

## *The Thing Around Your Neck: A Cultural Document*

In the story collection *Things Around Your Neck* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie basically raises the issue of Nigerian diaspora in American landscape. Adichie is an African diasporic writer; she mainly raises the issue of immigrants in American landscape through stories. Issues, evidences, story and characters that are deployed in these stories are suffering from diasporic evidences. Identity crisis, inferiority complex and cultural hegemony are the common themes deployed in these stories. How their mindset is colonized mentally as well as physically is the issue incorporated these three stories. Adichie presents these stories as the document of fluctuation, dilemma, cultural destruction, inferiority, cultural hegemony of the marginalized groups of people through the life of the characters Chinaza Okafor, Ofodile Udenwa, Akunna and Nkem. "The Thing Around your Neck", "The Arrangers of Marriage" and "Imitation". A Critique of Cultural Ambivalence" is the conclusion of the whole study which asserts that westernization of Nigerian culture has created some sort of anarchy and frustration upon Nigerian people.

Keywords: Ambivalence, culture, diaspora, harmony, identity

This research paper explores the cultural ambivalence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's three stories "The Thing Around Your Neck", "The Arrangers of Marriage" and "Imitation" collected in *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). The main thrust of this research paper is to show the cultural ambivalence through the characters of the stories. While reading these stories, one sees that fluctuation, dilemma, cultural destruction, inferiority, cultural hegemony in the life of Akunna and her uncle in "The Things Around Your Neck", Chinaza Okafor and Ofodile Udenwa in "The Arrangers of Marriage" and Nkem and her husband in "Imitation". The theme of these stories is about the destruction of African people's psychology. As mentioned in the

stories, when Nigerian people move towards American landscape, they perceive American cultural norms and values, they even want to hide their own Nigerian identity. In order to get social equality in terms of employment, equal treatment, social dignity, day to day activities, occupation, they imitate American way of life. In this way, these stories capture the cultural ambivalence in the lives of the Nigerian people which has created psychological trouble and confusion of Nigerian people.

Prior to the history, Nigeria was prosperous, its fame and name was widely developed. Due to its political instability, slowly and gradually country went into the verge of danger zone as it could not provide its people harmony and prosperity in terms of education, occupation, health and security. As Nigeria lost its charm which caused Nigerian people some kind of insecurity and inferiority complex. Therefore, they with the motif of upgrading their life style they migrated towards American continent and started to adopt or imitate western way of lifestyle and ideologies without thinking its possible consequences. After all, Nigerian people neither completely abandoned their own native culture nor they could adopt western way of life completely. This incompleteness leads them towards cultural ambivalence. The collision of two completely different cultures created a kind of confusion upon Nigerian people i.e. cultural complex which can be associated with familiar disruption, cultural perversion, dash identity, hybridity and mimicry. The loss of culture is the loss of identity, when people cannot locate themselves in a fixed cultural legacy they suffer from sense of identity crisis which causes frustration and dilemma. Ofodile Udenwa, Chinaza Okafor, Udenwa Akunna, Akunna's Uncle, Nkem and Nkem's husband are the representatives of the subversion of western culture because they appear to unable to follow the dimensions of each and every aspect of it completely. Thus, it can be claimed that collected stories "The Thing Around Your Neck", "The Arrangers of

"Marriage" and "Imitation" are the document of cultural ambivalence where characters are ambivalent towards both American and Nigerian culture.

The cultural dislocation and hybridized condition of the protagonist but it also presumes their problem of adjustment and survival in the unfamiliar space in spite of their cultural differences, which result in their position of cultural ambivalence. Moreover, they adopt the newly emerging identities, but it never gives them the sense of unity within themselves rather it creates a sense of ambivalence in the immigrants.

Adichie is one of the most prominent members of the third generation of Nigerian writers who basically raises the issue of Nigerian diaspora in American landscape in her story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*. The term diaspora comes from an ancient Greek word meaning "to scatter about." And that's exactly what the people of a diaspora do, they scatter from their homeland to places across the globe, spreading their culture as they go. The collection of short stories *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) centred on the diaspora experience of the characters. "The Arrangers of Marriage" is a story incorporated within *The Thing Around Your Neck* which shows the pathetic condition of Nigerian people how they are living their lives in American continent.

Chinaza Okafor is well educated girl and she goes to the US after marrying Ofodile Udenwa, a Nigerian man settled in America through an arrangement by their parents which she takes as fantastic opportunity. She moves with him but her fantasist wonderfulness turns out to be a great disappointment as she acknowledged primarily his husband's condition and secondarily whole Nigerian's condition in American landscape. Udenawa was successful doctor and prestigious personality in Nigeria, but quite contradictorily she finds him in different situation in American continent. She finds Udenawa not only the man, not a successful doctor

rather he is an authoritarian and abhorrent being living with too much hurdles and hardships losing his identity and personality. In order to exist in America, Ofole calls himself Dave, and even changed his last name to Bell. This shows their fascination towards the western culture. They alter their personality because they face the pressure of postcolonial ideology; without changing themselves, they cannot live in USA. Though they adopt the American norms and values, psychologically they are tortured which means their mind is not constant. Therefore, Adichie, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, shows the diaspora condition of the Nigerian people that how they pretend of being Native in order to exist in this society.

Adichie in "The Arrangers of Marriage" further exemplifies the identitylessness of the Nigerian people where Udenwa says his wife, "You don't understand how it works in this country. If you want to get anywhere you have to be as mainstream as possible. If not, you will be left by the roadside. You have to use your English name here" (172). In these lines, it is clearly seen that how Nigerian people are compelled to hide their real identity and they are hiding their identity so as to sustain there.

