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Research Article

Patriarchy, Religion and Women's Subjugation in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

This paper explores the intricate portrayal and symbolic nuances of patriarchy and religion as fervent sources of intolerance within Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). The study transcends the binary view of these forces, scrutinizing their dynamic interplay and discerning their nuanced expressions within the depicted characters and broader societal constructs. The examination traverses beyond the surface-level manifestations, rummaging into the intricate fabric of power dynamics, gender roles and cultural norms to unravel their profound impact on individual conduct and the structural foundations of society. Drawing on theoretical frameworks, this study invokes John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration* (2003) and Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1995) to dissect patriarchy and religious practices as intricate manifestations of intolerance. By situating the analysis within these theoretical underpinnings, the study unveils the multifaceted layers of control, discipline and ideological enforcement inherent in these forces. The culmination of this exploration propels beyond a mere diagnosis of the issues at hand. It advocates for a transformative shift, contending that the perpetuation of patriarchy and religious fanaticism must be dismantled for the collective well-being of families and society at large. This call for cessation transcends mere condemnation, urging a profound reevaluation of ingrained societal structures and norms. Beyond its contribution to literary discourse, this study seeks to offer a deeper comprehension of the pervasive influence of intolerance, shedding light on its contemporary relevance. By pushing the boundaries of traditional analyses, this paper aspires to be a catalyst for transformative discussions on the dismantling of oppressive forces, paving the way for a more enlightened and inclusive future.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Catholicism, paternal authority, women's rights, women liberty

Introduction

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie investigates and debunks two major factors of intolerance: religious fanaticism and patriarchy/domestic violence. Through the lens of the protagonist Kambili and her family, the author vividly depicts the devastating impact these forces have on the lives of individuals and society as a whole. Depicting the oppressive nature of religious extremism and the cycle of abuse within families, Adichie sees the urgent need for freedom, understanding and compassion to overcome intolerance that hinders personal growth and social progress.

A projection of patriarchy and religious intolerance in the novel reflects the overlapping and mutually reinforcing nature of these forces of intolerance. The novel is expected to portray the detrimental effects of patriarchal rule and religious extremism on individuals, particularly female characters. Furthermore, the story is thought to highlight how the patriarchal system uses religion as a means to legitimize and perpetuate oppressive behavior and to limit individual freedom. Through an analysis of the characters' experiences and interactions, the novel offers insight into the complexities and intersections of patriarchy and religious intolerance, reveals the harmful consequences, and offers a critique of these social forces. This hypothesis is based on the understanding that Adichie challenges the limits of these forces, reveals their limits, and ultimately advocates greater individual autonomy and the dismantling of oppressive structures.

Adichie's novel has attracted a significant scholarly attention. Several scholars have examined the depiction of patriarchy in the novel and its implications for gender dynamics and power structures. In this case, Ogaga Okuyade argues that Beatrice is “an embodiment of the traditional African woman . . . content with the economic security her husband guarantees” but, meanwhile, by poisoning and killing her husband, she “fractures the patriarchal social structure” (255). His argument suggests that Adichie challenges traditional gender roles through the characters of Kambili and Beatrice, highlighting the oppressive nature of patriarchy and its impact on female agency. Laura Sjoberg states that the novel has a domestic war, presenting “narratives of (gendered) lives who live (gendered) wars” (248). The domestic war is between Eugene and his wife and children. Audrey D. Peters writes in her thesis, “Kambili and Jaja are bombarded by opposing forces: indigenous and colonial, Pagan and Christian, Nigerian and English, familial loyalty and individual identity” (12). She also points out the binary conflicts between Eugene and his wife and children on the basis of patriarchy and religion. The novel, in fact, explores the theme of patriarchy and religion, emphasizing how it perpetuates a cycle of violence, silence, and control.

