

Nature Connection and Conservation as the Starting Point of an Environmental Consciousness

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Abstract: This article explores the concept of home nature as the starting point of environmental consciousness in the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. In fact, this concept derives from the good relationship between Adichie's characters and their home landscape. For a better quality of life, home atmosphere protection has to be an integral part of mankind behavior. In other words, human must care about his close atmosphere for both his survival and then the upkeep of nature. When focusing on home greenness safekeeping in *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *Americanah*, we want to draw today's people attention on the fact that home nature link is synonymous with happiness, joy and well-being. Moreover, through Adichie's novels, it stands out that the preservation of home atmosphere has a positive impact on the global environment maintenance. Besides, one can notice that Adichie's novels demonstrate that consciousness-raising of home scenery safeguarding contributes to keep a verdant and healthy surrounding.

Keywords: Home nature, environmental consciousness, consciousness-raising, home scenery, well-being, home greenness safekeeping, quality of life.

Résumé : Cet article analyse le concept de la nature domestique comme le point de départ de la conscience environnementale dans les romans de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. En effet, ce concept tire sa source de la bonne relation entre les personnages d'Adichie et leur environnement immédiat. Pour une meilleure qualité de vie, la protection de la nature en miniature et interne doit être la priorité de l'espèce humaine. Autrement dit, l'être humain est tenu de prendre soin de son environnement immédiat pour à la fois sa propre survie et celle de la nature. En se référant à la conservation de l'environnement intérieur des personnages dans les

romans d'Adichie à savoir *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, et *Americanah*, nous voulons attirer l'attention de tout le monde sur le fait que le lien à la nature domestique est synonyme de bonheur, de joie, et de bien-être. Ensuite, à travers les romans d'Adichie, il ressort que la préservation de la nature intérieure permet à l'homme d'être plus sensible à la protection de l'environnement extérieure. Par ailleurs, nous notons que les romans d'Adichie démontrent que la prise de conscience de la sauvegarde de l'environnement intérieur contribue à maintenir un monde écologique équilibré.

Mots-clés: Nature domestique, conscience environnementale, prise de conscience, paysage de maison, bien-être, conservation de la verdure domestique, qualité de vie.

Introduction

Broadly speaking, the term 'nature' is one of the key concepts in the ecocritical studies. However, Adichie's novels bring to the fore the notion of home nature, viewed as all kinds of greenness growing in any surrounded space. It is mainly the verdure (flowers, grasses, lawn, and trees) that grows up in human surroundings. When referring to Adichie's novels, home nature connection and conservation is the basis of environmental consciousness. This is the reason why, all events in her novels take place in the main characters' home. This quotation is evidence of characters' intimacy with their home scenery:

Jaja and I stood by the hibiscus bushes, waiting. The gardener was clipping away at the bougainvillea, taming the flowers that defiantly stuck out of the leveled top. He had raked underneath the frangipani trees, and dead leaves and pink flowers lay in piles, ready for the wheelbarrow. (PH, P.108)

As it can be seen through this quotation, Adichie's characters such as Jaja, Kambili, and the gardener are connected to their home landscape. They show up their enthusiasm, joy and great interest to be near the home atmosphere. This can be perceived through Jaja and Kambili's position vis-à-vis the hibiscus bushes. In fact, Jaja and Kambili were closed to the hibiscus bushes because these hibiscuses provided with them happiness and wellness.

The concept 'home nature' in Adichie's narratives can be seen as an environmental perspective for the rewilding of today's global atmosphere. In this

article, we want to linger on the ecological awareness and its implications, the benefits of home nature preservation, and the necessity to get an environmental identity as widely developed in the novels of the female writer named Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

The purpose of the article is to study the advantages of environmental consciousness based on home nature connection, and the indispensability of eco-identity for the maintenance of a green and healthy world. Indeed, Adichie's writing points out the importance of home greenery safekeeping as the basis of ecological awareness. She also shapes home nature conservation as the beginning of environmental consciousness, and presents her characters as the embodiment of eco-identity, in a wild and attractive environment. Based on ecocritical approach, this analysis is mainly concerned with how Adichie portrays environmental consciousness linked to a close area, and the benefits of that close area greenness protection, without forgetting the eco-personality of her characters which reinforces the sustainability of their surroundings.