Similarly "The Thing Around Your Neck" is a story which Adichie has given name to the collection in which she confronts the stereotypes that Americans treat upon Africans. In this story, Adichie narrates the challenges that Akunna faces once she wins the visa lottery. While Akunna tries to embrace her Igbo origin and traditions, her uncle forces her to adopt the westernized ways of life as her only option and threatens her not to live her life as Africans rather Americans.

After winning DV lottery, she finally comes in America lots of expectations from it, but as soon as she arrives, the people in her community college class ask her ignorant questions, such as where she had learnt to speak English, or if she had a real house in Africa. Her uncle who

helped her to register DV also tells America is "a mixture of ignorance and arrogance" (116). Not only this, her uncle tries to rape her too and opinions that each and every smart women do all this in America. It is American culture where people involved in sexual activities, they care not about relations. Akunna new comer in America but her uncle was already there. He is deviated from Nigerian culture to American culture therefore he wants to make physical relationship with his nephew. Cultural ambivalent can be seen in the nature of Akunna's uncle and also suggests her if she want to be successful in America, she has to adopt American way of life.

In the same way, another story "Imitation" the protagonist is a Nigerian young woman Nkem who has got married with a Nigerian settled in America. After reaching US she finds the reason to love about America is to adoption of their culture. She comes to know through her friend that "her husband's girlfriend" (22). It is American society where Nigerian people are deviated from their root culture and adopting other's one, which can be taken as diasporic exercise of them. Not only this, rather Nkem also wants to perceive American culture and she sends her children school where white people's children are reading. Adhichi writes, "She had never imagined that her children would go to school, sit side by side with white children whose parents owned mansions on lonely hills, never imagined this life. So she said nothing" (27). In these lines, Nkem feels proud of her children perceive whites' culture and their social activities. Hence, Chimamanda Ngozi Achiche through her three stories, tries to show the Nigerian immigrants ambivalence nature.

Obiora, Husband of Nkem in "Imitation" is a bundle of contradictions, on the one hand he seems to be loving husband and father follows Nigerian culture, responsibility of good husband, but on the other hand he keeps extra marital affairs which puts Nkem in "mantel as she lerns about her husband's girlfriend" (22). By knowing the fact that Nkem neither takes any

action nor complements with her husband rather she perceives it as metropolitan lifestyle where extra-marital relationships are viable. She feels proud as her children sit with white's kids. She is so closely fascinated with American lifestyle and cultural programmes. She completely betrays when her friend asks her if she is going back to Nigeria. "But How can I live in Nigeria again? she said" (29) is the outcome of fascination and ambivalent towards American lifestyle.

Similarly, "The Thing Around Your Neck" also deals with the issue of the people who wins DV Lottery and Nigerian people are already there. DV lottery is a trick of "America, to know that America was give-and-take. You gave up a lot but you gained a lot, too" (116). In these lines it is clear that people who move towards American, they lose their own Nigerian culture and adopt American culture. It is their compulsion to adopt American culture to exist there. Akunna is a new comer in America where her uncle asked her abandon Nigerian way of life. Her uncle tries to molest her and tries to rape too which Akunna rejects. Her uncle suggest her that it is common in USA, each and every successful women do the same and she has to adopt such activities if she wants to be successful in America. The Nigerian people who are migrated to USA are culturally Ambivalent, as Akunna's own uncle tries to establish sexual relationship with her which unfolds the dual nature of Nigerian man due to cultural ambivalence.

This anthology has drawn the attention of many critics since its publication in 2009. Richard Bernstein analyzes this novel as a presentation of crisp, succinct, vigorous story. He claims that the people around the world who go to USA are facing many problem. Social inequalities are still remaining in American. Bernstein observes her novel as the document of social inequality. The immigrant people who are in American are facing many problems. He opines:

This stunning collection of short stories confirms Adichie's position as one of Africa's brightest new literary stars. The author of two important novels, her writing is even more poignant when applied to the short story: crisp, succinct, vigorous and loaded . . . like all fine storytellers, she leaves us wanting more (cited in Adiche, i)

Bernstein though these lines indicates the weak aspect America. Adichie through her short stories wants to excavate the situation of inequality or real situation of the immigrant people in America. Through the story she tries to excavate that immigrants from all over the world are not able to live prosperous live as Americans.

Likewise, another critic Hamish Dalley is considered one of the most prominent members of the third generation of Nigerian writers. Dalley, reads Adichie's novel as a historical novel. He further opines :

Recent critical discourse on Nigerian fiction *The Things Around Your Neck* employs historicizing techniques that categorize texts according to generations, each of which is presumed to share formal and political qualities and represent a distinct stage in national literary development. . . . It shows that recent Nigerian novels are shaped around spatio-temporal imaginaries that exceed the national-generational framework. (15)

In these lines, critics opines about the novel as a historical novel, the historicity of the novel is its soul. This novel is the outcome of third generation in Nigeria which shows that both are traversed by alternative temporalities and spatialities that deconstruct their dominant frameworks.

Similarly, Maria Ajima sees the *Things Around Your Neck* from the perspective of racial attitudes, loneliness and disillusionment of African people in American landscape. She sees the

story collection as the document of disillusionment faces by the immigrants in America. She sees Adichie as emigrant writing generally raises the issues of Nigerian people. She further opines:

The experience of something around the character's neck forms the title for the short story collection of Adichie's. The "Something" probably relates to the experience of disappointment and disillusionment that faces Akunna in America. She is confronted by racial attitudes, joblessness, loneliness and disillusionment in America. These are situations she never expected to come her way when she and her family were looking forward to while she was in Nigeria waiting to emigrate. (113)

Maria takes the story collection as problematic fiction which deals with the issue of social problems in America in the lives of emigrants. People all over the world migrate to America with the hope of prosperity, but when they reach there, they face numbers of hurdles and hardships. Confrontation of racial attitudes, jobless situation, loneliness, and disillusionment are the prime factors they met in American continent.

