Women and their Presentation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and her treatment of women. Adichie is a notable writer whose prominence has flown beyond the African continent. She is a feminist writer who writes from a woman's perspective and also on all issues affecting the Continent. Her female characters are fierce and they represent the uncompromising prototypes who are challenging and ready to challenge the status quo. They are radical in nature. Purple Hibiscus is her first Novel published in 2003 and it brought her positive reception from critics**.** Purple Hibiscus is a post-colonial text that belongs to post-colonial literature. It is a feminist novel. It chronicles female characters who have confronted with unfair treatment from their male-dominated families. Adichie's Purple Hibiscus reworks women's images by highlighting male oppressors that disempower women and cause them to suffer mentally and physically. She portrays the situation of women inside the family as well as in society and focuses on different forms of oppressions and how those oppressions push women to support each other. In Purple Hibiscus, Adichie pushes women from the margins to the center as she challenges patriarchy. Adichie succeeded in making her female characters help and be friends with one another, which eventually leads to empowerment.

Keywords: Womanism, Female, Chimamanda, Writer, African.

Adichie's Profile

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in 1977 at Enugu, Eastern Nigeria. She grew up in the university town of Nsukka which is the fictional town in her works. She is one of the notable writers of Nigeria and Africa. Her works were inspired by Chinua Achebe and she is a staunch fan of Achebe. That inspiration of Achebe developed her to the height she has attained in the literary corpus. She is an award-winning author both in fiction and in prose. Her premier works talked about gender partiality, cultural shock and identity crisis. Purple Hibiscus was her first Novel and was published in 2003 and it received positive reception from critics. She received Commonwealth Writers' prize for the novel. It brought her fame in the literary corpus.

Adichie does not portray main women characters as liberal and self-motivated. They are shown as voiceless community entwined immature social practices. She wants to show justification that these kinds of women from African territories should raise their voice against all kinds of violence, if not they will be ever suppressed and left as unaccounted.

INTRODUCTION

Chimamanda Adichie is a prominent figure in African literature. She is towering in her writing particularly on issues affecting women in Africa. She is among the exceptional women writers in Africa and perhaps the most popular of her age and contemporary. She is fierce and uncompromising in her presentation of women characters and issues affecting women. She is a radical feminist writer and her writings belong to the feminist literature. Purple Hibiscus is a feminist novel that serves as a spokesperson for feminism. The text examines African women's problems taking into cognizant of racial, cultural, national, economic, and political challenges, as well as sexists' ones with the ultimate goal of ensuring the survival and unity of the black/African community.

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Women writing in Africa saw the light of the day in recent times perhaps in 1970s. It assigns to itself the function of bringing out the history of women and their experiences through the centuries. This other side of the story reveals information about African women who were silenced by the master-narratives that focused on the canonized racial and sexual superiors. Only through such information can we see the part played by them, the role played and the true stories about their existence.

This depiction of positive traits attributed to a father's influence downplays the importance of the role played by female characters. Although fathers play a role in their children's lives, mothers have initial influence over their children as they are the ones who often provide early childcare. Both parents play a dual role in their children's behavioral traits and should thus be accorded equal recognition. Women have faced and continue to face obstacles to self-fulfillment as a result of cultural restraint, lack of education and barriers to power. In reality, however, more and more African women have successfully overcome these barriers.

African women authors write on themes that effectively relay their messages on gender disparities; for example, contemporary women writers write on women's concerns. The study assumes that contemporary African women writers would depict female protagonists such that, within these recurrent gender themes, they reflect the changing status of women in current political, economic and social change.

An analysis of the writing from the women writers has revealed the vital role they have played in representing the female quest for agency and power, emphasizing the ongoing struggle against patriarchal power in the society. These writers have demonstrated the important role that women's writing has played, not only in communicating a female voice, but more pertinently, in speaking from a position of detachment from the essentially masculine discourse of nationalism and neo-liberal globalization.

Violence against women in Africa is a persistent problem that can limit the ability of women to contribute to society and development. Accordingly, all African women suffer some form of violence and or discrimination in their lifetime. Discrimination in Africa is shaped by a number of factors, related to cultural attitude, the history of conflict, the political environment and donor interventions.

Attaining equality between women and men eliminating all forms of discrimination against women are fundamental human rights and United Nations Values. Women in Africa nevertheless regularly suffer violations of their human rights throughout their lives and realizing women's rights has not always been a priority. Achieving equality between women and men requires a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which women experience discrimination and are denied equality so as to develop appropriate strategies to eliminate such discrimination.

The United Nations has a long history of addressing women's human rights and much progress has been made in securing women's rights across the cosmos in recent decades. Since the founding of the United Nations, equality between men and women has been among the most fundamental guarantees of human rights. Adopted in 1945, the Charter of the United Nations sets out as one of its goals to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human persons and in the equal rights of men and women.

