

Tribhuvan University

Utopia to Dystopia in Adhichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

by

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April, 2017

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled
"Utopia to Dystopia in Chimamanda Ngozi Adchie's The Thing Around Your Neck "

In my own work carried out as a Master's student at the Department of English at
Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus except to the extent that assistance from
others in the thesis design and conception or in presentation style,
and linguistic expression are duly acknowledged.

All sources used for the thesis have been fully and properly cited. It contains no
materials which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any
other degree at Tribhuvan University or any other educational
institution, except where due acknowledgement
is made in the thesis paper.

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Letter of Approval

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Utopia in Adhichie’s *The Thing Around Your Neck*” submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, by Archana Gautam, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere and deep sense of gratitude to my respected research supervisor Mr. Yadab Adhikari, lecturer at the Department of English, Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, for his invaluable supervision, constructive help and guideline, which helped me to give the final shape of this thesis.

I am also indebted to Pradip Sharma, Head, Department of English for the valuable directions in conducting the research. And I am equally grateful to Mr. Toya Upadhaya, whose supported me a lot during my thesis work .

I also owe the highest level of thankfulness to my dear friend Mariya Rai who is the constant source of inspiration for me to go ahead in the completion of any creative work. My sincere thanks also go to my all family members.

I also think this moment to thank my all other friends and colleagues who extended their moral and academic support to my pursuit.

April 2017

Archana Gautam

Abstract

The major thrust of *The Things Around Your Neck* research is to expose or focus upon the issue how Adichie's migration and cultural in-betweenness is presented. Even though Adichie's work is an analogy of human desire for power and their surviving it still provides the possibilities of establishing a utopia, and is more important for this paper, illustrates the factors in a utopian society that ultimately led to the creation of a dystopian society. Nkem, Kamara, Akunna, Ofodile and Chinaza migrated to America for better life. They migrate there because this country lacks education, lack of infrastructure, politically instable, economic condition, corruption and unemployment which are the main cause of migration. As immigrants they have to face problems but in the same way migration opens wide range of possibilities in their life. So, all the characters have to suffer physically and mentally as immigrant in America. This thesis explores the condition of Nigerian people in the country and abroad which means in America.

So, this research explores all the elements of utopia *The Thing Around Your Neck* which is proved by migration and their imaginary place where the life would be perfect. Utopia is a place where people can get every kind of pleasure and happiness. They find the place which meets the place of their dream. Utopia is a place of perfections. It full any kinds of need and greed. People get their ambitions achieved and their each and every kind of desires fulfilled. This novel explores the effect of social atmosphere and locale in those who come to imbibe and assimilate the new trends and norms of this locale. The characters are unhappy with society in general and cannot communicate with the social milieu on one perfect or the other. They feel disturbed by the pretentiousness and violence in society. They nurture utopian dreams. Society demands compromises, which they egotistically abhor.

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Chapter: I

Adichie, Nigerian People and Utopian World

This research is an attempt to explore the theme of utopianism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's short story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck* demonstrating the utopian anticipation inherent in the text through the means of migration and social perfection of the Nigerian people in the country and abroad. The book contains twelve stories and represents the conditions and lives of Nigerian people in the country and abroad. The present study especially focuses on the issues of migration for attaining success and betterment of their family and making their children's life and future secure. However, that is only possible in their imaginary world which is a fictional country. The scope of this work is limited to the following short stories in the collection "Cell One," "Imitation," "On Monday of Last Week," "The Thing Around Your Neck," "The American Embassy," and "The Arrangers of Marriage." However, reference will be made to other works both fictional and critical related to this topic.

Mostly in underdeveloped countries like Nigeria many people have a dream to migrate to European countries for the betterment of their family and to secure their children's life and future. Because in the homeland there are many problems such as insecurity, poor education, lack of infrastructure, corruption, unstable government, no law and justice, crime, conflict, cultural riots, unemployment and so on. Now, in search of relief from the stigma of the underdeveloped, they think migrating to the countries like the USA is a better option than staying in the country which is underdeveloped and far from western technology and development. Whereas Nigeria is in the same state following the old tradition and culture.

After colonization, the colonized Nigerians' suffered many problems in the country and abroad. The problems annihilate people's belief in their names, their

languages, and their environment, their heritage of struggle, their unity, and their capacities and ultimately it also turns to Nigerian people. When people lose belief for their own, they will inevitably turn towards what they perceive as better. The result of which is migration and with migration comes utopian notion. This can be explained by the fact that the migrating population does not only face hurdles of detachment from a well-constructed ancestral background, but equally suffers from solitude, psychological trauma and cultural in-betweenness. Migration can be physical as well as psychological. The immigrants suffer because they lack homes, but simply because they are not at home in themselves. The search for a new identity becomes an adventure whose success and completion is very uncertain. Migration cannot be separated from the postcolonial realities of Africa today.

