

## Canons of Satire in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus: A Focus on Domestic Violence and Religious Fanaticism

Agbonifo Rosemary<sup>1</sup> | Oboli Blessing Ph. D<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Directorate of General Studies, Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro

<sup>2</sup>Directorate of General Studies, Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro

Received 26-04-2024

Revised 27-04-2024

Accepted 13-05-2024

Published 14-05-2024



Copyright: ©2024 The Authors. Published by Publisher. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

### Abstract:

This paper x-rays the satirical punches of Adichie on Nigeria's military dictatorships and corrupt civilian governments since she gained political independence sixty-three years ago. It concludes that Adichie is a committed writer and **Purple Hibiscus**, a powerful satire that documents fictionally some of the notable happenings of Nigeria's military era and a leading light against corruption and bad leadership. It is a praise-worthy contribution to the repertoire of Nigerian fictional works that has its parallel in highly ennobled works like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

**Keywords:** Satire, political independence, domestic violence, religious fanaticism

### Introduction:

Literature plays a very significant role in the development and sustenance of a society. This fact is acknowledged as essentially true by Rene Welleck (1973:95), when he says that:

The relation between literature and society is usually discussed by starting with the phrase derived from De Bonald, that literature is an expression of society. Za-ayeme Agye in "Toward a people's literature of socio-political Awareness". (1986:129), alludes to this when he writes:

Ngugi clearly states the function of literature as follows "literature as the product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images, the tensions and the conflict at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming. It is a reflection on the aesthetic and

imaginative planes of a community's wrestling with its local environment to produce the basic means of life"

The above statement apparently portrays literature as the embodiment of societal happenings. Over the years, literature has gained a notoriety of vacillation appearing to perform diverse roles-alongside Africa's political, social and economic history.

In Africa, literature is a committed form of Art since it is meant to perform some specific functions. Africa writers took up writing as a weapon of words to combat certain issues or vices in their various societies right from pre-colonial through Colonial and post colonial times. Their purpose was to draw world attention to their plight as well

as help bring about reformation in their societies. Thus, right from the pre-colonial to our present day, literature has acted as a handy instrument which has been used to identify, expose, ridicule and offer corrective measures to the ills in the society in public and private institutions. For instance, in the pre-colonial days, stories, songs, folktales, proverbs etc were used to ridicule ills in the society with utmost aim of correcting them. With colonialism and the subsequent introduction of formal education, Africa writers used literature (drama, prose or poetry) to expose and ridicule the evils of colonialism and colonial administration.

Apparently, the utilitarian function of Africa literature is still on-going even after 50 years of post colonialism.

However, after independence, writers turned their literary focus to the contemporary short-comings in the activities of African leaders. During the struggle for independence, the feeling among Africans was that a brighter future awaits them. But with independence, Africans saw with dismay that independence had not brought the much expected economic, social and psychological succor because of the political class.

African writers also wrote in response to the problems and adverse conditions resulting from colonialism. Pioneer Africa writers reacted to European literature by Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene and Joyce Cary who gave prejudiced versions of African societies. These writers felt challenged to put matters in the correct perspective. Chinua Achebe for instance, wrote **Things fall Apart** in response to Joyce Cary's **Mr. Johnson** lopsided projection of Africa and to a lesser extent Joseph Conrad's in **The Heart of Darkness**. Thus these early African writers concerned themselves with righting the wrongs occasioned by colonialism in Africa. They spoke against European colonialism in general, highlighted Africa culture and tried to preserve the African heritage through the written mode.

Early colonial African writers included Leopold Sedar Senghor, camara Laye, Amos Tutuola, and Chinua Achebe, D.O. Fagunwa, Ferdinand Oyono

and Mongo Beti. The list of writers reflects notable writers who wrote within that era or who with the aid aptly mirrored the era in which they lived in with the aid of their literary works. Although these writers benefited from the African and European heritage, they mainly sought to use their writing to highlight the evils of colonialism in Africa with the task of reversing the negative depictions of the African people and activities in texts authored by white colonial writers.