The exploration of religious intolerance in the novel has also garnered a scholarly attention. There are “many groups effectively [who] inhabit two worlds simultaneously, navigating between indigenous and dominant Western systems” (Meskell 76). Meskell implies the role of Catholicism of western system in Nigeria and its intersection with the patriarchal power, noting how religious practices become tools of control and suppression. Furthermore, Madelaine Hron writes, “As evidenced in the novel, Kambili's journey to adulthood also reflects the struggles of young Nigeria, as it negotiates Western and traditional norms, while also being overwhelmed by economic disparity, bad governance, pervasive corruption, or human rights violations” (31). With the concerns of all these that have been mentioned by Hron here, this novel delves into the theme of religious extremism, highlighting its consequences on individual freedom and the limitations it imposes on the characters' lives.

Several scholars have focused on the interplay between patriarchy and religion as forces of intolerance in the novel. Anthropologist A.K.H. Weinrich opines that “even

in postcolonial period, a husband and father as head of the household derived from the economic control his dominant position in the family and full authority over his wives and children. He was respected and feared because everybody realized his power over them. His words had always to be obeyed and those who aroused his displeasure were physically punished" (47). Further, she comments that economically submissive and without any legal rights women were entirely at their husband's mercy and thus silenced as active participants in public life. The women's inferior position was furthermore strengthened by the colonizers' customary view of African women as minors and 'simply more backwards' than their male counterparts, a view inherited by the earlier missionaries" (166). Like Weinrich, a reader of this novel can explore the interconnectedness of these themes, arguing that patriarchal authority finds validation through religious beliefs, resulting in a system of control that oppresses women. Substantially, the characters in the novel are suffering from mental trauma, "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (Caruth 3). In such a traumatic condition of the characters, a reader can delve into the intersections of patriarchy, religion, and culture, emphasizing how these forces shape the characters' experiences and contribute to the overall narrative.

Some critics also discuss the impact of patriarchy and religious intolerance on individual characters and the broader society depicted in the novel. Kambili, Jaja and their mother pace through traumatic experiences but "adverse circumstances, and their mastery of war--time life, their experiences of closeness to death, powerlessness and the disintegration of order eventually result in a growth of their strength" (Pape 100). With Pape's bildungsroman view, the characters of Kambili and Jaja can be analyzed, highlighting their struggles against the patriarchal and religious constraints and their journey towards self-realization and independence. Furthermore, Walter Benjamin argues that "the novel gives evidence of the profound perplexity of living" (87). The profound perplexity of living is observed in religious, cultural and patriarchal practices in the text. The researcher of this paper examines the social implications of these religious, cultural and patriarchal forces, underscoring how they perpetuate a culture of fear, silence, and conformity within Nigerian society.

To analyze the novel, two theories have been employed, which include Michel Foucault and John Locke, whose works can shed a greater light in the study. By applying Michel Foucault's concepts from *Discipline and Punish* (1995) to the analysis of patriarchy and religion in Adichie's novel, this paper provides a critical understanding of these forces of intolerance and their effects on individuals and society. The application of Foucauldian perspectives allows for a nuanced examination of power relations, disciplinary mechanisms, and strategies of resistance within the novel. By uncovering the intersections and implications of patriarchy and religion, this analysis deepens our understanding of the characters' experiences, the broader social context, and the ways in which power operates to perpetuate intolerance. Ultimately, this study highlights the significance of Foucault's theory in critically analyzing the themes of patriarchy, religion, power, and resistance in Adichie's novel.

This paper also uses the philosophical insights of Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (2003). Drawing upon Locke's ideas on religious freedom, individual rights, and the separation of church and state, this paper explores how these forces of intolerance are portrayed in the novel and their implications for personal liberty and societal harmony. By analyzing key instances of patriarchal and religious oppression, as well as the characters' responses to these forces, this paper sheds light on the complexities of intolerance and the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity within society.

Overall, scholars have explored their individual manifestations, their intersectionality, and their impact on characters and society. The existing scholarship provides a foundation for further analysis, calling for a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding these themes in Adichie's novel.