In 1967, United Nations member states adopted the declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which states that discrimination against women is an offence against human dignity, and calls on states to abolish existing laws, customs and regulations and practices which are discriminatory against women, and to establish adequate legal protection for equal rights of men and women. Less than a year later a proposal for legally binding treaty on women's rights was made. The convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. Its preamble explains that, despite the existence of other instruments, women still do not enjoy equal rights with men.

The Convention articulates the nature and meaning of sex based discrimination and lays out state obligations to eliminate discrimination and achieve substantive equality. As with all human rights treaties, only states incur obligations through ratification. However, the Convention articulates states obligations to address not only discriminatory laws, but also practices and customs, and discrimination against women by private actors. With

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these general principles as an overarching framework, the specific obligations of states to eliminate discrimination against women in political, social economic and cultural field are laid out in sixteen (16) substantive articles.

Early twenty first century African women from all over the continent write about their struggles to balance the demands of cultural traditions with the pull of modernity and their own desires for autonomy and independence. They write about their sexuality, which is often fraught site of struggle and resistance for women of all ages, from young women exploring first sexual relationships, to women confronting societal intolerance as a result of their desires for and relationships with other women, to women entering into marriage for the first time. We also hear about mature women grappling with unhappy marriages, in some cases making the difficult decision to leave their spouses and children in search of their own happiness. We hear too about the inherent tensions of polygynous marriages and about the suffering of older women dealing with the cultural exploitation of widowhood.

The fighting spirit of the African Women is revealed in the works of most African Women writers including Chimamanda Nguzi Adichie. The rising consciousness of the Nigerian woman of her rights, particularly in relation to men, can be traced through her work **Purple Hibiscus.** If the colonialist‘s image of the African woman as the dark and passive form was prominent in many male-authored texts, the works of the women writers bring out the self-assertive, courageous and determined women in Africa:

It is also to be pointed out that a true liberation of the African land can be only by the complete participation of the African woman in the national role-playing, since she had always been integral to her society. The women writers speak about the power of the African woman – marriage, motherhood, emotional and economic marginalization, their resistance to oppression and role in the nation are recurring themes in women‘s literature. They are at present making their voice heard and presence felt quite effectively.

Women writers speak of the real nature of the life of the African woman in the society. Often one comes across the exploited and suffering figure, as in Grace Ogot‘s works or Flora Nwapa‘s **One Is Enough** or Ba‘s **So Long a Letter**. An understanding of the true picture of women, along with solutions to solve their problems is given by many women writers like Adichie and Forna. Most women writers have paid equal attention to matters relating to the society and to those that pertain to women in the society. This is quite natural since we cannot hope to improve the society and make it change for the better without first improving the lot of women.

African women in literature were always associated in two major senses, positively as the life-giving mother figure and negatively as the frightening witch who has to be restricted by codes and norms. Even in the pre-colonial period, women, though in the family are given only secondary status, rose to positions of power politically: there were women in the armies of Dahomey in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; women who married wives in Igbo land and were called men ‘when they attained economic and social independence.

African women writers engage in several different discourses, which give voice to their many realities. They are conscious of neo-colonialism and are interested in fighting through their work for a greater genuine independence for Africa. They are critical of the exploitation of women. African women explore what is useful and what is dangerous to them as women in traditional cultures. At the same time, they examine which influences from the west are positive or negative in their environment. They write of realities in way male African writers do not. They also pay particular attention to the insider-outsider dichotomy, because they are often aware of participating in their societies but not always being part of the contemporary political decision in making structures. Because of these varied challenges, African women writers bring specific perspectives to the evaluation of their societies. They become not just artists but also pathfinders for new relations between men, women and children.

Purple Hibiscus is a post-colonial text that belongs to post-colonial literature. It chronicles female characters who have confronted with unfair treatment from their male-dominated families. Adichi’s Purple Hibiscus reworks women’s images by highlighting male oppressors that disempower women and cause them to suffer mentally and physically. She portrays the situation of women inside the family as well as in society and focuses on different forms of oppressions and how those oppressions push women to support each other. In Purple

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Hibiscus, Adichie pushes women from the margins to the center as she challenges patriarchy. Adichie succeeded in making her female characters help and be friends with one another, which eventually leads to empowerment.

One of the themes in Purple Hibiscus is domestic violence. Women are always on the receiving end when it comes to issue related to domestic violence. Through the presentation and the character of Beatrice, the Novel explores how wives are subjugated, maltreated and dehumanized by their husbands. Beatrice's world is exclusively controlled by Eugene, her husband. She is not entitled to any choice as if she has no life and feelings of her own. The author condemns Mama's failure to speak about her situation since the silence reenergizes Eugene resulting to several misfortunes that would have been averted. Although Mama is abused and unloved, she is subservient to her husband as expected in her marriage. She responds to her predicament by weeping.

Eugene's attack of his pregnant wife is not only a manifestation of the evil face of patriarchy but also the insensitivity of such practice to basic principles of humanity. His personality is well described by Hewett (2004) as 'a strict catholic who lives within the Manichean dictates of unforgiving faith.' And Mama's act of raising her hands while being flogged together with her children (102) is symbol of surrender and helplessness that grip women once exposed to male violence.