In the same way, Heba M. Sharbobeem sees the novel *The Things Around Your Neck* as the representation of cultural conflict and gender relations. Sharbobeem further opines:

The study discusses space as reflective of cultural conflict and the interrelation between gender, race, place, space, and power in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck*. The focus is on three stories that depict women residing in different spaces: domestic, border, and marginal. Space, and the role it plays in Adichie's stories, is analyzed as a social product . . . (18)

Heba M. Sharbobeem takes *The Thing Around Your Neck* from the perspective of cultural conflict and interrelationship between gender, race, place, space, and power. Hence, Sharbobeem in this article has opinion from the perspective of power relationship. He opines that America is



the super power of this world and its people too. People throughout this world allured to go to America even today, but in America too relationship are made in order to gender, race, place, space and power. The treatment upon American landscape is determined according to their gender, race and place.

Though many critics have seen and evaluated this novel from different literary angles and lenses. This study is different from aforementioned critics because it focuses on the issue of cultural ambivalence imbedded in the novel and the author's critical position regarding the issue. As this study claims that *The Thing Around Your Neck* as a novel, revealing the reality of confused Nigerian people and society where Adichie presents the cultural ambivalence. Characters in the stories are demanding to cross cultural and national boundaries in order to enter the space 'beyond'. Thus the departure of the study is not only thematically but also logically researchable and significant.

This study makes a significant use of the concepts developed in postcolonial scholarships, but it does not offer a comprehensive analysis of all postcolonial literary theories. As the study is mainly focused on analyzing cultural ambivalence in the text, it draws upon the fundamental concepts developed by Homi K. Bhabha, Franz Fanon and other related theorists and critics. Furthermore, the research completely engages in illustrating the textual evidences in conversation with the theoretical concepts introduced above in order to logically prove the claim and hypothesis. As the major objective of the study is to demonstrate the cultural ambivalence that lies in stories "Imitation", "arrangers of Marriage" and "The Thing Around Your Neck" does not incorporate other thematic and structured importance that the text may have.

The research assumes that the collision of two cultures has created a kind of confusion upon the Nigerian people. The author is trying to show the cultural ambivalence by making characters suffer from confusion and dilemma.

Basing upon the reflections and dramatizations of cultural ambivalence this study hypothesizes that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her short stories "Imitation", "arrangers of Marriage" and "The Thing Around Your Neck" forward the concept of cultural ambivalence as the crisis of identity, mimicry, superiority and inferiority complex, rootlessness, inbetweenness, hyphenated identity, cultural perversion, hybridity and diaspora. Cultural ambivalence is not only a reason of diaspora, hybridity and unbelongingness, but it is also the power of resistance where Nigerian people oppose American culture as they cross cultural boundaries and reach new culture.

Above mentioned concept of cultural ambivalence is not only shown as the negative way but also in a positive way through which character are entering into the new epoch. In the depiction of such issues Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, through her character is not pessimistic rather she presents the state of cultural ambivalence as a demand to cross the cultural boundaries and enter into the space, what Homi K. Bhabha calls 'beyond' where space and line cross to forge new identity for the subjects formed 'in-between'.

In order to meet the above mentioned claim and hypothesis this study brings postcolonial concepts like cultural ambivalence, in-betweenness, multiculturalism and space 'beyond' conceptualized by Homi K. Bhabha. As a postcolonial critic and theorist Bhabha has forwarded such theoretical concept in his various texts in order to deal with the problems of immigrants and the literature written on the theme of the cultural collision.

Postcolonial Studies, itself is generally regarded as the "critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and other European imperial powers" (Abrams 245). As a literary theory and tool of critical analysis 'Postcolonial Studies' can be taken as a double movement. On the one hand it observes and analyzes the imperial literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, viewed through a perspective that reveals the way in which the social and economical life is represented. When two cultures collide with each other, there appear many effects in the overall domain of the peoples' activities. It may result the cultural violence, suppression, diaspora, identity crisis etc. This gets reflected and represented in the literature produced by the people, who involved in experiencing and observing such effects of the collision.

One of the major effects of cultural confrontation, as provided by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins is the "hybridization of colonial languages and cultures in which imperialist importations are superimposed on indigenous traditions" (Abrams 245). Such hybridity involves the culture of both sides although in a disproportionate way. Literature dealing with this issue involves in the reflection of both cultures and their effects to each other. Ashcroft in his profound work *The Empire Writes Back* claims that "All postcolonial literature is cross-cultural" (39). Further, he argues that due to the theme of multiculturalism "the postcolonial text is always complex and hybridized" (110). Considering hybridity and complexity as the defining characteristics of postcolonial literature moreover he writes "Hybridity is the primary characteristics of all postcolonial societies" (185).

Hybridity results from the confrontation of the two or more than two cultures either due to the voluntary migration to the new cultural space or due to the envision of the foreign culture in native land. Ashcroft argues that the hybridity is the defining feature of such socio-cultural

identity and the literature produced in such socio-cultural realities. Living in the society, every individual possesses some sort of identity or is in search of social recognition but the concept of hybridity cannot offer recognizable identity to the people living in the border line of two cultures. So, they suffer from identity crisis.

The sense of identity crisis is another important effect of the collision of two different cultures, geographically, institutionally, linguistically they may belong to one cultural space and historically, nationally, culturally they may belong to another cultural space. Such division of the individual in two cultures hybridizes their identity which indicates the identity crisis or non-belongingness to either culture.

