



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHAL CULTURE IN ADICHIE’S PURPLE HIBISCUS

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Abstract

This study primarily centers on examining the impact of patriarchal culture within Adichie's highly regarded literary work, *Purple Hibiscus*. The primary objective of this research paper is to analyze the prevalence of domestic violence and its impact on the female protagonist in the literary works of Adichie. Domestic violence is a widely recognized and pervasive problem that has a significant impact on individuals across the globe. It is particularly concerning when considering the welfare of women and children, especially in specific geographical areas. It's been noted that women experience various forms of oppression within the institution of marriage as well as face societal discrimination in their respective communities. Adichie's extensive body of work is primarily focused on female protagonists, providing valuable insights into the diverse challenges encountered by women in Nigeria. Adichie's critically acclaimed novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, explores the pervasive theme of male-dominated patriarchal cultures, a recurring motif in the realm of Afro-American literature. The prevalence of female oppression is a widely recognized and frequently discussed issue within the context of postcolonial Nigerian society. This research article seeks to undertake a comprehensive examination of the frequency and occurrence of domestic violence within the context of Adichie's highly regarded literary work, *Purple Hibiscus*. This study aims to analyze the portrayal of male dominance with female characters within the literary work. Adichie's novel delves into the examination of the widespread

violence that is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Nigerian society, the same way perceived and understood through the lens of its female protagonists.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Patriarchal culture, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Purple Hibiscus.

Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a highly acclaimed Nigerian novelist, achieved notable acclaim through the release of her inaugural novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, in 2003. *Purple Hibiscus*, widely acknowledged as an exceptional first novel, has garnered numerous accolades, notably the esteemed Hurston/Wright Legacy Award in 2004 and the distinguished Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 2005. Adichie's second literary work, entitled *Half of a Yellow Sun*, received widespread recognition and was awarded the prestigious Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction, further solidifying her reputation as a talented writer. Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, delves into the examination of societal norms and expectations imposed on women, highlighting the imperative for women to surpass these established frameworks. The author emphasizes the significance of women's self-expression and self-recognition in acknowledging their individual experiences. According to Adichie, the acquisition of self-experience and self-knowledge is deemed essential as a preliminary requirement for engaging in any form of action. The present study endeavors to conduct an analysis of the patriarchal culture and its correlation with instances of domestic violence as portrayed in Adichie's literary work titled "*Purple Hibiscus*". The primary focus of this investigation lies in the character of Kambili, a fifteen-year-old female protagonist, who acts as a representative figure in examining these themes. In the narrative, Adichie skillfully presents the events that transpire on Palm Sunday, shedding light on the deeply ingrained violent and colonial mentality exhibited by Kambili's father, Papa Eugene Achike, within the confines of their familial unit. Within the background of their family dynamics, it is noteworthy to observe that Jaja, the sibling of Kambili, exhibits a rebellious disposition towards their father's rigid adherence to the Catholic faith. This is exemplified by Jaja's deliberate act of abstaining from taking part in the sacrament of communion on the occasion of Palm Sunday. The narrative delineates the



subsequent ramifications of Jaja's act of resistance, as conveyed through the retrospective narration of Kambili, three years hence.

Literature Review

Regarding Adichie, previous works have undergone analysis to various themes and the juxtaposition of societal roles.

In “(Re)Fashioning Biafra: Identity, Authorship, and the Politics of Dress in Half of a Yellow Sun and Other Narratives of the Nigeria-Biafra War,” Matthew Lecznar has demonstrates the male dominance in Half of a Yellow Sun, and he demonstrates the way this dominance shapes identity and thought. Matthew concludes that Half of a Yellow Sun has a negotiating influence on the literary legacy of Biafra through material fashion.

Jack analyzed Black Diaspora Theory in “Language, Race, and Identity in Adichie’s Americanah and Bulowayo's We Need New Names,” Jack illustrates how two migration novels, Americanah and We Need New Names, dramatize and extend the primary features of the black diaspora. Jack concludes that Stuart Hall’s theory of Black Diaspora is very applicable to the two novels because it captures the essence of the pain and alienation of black people.

In “Sex as Synecdoche: Intimate Languages of Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun and Aminatta Forna's The Memory of Love,” Zoë Norridge demonstrated the importance of love during the times of war and pain and analyzed the language of violence with regards to Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun and Aminatta Forna's The Memory of Love. Zoë Norridge concludes that there is a conflicting relationship between love and violence within the two novels as they are both a product of the consequences of war.

