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CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S JUMPING MONKEY HILL: BRIDGING THE INTERSTICES OF GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract

Amidst the chaos of Planet Earth emerges a new sparkling voice of dawn with propounding statements, "Gender matters everywhere in the world. We teach girls to shrink themselves and make themselves smaller". 'Gender', the baffling word is used to refer to the socio-cultural constructions of masculinities and femininities. The stereotypical notions weaved by the society direct the male sex to assert his superiority of control over the female sex. The stubborn, bawdy male patriarch Edward Campbell in *Jumping Monkey Hill* oppresses the self-assertive female Ujunwa by eschewing the desires of her unconscious and labels her as a sexual object for him. The furtive 'male' considers the female as the 'other', who is in an asymmetrical relationship with the self and she becomes a projection of everything the self or subject rejects it i.e. immanence, passivity and voiceless. With humour and levity, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie offers readers a unique literary splendour, rooted in inclusion and awareness. Through Ujunwa, a Nigerian participant in the African Writers' Workshop, Adichie tears up the society that emasculates male and subjugates female. This paper is an endeavour to gain an insight to Adichie's *Jumping Monkey Hill* wherein she shines a light on the blatant discrimination of Gender and the insidious, institutional behaviours that marginalize the female gender in the nook and corners of the world challenging the primeval doctrines and phrasing novel perspectives for an egalitarian society.

*Remember me, I am the one you hid
In your walls of stone, while you roamed
Free as the breeze, not knowing
That my voice cannot be smothered by stones.
-Kishwar Naheed (I am not that Woman)*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing around your Neck* is a daring departure from the domestic preserve of most fiction written by writers all over the world. *Jumping Monkey Hill* is one of the most compelling and socially critical short stories in the short story collection *The Thing Around your Neck*. The scathing social critique primarily encompasses the foreign perceptions of Nigerians, or Africans in general, and projects the subtle exploitation and mortification of women.

The crux is an unpredictable, elite African Writer's Workshop at *Jumping Hill*, a resort bearing an incongruous name near Cape Town. Ujunwa Ogunda, a Nigerian participant in the Workshop exerts her invincible nature bridging the interstices of Gender Equality that clamps her down, threatening and shoving her 'Feminine

Mystique' fade into oblivion. The title is tantalizing and bizarre, evoking myriad thoughts and judgments in the readers' minds. The complacent, lavishly crafted, beautiful resort is set against the environs of the rustling of the jacaranda leaves and the steady calming crash of the sea's waves. The diverse spaces inside the resort labeled enchantingly as 'Baboon's Lodge', 'Porcupine Place' and 'Zebra Lair' are sheer indicators of the Gender discrimination Adichie reflects upon.

Jumping Monkey Hill hinges on Ujunwa's interactions with Edward Campbell, his wife Isabel, the haughty, aloof Ugandan and a bunch of writers. Adichie uses a close perspective to frame the narrative and loosen the plot unwinding the mould of the characters. The main character is Ujunwa, a young girl, who establishes and asserts her identity with confident calmness. She attends with the intention of completing a story for the forthcoming anthology of the group's work. Over the course of a week, members of the workshop take turns reading their stories along and being critique by the group.