Along with the concept of the hybridity and identity crisis there follows the concept of diaspora and displacement as another important effect of cultural confrontation and feature of postcolonial literature. When someone migrates to the new geographical and cultural location he/she starts to assimilate and adopts other's culture, language, custom etc. in order to survive there. Gradually, to some extent becomes successful to transform oneself as an inhabitant of that new location but not completely. At some point, that person wishes to return back to his native land or cultural location in such condition he/she feels the sense of displacement, loss and alienation which, in literature is termed 'diaspora'. It is the position from where the longing of stable home and identity starts.

Homi K. Bhabha in his profound work *The Location of Culture* writes that cultural confrontation results hybridity, identity crisis and diaspora which further causes ambivalence in people. Writers, critics or people living in 'no man's land' or between the border lines of two cultures experience such things, they possess conflicting views towards both culture and to their own position. Bhabha is not pessimistic towards the situation and forward the notion of crossing

national boundaries in order to enter the new sphere called 'beyond' where the heterogeneity of cultures exists in equality.

Going 'beyond' does not mean really travelling into the new horizon and crossing the national and cultural boundaries and it does not mean leaving the history, it means bringing and practicing new paradigmatic changes in the concept of nation and culture where all culture finds their respected position. Bhabha argues, "The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past" (1). It is rather a liminal phase where the world shrinks and then expands enormously at once.

Bhabha further writes, "What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences (2). According to Bhabha theoretically going beyond the narratives of national and cultural differences is always fruitful. Cultural ambivalence or liminality demands such traversing into the 'beyond'. Here, Bhabha clearly points towards the concept of multi-cultural nationalism that promises the equal ground for all existing cultures.

Cultural ambivalence plays important thematic role in Adichie's short stories "The Thing Around your Neck", "The Arrangers of Marriage" and "Imitation" author's critical position towards the issue remains as a weaving thread to the study. Grounding upon the above introduced major concept of postcolonial study.

The narrative of cultural confrontation and peoples' conflicting psychologies due to the cultural ambivalence interests the readers from every place and society in the present era where the concept of multiculturalism, question of identity and globalizations are in hot debate and discussion. This study finds Adichie's short stories "Imitation", "arrangers of Marriage" and "The

Thing Around Your Neck", the texts that involve in the debate of cultural confrontation and its various dimensions. This study touches the subject matter that is highly in value, the significances of the study lies in its contribution of finding the overlooked but most important issue of the novel.

This research has been divided into three chapters. The first section is the introduction to this research which is entitled as *The Thing Around Your Neck: A Cultural Document*. This chapter portrays the problematic issues the research tries to address. It also gives short glimpse of this novel and introduces relevant theoretical insights along with important reviews on the text in order to demonstrate how the study is going to analyze the issue, how the study departs from all other previously imposed claims and logically proves the issue be researchable one.

Similarly, second chapter, entitled as "Cultural Ambivalence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Short Stories "The Thing Around your Neck", "The Arrangers of Marriage" and "Imitation" is the textual analysis of the novel which explores issue with reference to the theoretical concepts developed in post colonialism. It is the actual study that analyses the cultural ambivalence reflected on text and demonstrates how the author has handled the issue of cultural ambivalence and get involves in the debate of multiculturalism. Finally, remaining last chapter is entitled as "The Thing Around your Neck", "The Arrangers of Marriage" and "Imitation". A Critique of Cultural Ambivalence" is the conclusion of the whole study which asserts that westernization of Nigerian culture has created some sort of anarchy and frustration upon Nigerian people. It puts all the findings of the study in logical order and proves the claim or hypothesis of the study. In this way, the study gets a systematic and logical end or completion.

Cultural Ambivalence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's selected short stories tries to show the cultural ambivalence of the main characters: Ofodile Udenwa, Chinaza Okafor,

Udenwa Akunna, Akunna's Uncle, Nkem and Nkem's husband as immigrants who in their entire life, feel the sense of dislocation, alienation and dilemma due to cultural differences which result in their position of cultural ambivalence. In the intersections of two or more than two cultures, there emerges cultural ambivalence. According to *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, dictionary meaning of the word, ambivalence is "having two opposing feeling at the same time, or being uncertain about how you feel" (39). But in a broader framework of cultural studies, cultural ambivalence has a deep significance.

The depicted society in the stories incorporates the 20th century African-American society where material phenomena has flourished in its practical application and African people are compelled to conquer socially, culturally, politically and economically. Their due respect towards western way of life is wrathful as they are transforming themselves in terms of ideology, desire, pleasure and emotions. Regarding the fact Sanjeev Uprety in his article "A Split in the Colonial Gaze" opines, "One of the consequences of the growth of capitalism and colonialism in the eighteenth century was a substantial increase in the global trade and cultural exchange" (19). Sanjeev Uprety writes about the natural tendencies seen in the involved subjects, which he accounts in terms of "fascination" of alien cultural and "resistance" in the parallel lines. Later, he insists that the ultimate result of these fascination and resistance is cultural or "social contradictions" (19).

This thesis focuses on the cultural ambivalence in Nigerian short stories collected in *The Things Around Your Neck*. Accordingly, we can see a number of places in the stories is fascination of the characters to the American culture in Nigerian subject and at the same time resistance to it. This has led the protagonists as well as the other characters to an ambiguous

situation; neither to accept nor to rely on the western culture absolutely nor to reject it, but partially being at two junctures. This state of being is called ambivalent mentality.

The discussion of this ambivalent mentality in the stories complies with the alien culture knowingly or unknowingly. While colonialism was expanding in Nigeria, British, not only came there with their weapons but also with their culture carried by English language. By the influence of language and culture, they slowly started influencing the original culture. During this first contact, the colonized were very much conscious about the defence of their culture against the alien culture. So, here starts the resistance or more concretely the rejection of alien culture.