The resources above have done a fair examination of the concept of violence, war, love, and language; however, the idea of patriarchy is not analyzed in Purple Hibiscus. Therefore, the researcher explores the idea of a patriarchy Adichie's novel.

Male Dominance over Female Character

Kambili Achike, a 15-year-old daughter of Papa Eugene, is a devout Catholic Christian. She is known for her reserved nature, lacking boldness, and struggle to



communicate with others because of the traumatic experiences she endures at home. This pain and suffering contribute to her modest and quiet demeanor. Even when her classmates taunt her with the label "backyard snob," Kambili remains silent, unable to muster the courage to defend herself. This incident highlights the profound impact of trauma on her, shaping her into a fearful individual.

“Why did your father come this morning?”

“I...I...” I stopped to breathe because I knew I would stutter even if I didn’t. “He wanted to see my class.” (49). Whenever she used to talk about her father, she started stuttering in her voice because Papa’s violence toward her turned her into a fearful person and made her a weaker person. Through this scene, one also sees Papa's violent behavior, which makes Kambili meek and fragile. “Once, Kevin told Papa I took a few minutes longer, and Papa slapped my left and right cheeks simultaneously, so his huge palms left parallel marks on my face and ringing in my ears for days.” (51).

Following her visit to her aunt Ifeoma's residence in Nsukka, she transformed into an autonomous individual. Engaging in introspection, she embarked on a journey of self-discovery, thereby illustrating her newfound sense of liberation. She says, “I felt as if my shadow were visiting Auntie Ifeoma and her family, while the real me was studying in my room in Enugu, my schedule posted above me.” (125).

The freedom Kambili briefly enjoyed was cut short when Papa Nnukwu, due to his health issues, moved to Auntie Ifeoma's house in Nsukka. Upon learning that Kambili was staying with his father, Papa Nnukwu, her father became enraged. He summoned his children back home and scalded Kambili's feet with hot water as a punishment for being with his heathen father. In his misguided belief that this act would cleanse her of sin, he failed to realize that it would cause her harm. In addition to physically attacking his wife and children, he also emotionally manipulates them with pitiful expressions to make them feel guilty. Kambili stated the incident: “I stepped into the tub and stood looking at him. He lowered the Kettle into the tub and tilted it toward my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed” (193&194).

Another example of the father’s physical abuse is (Adichie) says,



“when he finds Mama and Jaja allowing Kambili to eat a bowl of cereal 10 minutes before the Eucharist, instead of observing the imposed fast, he asks them in Igbo, "Has the devil asked you all to go on errands for him?... Has the devil built a tent in my house"? These questions culminate with Papa taking off his belt and hitting the three of them”. (102 & 69, 97, 77).

Concerning religion, he always brutally tortures his children. Through these incidences, the domestic violence and male patriarchal behaviors of Papa Eugene Achike become obvious. Papa was portrayed as an oppressive character. Of the traumatic experience and suppression of voice Kambili, one can trace that these incidents gradually changed Kambili into a very quiet, shy, and meek person. The brutal assaults of Papa and Kambili’s family were always experiences of silent and suppressive voices.

Through this novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, the author shows the challenges faced by female characters and how they overcome their struggles and the domestic and patriarchal behavior of male characters. This incident seeks to show that women should break the stereotypical mindset of patriarchal culture and set up their own identity. At the end of the novel, Jaja takes responsibility for Papa’s murder, but the actual crime is done by Mama Beatrice Achike. The mother of the family was agonised by the torture and brutal violence from Papa, and she poisoned her husband with the help of her Sisi. Mama tries to open the truth to everyone, but Jaja silences her and takes responsibility for that crime, and he is imprisoned for three years. He was released after three years. After Papa's death, his family started realizing their identity.

Like the hibiscus, the fragrance of Kambili's life bloomed, giving the path to her life of freedom from her past. A vivid symbol of a new beginning is in the novel. When she starts planting new trees, she talks about how Jaja’s ‘Purple Hibiscus,’ a symbol of freedom, will bloom again. This novel ends on a hopeful note.

Conclusion

This novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, focuses on female characters suffering from traumatic experiences and serious mental illness disorders. Also, this novel mainly focuses on the mental agony of the female characters Kambili and Mama (Beatrice

Achike). This paper shows the brutal violence and psychological abuse done by Kambili’s father, Papa (Eugene Achike). Finally, Eugene’s death put an end to the patriarchal culture and religious dictatorship of her father. Mama, Jaja, and Kambili came from mental awakenings and identified their individuality.

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