Religious Intolerance in *Purple Hibiscus*

Foucault (1995) believes in disciplining the body and states that the classical age discovered the body as an object and a target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body – to the body that is manipulated, shaped, and trained, which obeys, responds, and becomes skillful and increases its forces (136). Eugene works and behaves very cruelly for disciplining his children. He thinks the body commits sins and they can be cleansed by some orthodox punishments. As soon as the children return from vacation at his aunt's house in Nsukka, he immediately punishes them for “living in the same house as a heathen” (191).

“You knew your grandfather was coming to Nsukka, did you not?” he asked in Igbo.

“Yes, Papa.”

“Did you pick up the phone and inform me of this, gbo?”

“No.”

“You knew you would be sleeping in the same house as a heathen?”

“Yes, Papa.”

“So you saw the sin clearly and you walked right into it?”

I nodded. “Yes, Papa.”

“Kambili, you are precious.” His voice quavered now, like someone speaking at a funeral, choked with emotion. “You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it.” He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen. (194)

Probably Eugene learned these orthodox practices in his Christian upbringing and education. Ifeoma had also similar upbringing and education but she was not orthodox anyway. She did not know what orthodox punishments were being given to children by Eugene though she knew that he was Catholic fanatic. Kambili's feet were burned with hot water in the tub and that was to cleanse her from the sin of living and sleeping in the same house where her grandfather was sleeping.

For Eugene, her grandfather (his father) was pagan. For him, pagan was heretic and schismatic. Pagan influence on his family meant sin and that should be cleansed. Eugene beats Jaja with his belt only for the reason that he did not go for the communion in the church. Kambili took food ten minutes before the mass and, for that, Jaja and Kambili got severe beating with a leather belt from their father:

“What are you doing, Kambili?”

I swallowed hard. “I...I...”

“You are eating ten minutes before Mass? Ten minutes before Mass?”

“Her period started and she has cramps—” Mama said.

Jaja cut her short. “I told her to eat corn flakes before she took

Panadol, Papa. I made it for her.”

“Has the devil asked you all to go on errands for him?” The Igbo words burst out of Papa's mouth. “Has the devil built a tent in my house?”

He turned to Mama. “You sit there and watch her desecrate the Eucharistic fast, *maka nnidi?*”

He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather-covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse. I put the bowl down just as the belt landed on my back. (101)

This harsh treatment on the family cannot be justified on any ground. Patriarchy is based on religion here and family violence thereby has been justified in the name of discipline. Readers cannot agree with Foucault's concept of discipline if it goes to the extremity as shown in the novel. However, Foucault argues that it was certainly not the first time that the body had become the object of such imperious and pressing investments; in every society, the body was in the grip of very strict powers, which imposed on it constraints, prohibitions or obligations. (136)

Discipline was "a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior" (138). Eugene expects in his family a kind of discipline that "produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies" (138). He uses "disciplinary coercion" (138) for the change in their aptitude with patriarchal domination. "Discipline sometimes requires enclosure" (141) and the cruel father imprisons Jaja and Kambili in their rooms many times for the same reason. Here, Foucault writes, "For centuries, the religious orders had been masters of discipline" (150). In the novel, Catholicism is the tool of the power and discipline that Eugene uses over his wife and children. He often intervenes in their activities. He is very angry when Kambili becomes second in the class. Kambili says that her form mistress, Sister Clara, had written, "Kambili is intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible" (38). The principal, Mother Lucy, wrote, "A brilliant, obedient student and a daughter to be proud of" (39). Kambili knows well that her papa would not be proud. Her papa convinces her with his cruel words asking her whether the topper has two heads and she has only one head (47). Domination is at the center of the novel. Eugene is a rich industrialist, educated and very kind to people in need but unwise within his house. His nature of authority and imposition is beyond calculation.

