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SILENCE AS A TOOL AGAINST PATRIARCHY IN ADICHIE'S PURPLE HIBISCUS

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Gender issues include all aspects and concerns related to men's and women's lives and situation in society, to the way they interrelate their differences in access to and use of resources, their activities, and how they react to changes, interventions and policies. Women are much affected by gender inequality. They lag behind men in many aspects including education, labor market opportunities and political representation and also in pay. Women issues are broadly referred as gender issues, in which women struggle for equality but they are treated as slaves in the patriarchal society. Women have not been treated equally as men in the society. They are indeed separated from society and they are being isolated and tormented in the society because of male dominance. Though women are being subjugated, they continuously struggle to overcome marginalisation in the patriarchal society.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie beautifully describes the struggle of women in the novel, *Purple Hibiscus* which was published in 2003. In this novel, Adichie tells about how women are suppressed and repressed becoming silent and voiceless in the male dominant society, and at last they emerge strong with faith, courage and strength. This novel mainly focuses on the women's impassioned struggles to free themselves from the restraints of male brutality and dominance. Adichie also talks about women's determination to survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, extreme starvation, senseless brutality and ceaseless threats to their lives and property. Also, Adichie concludes the novel with positive tone that women become strong and break the system of dominance and set up her own parameters within the society.

The novel *Purple Hibiscus* deals with the cultural issue of a society in which women struggle to be taken seriously where religion and career is concerned. Finally, Adichie puts an ironic twist in the novel as women become successful against aggressive men. The author explains the female characters as victims of violence in the novel. The two female characters who suffer much in the novel are Kambili, a fifteen year old girl, who is the narrator of the novel and Beatrice, Kambili's mother. The male characters act violently towards female characters. Eugene Achike, Kambili's father manipulates Catholicism to justify his violent conduct. This paper shows how Kambili and Beatrice struggle under the brutality of Eugene throughout the novel and finally get hope in their life.

Kambili, who is raised in a Catholic background, is very obedient to her father, mother and aunt. She is very submissive and attentive to whatever happens in her life, her brother's life and mother's life as well as other's lives. She falls a prey to her father's violence. Kambili begins the story with the phrase, "Things started to fall apart at home"(4). This phrase makes to think why "things started to fall apart at home". This novel relates the flashback of the Kambili and its relation to the present. The things are about to fall apart in Eugene's family, because of the brutal behaviour of Eugene.

Kambili's encounter of violence is associated with 'tea' given by her father. Eugene shares the drink to create a bond among them. Though it is too hot and burn the tongue, she has to have a 'love sip' obeying her father's condition. Yet this love is full of violence. Thus, Adichie used metaphor to show the close connection between love and violence:

Have a love sip, he would say, and Jaja would go first. Then I would hold the cup with both hands and raise it to my lips. One sip. The tea was always too hot, always burned my tongue, and if lunch was something peppery, my raw tongue suffered. But it didn't matter, because I knew that when the tea burned my tongue, it burned Papa's love into me. (8)

This acceptance of the burning tea shows her submission to violence perpetuated by her father as she misunderstood it as Papa's love for her.

The incident of breaking the 'Eucharist fast' is another violent act encountered by Kambili in the family. According to Catholic tradition, faithful worshippers are not allowed to eat before mass on Sunday. As Eugene is a strict follower of Catholic tradition, he becomes furious when Kambili has eaten cornflakes a few minutes before mass, as she suffers from stomach cramps. He mercilessly beats Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice, like Fulani nomads whip animals, "Papa was like the Fulani nomad- although he did not have their spare, tall body- as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja and me, muttering the devil would not win" (102). This shows that he treats them like beasts of burden.

Later, Kambili and Jajagoto her grandfather's village Abba for Christmas and there was a clash between Eugene and Papa-Nnukwu, because her grandfather is stern to follow the traditional religion and refuse to accept Catholic. Papa ceases to talk with him. Eugene mercilessly tortures Kambili for being stayed in the home of a pagan, who happens to be her grandfather. Eugene brings his children back to home and he torments Kambili by soaking her feet in hot water, "He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen" (194). Eugene thinks that by pouring hot water over Kambili, he is removing his daughter's sin. But only fear filled Kambili's mind associates with violence. As Kambili is a woman, she is treated as an instrument of violence by her father, Eugene.

In another incident Kambili preserves a painting given by Papa Nnukwu as a memory, Eugene finds it and becomes furious on seeing the painting given by a non- catholic and he whips her like hitting a log especially when she clings to the painting. Then Kambili's pain is unbearable and she suffers from "internal bleeding" and is admitted in the hospital. She tells her mother at the hospital, "My whole body is on fire" (211). She equals her violence with fire. Kambili feels that staying in hospital is more relaxing for accommodation than in home where she is suppressed by her father.

Through all these sufferings, Kambili feels that violence is accompanied by suppression in her life. As Nigeria is a patriarchal society, Kambili feels like a prisoner in every aspect. Her father becomes more restrictive in Kambili's acts. She becomes silent and voiceless to argue against the violence she has undergone in her life. Kambili has suffered from physical as well as mental torture by Eugene. She is feared to talk loudly, she only whispers even conversing with her brother Jaja. Thus, Kambili's whispers seem to be a new dimension in her life. Gayatri Spivak has mentioned about the whispers of the subaltern saying that they are instrumental in grasping their concealing thoughts. These whispers become a means for identifying the wrongs of the society. These whispers reveal her agony in her life. While she visits her aunt's house in Nsukka, Amaka, Kambili's cousin questions her about her 'abnormality' and asks Kambili that, "Why do you lower your voice? You lower your voice when you speak. You talk in whispers" (117). Thus, whisper is the result of her suppression in her life.

Beatrice, who is Kambili's mother has also undergone sufferings and pain. She is conditioned by her husband, Eugene to look after his daily needs despite the abuses she experiences. She also becomes an instrument of violence for Eugene and subjects herself to a life of servitude. She remains isolated and shares all her pain and sufferings about Eugene's violence with Ifeoma. Beatrice has a great defiance in her life that she has miscarried twice by the beatings of Eugene for a meaningless matter. Eugene's violence on Beatrice dehumanises her and makes her to hate him to the core. Thus, Beatrice also suffers greatly when she witnesses Eugene's violence on her daughter, Kambili. Because of suffering from all these pains, Beatrice suffers from mental illness and poisons her husband at last, Eugene and he dies. Her psychological suffering induced her to commit this murder. But she does not believe that she has committed this murder. Finally, her act of killing her husband is a relief from physical, mental and psychological tortures in her life.

Thus, this paper examines the violence on female characters Kambili and Beatrice by a male character Eugene. Women in this novel become victims of violence because of male dominance and finally they strongly show by defeating the male dominance in their own way.

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