



Domestic Tyranny and Female Empowerment: A Feminist Reading of *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract—This seminar paper explores the multifaceted oppression of women in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), examining how religious, postcolonial, and patriarchal forces intersect to silence and marginalize female characters. Set in postcolonial Nigeria, the novel portrays a society grappling with the residues of colonial rule, where Western religious ideologies and traditional gender hierarchies together reinforce systemic subjugation.

This paper explores the discourses, worldviews, and values presented in *Purple Hibiscus*, offering a critical examination of patriarchy, colonialism, and sexism. It will provide fresh insights into Adichie's portrayal of radical female characters and their traumatic journeys toward liberation within patriarchal and post-patriarchal contexts.

The paper critically examines the female characters, highlighting how their identities and autonomy are suppressed by religious dogma, patriarchal expectations, and the sociopolitical aftermath of colonialism. Through a feminist and postcolonial lens, it shows how Adichie not only critiques these oppressive structures but also foregrounds female resilience and the subtle forms of resistance that emerge within constrained spaces. Ultimately, the paper argues that *Purple Hibiscus* serves as a powerful narrative of both suffering and liberation, offering a nuanced commentary on the complex dynamics of power, gender, and culture in contemporary African society.

Keywords—Patriarchy, Religion, Domestic Violence, Paternal Authority, Women's Liberation.



I. INTRODUCTION

Set in Enugu, a city in post-colonial Nigeria, *Purple Hibiscus* unfolds through the perspective of its protagonist, Kambili Achike. The narrative focuses on an Igbo family residing in south-eastern Nigeria during the late twentieth century. It is a coming-of-age story that chronicles Kambili's transformation from a timid, introverted girl into a confident young woman capable of navigating and challenging the socio-economic and political systems around her. She eventually breaks free from the grip of domestic violence inflicted by her father, Eugene, a devout Catholic who subjects his wife, Beatrice, and children, Kambili and Jaja, to physical and emotional abuse under the guise of religious, cultural, and traditional righteousness.

Kambili lives with her older brother, Jaja (Chukwuka Achike), a bright and diligent student who, like his sister, is

emotionally repressed at home. Eugene Achike, a rigid and authoritarian patriarch, allows his extreme Catholic beliefs to suppress any expression of paternal affection. He disciplines his family harshly whenever they fall short of his unattainable ideals. His religious rigidity and patriarchal authoritarianism end up confining and diminishing those he claims to love. Ultimately, the novel's turning points come from the most unlikely characters, culminating in a dramatic shift of power as Eugene's life is brought to an end by his wife.

In literature, the roles and status of women are often reflective of the broader societal views toward gender. In the African context, patriarchy sustains itself through the silencing and subjugation of women, including the control of their bodies. In response to this, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie crafts narratives centered on female protagonists

and their concerns, deliberately challenging patriarchal norms. Through her storytelling, she constructs a gendered discourse that not only confronts male-dominated power structures but also motivates the female struggle against oppression and violence.

Kolawole (1997), an African feminist scholar, argues that African women experience layered forms of oppression: "Patriarchy, tradition, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and gender imperialism, all combine to act against the African woman's self-assertion" (25). Adichie, whether explicitly or implicitly, engages in crafting a discourse aimed at shifting women from the periphery to the centre. Through her literary works, she challenges patriarchy and various other mechanisms of female marginalization, effectively undermining male-dominated structures and giving a strong, assertive voice to her female characters.

II. OBJECTIVES

The seminar paper first explores how Adichie portrays the complexities, contradictions, and limitations of female resistance to patriarchy through the contrasting characters of Beatrice and Auntie Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*. The next section explores how Ifeoma and Beatrice embody resistance to colonial legacy in *Purple Hibiscus* and the limits of their efforts. Further it examines how Adichie reconstructs femininity in *Purple Hibiscus* by contrasting Beatrice's constrained roles in motherhood and marriage with Auntie Ifeoma's model of empowerment and independence. The concluding section examines how *Purple Hibiscus* critiques religious rigidity and its impact on family, gender roles, and cultural identity through characters like Eugene, Beatrice, Auntie Ifeoma, and Father Amadi.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study falls back on secondary materials. Apart from the text, other reference materials and inputs will be made use of.