Cultural in-betweenness and migration are two major issues of post-colonial theory in modern culture which incorporate hybridity, diaspora, alienation, identity crisis, globalization, marginality, dislocation. The study examines the experience of Nigerian people in the country which causes them to migrate and their struggle abroad. They are not able to work in the country and for the search of their own identity and also to get struggle they migrate abroad. It means that it is only possible in a utopian world. The themes involve the anxieties and insecurities of the Nigerian people, which tempt the critics of utopian.

Adichie relates the truth by talking about University strike, religious riot, and a brutal prison system are all exposed in her story titled "Cell One". This is story shows a descent into lawlessness and police brutality that we've come to expect depicted in Nigerian literature. Set on a university campus, its young men belong to gangs who steal, fight and kill: ". . . eighteen-year-olds who had mastered the swagger of American rap videos were undergoing secret and strange initiations that sometimes

left one or two of them dead on Odim Hill” (7). Nnamabia, is arrested by the police after one such gang has run riot, shooting students and escaping in a professor’s car. It’s unclear whether he is guilty of the shooting but he is imprisoned and left to the mercy of corrupt policemen. The son, during a stint in prison, sees an innocent old man humiliated by corrupt guards. Outraged, he challenges them. For speaking up, he’s subsequently beaten and sent to Cell One and treated far worse than before. Adichie, was able to project that the country Nigeria has its own plight and those are the realities of living in the country.

Similarly, in “A Private Experience,” there is a clear picture of riot. Two women take refuge in a shack in the middle of a riot carried out by Hausa Muslims against Igbo Christians in northern Nigeria in Kano. One is an Igbo medical student Chika, the other an uneducated Hausa market-trader, and their brief interaction affirms the power of humanity to resist and survive tribal warfare.

Not only this, she has also mentioned the Nigerian immigrant experience in America as well as the country America from the eyes of immigrant. Here, Adichie explore the struggle of immigrant to assimilate in new environment and culture. In this process of assimilation they have to pass through several difficulties and problems. The story, “The Arrangers of Marriage,” in which a newly married wife arrives in New York her dictatorial husband as something merely to use and abuse. In “The Thing Around Your Neck,” the central character Akunna, her “uncle” who has enabled her to live in the US but he molests her who had been migrated three years earlier as had opined that “America was give-and-take”(117) and she ends up working as a waitress in Connecticut. Similarly, “On Monday of Last Week,” in which Kamara, a Nigerian woman who has joined her husband in America takes a job as a nanny to an upper-class family and becomes obsessed with the mother. These are the

experience of Nigerian people in the country and abroad which makes them migrate and creates the condition of utopian world.

This story collection contains many characters such as Chinaza and Udenwa, who only speaks in English instead of mother tongue, use American appellation of things; cookies for biscuits, pitcher for jug, and so on. Nkem's children and Nwoye's grandson have born of Nigerian parents but handled like Americans they are automatically hybrids. Nkem loves America and other things what it offers. But at the same time her nostalgic for homeland and cultures. Chika who frequently visits relatives in New York and her love for America can be seen in her dress up, red T-shirt embossed with a picture of the Statue of Liberty and using Igbo words in between English language by the characters in the stories which also shows the utopian world nature.

The process of colonization caused fragmentation in the social and cultural aspects of the people. The major distortion is that people lost their identities. Then people started migrating towards the better places to create/recreate their (lost) identity. Such migration gave them feeling of alienation, longing, hybridity and identity crisis. Adichie's story collection consists of different age group and class characters that represent the state of Nigerian people in the country and in America after migration. Through some characters she has also shown the picture of America which is far from their imagination which gave them painful experience. As a black immigrant they have been exploited and oppressed in the name of color, sex, and race. This work is significant in that it x-rays and brings to limelight the causes of migration and cultural in-betweenness. It also attempts to pinpoint the positive effects of these post-colonial issues raised in this book which the researcher is trying to do.

Even though Adichie's work is an analogy of human desire for power and their surviving it still provides the possibilities of establishing a utopia, and is more important for this paper, illustrates the factors in a utopian society that ultimately led to the creation of a dystopian society. This research proves the hypothesis that Nigerian people are searching the utopian world. That means the perfect world where they can get good job, education and opportunities. The various searches of the Nigerian people according to their need and aspiration proves that the utopia is not singular. It changes according to the time, need, and the aspiration of people. They need money, good education and betterment of life and want to change their life standard in abroad country. But they are not able to work in the country and are not able to exist them there. So their utopia is the betterment of the life which they want to spread not only to the Nigeria but also to the America.

