

Tire to Cope up the Patriarchal World as Portrayed by Adichie in *The Purple Hibiscus*

Dr. S.Newton Raja., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D¹

¹ Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of English, Bishop Heber college (autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University Tiruchirappalli -620017, India

Correspondence: Dr. S.Newton Raja., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D, Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of English, Bishop Heber college (autonomous), Tiruchirappalli -620017, India. E-mail: drnewtonrajahc@gmail.com

Received: May 15, 2023

Accepted: July 20, 2023

Online Published: November 3, 2023

doi:10.5430/wjel.v13n8p602

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n8p602>

Abstract

Women worry about subordination, as well as other issues impacting the development of the Nigerian female, have been voiced from a number of different perspectives. Nonetheless, themes like as gender-based violence, religious extremism, domestic abuse, and violence are seldom addressed in post-colonial literature by first generation female writers, in contrast to the writings of the new generation of female writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. As a result of the author's works, it has been determined that patriarchy is an ideology that attempts to demonstrate that a woman's primary role in life is that of a mother and wife. This classification has an impact on a variety of women, regardless of their educational background. Adichie provides a multifaceted rather than a simple picture of her characters in *Purple Hibiscus*. She has been successful in dismantling the stereotype of African women as a homogeneous group of hard-working, helpless, and self-sacrificing victims who are complacent in their inferior positions, as she has done. Beatrice is a character in *Purple Hibiscus*, and through her, she portrays a picture of an African woman who is oppressed by the dual burdens of patriarchy and illiteracy. She is unable to redefine herself or speak up for her rights, and she ultimately resorts to murdering her husband Eugene in order to save herself and her children from their ordeal. Due to her failure to assert her own rights early in the novel, she suffers the tragedy of her husband's death as well as the imprisonment of her son, as well as the start of her insanity.

Keywords: Subordination, evil, patriarchal, emerging, feministic approach

1. Introduction

Female protagonists in African women's fiction fight to gain visibility and respect in cultures where they are marginalized. Women are challenging gender stereotypes and the socio-political status quo in which women feel repressed and silenced by society. African women's unique attitude to diverse circumstances and challenges has recently attracted increased notice. The second half of the 20th century saw a massive increase in the literature published by and for women. Literature such as this one has emphasized that males have built pictures of women that do not reflect the uniqueness of women's lives. Most women in African literature are depicted as sexual objects, mothers, daughters, mistresses, and deities. These feminine stereotypes align with the patriarchal perception of women as inferior to men, which has existed for centuries. Since there would be no foundation for differentiating those who wield power from those who are subjects, dominance relies on the development of social and cultural distinctions among individuals. These concepts, which appear to have been produced not by people but by nature, are the most potent.

According to patriarchal ideology, males are superior to women: "Masculinity encompasses a wide range of features, including physical strength, sexual and functional duties, social position, emotional characteristics, and intellectual talents," (Loum 273). Patriarchy is based on a patriarchal worldview that supports male dominance. Female experiences and expertise are undervalued by patriarchy, a concept that regulates women in many civilizations. Despite their silence, women must follow and accept what males design and articulate because they are the mute group. The silence and oppression of women, particularly the control of their bodies, is the foundation of patriarchal authority in the African setting. Adichie's goal is to empower the African lady through writing female-centered fiction. She organizes her narratives to counter masculine authority and its violent expressions. An example of gender power discourse, her activity catalyzes the feminine battle against male dominance.

In her novels, Adichie tackles misogyny and different kinds of female oppression. In this paper, the researcher argues that African women must fight against patriarchal standards. As a result, it is moved by the urge to investigate the new frontiers on which African women authors are breaking ground, expressing their lack of representation, exploitation, and oppression. African women authors have used a number of approaches to talk about the domination of women in various communities over the years. This paper examines Adichie's journey as she fought to liberate Igbo women from oppression.