IV. ANALYSIS

Purple Hibiscus has sparked debate over the exploitation of women by institutionalized patriarchy, colonial influence and religious systems, which together hinder the flourishing of women in African societies.

4.1 Challenging Patriarchy: The Limits of Resistance in *Purple Hibiscus*

Adichie's representation of patriarchy in *Purple Hibiscus* draws largely from the gender stereotypes that has its historical roots in both the practices of African Christianity

and African cultures. In the narrative world of *Purple Hibiscus*, there are two important systemic institutions that reinforce patriarchy, the church, and the society. The character of Eugene Achike (the husband of Beatrice, and the father of Jaja and Kambili) is projected as an embodiment of these structures since his religious beliefs and traditional upbringing were his continual points of referents for his oppressive behavior and intimidating sense of identity in and outside of his household. Motivated by his religious ideologies, Eugene's household served like a mini-sacred space and a mini-Christian community to ensure the spread, continuity, and realization of the Christian message.

Purple Hibiscus, portrays thrilling horrors of violence, oppression and intimidation perpetuated by the patriarchal figure Eugene. As difficult as it is to witness the gruesome violence in *Purple Hibiscus*, it is even more heart-breaking that Eugene never sees his abusive behavior as a problem. Eugene was an embodiment of patriarchy par excellence. Eugene had complete control over his wife and children's emotions, thoughts, and actions. He decides the organization of the household and forces them to participate. Paradoxically, his Christian beliefs pervasively emboldened and reinforced his oppressive attitudes. "Papa flung his heavy missal across the room; it landed on Jaja's shoulder. Jaja was gritting his teeth so hard I could hear the sound" (7). This illustrates Eugene's authoritarian grip on his family's religious observance and personal choices. His violent reaction to Jaja's refusal to take communion underscores how his version of Catholicism legitimizes emotional and physical abuse.

Given the above background, Adichie uses the images of the two female characters, Auntie Ifeoma and Beatrice to deconstruct patriarchy. The resistance paradigm projected in Auntie Ifeoma's depicts the African womanist's approach that protests patriarchy and its roots in religion and culture by uplifting and empowering the woman to make changes from within. Education creates the grassroots resource and power every female needs to resist patriarchal influence. Auntie Ifeoma's educational exposure was the first element that will shape her future because it offered her the opportunity for self-development, gender flourishing and identity building. Because of her background, Auntie Ifeoma's house became a liberative space where patriarchy is apparently neutralized. "Auntie Ifeoma was a university lecturer... They talked about books and politics and laughed so easily. It was different from home, where laughter was rare and conversation was measured" (148). Auntie Ifeoma's education not only defined her career but also helped her create a space of liberation, intellectual freedom, and gender empowerment, especially when contrasted with the rigid patriarchy of Eugene's home.

Adichie critiqued patriarchy by encouraging the paradigm of women empowerment of other women. Auntie Ifeoma exemplifying this model, identifies with the victim of patriarchy in building structures of solidarity and resistance where she can bond with Beatrice and the other women to empower them in bold and assertive resistance of the gender status quo in the world of *Purple Hibiscus*. African feminists including Buchi Emecheta believes in the power of African women fight against patriarchy is in their solidarity which can be achieved through the formation of sisterhoods. For Auntie Ifeoma, a caution on religion is a caution on patriarchy. The ability to accept the differences inherent in every religion and culture, and the openness to accept its rich values and virtues will greatly facilitate the transformation of the stereotypical representations of the female gender in *Purple Hibiscus*. In the character of Beatrice, Adichie resisted patriarchy by eliminating Eugene, thereby unleashing chaos in her world.

