

I. Introduction to Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* as a Postcolonial Feminist Fiction

This research attempts to investigate how the notions of freedom and oppression are woven into the novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on the light of postcolonial feminism. It examines the extent of women's struggles to overcome marginalization in a sexist and patriarchal society as the major female characters like Kambili, Beatrice and Ifeoma have been the victim of double suppression. Postcolonial feminism addresses the issues of oppression and isolation, as well as, the empowerment of postcolonial females. Postcolonial women are vulnerable to marginalization and subjugation because they often struggled for liberation from patriarchal institutions even before the colonial powers entered. Adichie's debut fiction addresses some of the important issues postcolonial studies are concerned with, including violence against women, the silencing of victim, the domestic sphere and the multiple embodiments of postcolonial feminism. Postcolonial females in *Purple Hibiscus* are not only the passive subjects of oppression but they collaborate with each other thereby resisting against patriarchal and colonial domination through their silence.

Considering that the analysis of *Purple Hibiscus* will focus on the suffering of females and the way they resist patriarchal domination where the silence is used as a form of oppression and a mode of resistance. Indeed, while postcolonial feminism, an important methodological tool, takes as its premise that racism, colonialism, and the long lasting effects (economic, political and cultural) of colonialism in the post colonial setting, are inextricably bound up with the unique gendered realities of non-white and non- Western women. Postcolonialism can provide an outlet for citizens to discuss various experiences endured during colonialism. These can include: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender,

place and responses to the influential discourses of Imperial Europe. Postcolonial feminists see the parallels between recently decolonized nations and the state of women within patriarchy –both take the perspective of a socially marginalized subgroup in their relationship to the dominant culture. The violent acts committed against family by the father Eugene are representative of the patriarchal power. Eugene, the head of the household, is oppressive and violent, forcing the family into a deep silence out of fear and deference; he takes away their voices and thus their power.

Despite the divergent concerns, the researcher attempts to see one of the most compelling features that lies in its nuanced treatment of the notion of freedom and tyranny in the post independence Nigeria of the 1990. Though Nigeria got independence in 1960, the ex- colonial powers and newly emerging superpowers continued to play a decisive role through educational, political and cultural institutions. The burning issue in the novel is about the promise of freedom; about the blurred lines between the old gods and the new; between childhood and adulthood; between love and hatred. An extraordinary debut, *Purple Hibiscus* is compelling novel which captures both a country and an adolescence at time of tremendous change. The major female characters undergo double suppression from colonial legacy and patriarchy.

Women's impassioned struggles to free themselves from the shackles of male brutality and dominance are what hold us spellbound to Adichie's most alluring and extremely powerful novel. Patriarchal figure resides on tradition of male supremacy to authenticate abuse of female rights and sexuality. This act of revisiting of the repositories of memory and cultural survivals in the postcolonial refashioning, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's view has a "retrograde valency" (86). In other words

female figures once suffering in colonial culture are still suffering similarly in their own refashioned traditional culture. It beckons that the legacy of domination of colonial Nigeria passes into the hands of postcolonial patriarchy which is mistaken as tradition and here too women are made to feel that they have all their rights intact, whereas the reality is just the reverse.

Because *Purple Hibiscus* incorporates postcolonial feminism as a prominent theme, it is important to acknowledge the role of domesticity in the novel.

Postcolonial woman has an equivocal relationship with the kitchen space. In one sense it is a place of oppression and marginalization but for many of the same reasons it is a source of liberation and empowerment. The characters Kambili, Beatrice and Ifeoma serve as commentary on the postcolonial feminist perspective on the kitchen space. As the woman of the house, Beatrice controls the food that is provided for the family. In the article, "Women's Quest for Rights: African Feminist Theory in Fiction," author Helen Chukwuma states that there exists "domestic revolution through the wife who slowly and methodically poisoned her husband. She freed herself and her children from the yoke" (6). It is through her control of the food and nourishment for the family that Beatrice finds her freedom: she slowly poisons Eugene in his meals and his daily tea, killing him little by little.

The term 'resistance' in postcolonial studies stands for the act of resisting the colonial mission in physical, psychological, and in other different levels. But the research will see the resistance of female figures against colonial patriarchal domination. Because after knowing the colonizers, colonized can react in a very strategic way to defend any either/or strategy of colonial mission. In the post – independence era as the colonizing mission is subtle and unidentified, the colonized respond to these strategies in a very strategic way. Benita Parry theorizes it as a

rehearsal of “questions about subjectivity, identity, agency and the states of reverse-discourses an oppositional practice, posing problems about the appropriate models for contemporary counter- hegemonic work” (“Resistance Theory” 84).

Regarded as one of Nigeria’s talented young writers, Adichie is acknowledged for her well-crafted stories and novels that explore the political and personal repercussions of recent Nigerian history, particularly the strife of the Nigerian Civil War and the doomed Biafra secession in the late 1960s. Critics praise her thoughtful treatment of history and her sensitive and honest depiction of the effects of war and brutality on the individual. In recent literary works, Adichie addresses the challenges of the immigrant experience, focusing on issues of national identity and language.

Adichie was born in Enugu, Nigeria, on September 15, 1977. She was brought up in the university town of Nsukka, the location of the University of Nigeria, where her father worked as a deputy vice-chancellor and a professor of statistics and her mother was the university registrar. As a child she attended the university’s primary and secondary schools. Growing up in a university environment nurtured her innate desire to write, and during these years she wrote a number of plays and poems that were performed at school. In 1995 she enrolled in the university to study medicine and pharmacy but left the following year to enroll at Drexel University in Philadelphia on scholarship. Two years later, she transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic, Connecticut, to study political science and communication. She continued to write during this period, and several of her short stories were published in literary journals, including *Granta*, *Other Voices*, *Calyx*, and *Iowa Review*. During her senior year, she began writing her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, which was published in 2003. After graduation in 2003, she received a scholarship to pursue her master’s degree in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University. That same year, her

short story “Half of a Yellow Sun” won the PEN/David Wong short story award. She expanded the story into a novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which was published in 2006. She has won several important honors and awards for her work, including Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best First Book in 2005 for *Purple Hibiscus* and the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction in 2007 for *Half a Yellow Sun*. In 2005 she was a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University, and in 2006 she began to work toward a graduate degree in African studies from Yale University.

Adichie’s work incorporates themes of political and domestic violence, tolerance, loyalty, family, national identity, self-realization, and the effects of colonialism on the collective and on individuals. In her play, *For Love of Biafra* (1998), she chronicles the expectations and shattered hopes of a Nigerian family around the time of the Nigerian civil war in the late 1960s. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, explores the tension between Igbo and Western culture through the story of a fifteen-year-old girl named Kambili. Her industrialist father, Eugene, is known in the community as a pious and generous man that courageously stands against the rebel forces who overthrew the democratic regime; at home, however, he is an abusive tyrant who terrorizes Kambili, her mother, and her older brother, Jaja. Moreover, he forces his family to live by the strictures of a fundamentalist strain of Catholicism and rejects the traditional African faith of his own father. As the political situation heats up, Jaja and Kambili are sent to stay with their Aunt Ifeoma, a respected university professor. Under her nurturing eye, Kambili embraces her independence and begins to blossom. Kambili and Jaja return home to find that the abuse has continued unabated; their mother, Mama Jaja, reaches her breaking point and poisons Eugene’s tea. In an act of self sacrifice, Jaja takes responsibility for the crime, hoping to save his mother from a certain death sentence. Critics have found the

disintegration of Eugene's family symbolic of life under a military dictatorship. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie explores the effects of the doomed Biafran secession and subsequent civil war on several individuals. Forced to leave their privileged lives at the University of Nigeria, Olanna and her lover Odenigbo flee to the rural villages of Eastern Nigeria, where they must endure the horrors of war. As a result, their relationship as well as their own values and morality are challenged under incredibly trying circumstances. In several of her short stories, which have been published in various periodicals, Adichie depicts the difficulties Nigerian immigrants experience in the United States and in England, focusing particularly on issues of identity and language.

Inspired by Achebe's novel, Adichie mirrors elements of it in her novel. As a result, we say that *Purple Hibiscus* is an allusion to *Things Fall Apart*. An allusion is an intended yet implicit, reference to something else- in literature, it applies to another piece of writing. Just like Achebe, through *Things Fall Apart* focuses on pre-colonial life in Nigeria, following a strong male figure, Okonkwo, in the similar fashion Adichie focuses on postcolonial life in Nigeria through Kambili. Moreover Adichie has noted in interviews how Okonkwo served as an inspiration for Kambili's father Eugene. The novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) takes place roughly during the time period between the coup in 1993 and the independent election of 1999.

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) has received considerable critical attention since its publication .The book has been extensively reviewed in both newspapers and academic journals and, recently, detailed scholarly readings have provided illuminating insight into some of the prominent themes and motifs. The novel is not shy of prevarication either, and in its three hundred odd pages the novel packs in a dense and intellectually challenging story that broaches some of the larger themes that

preoccupy people any where in the world –life and death, the ambivalent meaning of familial love, domestic violence, religion, history and politics. Tony Simoes da Silva studies the physical and psychological abuse in *Purple Hibiscus*. He says:

[...] Adichie suggested that while she had intended some thematic concerns in the novel, she was very conscious of the risk of producing a didactic narrative. Mama's shadowy presence, her pathetic forbearance in the face of daily physical and psychological abuse by her husband and the novel's ambivalent treatment of this issue demonstrate her success, for while it is possible to point out Papa's obvious patriarchal authoritarianism,-and to identify Mama as a victim because of her gender.(2)

Silva analyses *Purple Hibiscus* as the marginalization of women in male dominant society. The violent acts committed against the family by the father Eugene are representative of the patriarchal power. Eugene, the head of the household is oppressive and violent, forcing the family into the deep silence out of fear. He takes away their voices and thus their power. Beatrice, Kambili, and Jaja have all suffered at the hands of Eugene. Eugene's violent power has stolen the voices of the other family members, causing a deep- rooted silence ingrained in each family member. His outbursts are violent, yet the family does not openly discuss any of this tension. They ignore it, pretending it does not happen, and quickly resume their activities. The silence is strange and thick, and Kambili feels "suffocated" by it (7). In this way, all the women characters in the novel have been the victim of gender discrimination because they are females.