1- Shaping an Ecological Consciousness

When focusing on environmental consciousness, the idea is to point up the origin of environmental awareness. As regarding Emerson's concept of environmental consciousness, it refers to human connection to outside greenness. In this context, he states that: "In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows." (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, 1836, 9)

Emerson's conceptualization of environmental awareness takes into account all sorts of outdoor verdure that attracts mankind mind. On that case, that environmental consciousness is originated from human contact with outside nature. For Emerson, when humankind is near the global atmosphere, he feels joy and happiness. Nature joining constitutes a real panacea for human. This is the reason why, Emerson promotes the preservation of the physical atmosphere.

Contrarily to Emerson's understanding of environmental consciousness, Adichie presents ecological awareness as resulting from human intimacy with inside nature (home nature). In this regard, she has a new approach of nature and by extent environmental consciousness. In her novels, she reveals that nature is not only the outside greenery but also the internal verdure of human home. In fact, that nature is all things which grow in human living area. From that insight into home nature presentation, Adichie wants to raise mankind awareness on home scenery protection and conservation.

Adichie's representation of environmental consciousness in her novels is different from that of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Indeed, she visibly posits a new concept of environmental consciousness. That ecological awareness is based on human attachment to home flowers, trees, lawn, and grasses. Adichie stands out from the other eco-writers through her caricature of ecological consciousness. In her novels, Adichie has a focus on home nature link as the beginning of environmental consciousness. She brings the response to ecological issues through human reconnection to home landscape. For Adichie, if one takes care of his home atmosphere, one indirectly participates in the global surroundings rewilding.

In Adichie's novels, environmental awareness contributes to maintain the environment of characters natural, healthy, and attractive. In *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half a Yellow Sun*, and *Americanah*, the upkeep of characters' home scenery is linked to their ecological sensitivity. The eco-sensitivity is nothing but human faculty to express his interest for the wellness of nature. As a matter of fact, ecological sensitiveness is necessary in the preservation of a wild and wholesome world. In *Purple Hibiscus*, one can throw light on Adichie's characters' eco-sensitivity as a key value in the upkeep of a natural atmosphere. This passage is the illustration of Aunty Ifeoma's eco-sensitivity: "Aunty Ifeoma asked me to join them in the garden, to carefully pick out leaves that started to wilt on the croton plants." (*PH*, 142)

Through this quotation, Adichie highlights the importance of human to care about his home environment for upkeeping a satisfactory level of worldwide greenness. For Adichie, looking after home landscape is the guarantee of living happily in a natural place. In addition, the fact of expressing sensitiveness, love, and passion to home scenery safekeeping is both benefit to mankind and nature itself. On that account, environmental consciousness can be seen as the compass for turning human quality of life into a better one.

The idea of environmental awareness is coupled to home landscape protection. In Adichie's writings, the different characters are always joined to their home greenness. This way of being near their environment demonstrates their ecological sensitiveness. The closer they are, the less affected the global atmosphere is. Adichie's characters eco-attitude is the result of a verdant, lovely, and absorbing living area. By extent, their good comportment offers them an excellent quality of life.

In the field of ecological sensitivity, there are three French eco-writers who are on the same way as Adichie. For these writers, human relationship with nature enhances the quality of mankind living standard. Their perception of eco-sensitivity derives from human strong link to nature in view of improving his living conditions. On that way, being connected to nature is synonymous with a happy and better life. Furthermore, through that eco-sensitivity, human is aware of the protection and conservation of his atmosphere. In other words, ecological sensitiveness pushes humankind to be watchful about the quality of the environment. Consequently, environmental consciousness frames with good level of life. (Ecological sensibility and the experience of nature in the twentieth-century French literature of Jean Giono, Marguerite Yourcenar and Julien Gracq, *European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, vol.5, n.1(2014: 175-198)