Locke esteems "toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true church" (7). Eugene prefers St. Agnes church in Enugu to St. Andrew's church in Enugu or church where Father Amadi is a priest. He does not have toleration for the other churches. He forcefully leads his children to the church. Jaja says he can't tolerate the smell of the church and requests to leave him at home but he gets punishment with an accusation that devil is working for him for neglecting the church. Locke states that "all the life and power of true religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind: And faith is not faith without believing" (13). For Jaja and Kambili, the issue is not of faith but of belief. Moreover, they are forcefully driven for the faith and belief.

Locke argues that true religion works according to the rules of virtue and piety (8). It is one thing to persuade, another to command: one thing to press with arguments, another with penalties (14). Eugene does not know rules of virtue and piety. He does not know how to persuade people for ecclesiastical discipline. He knows how to command and therefore he works with religious coercion and persecution. He governs over his children and wife with penalties. Locke speaks as a humanist. In his words, no man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but every one joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable unto God (15). Nature, voluntary, faith and belief and such other words do not have entry in Eugene's Catholic dictionary.

Patriarchy, Paternal Authority and Women's Subjugation

Patriarchy is a pervasive force in the novel, depicting the dominance of male authority and the subjugation of women. The protagonist, Kambili, and her mother, Beatrice, endure physical and emotional abuse at the hands of Kambili's father, Eugene. The presence of patriarchy limits the agency and self-expression of women, creating a climate of fear, submission, and oppression. By exploring this force, the novel invites readers to critically examine gender roles, power dynamics, and the consequences of rigid patriarchal systems.

Kambili does not dare to blame her father for his cruelties. She cannot name Eugene's cruelty when he breaks her figurines and says, "I meant to say I am sorry that Papa broke your figurines, but the words that came out were, 'I'm sorry your figurines broke, Mama'" (10). Instead of directly saying, "I am sorry that Papa broke your figurines," she says, "I'm sorry your figurines broke, Mama." This subtle difference in phrasing reflects her fear. She does not refer to the agent; the object becomes subject in the place of "Papa." Papa's authoritative and often oppressive presence may create an atmosphere where direct expressions of emotions and criticisms are challenging. Kambili's altered phrasing could be a subconscious attempt to navigate around the authority figure and soften the impact of her words. They are victims of physical violence at the hands of Eugene but, they do not blame him anyway. They cannot challenge him with their expressions of truth. They must always keep up appearances, hiding the truth about Papa. Kambili cannot bring herself to blame Papa for the broken figures though the entire family witnessed his outburst. They must remain quiet. Silence is the remarkable characteristic of the family. Everything in the house is quiet. Even laughter is not allowed.

Kambili loves her father in spite of mental and physical tortures. She shares her experiences like this: "I knew that when the tea burned my tongue, it burned Papa's love into me" (7). Kambili burns her tongue while drinking tea but the tea was Papa's love and that was burning within her as the significant sensation. They are very accustomed to their father's behaviours. Kambili appears very wise in her words when she says, "We did that often, asking each other questions whose answers we already knew" (23). Kambili and Jaja always share a close bond and they have a good sense of connection and intimacy. They have mutually shared experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Because of their father, they did not have a sense of comfort in their lives but they had a common understanding. For every issue, they would raise questions but, meanwhile, they already know the answers of those questions.

Kambili was restored to her health a few days before from burning of her feet by her father because she had stayed in the same house where pagan father of Eugene lived. Jaja and Kambili loved their grandfather. Christianity, Catholicism and paganism were not their concerns. Papa-Nnukwu was their grandfather and that was the concern. Amaka painted grandfather's picture and gave to her. Kambili pressed something wrapped in black cellophane "into my hands, then turned and hurried back into the flat. I could see through the wrapping: it was the unfinished painting of Papa-Nnukwu. I hid it in my bag, quickly, and climbed into the car" (190). The narrator adds the ancestral value to the painting here: "The painting ... represented something lost, something I had never had, would never have" (210). Kambili and Jaja had a good spiritual attachment with that painting. They brought it home and hid from their father. This painting raised a new problem. Both were looking at the painting when Eugene, they believed, was absent from home, and suddenly he appeared. She had the painting. Though Jaja tried to save her, Eugene kicked her with his metal buckled slippers but she described the beating in her modest words "kicking increased in tempo, and I thought of Amaka's music" (211)

and he was kicking everywhere in her body, "Kicking. Kicking. Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy." The scene was beyond tolerance for Beatrice, and Ifeoma later met her when she was still in bed recovering her senses. Ifeoma was disgusted from her brother's fanaticism. Probably, she gives a hint to Mama Beatrice when she says, "When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head" (213), to take an action against Eugene. As an action, she poisons to his death.