Thus pioneer African literary writers in the colonial and post colonial era felt compelled to put matters in their correct and proper perspectives to guide future generations of Africans and to advocate independence or self rule for African and Africans. Writers as moral crusaders are therefore crying out against the social injustice, political crisis, woman subjugation, religious hypocrisy, and moral bankruptcy of the post-independent period. There has also been a noticeable shift from the thematic pre-occupation of nationalism to a more contemporary one after independence. Dr. Akomaye Oko in "Toward a sociology of the Nigeria play Wright: The playwright as an intellectual in society" (1986:58-59) states the reasons for the shift when he writes:

**Achebe states clearly, the role of the creative writers: "It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames". (59)**

The implication of the above statement is that a writer who is socially uncommitted has abdicated his responsibility as a writer. This accounts for the reasons why African writers of later descent moves away from appraisal of the nationalist to a vehement critiquing of the entrenched evils of contemporary African society. Literature thus becomes a tool of social control and reformation. J.N. Ogu in "Modern African Literature: A Literature Echo of cultural, political Reality". (1986:120) buttresses the vital important of protest literature. According to him:

**A point made by Becker in his study: As every society needs a literature of support to help it identify itself as a coherent culture, so does every society need a prophetic literature to rage against its injustices and its failures to live up to the ideals it proclaims to the world. (120)**

### **The Use of Satire in African Literature:**

The roots of the protests and attacks are deeply embedded in neo-colonialism -a situation where a native class of African bourgeoisie serve as watch dog for foreign imperialist to exploit the entire continent while majority of his country men expire as a result of hunger, disease and poverty imposed on Africa by her own sons, the new rulers. The major pre-occupation of African writers, at this time is the portrayal of injustices, wide-spread of social evil and the tension and the demand for accountability from the new rulers. This was the period of satire.

It was during this period that some African satirists amongst whom are Wole Soyinka, Ayei Kwei Armah, Kobina Sekyi, chinua Achebe, Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare, Festus Iyayi, Sam Ukala, Alex Roy Omoni, T.M. Aluko came up with their different write ups (satirical works) to attack, ridicule, to scorn and expose the corrupt government of the African society. They wrote on the hypocrites and bad leaderships; of the dupucity of religious sects in our society of bribe ring and the general ills which is the order of the day in contemporary African society. Their primary aim was to correct these ills since the main purpose of satire is to attack, criticize and ridicule with the aim to correct and reform man and society.

Satire as a sub-genre, became a "forceful organ" and an instrument to mirror and antagonize the existing social, political and economic ills of the newly independent African states for defaulting in living up to its proclaimed objectives.

Satire according to Ngugi in his essay (1969:56), "Takes for its province, a whole society and for its purpose, criticism". Unarguably a satirist needs to set himself certain standards in order to effectively criticize society when and where it jellisons societal etiquettes. He invites the general public to

assume his standards and share the moral indignation which cajoles him to pour derision and ridicule on the dark sides of the society. His major aim is to correct the evils of the society. He does this correction through painful, sometimes malicious laughter.

For Soyinka, this means scrutinizing contemporary Africa and Nigeria in particular. Soyinka's view of the role of satire and the satirist raises one question: What has satire got to do with Nigeria?.

Nigeria has become an object of contempt and ridicule since her emergence as an independent polity, two score and five years ago.

Why? She has been bedeviled by some evils. These evils, have not only crippled her political, social and moral decadence. Prevalent since her independence are: Mass corruption, tyranny, class consciousness, embezzlement of public funds, prostitution, religious hypocrisy, women subjugation and hopelessness of the down trodden masses.

Corruption is deeply entrenched in the African society today. Collins Legume (1975:743) acknowledges this fact and thus says that the Adjutant General of the Army, Brigadier Emmanuel Abisoye, was quoted as saying that "all Nigerians are corrupt".

African leaders are very active when it comes to acquiring expensive cars, houses, both in and outside their countries. They direct public funds entrusted to them to their private bank accounts in foreign banks while the masses languish on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of vast ocean of material prosperity: Ise-Oluwa Ige of vanguard (2005:1) reports the extent to which corruption has taken its root in Nigeria.

According to him, "14 state governors in the six geopolitical zones in the country were being probed over alleged illegal operation of foreign accounts while holding public office".