In the same perspective, ecological sensitivity reveals the ecological identity of a person. Indeed, when someone is sensitive to his environment, he indirectly

discloses his eco-personality. Human intimacy with nature confirms his ecological personality. From that observation, one can state that there is a strong link between ecological sensitivity and ecological personality. That ecological personality is fully represented through Adichie's characters behavior. As illustration, one can quote Papa in *Purple Hibiscus*, the couple Odenigbo in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and Obinze in *Americanah*.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the concept of ecological personality is depicted as human responsibility to conserve first his home nature and then the outside surroundings. In this vein, the couple Odenigbo is the metaphor of environmental personality. In point of fact, that couple has demonstrated his capacity to keep his close area green and healthy. Also, they have been sentient to the physical atmosphere, too. In this context, this quotation is an example of Olanna's eco-personality: "She led the way outside to the African lilies and pink roses, freshly watered by Jomo, and asked Ugwu to cut some. She showed him how much water to put in the vase." (HYS, 47)

As it has been mentioned in this quotation, one can see the remarkable attitude of Olanna vis-à-vis the home scenery (lilies and roses). Olanna represented by the third-person pronoun "she" is attracted by the flowers scent from the garden. She stands up and goes straight toward this garden. Olanna finds the African lilies and pink roses freshly watered by Jomo. Olanna's eco-personality is linked to her sensibility to be near her home landscape. Instead of sleeping or reading a book, she is rather interested in home blooms care and protection. Adichie, through Olanna's character wants to underscore the necessity to be an eco-person. Eco-personality is necessary in nature conservation and sustainability. Without eco-personality, human efforts to preserve his atmosphere will remain vain and unsuccessful. In Adichie's writings, she puts in evidence the eco-identity of her characters for the maintenance of a green and absorbing world. For Adichie, eco-sensibility and personality cannot be separated. Both eco-values contribute to make mankind live in good conditions.

As regards ecological personality concept and its benefits, Adichie's vision is not different from that of Ralph Waldo Emerson. For Emerson, human personality is primordial in the safeguarding of nature. He also indicates that the happiness of mankind comes from his eco-status or eco-identity. When humankind is near his environment and worships it, he receives joy and happiness. On that point, he states: "The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship" (*The complete works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Nature addresses and lectures* (Vol 1) Boston, New York: Houston, Miffin, September 10, 2024, 61)

As for Emerson, being happy is linked to human ecological status. This is why, he says that the happiest man is the one who is connected to the wild and verdant atmosphere. In other words, human is glad when is close to the green landscape and cares about it. Emerson visibly shows that the key of blissfulness can be found through the linking to nature. On that account, environmental consciousness participates in the joyfulness and the improvement of human living standard.

In addition to the eco-personality, there is another value which is so important for a happy and natural life. Generally speaking, an eco-person is also the one who shows up devotion toward his or her atmosphere. On that way, eco-devotion can be seen as human attitude to love nature, being attached to it and then work for its sustainability. In Adichie's narratives, that eco-value has strongly contributed to the safekeeping of home nature first and by extent the outside one. In fact, Adichie presents the eco-devotion as an efficient means of preserving internal nature first and foremost and then the external one. Accordingly, this eco-devotion can be perceived through the demeanor of her characters in her different novels. This quotation showcases the embodiment of ecological devotion by Aunty Ifeoma:

Aunty Ifeoma asked me to join them in the garden, to carefully pick out leaves that had to wilt on the croton plants.

"Aren't they pretty?" Aunty Ifeoma asked. "Look at that, green and pink and yellow on the leaves. Like God playing with paint brushes."

“Yes,” I said. Aunty Ifeoma was looking at me, and I wondered if she was thinking that my voice lacked the enthusiasm of Jaja’s when she talked about her garden. (*PH*, 142)

Aunty Ifeoma’s eco-devotion is characterized by her love for home greenness. Indeed, she gets a big garden in the back of her house. She spends much more time there in order to make his home blooms clean, green, and healthy. Her attentiveness and presence in the garden is a proof of eco-love. Furthermore, spending time and asking other people to join her in her garden is nothing but a strong connection to home nature. Finally, Aunty Ifeoma’s attachment to her home landscape has enabled him to conserve it in good conditions for a long time. Consequently, Aunty Ifeoma’s attitude is the metaphor of eco-devotion, symbol of nature preservation. From Aunty Ifeoma’s behavior, one can retain that environmental consciousness is a source of nature safekeeping.