Beatrice stands here against the patriarchal fanaticism. Her action is bold and masculine when she says, "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor" (290). She was a mother and she has better feelings for her children. She respected her husband until she could tolerate. Kambili still loved her father and disliked her mother's action. Tea used to link her with her father, with warm relationship. Tea joined them with family love. Beatrice put poison in his tea and ended everything at once. Kambili felt that as unnatural and disliked it. She wanted to have sips of Papa's tea, love sips, "For a long, silent moment I could think of nothing... Then I thought of taking sips of Papa's tea, love sips, the scalding liquid that burned his love onto my tongue. "Why did you put it in his tea?" I asked Mama, rising. My voice was loud. I was almost screaming. 'Why in his tea?'" (290). In this way, patriarchy is an authority that subjugates women in the novel.

The Role of Church in Public Affairs

Religion based on human craze (not a real belief) is a drug of intoxication. God is everywhere in nature. Locke is very just in his remark that faith is not faith without believing (13). Kambili believes that her Aunty Ifeoma is right when she says, "There is Odim hill. The view from the top is breathtaking, when you stand there, you see just how God laid out the hills and valleys, *ezi okwu*" (130). Kambili has the realization and she feels she is closer to nature and god in nature. When Aunty Ifeoma made a U-turn and went back the way the children had come, Kambili let her "mind drift, imagining God laying out the hills of Nsukka with his wide white hands, crescent-moon shadows underneath his nails just like Father Benedict's" (131). Kambili finds God in nature. She envisions that the divine hands that created the hills of Nsukka are white, and that is because she has been taught to accept a white image of God. However, her vision has got changed. Aunty Ifeoma and her children have changed her perspective. Her eyes have been turned to different type of faith. Aunty Ifeoma is very wise because she blends human and natural ways with her Catholic faith. Her wisdom can be observed in her words about Papa-Nnukwu when she corrects Kambili's thought, "Your Papa-Nnukwu is not a pagan, Kambili, he is a traditionalist" (81).

Kambili knows well that her father liked everything white because he was gracious like the white. He was religious like the white. His charity was like the white. Only physically he was black; spiritually he was white. He makes an effort to be accommodating, cooperative, and likable. Eugene visits her school and talks to Sister Margaret in the way the white people speak. Kambili draws a good character sketch of her father: "Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict. He was gracious, in the eager-to-please way that he always assumed with the religious, especially with the white religious" (46). The description implies that this behavior is not natural or authentic to the Eugene's true self. Instead, it is something he assumes or puts on, possibly as a result of societal pressures, power dynamics, or a need for validation and acceptance. The description of Eugene's behavior highlights the power dynamics at play and the need for external validation from people in his surroundings. His eagerness to please and assumption of a specific

mannerism could stem from a desire for acceptance, approval, or a perceived sense of authority associated with the white religious community.

Who knows better about Eugene? Beatrice or Ifeoma? The narrator's focus is on Ifeoma, Eugene's sister, as both of them were brought up in the same way, with similar provisions, and both of them were turned to be Catholics. However, both had differences all the time. Eugene tried her to join the church that he preferred. He wanted her children to join a convent school. He wanted her to avoid makeup. She was not interested to follow him for his things. Ifeoma's husband Ifediora was frank to tell Eugene what he liked. He was bold to tell the truth. She followed her husband and disregarded her brother for his religious extremity. They did not have mutual understanding. She did not like her brother for his insensible talk and behaviours and often attacked upon his character. She showed the negative character of Eugene. She is very practically harsh in her comments,