Female African authors have not only been vulnerable to foreign misinterpretations but have also been ignored in the critique of their work and excluded from the literary canon. The African women authors have spoken up about their issues and silenced things via their

work. This paper explores how women altered their methods, notably in the 21st century, during the fight against patriarchy. One might claim that Adichie's background helps her understand and depict her people's issues in the two novels, although she is writing from the post-colonial perspective. While female authors have used literature to counteract the preconceptions presented by colonial and male writers, not many people have investigated new ideas about gender complementarity, which is a powerful force in helping women and other isolated groups rise out of oppression. This paper thus analyses how the author succeeds in including African males in her efforts to alleviate human suffering and the oppression and exploitation of women by extension.

One exciting aspect of the study illustrates how Adichie's concept of gender relations challenges assumptions about gender made by radical feminists. Her books promote a tolerant attitude toward others regardless of gender, tribe, class, and religion, and most likely, in their view, also call for a healthy political consensus at the national level. As a result, Adichie's work is protest fiction, in which her female characters defy patriarchal norms and tell their own stories. She wants to bring more women into the public sphere and redistribute power, which has been unfairly allotted in the past. Adichie's concern with the troubling and unpredictable space women find themselves in resulted in her narratives. Adichie's novels feature women being taken advantage of in their varied roles.

Nevertheless, women persistently and fearlessly oppose patriarchal ideology in many ways. In all her novels, women occupy the roles of wives, mothers, daughters, and mistresses, and these roles provide them access to the domestic environment and to a traditional female identity, which allows them to challenge male dominance. Adichie shows how many types of gender oppression burden women as spouses. Marriage is how women become spouses, whether via monogamy or polygamy. The apparent inequities addressed in Adichie's books do so to inspire the change needed to produce more significant equity between men and wives. Through her works, readers may learn that power is derived from a society's constantly changing social hierarchies. According to her, subordinates are constantly able to dispute the complicit actions of allied agents, thereby disempowering her.

This paper examines the current situation in which women are forced to occupy a second-class position. She is only supposed to be seen, not heard. All types of oppression in which one group sees themselves as the norm and views another as living solely for themselves are highlighted. Look at how the system pushes female characters into isolation, voicelessness, and identity loss. In this paper, the researcher has analyzed how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie depicts gender expectations in Nigeria and how she links personal experiences with male-female interactions to modern gender debate.

2. Trauma and Conflict

In **Purple Hibiscus**, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie presents a striking indictment of the patriarchal norms pervasive in Nigerian culture. Adichie exposes the negative impacts of patriarchy and illuminates the need for female equality and emancipation by examining individuals, relationships, and cultural expectations. The role of Eugene, Kambili's father, serves as one of the leading platforms via which Adichie criticizes patriarchal norms. Eugene is the poster child for patriarchal dominance since he uses violence and religion to control his family. His strict adherence to socially prescribed gender norms and abusive treatment of his wife and kids reflect the repressive nature of patriarchal authority. Adichie shows the adverse effects of such domination in families and society by portraying Eugene's character.

Adichie also emphasizes the oppressive gender stereotypes placed on women, primarily through the perspective of Kambili. At the novel's start, Kambili is obedient, silent, and without agency since she has internalized cultural expectations. Her voice is muffled, and her father's control suppresses her uniqueness. However, as the plot develops, Kambili goes on a transformational journey and challenges the patriarchal expectations placed on her. Adichie's development exemplifies the relevance of women establishing their own voices and escaping the confines of patriarchal systems. After Jaja's disobedience of his father, Kambili remains in bed, letting her mind to wander back in time:

I lay in bed after Mama died, allowing my thoughts to travel back to the years when Jaja, Mama, and I spoke more with our hearts than with our tongues. At least till Nsukka. It all began in Nsukka, when Auntie Ifeoma's modest garden next to her flat's door began to lift people's moods. ... silence. Auntie Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus reminded me of Jaja's bravado: uncommon, fragrant, and tinted with liberty..." (PH 15)

The effects of patriarchal domination in a marriage are best illustrated by the bond between Eugene and Kambili's mother, Beatrice. Beatrice is subjected to verbal and physical abuse and forgoes her pleasure and well-being to live up to conventional standards for a devout wife. Adichie uses this connection to demonstrate how damaging patriarchal institutions are to women's lives and how vital it is for them to be treated equally in the family.