The same case is prominent in the "imitation". It can be shown through a number of evidences in the story. Nkem imagines living with white people, she wants her children would go to school with their children. She gives approval to multiple relationship of her husband not saying anything although she was well known of the fact that her husband keeps relationship with other women. She is proud of her husband as he sends her in America in order to provide American education to their children. Adiche writes, "She had never imagined that her children would go to school, sit side by side with white children whose parents owned mansions on lonely hills, never imagined this life" (27). These subject and learning have far reaching impacts upon the formation of subject of Nkem. In this context, Bill Ashcroft and others in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* write:

once colonized peoples had cause to reflect on and express the tension which insured from this problematic and contested, but eventually vibrant and powerful mixture of imperial language and local experience post-colonial theory, came into being. (1)



The term post-colonial is related with "all the ambiguities and complexities of the many different cultural experiences it implicates" (2). In fact, post-colonialism is a long and a continuous process of resistance, adaptation and reconstruction of the human subject who are within this territory. The introductory note further adds:

Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experiences of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses [colonial discourse] of imperial Europe such as history philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. (2)

Indeed, post-coloniality is the study of significant consequences caused by the variety of cultural, economic and political power imposed upon the colonized by the imperial authority. Post-colonial theory has been produced in all societies into which the imperial force of Europe has entered. By the influence of language and culture of the colonizer colonized people start influencing the native culture due to which the rejection of alien culture begins. As evidence Achichi's "The Arrangers of Marriage" presents the first figure of resistance from the attitude of the Chinza Okfar, an educated Nigerian girl gets married to Offodile Udenwa. Udenwa and Okfar who are in the verge of 'mimicry' and rejection. Okfar's rejection of Westernized name can be seen when Ofodile Udenwa call her "Agatha Bell". Chinaza Okfor reacts that:

"I never have, my English name is just something on my birth certificate. I've been Chinaza Okafor my whole life".

"You'll get used to it, baby," he said, reaching out to caress my cheeks. You'll see."

When he filled out a Social Security number application for me the next day, the name he entered in bold letters was Agatha Bell." (172-173)

Name is a part of human identity and it reflects the culture, tradition, religion, race and gender of any person. Due to the postcolonial impact on the mind of colonized people, these shortened it or changed it to mix up in the new society. They changed their name and identity in order to find themselves where they already lost their identity and name, that is, in the colonized society. But, the new name creates different meaning. They can surely change the name but they can never change their personality they already inherit from their own culture norms and values. Ofodile loses the identity which was given to him by his native culture and new name gives the scattered identity, which also results in ambivalence. Changing name shows the colonized mind set of Ofodile in which it's believed that only American names are impressive and others' names are not an impressive as of Americans

Ofodile anglicizes his name to conform his identity to Western culture, by preferring to be called 'Dave'. His wife, Chinaza cannot understand why this is necessary to fit in with American society. Ofodil makes a point that in order to exist American society it is necessary. He further says, "Americans have a hard time with Udenawa, so I changed it" (172). Nigerian immigrants by this line seem dwelling American continent without their identity. It's Ofodile Udenwa's compulsion to change his identity. He then asks Okfar to stop speaking as in Nigeria. He points out in her greeting exchange manner as she presents herself with Shirley, a new neighbor in America comes their apartment to provide congratulation for successful conjugal life. The conversation is worthy to quote here:

"I'm Shirley from 3A. Nice to meet you," she said, thanking my hand. She had the nasal voice of someone battling a cold.

"You are welcome," I said.

Shirley paused, as though surprised. "Well, I'll let you get back to breakfast," she said.

"I'll come down and visit with you when you've settled in."

Shirley shuffled out. My new husband shut the door. One of the dining table legs was shorter than the rest, and so the table rocked, like a seesaw, when he leaned o in and said, "You should say 'Hi' to people here, not 'You're welcome.'"

"She's not my age mate."

"it doesn't work that way here. Everybody says hi." (171-172)

In these lines Udenwa continues to suggest his wife to be framed within an American cultural framework. Okfar is resisting the new cultural practices. As immigrants; both husband and wife neither they can neither totally reject nor adopt the foreign culture in America due to which Udenwa becomes a American of Nigerian origin and Okfar becomes the prefect mix of American and Nigerian cultural product. It means they remain ambivalent and such ambivalent condition is created due to the dual nature of the colonized subject as well as colonizer. The first is resistance of new cultural practices. This resistance is accompanied by different forms of rejection whether it is economic, social or cultural. Actually, the resistance is attempted by creating the counter-colonial discourses. Tiffin, in the essay, further writes:

The project of post-colonial writing [is] to interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from a privileged position within (and between) two worlds: to investigate the mean by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in the colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world. (95)

The colonized people have resisted the colonizers not only in the level of knowledge and discourse rather they have also resisted by disobeying his codes of practices, not wearing his/her style of clothes, not eating the food he/she eats, not worshiping his god not speaking his

language and not reading his literature. The same thing happens in this novel too. Udenwa is portrayed to be a Nigerian immigrant man who has successfully integrated in Western society. Through his successful integration he is also struggling against a white classist western society as he constantly competes to be and to have all that is he changes his name and sur name, makes aware Okfar about her verbal utterances, a white collard American profession. American food and clothes and American ideals. The following conversation between Udenwa and Okfar regarding the changing pattern of Nigerian migrants can be seen as:

"Boil some water for tea," he said

"Is there some dried milk?" I asked, taking the kettle to the sink. Rust clung to the sides of the sink like peeling brown paint.

"Americans don't drink their tea with milk and sugar."

No. I got used to the way things are down here a long time ago. You will too, baby."