...But you know Eugene quarrels with the truths that he does not like. Our father is dying, do you hear me? Dying. He is an old man, how much longer does he have, gbo? Yet Eugene will not let him into this house, will not even greet him... Eugene has to stop doing God's job. God is big enough to do his own job. If God will judge our father for choosing to follow the way of our ancestors, then let God do the judging, not Eugene. (95)

Eugene quarrels with truths he does not like. He has a tendency to reject or deny certain facts or realities that are uncomfortable or go against his own beliefs or desires. Ifeoma shows her concern that their father is dying. She accuses Eugene of refusing to let their father into the house and even greet him. He shows indifference to their father, with a lack of compassion, respect, or acknowledgment towards their own father during his declining health. Ifeoma stands here as a critic and says that he is trying to do God's job by judging their father's choices and actions. They argue that it is not Eugene's place to take on this role and that if God is to judge their father for adhering to their ancestral way of life, then it should be left to God alone. Religion is the way to patriarchy and Eugene uses the religion as the disciplinary tool to discipline the surrounding so that everything can be under his hegemonic order. He never thinks of the consequences of his religious intolerance and dogmatism. Adichie depicts Eugene as a character of orthodoxy and hegemonic masculinity.

Kambili as a narrator reports in very beginning of the novel about the conflicts between Christian orthodox and Christian democrats, with a foregrounding of the thesis and purpose of the story. She indicates to the readers that people were much conscious by the time the story events occurred. General public were getting humanistic separation from the churches. They were working for liberty from any religious, political and patriarchal domination. She realized it within her family as well. She says, "Things started to fall apart when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère" (1). "Things fall apart" referred here is an allusion to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Adichie eagerly read his books. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* chronicles the decline of an Igbo clan leader in the shadow of British colonial rule and Christian missionaries. Achebe's book depicts the downfall of Igbo leaders under the empirical influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries. She presents an educationally and economically cultured Igbo family who live according to strict Catholic customs of patriarch's father. He is educated in England and uses an English accent while speaking in public. The Achike family depicts a conflict between ancestral beliefs and Christian missionaries and also dogmatic Catholicism and democratic/liberal Catholicism.

Eugene is a follower of Christian missionaries and dogmatic Catholicism. Ifeoma, her children and Father Amadi play significant roles in the mental transformation of Eugene's children – Jaja and Kambili, and thereby their mother Beatrice. Ifeoma invites Jaja and Kambili to spend their holiday at her residence in Nsukka. They have very unusual experience in their aunty's residence. They have freedom of all kinds of expressions. They can smile and laugh. They can play at their choice. Amaka freely talks to Eugene, without any fear and hesitation, and that is remarked by Kambili, "I wondered how Amaka did it, how she opened her mouth and had words flow easily out" (99). She had all wonders- "laughter always rang out in Aunty Ifeoma's house" (140). She describes things at their place which were quite different from Enugu:

Laughter always rang out in Aunty Ifeoma's house, and no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms. Arguments rose quickly and fell just as quickly. Morning and night prayers were always peppered with songs, Igbo praise songs that usually called for hand clapping. Food had little meat, each person's piece the width of two fingers pressed close together and the length of half a finger. The flat always sparkled—Amaka scrubbed the floors with a stiff brush, Obiora did the sweeping, Chima plumped up the cushions on the chairs. Everybody took turns washing plates. (140)

Kambili could not believe that they could have such wonderful life. They do not have laughter at Enugu. They do not have arguments of any kind. Igbo songs are not allowed in their prayers. They have not seen and heard hand clapping in their house. Children do sweeping, cleaning and scrubbing the floors. They wash their plates. Jaja and Kambili, for the first time, clean their plates. They learn all things in Nsukka that they have never done in Enugu. They learn senses of the awakening from the regular visitor, a young Catholic priest, called Father Amadi.