The beginning of Purple Hibiscus heralds a threat to continued co-existence of the family members because of lack of free space. The home is in turmoil and things are about to fall apart. It means the Centre symbolized by the paternal authority cannot hold anymore and further suggests several centers of authority are necessary. It is in the other centre(s) where the characters living in Eugene's family but does not speak her mind because of lack of freedom to be.

Religion is partly to blame for what Papa becomes since he is brought up by a priest and as a result his world is structured in Biblical terms of evil versus righteousness. The familiar space, occupied by Beatrice and her children is so packed with catholic rituals and religious activities that they have no time left for anything else. This constriction of people's freedom dictated by religion exists only at St Agnes in Enugu and not anywhere else. At Nsukka the church accords its members some liberties and that way religion is a source of freedom and not a burden to the faithful. The Church at Enugu knows the happening at Eugene's house but does nothing to rectify the mess. Because God is love as per the inscriptions of Mama's T- shirt, the church is ridiculed by Adichie when it fails to preach the same love to wife batterers like Eugene. Father Benedict becomes one of the contemptible priests in the novel in sharp contrast with Father Amadi. Adichie pours scorn on any kind of faith that encourages oppression. She calls on her people to snub those churches which do not do anything to expand democratic space or entrench equity among faithful.

Theoretical Framework

Womanist theory is the study's theoretical framework. The theory was expounded by Ogunyemi (1985) and Kolawole (1997). It is a form of feminism but the Afro-centric form of feminism that not only takes concerns of gender but includes class, race, politics, ethnic relationship, religious intolerance, colonialism and neocolonialism in their consciousness. It is a mother – centered ideology with its attention on caring-familial, communal national and international. This theory came from the perspective of African women wanting to name their unique experience within a specific socio- cultural and political context. It fought against division and encourage dialogue and cooperation in their battle.

Womanist Theory is associated with womanhood and motherhood. The principal ideas of this Theory are gender in the context of other issues of humanity relevant to African women. In Womanist theory, African women's writing should deal with misrule, national politics, corruption, inter-ethnic skirmishes and cleansing, religious fundamentalism, language issue, gerontocracy and in-lawism since such concerns are immediate and urgent to an African woman than patriarchy. The philosophy shows that a black woman writer, aware of the heritage of subjugation, should empower the black man since he is equally a victim of colonial and neo-colonial oppression. In addition, a black woman writer should attack black patriarchy and all other forms of oppression burdening the African people. It is a theory with an African consciousness. It is an African oriented theory which includes men in women struggles and looks into other problems of Africa and how they are linked to sex issues. This theory seeks to distinguish itself from radical feminism. Radical feminism creates a separatist ideal society

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devoid of male authority. For womanism, the treatment of black women is not the only aspect of the theory but all other negatives issues that affects the African society. Womanism promotes wholeness and oneness that encompasses men and women as well as children. As opposed to radical feminism, it is not separatist or anti-male.

Womanism imitates African feminist ideology by emphasizing African women's oppression, and the two approaches to addressing women's oppression are complementary. In the sense that African feminism implies female independence from oppressive male control, as well as if necessary, cooperation with men, whereas (Ogunyemi, 2003) and (Walker, 1984) present a womanism targeted at both male and female universal survival. This viewpoint runs counter to radical feminists' belief that men and women are determined by biological and psychological differences. According to Firestone, women are oppressed since men are in charge of their output (Bhasin,pp 25). The radical feminists' notion of the sex class system as the sole source of women's oppression restricts study into the specificities of women's oppression across cultures (Bhasin, p 25). Brownmiller beliefs that to maintain their dominance and superiority, men utilize their power to rape, intimidate, and manipulate women. Other radical feminists believe that men are a ruling class that maintains power by direct violence that gets institutionalized through time due to their nature.

This theory helps the researcher to examine the female characters and identifies who represents the womanist theory and who represents the western feminist perspective. It helps to show where among the two we can place Adichie as an African writer.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In African Literature, men writers have not written the story of women from women's perspective rather from a male perspective with lots of misconceptions. Therefore, women writers write about women and their experiences because they see women whenever they wake up in the morning. These female writers bring into focus their femaleness in their narratives and in doing so highlight power differences between men and women. Women Scholars and activists have pioneered intellectual revolution built on sexual politics aimed at stamping gender and feminism into both criticism and its philosophical appendage-theory, replacing a tradition that is masculine and domineering (Aido 1996, Cited in Kivai 2010).

There are many African female writers like Nwapa (1966), Emecheta (1981), Aido (1977) among others who have written stories seeking to expunge women's marginal position(s) and thus their texts are spaces of strength within and between which they fluctuate. Women's writing is a weapon that destroys the ideas that perpetuate subjugation and inequality. Some Scholars in African literature agree that works by African women writers are rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in canon formation thus making much of the African literature appear male-centered. Thus, African women have been indoctrinated to envision the world from a patriarchal perspective. One can conclude that to be an African woman is to be totally deprived of equality and thus African female writers have taken responsibility of redressing this mistake and redefining the meaning of being an African woman. In doing so, women writers have tried to look for a possible centre in the periphery of female imagination (Kivai, 2010).