Tyranny is another evil that has bedeviled the African society. This is essentially the case during the military regimes. The military rulers are both dictators and tyrants. Again, Collins Legume

(1975:746) highlights one example of dictatorial ruler ship when he reports that "Mike Omoleye, news editor of the Daily sketch (owned by western state) was arrested in August for publishing a letter unflattering to the Air force.

Poverty has now become normal rather than an anomaly in African society. For instance, Nigeria is one of the highest exporters of crude oil in Africa, yet her citizens are crippled by the manacles of poverty imposed on them by their inhuman, callous and exploitative rulers. The article "Everyone Needs A Home" (2005:4), describes the effects of the nefarious and obnoxious acts of Nigerian rulers when it reports that "there are Nigerian cities where more than 20 percent of the population live in slums and squatter settlement". What a noxious sight!

Religious hypocrisy is another evil or dark side of Africa societies that is highly criticized. The issues of religion have not only become a lucrative business, but have also become a medium of exploitation and deception in Africa. Pastors in Africa now drive expensive jeeps with bloated bellies whereas the flocks which are the source of their wealth, sigh in starvation. These clergies do not only exploit their members, but also perpetuate all sorts of heinous crimes, which they condemn in their predatory pulpits. This reveals the hypocrisy and moral decadence of the religious sector. These aberrations of the Africa society infuriate the African literary writers and as such they try to draw attention to them.

Women subjugation is another evil or dark side of the African societies that is highly criticized by writers. Traditionally, in early literary works in Africa, women were portrayed in a very bad image. They were seen as helpless creatures who could only be house wives, prostitutes, punching bags, baby making machines, They were portrayed as people who did not have a say in the general affairs of everyday life. They did not even have a say in matters concerning their lives. They were prosecuted as obedient slaves who said yes to everything their husbands said even when it was not in their favor.

However, female literary writers like flora Nwapa decided to change this. A more realistic image of the woman was brought out. The African woman was portrayed in a different light, she was brought from the back to the center stage. The Africa woman was made an equal with the male characters and she was given equal rights domestically, socially, economically and even to some extent politically. The African woman was made to stand out; she was made to participate in the social and economic aspects of the community which was not so before. It is in this light that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Asare Konadu portray their female characters.

Satire is therefore the medium through which African writers attack and intensely criticize morally degenerating African societies. Awodiya P. Muyiwa, in his essay, "Femi Osofisan's theatre" (1988:227) echoes femi Osofisan's annoyance that:

**Our government in Nigeria so far since independence have acted as traitors to our people. It is therefore the task of the artist to arouse the people from, not joining the general despair. The playwright voices the light by which the statement wisely guide their steps.**

Osofisan in the quotation above acknowledges that Nigeria as a country in Africa has failed to live up to it proclaimed objectives. It therefore, behooves writers to bring about social reformation. Like Femi Osofisan, Wole Soyinka believes that his country, Nigeria, needs correction hence he agonizes with rage like a prophet and seer against the Nigerian society that will not be honest to itself. This, these writers achieved through satire.

The above reasons are responsible for the choice of the particular writers selected 'for his study who have published their works in the 21st century with the aim of using literature which mirrors the society as a medium for condemning certain issues or vices of the African society ranging from corruption, tyranny, poverty, religious hypocrisy, oppression, women subjugation and inhuman treatments through satire.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's **Purple Hibiscus** is a moving sad story which the author tells through

the heroine, fifteen year old Kambili, who belongs to a family of four. The family of four lives luxuriously because their father is a wealthy businessman who has many factories and also publishes **The Standard Newspaper** that serves as the voice of the people against the corrupt military government in the country. Kambili and her older brother Jaja are well behaved children, and their caring mother, Beatrice speaks of their eating habit thus, "The way a bird eats, in small amounts" (20). Yet they are all victims of papa's domestic violence.