“Mama put the bottle of poison in his tea, enough to kill a full-grown man. Sisi said she watched him drink it” (290). This moment of Beatrice poisoning Eugene is a climactic act of resistance, a silent rebellion. Though shocking, it underscores Adichie’s complex portrayal of a woman pushed to her limits, reflecting not just local realities but also broader feminist perspectives influenced by diasporic discourse. This type of cruelty executed to Eugene is untypical of the African woman. It means that Beatrice’s dynamics of resistance can be located within Adichie’s diasporic exposure.

Both the liberative choices of Auntie Ifeoma and Beatrice were feasible and liberating for the moment but were not sustainable and forceful to the end. Auntie Ifeoma seems to have launched social religious ideas to deconstruct the hegemony of patriarchy, but she could not stay to enforce the erasure of the abuse of power and the wrong conceptions and treatment of gender. She absconded the dominant patriarchy of African society to the relatively liberal worlds of the West by traveling abroad. Auntie Ifeoma's decision to leave Nigeria for the United States underscores her resistance to patriarchal and authoritarian structures. Despite her efforts to challenge these systems, she ultimately recognizes the limitations imposed by the oppressive environment. This is evident in her conversation with her friend Chiaku:

“It is not about me, Chiaku,” Auntie Ifeoma paused. “Who will teach Amaka and Obiora in university?”

“The educated ones leave, the ones with the potential to right the wrongs. They leave the weak behind. The tyrants

continue to reign because the weak cannot resist. Do you not see that it is a cycle? Who will break that cycle?” (244–245)

This dialogue highlights Ifeoma's internal conflict between her desire to enact change within her country and the need to provide a better future for her children. Her eventual departure reflects the challenges faced by those who oppose entrenched systems of power, and how personal circumstances can influence decisions to seek opportunities elsewhere.

On the part of Beatrice, the death of patriarchy symbolized by her killing of Eugene paralyzed the entire household and drove the system dependent upon it into chaos. Thus, patriarchy was a problem, but the destruction of patriarchy was not the solution. Patriarchy could not stay, neither could the matriarch hold the system.

Weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each of the liberating paradigms, one can say that Beatrice’s failure is measured by Auntie Ifeoma’s trained capacity to confront patriarchy. The merged personalities or characters of these two women in *Purple Hibiscus* appeared to enforce and romanticize Adichie’s utopia which is seen in the brutal killing of the patriarchy symbolized by Eugene on one hand, and the escape from the chaos of the post-patriarchal world through liberative movement of Ifeoma abroad.

4.2 Colonial Legacy and the Limits of Resistance in *Purple Hibiscus*

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene embraced colonialism completely. He was a micro reflection of what colonial ideologies were detested for, male dominance, hierarchical power relationships, exploitation, imposition of western culture and belief, demonization of African culture and tradition, the notion of superiority, discrimination, including the use of violence to pursue and sustain authority and domination. Eugene domesticated his family upon the standards deployed by the colonizers who themselves came to domesticate Africa and to exercise their patriarchal hold and institutions on African society. Eugene lacked the critical mind capable of appreciating the rich traditional heritage of his people. On the contrary, he was brainwashed to belief that speaking in the tongue of his master, dressing in his clothes, eating his food, drinking his wine, and adopting his master’s religion would translate into self-worth and dignity for himself.

Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to important people on the phone. His Igbo sounded strange, heavy, like something he had to form in his mouth before he let the words out. (46) Eugene's adoption of a British accent and demeanour when

interacting with religious figures reflects his internalization of colonial values and his desire to align himself with Western ideals, often at the expense of his native Igbo heritage. Eugene elevates the British accent and struggles with his native language, symbolizing his belief that adopting the ways of the colonizer grants status and legitimacy. His rejection of his indigenous identity in favour of Western norms, including religion, language, and culture, underscores the psychological impact of colonialism.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie critiques the impact of colonialism on Africa. She admits the harrowing effect of colonialism on Africans, especially the marginalization of African culture and the inferiority complex mentality that causes Africans to denigrate their cultural identity and religion. She initiates a discussion about decolonization of the mind. It comes in the form of decentralization of our perceptions about oppressive colonial realities and the recentralization of the African religious systems and values. This was very evident in certain narrative conversations that took place in Auntie Ifeoma's household, such as, picking a confirmation name, singing Igbo songs at mass/family prayers, and encouraging the children to appreciate the richness of Nigerian culture and heritage. In addition, she insists on the beauty and worth of a vast amount of Igbo festivals, practices, and beliefs.

