and realized that he would never be able to capture that child on paper, never be able to describe well enough the fear that dulled the eyes of mothers in the refugee camp when the bomber planes charged out of the sky. He would never be able to depict the very bleakness of bombing hungry people. But he tried, and the more he wrote the less he dreamed. (398)

With each of these cases, the novel initiates a discussion about how we record and speak about trauma.

The traumatic situation faced by Kainene and Richard when the vandals attacked Port Harcourt is beyond description. The attack was targeted on the civilians where, Ikejide, one of the helper of Kainene was killed in mortar attack:

[T]hen came the cold whistle of a mortar in the air and the crash as it landed and the boom as it exploded. Richard pressed Kainene to him. A piece of shrapnel, the size of a fist wheezed past. Ikejide was still running and, in the moment that Richard glanced away and back, Ikejide’s head was gone. The body was running, arched slightly forwards, arms flying around, but there was no head. There was only a bloodied neck, Kainene screamed. [T]here was eerie blankness in her eyes. Richard was not sure what to do. He shook her gently but the

blank look remained, so he went to the tap and splashed a bucket of cold water on her. (317)

The unspeakable terrible situation of war is crystal clear here. How the war trauma survivor passes through the psychic disorder after witnessing such horror can be exemplified with Kainene. Those traumatic experiences haunted people in the dreams and everyday life as well: “She woke up every morning and remembered his running headless body clearly” (318).

Ugwu, the main character of the novel, was conscripted by Biafran Organization of Freedom Fighter. He faced the actual pain while he was used as child soldier:

The skinny soldiers – with no boots, no uniforms, no half of a yellow sun on their sleeves –kicked and slapped and mocked Ugwu during physical training. The parade left Ugwu’s arm stiff. The obstacles training left his calves throbbing. The rope climbing left his palms bleeding. The wraps of *garri* he stood in a queue to receive, the thin soup scooped from a metal basin once a day, left him hungry. And the casual cruelty of this new world in which he had no say grew a hard clot of fear inside him. (359)

The traumatic articulation is overheard here through the third person narrator. Ugwu faces the physical trauma during the training which was not of his interest. The difficulty and compulsion as a child soldier of Biafran Organization of Freedom Fighter, reminded him of the historical trauma of slavery. He goes through the novel *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* during these days and memorizes some sentences from the book to compare him: “*The slave became as fearful of the tar as of*

the lace. They find less difficulty from the wants of beds, than the want of time to sleep” (360).

The war resulted into homelessness situation, and insecurity compelled people to live on the Bunkers. The children suffered of Kwashiorkor, the silent killer because of the lack of food and nutrition. The main characters, Olanna, Odenigbo, their child, and Ugwu also faced the same condition. They live as refugees in Umuahia. They suffered humiliation and threats.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie shows the persisting colonial interest in post-independence Nigeria as a booster of violence in subtle way. Britain as colonial power is an ‘evil spirit’ in the novel. Adichie, at the same time, explores the complexity of ethnicity and violence that resulted into traumatic disorder during the war on the inter-ethnic struggles fueled with neo-colonial mission. Hausa in the north, the Igbos in the south and the Yorubas in the southwest were the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. After independence, the ethnic issue became more prominent. Nigeria underwent politicization of ethnicity and regionalism.

The novel makes explicit link between colonialism and the ethnic and political strife of the new nation: “If this is hatred, then it is very young. It has been caused, simply, by the informal divide-and-rule politics of the British colonial exercise. These politics manipulated the differences between the tribes and ensured that unity would not exist” (166-67). Telling the story of the Biafran Republic and the Nigerian Civil War, the novel challenges the concept of the ‘Postcolonial’ by connecting the violence in post-independence Nigeria with the centuries of colonial rule. The economic, political, and cultural domination of colonialism lingers in multiple ways long after the changing of flags.

The traumatic legacy of colonialism is not evident in the large –scale events of history but in the daily private lives of citizens. The major characters like Odenigbo and his beloved Olanna are engaged in psychic harassment due to sexual jealousy. Mainly Odenigbo, on the one hand, is a ‘revolutionary lover’ who seems radical about the British colonialism and its aftereffects but on the other hand he follows the very colonial mentality in his life style (sexual relationship) and language he addresses to his natives. Thus, the creation of Biafra in the novel is a consequence of this unmarked history out of the traumatized legacy of the colonialism. The tensions and rivalries fueled by British governance remain uncontrolled until they erupt in violence, tearing apart the nation fabricated by the British. But to whom is the trauma of colonialism inaccessible? Not to the people of Nigeria who live in it. Within Nigeria, the violence of the past and present are not outside knowledge but woven into cultural practices and everyday routines. The history of colonialism as traumatic factor perpetrated by the west remains unacknowledged in the official histories of the Anglo-European civilizing mission and narratives of charity and progress.