Father Amadi is a white but quite different in his thoughts. He follows Locke, with a view that one can be a Catholic with a liberal and empathetic feelings and beliefs. He has a humanistic piety and unorthodox in character. He is very social and treats all people equally regardless of age, religion, ability, or gender. He plays football with children from poor neighborhoods. He jokes with Kambili's cousins. Father Amadi laughs while living among children. He enjoys children's company. He teaches Kambili the real sense of religion. Religion is itself a discipline of love, responsibility and empathy for the other. He is not rigid in religious practices. He is very cooperative in the society. He works and manages everything to help Ifeoma during the treatment of Papa-Nnukwu. He is not judgemental on religious ground. He has very fair dealings; does not discriminate people on religious or racial issues. He is quite different from Eugene. He respects all communities and their beliefs. He believes Papa-Nnukwu is a human and Eugene is wrong to call him a pagan but he does not criticize anybody. He expresses his intention during his talk with Kambili,

"I sleep in the same room as my grandfather. He is a heathen," I blurted out.

He turned to me briefly, and before he looked away, I wondered if the light in his eyes was amusement. "Why do you say that?"

"It is a sin."

"Why is it a sin?"

I stared at him. I felt that he had missed a line in his script. "I don't know."

"Your father told you that."

I looked away, out the window. I would not implicate Papa, since Father Amadi obviously disagreed. (175)

Every individual has different perspectives. Eugene is orthodox and Kambili is guided by her father. She is innocent and her father is imposing his own perspective upon her. She stands between Father Amadi and her father Eugene, with two different perspectives. She thinks that Papa-Nnukwu is a pagan because that has been told by her father. Her belief is entirely colored by her father's orthodoxy and that is being corrected by Father Amadi. He guides her to see Papa-Nnukwu with empathy.

Kambili's cousin Amaka is much wiser and intelligent in her views. She questions the authority openly. She has intellectual curiosity. She loves her Nigerian ancestry. She makes her intellectual talk with Father Amadi in Kambili's presence, "The white missionaries brought us their god," and further comments, "Which was the same color as them, worshiped in their language and packaged in the boxes they made. Now that we take their god back to them, shouldn't we at least repackage it?" (267). The doctrinal aspects of the Church emphasize sin, damnation, and obedience. Religion and operation go together. Religious teachings can contribute to a climate of fear, judgment, and control. She raises questions about the effects of such a religious framework on individuals and communities. It suggests that the Church's emphasis on sin and damnation, obedience and punishment can potentially instill a sense of fear, guilt, and a strict adherence to moral codes. Amaka often debates over such issue with Father Amadi who in turn encourages Kambili to take a part in the debate so that her silence can be broken and she can have independent thoughts. She had received the painting of Papa-Nnukwu from Amaka who painted it herself.

Liberty of Kambili

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie shows the suppression of individual rights and freedoms by patriarchal and religious oppression and then the characters' quest for personal autonomy and liberation from these oppressive forces, which drive them to explore identity formation and self-realization. Even a snail desires for free life. Kambili learns the values of personal autonomy and liberation from these oppressive forces from her aunty Ifeoma, cousins and Father Amada. Here is a beautiful imagery of liberty from the narrator: "She picked up an enterprising snail that was crawling out of the open basket. She threw it back in and muttered, 'God take power from the devil.' I wondered if it was the same snail, crawling out, being thrown back in, and then crawling out again. Determined. I wanted to buy the whole basket and set that one snail free" (238). The snail carries a symbolic meaning for Kambili. Both are in similar condition of life. While she is at Enugu, she feels she is in her father's basket. When she is in Nsukka, she has a wonderful experience of liberty. New philosophy of life is recognized and learnt. She has a growth of her mind and physical strength within her and it is nurtured all the time by her aunty Ifeoma, cousins and Father Amadi. Her sense of delight and flight of liberty can be recognized and justified here.

