

Male Chauvinism as Revealed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

N. Raja Lakshmi¹ and Dr. M. Rajaram²

¹Full- Time Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English, M.V. Muthiah
Government Arts College for Women, Dindigul-624 001.

Email id: nrajlakshmi1106@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, PG & Research Department of English, M .V. Muthiah Government
Arts College for Women, Dindigul-624001 Email id: mrajarams@gmail.com

Abstract

African society is system of patriarchy because men advantaged from everything. Male aspects rule the conditions at house as well as at the other places. The men are also portrayed as active, heroic, and intellectual, while the women are introverted, and sensitive. A woman is expected to be conserved by a man, raised and supported by males in this patriarchal area. This is how the African society gave birth to male chauvinism. Male chauvinism makes women to live away or under from the power system for the fear of losing their authority. Chauvinistic ideals limit women's movement and stop them to control over their own possessions. As a result, women are weak to voice their opinions and select their choices. The present paper is an attempt to study the concept of male chauvinism that revolved in a patriarchal society through *Purple Hibiscus*. It will critically analyze many double-crossing practices followed by patriarchal society with respect to gender oppression.

Keywords: Oppression, Suppression, Male chauvinism, Feminism, etc.

Male Chauvinism as revealed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* examines the extent of women's struggles to overcome domination in a patriarchal society, the violation and the continuous subordination of women. Love, strife, conflict, persistent inequality and the war between men and women are the powerful themes revolved in the novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). Adichie, however, projects feminism in a optimistic way. Adichie makes the role models out of female protagonists like making Kambili as the protagonist of this novel. She also illustrates the women's fierced the struggles to free themselves from the hands of male chauvinism, ferocity and supremacy. Through her works, Adichie brings the women's independency to survive in the face of sexual assault, violence, ceaseless, senseless brutality and extreme starvation threats to their lives. Her theme

include the effect of war on everyday people, the ways that power can be claimed through understanding identity, maintaining a cultural identity as an immigrant in a new place, and the clash of traditional practice with modern ideas. It was very clear in the early life of Adichie that women and men were not treated the same way; that women were treated unfairly, just because they were women.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was long-listed for the Booker Prize and was winner of the Hurston/Wright Legacy award for debut fiction; shortlisted for the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and the Orange Prize 2004, and won the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction 2007 with her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. *Purple Hibiscus* is her debut novel. Adichie was born in Nigeria in 1977. She is from Abba, but was grown up in the university town of Nsukka, where she attended her primary and secondary schools. Some of her short fiction won the International PEN/David Wong award in 2003 and some has been published in journals.

Purple Hibiscus is a novel that expresses about Kambili, an adolescent girl who belongs to a Catholic family. Kambili Achike is not only the protagonist, but also the narrator who unfolds the story from her own perspective. Kambili was grown up by a malleable mother Mama Beatrice and authentic father, Eugene Achike, so, she resulted in socially unreasonably and amateurish quiet. Although she is exceedingly brilliant, she suffers with an inferiority and submissive complex character. Kambili Achike is persuaded by her family's false beliefs and values. Papa Eugene is a strongly influenced as a philanthropist and also abused each member of his family and they accept it in withdrawal that shows his male chauvinism and domination over them.

When Ifeoma, Kambili's Aunty accomplished the permission by convincing Eugene Achike to allow Kambili and Jaja to spend their time with aunt family living in Nsukka, where the two innocent experiences were felt- firstly a disparate environment that they never felt before and also eventually fall in affectionate with. Aunty Ifeoma is broad minded, unconventional and encourages freedom among their children. Unlike the Achike family, Aunty Ifoema makes a very simple, good-natured, protected atmosphere for her family members and treats them with equal love. The protagonist embraced from the independency given to their cousin by her auntyIfoema.

The visit to Nsukka for Kambili and Jaja comes to an edge and they came back home to their father's rules living in Nsukka. This is the point where they both exhibit the first form

of rebellion against dominance of their father. The act of disobedience is resulted with more violence and they are quickly expelled from the territory of the Papa Eugene. The visit once again to Nsukka evacuates their emotional and mental emancipation. The novel reaches a destiny when Beatrice Achike slowly poisons her husband and he dies. However, Jaja takes the crime in his hand to save his family members. Women's privileges and rights are prohibited by the patriarchal society. It is a system of male-rule which put women under-privileged situation due to its maltreatment, dominance, dictatorship and oppression. The unbalanced power relations between men and women have influenced the control of male status and power over women. Johnstone explains that the struggles over control and power are often struggles over whose words get used and whose do not and also against who get to talk and who does not.

Kate Millett in one of her writings *Sexual Politics* argues that all aspects in society are inveigled by male oppression, injustice, patriarchy and abusiveness. Millett sees domination of male act with regard to the female force, direct pressure, in domestic and civil life to confine women, or subaltern the female to the male. There are many feminist writers who depicts the domination, patriarchy, and oppression through their works to enhance the feminist movements, a rejection of servility for women's self-realization and self-exploration.