Ecological awareness is necessary for the human well-being and by extension his environment. As a matter of fact, environmental consciousness represents the main means for human to live happily in a globalized world. When reading Adichie’s novels, characters eco-awareness has brought them happiness and quietness in a wild and green atmosphere. For that reason, these characters have always been connected to their home scenery. For a better quality of life, mankind must turn into his home environment conservation.

2- Preserving Home Landscape

Home landscape preservation is the starting point of human happiness. Without any care of human atmosphere, life cannot be easy and livable. If human is close to his surroundings and cares about it, he really participates in enhancing his living conditions. The preservation of one’s area is the beginning of a better quality of life. If mankind wants to be happy and lives for long, he has to take care of his habitat. It is in this perspective Douglas P. Wheeler states that a good life is linked to human capacity and intelligence to stop destroying his environment: “To halt the decline of an ecosystem, it is necessary to think like an ecosystem.”(Douglas P. Wheeler, *EPA Journal*, September-October 1990)

Through this quotation, Wheeler tries to point up the importance of acting ecologically toward nature. For Wheeler, nature is destroyed because mankind has no connection with it. However, if humankind reconnects himself from his surroundings, he will take a great profit it. Furthermore, Wheeler thinks that human must understand the value of nature in order to preserve its survival. This is why he asserts that, each person shall think like nature. If human thinks like nature, he won't damage it. In other words, Wheeler realizes that human has no interest to ruin his ecosystem because of its benefits. In this vein, environmental consciousness is a means of nature preservation.

Environmental awareness implies the protection and preservation of human environment. Besides, taking care of human surroundings contributes to keep a satisfactory level of greenness around the world. When human is ecologically connected to his environment, he participates in maintaining his area green, beautiful and riveting. That environmental beauty can be seen through Adichie's characters homes. In fact, Adichie casts light on her characters' houses for showing up how inside environment is necessary in terms of loveliness but also in terms of psychological wellness.

In Adichie's writings, the link to home landscape not only partakes in the rewilding of the global atmosphere but also pointing out the attractiveness of characters' habitat. When mankind cares about his home atmosphere, he also shows up the aesthetic dimension of his living place. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie underscores how her characters' dwelling is the manifestation ecological pulchritude:

Jaja and I stood by the hibiscus bushes, waiting. The gardener was clipping away at the bougainvillea, taming the flowers that defiantly stuck out of the leveled top. He had raked underneath

the frangipani trees, and dead leaves and pink flowers lay in piles, ready for the wheelbarrow. (*PH*, 108)

Jaja and Kambili stand by the hibiscus bushes located in the back of their father's residence. They take pleasure to run in that big house, filled with many types of flowers, and many big trees. A green and primeval home, with dead leaves underneath the trees like the frangipani. In the front of the compound, there are some wilted flowers on the lawn whose beauty is fascinating. Each morning, the gardener, with passion makes the yard clean and charming. Jaja, Kambili, and their parents live happily in their natural home. The eco-dimension (environmental loveliness) of Jaja and Kambili's house matches with their happiness. In other words, their home landscape provides to them something special in their daily life. This is the reason why that family is always happy and relaxed. On that way, ecological awareness fosters human to look after his home environment for a healthy life.

Adichie demonstrates that home nature preservation is essential for both human and nature itself. The good demeanor of characters toward their home landscape has contributed to their wellness and happiness. These characters are constantly connected to their home environment because they always find the true joy and comfort. Moreover, home scenery safeguarding leads to the promotion of nature and by extension to human well-being.