Furthermore, Adichie’s presentation of complexity of ethnicity raises crucial question about symbols, i.e. tribal marks and geography come to define the ‘imagined community,’ that is ethnic group. In Lagos and Northern Nigeria, the Igbo country was perceived as a monolith undemarcated by the River Niger. Besides geography, ethnic symbol loomed alike in ethnic conflict. During the witch hunt and massacre of Igbo community residing in the predominantly Hausa country up North, Major Madu, an Igbo soldier survived with the help of his fellow Hausa soldier, Ibrahim.

Richard represents ‘White man’s burden’ so as to make people aware about the war’s trauma through his book. He really wanted to write about the roped pot and Igbo-Ukwu art under the title, *The Basket of Hands*, changed into *In the Time of*

Roped Pots but finally transformed it into *The World Was Silent When We Died* before bequeathing it to Ugwu. The title of the book was named under the expression of Major Madu. Madu suggests Richard to depict the real picture of War's brutalities rather to claim himself as a Biafran. White people always mystify and treat as story what the blacks deliver to them: "They want experienced insiders to do stories that are about more than just the number of Biafran dead" (304). Madu argues supporting Kainene:

[T]hey will take what you write more seriously because you are white. Look, truth is that this is not your war. This is not your cause. Your government will evacuate you in a minute if you ask them to. So it is not enough to carry limp branches and shout *power, power* to show that you support Biafra. If you really want to contribute, this is the way that you can. The world has to know the truth of what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent while we die. They will believe a white man who lives in Biafra and who is not a professional journalist. You can tell them. [D]ifins flown by Russian and Egyptians are bombing us everyday, [a]nd how the British and Soviets are in an unholy alliance giving more and more arms to Nigeria, and how the Americans have refused to help us, and how our relief flight come in at night with no lights because the Nigerians will shoot them down during the day.' (305)

The neo-colonial hegemonic attitude is still working. The whites do not believe the blacks. On the one hand, the colonial legacy of different countries is working in hidden way, on the other, they are more traumatizing the situation supporting arms to eliminate the Biafran. Madu sees the continued hegemonic sympathy on the side of

Richard transforming himself as Biafran. Madu, here, encourages Richard to do something precious than the neo-colonial motif - to make aware the people about the actual condition of the Civil War.

Furthermore, the harrowing situation after the Biafran noticed the warship supported from the British side, which is a self-destructive one. Major Madu makes Richard cautious of certain accident: "There is a rumour that Britain supplied five warships to Nigeria, so youths have been burning British shops and houses all over Port Harcourt today" (314). This is also a kind of cultural trauma in broad sense. The neo-colonial interruption caused cultural trauma between whites and blacks in Nigeria, and at the same time in the blacks of Nigeria.

The focus in the novel on the continued hegemony of a colonial signifying system foregrounds the difficulties these characters face in attaining a voice with which to begin the western subject. The cultural shift after the decolonization in Nigeria led to explore how to narrate cultural trauma which is resulted out of the civil war. Out of the traumatic articulation in post-colonial Nigeria most notably, the British and US journalists situate themselves as witness to the trauma of the war, but the story they hear is distorted and filtered through colonial discourses which prevent them from listening.

Through the white character Richard, the bitter reality about western thought is realized by media dealing with African daily life emergence. In the novel, when Richard responds to these articles with a critique of the colonialism that contributed to the Civil War, he is told that:

[t]he international press was simply saturated with stories of violence from Africa, and this one was particularly bland and pedantic, the deputy editor wrote, but perhaps Richard could do a piece on the

human angle? Did they mutter any tribal incantations while they did the killings, for example? Did they eat body parts like they did in the Congo? Was there a way of trying truly to understand the minds of these people? (167)

This response makes evident that the images of *Heart of Darkness*, though written over a century ago, lingers to this day in the Western cultural unconsciousness.

Olanna's Revolutionary Lover, Odenigbo is one who symbolizes the cultural biasness within Africa (Nigeria). Western narratives or stereotypes like violent, disease-ridden, uncivilized and unknowable are differentiated with urban and rural life symbolically.