This book is a rich story collection of enigmatic characters and their interesting and painful experiences abroad. The collection of short stories has attracted enormous attention from reviewers around the globe. Different critics have analyzed the story collection from multiple perspectives which proves its univocal nature of the book. Bernadine Evaristo, the critical commenter, in *The Times* has said:

This stunning collection of short stories confirms Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's position as one of Africa's brightest new literary stars. She is the author of two important novels about the Igbo people of Nigeria *Purple Hibiscus* and the Orange prize-winning *Half of a Yellow Sun* yet her writing is even more poignant when applied to the short story: crisp, succinct, vigorous and loaded. . . . Like all fine storytellers, leaves us wanting more. (4)

Thus, Evaristo finds them interesting as they truly represent the Nigerian people's true experiences in an artistic way. He comments about the entire book that deals with overall analysis of the stories which he calls concise, vital, and dynamic. Similarly, Mary Crockett, in *The Scotsman* newspaper points out:

Adichie has shown herself a powerful writer, moving with disquieting ease from humor to horror, and anger to tenderness. This is storytelling as its very best; it roots in an ancient tradition, giving all that precedes it a poignant and sobering context (7).

The newspaper finds the book the best storyteller as it includes the different stories representing different strata of Nigerian lives. Heather Hewett in *Women's Review of Books* writes about the book as:

The Thing Around Your Neck, demonstrates her mastery of the short-story form. Adichie captures in elegant and precise prose the deep wells of complex emotion under the surface of characters living in and moving between different places. The steadiness of the author's gaze on the psychic spaces between intimate friends and family frequently produces a wrenching effect. Unlike many canonical migration narratives, most of which focus on men's experiences, these stories give voice to female longing and desire. Provide a Nigerian perspective on familiar themes of con artistry, virtue, and greed in a globalized world. (3)

Heather's remark about the characters complex experiences of Diaspora and migration from psychic level. She frankly state this book gives voice for female.

From above mentioned statement also suggest the skill of Adichie who is successful in depicting the live situation of Nigerian. Holloway McCandless in *Times* points out:

In *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's first collection of short stories to follow her award-winning novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half a Yellow Sun*, headstrong girls and women make the best narrators—they're essays, agitated and predisposed toward action once their inner injustice detectors calculate the full measure of their circumstance. Whether their subjugation is political, familial, romantic, or cultural, Adichie's headstrong and headstrong heroines reach a point where they take action to loosen whatever is choking them. That their actions are often risky or severe, and still seem inevitable, is a testament to Adichie's empathetic storytelling. (5)

McCandless's commentary on its female characters is crucial. Several of the female characters in the stories are headstrong and headstrong, who show the female resistance despite the torturous environment. These are the focus point of female remapping.

The aforementioned reviews appreciate her story telling tactic, her projection characters that are true and realistic, and as a postcolonial writer, she raises issues of family, self, migration, identify, culture war and the experiences they go through. The above reviewers are aimed at improving on the quality of the work. Though, different critics have analyzed this book from different perspectives.

It is worthy of note that physical and psychological migration would be taken into consideration. According to Aaron S Neba in his book *Modern Geography of Cameroon*, migration is the movement of people from one geographical region to another. This can rather be internal (within the national territory) or external (across borders). George Lamming in "The Occasion for Speaking," views migration as:

When a small group of men, different in years and temperament and social origins, should leave the respective island they know best, even exchange life there for circumstances which are almost wholly foreign to them. Their journey a part of a hunger for recognition and security likely to drag into a state of permanent separation from their roots.

Which demands some kind of involvement. Some may remain neutral; but all have, at least to pay attention to the condition. (12)

The whole concept of migration has to do with movement. For Bill Ashcroft et al, as quoted by Femi Abodunrin in *Blackness–Culture, Ideology and Discourse*, “larger issues of place and displacement to the degree of identification from a place of origin depends to a significant extent on the degree of displacement from such a place” (29). The tendency is that there is a romantic attachment to the culture of the homeland from which individuals have moved away from or displaced.

In this study, migration is the conscious or the unconscious movement of either an individual’s mind or the individual in person. This conscious movement is what one may call physical or geographical migration and the unconscious movement can be termed psychological migration. It is also worthy of note that psychological migration can also be conscious taking into consideration the mind set of an individual at that point in time. Talking about culture, le Roi Jones as quoted in *Cross Cultural Psychology* says,

“Culture is simply how one lives and is connected to history by habit”

By this he implies that the way of life of a person is his or her culture.

Cultural critics in *Critical Theory Today* view culture as “a process not a product” (294).

Lois Tyson continues to say that:

One's experiences make up one's culture; it is a lived experience, not a fixed definition. Culture is a collection of interactive cultures, each of which is growing and changing, each of which is constituted at any given moment in time by the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, occupation, and similar factors that contribute to the experience of its members. (294)

The definitions above tie to the fact that culture is a way of life of a people, their custom, tradition, religion, norms or rites and regulations that govern them. Lois Tyson views culture not as biological but as acquired by people. A person acquires culture as a member of the society. Social life will be impossible without understanding the practices shared by people.