Similarly, Michele Roberts reviews the book emphasizing the post-traumatic stress disorder. He sees the traumatic experiences amidst political coup and domestic violence. He says:

[...] It puts shape on trauma and makes it bearable, mends what has been broken, works with bits and pieces of shattered lives to see what might be made with them. Remembering thus involves remembering, and is a political act, particularly if the official historians of a culture ignore the experience of certain sections of the people[...], his ardent espousal of capitalism and Catholicism is shown to be at the root of his domestic cruelty.(54-55)

Roberts' criticism on *Purple Hibiscus* is based on the memory of trauma. The memory is always politicized to learn from the past. The character Eugene's fusion of capitalism and Catholicism are the roots behind such trauma. Kambili and her brother Jaja speak different languages in the presence of their father. Kambili calls their language "asusu anya, a language of the eyes" (305). She describes father's house as "spacious" and "suffocating" (7). These secrets weigh most heavily on Kambili whose frequent inability to speak suggests how continuously fear traumatizes her. When her classmates and teachers at the Daughter of the Immaculate Heart (school) ask her questions, her throat tightens and she cannot speak in a clearly articulated voice then her words come in a fragmented stutters and whispers. Kambili has no voice and she is trapped in a cycle of self-negation by her adoration and adulation of godlike father and his acute need for his affirmation.

Likewise, Lily G.N. Mabura studies the complex issue of the colonizer's language. She sees the influence of the colonial language (English) that has affected the local tribal culture and their heritage. She says:

[...] From this we see that while the actual colonialists seemingly left the post independence scene, the language(s) of colonization have not. These languages have, instead, attained vehicular status as bureaucratic languages of the state and robbed many indigenous languages like Igbo, their cultural, religious, commercial, and educational functions. (211-12)

Mabura analyses the colonial language as legitimized bureaucratic language of the state, which tries to demolish all the local values and indigenous languages and cultures of Nigeria like Igbo. Kambili memorizes Aunty Ifeoma's saying: "Papa was too much of a colonial product" (13). Mama Beatrice poisons Papa Eugene when she feels extremely tortured in the absence of her children. But the son Jaja confesses as his crime and therefore is sent to jail. After three years, military government collapses and his crime changes as an act of old regime. And he is released from the jail.

Adichie makes a poignant critique through Ifeoma when she sends letter to Kambili saying:

There are people [...], who think that we can not rule ourselves because the few times we tried, we failed, as if all the others who rule themselves today got it right the first time. It is like telling a crawling baby who tries to walk, and then falls back on his buttocks, to stay there. As if the adults walking past him did not all crawl once. (301)

Ifeoma delivers an optimistic message to Kambili that though they failed many times to resist patriarchy, they will get victory over it once. For this, they need unity to overcome marginalization in a gender biased society.

In the similar fashion, *Purple Hibiscus*, according to Tunca Daria, is a text of silence and he analyses the way language is used in it. He says:

[...] The heroine's muteness in the passage previously cited illustrates the pervasive presence of silence in the novel. Kambili's tongue-tied responses have left some reviewers frustrated, but it seems to me that, silence is not merely a form of oppression in *Purple Hibiscus*- in the sense that Kambili's speechlessness can be attributed to "her father's abuse"- but it also becomes "a mode of resistance"(5).

Daria's criticism on *Purple Hibiscus* is based on the speechlessness of the main characters where the muteness is both marginalization as well as resistance. The crux of the matter probably lies in the simultaneous presence of the opposite functions in a single instance where words are left unspoken Kambala and her brother Jaja dare not say some things aloud, but their "asusu anya" or language of eyes (305) allows them to speak about subjects of which their father might disapprove. Eugene, furious at Jaja's disobedience, throws his missal across the room and breaks Beatrice's ballet-dancing figurines. But the narrator attempts to comfort her mother. The girl reports: "I meant to say I am sorry Papa broke your figurines, but the words that came out were, I'm sorry your figurines broke, Mama"(10). Kambili avoids implicating her father in his own act of violence and through this indirect veiled manner of speech, she is able to broach the subject of Eugene's abusive behaviour and acknowledge her mother's status as an innocent victim.

In this way, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* has been analyzed by various critics from different perspectives. Some of the critics point out the issue of physical and psychological abuse, influence of colonial language in colonized world, postwar trauma, silence and so on. None of the aforementioned critics have explored the notion of freedom and oppression in the light of postcolonial feminism. This research

tries to study freedom and oppression in accordance with postcolonial feminism. Adichie delineates the empowerment of females in the post independent Nigeria.

As the issue of hypothesis at hand demands, postcolonial feminism is the theoretical tool to analyze the text. The recent postcolonial feminists have developed postcolonial feminism as a dynamic discursive field that addresses the issues of race, gender, economic status etc as well as doubly marginalized women's oppression, critique their false representation made by the western feminism. The postcolonial feminism "interrogates the premises of postcolonialism as much as those of feminism, supplementing them with its own particular concerns and perspectives, while in turn being subject to criticism and revision by them"(Bhari 202). But in doing so, it will not cross the frontier of the textual research. It is proved with the supports of different writers and critics from the domain concerned. The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter of this research is general introduction which comprises objective of this research, introduction of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the theoretical modality and literature review. The second chapter is textual analysis that mainly focuses on the issues of freedom and oppression in relation to theoretical methodology postcolonial feminism. Ultimately, chapter three will sum up the whole explanations and arguments put forward in the preceding chapters and shows postcolonial feminist reading of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

II. Female's Body as a Site of Domination and Resistance

in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

Double Victimization of Females in *Purple Hibiscus*

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* delineates the double victimization of women. They are exploited by colonial legacy as well as patriarchy. Even after Nigeria gained independence from British colonization in 1960, the status of Nigerian women remained the same as previous even in the post-independence scene of the 1990s. The female characters like Kambili, Beatrice and Ifeoma are doubly marginalized in *Purple Hibiscus*. Thus, the present researcher tries to analyze the double suppression of females in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* in the context of postcolonial Nigeria. This exploration, on the one hand, depicts the failure of postcolonial norms and females' resistance to the colonial principles on the other. Hence the theoretical terrain of postcolonial feminism is applicable for analysis of the text to portray how revolutionary forces like feminism and postcolonialism entangle in the conspiracy of traditional patriarchy. In *Purple Hibiscus* females like Kambili, Beatrice and Ifeoma have shown the characters of third world females and have been the victims of double suppression.

Black women suffer not only from black men's gender-biased discrimination but also from the white men and women's racial oppression. Black women suffer from injustices and exploitations-physical, sexual, psychological-both from black men and white men and women. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the worst kind of oppression is the stifling power of abuse- verbal, mental, and physical wrought by Kambili's father, "Papa". Postcolonial feminist critics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Sara Suleri have argued that "colonialism operated very differently

for women and for men and the ‘double colonization’ that resulted when women were subject both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and specific discrimination as women needs to be taken into account in any analysis of colonial oppression”(Ashcroft et al.103-4). Anne McClintock also opposes the ignorance of gender issues in the postcolonial struggle for nationalism. She observes, “Nationalism is [...] constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gendered power”(355). The postcolonial feminists claim that gender issues are inseparable from the project of postcolonial criticism.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the protagonist and the first person narrator fifteen years old Kambili and her brother Jaja lead a fearful, silent life led by their repressive father, Eugene, who is also a wealthy factory owner and passionately devoted Catholic. This domestic fierce person is obsessed with order. His family tries to please him by speaking to earn his praise, and otherwise keeping quiet. Eugene also holds many secrets and lies that he forces his children not to reveal to the public. In addition, Kambili and Jaja dread their father’s violence so much that they hold back their laughter and other feelings, pushing them into silence. Although he may come across as an altruistic man, Eugene abuses his power to control his family into silence, locking up the truth and their emotions, and leaving them to only speak for his approval. He devises schedules for how his children spend their time, with every minute accounted for. His strong feelings and espousal of capitalism and Catholicism is shown to be at the root of his domestic cruelty. He violently represses his sense of the ancient culture Igbo that formed him.

Eugene is an interesting character study – a person so completely sold on the superiority of the Western mode of thought and action, especially through religion, that he will stop at nothing to see it enforced in his own house. He is at once

consumed by raw extremes of passion—extreme love and, worse, extreme anger. His family, including the protagonist, Kambili lives every minute in sheer terror, looking upon Papa for constant approval. Adichie’s descriptions of Papa’s stifling presence are extremely well done—one’s heart bleeds for the family. Eugene is the representative of domestic horror. Though he maintains the love and respect of his community, he beats and tortures his wife and children to a point where his wife Beatrice Achike is driven to an irrevocable act of self-defense. His Godlike status in Kambili’s eyes is bolstered by his role as publisher of one truly outspoken newspaper *Standard* in the country. When his editor Ade Coker is blown up by a letter bomb, Papa is broken man who takes out his rage on the body of his daughter, beating her almost to death. For children, his violence has two possible alternatives: Mama’s passive aggression, and aunt Ifeoma’s happy, harmonious family in Nsukka, where she struggles as a low-paid academic.

Amidst country’s despair caused by military coup, both of them are sent to their aunt’s house for safety’s sake. With aunt Ifeoma, they learn the value of independence. Here Kambili learns to speak, to engage with others, and even to question her father’s warped values. Two people make this possible: her grandfather, whom her father has banished from his house as a dangerous pagan influence, and a young Nigerian Catholic priest. Her grandfather Papa Nnukwu offers her a nourishing portrait of an existence lived in the presence of gods and ancestors, while the young priest Father Amadi who is sensitive, handsome, and sensual, demonstrates that Nigerians can adapt Christianity in their own positive ends. Mama Beatrice’s silence bursts out into an irrevocable action. That is the killing of her husband by poisoning the tea. Finally, the son, Jaja accepts himself as a killer of his father.