The relationship between Richard and Ugwu in the novel opens up and examines the binary between a knowing Western subject and an impossible traumatic otherness. Richard, laughingly called "a modern-day explorer of the Dark Continent" by his Nigerian lover Kanene, comes to Nigeria because of "the magnificent roped pot" (62) he once read about in a publication titled *Colonies Magazine*. As the novel begins Richard has arrived in Nigeria to chronicle the history and culture of people who could make such a wonderful pot. He attempts to erase his European identity and become Nigerian, yet his encounter with the people of Africa, his language and address maintain a colonial privilege.

Richard remains a colonial observer, and Kanene challenges his use of "we" when he titles his latest attempt at a book: *The World Was Silent When We Died*. For him, Kanene is a manifestation of the beautiful pot that drew him to Africa: "I fell in love with Igbo-Ukwu art and then fell in love with her" (310). Despite his effort to erase his European identity, Richard functions as a marker for how colonial epistemology constructs and shapes Africa as an object of consumption. In Richard's final appearance in the novel, the barely suppressed racist attitude toward Kanene's

friend Major Madu comes to the surface: “Come back, he wanted to say, come back and tell me if you ever laid your filthy black hand on her” (429-30).

However, as the novel progresses, the narration of the traumatic history of colonialism and Biafra transfers from Richard to Ugwu. Perpetrating and witnessing the horrors of war, Ugwu is inspired by a passage in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*: “Even if it cost my life, I was determined to read. Keep the black man away from the books, keep us in front, and we would always be his slaves” (360). Ugwu becomes the chronicler of trauma as the colonial voice that Richard represents fades into the background, marking the exit of the western subject from the narrative boundary.

The story Ugwu writes disrupts the more conventional narrative flow of the novel as a whole, punctuating it with eight fragments that are different in style and tone from the rest of the text. All these fragments and the different varieties of the characters stand on the traumatic fragility as a whole. The book these fragments come from is titled ‘The World Was Silent When We Died’ as Richard hands over his book (*The World Was Silent When We Died*) to Ugwu in the final stage of the novel. The very traumatic situation of the book is foregrounded in sixth fragment:

He writes about the world that remained silent while Biafrans died. He argues that Britain inspired this silence. The arms and advice that Britain gave Nigeria shaped other countries. In the United States, Biafra was ‘under Britain’s sphere of interest.’ In Canada, the prime minister quipped, ‘Where is Biafra?’ (258)

The trauma of colonial legacy while forming a distinct collective identity is foregrounded here. Because of the pressure from British imperialism, the other

countries also denied to recognize the ‘Biafran Republic.’ The collective identity of Igbos as Biafran remained unnoticed because of deaf ear of the colonial legacy.

The position of impossibility is not the others (addresser). The difficulty of communicating lies in the addressee, who cannot hear. These ideas are further developed in seventh fragment, taken from the epilogue. The title of the poem addresses the reader: ‘Were you silent when we died?’ Here the title of Ugwu’s book is transformed into a question asked by the dead. The addressee imagined is clearly a Western reader, particularly an anglo-American reader:

Did you see photos in sixty-eight
Of children with their hair becoming rust: [. . .]
It was kwashiorkor –difficult word,
A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin.
You needn’t imagine. There were photos
Displayed in gloss-filled pages of your life. (375)

The poem indicates the Western gaze and the images that become equated in Western culture with Africa. Ugwu’s poem implies that the addressee must move beyond an empathic response that relies on identification with the victim. This is the case of ‘Secondary Trauma’, where the tension is shown out of the different cultural practices and historicity because of the Nigerian civil war and its brutalities. The pathetic condition of children because of kwashiorkor, result of the communal violence is also clear here.

The most traumatic image of the novel is that of severed head in a calabash. This event has been recounted thrice in the novel; the first account comes in the initial fragment from Ugwu’s book:

For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train squashed between crying people, shouting people, praying people. She was silent, caressing the covered calabash on her lap in a gentle rhythm until they crossed the Niger, and then she lifted the lid and asked Olanna and others close by to look inside. [. . .] She describes the carved designs on the women's calabash, slanting lines crisscrossing each other, and she describes the child's head inside scruffy braids falling across the dark-brown face, eyes completely white, eerily open, a mouth in a small surprised O.