Stanley, 2021 states that Chimamanda Adichie's and Chinua Achebe's writing are similar. Purple Hibiscus is seen as yet another Volley against colonialism and the patriarchy that has been portrayed in much of West African writing. In Purple Hibiscus is the story of a mute voice who has been traumatized by a tyrannical Catholic father who abuses his family; a father who is completely devoted to Western colonial principles? Rather, his dominating, arrogant, destructive and barbaric attitude which may possibly be regarded end results of colonialism, is what motivates him to abuse his wife and children, despite the fact that patriarchy is a legacy of colonialism. Purple Hibiscus opens with Achebe's enormous story of a clash of culture. Purple Hibiscus has a colorful aesthetic and an appealing voice that, like Things Fall Apart, echoes issues such as patriarchy. Purple Hibisus and Things Fall Apart are brilliant examples of texts that have defined African literature. They have explicated the issues affecting African society. They emphasize the cruelty and violence that has defined African nations and families as a result of patriarchy.

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Hassan and Mohamed 2023 state that Purple Hibiscus is a work that voices the needs of women in a manner that changes the current situation of women. Adichie portrays Eugene as barbaric, oppressive, evil and bigoted, and the way he governs his family is a typical instance of the male-dominance way of life which she observes in several African families. His wife and children live according to his strict planned schedule, in which there is a room for their personal free time. Eugene is a symbol of danger and destruction. He is a system of evil and fear. He is a symbol of patriarchy whose mere presence sparks off the fire of danger that keeps the female under fear, tension and hopelessness.

Hassan and Mohamed 2023 state that Beatrice (Mama) is responsible for her husband's mistreatment for many years, even though this situation put her life in danger to the point where she lost her unborn child. Mama is portrayed in Purple Hibiscus as being submissive and silent but she turns radical toward the climax to demonstrate how she can react when things start to fall apart. The Novel focuses on the obvious inequality to bring about serious change that would lead to equity between wives and husbands. Through Beatrice's Character, Adichie depicts how wives are mistreated by their husbands. Beatrice is the type of woman that Africans describe as being a 'good' woman since she always obeys her husband. She has no choice or feeling of her own because she lives in a world that is ruled by her husband.

Hassan and Mohamed 2023 encourage women to speak up when are confronted with ill-treatments. Silence and its weight can destroy women. Kambili's silence and trauma are dissimilar from her mother. Eugene established in her ideology that obeying is the correct option and that speaking up is considered disrespectful. However, Kambili after spending time with Aunty Ifeoma, makes the decision to speak out for her beliefs, and one of the instances she does so is by shouting 'No' after Eugene tears up Eugene-Nukwu's picture. She challenges Eugene's actions rather than obeying him and being silent. She also rejects getting up from the pieces, despite his commands to leave the pieces of picture. Kambili's trauma is presented through her silence due to her fear of Eugene. She starts speaking and using her voice more after Eugene's passing; she befriends her mother and speaks to her to calm her after Eugene dies.

Analysis Of The Text

The Novel **Purple Hibiscus** is set in post-colonial Nigeria. Nigeria is found facing political and economic uncertainty. This is badly reflected in the houses of Nigerian civilians. Eugene and Beatrice are introduced as father and mother of Kambili and Jaja. Kambili is the narrator of this fiction in some quarters. She remembers the Palm Sunday incident after three years. She recalls the brutal behaviour of her father through this past event. Kambili and Jaja, on attaining adulthood understand the importance of freedom in life. Only in this stage of adulthood, Kambili could analyze and criticize her father's behaviour since she was not strong and mature enough in her childhood.

Adichie registers that many African women like Kambili and her mother are unable to resist the violence caused by men at the beginning. So, Adichie represents the unaccounted emotions of women through the character of Kambili. When Kambili was at the age of fifteen, she was the witness and victim of her father's brutal punishments. She could not neither react nor oppose to the harassment. She thought that if she tried to question him, she would receive injustice as a result. Her anger against her father is unaccounted since she did not practice the act of defiance. "Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female - whenever she behaves as a human being she is said to imitate the male." (Simone De Beauvoir 85).Like many family heads, this unregistered protest is taken as an advantage by men to continue their domestic violence. Her silence was teased by her fellow classmates. They called her as 'backyard snob'. In realit she was not a snob and she wanted to be normal like others. But her fear towards her father did not give a space to think freely.