Adichie presents Eugene Achike as a generous and well respected man with the title "Omelora" meaning "The one who does for the community", but a fanatic, too religious and repressive at home. He displays his religious fanaticism by regularly and viciously beating his children and wife for mild acts, which he considers not good for their Christian life. The children are exposed to a different way of life when they left Enugu to visit Auntie Ifeoma (their father's sister) and her children in Nsukka. She is a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, a widow with three children who lives in the staff quarters on campus. Though, Auntie Ifeoma cannot afford a luxurious family lifestyle, she brings up her children without terrorizing them. Kambili's and Jaja's encounter with this loving family brings to the open family secrets they once held sacred. They also learn how to express themselves more freely and become hopeful of a better and happier future. Consequently, they consider their father's brutality as abnormal. Things started to fall apart at home and papa suddenly died of food poisoning. Jaja claims responsibility for the crime and the policemen took him away for prosecution, but he (Jaja) was later released following a relentless agitation for his freedom by pro-democracy and Human Rights Activists.

Adichie in this text mentions some brutal activities of the Military Junta that was in power as at that time, immediately the soldiers overthrew the politicians, anarchy is let loosed on the land: helpless unarmed men and market women are being molested for no just cause (27-28), some drug pushers are publicly executed even as rumours are swirling that the head of the new Junta

and his wife are shielding a certain drug pusher who is being alleged of involvement in the illicit business on their behalf (38). For daring to poke into this sensitive matter, Ade Coker, editor of **The Standard Newspaper** is killed through a letter bomb (202). All these are some of the activities of the military junta that are mentioned by Ngozi Adichie in her **Purple Hibiscus**.

According to the **chambers 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary**, "satire is a literary composition, originally in verse, which holds follies and vices for criticism, ridicule and scorn".

**Encyclopedia Britannica volume 10** (1995:467) shares similar sentiment when it defines satire as:

**an artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony or other method sometimes, with an intent to bring about improvement.**

In Joseph Obaro Ikupa's, **A simple Approach to literature** (2006:21-22), satire is defined as any literary work that exposes someone or a society to ridicule and brings it under attack. According to him, satirical works are usually written with a view to teaching a moral lesson, but this teaching is done through ridicule, criticism and lampoon. He also defines it as a play, novel or poem which ridicules the evils any kind of stupidity or foolish act of a person, an institution society or a group, with the intention to attack the follies or the ills through the use of humor and ridicules so as to correct them.

From all the definitions given above, the intent of satire is not only to criticize but also to bring about improvement or correct the situation. On this note, we can attempt to define satire as follows:

Satire can be defined as a poem, a play or prose work written with the intention of exposing or ridiculing certain prevailing vices, crimes and follies of society or an individual, an ironical work in which the ills of the society or of an individual are castigated with the objective of introducing reforms.

Satire can also be defined as any artistic piece (literary as well as drawing, painting and even music) that employs humor, parody, invectives, irony and sarcasm in ridiculing the vices and follies of an individual, a group, a society and even humanity with the intent of bringing about improvement.

### **Use of Satire in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus:**

Adichie's first novel **Purple Hibiscus** (2003), is a cleverly written satire of the Nigerian social, religious and political concerns in the Eastern Nigerian environment, a country that graduates from an obnoxiously corrupt civilian administration to the rule of a monstrous military tyrant, who came with fake innocence and personal sincerity.

Throughout this novel, Adichie was able to explore the ills inherent in the society, ranging from corruption in government and public offices, political oppression, women subjugation, poverty and extreme economic disparity, national brain drain, love and celibacy, religious fanaticism and intolerance, turmoil, clash of cultures, hope, freedom, unemployment, wickedness, brutality and death by poisoning that engulfs the well-to-do Igbo family of the fifteen-year old protagonist, Kambili Achike amongst others.

Adichie's **Purple Hibiscus** is set against the backdrop of political unrest in Nigeria and the story is told in the first person narrative, by fifteen year old Kambili who lives at home with her powerful and tyrannical father, her emotional mother and her inconveniently rebellious brother. Adichie in the novel presents certain aspects of her background, hometown and her Catholicism. The story is an evocative and moving portrayal of a childhood in a fanatically religious household ruled by a charismatic violent catholic patriarch. The story captures with all seriousness the prevailing conditions in contemporary Nigerian society, conditions which are altogether too tragic and weighty for the masses and concerns which committed writers cannot afford to relegate to the background.