There is a strong link between eco-beauty and human joyfulness. A natural environment is the basis of human happiness. When mankind is melted with his atmosphere, he automatically receives joy and wellness. On that account, William H. Stewart declares: "The truly healthy environment is not merely safe but stimulating." (William H. Stewart, *Environmental Science and Technology*, February 1968)

Stewart reveals that a healthy environment is not just beautiful and attractive but also it participates in the wellness of human. For Stewart, all those who live in

a green atmosphere are jovial. Nature brings to mankind moral and spiritual satisfaction. It is in this regard, Stewart talks about stimulation. When a person cares about his home landscape, he is preparing the conditions to receive the benefits of his environment. Through Stewart's thought, one can retain that a wild and verdant surroundings is profitable to human life. In this case, environmental awareness becomes the key of happiness for humankind.

Except for happiness and well-being, human connection to nature improves his living standard. In fact, life in a primeval place is advantageous for each living creature. Mankind takes a great profit from a wild environment. For instance, when a person dwells in a natural and healthy area, he breathes good, fresh, and pure air. He also eats natural food and drink natural water. From this moment, his living condition starts to be improved. On the contrary, the lack of green places affects negatively human quality of life. In this case, the comeback to a wholesome and green atmosphere is necessary for impacting today's people life. When reading *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the idea of enhanced living standard can be apprehended through Odenigbo's house portrayal:

Ugwu walked around in search of *arigbe*. He looked among the pink flowers, under the cashew tree with the spongy beehive lodged on a branch, the lemon tree that had black soldier ants crawling up and down the trunk, and the pawpaw trees whose ripening fruits were dotted with fat, bird-burrowed holes. (HYS, 15)

As it can be seen in this quotation, we are in the compound of Odenigbo, filled with all sorts of greenness. Ugwu, Odenigbo's houseboy is looking for *arigbe*. As a matter of fact, the depiction of Odenigbo's home is significant in the sense that it encompasses home verdure with an incredible splendor. That residence is visibly eco-attractive thanks to the presence of colourful flowers, trees, and grasses in the front and back yard. In addition, one can understand that an eco-house influences the life of the residents. In this context, dwelling in a wild and natural place, Odenigbo, his wife, and Ugwu, the houseboy are positively impacted by the virtues of their verdant habitat. Therefore, the couple Odenigbo is always glad because they live in a green place. And by extent, their living standard is also good. Through the eco-portrayal of Odenigbo's home, Adichie

clearly stresses on human quality of life based on his linking to a natural atmosphere. From this analysis, ecological awareness can be seen as the booster for a better quality of life.

If one considers the opposite view of Adichie and Stewart, it stands out that the lack of greenness in any place is nothing but sufferings and sadness. In one word, if there is no verdure in any atmosphere, there is no life, no happiness. By extent, if human surroundings is devastated, his living standard will also be affected. In this vein, he cannot be joyful due to the damaged area. There is a relationship between human living condition and his atmosphere. That truth can be perceived through Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967).

In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o deals with the disillusion of the natives in post-independence Kenya. The British settler has converted the natives' primeval environment into a modernized place. In fact, the British settler has taken a great profit from the westernization of natives' community. Unfortunately, these natives have seen their properties stolen, and some of them have been put in prison. As well, their green ecosystem has been destroyed for the interest of the White people (British people). In the end, these natives have lost everything, their lands, own properties, their wild and natural environment, their culture and customs. Consequently to the White people bad demeanor, there is the rarity of rain, the soil is dry. There are no activities for these natives in that ruined environment. As a result, this indigenous community is affected at many levels. On the socio-economic field, their life has negatively changed. They are not happy anymore because of westernization. They cannot take advantage of their new life. In this way, this westernization (change of life) has also impacted their living standard.

When comparing the life of the couple Odenigbo in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and that of the natives in *A Grain of Wheat*, the difference is found through the good quality of life of Odenigbo and his wife. Their good quality of life rests in the presence of nature in their residence. This couple is glad, with a good living

standard because they live in a green and natural atmosphere. In contrast, the natives' community is unhappy, with a declining living condition because the British settler has totally devastated their ecosystem. Accordingly, environmental consciousness enables mankind to care about his living place for a good level of life.

Nature preservation is essential for both human and his environment. When mankind looks after his living surroundings, he indirectly enhances his standard of life. This is the reason why humankind must make all his efforts in order to live in a wild and natural environment. When minding his home environment, human makes his life better years after years. For a better living standard in a green atmosphere, human must show up his ecological personality.