No society is culturally homogenous and there are no two cultures that are entirely similar. Cultural differences can be conceptualized in terms of cultural dichotomies. The notion of cultural in-betweenness therefore is when one is caught in-between cultures; the home culture and the new culture to which he is a stranger, neither belonging to the original nor to the present. The individual suffers from culture war and is unable to take a stand. Caught between cultures, an individual becomes a victim of double consciousness that perceives the world as divided into two antagonistic cultures; that of the colonizers and that of the indigenous community. As a result of this, one finds him or herself arrested in psychological limbo, resulting not only from the trauma of cultural displacement, but also because of solitude and distance from home. The effect is cultural identity crisis. Post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridized.

Trans-culture depicts many forms, not only culture but also political, racial, social, and linguistic. It has frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean

cross-cultural exchange and also to understand as the process by which colonized people mimic the colonizers' language (either to subvert colonizers or to form their identity), borrow western ideas and practices rejecting their own socio-cultural structures.

Although all these critics and reviewers examined this novel from different points of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusions, none of them notice the issue of Utopia to Dystopia issue in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Since, the topic of concept is untouched and unexplored; the researcher claims that it is the fresh, new and original topic. The theory might enable the analyst to have a glimpse of those social milieus that are responsible for characters migration and cultural in-betweenness. By using the theory of concept of Utopia and Dystopia, the researcher proves into this topic. This research is conducted on the theoretical basis of applying the dystopian critique propounded by M. Keith BOOKer, Tom Moylan and other theorists.

Utopia is a place where people can get every kind of pleasure and happiness. They find the place which meets the place of their dream. Utopia is a place of perfections. It full any kinds of need and greed. People get their ambitions achieved and their each and every kind of desires fulfilled. Utopian fictions are also the fictions which meet the standard of utopian world. Utopian literature and utopian novels are that work of art which deals with the theme of perfection and prosperity. Utopian fiction avoids the miseries, sufferings, pains, and other vices and presents a highly-organized and systematic society. "Utopia has traditionally been concerned with happiness and the good life" (Elliott 97).

Similarly, "utopia is a healthy society" (117). It exclusively embraces the idea of progress and prosperity ignoring the prevalent absurdities and adversities.

Projecting into the future events, utopia optimistically depicts the development of humanity and human civilization as "it is a description of the best society" (Kumar 25). Utopian fiction openly advocates the everlasting happy and satisfied life. Utopia is a place of wealth, which complete the essential and primary requirements of people. If there is no insufficiency and deficiency, there is no question of disagreement, tension and anxiety because utopia:

Utopia is a place of abundance which fulfills the basic and fundamental necessities of people systematically attempts to eliminate social conflict, accident, tragedy . . . utopian thought is profoundly inherent in human nature, man wounded by the evil of the world, inevitably evokes an image of a perfect, harmonious social order where he will be happy. . . full opportunity to develop intimate and satisfying personal relationship.(Elliott 89-104)

So utopia is a place where there is no need of anything and there is no any kind of pains and sufferings. Utopia is an imaginary place people often imagine in their fiction and story book. It is place where there is a lot of property and prosperity. It is a perfect and harmonious world without any physical and mental pains and sufferings. It is full of opportunities and good social order.

So this project will explore all the elements of utopia *The Thing Around Your Neck* which is proved by migration and their imaginary place where the life would be perfect. So to explore all these theme of utopia and dystopia this research has incorporated the theory of utopian ideals. The thesis is divided into four chapters where the first chapter gives general introduction with some critics' views on the text. Similarly, the second chapter gives the theoretical aspects of utopian to dystopian world. The third chapter proves the textual analysis aspects. It attempts to examine the

causes of migration from physical perspectives. It focuses on the effects of migration of the characters and how the characters embrace Western ways which they manifest consciously or unconsciously. Finally, the fourth chapter is conclusion that provides summary of the research and closes the thesis.

Chapter II:

Concept of Utopia to Dystopian

Utopia is a place where people can get every kind of pleasure and happiness. They find the place which meets the place of their dream. Utopia is a place of perfections. It fulfills any kind of need and greed. People get their ambitions achieved and their each and every kind of desires fulfilled. Utopian fictions are also the fictions which meet the standard of utopian world. Utopian literature and utopian novels are that work of art which deals with the theme of perfection and prosperity. Utopian fiction avoids the miseries, sufferings, pains, and other vices and presents a highly-organized and systematic society. "Utopia has traditionally been concerned with happiness and the good life" (Elliott 97). Similarly, "utopia is a healthy society"(117). It exclusively embraces the idea of progress and prosperity ignoring the prevalent absurdities and adversities. Projecting into the future events, utopia optimistically depicts the development of humanity and human civilization as "it is a description of the best society" (Kumar 25). Utopian fiction openly advocates the everlasting happy and satisfied life.