Auntie Ifeoma's household in *Purple Hibiscus* serves as a microcosm of resistance against colonial and patriarchal structures. Within her home, open discussions and critical thinking are encouraged, contrasting sharply with the oppressive silence of Kambili's family environment.

I lay in bed after Mama left and let my mind rake through the past, through the years when Jaja and Mama and I spoke more with our spirits than with our lips. Until Nsukka. Nsukka started it all; Auntie Ifeoma's little garden next to the verandah of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence. Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Auntie 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. (15–16)

Auntie Ifeoma's environment cultivates a sense of liberation and critical engagement, enabling characters like Jaja and Kambili to begin questioning and challenging the oppressive norms they have internalized. Auntie Ifeoma deconstructs Eugene's discriminatory and oppressive mentality in relation to religion and culture. She used the space of her home to unwrite contested claims about colonial ideals, especially in the areas of power and patriarchy, oppressive construction of family values and relationships, and domestic responsibilities. Although Auntie Ifeoma's home lacks the luxuries and wealth of Eugene's home, it

possesses the wealth of freedom, peace and openness that help build a social cultural identity founded on dialogue, tolerance, and mutual respect. Adichie's challenge of colonialism is certainly interesting, however, her liberating solutions were not forceful enough to impact lasting changes.

Auntie Ifeoma tells Chiaku that she is thinking about moving to America, and she has sent her resume to a relative there. Chiaku is disappointed, and comments that Nigerians will always be 'second-class citizens' in America. Chiaku laments that all the strong people are leaving Nigeria, while the weak stay behind to be ruled by tyrants. (244)

This exchange underscores the tension between the desire to escape systemic oppression and the reality of potential marginalization abroad. Auntie Ifeoma's departure signifies both a personal act of resistance and a commentary on the broader socio-political challenges faced by Nigerians. For economic reasons and disappointments over unfulfilled hope for a working Nigeria, Auntie Ifeoma migrated to America, thereby recolonizing herself in the land of her former colonizers. By abandoning the victimized system and running into the system of the oppressor.

Adichie is indirectly reaffirming what it criticizes. Such a move could be criticized since it reaffirms the indispensability of the colonial system for survival. In context, the voice of Auntie Ifeoma gradually became a faded voice in the fight against colonial impacts. Her letters to Kambili and Jaja no longer speak about the patterns of colonial exploitation, but of her progress in her new location.

As with other post-colonial literature, *Purple Hibiscus* tries to wage the war against colonialism but still caught up in an attitude of attachment to colonial exigencies and system they criticize. Adichie, writes her literature from the Western world and even uses Western feminist thoughts to criticize the postcolonial society. This position speaks of the complex nature of every attempt to resist postcolonial control. Perhaps, Adichie's principles of dialogue, interrogation, and negotiation may work to destabilize certain colonial narratives that have destroyed traditional institutions, values, and systems, but must be forceful to the end.

4.3 Reconstructing Femininity: Motherhood, Marriage, and Empowerment in *Purple Hibiscus*

There are three sexist discussions projected in *Purple Hibiscus*. The first is the sexist discussion of a woman as a mother. Motherhood in African is defined in terms of giving birth, protecting, and nurturing the life of the child (children). They believe women are biologically assumed to be mothers because they have a natural mothering instinct,

or maternal instinct, therefore they are ought to be mothers. Eugene expected Beatrice to be a perfect mother, but the patriarchal ordering of her home turned Beatrice from a mother to a murderer.