The onset of Nigerian civil war forced them to move to her aunt's house situated in Nsukka. It appears to be unique and a symbol of freedom for Kambili. In Aunt Ifeoma's house Kambili, found her space to feel the value of freedom for first time in her life. However, her suppressed fear did not allow her to embrace the love of her aunt. "I felt as if my shadow was visiting Aunty Ifeoma and her family, while the real me was studying in my room in Enugu, my schedule posted above me" (Purple Hibiscus 125). Aunt Ifeoma was Kambili's eye opener against her invisible chain of fear. Kambili's voice got the courage to be registered without any suppression at first time through her aunt's support. Her aunt made her raise her voice against any kind of dominance and her

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practice started with her cousin Amaka. Through the disturbances caused by Amaka, Kambili started to learn of handling abnormal characters. The Voice of Kambili was ignored by her father and her silence was taken as granted to torture her mother. Kambili as a daughter represents the painful condition of African children who experience mental torture from their parents. She swallows her emotions whenever she encounters the brutal behavior of her father against her mother. It gets ingrained and registered as a deep scar in her heart. Her memories are filled with the bleeding face of her mother. She cried for a long time. She cried until her hand, clasped in hers, felt stiff. She cried until Aunty Ifeoma finished cooking the meat in a spicy stew. She cried until she fell asleep, her head against the seat of the chair. Jaja laid her on a mattress on the living room floor (Purple Hibiscus249).

Kambili is always like a silent witness against the domestic violence. Her silence continues as unaccounted. This is the same condition of Beatrice also. As a mother, she could not take any tough decision until she poisons Eugene. Most of the buried voices become responsible for taking wrong decision like suicide and self-destruction. Somehow the characters try to voice out the accountability of their existence. Now Kambili broke her silence at her aunt's home and understood the power of her unaccounted opinions. This is a hidden impetus introduced by the author to all submissive African women who are suffering from domestic violence. When the family heard the demise of Papa Nnukwu, they started to perform pagan funeral. Kambili noticed that Amaka was crying into the toilet. It was little bit louder to her. This made Kambili to think about the 'art of silent crying'. So across many centuries, around the world, the unaccounted voices of women were delivered only through this type of crying. The once broken silence of Kambili gets restored again when she returned to her father's house after the funeral. The only voice that rose against Eugene was Aunt Ifeoma. She did not pay her attention to his anger when he argued about not performing funeral by the catholic norms. However, the strong voice was ignored by Papa and thrown as unaccounted. Eugene does not attend his funeral, although Aunty Ifeoma asks him to sponsor the funeral. His Christian practice is an anxious exercise in making a complete break with the past. Since Eugene Achike was an ardent follower of Catholicism, he turned his anger towards Kambili, on seeing the painting of his grandfather gifted by Amaka. "Violence and religion are in fact the strange bedfellows that account for the biggest irony in Purple Hibiscus." (Ouma 59). He called this action as 'walking into sin', so he poured hot water on Kambili's feet. This time Kambili did not break her silence but suffered from inside. In this condition, her mother smeared salt to heal her wounds instead of fighting against her cruel husband. Painful voices of these two women is left as unaccounted, so their life was subjected to suffer in a state of eternal hell.

In this novel, the brutal punishment by men continues without any resistance or opposition by the women folk. These women's unaccounted emotions are projected through the tearful eyes and scorched feet. The condition of women characters is the result of postcolonial marginalized social conditions. Around the world, patriarchal society and ensuing gender partiality are acknowledged as common issues. But in the case of under developing African countries, condition of women is classified under black feminism. Though the story runs in the native land, the indirect force of 'western culture dominance' underplays as an influential element through the face of religion. The major cause behind the abusive behaviour of Eugene is his tough practice of Catholicism. Under this condition, African women struggle more to escape from this male dominant society. The unaccounted voices of women keep them as an identity-less community and erases their importance in family as well as in society. Adichie is a sensible writer who retrieves the lost voices of native African women through literature. "African writers have a duty to use their works to contribute actively to the reshaping of their respective societies and cultures." (Akpome 9847). At least she gives a space to record the practical truth of under developing countries with the focus on gender issues.

Like a volcanic eruption, the so called brutal Papa was poisoned and Jaja took the responsibility for this crime to save his mother. "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. (Purple Hibiscus 290).Beatrice gets her emancipation by her own effort, because her crime is accepted by her son. Kambili does not play any role to liberate her mother from domestic violence. Unlike Forna's **Ancestor Stones**, the new generation are also conformists to domestic violence in Adichie's **Purple Hibiscus**. Jaja gives confidence to Kambili and changes her negative thoughts about men in society. However, no open voice and harsh dialogues are delivered against Eugene by his wife. Though she poisoned him, her suppressed emotions are still unaccounted and left as forgotten. After his death, Mama's emotions turned as unaccounted once again but in different perspective. This time it is not about the torture but her grief. Her grief keeps her remain calm, only the walls of home could listen her loss. This silence is not the extension of her submissive attitude but the reflection

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of priceless freedom that she attained. Beatrice climbed to the top of the centralized position in her family. Though it is not the right way to react, Beatrice is left with no choice. In this case her decision represents a one woman revolution against the so called patriarchal society. Now her boundaries are broken and she could make her choices freely without any dictates. There is no need to plead and pray to get her voice registered. Adichie does not justify Beatrice's choice of killing her own husband but readers could accept this because of Eugene's tyrant behavior. Divorce like choices are not mentioned in this novel. However this novel shows the ugly truth behind the sufferings of African women who are struggling to attain their freedom under poor social structures of Africa. Broadly, the removal of male influence could be a key to acquire the required mental space women need within their family. The men should try to influence women in their families through love and gender equality and not through patriarchal dictatorship. Aunt Ifeoma leaves for America, now Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice Achike start to breathe the fresh air of independent life. But the struggle that they undergo to attain this state of freedom is really painful.