(171)

Through these lines, it is clear that the speaker is following American way of life through food and beverage culture. A Nigerian person comes to America and says Americans "do not drink tea with milk and sugar" therefore he also does the same thing which shows his hybrid nature in order to exist in American landscape. It can be argued that due to his struggle for equality in such a society and his need to maintain power represents his resistance against the westerner.

Moreover, post colonialism is a project which studies the effects of colonialism or ambivalences caused by the colonialism as Leela Gandhi in her text *Postcolonial Theory* writes. "Rarely did the onslaught of colonialism entirely obliterate colonized societies. So, also, far from being exclusively oppositional, the encounter with colonial power occurred along a variety of ambivalent registers" (124). Gandhi quotes Harish Trivedi's version that "it may be

useful to look at the whole phenomena as a transaction ... as an interactive, dialogic, two-way process rather than a simple active-passive one; as a process involving complex negotiation and exchange" (125). New adjustment should be sought according to the critics in the phase of ambivalence atmosphere. Though there are tendencies of ambivalence caused by the intersections of cultural lines. Resolutions are made according to the situations in a new dimension.

Okfar after arrange marriage, goes to America as an immigrant and her journey of life starts in a totally new environment. At the end of the story, she becomes a new woman, totally different from what she was before her marriage in Nigeria. First of all when she hears her husband had married to a white girl in order to get green card, she quite upsets. "You were married before?" I laced my fingers together because they had started to shake. [. . .]. I pushed the jug (Pitcher) across. The pounding in my head was loud, filling my ears with a fierce liquid. "You were married before?" (183). These lines clearly shows that the anguish of Okfar. In Nigerian society marriage, virginity, social norms and values has great meaning. Offodile Udenwa, her newly married husband who was already married in American with American lady in order to get permanent residence is his act of cultural ambivalence that in any case he wants to America. Udnwa says:

The American Woman I married to get a green card is making trouble [. . .]. It was just on paper. A lot of our people do that here. It's business, you pay the woman and both of you do paperwork together but sometimes it goes wrong and either she refuses to divorce you or she decides to blackmail you. (183).

These are the lines Offodile Udenwa that unfolds every Nigerian immigrants do in United States. For this, many factors are responsible for changes in any immigrant personality.

Immigrants change their personality because they face the pressure of postcolonial ideology; without changing themselves, they cannot live in the developed country. They unconsciously follow the norms and values of colonizers and starts forgetting their own cultures as Udenwa who forgets his root and gets marriage with an American lady.

People of Nigeria were once colonized by European people, which has deeply hampered Nigerian people's psychology. Nigeria lost its power and it destroys its cultural norms and values during the time of colonization. This colonization caught Nigerian people into inferiority complex and they started to take American culture superior one. People, who belong to those countries which were colonized in the past, even after their independence, follow the colonizers. The colonized behave in a way the colonizers have programmed them. They willingly accept the superiority of the colonizers and their own inferiority. This cultural cringe remains forever in their life because of colonial legacy. Therefore, Chinza Okfar's Uncle and Auntie decided to marry her with Offodile Udenwa although they were acknowledged about the fact that he was married. Her Uncle and Auntie were suffered from inferiority complex of being Nigerian, therefore, they take Offodile Udenwa an American immigrant a great person, so they lend Okfar's hand to him. Offodile Udenwa further clarifies, "I deserved to know before we got married" . . . It wouldn't have made a difference. Your uncle and aunt had decided. Were you going to say no to people who have taken care of you since your parents died?" (183). Chinza Okfar's parents were dead and she was brought up with uncle and aunt. Offodile Udenwa was insisted to them about his first marriage but they were agree for her marriage as they were responsibility to marry Chinza Okfar such capable person who is American green card holder. Achichie through this story wants to prove that Nigerian people are suffering from inferiority complex, they like American culture, follow American way of life, but while doing so neither

they completely changed themselves nor forget their own, in this situation they face the situation of Homik K. Bhabha's "in-betweenness".

Chinza Okfar, first of all makes disputes with her husbands, but slowly and gradually she perceives American way of life. She has an ambiguous position in alien country since she starts perceiving the world through the consciousness of colonizers as well as through her own vision which is provided by her native cultures. Okfar suffers from social invisibility and the feel of inferiority. Gradually, Okafar starts dressing up like that of westerners. She goes to America with lots of Nigerian dresses but she cannot wear them due to the colonial mentality. She starts wearing long coat and pants instead and Nigerian dress. She gives up her own dressing style and accepts Americans. Adichie in "The Arrangers of Marriage" writes, "He bought me a coat the color of a gloomy day's sky, puffy with what felt like foam inside its lining. The coat looked big enough for two of me to snugly fit into it" (177).

An immigrant leaves his land for the new land where he gets a new identity. The immigrant suffers from the double identity: he wants to adjust his personality according to the new land's culture, but at the same time, he wants to remain in the identity of his own culture. In this dilemma, he becomes unable to get any identity; even if he accepts the culture of the new land, his appearance remains the same as where he was born. He cannot escape from the personality of his native place, and such confusing state creates ambivalence in his life. He can go anywhere, but his inherent qualities cannot be changed. He can gain new qualities of new culture to enrich his personality, but his identity will not be pure. It will be a mixer of two or more cultures, it can never be natural, because one can change his getup, but one cannot change one's fundamental appearance. An immigrant willingly wants to be a part of the new culture by changing his personality- Retries his best to change himself, but in the new world people may

have some strange types of norms for an immigrant, therefore that immigrant is facing a conflict within his own mind to accept it or reject it. He compares it with his own norms, yet often he fails to get any solution or any concrete answer. This dilemma of acceptance or rejection of norms runs through his whole life in the new culture. His identity swings between two cultures. His identity becomes a mixture that is not fully accepted by the new culture, but his acceptance in new culture always remains questionable. He fails to end up this dilemma and remains in ambivalence. In this context. Homi K. Bhabha states:

The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the other as it visualizes power. Mimicry' is also the sign of the inappropriate; however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledge and disciplinary powers. (122-23)

Bhabha means to say that mimicry can be both ambivalent and multilayered. Hegemony and mimicry come together in the process of acculturation, which suggest disparagement of the tendency to imitate the colonizer. Mimicry is also a sign of double articulation and inappropriateness. The mimicry of the postcolonial subject is therefore always potentially disestablishing to colonial discourse and locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the -structure of imperial dominance. In this context, Adichie in "Imitation" describes Nkem and Obiora position of ambivalent: "At first, when she comes to America to



have the baby, she had been proudly excited because she had married into the coveted league, the Rich Nigerian man who sent their Wives to America to Have their Babies League" (26).

Through above lines Adichie tries to say that the people who follow the culture of the other are caught up in a state of double articulation of their identity. As immigrants Nkam and Obiora 'mime' the colonizer, by adopting the American cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values. Though "Rich Nigerian men who owned houses in America league" (26), actually they "have come to love America, the abundance of unreasonable hope" (26). Nkam and Obiora are rich couple of Nigeria, Obiora sends her wife Nkam America to give birth to their child there and take American green card. Nigerian rich men have bought physical property America too is their longing towards American way of life. Neither Obiora sell his property and migrates to America permanently nor he sells the house in America where his family is residing is the ample example of his mimicry nature. In the same degree, Bill Ashcroft Griffiths and Tiffin, in *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Study* argue that: "When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer that can be quite threatening" (139). In this sense to mime the traits of colonizers is not to complete beneficial for colonizers: its ends are spoiled image and caricature of the masters, though it may be desirable for them too. That blurred copy is threatening to colonizers, their civilizations and images. In the same way, Bhabha also defines mimicry in terms of ambivalence as similar and dissimilar or inclusion and exclusion.

In "Imitation", Obiorao, after arrange marriage, settles his family in America, he as a business person visits far and wide, make multiple relationships with girls which brings

familiar tension. Since he encounters with the western culture, remains ambivalent. Due to the encounter between American and his own Nigerian culture, he is unable to remain constant due to which his identity hybridizes. His debauch nature is the outcome of cultural ambivalence.

Adichie in "Imitation" makes clear of Obirao's fluid nature as:

"Nkem is staring at the bulging, slanted eyes of the Benin mask on the living room mantle as she learns about her husband's girlfriend.

"She's really young. Twenty-one or so," her friend Ijemaka is saying on the phone. "Her hair is short and curly – you know, those small tight curls." (22)

In these lines, the fluidity regarding the cultural ethos and ethical consideration are outlined.

Obiora, a married person with children loves skirt flickers. He deviates from his cultural root and makes relation except his own wife. He does not completely follow American culture if he makes relationship except wife, he has to divorce first one. Obirao is in "in-between position" means neither he totally accepts the western culture nor rejects his own native culture. In such a situation she becomes the victim of cultural ambivalence. In this regard, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have defined ambivalence along with Bhabha's Sine as "it describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized.

The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed in the colonizer" (12). Some colonized subjects become complicit while some resistant. Now, ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within a colonized subject. Moreover, there is either the exploitation or the nurturing situation to the colonized subject that characterizes ambivalent mentality. Hybrid culture does exist in colonial society where people occupy an 'in-between' space by the 'mimicry' of the colonizer.

As understood within the domain of postcolonial criticism, hybridity is the result of the orientalist project of the West. The term has something to do with the traumatic colonial experience, since it is the ambivalent relationship of the colonizers and the colonized. Once the colonial settlers arrive in an alien land, they feel the necessity of having new identity, because they are dislocated from their own origin. In a colonized society there emerges a binary relationship between the people of two cultures, races and languages, and such relation produces a hybrid or cross-cultural experience on the lives of daily activities of Nkem. As she migrates to America, she adopts American way of life. She deviates from her root and cultural experiences. Adichie further discloses the hybrid nature of Nkem in the story "Imitation" as:

She does miss home, though, her friends, the cadence of Igbo and Yourba and Pidgin English spoken around her . . . she has sometimes thought about moving back home, but never seriously, never concretely. She goes to a Pilates class twice for her children's classes and hers are always the favourites; she expects banks to have drive-ins. America has grown on her, snaked its roots under her skin. "Yes, a small drink," she says to Amaechi. "Bring the wine that is in the fridge and two glasses." (37)

Nkem sometimes longing for Nigeria which creates psychological trauma on her mind but she does not really want to return Nigeria, because she has produces hybrid or cross-cultural habit in which she delves into. She goes English classes as America has grown on her root. She thinks that drinking wine and speaking English is an American culture and adopts the way of Americans, speak and drink.

Homi K. Bhabha in his profound work *The Location of Culture* writes that cultural confrontation results hybridity, identity crisis and diaspora which further causes uncertainty in people. People living in 'no men's land' or between the border lines of two cultures experience

such things, they possess conflicting view towards both culture and to their own position. Achichi, through her story "The Thing Around Your Neck" shows the ambivalent nature of Nigerian people migrated to America. Akunna, the central character of the story faces so many hurdles as she wins American DV lottery and reaches to America. Akunna tries to embrace her Igbo origin and traditions, her uncle forces her to adopt the westernized ways of life. He time and again threatens her if she wants to stay in American she should follow the rules of Americans rather Africans. After winning DV lottery, she finally comes in America with lots of expectations, but as soon as she arrives, the people in her community and college class ask her ignorant questions, such as where she had learnt to speak English, or if she had a real house in Africa. Her uncle who helped her to register DV also tells America is "a mixture of ignorance and arrogance" (116). As insisted by Bhabha, her uncle calls America as a melting pot of different cultures. Everything is viable in that land. Her uncle is deviated from his Nigerian cultural norms and values he "came into the cramped basement where you slept with old boxes and cartons and pulled you forcefully to him, squeezing your buttocks, moaning" (116). In these lines, her uncle seems quite modern as he does not hesitate to molest her. Her uncle seems quite modern as he smiles after her rejection and says, "you were no longer a child at twenty-two" (117). In America sexual relationships are free and viable which her uncle follows but he forgets that in such relationship both party should be ready. He without agreement of Akunna molests her in a Nigerian way and after rejection he insists her age and she is living in America.