Adichie points out the issue of females' victimization from British colonizers. Eugene is true embodiment of British colonialism. He mimics the colonizer's language and religion and imposes it in his family. Instead of using his own Igbo language he hates it and gives priority to colonial language. Kambili explains:

He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, in public he told us; we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Auntie Ifeoma, said once that Papa was too much of a colonial product. She had said this about Papa in mild, forgiving way as if it were not Papa's fault, as one would take about a person who was shouting gibberish from a severe case of malaria. (13)

Eugene's less preference of the local language Igbo is very much supportive of colonial mission. In the name of civilization, the father is taking all the Manichean dictates blindly thwarts those norms, values, institutions towards new generation. As a result, Kambili and Jaja are compelled to speak English though they love to speak Igbo. The direct forward expression through Auntie Ifeoma shows the intellectual perception of him as a 'colonial product'. But yet she understands that it is not Eugene's fault because there is no way out of it. The simply fault is that Eugene cannot properly and positively use his mimicry. Eugene also fakes his British accent who wants villagers to speak English around him. Kambili narrates, "He spoke English with an Igbo accent so strong it decorated even the shortest words with extra vowels. Papa liked it when the villagers made an effort to speak English around him. He said it showed they had good sense" (60).

In addition to language, Eugene equally imposes colonial religion in his family. In terms of religion, his imitation also typifies fundamentalist nature: he

chooses schools with the biggest walls for his children, he considers it sinful that women wear trousers, or he forbids his family to watch television or listen to the radio. His religious fundamentalism is the most apparent in his vehement opposition to his father's paganism. He only lets his children visit their grandfather Nnukwu for fifteen minutes a year, dictating, "do not touch any food, don't drink anything. And as usual, you will stay not longer than fifteen minutes [...] I don't want to send you to the home of a heathen, but God will protect you"(62). When Kambili stays at her grandfather's home more than fifteen minutes, it causes physical punishment. He takes Kambili in bathroom and orders her to climb into the tub. She becomes surprised because "father did not have stick this time but suddenly saw a jar which was used by Sisi to boil water"(193-194) Further she narrates:

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. He was crying now, tears streaming down his face. I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed. (194)

Eugene as a colonial product imposes Catholicism upon her daughter, Kambili who is poured hot water only because of her delay in her grandfather's home. Eugene is so authoritarian that he manages time for his children at home. If they disobey, he gives them physical punishment. The pouring of hot water in Kambili's feet is an act of dehumanization. But he pours it on her feet as if he is doing an experiment with her and however understands her pain and suffering with his bizarre act. Still his justification is that, "that is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin, you burn

your feet" (194). For Eugene her staying at grandfather's home is a sinful act and the hot water is a revenge of the sinful activity. All his imitation is the effect of British colonialism.

Gayatri Spivak in her essay "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value" discusses about the differences existing among non-western women to whom the western feminists tag as homogeneous group. She gives an example of an event in July of 1988:

A section of underclass 'Asians' was vigorously demanding to be recognized as different from underclass 'Black', basically because they felt that on account of their cultural attributes of mildness, threft, domesticity and industriousness, they were, unlike the lazy and violent people of African origin, responsible and potentially upwardly mobile material. (198)

When Kambili narrates the issues of spouse beating, she does so with a sense of ordinariness and opacity that one can hardly describe Eugene's home as a domestic war zone. From her narrative it seems as if spouse beating is a normal phenomenon. The helplessness of the traditional African woman is only articulated very vibrantly when Kambili's mother in complete actuality remarks:

"Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go?" She did not wait for Aunty Ifeoma to respond. "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not to bother paying a bride price? (250)

Kambili's mother is between two fires here. She can neither leave Eugene's house nor can she bear his torture. She is confused and cannot take right decision. Being confused she sits on the bare cement, resting her head against the railings. Such condition of mother makes unhappy to Kambili and Aunti Ifeoma.

Postcolonial feminism is taken as a form of feminist philosophy which centers on the idea of racism, colonialism, and the long lasting economic, political, and cultural effects of colonialism in the post-colonial setting. Postcolonial feminist critics like Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Sara Suleri began to argue that "Western feminism, which had assumed that gender overrode cultural differences to create a universal category of the womanly or the feminine, was operating from hidden, universalist assumption with a middle-class, Eurocentric bias"(qtd. In Ashcroft et al.102). They charged western feminism that failed to account adequately with the experience of third world women. The western feminist assumption that all of us of the same gender across classes and cultures are socially constituted as a homogeneous group is criticized by these third world feminists. They argue that this homogeneity is produced not on the basis of biological essentials but rather on the basis of secondary sociological essentials. It is at this point that the postcolonial feminist critics find an elision between woman as discursively constructed group and 'women' as material subject of their own history. Mohanty argues that "the discursively consensual homogeneity of 'woman' as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women" (262).

Just as the Catholic missionary once scalded Eugene's hands for masturbating, he scalds his children's feet for sleeping in a house with their 'heathen' grandfather. Thus the father, is a reformed recognizable Other as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite. He represents the neo-colonial Nigerian tyrant who

mimics the attitude of British colonial missionaries, albeit with a difference. Kambili reveals that Eugene acquiesces to Father Benedict's view of Igbo language and therefore even makes the point of speaking British accent when around British missionaries, "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).

Eugene refuses adamantly to attend the funeral of his father. Instead he calls it 'heathen' funeral. He says, "I cannot participate in Pagan funeral but we can discuss with the parish Priest and arrange a Catholic funeral"(189). But his proposal is despised by Ifeoma saying, "I ask you Eugene, was he a Catholic? Put my dead husband's grave up for sale, Eugene, before I give our father a catholic funeral. Do you hear me? I said I will sell Ifediora's (her husband) grave first. Was our father a catholic? I ask Eugene, was he a Catholic?" (189). He even despises the painting of his father. When Kambili and Jaja bring the painting of their grandfather, he questions bitterly, "What is that? Have you converted to heathen ways? What are you doing with painting? Where did you get it?"(209) Then Eugene seizes the painting and makes it into several pieces and scatters it. Kambili feels:

Papa snatched painting from Jaja. His hands moved swiftly, working together. The painting was gone. It already represented something lost, something I had never had, would never had. Now even that reminder was gone, and at Papa's feet lay pieces of paper streaked with earth-tone colors. The pieces were very small, very precise. I suddenly and maniacally imagined Papa Nnukwu's body being cut in pieces that small and stored in fridge. (210)

Being a strong dogmatic Catholic and colonial product, Eugene takes the painting from his children and destroys it as if it is Papa Nnukwu himself. All these practices lead him to do such mischievous act. Such strong hatred of a son to a father is the extreme example of complicity which proves more fatal in the saying. Kambili's feeling of cannibalistic act of her father is serious result of extreme complicity.

Mohanty in her essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" discusses about feminists texts and their performance required in the case of third world formation by western feminist:

The intellectual and political construction of 'Third World feminisms' must address itself to two simultaneous projects – the internal critique of hegemonic 'Western' feminisms, and the formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies. The first project is one of deconstructing and dismantling; the second, one of building and constructing. While these projects appear to be contradictory, the one working negatively and the other positively, unless these tasks are addressed simultaneously. 'Third World' feminisms run the risk of marginalization or ghettoization from both mainstream (right and left) and western feminist discourses. (172)

Western feminists show middle-class urban African or Asian scholars producing scholarship on or about their rural or working class sisters which assumes their own middle-class cultures as the norm, and codifies working class histories and cultures as Other. Clarifying its nature Mohanty says, "This is the effect of the dominant 'representation' of Western feminism which has a conflation with imperialism in the eye of particular Third World women"(175). Thus, an isolated 'women' category is

formed on the assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests, desire, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, contradiction, and implies a notion of gender or sexual differences of even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally.

Eugene is the embodiment of repressive patriarchy, based on imported western religion, and colonial mimicry. In the many ways, he is somewhat of a paradox. He is a wealthy factory owner, a fanatical Catholic, and philanthropist, who generously supports the poor in his town. That is why, the town people invest with the title of Omelora, "The One Who Does for the Community" (56). Eugene also owns the newspaper, which takes great risks to denounce the corruption of Nigerian government. Therefore, "*Amnesty World* gave him a human rights award" (5). His involvement in correcting the fault of Nigerian dictator is praiseworthy but he dooms himself in the same pit of colonialism through religion.

There is the vivid irony involved in Eugene who loves God, the father and Jesus the son, but despising his own father and abusing his own son. In the domestic sphere, however, he is a despotic tyrant, who abuses his family, to the point that his wife miscarries or Kambili is hospitalized. Though he seems he seems humanitarian in public, he embodies the terrorist, who controls and governs his family with fear in private life. Kambili eventually realizes, "We were terrified" (226). This twofaced life is the effect of colonial legacy. Thus, *Purple Hibiscus* explores the tension between Igbo and Western culture through the story of a fifteen years old girl named Kambili.

Fifteen year old Kambili Achike provides our perspective on her authoritarian father, and her diminished life dramatizes the effects of a too powerful father on a young girl. Her narration enables us to see what cannot be seen in Achebe's text as Deirdre Lashgire observes, "Shifting the vantage point of the subject allows us to see

forms of violence that had been invisible, or to see in unfamiliar ways. When the gaze is redefined, what it encompasses change, deconstructing the master narrative” (3). Through Kambili’s eyes, we come to see how an entire family has adapted to life under a rigid and unpredictable patriarch, and we understand how unbridled power can cause both physical and psychological destruction.

Purple Hibiscus, however, revolves around taboo like physical abuse. Through Kambili, the novelist introduces her readers to a family blessed with material wealth but cursed by violence. As the story unfolds the daily events of their troubled lives—their mother’s multiple miscarriages, Jaja’s deformed little finger—remain unspoken secrets. These “unspoken things unspoken” are shared between Kambili and her brother through stolen glances. At first we are only given hints. We know that Eugene exhibits a strange obsession with order in his children’s lives, that he dominates the dinner table with his religious pronouncements, and that his violent expressions of rage erupt unpredictably. We can see his family’s fearful acquiescence to his dictates and his children’s watchful veneration of him as they constantly seek his approval and love. We see how highly he is regarded in the community, how he uses his position as a newspaper publisher to advocate democratic change in Nigeria, how he never mentions the human rights award given to him by Amnesty World. Similarly, we hear him beat his wife behind closed doors, and like Kambili we struggle to reconcile his public persona with his private self.