In Beatrice, we discern femaleness in terms of failed motherhood and murderhood. "Mama slid to the floor, her face buried in her lap and sobbed. I stood there, watching her, feeling the tears gather in my eyes. I wanted to reach out to her, to hold her, but I did not know how" (248). This scene underscores the profound emotional and physical toll that domestic violence has taken on Beatrice, affecting not only her well-being but also her ability to protect her unborn children. Beatrice experienced the brokenness of motherhood because of the treatments she received from Eugene.

Under intense and perverse situations, she could not keep up the patriarchal nicety and impositions. Where she could not protect or prevent her miscarriages, she also decides to miscarry the marriage. By murdering Eugene, Beatrice shows how some women under severe pressure in their marriages can resort to terminating the lives of their children or husband. Here, the line between a mother and a murderer is so thin, and Beatrice crossed it.

The other sexist presentation of the African woman is that of a housewife. The sense of being a housewife implied that Beatrice had no work outside of the home. Beatrice did not have any higher formal education, at least, when compared to Auntie Ifeoma. She was not an office holder or a group leader in any organization in her social or religious settings.

Within her home, her major function was cooking, plaiting Kambili's hair, savouring the drinks from Eugene's factory, and polishing the glass. The role of Beatrice was an embodiment of the state of the African woman, one who is locked up in a housewife role, with clearly mapped out duties assigned to her. She is submissive to the husband, obedient, lacking initiatives, and the oppressive system ensures that she is continually dependent on the husband.

The third sexist representation of the African woman is that of a wife. From *Purple Hibiscus* we note that marriage in African culture is seen as an achievement. "A woman with children and no husband, what is that?" Beatrice retorts (236). It is the belief of a typical African man, that marrying a woman gives the woman an identity and a social face, and women have been brainwashed to belief such idea.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie resists the oppressive paradigms about femininity. In the voice of Auntie Ifeoma, Adichie attempts to re-situate and recentralize the position of women in the African society. The strategy lies in deconstructing the stereotypes about femaleness in relations to motherhood, housewife and wife. Auntie Ifeoma's state of widowhood could be regarded as a breaking away from the

'motherhood childbearing' paradigm since she refused to remarry, and yet she was a phenomenal mother.

But Adichie's representation of motherhood in Beatrice is questionable. In the 'kill the patriarch' paradigm, one wonders whether Adichie's emancipation from the traditional notion of motherhood resonates with African women writer's matrix of motherhood. According to many African Feminists including Buchi Emecheta, African women's struggle for freedom must be separated from the struggles of their Western feminist counterparts because the African traditional society still values the richness and virtues of motherhood and needs to be incorporated in the discussion.

Given that Adichie is writing under the influence of modernity and western feminism, it is not clear whether she is embracing the African women writer's position or promoting the 'world without men paradigm.' One thing is certain, that by upholding Auntie Ifeoma's state of widowhood, Adichie is rejecting the patriarchal cultural conceptions and prejudiced notions woven around the neck of the African mother which often suffocates rather than frees her. Contrary to Beatrice, Auntie Ifeoma is the bold, hardworking, strong, assertive, and economically independent woman. She was economically stable, even in the absence of her husband. She was educated like Eugene, and as such was empowered from the beginning for a future sustained life. Auntie Ifeoma's educational background prescribes the right of every girl or woman.

Adichie also challenged the notion of the African woman as a wife. The view that marriage is a license to happiness or certificate of identity for an African woman comes under attack in *Purple Hibiscus*. The state of Auntie Ifeoma's widowhood and her ability to protect and care for her family gives a different notion of women as wives. Auntie Ifeoma refuses to remarry, because for her the loss of the husband is not a loss of identity and responsibilities. The experience of Beatrice was an embodiment of marriage without love, marriage full of sacrifices and pain. Beatrice's experiences can be used to further debate on the state of women in several marriages, with special reference to love, sacrifice, and pain.

Adichie advocates for women to seek for freedom from abusive marriages. Staying in abusive marriages can attract violent repercussions, oppressive consequences, and loss of life. For Adichie, Auntie Ifeoma's role idealizes a somewhat balanced approach to femininity and sexism in African context.