American modernity puts the concern of self at the center. Individual freedom and the solace of inner self is dominant paradigm. American modernity holds different style of dressing, eating, behaving and establishing relation with others. Each and every character in these stories is culturally ambivalent in one way or other. Akunna's uncle, who is like a free spirit embodying

a deviant nature of person. He is a bundle of contradictions. On the one hand he keeps modern way of life and says, "Smart women did it all the time" (117). According to him, to be smart it is necessary to keep sexual relationship which he wants to establish with Akunna. He loves short skirt, says everything is viable in America, work for dollar, bribes on "America was give-and-take" (116) on the other hand he keeps familial relationships to Nigeria and makes trustworthy to his members as Akunna's father says to her during her departure from Nigeria as, "Your uncle in America, who had put in the names of all your family members for the American visa lottery, said you could live with him until you got ton your feet" (115). In traditional Nigerian belief that the uncle is equal to father who rears and cares from each and every angle, saves his child from possible danger, but here quite contradictorily Akunna's uncle seems culturally Ambivalent.

Western modernity consists of different types of dressing, eating, drinking, behaving and making relationships with others. Existing social roles and social institutions are immensely modified by the structure of western conception. After the European colonization Nigerian people were affected by western hegemony when European people enter into Nigeria as Franz Fanon argues:

Wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up to data style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse, adoring the native language with European expressions; using bombasting phrases in speaking or writing and using European language; all these contribution to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. (25)

In the above lines, Fanon talks about how non-westerners copy westerners cultural norms and values either they are good or bad. He compares themselves at the level of European which makes them mimic man. As insist by Fanon Offodile Udenwa and Chinza Okfar in "The

Arrangers of Marriage" are mimicking of western cultural values; Udenwa changes his name and surname, suggest his wife pretend as if she is a true American, suggest her not to say "lift" rather "it's an elevator, not a life. Americans say elevator" (177), "biscuits" rather "Cookies. Americans call them cookies" (174). At the end of the story, Okfar also deviates from her cultural roots. She follows the way as taught by Nia, "you can wait until you get your papers and then leave, Nia said" (186), until and unless she gets green card, she makes plan to sits with her husbands. She agrees with Nia as "she was right, I could not leave yet" (186). Chinza Okfar also deviates from her Nigerian cultural ethos of marriages and plans to forsake her husband after getting green card which is her ambivalent nature as she deviates from her culture.

Thus, *The Thing Around Your Neck* is the document of cultural confrontation. It exposes how Nigerian people are ambivalent in the verge of eastern and western culture. For them, loss of Nigerian culture is the loss of Identity, when people cannot locate themselves in fix cultural category they suffer from sense of identity crisis which causes them fractured identity, inbetweenness, hybridity, frustration, confusion. The same frustration and dilemma lead them to become a cultural uncertainty.

Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, a postcolonial Nigerian novel in English, dramatizes the cultural ambivalence of the protagonists. Nigerian people of the stories, migrated to America where they face the tremendous effects of cultural encounters: loss of one's own culture by mimicry, fascination of dominant culture, rejection of other culture and the ambivalent mentality developed in affected subjects due to the expansion of Western colonialism across the countries. Udenwa and Okfar in "The Arrangers of Marriage", Obirao and Nkem in "Imitation" and Akunna and her uncle in "The Thing Around Your Neck" are the

affected subject of this cross cultural intersection. Due to the meeting of two cultures - their original Nigerian culture and foreign culture, remain ambivalent.

In "The Arrangers of Marriage", Udenwa gets education in English, upbringing in a middle class Nigerian family that is immensely influenced by Western colonial rule on the one hand and the legacy and essence of own cultural intimacy on the other hand makes him a fluctuating subjects from one culture to another. Udenwa, a successful doctor in America gets married to Chinza Okfar and migrate to America gets unfold in front of his wife as he exposes the bitter reality that he for his existing in America gets married to native American, not only this, rather in terms of survive there, he even changes his Nigerian name Offodile Udenwa to American name Dave Bell. It is obviously exposed in the textual analysis that their fascination with and rejection of both Nigerian and Western culture parallel, resulting in ambivalence.

After all, Nigerian people neither completely abandoned their own native culture nor they could adopt western culture completely. This incompleteness leads them towards cultural ambivalence. The collision of two completely different culture created a kind of confusion upon Nigerian immigrant which is can be associated with the reason behind the familial disruption, cultural perversion, dash identity, hybridity, mimicry and so on. Thus, it can be claimed that Adichie exposes Nigerian people are ambivalent towards both eastern and western culture. The loss of culture is the loss of identity, when people cannot locate themselves in a fix cultural stratum they suffer from sense of identity crisis which causes frustration and dilemma. Offodile, Okfar, Nkem, Obirao, Akunna and her uncle are the representatives of the subversion of western culture because they cannot wear the dimension of each and every aspect of it completely. They always seem to be in a dual consciousness of whatever accepting and rejecting the cultural

values. The dilemma leads them to become ambivalent towards their native culture and adopted American culture.



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