Adichie introduces Ifeoma, Kambili's aunt, as a representative of alternate narratives that subvert patriarchal expectations. Ifeoma is a powerful, independent woman who goes against social norms by pursuing an academic profession and contesting authoritarian ideas. Adichie offers a different view of femininity in Ifeoma, which rejects servitude and promotes women's autonomy and empowerment. Ifeoma's persona catalyzes Kambili's awakening by inspiring her to query patriarchal conventions and conceive of a life free from their restrictions.

Adichie also criticizes the patriarchal control over women's bodies and sexuality. The persistent idea that women's value is judged by their capacity to play out traditional gender roles is shown by the pressure on Kambili's mother to have a male heir. This criticism emphasizes how patriarchal systems deny women's autonomy and commodify their bodies.

Also, Adichie reveals the pernicious nature of patriarchal hierarchies through her subtle analysis of individuals and relationships. She makes a strong case for destroying the coercive control, constrained autonomy, and constricting expectations placed on women. Adichie promotes gender equality, female agency, and the release of women from the chains of patriarchal dominance by giving voice to characters who oppose and confront patriarchal standards.

Adichie's critique of patriarchal systems in **Purple Hibiscus** adds to a more extensive discussion of feminism and is a plea for societal change toward an equal future. Her writing urges readers to acknowledge the negative impacts of patriarchal authority and fight for a society in which gender equality is not just an ideal but also a reality. Sheila (4) observes that feminists do not agree on one all-inclusive and universally acceptable definition. Richards (19) too observes that the word "feminism" does not have a singular meaning. She, however, admits that it is concerned with fighting the systematic social injustice against women Adichie masterfully depicts physical violence to explore the environment where female identity development may occur inside a patriarchal household. Eugene feels furious when he discovers that Kambili chose to remain silent regarding Papa Nnukwu's time at Auntie Ifeoma's residence. The defiant act of disobedience necessitates harsh retribution in Eugene's mind. His father, Papa Nnukwu, had a traditional faith that demanded he worship wooden and stone gods while denying Catholicism and Eugene's belief that bringing people to his house was dangerous.

The members of a patriarchal household that disobey rather than obey undermine patriarchal authority when they do so. Such a statement, whether intentional or not, shows women's ability to defy patriarchal power, even if it incurs repercussions. Living in a patriarchal family as a youngster, Kambili never learns to speak out until she meets her aunt Ifeoma. The events help Kambili escape her father's shadow and become her person. Ifeoma calls Kambili to stand up to her cousin and make her voice heard. Kambili is being called out on her transgressions by Auntie Ifeoma, who takes on the role of an authority figure. In **Purple Hibiscus**, the father's patriarchal restrictions complicate the search for individuality and self-expression. During her stay with her aunt Ifeoma's family, Kambili learns to appreciate her cultural roots, but she cannot reach a middle ground between the strict household of her father and the caring, participative atmosphere of her aunt's home. It is no wonder that Kambili, who endures physical and psychological stress, has difficulty getting around the house to earn her father's favour. In **Purple Hibiscus**, extended family members live together in autonomous houses. Kambili discovers her autonomy only when she can consider her existence.

In her novel *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie explores the theme of violence, encompassing physical and psychological manifestations, and its profound influence on individuals and interpersonal dynamics. Adichie's examination of violence reveals the detrimental outcomes of oppressive power dynamics in familial and societal contexts. The novel also portrays physical abuse as a manifestation of violence, with Eugene, Kambili's father, being the primary perpetrator. Eugene's unwavering commitment to religious tenets and his authoritarian parenting style result in using physical force to assert dominance over the women in the family. In order to instill compliance and adherence, the individual's behaviors encompass various forms of physical disciplines, such as beatings, whippings, and other methods.

