

Post colonial perspective through Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus

N. Subramaniyan¹, Dr. S. Suganya^{1*}

Abstract

Post – colonial Literature deals with the issues faced by the people after independence. The writers of this genre focused the attention towards the problem of an individual and the society. Major works from the post-colonial writers portrays the sufferings of repressed, alienated, identity crisis etc. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian writer through her novel PURPLE HIBISCUS explores the concept of an ideal woman irrespective of the nation. Picking up her non – linear writing style, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, portrays clearly the challenges and the tendency of men to dehumanise women. The objective of this paper is to address the issue of female subjugation in the selected novel and how the characters subject to a series of humiliation that leads to a radical approach to gain their freedom.

Keywords

Male domination, Freedom, Post – colonialism, Violence, Subjugation.

¹ Bharathiar University PG Extension & Research centre, Erode.

1. Introduction

Post-colonialism is a positive means of communicating to the Western countries, and letting them understand that no culture should be undermined on the basis of racial divide. The postcolonial era has witnessed enormous changes in human mobility. The post-colonial world of Africa has many political instability. The political instability resulted due to the release from colonial power. Purple Hibiscus (2003), written by Adichie is a beautiful novel exploring the search for identity in the crucial times of post-colonial African society. The novel is set in post-colonial Africa in Enugu city. The aftermath of colonialism has a severe impact on the post-colonial world of Africa. The rise of political corruption and their political power derived from the colonial roots is beautifully portrayed in the novel.

The novel mainly deals with the issues of political power, woman and child abuses as well. As a Post-Colonial writer, Adichie was able to capture the ambivalent relationship between two opposing cultures where Christianity and Igbo religion battles against each other. Adichie embraces a womanist attitude in Purple Hibiscus, addressing not only the abusive treatment of women, but also racial issues, national politics, and patriarchal culture. In this novel, the multi-layered perspective on women's struggles underscores the need for men, women, and children to work together to survive at the last. As a postcolonial novel, Purple Hibiscus critiques the associated violences of Christian religion, colonial forces, and patriarchal domination.

Adichie presented the two different types of feminism: African feminism which is often seen as being liberal and tolerates men and Radical feminism which uses violence in order to gain their freedom. The novel made it clear that

Radical feminism is usually a reaction to violence. It is a measure taken by the victimized to gain his/her freedom. This novel is narrated through a 15-year-old Kambili Achike, who was from a wealthy Igbo family in post-colonial Nigeria. Her family is a Catholic, and her father Eugene is a pillar of the church and community. He gives abundantly to the church and community and he owns a newspaper that tells the truth about the corrupt government.

Kambili admires her father, hangs on his every word and movement, and craves his attention even though he strictly controls his wife Beatrice and his son, Chukwuka, known as JaJa, and Kambili herself. He is very abusive towards them when they vary even slightly do anything without his knowledge. Kambili is careful to observe her father's rules and regulations, and she is shy and cannot speak up for herself. Kambili's schoolmates and her cousin Amaka think she is a snob because, in her attempts to please her father, she has no time to spend with them and struggles to find the right words to express herself. Her mother Beatrice bears the actions of her husband's cruelty. He physically abuses her, causing her to miscarry more than once. Though he abuses her, she didn't speak up for herself instead she obeys him like an obedient wife.

Kambili's older brother JaJa is a dutiful son, but after spending time with his Aunt Ifeoma and observing how his cousin Obiora looks after his mother and siblings, he openly rebels against his father by refusing to take Holy Communion at Mass. Kambili also changes her mindset when she spends time with Aunt Ifeoma's family. Aunt Ifeoma is a widow and university professor who is against her brother's orders. She allows Kambili and JaJa to spend time with their grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu who practices Igbo spiritual traditions. She

introduces them to Father Amadi, a young Nigerian Catholic priest, who incorporates traditional Igbo songs and cultural expression into the Catholic Mass. Kamili and Jaja are changed through the time they spent with their Aunt Ifeoma as she allows them to experience Igbo culture and a less pressure way of life. Mental abuse brought on by Papa damages Kambili's sense of self worth and confidence in herself. When Kambili is on her period and eats cereal before mass, Jaja takes the blame. Papa ends up punishing all of them by hitting them with his belt. He also mentally abuses her by accusing Kambili of liking sin. Unable to cope with Eugene's continual violence any longer, Beatrice poisons him. Jaja takes the blame for the crime and ends up in prison. In the meantime, Aunty Ifeoma and her family move to America after she is unfairly dismissed from her job as a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The novel ends almost three years after these events, on an optimistic note. Kambili has now become a young woman of eighteen, more confident than before, while her brother Jaja is about to be released from prison, hardened but not broken by his experience in the prison. Adiche Kambili dreams that she will take Jaja to America to visit Aunty Ifeoma, together they will plant orange trees in Abba, and purple hibiscuses will bloom again.

So in this novel, at the beginning, readers can able to observe the the character of Mama (Beatrice Achike) who tolerates the brutality and victimization from her husband, as an African woman so as to be regarded as a good woman for the sake of her society. In African tradition, it is a sin to be a divorcee. From the opening of the novel, one can clearly predict the type of husband and father on how Eugene Achike is and how he uses the power of male domination in the household to dehumanise their family members and abuses her wife which results in the miscarriage more than once. Adichie started the novel in this way to clearly describe the family as will be seen all through the novel.

2. Conclusion

Adichie focuses her attention on the women and what they go through in life, their love for the family, respect for their husbands even when they have been treated unfairly, and how some of them were able to say no to all sorts of violence or subjugation by the menfolk. Adichie in her novel presented two types of women; the good woman (Mama) and the real woman (AuntyIfeoma). Mama even when her life was threatened to the extent of losing her pregnancy endured her husband's illtreatment but Ifeoma is a kind of woman who is not afraid of anyone and will speak up when things are going in a wrong way. She tactically presented Mama as quiet and obedient at the beginning of the novel but she became radical towards the end of the novel to show that she can react when pushed to the wall.

The book's namesake flower Purple Hibiscus is a representation of freedom and hope, as a flower purple hibiscus blooms in a garden metaphorically symbolizes Jaja and Kambal's con-

fidence also bloom towards their own identity and culture. Adichie ends Purple Hibiscus with a happy note of Kambal's laughter and Mama's smile that they fully come in to their own, they able to support themselves. This hope is not only for Kambali and her mother but also for all the African people who wants to free themselves from British colonization. Adichie ends with a hopeful message for Africa and Achike family. This novel contains all the postcolonial threads to show the rest of the world that time flies but colonialism left its instincts in a colony that is now called Post-colonialism or Neo-Colonialism.

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