4.4 The Impact of Religious Rigidity and Patriarchy in *Purple Hibiscus*

One of the fundamental assumptions in *Purple Hibiscus* is that the practicing of religion brings pain and suffering. At the institutional level, the Church displays a certain level of religious rigidity and formalism that is seen as part of the formative strategy that seeks to protect the teachings of the Church. However, these religious rigidity and legalism in essence shows Christianity (and other similar religions) as a structure that lacks compassion and charity towards other human beings.

From the actions of Eugene, it is believed that Christianity is best practiced when it is rigidly interpreted, and its instructions mindlessly followed. There were levels of intolerance, even for the slightest mistake. For instance, there were sets of rules that were meant to be obeyed during the rite of Holy Communion, and the Church demanded full obedience of these traditionally laid down religious rites. "He said we should not eat at all before Mass. That it was a sin to eat before receiving Communion. He said God would punish us if we did" (117). According to Eugene, the breach of this requirement is considered sinful and attracts divine punishment, demonstrating Eugene's rigid interpretation of Catholicism and his use of fear to enforce religious obedience in his family. It highlights his controlling nature, which is a central theme in the novel.

In the Church, Eugene is praised as one who speaks out for freedom, charity, and love. He was generous to the Church and would even pay for the cartoons of communion wine. But Eugene mocks his charity work by failing to exemplify these virtues at home, placing a hypocritical wedge between spirituality at the church and the one at home. Eugene's religious rigidity was detrimental to the life and existence of his family members as community of believers. His implacable stance on religion vis a vis culture and morals led to his uncontrollable anger, anxiety, obsession with sin, and other behavioural anomalies. Eugene talks about sin, but the abuse in his home, the anger in his heart, the injury he inflicts on his children, the murdering of his unborn children, are nothing less than sin.

At the level of the family unit, religion is pain and a kind of mockery for the rich and the strong. Religion also subtly scorns the faith of the poor and the weak. In Eugene's household, religion is butchered, ridiculed, and mocked. In the merciless beatings and the number of stigmas left on the children and wife, Eugene's representation of religion was murderous, insensitive to suffering, dehumanizing, abusive, and oppressive. The Christian statues, and other relics found in Eugene's home were supposed to be a constant reminder of their spirituality and dedication to the life of faith, hope, and love, but in *Purple Hibiscus* their presence made no difference to the patriarchal and abusive character of Eugene.

For Beatrice and her children, religion could not defend or rescue them from the oppressive hands of Eugene. Rather it left them in a state of helplessness and defenceless. It is ironical that Beatrice was experiencing the most horrendous and appalling manifestations of what could be described as the failure of religion, yet she wore on her neck, the image that reads "GOD is love" (35).

The idea of remaining in and endorsing a religion that is traumatizing and oppressive explains the situation of most African women. There are many internal and external problems that have catalyzed the experiences of women because of their religious convictions. Instead of speaking up and negotiating their freedom, they will rather remain passive because they have been brainwashed into believing that living with their broken dreams and realities are symbols of one's true commitment to religion.

The pains of religion can also be perceived in the religious spats between Eugene and his father (Papa Nnukwu). Eugene's religious claims and intolerant attitude toward his father promoted religious antagonism, hatred, rejection, and resentment. "Papa Nnukwu suffered so much in the hands of his son, for despite his son's wealth, he lived the life of a pauper" (84). Papa Nnukwu's resentments and pains highlight the indubitable, violent, and perhaps, the many untold stories of individuals suffering because of their religious identity.

For Adichie, Eugene's religiosity negates the essence of true religion. In the character of Auntie Ifeoma, Adichie resiliently asserted religion as kindness, love, and compassion. Adichie argues for a certain level of flexibility with religious rules as they sometimes inflict pains on the lives of those who seek to live by them. In addition, some of these rules have played a role in the promotion of religious and gender violence. Adichie does not suggest the overcoming of religion but challenges the use of religion to promote patriarchal perspectives and ideologies, especially the ones that promote oppression.