Eugene can unambiguously be identified as a volitional actor as he makes decisions his own whatever he likes. He imposes his catholic discipline in his family at times and gives physical punishment. When Kambili eats corn flakes ten minutes before Mass, her father, Eugene threatens her as “You are eating ten minutes before Mass? Ten Minutes before Mass” (101). Eugene punishes his daughter, each one

escalating what is stake and heightening the reader's empathetic response. As the Eugene raises a belt, Kambili gets suffocated and swallows hard and her mind jumps into fear. Eugene's furious outburst of violence as employed by the narrator can be seen as:

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. Sometimes I watched the Fulani nomads, white jellabas flapping against their legs in the wind, making clucking sounds as they herded their cows across the roads in Enugu with a switch, each smack of the switch swift and precise. Papa was like a Fulani nomad –although he did not have their spare, tall body-as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja, and me, muttering that the devil would not win. We did not move more than two steps away from the leather belt that swished through the air.

(102)

The striking, almost romantic comparison between Eugene and a Fulani nomad, whipping cattle with a rod, illustrates the animalistic and bizarre behaviour of Eugene to his daughter. The juxtaposition of peaceful, rural nomads with Eugene's violent rage startles, but the image does more. By slowing down the moment, it increases the tension, enabling us to see through the eyes of a young narrator who possesses acute powers of observation. The image patently relates Papa's violent treatment of his own family to the way Fulani nomads handle animals. The evocation of a switch and the

ruthlessness of Eugene's actions further summon associations with the scene witnessed by Kambili while at the market with her mother and Jaja:

As we hurried past, I saw a woman spit at a soldier. I saw the soldier raise a whip in the air. The whip was long. It curled in the air before it landed on the woman's shoulder. Another soldier was kicking down trays of fruits, squashing papayas with his boots and laughing (44).

The descriptions of the soldiers' thoughtless brutality and Eugene's assaults on his family suggest a parallel between national and domestic violence that is made explicit in several passages in the novel.

In most of the novel, there is a marked discrepancy between the words Kambili addresses to her family- or rather, those she does not-and the feelings she expresses in narrative passages. Indeed, the heroine repeatedly finds herself in situations where she remains silent or utters words she did not intend to, often out of fear of displeasing her interlocutors or because she is unable to articulate her response. Thus, Kambili is initially misjudged by her cousin Amaka, who interprets her laconic comment as a sign of world weariness:

“We don't watch a lot of TV”, I [Kambili] said [Amaka] “why? Because you're bored with it? If only we all had satellite so everybody could be bored with it.”

I wanted to say I was sorry, that I did not want her to dislike us for not watching satellite. I wanted to tell her that although huge satellite dishes lounged on top of the houses in Enugu and here, we did not watch TV. Papa did not pencil in TV time in our schedules. (79)

Kambili never watches television because her father strictly organizes his children's time, but she never voices aloud the explanations she so desperately wants to add. However, it is significant that, despite her shyness "there is a lot going on in her head"(220), as Father Amadi astutely observes.

Kambili's thoughts and feelings, and how they sometimes clash with her attitude towards others, are minutely rendered in her narrative account. The heroine's muteness in the passage illustrates the pervasive presence of silence in the novel.

Gayatri Spivak poses the question to all critics in postcolonial studies whether the subaltern woman can speak. Her response is that subaltern woman is mute. Carole Boyce Davies has argued that the problem lies in the "selective hearing or mishearing" of her oppressors ("Hearing"³). Adichie's novel suggests that silence and voicelessness result from a combination of the problems about which Spivak and Davies write. The causes of silence and voicelessness are multiple. One person can suffer both from being silenced and not being heard, especially as circumstances change and time passes. Kambili is a case in point. She suffers because she cannot articulate herself –her father's patriarchal rule has subsumed her individual identity almost entirely, and his abuse rends her from her own ability to speak. But at other moments she struggles to speak and while fear often prevents her from speaking the truth. She does manage to talk. What she says, however, is often misunderstood by others. They do not really hear she means or do not listen to her silences, which speak louder than her words. They do not comprehend the "gap" between her utterance and her unconscious intention or feeling" (Elbow, "What Do We Mean ..."18). Instead he calls her a "backyard snob" (49), and other adults believe that she is "quiet" and "shy" (57, 139). They do not hear the struggle taking place beneath her words. Kambili's silences, then, are not absolute. They are full of mumbles, whispers, and coughs that

reveal the symptoms of her physical struggle with fear, her “tongue- tiredness” (49). When she tries to speak, her throat tightens and words will not come: she fears her father’s reprisals, his unspoken command that she doesn’t tell others her secrets. After she fails to come at the top of her class at school, she feels:

It was like balancing a sack of gravel on my head everyday at school and not being allowed to steady it with my hand. I still saw the print in my textbooks as a red blur, still saw my baby brother’s spirit strung together by narrow lines of blood. I memorized what the teachers said because I knew my textbooks would not make sense if I tried to study later. After every test, a tough lump like poorly made fufu formed in my throat and stayed there until our exercise books came back. (52)

Time and again she takes another test, otherwise her father punishes her. Estranged from her own speech and the workings of her throat and tongue, Kambili’s linguistic alienation underscores her personal isolation. Her brother and mother have also been victims of it, their powerlessness enabling Eugene’s violence.

The Achike family has become trapped by Eugene’s wealth and his position in the community. Compounding the issue of not being heard, Kambili suffers from an inability to communicate what she truly feels: “I meant to say I am sorry Papa broke your figurines, but the words that came out were, ‘I’m sorry your figurines broke, Mama,’”(10). She tells her mother, revealing her fear of implicating her father in his acts of violence. She does not say what she wants to say when talking with classmates or her cousins. Her father’s hold on her is too great, the secrets too dark: there is too much that cannot be said. In this sense, Kambili is voiceless. The only person with whom she can truly communicate is her brother Jaja and the two of them do not need words: they have an “asusu anya, a language of eyes” which enables them to

communicate what cannot be voiced (305). With other people the narrator often struggles because she does not know what she would say, or how she would say it, if she could say anything. She does not know what she feels or who she is: her subjectivity is too wrapped up in pleasing her father. When she says something that wins his praise, she feels complete, and his approval affects her physically. Even when he holds her hand, she feels uncomfortable as she says, "Then he reached out and held my head, and I felt as though my mouth were full of melting sugar" (67).

Fear of Eugene forces Jaja and Kambili into silence, controlling how they express their emotions. To hide their true feelings while in the presence of others, Kambili and Jaja use their secret language of the eyes to communicate while remaining silent. When Kambili spends time with Auntie Ifeoma and her cousins, she realizes how much more time their family spends laughing at her. She also realizes she never laughs because she dreams that, "I was laughing, but it did not sound like my laughter, although I was not sure what my laughter sounded like" (88). Kambili never feels inclined to laugh because Eugene maintains a household where he expects the children to remain silent and not show their emotions. His control creates an environment with no laughter. When her father gives her tea, she feels "the love burn my tongue" (31). Even thinking of his absence causes her throat to tighten in fear. Kambili cannot believe that someone could stand up to Eugene and offer something besides a compliment. The knot in her throat forms because she does not know what to say to her father, how to speak the truth. By not speaking up about Eugene's wrongdoings, Kambili demonstrates his control on her silence. When Jaja explains his deformed finger to Auntie Ifeoma, Kambili can not believe he could reveal one of Eugene's secrets. His control over what Kambili can say clearly shows when she thinks, "Had Jaja forgotten that we never told, that there was so much that we never

told?" (154) Eugene forces Kambili to hide his horrible acts by not speaking, concealing them in a veil of silence. When Eugene beats his wife, Jaja and Kambili "cleaned up the trickle of blood...we did not talk about Mama" (33) Jaja and Kambili clean the blood as if they scrub bed away their father's transgressions. By not talking about Mama, they silently hide the truth from themselves, trying to forget Eugene's terrible deeds.

Thus, the females in *Purple Hibiscus* have double exploitations by both black men and white people. Adichie has successfully shown the degree of racial and gender suppression of females in postcolonial Nigeria.

Resistance to Patriarchal cum Colonial Legacy in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is not only about female suppression but also a mode of resistance against colonial-patriarchal domination. Resistance and co-operation are the new ways to overcome against patriarchy and colonial domination for the third world females. In *Purple Hibiscus* women characters like Kambili, Beatrice and Ifeoma have shown the characters of postcolonial females and are resisting against patriarchal cum colonial legacy. Using specific example from Nigeria, this study examines the extent of women's struggles to overcome marginalization in a sexist and patriarchal society. Love, war, conflict and the persistent inequality between men and women are among the dominant themes in potentialities which the patriarchal structure has repressed. Women's impassioned struggles to free themselves from the shackles of male brutality and dominance are clearly seen in the novel.

Postcolonial feminism is an intervention of both postcolonial and feminist studies. It is the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation,

class, race and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality and rights. It is identified with the work of feminists of Third World origin located in the metropolitan university and the agendas set by them to define a recognizable postcolonial feminism. Interlinking feminism and postcolonialism, Ashcroft et al. write in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*:

Both feminism and postcolonialism have often concerned with the ways and extent to which representation and language are crucial to identify formation and to the construction of 'subjectivity'. For both groups, language has been a vehicle for subverting patriarchy and imperial power [...]. Both discourses share a sense of disarticulation from an inherited language and have thus attempted to recover a linguistic authenticity via a pre-colonial language or a primal feminine tongue. However both feminists and colonized people like other subordinate groups, have also used appropriation to subvert and adapt dominant languages and signifying practices.(102)

The feminist and postcolonial studies get involved into a mutually investigative and interactive relation with each other. But when feminist perspectives are blind to issues related to colonialism and the international division of labour and when postcolonial studies fails to include gender in its analysis, then both theories fail to co-relate with each other to address the lives of women under colonization. Feminists "[...] complain that analyses of colonial postcolonial texts fail to consider gender issues adequately, bracketing them in favour of attention to supposedly more significant issues, such as empire building, decolonization, and the liberation struggle[...]" (Bhari 201).

Using specific example from Nigeria, this thesis analyzes the philosophical underpinnings of African feminism. The present researcher argues that African feminism is largely flawed by being couched in the discourse of African anti-colonial movement. By doing so, it is inevitably inherited parts of the cultural setbacks of the movement. My point is African postcolonial discourse is that the line between resistance to the evil of colonization and resentment of the cultural world of the colonizer was largely blurred. There was therefore an overabundance of reactionary impulses. While in agreement with the discourse about the concerns of women's human rights, the researcher suggests that African feminism as articulated by African women thinkers must free itself of resentment in order to focus on creating flourishing communities in Africa. The researcher analyzes one of the most recent Nigerian narratives-*Purple Hibiscus* as example of work that seeks the flourishing of communities with the liberation of women in the background.