The novel highlights the brutality of a rigid, zealous father and the evils of a dictatorial military Junta which is set in two South-Eastern Nigerian States, Enugu and Anambra. The novel exposes how the opportunized elite are exploiting the masses and getting rich at the expense of the poor resulting therefore in total despair, frustration and disillusionment. The novel should therefore be seen simply as a representation of political corruption, women subjugation, extreme economic disparity, and poverty, religious hypocrisy and wickedness in nascent independent African states.

It is these social ills that Adichie sets out to expose and ridicule. Her satirical searchlight first beams on Eugene Achike, Kambili's father. Adichie describes Eugene Achike as a wealthy businessman, who has many factories and also owns **the Standard Newspapers** which serve the voice of the people against the corrupt military government in the country, and he is well respected by his community and is very generous to outsiders, with the title Omelora, the one who does for the community (55-56).

**As we drove past, people waved and called papa's title Omelora, (55).**

**Papa's title was Omelora, after all the one who does for the community, (56).**

The above quotations from the novel show how generous Eugene Achike was to the outside world, to the extent of having a title. However, at home he displays his religious fanaticism by regularly and viciously beating his children and wife for mild acts, which he considers not good for their Christian life.

Things start to go awry with Kambili when her father takes his "fanatic brand of Catholicism" too far. The opening sentence of the novel connotes rebellion for evident change; due to religious fanaticism;

Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja did not go to communion and papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etageres.

Kambili's brother, Jaja is mercilessly beaten for missing or not receiving the Holy Communion which according to Jaja gives him bad breath.

**"The wafer gives me bad breath"... "And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me" (6)**

Eugene Achike who always sat in the front pew for mass, at the end beside the middle aisle, with Mama, Jaja and Kambili sitting next to him, who was always the first to receive communion (4), believed that not receiving the communion means death:

"You cannot stop receiving the body of our lord, It is death, you know that" (6)

Jaja who was already tired of these religious fanaticisms was ready to die:

"Then I will die, fear had darkened Jaja's eyes to the colour of coal tar, but he looked papa in the face now. Then I will die, papa". (6-7)

This attitude of Jaja made Eugene to mercilessly fling the missal at him, (7). To Papa, this is the height of abomination. He grabs the missal and flings it at Jaja, sending Kambili's mother's figurines of ballet dancers, which had been perching on the shelf, crashing down, and breaking into many pieces,

Adichie in this novel was able to explore the pains caused by religious fanaticism in the society and in Africa in general, through Eugene Achike's attitude toward his immediate family.

Eugene Achike believes that refusal to bid the Reverend Father Benedict goodbye after mass is a grave sin. Even when his wife was feeling sick, he still forced her out of the car to go and visit Father Benedict:

We always dropped in to visit Father Benedict after mass, "Let me stay in the car and wait, biko" mama said, leaning against the Mercedes. I feel vomit in my throat, (29- 30).

Eugene Achike is apparently not in the least concerned about what his wife has been enduring. instead he is more concerned about the need for Mama to seek God's forgiveness for having committed a grave "sin" (demurring to go and bid Father Benedict goodbye after mass, that is) for that, they are obliged to recite the novena for sixteen odd times after mass.

Later, at dinner, Papa said we would recite sixteen different novenas, for Mama's forgiveness and on Sunday, the First Sunday of trinity, we stayed back after mass and started the novenas. Father Benedict sprinkled us with holy water, some of the holy water landed on my lips, and I tasted the stale saltiness of it as we prayed. If papa felt Jaja or me beginning to drift off at the thirteenth recitation of the plea to St. Jude, he suggested we start all over. We had to get it right. I did not think. I did not even think to think, what Mama needed to be forgiven for. (35-36).

The above passage is a reflection of religious intolerance which Adichie uses to satirize the religious hypocrisy in our society of today. The religious settings and belief of the Africans, particularly in Nigeria, is that it is compulsory and important for sinners to confess their sins every time before taking the communion, regardless of their situation; this is mostly seen in the Catholic Church.

For refusing to convert to Catholicism, Eugene Achike repudiated his own father, Papa Nnukwu and turned his grand children against him, allowing them only fifteen minutes a year with him at Christmas. They were never allowed to take or eat anything in Papa Nnukwu's house

Kambili and Jaja, you will go this afternoon to your grandfather's house and greet him. Kelvin will take you, remember don't touch any food, and don't drink anything. And as usual, you will stay not longer than fifteen minutes.