3- Shaping Environmental Identity

Environmental identity can be defined as the good comportment of human face to nature. In other words, eco-identity can be seen as human capacity to be much closer to his environment in view of ensuring a special protection. Indeed, this ecological identity is based on nature conservancy and promotion. Getting an environmental identity is synonymous with preserving human living atmosphere.

Human environmental identity can contribute to maintaining today's ecology natural and healthy. If human keeps his environment safe, he will live happily. On that basis, Steve Irwin says that: "If we save our wild places, we will ultimately save ourselves." (Steve Irwin, *The Crocodile Hunter: The Incredible Life and Adventure of Steve and Terry Irvin*, 1996, Documentary, Animal Planet and Discovery)

Through Steve Irwin's quotation, one must understand that human wellness depends on his relationship with his environment. For Irwin, human eco-identity is the key for his survival. If he fails in his surroundings protection, he also destroys his life. Life won't be livable and tranquil if human does not protect and conserve it. Moreover, Irwin wants also to state that if humankind desires a better

quality of life, he has to stand out his environmental personality. That eco-personality is the means by which he could live joyfully and peacefully. Hence, Irwin's thought is the metaphor of nature safeguarding for an excellent standard of life.

Eco-identity of human can also lead to green world promotion. When humankind conserves his environment in a verdant way, he is indirectly making his promotion. On this point, one can assert that nature conservancy makes nature promotion. On the grounds, Adichie's characters have kept their habitats as natural as possible. Then, their living standard has remarkably been enhanced. As well, in Adichie's novels, characters' safekeeping of their home landscape has also permitted to contemplate green and beautiful living places. Therefore, environmental consciousness is a means of natural area promotion for a good level of life.

The idea of nature promotion is very important for human. When human is protecting his environment, he is not only revealing the aesthetic dimension of nature but also the invaluable benefits of his surroundings. On account of it, Henry David Thoreau asserts that: "I have a room all to myself; it is nature. It is a place beyond the jurisdiction of human governments. There is a prairie beyond your laws. Nature is a prairie for outlaws." (Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, January, 3, 1853)

As one can see in this quotation, Thoreau talks about what nature represents to human. For him, nature is the most beautiful gift that humankind can profit from. He compares this nature to a room. As a room is so important for a house, nature is also indispensable for human. In fact, Thoreau wants to point out that nature is "life" for mankind. In other words, nature is the basis of human happiness and wellness. That is why he draws the parallel between nature and the prairie. If human takes care of nature, he is not only improving his living standard but he is also making the promotion of natural world (environmental loveliness). In this

perspective, one can keep in mind that ecological awareness enables human to be happy thanks to his connection to his wild surroundings.

Conclusion

Home nature connection is the starting point of environmental consciousness. When considering the behavior of Adichie's characters, it stands out that there is a true relationship between these characters and their habitats. In fact, these characters are really involved in the care and the protection of their home landscape. Consequently, their living conditions are enhancing and life is becoming better for them. From these characters eco-attitude, Adichie casts light on the importance of mankind to care about the home scenery for his survival and happiness. Besides, when humankind environment is green, his life goes better. In this context, one can quote the case of the couple Odenigbo in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Odenigbo and his wife are the illustration of better life based on home verdant surroundings link. On the other side, in *Purple Hibiscus*, Papa and his children are the embodiment of improved life connected to home wild atmosphere. Moreover, in Adichie's novels, environmental consciousness also includes the term "eco-identity". Eco-identity is human capacity to look after his home environment permanently. This is the reason why Adichie's characters have succeeded to keep their living places natural and alluring. That eco-identity is perceived through the green maintenance of Adichie's characters dwellings. As well, that ecological identity is a way of natural world promotion. In reality, the environmental pulchritude revealed through of Adichie's writings is nothing but the promotion of green surroundings for a better quality of life. Finally, one can retain that home greenness linking is the turning point of ecological awareness. And that ecological consciousness has enabled Adichie's characters to live happily and peacefully.

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