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Krishan Kumar always claims that the synonym of utopia is perfection. He argues that in utopia there is no any kind of pains and sufferings. It is the like the world before Prometheus has stolen the fire from leaven disobeying the goal. It is like the world before Adam has eaten the fruit of knowledge from the Garden of Eden. Utopia is always flawless without poverty, class and hierarchy Utopian perfection is like our ambition of getting heavenly pleasure. It is like our dreamland. As Krishan Kumar argues utopia is:

The dream of a just society which seems to haunt the human imagination ineradicably and in all ages, whether it is called the kingdom of heaven or the classless society, or whether it is thought of as a golden age which once existed in the past and from which we have degenerated . . . in utopia there is the elevation of public over private life, and the pervasive control and regulation of daily life. (2)

So utopia is like a heaven and we are like the human being degenerated from the heavenly bliss and pleasure. Utopia is an imaging place where there is only happiness and prosperity in each and every fired. It is like a golden age which has reached to the zenith of prosperity in every sector.

Utopias are always changing. The utopia of ancient time is different from the utopia of modern times. There are the chain of utopias according to time and context. The utopia of medieval period is the religiously superstitious world. The church is the offices of utopia. There are saints and sages who seek religious perfections. After that in enlightenment period the reason becomes powerful and the development through the use of reason is utopia for the people of enlightenment. "They had and have a continuing influence on conceptions of utopia" (Kumar 32). So utopia cannot be stable.

Even if Wells is presenting fight and struggle among the ant-like creature of the moon and the two protagonist, this is all for the change of the world. It means the fight is for the utopian world as the basic preparation. It is the preparation for a coming utopia. The fight and hardship is also for the utopian perfection. As Krishan Kumar argues "it [humanity] might have to go through generations of misery and pain, but eventually it would come to its senses and construct the World-State" (Kumar 219). So even if there is misery and pain among the people of the world the misery and pain is for a perfect world claims the utopian philosophy. In addition, Kumar spotlights on "the inevitability and necessity of war as the precipitant and catalyst of the coming changes" (189). That's why the hardship and difficulties faced by the two men in the moon is nothing more than a preparation a utopia.

The face of utopia is to shatter. Utopia always results into opposite. Utopia and its destiny is turn ageist itself. Krishna Kumar argues that utopia is not possible. It always turns upside down when it comes into existence. As he argues:

The whole of western development since the time of more was re-interpreted and recounted as a disaster, in so far as it is presented the dominance of utopia principles. Science and democracy were no doubt

noble ideas, good in themselves but the attempt to institutionalize them in society had produced the exact opposite of utopian hopes. The anti-utopia was the image of those blighted hopes, a peruse reversal of utopian expectations. (111)

Utopian imagination always shatters at the end. Like the destroyed hopes and aspiration of the impoverished business man Bedford the utopia turns into anti-utopia at last. The utopia is like a shadow which cannot be touched. The utopia imagination is not true. It is always false and fruitless. The entire endeavor to get utopia are vain.

Utopia is such a place which always seeks happiness. In utopia there is not any kind of pain and agony, even of the old age. In utopia people often break the rule of nature. The organic system is challenged in utopia for example the system of being old is challenged and people stop being old. They challenge the law of nature and moves toward technological advancement. As Langdon Winner argues:

All views of Utopia involve change, which affects human systems and institutions. Such change will only be facilitated by a fundamental reassessment of every human-made system in light of its purpose and function. For example, enforcement of the law should refocus its goal to truth finding, and eliminate the institutionalized court room rules that perpetuate gamesmanship instead of justice. Some people are blinded by emotion and/or self-serving beliefs when it comes to changing institutions or systems they are connected with. Humans do not exist to serve institutions. (562)

So utopia challenges the existing institutions and system. It believes that human being is not the slave of institutions and system. They should be free from all kinds of institution and their bondage.

Utopia is always moveable to person to person. Utopia is kinetic. It always varies person to person. There are many utopias in this world because people's aspirations and ambitions are also different and various. A place can be a perfect world for a man whereas the same place may be dystopia to another person. If a person seeks a perfect world in money then another person may seek perfection in luxury and fun. So there are varieties of utopia according to people's interest. As Langdon Winner argues:

Visions of Utopia are as numerous as the number of people. Every person has their own view of what Utopia, a heaven on earth, would be like. While there is no unified view of Utopia, the various views can be classified into some common groups. The range of these groups' spans from those who believe they have already found Utopia, to those who believe humans can reach a state of pure energy, which is a realm beyond Utopia. (565)

According to Winner it is claimed that person can claim their own utopia in any place because utopia is not a single entity. It does not limit in one person's choice and aspiration. It differs person to person.