Adichie remarkably dramatizes in her work, women's determination to survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, extreme starvation, senseless brutality and careless threats to their lives and property. Through her main characters, Adichie reveals how the physical, psychological and mental abuse of women can have negative effects on their well-being. The liberation of women from all structures against their peaceful co-existence alongside men deserves the support of all humanity. This study, therefore, suggests that every African woman must face up to the realities of her sexiest culture and assert her rights. This is undoubtedly a demanding choice fraught with its own dangers but a woman needs to burst the system and set up her own parameters within the society or risk being treated as a doormat for life.

Purple Hibiscus begins with crisis and this crisis runs through the book glowing and hauntingly gripping. This crisis seems to be the artistic and structural plank on which the entire narrative anchors. The book begins in media res, realizable through flash back. The novel traces the physical and psychological development of the protagonist, Kambili and her brother Jaja. A development which designates their struggle to define themselves, beyond the stiffened, and funless world their Calvinistic father has fashioned for them. Their fussy mercantile father builds a world stuffed with materialistic wholeness, world that lacks ventilation, which guarantees a steady relationship with the outside when the inside becomes too suffocating.

Eugene, as a tyrant patriarch at home, maintains Christian codes and family order. Thus, he pencils the routine which is supposed to follow by the family members. The characters in *Purple Hibiscus* can be categorized into three different categories as hardliner Christian, liberal Christian, and following old Igbo tradition. Father Benedict, and Eugene represent hardliner Christians whereas Father Amadi, Aunti Ifeoma, Eugene's children -Kambili, and Jaja and Ifeoma's children – Amaka, Obiora and Chima belong to liberal Christians having faith in Igbo culture and it also involves the third party like Papa Nnukwu who celebrates his own old Igbo tradition through strong faith. Therefore, he represents complete resistant side of extreme polarities. This is harmful because it leads to violence. On the other hand, Eugene practices Christian orthodoxy blindly following the Manichean dictates of Christian religious dogmas. He represents the complicit side between two poles. Belonging to the complicit band, he adopts the cultural artifact forwarded by Western people. Eugene internalizes all the imperial codes of inferiority complex. He is thoroughly colonized through Christian religion and English language. Filled with European mindset, Eugene deceives himself and his family. He is a lackey, a 'yes man' who

wants to prove to Pope Benedict (white priest) at all cost through so-called richness of thought and the equal value of the intellect. The black skin of the Eugene is masked by complicity with the values of the white colonial powers. He does not know the root of the germination of domestic violence is European mindset. Aunti Ifeoma being an intellectual person takes the in-between position and teaches full freedom with this hybrid space. Her stance is fully supported by new generation including Kambili and Jaja and they together take both tradition and modernity as a formative fact of Nigerian culture. But they vehemently oppose excessive modernity as imposed by colonial Britain and its product, Eugene.

The language of the novel is the amalgam of both English and Igbo language vehemently opposing one another. As Adichie has introduced the characters from two different cultures- Igbo and English, the language of the novel is hybrid in nature. Father Benedict and Eugene proudly use English language thinking themselves as superior and impose it on others, where as other characters like Father Amadi, Auntie Ifeoma, Kambili and Jajamake use of their own Igbo language and they have strong faith in it yet they respect English. But when Igbo was not accepted by Father Benedict, they resist to White priest Christianity. Though Adichie focuses on the possibility of international communication, she also uses Igbo language without distorting the meaning in it. When Kambili and Jaja have to suffer from their father's abusive silence, their medium of communication is *asusu anya*, which means the language of the eyes. The Papa's title *Omelora* means the one who does the community. The different Igbo terminologies like *Ezi Okwu* (I did not know), *Umanna* (communal authority), *Unu* (plural you), *gi* (singular you), suggest the insertion of black vernacular there by preserving their Igbo language and culture. This is also incorporated by the use of different Igbo food items like *fufu* (dough made

from boiled yam, or ground plaintain or cassara used used as a staple food), *Okwia* (fast food on the way), *egusi soup*, *Utazi curry*, *Onugbu soup*. The character Nnukwu reveals some of the Igbo gods like *Aro and Mmuo*. The dispute of traditional and modernity is also appropriate in this regard. Eugene restricts his children not to speak Igbo language in public. For him it is the language of the inferiors. In contrary to Eugene, his father Nnukwu prefers Igbo without English accents. Kambili observes: “His dialect was ancient; his speech had none of the anglicized inflection that ours had” (64). Father Benedict, a White priest too gives priority to English over Igbo language as Kambili says:

Father Benedict had changed things in the parish, such as insisting that the Credo and Kyrie be recited only in Latin; Igbo was not acceptable. Also hand clapping was to be kept at a minimum. Lest the solemnity of Mass be compromised. But he allowed offertory songs in Igbo; he called them native songs, and when he said “native” his straight-line lips turned down at the corners to form an inverted U. (4)

Father Benedict imposes White Christianity on Igbo people, but they resist to White priest Christianity and give valorization to their own Igbo language.

This is what Ketu Katrak in *Theorizing a Politics of the Female Body* says:

Nyasha’s words in the opening epigraph from Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga’s novel, *Nervous Conditions* evoke two of the most significant concerns for postcolonial women writers: the uses of English (over indigenous languages, in this case Shona) imposed by colonialism and how linguistic choices encode cultural belonging or alienation, and second the female body and gendered inequities in patriarchal postcolonial society. (377)

Use of English imposed by colonialism and the female body in patriarchal postcolonial societies are the two significant concerns of postcolonial women writers. Thus, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, being a postcolonial female writer, shows the imposition of English over Igbo and discrimination between the males and the females where females have been the victim of patriarchal domination and they resist it with their silence.

The title of the novel *Purple Hibiscus* suggests the Hibiscus flower, which is a tropical plant with large brightly colored flowers. The choice of the title is significant because the color purple consists of two different colors - red and blue. Both colors are quite contrastive because they represent two extremes symbolically. The color 'red' represents the extremity and violent move, and most of the times revolutionary. Thus, the color red symbolizes the resistance or rebellion of postcolonial women against colonial –patriarchal domination. Similarly, the color 'blue' represents liberality and peace. As it is the color of the sky without clouds on a bright day, it symbolizes serene and tranquil cultural nature. But in textual symbol we can see something different meaning, the hibiscus as a symbol of both the memory of violence and the protagonists' refusal to be determined by that violence both emotionally and physically as she recovers. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the flower of the title is so revolutionary which represents the changes Kambili must undertake if she is to survive the abuse in her family and the corruption in her country. The narrator and protagonist describes about purple hibiscus in contrast to red hibiscus in this way:

[...] Closer to the house, vibrant bushes of hibiscus reached out and touched one another as if they were exchanging their petals. The purple plants had started to put out sleepy buds, but most of the flowers were still on the red ones. They seemed to bloom so fast, those red

hibiscuses, considering how often Mama cut them to decorate the church altar and how often visitors plucked them as they walked past to their parked cars. (9)

The description presents the ambivalent feelings in symbolical level. In the beginning it presents the hope when Kambili sees the vibrant bushes of hibiscus reaching out and touching one another as if they were exchanging hope, aspiration of freedom but this is no avail because in the succeeding description we see the restriction when visitors pluck them. Nonetheless, the visitors are western invaders who are just walking past Nigeria feigning the parking station. The whole mission is the colonial mission of the invaders and that is the most vicious cycle. Kambili's mother is also part of such crowd who in the name of religion cuts it to decorate the church altar.

Kambili further compares her brother Jaja's resistance with the aunt Ifeoma's experimental flower 'Purple Hibiscus' as it entails the different kind of freedom:

[...]. Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunty 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)

Her comparison shows the symbolic value of freedom represented by 'purple hibiscus'. She calls it experimental because there she feels the real existence of the different kind of freedom. Kambili and her brother experience different world within Nsukka, the hometown of aunt Ifeoma. The ordered and scheduled Abba, the hometown of their father Eugene's house is restrictive and repressive. In such experimental environment, she even remembers the resistance of her brother Jaja and justifies it with her aunt's different free-flow of independence and freedom. The

purple hibiscus of the title, which grows in aunt Ifeoma's garden, is counterpoised with the red hibiscus of home. It is metonymic of a series of oppositions on which the novel is structured: silence and speech, repression and spontaneity, state violence and family abuse, censorship and press freedom, harsh and gentle version of masculinity

The subtitle 'Breaking Gods' suggests the resistance to imported dogmatic Christian values. Eugene, thinking himself as a god, controls his family with physical punishment. He is so tyrannical that he imposes dogmatic Christian values on his family. But Kambili, Jaja, and Beatrice vehemently oppose his tyrannical power with their silence. Jaja shows the physical resistance from the beginning of the novel. Jaja defies his father and doesn't go to church on Palm Sunday. In terms of religion, his negation of the Christian communion is the vital one. In the first section he breaks the God symbolically on Palm Sunday. In this context, Adichie also gives homage to her literary mentor Chinua Achebe and explains the Jaja's physical resistance and Papa Eugene's misbehavior and mistreatment. Kambili begins, "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, jaja, didn't go to communion and Papa flung his missal across the room and broke the figurines on the *étagère*" (3).

When Papa wants Jaja to contribute and compliment his new products (wafers, cream biscuits, bottled juice, and banana chips) after tasting it, he does not show any interest in that. In fact he replies, "there was no words in my mouth"(13). Other members Mama Beatrice and Kambili taste it good though it is not. This defiance of Jaja gives good impression to Kambili. She even compares Jaja's defiance with symbolical Auntie Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus. Regarding the political discussion between family members about 'president', his lexical awareness of the term is praising. He says, " 'president' assumes he was elected, 'Head of state' is the

right term”(25). In this lexical analysis, we see his awareness of military dictator of the country who is not elected therefore ‘head of state’ is the right term.