(82)

The very fragment shows the silencing of women's traumatic experience. The severed head shows the horrible outcome due to the civil war in Nigeria. Because of such traumatic experience Olanna becomes paralyzed, which symbolically marks the fragmented flow of the narrative structure of the novel itself indicating the fragmentation out of such eerie atmosphere in Nigerian civil war.

Adichie represent the details of trauma in Nigeria alongside a critique of the representation and construction of Africa in the Western imagination. Inquiring and reworking the position of knowing subject and epistemological object, *Half of a Yellow Sun* challenges the Manichean organization of the colonial world by uprooting the symbolic order that structures the Western subject's sense of the real.

The focus in the novel on the continued hegemony of a colonial signifying system foregrounds the difficulties the characters face in attaining a voice with which to begin addressing the western subject. In this way, the text returns us to the question of grand narration by exploring how to narrate trauma in such a way that it can be heard. How the Western media represented the event eye-witnessed event in their own

way to depict themselves as humanists. The politics of traumatic address are engaged in the response of the Western media to the Civil War:

“Ancient tribal hatreds,” the *Herald* wrote, was the reason for the massacres. *Time* magazine titled its piece MAN MUST WHACK, an expression printed on a Nigeria lorry, but the writer had taken whack literally and gone on to explain that Nigerians were so naturally prone to violence that they even wrote about the necessity of it on the passenger lorries. Richard sent a terse letter off to *Time*. In Nigerian Pidgin English, he wrote, *whack* meant eat. At least the *Observer* was a little more adroit, in writing that if Nigeria survived the massacres of the Igbo, it would survive anything. But there was hollowness to all the accounts, an echo of unreality. (166)

The British and US journalists or media situate themselves as witness to the distress of the war, but the story they hear is distorted and filtered through colonial discourses that prevent them from speaking. They distorted the reality of the very traumatic situation. They represent Nigerian civil war as ‘ancient tribal hatred’. They also make discourse that Nigerians are naturally obsessed with violence. The British and American journalists see the event of the Civil War through a set of prejudiced assumptions about the violent and primal nature of African people.

The repeated return of the image of the woman carrying a young girl’s severed head inside the bowl marks one distinct site on Ugwu. The image functions as a symbol of the narrative of Nigeria. Ugwu wants to show the real picture of the country out of Civil War like Frederick Douglas did in his book *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* depicting the pathetic picture of historical trauma, i.e. slavery. He adds in response to that recurring image: ““It will be part of a big book. It will

take me many more years to finish it and I will call it “Narrative of the Life of a Country”” (424).

The bowl and the girl’s severed head within it is picked up in another image that of the roped pot and its relationship to Olanna’s sister Kainene. The image of this pot is first introduced by Richard, who comes to Africa because of the fabulous Igbo pot, an image to him of the culture and history of these people. In tracing this pot, Richard acquires instead his Nigerian lover Kainene, who is for him a manifestation of the beautiful roped pot that drew him to Africa. At the end of novel, as Richard searches for Kainene, who is missing due to the war, he “showed them Kainene’s picture. Sometimes, in rush, he pulled out the picture of the roped pot instead” (407). Kainene, is to Richard, an embodiment of native Nigeria and to the reader a figure of what remains lost, silenced and severed because of three years’ horrible war. Just before the war ends, Kainene crosses military lines in search of black-market food to bring to refugee camp, but she never returns. Despite all the efforts to notice her, no trace or evidence of her is found. It is the most symbolic aspect of the any kind of war trauma. Kainene is the symbol of the entire missing category in the war. As the novel closes, Olanna remains in psychic trauma out of such historico-cultural disorder. She is committed to finding her sister. She is even ready to go to *dibia*, a blind-faith which she previously rejected all the time and utters: “I do believe in it. I believe in everything that will bring my sister home” (433). Kainene’s absence haunts the closing of the text.

At the end, the traumatic articulation out of the Civil War in the form of historico-cultural trauma gets objectified by the shattered lives of all the characters. Odenigbo, the freedom fighter, is faded with alcoholism forgetting his duties. Richard, a lonely man, remains desperate and he even loses his magnificent lover

Kainene. Olanna remains in psychic disorder because of disappearance of her twin sister Kainene. Only Ugwu, the real hero of the novel is determined to do something to present the real horror or trauma resulted out of civil war by writing the book, *Narrative of the Life of a Country*.