Utopian novels claim that people can choose any place they like as their utopia. As Mark Rose comments:

Some Utopia seekers think Humanity's problems can be solved by community level autonomy and self-rule. They believe each community should be free to set its own standards and rules and that there should be a community for each different type of belief and preference that exists. Each community would establish its own rules of conduct and behavior, allowing any conduct and behavior preferred, and prohibiting any conduct and behavior disliked. Subsequently, each

person can pick a community to live in which matches their vision of an ideal community. (764)

Even if they have to fight with the strange creature of the moon the two men resolves to live there in the moon.

So utopia is different to person to person. There is no any restriction in people's hopes and aspirations and their possibilities of progress. Likewise there is no any barrier of utopian imaginations. As Krishan Kuram argues, "the new is better than the old, the future more perfect than the past, because history is the record of the growth and progressive fulfillment of humanity"(43). From time to time and person to person the utopian vision is changing.

Chapter III:

Utopia in Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*

This research is conducted on the theoretical basis of utopian and dystopian. The collection of short stories from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveals the complex and often sad reality for modern day Nigerians. *The Thing Around Your Neck*, a collection of short fiction by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, explores the lives of Nigerians both at home in problematic and sometimes life threatening settings and, discomfortingly, as green card immigrants to the United States. In most cases happiness is at a premium, and loss and sadness are fellow travelers. The title story itself, which is positioned at about the midpoint of the book, exemplifies many of the collection's concerns and themes. Similar imagery is evidenced in stories such as *The American Embassy*, and *The Arrangers of Marriage*.

In "Cell One," the popular and reckless teenage brother of the narrator is rounded up by police eager to show the government they are cracking down on gangs. In "The American Embassy," the wife of a crusading newspaper editor starts the process of seeking political asylum, but cannot bring herself to turn her murdered son into a story that might help her save herself. In "Imitation," the wife of a businessman and art collector, ensconced in a house on Cherry wood Lane in a Philadelphia suburb, learns that her husband has acquired a girlfriend back in Nigeria. In "On Monday of Last Week," an educated Nigerian woman working as a housekeeper struggles with the overanxious parenting of a lawyer father and the false intimacy of his artist wife.

In the countries like Nigeria, there is the direct effect of the colonialism although the Nigerians are politically free. They are badly colonized in terms of culture and economy. They have a dream of going to the western countries or the US,

get good education, earn a lot and live a sophisticated life. For example, they think that the sexual relationship even among the incest is not a taboo, which is the product of the colonization of their minds. The following lines illustrates about it:

You told him why you were upset, that even though you went to Chang's so often together, even though you had kissed just before the menus came, the Chinese man had assumed you could not possibly be his girlfriend, and he had smiled and said nothing. Before he apologized, he gazed at you blankly and you knew that he did not understand. (124)

There they are tortured and victimized. They are victimized by the colonizers. After a great struggle they reach to the countries. But in there when a man is kissing his girlfriend the other countries people feel shame and only look with smiling and gazing.

No matter how hard they struggle to survive in America in a dignified and standardized way, they happen to remain in the bottom line of sordidness and vacuous condition. In the beginning of the days of their life in America, America appears to be gorgeous, and glamorous. The city of America used to appear as the rosiest and promising city to them. Now when their struggles yield no substantial fruit and when their life hovers on the vortex of futility, America looms as the intimidating city. They fail to get reconciled to the standard of life set by the Nigeria. The following line throws light on this aspect of growing sense of futility and nightmare on the part of Nkem:

Obiora laughed when she told him how curious the neighbors were about them. He said *Oyibo* people were like that. If you did something in a different way, they would think you were abnormal, as though

their way was the only possible way. And although Nkem knew many Nigerian couples who lived together, all year, she said nothing. (24-25)

This above cited extract is illustrative of how frustrated and futile Nkem feels. With ambition and dream to reach the pedestal standard life, she had come to America. She struggles to reach the ambition. But the result turns out to be contrary to her expectation. To the contrary, she goes on getting debilitated and enervated due to the increasing sense of futility and frustration. That is why the horror of the city life haunts her. Her expectation to get adapted to the urban mode of life remains a far-fetched dream. She does not succeed in accomplishing what she cherishes and dreams. In the preliminary phase of her life, she used to feel hopeful and ambitious. But as she comes to understand the realities of the urban underworld of America, she is infuriated with herself.

In the short story "Imitation" Nkem stares at a Benin mask as her friend tells her that her husband has a girlfriend. The friend tells Nkem that the woman has even moved into Nkem's house back in Lagos. After Nkem hangs up from her phone call she thinks about the mask at which she has been staring. These masks were once used to protect the king from evil. She imagines the men who were in charge of keeping the masks had wished they could be protected from evil and that they had some say in their lives. Nkem had been pregnant when she first came to America with Obiora. She enjoyed the way the American neighbors offered to help her. When Obiora went back to Nigeria the neighbors questioned why he was gone, wanting to know if something was wrong.