This he did because Eugene believed that he had nothing to do with his pagan and heathen father who had bluntly refused to convert to Catholicism. Eugene Achike described hell, as if God die not know that the flames were eternal and raging and fierce. Even during prayers their maje prayer points were on religion. For example during one of the prayer sections;

Mama started with a prayer for peace and for the rulers of our country. Jaja prayed for priests and for the religions, I prayed for the Pope, finally, for twenty minutes, Papa prayed for our protection from ungodly people and forces, for

Nigeria and the Godless men ruling it, and for us to continue to grow in righteousness. Finally, he prayed for the conversion of our Papa-Nnukwu, so that Papa-Nnukwu would be saved from hell. (60 61).

Eugene had to bar Papa Nnukwu from coming to his house, he never greeted him, but he sends slim wads of naira through Kevin or through one of their umunna members, shiner wads than he gave Kevin as a Christmas bonus (61). Due to his religious belief, he never had anything to do with his father, till Papa Nnukwu's death, all he could say is,

Did you call a priest to give him extreme unction? (186)

According to him, he would not participate in a pagan funeral, "but we can discuss with the Parish Priest and arrange a catholic funeral" (186).

Ngozi Adichie, apart from the religious fanaticism, also satirizes the exploitation of the teenage mind and domestic violence in the novel. Adichie presents Eugene Achike as a man well respected by his community and very generous to outsiders, yet, he is a despot and a tyrant at home. What he reflects outside, is the opposite of what he exhibits at home. His son, Jaja daughter Kambili and the wife Beatrice lived in perpetual fear and silence. Eugene Achikes family members' lives are reduced to facts and figures subjecting them to mental torture.

I stayed in bed and did not have dinner with the family. I developed a cough and my cheeks burned inside my head, thousands of monsters played a painful game of catch, but instead of a ball, it was a brown leather brund missal that they threw to each other (14).

In the novel, Adichie portrays the domineering nature of men in Eugene, where a man takes all the decisions in the home without seeking the wife's opinion. This was what led to the major domestic violence in the home, because, Beatrice was silent all the time, all through the novel which leads to the pains and frustrations which the entire household went through. Silence is device used in the novel. Silence in Eugene's home is so magnified to the extent that it could be heard. This does not only affect Kambili's mother, it also constricts the

function of Kambili tongue that even when she tries to express herself it usually terminates, with a stutter making he classmates to observe her familiarity laced with contempt. Because of Kambili's inability to make her tongue function in school, she is labeled "Background Snoh" (52). To make matter worse, when school closes she dashes off to her father's waiting car without exchanging pleasantries with her classmates before she is driven home. Her classmates see this aristocratic arrogance, they are not aware that Kamibili's life is dictated and regulated by schedule scrolled in her heart (51).

Ezinne, one of Kambili's classmates, would ask:

Why do you always run anyway? Maybe you should stop running off like that and walk with us to the gate.

Due to Eugene's violent treatment, Kambili and Jaja's home becomes a prison for them as the slip down the academic ladder. For instance, when Kambili comes second position in her clas rather than encourage her to put more effort into her academic carrier, Eugene petulantly asks he a mechanical question saying:

How many heads does she have gbo?

That is the girl who beats Kambili to the second position. He did not stop there, he also:

... Pulled a small mirror. The size of a powder compact from his pocket.

He gives it to Kambili in order to ascertain the number of heads she has.

Look in the mirror. I took the mirror, peered at it. "How many heads do you have gbo?(46)

The kind of educational system Eugene wants for his children is seen to be dehumanizing as he so mechanical in all spheres of life that he condemns and discourages all forms of leisure Kambili therefore devices a new method of studying for fear of being tortured by her father.

It was like balancing a sack of gravel on my head everyday at school and not being allowed 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... Lump like poor made fufu formed in my throat and stayed there until our exercise books came back. (52)

Eugene's educational standards are so faulty that Kambili has no other choice than to turn entire academic exercise to cramming and calculation. Eugene's educational standard stresses the training of the intellect without any complementary ties with the emotion and imaginations. To him, only the human reason is important. The items in Eugene's agenda are strict and tight this makes him lack interest in ideas except the idea of being the perfect definitions of a self made man and this is what he uses to intimidate his family.