His name also represents historical significance. His name signifies Jaja of Opobo, a defiant king. “He was the king of Opobo people," Aunty Ifeoma said, “and when the British came, he refused to let them control all the trade. He did not sell his soul for a bit of gun powder like the other kings did, so the British exiled him to the West Indies. He never returned to Opobo” (144). His rebellious nature can be seen from his childhood. Jaja’s crooked finger reveals cruelty of his father. Kambili explains:

When he was ten, he had missed two questions on his catechism text and was not named the best in his first Holy Communion Class. Papa took him upstairs and locked the door. Jaja, in tears came out, supporting his left hand with his right, and Papa drove him to St. Agnes hospital [...] Jaja told me, that Papa had avoided his right hand because it is the hand he writes with. (145)

The cruelty and torture received from his father makes him more bold and resistant to his father. After visiting aunt Ifeoma’s house, he becomes more resistant to his father’s activities that are prone to violence and domestic cruelty. Before the aspiration of Papa Eugene that Nnukwu might have converted before he died, he speaks straightforwardly saying, “may be he did not want to convert” (191). In this, we see the participation of Jaja indirect conflict with his father. Then suddenly after the incidents, Jaja feels the owning his things, when he demands the key to his room. In this circumstance, ‘key’ becomes an important symbol of ownership and approach to freedom. Therefore, it is a source of resistance. Jaja also wants to show the bundle of purple hibiscus brought from Aunty’s house to Kambili and wants it to give to

gardener. This carrying of hibiscus flower from aunt's Nsukka house to their house represents the carrying of freedom with resistance.

Again when there was invitation from aunt Ifeoma to Jaja and Kambili to spend Easter in Nsukka, Jaja expresses free-minded thinking to Papa: "We are going to Nsukka today, not tomorrow. If Kevin will not take us, we will still go. We will walk if we have to" (261). His speech to his father is one of acts of resistance between when he starts to negotiate with his father, he enters into the phase of search of his identity. After the death of their father, the debate about God between Kambili and Jaja is interesting. In this manner as Kambili says, "God knows best, god works in mysterious ways" but Jaja laughs and replies, "Of course God does. Look what He did to his 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 takes the accusation of murder of his father in his hands and accepts the punishment. He secures his mother by taking the punishment of his mother. This act of serious love and sacrifice of Jaja is the final part of his physical resistance.

We see the physical resistant on the part of intellectual character Ifeoma who makes serious resistant comments on the colonial mimicry and colonial mission. Ifeoma, a lecturer in the University of Nsukka feels great with the hybrid resistance. She straightforwardly declares his brother Eugene as "too much of colonial product"(13). Her experiment with the free-low of the independent and freedom is praiseworthy.

The narrative is woven around Palm Sunday, yet the development of the protagonist and her brother has a quadrilateral dimension; their home in Enugu, school, church and Nsukka. The later has the most amazing effect on their

developmental process. Eugene, Kambili's father is a religious maverick and his bigotry belief is anchored on the theological standards of Catholicism. He leads a life of Rosary and Crossing and carries himself with a donnish air of Catholic superiority. His over-zealous attitude and clipped religious tones reduce members of his family to the size of midgets. He works hard to ensure his family lacks nothing. His houses are capacious yet stifling, and the bedrooms, are very roomy yet stuffy. Kambili's description of the contrast between their commodious apartment and its airlessness is telling.

The silence was broken only by the whir of the ceiling fan as it sliced through the still air. Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated. The off-white walls with the framed photos of grandfather were narrowing, bearing down on me. Even the glass dining table was moving toward me (7).

The entire narrative is relayed through Kambili's eyes. Though a novel about coming-of-age, it also glaringly captures the socio-political evolution of Nigeria. The novel tells numerous stories that run simultaneously. This discourse shall therefore, focus on the developmental process of Kambili, physically and psychologically vis-à-vis the Nigerian nation. Kambili's father owns a conglomerate of which one is a publishing house reputed for its astuteness and unbiased reportage of the Nigerian political situation and above all its antipathetic posture or stance towards the virulent political temperament of the military regime in Nigeria. He urges his editor, Ade Coker to ensure that the *Standard* speaks out, yet he continues to muzzle his wife and children. Silence in Eugene's home is so magnified to the extent that it could be heard. The function of Kambili's tongue is so constricted so that her struggle to express herself usually terminates with a stutter, making her classmates observe her with familiarity

laced with contempt. Because of her inability to make her tongue function in school she is labeled a “backyard snob” (53).

To make matters worse, when the closing bell rings, she dashes off to her father’s waiting car without exchanging pleasantries with her classmates before she is chauffeur-driven home. Her classmates see this as aristocratic arrogance. They are unaware that her life is dictated and regulated by a schedule scrolled in her heart. Eugene’s sense of production enunciates his stance as a capitalist, from time to time, as he brings a new product home from his factories to be assessed by his reticent family who have become so dopey in their pathetic state of taciturnity, created by his phallogocentrism. This phallic and capitalist drive is extended to his children’s academic enterprise. Coupled with the sickening and choking home characterized by her father’s sense of material acquisition, her academic business begins to lack creativity and enchantment. Both her home and school become a prison for her, as she slips down the academic ladder. The kind of educational system Eugene wants for his children is dehumanizing. He is mechanical in all spheres of life, and he condemns and discourages all forms of leisure. When Kambili comes second in her class rather than encourage the girl to put more effort into her academic business, he petulantly asks a mechanical question. “How many heads has Chinwe Jideze?” -The girl who beats her to the second position (46). He did not stop there, he brings out a mirror and gives it to Kambili, in order to ascertain the number of heads she has. For fear of being tortured, Kambili devices a new method of studying:

It was like balancing a sack of gravel on my head everyday at school and not being allowed to steady it with my hand. I still saw the print in my textbooks as a red blur, still saw my baby brother’s spirit strung together by narrow lines strung together by narrow lines of blood. I

memorized what the teacher said because I knew my textbooks would not make sense if I tried to study later. After every test, a tough lump like poorly made fufu formed in my throat and stayed there until our exercise books came back. (52)

Eugene's educational standards are not only placidly faulty, it is banal and unproductive. Hence, Kambili turns the entire academic enterprise to cramming and calculation.

Eugene's educational standards stress the training of the intellect without any complementary ties with the emotion and imagination. To him only the human reason is important. Kambili and Jaja's lives are reduced to facts and figures thereby subjecting them to mental torture. From Kambili's account, her father though, stands for something repellent, nevertheless respectable. His utilitarian posture is what eventually leads to the crumbling of his family's psychological configuration. Eugene is a symbol of rugged individualism. His entire world is woven around self-assertion, power and material success. The items in his agenda are strict and tight, making him lack interest in ideals or ideas- except the idea of being the perfect definition of a self-made man. This is what he uses to intimidate his family. "I didn't have a father who sent me to the best schools" (49).

Eugene is so mechanical to the extent that he regards his house help, Sisi as "that girl". All through the novel, he never addresses her by her name. He runs his home with a zero tolerance in its grossest and most intransigent sense, and this in turn reduces his family to a resonating silence in almost all their endeavors, outside and inside the home. As the narrative develops, one notices varied forms of silence. Kambili, Jaja and their mother speak with their spirit. Sometimes they converse with their eyes. Kambili's mother hardly talks and when she does, it is in monosyllables.

Pauline Ada Uwakweh (1998) observes that “silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women’s social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure” (75).

In *Purple Hibiscus* silencing is not only a mechanism or weapon of patriarchal control but of domestic servitude. Kambili, Jaja and their mother devise ways of survival within the utilitarian calculus Eugene has created for their minds. One of the strategies is the domineering silence with which they observe situations and the other is a filial bonding. Through bonding, mother and children are able to survive the domestic quagmire and the prescriptions of the religious zealotry of their father.

Purple Hibiscus has a feminist thrust but the brand of feminism is very subtle at the first couple of chapters, so that one may hardly deduce from the text the gender tensions. Adichie artistically tries not to create in the traditional standard where women are not only completely marginalized but the masculine voice triumphing over the females. Sometimes she uses irony to contradict situations, but then her feminist intention is discernable. For example, Papa Nnukwu gets frustrated by his son’s dereliction of his responsibility to him, and blames the missionaries for the gulf created between him and his son. Ifeoma tries to exonerate the missionaries for Eugene’s lackadaisical attitude towards Papa Nnukwu by affirming that both of them have the same elementary upbringing, she remarks that, "It was not the missionaries. Did I not go to the missionaries school, too?"(83). Papa Nnukwu laments with a passionate fidelity, “but you are a woman .You do not count”. The veracity of this statement is incontestable yet the monumentality of the statement is veiled and attenuated.

The most amusing character in the novel is Kambili's father who is a pack of contrast. He is so religious that he is unable to draw the lines between social responsibility and religious commitment. He forbids his family from identifying with traditional tenets yet he takes the traditional title 'Omelora'. He admonishes members of his immediate family not to bow before any mortal being, yet when Kambili proudly refuses to bow before Father Benedict during communion he spans her. He refuses to marry a second wife, when his wife is unable to give birth to more children even when his relatives heavily pressure him, yet he does not treat his wife as a partner in the matrimonial enterprise. His barbarous act makes his wife suffer chains of miscarriages. His missal, which is supposed to be sacred, judging from his parochial sense of religion, becomes a missile which he throws at Jaja, thereby destroying the figurines on the étagère. This scene sums up the entire narrative. As the figurines go down, the foundation of his family begins to crumble and everything about him begins to have a downward trajectory. The shards of the figurines represent the gradual disintegration of his authority in his home and the gradual fragmentation of the organic and psychological wholeness of his family.

Kambili's mother, an embodiment of the traditional African woman, who is unsophisticated and content with the economic security her husband guarantees, decides to liberate her children and herself from her husband's sinking philosophy. She is about the most interesting character in the novel. She steps out of her enervating state, fractures the patriarchal social structure and demystifies the idealized traditional images of the African women. She puts behind the psychological rift between her body and mind and liberties herself from the marginal status. She assumes herself powerless woman at the beginning of the novel, and she begins to

doctor her husband's meal at the end thinking herself as an empowered woman. It is this aspect of the novel that gives it a very radical feminist outlook.

Postcolonial feminism is thus characterized by debates, dialogue and diversity and besides looking at the issues of imperialism, anti-colonial nationalism, decolonization and nation building. It is concerned with "the various ways of reading gender: in the world, the world, and the text" (Bhari 200). In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak famously elaborates some contexts wherein contesting representational systems violently displaces or silences the figure of the 'gendered subaltern'. She writes, "Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world women' caught between tradition and modernization" (1988, 306).