Jaja's is also much mature by this time. He asks questions and finds answers as well by his reasoning. After the death of his father, he makes rhetorical questions and answers are within the questions, "Of course God does. Look at what He did to his faithful servant Job, even to His own Son. But have you ever wondered why? Why did He have to murder his own son so we would be saved? Why didn't he just go ahead and save us?" (289). Jaja persuades his sister Kambili that God killed His son (Eugene) because he was not just in his behaviours. God could have gone between them and their father to save the children from the cruelty but He couldn't. Rather He killed His faithful son and thus saved Jaja and Kambili. God sees the truth and gives fair judgment.

In place of his mother, Jaja lives in prison. He is going to be released soon. Kambili has planned to take Jaja to Nsukka first, and then to America to visit Aunty

Ifeoma. That's the land of liberty and she mentions it intentionally. She further says, "'We'll plant new orange trees in Abba when we come back, and Jaja will plant purple hibiscus, too, and I'll plant ixora so we can suck the juices of the flowers.' I am laughing. I reach out and place my arm around Mama's shoulder and she leans toward me and smiles" (306-7). Mother's smile alludes to the happiness of children, released from religious and patriarchal abuses. All references to plant and trees are for the feelings of independence and liberty. Meanwhile, she mentions clouds and rains with the indication of divine nature that has put her hands in their favour, "Above, clouds like dyed cotton wool hang low, so low I feel I can reach out and squeeze the moisture from them. The new rains will come down soon" (307). These all are symbols of freedom, new life and new beginning.

Jaja was defiant and challenged his father frequently but that did not result fine. The narrator argues, "Jaja's defiance seems like Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do" (16). Ironically, he often turned a prey to his father's abuses. Kambili never showed any defiance against father. However, Beatrice's defiance against religious and patriarchal fanaticism is highly admirable because "'being defiant can be a good thing sometimes,' Aunty Ifeoma said. 'Defiance is like marijuana – it is not a bad thing when it is used right'" (144). Death of father stuns Kambili and "silence hangs over us [them], but ... a different kind of silence, one that lets me [her] breathe" (305). Before they were silent and they could not breathe well because of the fear and abuses but this time situation was different: silence was different for that lets her breathe.

The discussion above suggests that the suppression of women's individual rights by the patriarchal and religious authority is the main issue raised in Adichie's novel. Similarly, the characters' quest for personal freedom from these oppressive forces drives them to explore their formation of identity and self-realization.

Conclusion

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* intricately weaves a narrative that rummages into the nuanced interplay between cultural expectations and political influences, presenting a distinctive exploration of intolerance. The novel vividly portrays how patriarchal and religious forces, deeply embedded in the fabric of society, intersect with political dynamics to shape the characters' lives and destinies.

Rather than merely portraying patriarchy and religion as standalone oppressive forces, the narrative skillfully reveals how these elements are intertwined with political structures. The stifling gender roles imposed on characters like Beatrice and Kambili are not only reflective of traditional norms but are also exacerbated by political systems that perpetuate inequality. Similarly, the portrayal of religion goes beyond mere dogma, illustrating how political power co-opts religious institutions to maintain control, instill fear and suppress dissent.

The characters in *Purple Hibiscus* grapple not only with the constraints of patriarchy and religious doctrines but also with the broader political landscape that perpetuates and reinforces these intolerant forces. The novel emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of societal structures, urging readers to recognize how cultural, religious and political elements intersect to shape individuals' lives and choices.

In navigating the complex web of intolerance, the characters engage in acts of resistance that extend beyond challenging patriarchal and religious norms. They confront the political underpinnings that sustain these oppressive forces, highlighting the necessity of addressing systemic issues for meaningful societal change. The novel invites readers

to reflect not only on individual agency and freedom of thought but also on the broader socio-political context that shapes and sustains intolerance.

Adichie's novel, therefore, emerges as a thought-provoking exploration not just of patriarchy and religious intolerance, but also of the intricate connections between cultural expectations and political structures. Adichie's narrative prompts a re-examination of the collective responsibility in dismantling systemic intolerance, fostering a more inclusive society that recognizes the multifaceted nature of oppression.

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