"I didn't have a father who sent me to the best schools". (47).

Eugene Achike's brutality and domestic violence knew no bound when he stumbles on his two children fondling the unfinished portrait of his heathen father which Amaka had given Kambili, he explodes,

"Have you all converted to heathen ways" he thunders, tearing the heathen materials into piece He kicks his daughter as she sinks to the floor, and lay on the pieces of paper.

"Godlessness, Heathen Worship, Hellfire. The kicking increased in tempo, and I thought of Amaka's music, her culturally conscious music that sometimes started off with a calm saxophone and then whirled into lusty singing. I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of the paintings: they were soft, feathery. They still had the metallic smell of Amaka's paint palette. The stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal landed on open skin, on my side, my back, my legs! Kicking! Kicking! Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy. (206).

In the passage above, Adichie, satirizes the wickedness of man in the African society, despite his religions background. In Africa, especially Nigeria, there are religious hypocrites like Eugene

Achike, who are generous both in the church and to the generality, but they use their positions oppress their innocent wives and children at home. Eugene who wanted perfection from family was so brutal that he poured hot water on Kambili's feet for not telling him that Papa Nnukwu, her grandfather was coming to Nsukka, the man he always referred to as a heathen and a pagan

"You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk into it. "He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet slowly. 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".

According to Eugene Achike, "that is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin. You burn your feet", he said. (192), Eugene Achike's domestic violence was also inflicted on Jaja at the age of ten for missing two questions on his catechism test 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". (144)

He avoided flogging Jaja's right hand because it is the hand he writes with. Adichie in this novel portrays Eugene Achike as a loving, but a brutal and violent father who does take the family's pains for granted.

Due to Eugene Achike's ceaseless brutality, Beatrice, Kambili's mother had countless miscarriages.

"The red of fresh blood. The blood was watery, flowing from Mama, flowing from my eyes". (30 and 35).

Despite this experience, Eugene Achike remains rigid and brutal with his family. Eugene's brutal violence, made his immediate family to shed endless tears, despite their luxurious ways of living. But they find peace and shelter in Auntie Ifeoma's place at Enugu. After Eugene's harsh treatment to his wife that led to miscarriage, she was able to find

peace, love and care at Auntie Ifeoma's place. Thus she explains:

"The doctor told me to rest, but I took Eugene's money and asked Kevin to take me to the park. I hired a taxi and came here".

This was the incident that happened immediately she lost her six weeks pregnancy due to Eugene Achike's merciless beating.

You know that small table where we keep the family Bible nne? Your father broke it on my belly". She sounded as if she were talking about someone else, as if the table were not made of sturdy wood. "My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes".... "I was six weeks gone" (243).

Adichie's adept exploitation of the teenage mind throughout the narration is enchanting. The choice of the teenage, inexperienced, narrator as the story proves does not only establish the author's conscious intelligence, it also convinces the critical mind of both her imaginative prowess and her tenderness and sensitivity. Perhaps, Adichie partly recollects her childhood perceptions. Throughout the novel, the reader could smell Kambili's sympathies. Kambili says her mother was slung over her father's shoulder like the jute sacks of rice his factory workers bought in bulk at the seme border (33) and that her father was like a Fulani normad... as he inflicts belt on her, her mother and Jaja (102).

The above passages, is a reflection of Adichie's exploitation of the teenage mind and the domestic violence inflicted on the family by Eugene Achike. Adichie's **Purple Hibiscus**, also denounces the treatment of women as second class citizens, women subjugation and discrimination against womanhood. Adichie's satire on women subjugation is from the perspective of Beatrice, Kambili's mother and Auntie Ifeoma and Kambili. She is mother to Kambili and Jaja, she is a dutiful wife who loves her husband and everything her husband loves a virtuous and humble woman who does not take any decision for the family. It is only he husband that dictates. Hers is only to be seen and not to be heard. Mrs. Achike hardly talks and when

she does it is in monosyllables. Paulina Ada Uwekweh (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 female structure. (75)

Mrs. Achike in the moving story is a character representing the degradation and family violence meted out to women by men. Life for Mrs. Achike runs like a nightmare. Eugene Achike reduces his family to the size of midgets as a result of his over zealotry and clipped religious tones. Such is the fear they have for him that they (wife and children) are reduced to stuttering whenever they are in his presence. Mrs. Achike who has no say in the home is severely beaten by her husband whenever she tries to disagree with him on any matter, thereby leading to several miscarriages: (29, 30, 35 and 243), In one of such occasions, Kambili tells the reader:

Mama was slung over his shoulder like the jute of rice his factory workers brought in bulk at the Seme border (33).