Adichie confronts patriarchy and other forms of marginalization of women in her literature. Through her literature, we realize that African women operate within the paradigm of dominated-periphery defined groups and so they are actively engaged in production of oppositional ideologies to counter the overriding patriarchal principles. Adichie's writing is seen as a form of protest literature subverting the male order. Patriarchy compels women to believe that their inferior position is natural and irredeemable. Adichie's writing is an effort to voice internal knowledge and needs of women in a way that challenges the status quo. She reworks earlier images of African women projected by patriarchal order and figures female characters as speaking subjects in Purple Hibiscus.

The African woman writer's goal, thus, is to redefine the woman's exercise of authority and seek entry into the public sphere since women's voices have been largely marginalized. Adichie's desire to investigate the marginal and liminal position taken by women marks the birth of her narratives.

Mabura (2008) in her reading of Adichie's novels concludes that the texts are forms of Gothic fiction where the female characters are often terrified, oppressed and driven to psychological disintegration by powerful tyrannical male(s) who embody patriarchal oppression. In **Purple Hibiscus** one can safely argue that Eugene fits the descriptions of a Gothic patriarch and Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja the suffering subjects of his authority. These victims of paternal patriarchal authority do everything possible to claim their free space in the oppressive circumstances occasioned by Eugene.

Women are exploited in their different identities that notwithstanding, women courageously and continually challenge the patriarchal ideology in various ways. In **Purple Hibiscus**, women are wives, mothers, daughters or mistresses and these positions allow them to use the domestic space and the prescribed female identity to contest male power. Adichie surveys the identity of women as wives and highlights different forms of gender oppression linked to such identity.

Adichie's writing can be understood within the assertions of Wartenburg (1990) who argues that power is mediated by social alignments which are dynamic. He maintains that the subordinate agent is always in the position of being able to challenge the aligned agents‟ complicity in her disempowerment. The character of Beatrice and Ifeoma in **Purple Hibiscus** is a case of women asserting their positions in their societies and challenging patriarchy with its several manifestations. Any system of oppression draws much of its strength from the acquiescence of its victims, who accept their image and get paralyzed by a sense of helplessness. Characters in Adichie's novels are not acquiescent to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situation.

Adichie in **Purple Hibiscus** carefully constructs her female characters to reflect the variegated personalities—forced or self-willed—that define an Igbo woman in post-colonial Nigeria. Beatrice is a dependent stay-at-home mother of two, and her widowed sister-in-law, Aunty Ifeoma, a university lecturer. Because of the novel's portrayal of both women, and the reading of scholars like Ndula (2017) and Duran (2017), the character of Aunty Ifeoma may become ideal the African woman of the 21st century while Beatrice may be understood as the African woman of the past. Describing both women, Ndula and Duran refer to Aunty Ifeoma as 'unconventional' and 'free-spirited' and read Beatrice as a 'typical' African woman.

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While there is some merit to these representations, what needs to be reviewed is the implication of those qualifiers: for example, that it is Aunty Ifeoma's education that makes her unconstrained by convention, making her an enlightened, bold, and a strong woman other women should aspire to become. Juxtaposing Beatrice's depiction as weak, indecisive, and taciturn with Ifeoma's strong, assertive, and outspoken persona, Ndula concludes that "all these qualities speak to the way [Ifeoma] parts with the social constructs of her society for her gender" (38). This interpretation makes it imperative to point out that while traditional and Western ideologies coexist in Igbo land, to the extent that the latter has considerable influence over the former, the features displayed by character of Ifeoma in **Purple Hibiscus** derive primarily from her tradition.

I hold the view that on the contrary that the personality traits of Aunty Ifeoma's character, are indeed representative of an Igbo woman and her Western education is merely complementary to her Igbo values: assertiveness (she is daring, questions Papa's condescension and Papa Nnukwu's patriarchal mindset), aggressiveness (when she says she considered stuffing sand into the mouth of an invisible female character), and her 'unconventional' stance on marriage (she does not believe a woman should endure an abusive marriage). I will argue further that the consequences of taking her education as the liberating force is that it robs the Igbo cultural canon of entitlement to its own rights as a sanctioned system of beliefs with its own beauty, truth, and flaws, just as it promotes the colonialist myth that Western values are needed to 'save' the Igbo culture from itself.