The text depicts the actual cultural trauma or the people's obsession with collective identity and hatred towards the different ethnicities, the colonial legacy of hierarchy which is adding fuel to boost up such traumas; and the post-war Scenario. In this regard, Biafran National Anthem clarifies the working of thick ethics in the Igbos:

*Land of the rising sun, we love and cherish,
Beloved homeland of our brave heroes;
We must defend our lives or we shall perish.
We shall protect our hearts from all our foes;
But if the price is death for all we hold dear,
Then let us die without a shared of fear (277)*

The very anthem itself speaks of the peoples' obsession with their own distinct ethics of collective identity. For such identity, Biafrans are ready to sacrifice everything. Even the price of life is priceless in front of their 'own independent identity' - evoking cultural trauma.

The cultural intolerance of Hausa, who butchered out the whole Igbo family from Asaba in the name of unity, is reported by a man from Asaba:

'The vandals took our town many weeks ago and they announced that all the indigences should come out and say "One Nigeria" and they would give them rice. So people came out of hiding and said "One Nigeria" and the vandals shot them, men, women, and children.

Everyone. There is nobody left in the Njikamma family. Nobody left’.

(384)

It is obvious that Hausas are also fighting for the fragmentation not for the unity of the nation. The superiority complex is working on their side. The ethnic bigotry is the main motto of their war. They want the unique identity in the cost of elimination of all Igbos.

In the same manner, Adichie, at the same time, traces the paradox of nationalism and impossibility of co-existence, and need of humanism- -acceptance of the difference cultural co-existence. She explores people’s inclined ethics through the discourse of Major Madu, an Igbo soldier. Madu signals out the unfeasibility of coexistence between the Hausas and the Igbos caused by the massacre of Igbos in the name of ethnicity:

Igbo soldiers and Northern soldiers can never live in the same barracks after this. It is impossible, impossible. [. . .] so many solid- good men – Udodi, Iloputaife, Okunweze, Okafor –and these were men who believed in Nigeria and didn’t care for tribe. After all, Udodi spoke better Hausa than he spoke Igbo, and look how they slaughtered him.

(140-41)

The ethnic tussle turned to such extent that there is no opening of cooperation and love between the Igbo and Hausa. People are obsessed with fragmented ethnic identity and despotism. They do not believe in unity and coexistence. The denial of co-continuation is clear from the given excerpt.

The concept of denial of co-existence is also apparent in the gratification of people in each-other’s defeat. Even the people are praying to God for other’s defeat. Even the major character including Olanna also prays for their victory. Pastor

Ambrose, the son of Mama Oji's morning song exemplifies the fact of bigotry; "God bless his Excellency! God give Tanzania and Gabon strength! God destroy Nigeria and Britain and Egypt and Algeria and Russia. In the mighty name of Jesus!" (337).

Quite contrarily, Adichie, through the characterization of Kainene, evokes for the coexistence among the tribes. Kainene, while working at refugee camp, presents her attitude of coexistence. She wants to blur the border between different ethnic groups. When a pregnant woman spat Dr. Inyana, a minority tribe doctor, and says: "Saboteur! It is you non-Igbo who are showing enemy the way! It is you people that showed them the way to my hometown?" Kainene, performs her rage to the pregnant woman slapping two hard smacks in quick succession on her cheek, says: "[W]e are all Biafrans! Do you understand me? We are all Biafrans!" (320).

Adichie, transforms the treatment of bias among tribes to equality among the tribes living in Biafra. She necessitates the unity among all the African black people. At the last part of novel, through the radio broadcast of His Excellency, Adichie has presented the need of coexistence and unity among the blacks: "Biafrans will not betray the black man. No matter the odds, we will fight with all our might until black men everywhere point with pride to this Republic standing dignified and defiant, an example of African nationalism" (386). The ethics of coexistence amid all blacks is the main motto of Biafran Republic. From the quotation, the nationalistic concept is excelling the tribal bias to form the unitary and secular African nationalism- - acceptance of various ethno-religious co-survival.

Before closing the novel, Adichie has presented the requirement of cooperation among all Nigerians. The reality of tribal war, which is never-ending phenomenon, has been realized. There is power in unity; sharing and coexistence can only conquer the brutality of war in humanistic way. There is certainly the traumatic

situation, if all the ethnic groups within a nation demand the independent and collective identity. For the prosperity and cheerful living, the ethics of humanism, i.e. coexistence and self realization, should be at the core. If the people do not realize their fault, there is no chance of collaboration and coexistence. At last, His Excellency, the leader of Biafran army also realizes the fact there is no option behind coexistence:

I take this opportunity to congratulate officers and men of our armed forces for their gallantry and bravery, which have earned for them the admiration of the whole world. I thank civil population for their steadfastness and courage in the face of overwhelming odds and starvation. I am convinced that the suffering of our people must be brought to an immediate end. I have therefore, instructed an orderly disengagement of troops. I urge General Gowon in the name of humanity to order his troops to pause while an armistice is negotiated.