Spivak first talks about the subaltern in general, and then the gendered subaltern. 'Subaltern'-to denote inferior rank –is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer those groups in societies who are subjected to hegemony of ruling class, that includes peasants, workers, women or other dominated groups. Made famous by Ranjit Guha's series of Subaltern Studies, the term denotes "the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (Guha 1982, vii). Thus, the concept of the subaltern is meant to resist the elite domination. Spivak made the term famous by asking the question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Here, she critiqued the assumptions of Subaltern Studies group that the concept of autonomy of subaltern group in the diversity, heterogeneity, and overlapping nature of subaltern group is fundamentally an essentialist premise, and Guha's attempt to guard essentialism by specifying the

range of subaltern groups serves only to problematize the idea of the subaltern. Spivak observes:

The true subaltern group whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the subject's itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual [...] How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice –consciousness can the subaltern speak? (27)

One cannot construct a category of the subaltern that has an effective voice clearly and unproblematically identifiable as such a voice that does not at the same time occupy in many other speaking position.

Just like the term patriarchy continues to defy definition, *Purple Hibiscus* cannot be contracted to just a narrative that borders on man-woman relationship. One of Adichie's minor agendas in *Purple Hibiscus* is to unearth the conformation of male domination in Nigeria. She explores the shades of female marginalization stemming from patriarchy and how it relates to the experience of government's exploitation of the masses. The issues of patriarchy and political corruption and subjugation are separate, but Adichie has been able to conflate them. As Adichie interrogates Eugene's inordinate religious stance and the traditional phallogocentrism that conditions his attitude towards his family, she tactically creates a vent in the narrative through which she explores the dehumanizing and exploitative disposition of the Nigerian government. Paulina Palmer gives an encompassing description of patriarchy when she remarks that:

Inspiring a plethora of inventive strategies and designs they enable writers convey to the reader an impression of both the ubiquity and the intricacy of systems of male power. It is, in fact, as a vehicle for the depiction of the working of male power that concepts of patriarchy and patriarchal relations are most effective. There can be few women who at some time or other in their lives have not experienced the frightening sense of being trapped in a conspiracy of male domination either in the work place or the private domain of the home. (69)

Adichie does not only artistically illustrate the presence of patriarchal postures, she also artistically advocates a radical feminism. Her portrait of male domination of the lives of women and feminine resistance to marginalization is striking. When Papa Nnukwu admonishes and prays for his widowed daughter, Ifeoma to have a fine husband who will take care of her and her children, she wishes her father prays fervently for her to be promoted to a senior lectureship position. She does not seem to want any form of masculine authority over her life. She is strong enough to father and mother. When Kambili's mother suffers the last miscarriage as a result of the over bearing and barbarious instinct of Eugene, Ifeoma advises her not to return to her husband. Kambili's mother rises up from her docility and poisons her husband, a counter measure to redeeming herself and her children from the marginal border of taciturnity. These are all firm indications of Adichie's feminist intention.

Although Jaja is the most pathetic character in the novel because he suffers greatly for a crime committed by his mother, he clinically takes responsibility for his father's death. By doing so, he identifies and sympathizes with his mother who suffers marginality and alienation the traditional phallocentricism his father's authority engenders.

By poisoning her husband, Kambili's mother realizes her voice through a new kind of silence. Kambili's metamorphosis becomes complete before Ifeoma travels out of the country. She finally falls in love. Her ability to express his emotion justifies the liberation quality of her voicing, which is self-defining and cathartic. It becomes glaring that Kambili has become matured and she is capable of independent thought and action. Silence plays a vital role in the developmental process of Kambili's life, or perhaps it could be described as a collateral. It inundates the entire narrative. The word silence is used as verb, adjective and adverb and appears forty seven times in the novel. The book begins with silence and ends in silence. However, the silence at the concluding phase of the book, which also marks the wholeness of Kambili's metamorphosis, is distinct. At the beginning of the book, the children and their mother rely heavily on silence and live on assumptions. This silence is dopey and empty. At Nsukka, a different kind of silence descends upon Kambili- this silence is dialectical. After the death of her husband and the incarceration of Jaja, Kambili's mother cracks and retreats into silence. Jaja while in prison cloaks his worries and pains behind an air of insouciance and silently observes his mother and sister. Kambili, on the other hand, retires into silence in order to liberate herself from the realities of the predicaments that have stormed her family. The death of Eugene no doubt, further irrigates the silence. On the whole the last shade of silence that beclouds their sense of imagination could be said to be furtive, because it is a silence characterized by hope and dreams.

The major women characters in *Purple Hibiscus* do not however, surrender to the dominations imposed upon them. They try to resist the subordination in their own ways. Some of which are implicit actions and some are explicit revolts. The dominated Mother, who has been living in confinement in her husband's house, finally poisons Eugene.

Female Bonding and Other Cultural Practices: Female Empowerment

Women's rights and women's being have always been taken for granted, nicely and safely tucked away under the bed of patriarchy. Silence was the virtue of women and passivity their garner, but it was not always so. Traditional societies in pre-colonial times had spheres of power and influence for women in closely-knit organizations that helped them maintain a voice. Colonialism has its merits but its new culture of ascendancy through education, white-collar jobs and money-driven economy relegated women down the ladder.

With women education came exposure and awareness and the inevitable reaction. Feminism is a reaction; it is an assertion of being, rights and status. Literature has proved a worthy tool in interrogating the female condition. The silence was broken by women writers in the mid-sixties in the continent which correspondingly was the era of political independence of quite a number of African States. The decade, that followed, witnessed shades of feministic writing by African women and has advanced the women's cause of recognition and relevance.

This discourse explores the empowerment of three female characters Kambili, Beatrice and Ifeoma as they struggle to make their mouth function within the totalitarian temperament of Eugene's home. Kambili, the protagonist is involved in crisis with religious and domestic stakes at the beginning of the narrative, she seems to be a mere observer and victim, but as the novel drags towards denouement she realizes her voice and role in the home after her awakening. The paper also equally explores the allegorical slant of the text as the growth and development of Nigeria is calibrated by the growth process of the protagonist. Invariably, Kambili begins as the teller in the tale, and at the end she becomes the tale, which eventually intercepts that of the nation. Thus, to give the discourse its desired theoretical thrust, silence is

conceptualized in order to articulate how the dominant group employs it to regulate the existence of the subservient group around the margins and how the subservient group attains power and agency in the subversion of the of the weapon of domination (silence) to negotiate their existence around the margins.

Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* in a subtle manner shows Mrs. Beatrice Achike, the voiceless, lack-luster, docile wife of the successful but overtly overbearing husband, Omelora Eugene Achike. He was fanatical in all his endeavors, be it in his faith, the education of his children, home discipline or his job. In the suffocating ambience of his enormous wealth and intimidation where both his wife and his two children live in awe of him, the author quietly ushered in a domestic revolution through the wife who slowly and methodically poisoned her husband. She freed herself and her children from the yoke. This is an important prelude to women's emancipation and quest for rights and status.

It is incidental to reproduce some of the assertions of Chinweizu in his book tellingly titled *Anatomy of Female Power*. His thesis is that women are powerful and exercise that power over men contrary to general belief and acceptance. He writes:

Because every man has as boss his wife or his mother, or some other woman in his life, men may rule the world, but women rule the men who rule the world. Thus contrary to appearances, woman is boss, the overall boss, of the world. (1)

He then went on to list three prongs on which female power hangs in the domination of man. These are; mother power, bride power and wife power. Female power can be proved by citing an Ogbaru Igbo proverb:

'Onwunwe nwata na enwe ewu bu na aji' Translates as “a child’s ownership of a goat is only skin-deep.” In other words, it is no ownership at all. This is informed by an anecdote which tells of how a father bought a kid and gave it to his son to keep and tend. Everybody called it the son’s goat. The son took great care of his goat, feeding it with choice verdure and spring water and the goat fattened accordingly. One day the boy came back home from collecting grass for the goat to find that “his goat” has been slaughtered for meal for some august visitors without his consent or even information. He realized to his chagrin that, that goat was never his, the real owner had demonstrated his ownership. That is analogous to female power. The woman is mother but the child belongs to his father whose name and lineage he bears and belongs to. The same applies to the wife who relocates to the husband’s house albeit in an impressive ceremony and whose name she bears. The high degree of dependence and so handicap is apparent in this situation.

However, the researcher attempts to analyze Chinweizu’s distinctions in the nature of male and female power realizations:

Generally then, whereas male power tends to be crude, confrontational and direct, female power tends to be subtle, manipulative and indirect. Whereas aggressiveness is the hallmark of male power, maneuver is the hallmark of female power. And where man is the great physical aggressor, woman is the great psychological maneuver. From a Male-centered point of view of what power is, it is easy to be misled into thinking That a female form of power does not exist at all; and even when female power is Recognized, it is easy to dismiss it as power of an inferior type, just because it is not Hard, aggressive or boastful like the highly visible male form. (2)

These quotations serve as fitting prelude to the appreciation of female self assertion in fiction by select African women to show the various stages and locations of the feministic encounter. The whole objective is to give women a voice and locus in their own affairs especially within the marriage institution and in other affairs that concern them directly.

Purple Hibiscus has a subtle yet powerful feminist thrust. The book tells the story of a Nigerian family suffering the effects of postcolonialism. Female empowerment plays an important role in the novel. The female characters are linked through issues of control, power, abuse and freedom. The empowerment of the postcolonial woman takes on two different forms in *Purple Hibiscus* through three of the characters: Kambili, the narrator and the daughter of Eugene, Beatrice, the mother of Kambili and wife of Eugene and Kambili's sister-in-law Auntie Ifeoma, the independent and enlightened Nigerian woman. Auntie Ifeoma, educated yet poor professor at a University in Nsukka, serves as a counter to the quiet, privileged housewife Beatrice. Yet, despite her voicelessness in the beginning of the novel, Beatrice transforms into an empowered postcolonial woman through her deadly rebellion against her violent and abusive husband, Eugene. Her interactions with Ifeoma work to strengthen her resolve and propel her towards her defining moment of resistance. Together, the two women form a complete and dynamic representation of the postcolonial women, their dilemmas and victories.