"The American Embassy" commences with a lady standing in a queue outside the American Embassy in Lagos. She seems to be there but is not there, in the sense that she's apathetic about what is going around her, until she's nudged off her reverie

by a man behind her, who afterwards makes attempt to talk to her, even though she's in no mood for a chitchat. As the story progresses, what's on her mind is brought to the fore" two days ago, she had buried her child in a grave near a vegetable patch in their ancestral hometown of Umannachi." He's being hunted because of this, but is able to abscond, his wife, the main character, aiding this escape. Gunmen, sent by the powers that be, subsequently storm the residence of the main character through the back door. Fortunately her husband has escaped, but unfortunately Ugonna, their son who screams out of fear amid the horror, is shot dead in cold blood. Consequently, the main character seeks an asylum visa to the United States, where her husband also intends to seek an asylum visa in the near future. But the visa interviewer she encounters is unable to grant her this request because she doesn't have enough "evidence" to substantiate the claim that government agents are responsible for her predicament. She drifts in thought for a while, during the interview, and then exits as the visa interviewer calls out "Ma'am?" behind her.

The beauty of this piece lies in its ingenious use of foreshadowing and flashback, which I think Adichie uses deftly in most of her fiction, not just only this. Adichie is able to take the reader two days back, to subtly portray what happened, and still tie the relevance of the flashback to actions taking place in real time. There's no distortion of the main narrative whatsoever, which rife in bad fiction, as she goes about this. Descriptions are vividly picturesque. One can easily imagine the scenario. And her descriptions do not flaunt themselves by being over-superfluous with detail. Nor do they drag on, so that it becomes an uphill task to connect the dots, or depressingly slow down the pace of the narrative. And, perhaps more importantly, some of her descriptions are allegorical. For instance, "there's a soldier flogging a bespectacled man" at the beginning of the story, before anything is said about the kind

of government at the time, which in my opinion presents what the story's major theme the horrors inherent in a military dictatorship and is not merely there to pad up the story.

In the story "On Monday of Last Week" Kamara looked at herself in the mirror and imagined Tracy touching her stomach. Josh was waiting when she came out of the bathroom. He was Tracy's seven-year-old son. She prepared supper for Josh. They'd been practicing for Read a Thon a competition Josh had been named a finalist. Kamara thought he looked tired. Josh's father was white. His mother was African-American. Even when she was being interviewed by Josh's father Neil, Kamara had wondered about Josh's mother. She was told Tracy was an artist that she worked in the basement and was not to be disturbed. Even though Kamara hadn't really wanted a job as a babysitter, one she considered demeaning, she had wanted a job in order to have a reason to get out of the apartment...

In the story "The Thing Around Your Neck" you thought when you went to America that you would have a car and soon have a nice house. Your uncle had put all of the names of your family members in for the American visa lottery. You had won. You would live with him until you were able to support yourself. Your uncle told you America was all about give and take. He helped you get a job at a gas station and enrolled you in community college. You felt at home with your uncle until he molested you one day. You left the next morning. You wound up in Connecticut where you got a job at a restaurant. You sent half your earnings back to Nigeria to your family.

In the story "The American Embassy" a woman stood in line at the American Embassy. She was the 48th person in line. She did not notice much going on around her. When the man behind her asked her a question she was surprised and had to bring

herself back to reality. Her doctor had advised her to keep her mind blank. He refused to give her any tranquilizers because he said she needed to be alert during her interview to request a visa. She couldn't keep herself from thinking about her four-year-old son with the splash of blood on him. When the man behind her tapped her on the shoulder she nearly screamed from the pain caused by a muscle she'd twisted when she jumped from the second floor balcony of her apartment. The man pointed out to her the...

In the story "The Arrangers of Marriage", because her new husband had always referred to his home as a house Chinaza was surprised to find herself in an apartment with little furniture. He woke her up the next morning having sex with her. Her aunt and uncle had been pleased they'd been able to arrange for her to marry a man studying to be a doctor in America. They'd had only two weeks to get to know one another before they were married. At breakfast Chinaza asked Ofodile if he had dried milk for their tea. He said he didn't drink his tea with milk any longer because he'd gotten used to the way things were done in America.

The story reflecting the different situation of the Nigerian people's lives in the country and abroad. The story presents the Nigerians' activities and cultures, their pain, suffering, pathos and complexities of lives. Most of the characters here have been affected by poverty, superstition, ignorance, hardships and discrimination that are prevalent in the country. The following lines shows how they are treated:

Smacking is discipline, Kamara wanted to say, and abuse is a different thing. Abuse was the sort of thing Americans she heard about on the news did, putting out cigarettes on their children's skin. But she said what Tobeche had asked her to say: "I feel the same way about

smacking. And of course I will use only the discipline method you approve of.” (78)

The above lines shows that a character of this story whose name Kamara heard that Nigerians’ people were treated as badly. They are not suppose that they are human beings. Because they treat them as cruel behavior by putting cigarette on their skin or body part which gives torture to them.