(412)

In this way, to end up such trauma of ethnic tussle, the only need is to accept the existence of all with self-critiquing to form the equality and coexistence among all tribes, ethnic groups and religious parties. War is obviously traumatic and barbaric one. So, to end up such cultural trauma caused by demand of unique collective identity, people should acknowledge differences, diversities and heterogeneities and valorize ‘ethics of coexistence’ and ‘self- realization.’

Thus, the Civil War for the search for independence within Nigeria is one of the historico-cultural traumas which remind us the historicity and legacy of colonialism –the treatment of binary opposition, representation and superiority complex. The novel clearly presents the transformation of colonial mentality evoking

the idea of cultural or ethnic or religious superiority within one nation, i.e. Nigeria.

Adichie has presented the fragmentation and traumas of cultural war through the variety on depiction of her subject matter, characters and the testimonial issues.

Adichie situates the trauma of construction of community as the cause of communal violence in the post-independence context. And, at last, she emphasizes on importance of co-existence to get rid off from such ethno-religious conflicts.

IV. Conclusion

Nigerian novelist Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* focuses that the binary structure constructed by colonialism must be deconstructed and the ethics of co-existence should be valorized in order to get some relief from colonial legacy and communal violence. The novel, along with the protagonist Ugwu, performs such an act of translation by implicating the Western subject and contesting its privileged position as a detached observer. Foregrounding the Western addressee's role in the creation and interpretation of these events, *Half of a Yellow Sun* dispels the myth of trauma's unrepresentability and of the trauma survivor as silent other. The historico-culturally traumatized situation in the form of Nigerian Civil War named as Biafra-War deciphers people's denial of co-existence and self-realization.

The novel basically is about the Biafran War of the 1960s, during which the southern region of Biafran fought unsuccessfully to secede in search of collective universal identity marked by ethnic binary within Nigeria as historico-cultural trauma, following the historical narrative of colonial legacy- -white-black binary. All the characters throughout the novel are haunted psychically, wounded physically and traumatized culturally. The ethnic intolerance has made people survive as refugees and 'construct community' with respect to ethno-religious identity to form unique collective existence. In such distinct identity, the collective memory plays the major role. This collective memory is full of traumatic events as depicted in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the cultural identity to establish Biafran State plays major role for the traumatized subjectivity. In this way, all over the world, especially in post-colonial nations, people have been suffering from the traumatic disorders in the process of forming the distinct cultural or collective identity. Adichie, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, also talks about such problematic predicament of post-independence

Nigeria where the failure of national leaders leads to the series of military coups and civil wars following the tradition initiated by Europeans colonialists.

In the scenario of post-independent Nigerian politics, Adichie traces the intervention of ethnicity and ethnic politics that also provokes and fuels violence. Here, complexity of ethnicity not only includes the inter-ethnic conflict, but also the situational religious conflict. Lack of resources triggers intense competition and ethnic polarization. Due to the politicization of ethnicity, Hausa came to power in the first election disappointing Igbos and Yorubas. The first coup was the result of ethnic intolerance or superiority-complex when Igbos premiers overthrew the Hausa government assassinating the prime minister, and the second coup was inspired by the intensity of revenge from the side of Hausa. This renegotiation of power status between major ethnic groups and changing ethnic balance cultivates the virtually unstoppable civil war in post-independence scenario. This is how, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, ethnicity has become a haunting factor that converted Nigeria into the historico-cultural traumatic disorder. However, ethno-religious intolerance causes communal violence which functions as post-independence disorder mesmerizing colonial legacy in the form of ethnic hatred.

To wrap up, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a representation of historico-cultural distress in post-independent Nigeria. The chaos of war in the name of cultural or ethnic collectivity has been portrayed through the fragmented variety in the form, content and characterization as the result out of colonialism. Thus, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* consigns at traumatic communal violence due to the 'construction of community' fueled by ethno-religious conflict. In order to reduce the intensity of historic-cultural trauma, Adichie asserts the importance of thin morality or critical humanism in the post-independent nations like Nigeria.

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