The silent suffering as well as the empowerment of the Nigerian woman is shown through Beatrice's character. Beatrice, married to the wealthy businessman Eugene, is conservative, unsophisticated and content with the economic security her husband guarantees. She is shown as a traditional Nigerian-Catholic wife, stifled by the knowledge that her husband is her lifeline. Ifeoma encourages her to leave

Eugene, yet Beatrice desperately replies, “Where would I go if I leave Eugene’s house?” (250). Like many postcolonial women, Beatrice is controlled by her husband and is relegated to the domestic sphere. She expresses feelings of limitation in her life and resigns herself to her dependency on Eugene. Her identity is not easily defined apart from her family and the home. She is dependent and powerless.

However, Beatrice also represents the postcolonial woman who finds empowerment through her domesticity, eventually using her control over the foodstuffs in the home to take the life of her husband. The control she exercises adds a new dimension to her character, moving her beyond “voiceless female” towards “empowered woman”.

Aunty Ifeoma is quite the opposite of Beatrice. As a willful and intelligent professor at the University in Nsukka, Aunty Ifeoma has a strong presence in the public sphere and is quite sure of her own identity. Having been widowed, Ifeoma is left alone to care for her three children and the small home they maintain in the University town. She is independent from a male figure and her identity does not rest on being a wife. Ifeoma’s character is presented as constantly encouraging the young women in her classes to postpone marriage and develop their own selves before entering a life that will unfortunately and inevitably restrict them to the home. In constantly applying this back pressure, Ifeoma’s character is the catalyst to Beatrice’s eventual and quiet insurrection against Eugene’s power; she repeatedly urges her to leave Eugene and take a stand for herself and her children.

Ifeoma stands strong against the other characters; sure of herself and her place, she is able to clearly see others for what they are. Kambili, Ifeoma’s niece and narrator of the novel, says, “She walked fast, just like one who knew where she was going and what she was going to do there” (71). She is the only female character who

seems to neither fear Eugene nor place him on a pedestal. In Abba, Ifeoma casually and abruptly reprimands Eugene for dismissing her comments about the cousins spending time together. The way in which she addresses him makes Kambili cringe; “Every time Auntie Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognize that it was Papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her lips shut” (77). Ifeoma does not see herself as being on a different level than Eugene. In fact, her attitude towards him makes it clear that she feels she is equal and just as powerful.

Beatrice’s quiet uprising against her husband is in stark contrast to Ifeoma’s open rebellion against the conventions of gender and power in Nigeria. Ifeoma’s character is one of zealous, unapologetic strength, a strength found through an attitude of equality. Beatrice finds courage and strength through subtler, more covert and ultimately deadly ways. Yet, in the end, her defiance is as powerful and fierce as Ifeoma’s.

The two women present a series of dichotomies: domestic and public, unsophisticated and educated, quiet resistance and overt rebellion. The image of the postcolonial woman in Adichie’s book has depth and complexity, helping to shape a postcolonial feminist identity that utilizes both the traditional domesticity of Beatrice and the fierce intellectualism of Ifeoma. While Beatrice and Ifeoma represent different aspects of postcolonial feminism, neither character fits neatly into a simple and limited definition of the concept, rendering the Nigerian woman multifaceted and potent.

Essentialism provides important contributions to feminist strategizing by presenting clearly-delineated problems and projected outcomes. Promoting a similar idea, critic Gayatri Spivak contends that while the ideology requires critique,

appraisals of essentialism should be based upon its effectiveness, or “a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest.”(116) She writes:

We have to look at where the group...is situated when we make claims for or against essentialism. Now I think my emphasis would be on noting how we ourselves and others are what you call essentialist, without claiming a counter-essence disguised under the alibi of strategy...Vigilance, what I call building for difference, rather than keeping ourselves clean by being whatever it is to be an anti-essentialist, that has taken of much greater emphasis for me.(117)

Kambili continues her quest for her voice through eavesdropping. She tries to make sense of her father’s conversation with his guests whenever they come calling. The process towards locating her voice begins with what would have been a normal ritual of another silent Christmas celebration if her aunt Ifeoma had not shown up with her family. The process of creating her own voice begins with Kambili’s location of her mother, which has been in a perpetual state of incapacity. Ifeoma’s presence in Aba during the Christmas celebration is fumigating, because the vector of silence that has clipped Kambili’s lips and the cyst shielding rays of humanity from her life begins to shade into a mincing voice.

The conservative mindset of their father makes them observe anything he labels as evil abominable to them without any rational or dialectical questioning. Kambili’s doughty aunt, Ifeoma, becomes a symbol of the iconoclastic identity and demystifier of patriarchal and despotic establishments. Though a catholic devotee like Kambili’s father, she creates the leeway that would give her brother’s family leverage from domestic servitude. Since her perception of religion is at variance with her brother’s, it is not surprising that the conflict between the two of them subtly

detonates on the dining table. Eugene almost blinds his family with prayers during lunch. It is only the ebullient Ifeoma who is able to express the implication of lengthy prayers at meals: “Did you want the rice to get cold, Eugene?” She belongs to the category of women who Rosemary Moyana (1996) describes as “women who refuse to be compartmentalized into their chiseled up roles” (30). Eugene only grants his children audience with their grandfather for fifteen minutes. Anything more is abominating and sinful and must be confessed before the priest for remission of sin. From their father’s prayers and remarks, they conclude that their grandfather must be very paganistic. Eugene would not allow his father into his premises because their religious beliefs are polar- a polarity which is characterized by a kind of inverse correlation. It is Ifeoma who gives Kambili and Jaja the exclusive benefit of knowing their grandfather beyond the atheistic portraiture their father has cartographed in their mind. Kambili observes her grandfather, Nnukwu with filial attachment from a distance because she has been zipped up by her father’s doctrinaire stance towards Papa Nnukwu, which is informed by Kambili’s father’s inebriated sense of religion. Ifeoma is able to discern the cosmetic life her callow nephew and niece are leading. She observes that their expressions are glacial unlike her children who have plenary rights to converse inside and outside their home. In order to initiate an osmotic pressure in their lives, she prescribes a trip to Nsukka, for Kambili and Jaja. A trip that marks an eclipse of Eugene’s unbridled religious hegemony. Although Eugene’s acquiescence to this proposal is a welcome development to their mother, he gives them a schedule they would strictly adhere to, because the schedule becomes a symbol of his authority and their mainstay.

Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* has been enriched by the voices of women expressing their concerns. Various inhibitions and encumbrances of women

exercising their human rights can be observed in the novel. It does appear that male chauvinism makes no such distinctions, both categories of women come under the masculine yoke. The only difference is that the educated women are able to free themselves from this masculine yoke quickly because of the economic empowerment education bestows on them. So women's education and economic viability are emphasized as means of women's reification. But if these subordinated females get opportunity to empower themselves and realize the hegemonic exploitations, they can resist the oppression in any way they can, either through silence, indifference, or through direct revolt.

III. Conclusion : Female Empowerment in Domination

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is significant to delineate the double subjugation of postcolonial Nigerian females. Different women characters seek to subvert the colonial regime and local patriarchy in order to attain freedom and happiness in their lives. Both patriarchy and colonization manipulate the knowledge and hegemonize women to believe that they are unable to know and do anything the men would do. The dominant power and discourses never provide women access to critical thinking about the other fields of possibilities. Some women who get privilege to exercise their minds and innate qualities of critical thinking question and resist the dominations and marginalization claiming their position in the center. The main female characters of Adichie's novel are in somewhat privileged position. They realize the domination imposed upon them. They resist and liberate themselves from the double oppression through whatever means they have access to.

This exploration, on the one hand, depicts the failure of postcolonial values and feminist's resistance to colonial principles, on the other. Hence, the theoretical terrain of postcolonial feminism is applicable for the analysis of the text to portray how emerging revolutionary forces like feminism and postcolonialism entangle in the conspiracy of traditional patriarchy. Resistance and co-operation are the new ways to overcome against patriarchy and colonial domination for the third world feminists. In *Purple Hibiscus* women characters like Kambili, Beatrice and Ifeoma have shown the characteristics of third world females. The resistance made by Beatrice in the murder of Eugene symbolically represents the downfall of patriarchal domination in Postcolonial Nigerian society.

Eugene, as a tyrant patriarch at home, maintains Christian codes and family order. He pencils the routine which is supposed to be followed by the family members. He practises Christian orthodoxy blindly following Manichean dictates of Christian religious dogmas. By being complicit to European mindset, Eugene deceives himself and his family. He is a lackey, a 'yes man' who wants to prove to Father Benedict (white priest) at all cost through so-called richness of thought and the equal value of the intellect. The black skin of Eugene is masked by complicity with the values of the white colonial powers. He does not know the root of the germination of domestic violence is European mindset. Thus, Eugene embodies repressive patriarchy, based on imported western religion, and colonial mimicry. He imposes his Catholic discipline in his family at times and gives physical punishment.

This study examines the extent of women's struggles to overcome marginalization in a sexist and patriarchal society. Love, war, conflict and the persistent inequality between men and women are among the dominant themes in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, however, projects womanhood in positive light. She upholds female potentialities which the patriarchal structure has repressed. She also makes role models of out of her female protagonists. Women's impassioned struggles to free themselves from the shackles of male brutality and dominance are what hold us spellbound to Adichie's most alluring and extremely most powerful novel. Adichie remarkably dramatizes in her work, women's determination to survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, extreme starvation, senseless brutality and careless threats to their lives and property. Through her main characters, Adichie reveals how the physical, psychological and mental abuses of women can have negative effects on their well-being. The liberation of women from all structures against their peaceful co-existence alongside men deserves the support of all humanity. This study

concludes, therefore, that every African woman must face up to the realities of her sexist culture and assert her rights. This is undoubtedly a demanding choice fraught with its own dangers but a woman needs to burst the system and set up her own parameters within the society or risk being treated as a doormat for life.

Postcolonial feminism in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, thus, depicts the way females undergo double suppression from 'colonialism' and 'patriarchy' and the way they attain power and agency in the subversion of the weapon of domination to negotiate their existence around the margins. Thus, the confrontation appears in between colonizer and colonized, male and female and colonialism and feminism.

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