Denkyi-Manieson (2017) highlights female education, marginalization, marriage, childbirth, and fertility as some of the overarching themes found in Adichie's novels. On education, she posits that Adichie juxtaposes Beatrice and Ifeoma as two different women, one educated, the other not. Denkyi-Manieson believes that Beatrice is "symbolic of our womenfolk who have given up under the yoke of gender segregation, resigned to fate and have resolved to live in masochism" while Ifeoma is "well educated, enlightened and a liberated woman" (52). Indeed, education is a powerful tool in the empowerment of women; according to Bungaro (2006) social mobility and choices seem highly unlikely for women with limited access to wealth and education. At the same time, the significance of a good education does not come without an ideological challenge to traditional Igbo institutions like the umunna (lineage sons), umuada (lineage daughters), and family elders forum which promote egalitarian ideals in handling the affairs of families and communities. Accentuating the efficiency of these cultural institutions within the Igbo society, Nzegwu reports that the Igbo woman leaned on these institutions to activate her voice within the family, and her freedom of choice on marriage, child rearing, and ownership of properties. It would appear that recourse to cultural values remains the center of formation of identity for the woman. For while she may be educated, the force of epistemic violence of male superiority never effaces. Drawing the literacy line between Beatrice and Ifeoma, as Denkyi-Manieson does, suggests an appropriation of Ifeoma's formal education as the liberating force in the novel: that Ifeoma's Western education on its own liberates the oppressed, as though it is not the same education with which Ifeoma liberates that Eugene terrorizes. Rather than purely a result of formal education, Ifeoma's wisdom and idiosyncrasies show a mix of both formal and native intelligence, with the latter most highly valued in the novel. She demonstrates her native intelligence when she utters the aphoristic "When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head" (213), a powerful statement that nudges Beatrice from her passive womanhood into proactive motherhood. For it is after this statement that Beatrice takes agency of her destiny; an instance that demonstrates the novel's representation of motherhood as both a mix of self-determination—Beatrice takes action to stop the abusive regime of husband toward her and her children—and a force of oppression—until later in the novel she refuses to act because of her social roles and the constraining cultural expectations of the society from a wife and a mother, who must sustain her home and endure uncomfortable conditions for the sustenance of her marriage and the safety of her children.

If Mama's reserved personality says anything about her as an African woman, it must be that, for her and other African women like her, power lies in her silence and calm; her main reason for enduring the suffering is the safety of her children, the protection of her 'joy of motherhood,' to use the words of Nwapa (23). In a conversation with Kambili, the utterance below reflects Mama's default position toward marriage:

God is faithful. You know after you came and I had the miscarriages, the villagers started to whisper. The members of our umunna even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else. So

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many people had willing daughters, and many of them were university graduates, too. They might have borne many sons and taken over our home and driven us out, like Mr. Ezendu's second wife did. But your father stayed with me, with us (20).

The statement suggests an essential part of Mama's conception of marriage; an institution upheld by the presence of, at least, an offspring: if a woman fails to activate the stereotypical fecundity, she is vulnerable to displacement. It is not that Mama is barren—she had had Kambili at the times of the miscarriages—rather it is the fear of losing her home to another woman that bothers her. Also, the utterance above reflects the logic that if men decide not to activate that aspect of their male privileges—the leeway to polygamy—women should show indebtedness, a logic that the novel later dismantles. This duality—apprehension over the security of her marriage, with her children at the heart consideration, and her mental construction of gratitude to Eugene—condemns Mama to a life of endurance and tolerance. Throughout much of the novel, Mama absolves Eugene of his patriarchal excesses at the expense of her own wellbeing, a disposition Adichie highlights to reveal how Mama, like some other women, has been inculcated into an ideology that harms her. With multiple terminations, and the resultant psychological trauma, Adichie complicates the story with Mama's repeated justification of Eugene's actions. Her statement above expresses the effect of societal conditioning. Adichie constantly directs our attention to the culturally-induced disposition to polygamy, male entitlement and narcissism, and an expected female gratitude. By mentioning other women's readiness to become second wives, Mama shows admiration for Eugene's outward personality traits and social standing, reflecting a mental disposition of indebtedness, submission, and helplessness. Adichie gives us access into her mind: because of the status and security that come with the suffering, the pain is not unbearable. Eugene's factories and the newspaper outfit bring enough money for the family to live on. Mama's children get to ride to school in their private car.

Adichie's Work and the Works of Other African Women Writers

In the canon of African literature, women writers have played an indispensable role in reshaping the narrative landscape, particularly in their representation of gender, domesticity, resistance, and agency. Adichie's **Purple Hibiscus (2003)** occupies a significant place in this continuum, offering a textured portrayal of women's lives within a postcolonial, patriarchal, and religiously conservative Nigerian society. When compared to the works of other notable African women writers – such as Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dangaremba, and Maraiama Ba – Adichie's novel both aligns with and extends the literary tradition that interrogates the intersection of gender and power in African contexts.