This is after he had beaten her to a state of near unconsciousness and now takes her to the hospital for medical attention. Again Kambili describes her father as:

Fulani normad... as he swung his belt at mama, Jaja and me muttering that the devil would not win (102).

Eugene resorts to physical violence and dehumanization as his way of correcting his family both socially and religiously. He uses whips on them. Whips are supposed to be for animals and not humans. Mrs. Achike and her children were reduced to nothing as her husband has no qualms. inducing physical pains and abuses on them. In an attempt to be free from the bondage, Mis Achike eventually kills her husband installmentally through a lethal poison introduced into his tea. In her confession, she says,

I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor (283).

This Mrs. Achike did, in order to be set free from the hands of a tyrant. Though, she pretended not to have a hand in his death initially thus, she calls Kambili on phone saying:

Kambili, it is your father. They called me from the factory. They called me from the factory, they found him lying dead on his desk. (280).

By this sudden twist of event, Adichie is able to explore the novel as that of a girl and a woman who gets the opportunity to step away from a world in which their lives are subjected to the violent mood and oppressive swings of a father and husband. Both mother and daughter now forces a new world for themselves in which they can start laughing without having their father and husband's opinions pervading and influencing their every move. Auntie Ifeoma on the other hand, Eugene's younger sister, opposed the oppressive and domineering nature of men in the novel. She is able to speak up against Eugene's authoritarian attitude. She tells him the truth and speaks her mind on any issue irrespective of his wealth and sex. Even after her husband's death when her husband's kindred were trying to accuse her of killing her husband, she stood her ground.

### Works Cited

1. Achebe Chinua: Things Fall Apart. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984.
2. Adichie Chimamanda Ngozi: Purple Hibiscus. Lagos: Farafina, , 2006
3. Agye Za-ayeme: Toward a peoples Literature and Society selected Essays on African Literature, (ed) by Emenyoun Ernest, Oguta: Zim Pan-African Publisher 1986.
4. Awodiya P. Muiyiwai: "Femi Osofisan's Theater" Perspective on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the present. Volume II. (ed) Ogunbiyi Yemi, Lagos: Guardian Books Nigeria Limited, 1988.
5. Chambers Twenty-first Century English Dictionary Fifth Edition, London: Chambers, 2005.
6. Encyclopedia Britannica Revised 16th Edition, Vol. 6, 10 and 23, Chicago 1980
7. Ikupa, J.O. A Simple Approach to Literature Warri: Kuba Publishers, 2006.
8. Festus Iyayi: Violence. Longman Group Limited, 2001.
9. Legume Colin (ed): African Contemporary Record, New York: Rex Collings Limited, 1975.
10. McArthur, Tom (ed): The Oxford Companion to English Language, London: Oxford University Press, 1996.
11. Ogu J.N.: Modern African Literature: A Literary Echo of Cultural, Political Reality: Literature and Society Selected Essays on African Literature, edited by Emenyoun Ernest Oguta: Zim Pan-African Publisher, 1986.
12. Oko, Akomaye: Toward a sociology of the Nigerian Playwrite: The Playwright as an intellectual in Society Literature and Society Selected.
13. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 7<sup>th</sup> Edition: International Student's Edition; First Impression Printed in India by the Oxford University Press, 2006.
14. Sam Ukala: Skeletons: A Collection of Stories Winners ANA prose 2000. Justice Jeco Printers and Publishers Limited, 2005.
15. Welleck Rene and Austen Waren: Theory of Literature, U.S.A Penguin Books 1985.
16. Wiener P. Philip (ed): Dictionary of the History of Ideas Vol. 4, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973