3. Thriving for Existence

Adichie's portrayal of these instances of violence reveals the inherent brutality and pervasive fear that characterize the existence of Kambili and her family. This depiction effectively showcases the profound consequences of such mistreatment on individuals' physical and emotional well-being. Adichie further examines the psychological harm experienced by the characters. Kambili and her brother, Jaja, experience significant emotional and psychological distress due to the oppressive governance imposed by Eugene. The persistent apprehension of not meeting the individual's expectations, stifling their voices, and subjugating their unique identities create a detrimental environment within the domestic setting. Psychological violence is observed in the form of self-censorship, apprehension towards self-expression, and the internalization of feelings of guilt and shame. Adichie adeptly portrays the deep-seated psychological injuries inflicted by such acts of violence, which can persist well beyond the resolution of physical trauma.

The broader societal context also influences the perpetuation of violence in *Purple Hibiscus*. The literary work portrays a nation afflicted by political instability and acts of aggression, mirroring the internal strife experienced within Kambili's familial context. Adichie elucidates the correlation between the individual and society, positing that violence on a small scale is indicative of and perpetuated by acts of violence on a larger scale. A tumultuous sociopolitical environment highlights the widespread and accepted nature of violence, thereby demonstrating its extensive impact on individuals and communities.

In the novel, Adichie refrains from sensationalizing violence and instead portrays it as an unembellished truth, encouraging readers to contemplate its detrimental consequences. By portraying the suffering and psychological distress experienced by characters such as Kambili and Beatrice, the author effectively highlights the recurring pattern of violence and emphasizes the pressing necessity for its cessation. Adichie's depiction of violence is a critical examination of power hierarchies that sustain oppressive dynamics, highlighting the significance of liberating oneself from patterns of mistreatment.

Nevertheless, there are intermittent instances of fortitude and optimism within the context of adversity. Adichie examines the capacity for healing and personal development by delving into the experiences of Kambili and Jaja, the central characters in her work. The novel posits that individuals who summon the fortitude to confront the violence inflicted upon them can potentially undergo personal metamorphosis and liberate themselves from the recurring pattern of violence.

4. Conclusion

At the novel's end, Kambili is still learning to be more confident, but she is still experiencing great difficulty trying to help her mother, Beatrice, who has poisoned Eugene and ruined the family. During her prison visit with Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice are shocked when Jaja responds: "I am laughing." I extend my arm to and over Mama's shoulder, leaning to me, smiling" (PH 307). It is not only a matter of Beatrice and Kambili swapping roles once Jaja goes to prison to shield his mother; rather, they swap following Eugene's death. Even if her mother is sick, Kambili still helps her cope with her brother's jail since he always protected me, her mother. He will never comprehend that I do not think he should have done more, and he will never believe that he did enough. While Kambili's discovery of herself as a young lady is just beginning, the story reveals that she has the essential self-reliance to care for her family. Kambili's identity is still forming, but she has gained the self-worth essential to establish a sense of self. Adichie's characterization of female relatives as integral parts of their communities is essential in building and depicting women's identities. According to Adichie, Kambili's path to freedom demonstrates the urgent need for patriarchal opposition in Nigeria. To give women a more relatable target, she selected Amaka as the model of femininity to emulate for women in Nigerian society. A "rare breed" is how Amaka is defined regarding the next generation of teenagers. "She embodies creative, accommodating, honest, vocal, and an indomitable fighter" (Odi 53).

References

- Adichie, C. N. (1977). *Purple Hibiscus*. Chapel Hill, N.C : Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2003.
- Odi, C. (2012). Wedlock of Nightmares: Narrating Motherhood in Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and *Binebai's Beyond Nightmare*. *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria (JNSN)*, 4, 41-53.
- Sheila, R. (1980). *Issues of Feminism: a first course in women's studies*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Udumukwu, O. Signature of women. Owerri: Onii Publishing House Ranti, W. (2012). Review of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. Retrieved from <http://www.weaverpresszimbabwe.com/index.php/reviews/24-purple-hibiscus/73-review-of-purple-hibiscus-by-ranti-williams> .2007
- Walker, A. (1984). *In search of our mother's gardens*. London: The Women's Publishers.
- Wood, J. T. (2009). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (8th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth. 2009

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).