Adichi's **Purple Hibiscus** portrays the domestic space as both a site of trauma and potential transformation. The protagonist, Kambili Achiki, and her mother, Beatrice, live under the authoritarian rule of Eugene Achikie, whose religious fanaticism masks deep psychological abuse. Beatrice is emblematic of the silenced woman – a figure common in earlier African women's fiction. Her quiet endurance and eventual act of resistance (poisoning her husband) mirror the way in which many African women writers use the domestic sphere to critique patriarchy. The thematic thread is also central in Buchi Emecheta's **The Joys of Motherhood (1979),** where the protagonist, Nnu Ego, embodies the sacrifices demanded of women by tradition and motherhood. Like Beatrice, Nnu Ego's suffering is largely framed by the expectations placed upon her by society and culture, yet her voice – unlike Beatrice's more muted narrative – emerges more distinctly as Emecheta problematizes the glorification of motherhood in African societies. In both novels, women's pain is not sensationalized but rather depicted with an acute awareness of the sociocultural structures that enforce silence and submission. The authors, while differing in narrative tone and historical context, foreground women's inner lives and the high cost of endurance

Adichie's and Tsitsi Dangaremba, author of **Nervous Conditions (1988),** share a particular interest in the Bildungsroman, using adolescent female protagonists to explore the formation of identity under systems of colonial and patriarchal oppression. Kambili, in Purple Hibiscus, and Tambu, in Nervous Conditions both navigate constrictive familial environments. Yet while Tambus's narrative is overtly politicized – her awakening is tied to both education and nationalist sentiment – Kambili's development is more interior, rooted in her emotional and psychological emancipation from her father's control.What distinguishes Adichie's is her subtle treatment of emotional repression and awakening. Kambili's voice is constrained by fear, and the narrative style itself – halting, cautious, and elliptical – mirrors her psychological state. Only through her exposure to Aunty Ifeoma, a contrasting maternal figure, does Kambili begin to understand the possibility of female autonomy.

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Similarly, Dangaremba uses the character of Nyasha to illustrate the toll of both colonialism and gender oppression, although Nyasha's more vocal defiance contrast with Kambili's quieter resistance.

An important thematic motif across African women's writing is reimaging of womanhood through female solidarity. In Purple Hibiscus, Aunty Ifeoma serves as a counterpoint to Beatrice: she is outspoken, educated, and politically engaged. Her home, unlike Eugene's, is filled with laugher, debate, and freedom – despite material scarcity. This juxtaposition is not unlike the one found in Mariama Ba's **So Long a Letter (1979),** where the protagonist Ramatoulaye finds emotional and ideological support in her correspondence with her friend Aissatou. Both texts suggest that within patriarchal constraints, women's relationships with other women can serve as spaces of empowerment and redefinition. Moreover, Adichie, like Ba, positions education as a tool of emancipation. Yet while Ba's narrative is more epistolary and introspective, Adichie leans heavily on imagery and silence to communicate the tension between submission and resistance. Both, however, advocate for womanhood that transcends victimhood, anchored instead in resilience and self – definition.

CONCLUSION

Purple Hibiscus is about domestic violence, religious influence, colonialism, effect of civil war and the brutal side of male society in African families. Eugene is inhuman and barbaric. Adichie hits the dark side of Patriarchal society in the novel. Adichie highlights the vitality of women education towards the path of emancipation, gender equality and zero exploitations. This is the only way to overcome the suppression of all kinds of exploitation. The work shows that African women should not be victims by maintaining silence. Adichie wants women to raise their voices and wants to change the society from a male-centered to a more conducive one for women. Womanism goes beyond sex. It an African theory that encompasses cultural, racial, national, economic and political concerns as well as sexism ones because its views are centered are centered on communalism rather than individualism. Adichie has imbues her female character with strength, persistence, courage and boldness. They are radical and operate in a reversal dichotomy ideology. An ideology that is based on retaliation. Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice are characters that are given another chance of life, a rebirth, in the ultimate analysis of her story, demonstrating how womanist hope pervades her agenda. After the demise of Eugene, Beatrice's identity is restored and she gets a space to express her desires without any fear.

Adichie has presented two kinds of women, the radical and the liberal. Ifeoma is a radical who stands for her rights while as Mama at the outset was liberal but when she realizes that her life is at risk she overhaul her approach to a radical one. This is a clear indication that reactions are as a result of certain situations that seek to threaten the existence of the individual. Mama overhaul brings the concept of reversal dichotomy to the Novel.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's **Purple Hibiscus** contributes meaningfully to the trajectory of African women's writing by reaffirming and refining the portrayal of women's lived realities in postcolonial Africa. Her work resonates with that of Emecheta, Dangarembga, and Ba, not only in its thematic concerns – patriarchy, motherhood, education, resistance – but also in its literary strategies. These writers collectively challenge the marginalization of women by offering narratives that center female voices, disrupt dominant discourses, and reimagine what it means to be an African woman in both private and public life.

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