In the countries like Nigeria, they are badly colonized in terms of economy. They have a dream of going to the western countries or the US, get good education, earn a lot and live a sophisticated life. The following lines illustrates about it:

About dead relatives that were never even born. Make Ugonna real.
Cry, but don’t cry too much. They don’t give our people immigrant visa anymore, unless the person is rich by American standards. But I hear people from European countries have no problems getting visas.
Are you applying for an immigrant visa or visitors? (134)

In the above line they are tortured and victimized. They are victimized due to the economy condition. They don’t get visa easily because they don’t have enough money to afford all the activities. But for European there is no any problem.

Ahamad says that a single locus of socio-cultural parameter should not be allowed to effect profound transformation in the dialectics of the socio-cultural and the artistic representation. Concerning to this aspect Ahamad demonstrates the following views:

What further complicates this dialectic of the social and the literary is that most literary productions, whether of the first world or of the third are not always available for that kind of direct and unitary determination by any one factor, no matter how central that factor is in

constituting the social formation as a whole. Literary texts are produced in highly differentiated, usually very over-determined contexts of competing ideological and cultural clusters, so that any particular text of any complexity shall always have to be placed within the cluster that gives it its energy and form, before it is totalized into a universal category. (22)

What Ahamad says is over-determination does not mean that individual texts merely float in the air. For him, totality is an impossible cognitive category. But in any comprehension of totality, one would always have to specify and historicize the determinations which constitute any given field. With sufficient knowledge of the field, it is normally possible to specify the principal ideological formations and narrative forms. What is not possible is to operate with the few texts that become available in the metropolitan languages. All ideological complexity is reduced to a single ideological formation. All narratives are read as local expressions of a meta-text.

Chapter IV:

Adichie's Euro-centric Prejudice

The Thing Around Your Neck explores the effect of social atmosphere and locale in those who come to imbibe and assimilate the new trends and norms of this locale. The characters in this story collection are unhappy with society in general and cannot communicate with the social milieu on one prefect or the other. They feel disturbed by the pretentiousness and violence in society. They nurture utopian dreams. Society demands compromises, which they egotistically abhor. Deeply affected by problems of modern industrial age. Many characters lack of individuality and commitment to some higher purpose in life. They quest for identity and meaning in life leads them to a point where they perceives the worthlessness of all art.

The story collection deals mainly with the life of Nigerian people after migration and in the abroad has been portrayed. The characters of this novel especially feel themselves detached from their homeland. Ugonna's death brings the emotions of all characters to the climax. At her funeral all characters feel the need of love and compassion from her husband but he refuses. He gives up too soon and leaves the pursuit of nothingness and futility. He is disillusioned with the outward glitter of the worldly success which attracts and binds other minor characters. He is engaged in an unequal fight against the social and commercial values of life which the abroad symbolizes.

The ultimate finding of this research *The Thing Around Your Neck* is that Adichie represents Nigeria and Nigerian culture in such a way that it could meet some of the target assumptions and expectations of western readers. In *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Nigeria looms as a threatening country hovering on the verge of disintegration. In abroad country, crime, poverty, caste system, and various other

dehumanizing practices have mushroomed. Adichie is less sensitive to the exact realities about Nigeria and Nigerians. He is eager to address the longings of western readers.

In this story collection, abroad country is overburdened with population. Beggars, slums, migrants, thieves, thugs and several deviated gangs practice their own techniques of survival. Hundreds of thousands of slums and beggars are compelled to go to any extreme for the sake of earning money, to get good education and to spend a standard of life. Extreme lack of the proper management of wastages and sewerage adversely harmed the lives of dwellers in slum area. In Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, the hectic and hazy lives of slums of Nigerian in abroad are represented in a lifelike way. Particularly, slum area is represented with a poignant sense of pathos. In this story collection, abroad city appears to be a shelter for those who are displaced. They are displaced by standard of life, good education, good job, good opportunities, social unrest and other disasters.

Thus, it can be reiterated that urban identity refers to the area of highly stereotyped categories. Due to the failure of reconciliation of divergent norms, it is based on Socio-cultural patterns of classifying persons. They are hardly recognized as members of a particular group. Personal identity arises in the area of close and intimate interaction. It is tied up with an aspiration to treat a partner in interaction in terms of their non-recurring nature and the recognition of their unique individualities.

Thus, it can be reiterated that most of the characters, who migrate to America from the neighboring areas try to get adapted to the sophisticated life in Nigeria. They harbor dreams and keep fervent aspiration. They struggle to climb the social ladder. But no matter how hard they struggle, their dreams and aspirations remain

naccomplished. That is why they remain in the low spirit. All the characters sink into the sea of tragic sobriety and Alma is drowned in alienation.