Papa Eugene Achike is the symbol of male chauvinism whose only existence lights off the pyre off the risk which makes the female under tension, fear, so the immediate family members are sentenced to silence. Since, Kambili in earlier, sounds lachrymal: "I felt suffocated"(7) and after some time he bursts out, bemused: "Fear, I was familiar with fear, yet each time I felt it, it was never the same as the other times, as though it came in different flavors and colors" (10). The each member of Achike family do not have mind of their own, instead they live according to Eugene's rules, orders and regulations and he suppresses them under the shadow of Papa Eugene until the point that the oppression itself perceive 'normal', 'general', and 'common' for them. In this novel, Adichie explores via the character of Mama Beatrice, she examines that chauvinism brings its power from the submissive of its victims who accept their picture and get submerged by the feel of helplessness. Mama Beatrice herself tolerated Papa Eugene's patriarchy, even when her life was threatened to the edge of losing her pregnancy.

Thus, Adichie reveals the character of Beatrice as muted and quiescent at the commencement of the book but she became riotous towards the end of the book to show that she can expose and react when things starting to fall apart. Adichie's works thus hit at the sparkling inequalities so as to bring the required change to bring balance among husbands and wives. Through the character of Beatrice, Adichie's shows how wives are dominated by their husbands and also by her selves. Beatrice is the type of wife that African calls as "simple-natured" woman because she bows to her husband all the time. She lives in the world that is controlled by her husband and she does not have any idea of her own. One of the evidences that validates the above statement is when the family members are ordered to meet the Father Benedict after a Sunday Mass, Beatrice happens to feel disgust and nausea which she tells her husband reluctantly that she wants to take rest in the car, instead of joining her family members to see Father Benedict. But Eugene sees this action as a threat to his power, seeing the reaction of her husband's face after she tells him that she wants to wait in the car, she changes her mind and decides to follow him bearing the pain quietly. Even though she follows her husband's regulations, yet she is mercilessly beaten at home for that former act of waiting in the car and suffers a miscarriage.

Beatrice is not the only abused character in the Achike family, the protagonist Kambili and brother Jaja suppressed physically by their Papa and breathing in danger due to his abusive attacks. Eugene throws the missal at Jaja for not joining in the Sunday mass hosted by Father Benedict. Although Eugene shows his care, love and completes their requirements, the abusive maltreatment that he gave for his family members far surpasses the love that he claims to have for them. When Eugene finds that Kambili and Jaja stayed at the same house with his own hated, sinful father Papa Nnukwu during their visit to Auntie Ifeoma's house, he boils water in a kettle to scald their children's feet with it because from Eugene's view, his father is one of the evil character since he has different ideas and beliefs. The other validate abusive attack was, when the protagonist Kambili brings the picture of her grandpa to their home in Nsukka and also secures it from the devastation of his father's brutality. Papa Achike rudely kicks her daughter Kambili, and

The kicking increased in tempo...The stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal buckle on his slippers landed on open skin by my side, my back, my legs.

Kicking, kicking, kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy. More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet” (210-211).

Kambili remains paralyzed for several days and also ailed in the hospital as a result of the above said cruel-brutal attack from Eugene Achike. This proves that no heathen objects should be alive in his own house, even though his own father’s picture before him that the chauvinism has concealed his eyes and love. After the brutal act, Kambili has dissatisfied with her father’s character and she resent her mother for not protecting her from the severe attacks and also not making any protests and revolts against him.

Aunty Ifeoma is a real- super woman, compared to Mama Beatrice, who is not afraid of anybody and will speak up when things surrounding her, are going wrong which exposes her as different type of woman. Ifeoma is strong, hardworking, assertive, economically, and emotionally independent. After the death of her husband, their family members tried to persuade and put her under pressure for different reasons, but she does not give them to succeed her in anyway. Ifeoma declined to succumb to male threats and intimidations from her in-laws. She is evenstrong enough to say Papa Achike the true word about his domination towards their family members and even over their own father. So, she takes the role of caring for his father by taking him to her house in Enugu even though she has no resources. She also stands against patriarchy, suppression and oppression when everyone is silent. Through her character, Adichie revealed that the male chauvinism must constantly challenge and beat their chauvinist. In this novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, Mama Beatrice forms a good relationship with her sister-in law Ifeoma and Ifeoma tries to bring out her from the poisonous web of disastrous marriage with Papa Eugene, so that Mama Beatrice would become independent and drop out from chauvinism.

This study further argues that Nigerian women are oppressed, exploited and degraded by a mix of traditional cultures and the modern forms of patriarchy. Violence against women in *Purple Hibiscus* is one of the primary forms of oppression, suppression, suffocation, desire for leader, in-law problems; polygamy, traditions, illiteracy, complacency and religious intolerance are isolated as core challenges that still trouble and strain the Nigerian women. Adichie challenges women to have their loud and powerful voice so as to confront their chauvinists. Silence in *Purple Hibiscus*, is to blame for the suffering that

Beatrice and her children Kambili, Jaja go throughout the novel. In the novels of Adichie, she concluded that women should shun submissiveness in the face of oppression so that their condition may be redeemed.

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