Adichie also promotes openness to understanding the ways of other people's traditions and culture. Certain rituals or rites which Eugene condemned were accepted by Auntie Ifeoma not as an alternative to Christian faith, but traditions that are rich in value and has its way of supporting the cultural values of the people and their society. Both Auntie Ifeoma's household and Father Amadi use Igbo words and traditional songs as worship songs and would clap their hands during worship. Auntie Ifeoma and Father Amadi embrace a form of Christianity that integrates Igbo culture, unlike Eugene's rigid and colonial interpretation. Auntie Ifeoma and Father Amadi see value in indigenous practices and use them in their worship, not as a replacement for Christianity, but as a way to enrich and contextualize it within their culture. "They sang Igbo praise songs, tapping

their feet, clapping, smiling. Even the priest, a young man with a round, open face, sang with his eyes closed and his hands raised” (138).

This scene describes the vibrant and inclusive style of worship at Auntie Ifeoma’s local church, where faith is expressed with joy and cultural identity is not suppressed. It contrasts sharply with Eugene’s home, where any blending of traditional culture with religion is condemned as pagan. This moment also reveals how religious expression can be both spiritual and culturally rooted, aligning with Auntie Ifeoma’s broader worldview that allows space for both faith and tradition.

This is a deliberate effort by the writer to affirm the validity and importance of African traditional religious and cultural systems against the Western assumptions of their faith superiority. In addition, such a move shows that African Christianity must be shaped by the content of her cultures, which plays a significant role in identifying her roots and for the adoption of the new religious beliefs.

“You are beautiful,” he said, looking straight into my eyes. “You should smile more often” (179). This moment is significant because it marks one of the first times Kambili is directly affirmed in her identity as a young woman. Father Amadi’s attention and kindness encourage her to discover a sense of self and physical confidence that had been suppressed under her father’s oppressive rule. While their relationship remains mostly platonic, scenes like this one suggest Father Amadi’s quiet internal conflict, he acknowledges his attraction but maintains boundaries, revealing the tension between his spiritual vows and human emotions.

The love relationship between Father Amadi and Kambili was an experience that helped Kambili come to terms with her femininity and sexuality. But it also projects the quibbling attitude of Father Amadi with his priestly celibacy. On the theological front, Father Amadi’s actions can be seen as a breach of his vocation of ‘no marriage’ for the sake of the Kingdom of God. But from a human point of view, his love relationship with Kambili is natural and expressive of his human sexuality. Adichie uses Father Amadi’s case to reawaken the debate on sexuality and the church for the future.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study interprets *Purple Hibiscus* by underscoring its subversive conversation with patriarchy, colonization, sexism, and religion. Adichie’s female characters are apparently offered liberation through murder of patriarchy in the image of Eugene, escapism by the movement of Auntie Ifeoma from Africa to America, and the

psychotic breakdown of Beatrice. However, Adichie offers redemption to these female characters in the bi-character merger of Auntie Ifeoma and Beatrice who representatively confronted patriarchy, and oppressive structures of religion and cultures. Thus, Beatrice and Auntie Ifeoma are the flip sides of the same characters, and together both confronted patriarchies, and charted a new horizon for themselves.

The new horizon clearly placed them in the character zones of widows, immigrant, open-minded individuals, and female rebels who challenged the biblical injunction, “thou shall not kill” in terms of Beatrice’s killing her husband, or the Auntie Ifeoma’s refusal of the cultural communal norm to stay forever in the land of one’s ancestral birth. Together these two women experienced a liberation through their refusal to stay happy in the hegemonic and systemic institutions of patriarchy, communal values, sexism, and colonization. Significantly, according to Adichie, to empower women to take the centre stage in the negotiations of their own liberations and freedom by speaking up of their experiences, rejecting all gender constructs that impinge on their human rights, not submitting to any form of abuse or violence, and taking actions where necessary to resist all systems of oppressions.

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