



# OPPRESSION OF WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIES PURPLE HIBISCUS

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## ABSTRACT

This article which tells about Purple Hibiscus, a novel by third-generation Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie, appears at first glance to be a simple work of adolescent fiction, a bildungsroman in which pair of siblings navigates the typical challenges of incipient adulthood, social ostracism, an abusive parent, emerging desire. However, the novel's setting - a revolutionary-era Nigeria - is clearly intended to evoke post-Biafra Nigeria, itself the setting of Adichie's other major work, Half of a Yellow Sun. This setting takes Purple Hibiscus beyond the scope of most modern adolescent fiction, creating a complex allegory in which the emergence of self and struggle for identity of the Adichie siblings represent Nigeria's own struggle for identity. Adichie achieves this allegory by allowing the father figures of the novel to represent the different political paths Nigeria could have followed in its post-colonial period. The Adichie siblings' identities develop through interactions with each of these patriarchs.

Adichie's Purple Hibiscus explores domestic violence and the role of women in the context of a patriarchal society. Women's struggle emerges as the dominant theme in the novel, which novel shows how women have to struggle tirelessly to achieve the desired freedom from the clutches of tradition, socio-political and economic disempowerment of women as well as from male oppression.

## KEYWORDS

Adulthood, Family, Society, Indifference Abuse, Inequality.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie she was born on 15 September 1977. She is a Nigerian writer whose works range from novels to short stories to nonfiction. She was described in The Times Literary Supplement as "the most prominent" of a "procession of critically acclaimed young Anglophone authors which is succeeding in attracting a new generation of readers to African literature", particularly in her second home, the United States. Adichie, a feminist, has written the novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), and *Americanah* (2013), the short story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), and the book-length essay *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014).

Her most recent books are *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017), *Zikora* (2020) and *Notes on Grief* (2021). In 2008, she was awarded a MacArthur Genius Grant. While she was growing up in Nigeria, she was not used to being identified by the colour of her skin, which only began to happen when she arrived in the United States for college. As a black African in America, Adichie was suddenly confronted with what it meant to be a person of colour in the United States. Race as an idea became something that she had to navigate and learn.

She writes about this in her novel *Americanah*. She received a bachelor's degree from Eastern Connecticut State University, with the distinction of summa cum laude in 2001. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), received wide critical acclaim; it was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction (2004) and was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (2005). *Purple Hibiscus* starts with an extended quote from *Things Fall Apart*. Her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), named after the flag of the short-lived nation of Biafra, is set before and during the Nigerian Civil War. Adichie has said of Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982). It was very important for my research when I was writing *Half of a Yellow Sun*. *Half of a Yellow Sun* received the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction and the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award. *Half of a Yellow*

Sun was adapted into a film of the same title directed by Biyi Bandele, starring BAFTA award-winner and Academy Award.

This Novel Purple Hibiscus written by Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie which was her debut novel and it was published by Algonquin Books in 2003. It is set in postcolonial Nigeria, a country beset by political instability and economic difficulties. The central character is Kambili Achike, aged fifteen for much of the period covered by the book, a member of a wealthy family dominated by her devoutly Catholic Father, Eugene. This novel explores the different themes like Religious hypocrisy, finding one's voice, and the persistence of love through the story of Kambili Achike, a young Nigerian woman struggling to find her way in a world beset with conflict and strife. The Novel which exquisitely about the emotional turmoil of adolescence, the powerful bonds of family, and the bright promise of freedom.

Women are an integral part of human civilization and there is no general development of a society or country without an active participation and uplift of women. Though the status of women is different from culture to culture and changes from age to age, the truth is that women have never been considered equal to men. They have always been victims of male domination and oppression and treated like beasts of burden and objects of pleasure. From the past, men have looked down upon women as the weaker sex and treated them as their inferiors and slaves.

Oppression of women is one of the important aspects of postcolonial theory. Generally women are exploited and faced oppression every day. The root of the women's oppression lies in the division of society into classes. In the male dominated society, women have fewer legal rights and career opportunities than men. Discrimination against women has become customs passed from generations to generations. The society regards women as inferior, trivial, unimportant, and peripheral. Discrimination against women is the attitude and beliefs in relation to the female gender that they are less important, such beliefs and attitudes are of society nature and do not normally carry and legal consequences.

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* explores domestic violence and the role of women in the context of a patriarchal society. Women's struggle emerges as the dominant theme in the novel, which novel shows how women have to struggle tirelessly to achieve the desired freedom from the clutches of tradition, socio-political and economic disempowerment of women as well as from male oppression. Adichie surveys the identity of women as wives and highlights different forms of gender oppression linked to such identity. Women become wives through marriage whether monogamous or polygamous. Adichie's novel therefore hit at the glaring inequalities so as to produce the required change likely to bring equity among husbands and wives.

The character of Beatrice and Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* are the epitomes of women asserting their positions in their society and challenging patriarchy with its several manifestations. Any system of oppression draws much of its strength from the submission of its victims, who accept their image and get paralyzed by a sense of helplessness. Characters in Adichie's novels are not submissive to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situation. Adichie's novel explores numerous societal structures through which women are oppressed. She identifies domestic violence, religion, traditions, family life, complacency as being responsible for unequal gender relations forming the basis of exploitation of women and she challenges women to have a voice so as to comfort their oppression. Silence in *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, is to blame for the suffering that Beatrice and her children go through. Implicitly thus Adichie advocates for the gender struggle to be linked with other efforts undertaken against problems which cripple Third World women. She calls for understanding, complementation, conciliation, collaboration and constructive gender engagement as men and women deal with dehumanizing problems affecting people in the Third World countries in her novel *Purple Hibiscus*. The opening lines of *Purple Hibiscus* signal a threat to continued co-existence of the family members because of lack of free space. The home is in turmoil and things are about to fall apart. It means the center symbolized by the paternal authority cannot hold anymore and further suggests that several centres of authority are necessary. It is in the other center where the characters living in Eugene's family enjoy freedom. Kambili is concerned about every member of the family.

Chimamanda Adichie uses a female protagonist, Kambili rather than her brother Jaja to tell the story in *Purple Hibiscus*. This is deliberate because the traditional model for a Bildungsroman is a boy whose voice carries on the narration throughout the novel. Furthermore, in a typical novel by women writers, the stories told about women often starts when the woman is an adult and married or about to be married and her self-development is then motivated by her frustrations with her life and her problems often tied to a controlling husband in a failed marriage. The domestic violence represented in the novel is both vivid and silent. This seemed to be one of the most effective writing tools that Adichie uses throughout the novel. The domestic violence scenes are sometimes explained vividly, like the scene in the bath where Kambili has boiling water poured over her feet. Adichie fulfills this role of the artist by creating the Achike home as a microcosm of the wider national trauma of chaos and silence imposed on the citizenry who defy the military's tactics of oppression and subjugation to maintain an atmosphere of fear. Even before she addresses the growth of Kambili, Adichie gives a picture of the political climate in Nigeria, the social context that she situates the novel in is that of a chaotic society in which coups have begotten coups. Adichie's weaving of Nigeria's political story along with Kambili's womanist growth comes from a womanist vision. The protagonist of *Purple Hibiscus* gives a background to the context within which the coups happen.

It is structured by the Christianity: the first three sections bear the subtitles 'Palm Sunday', 'Before Palm Sunday'. 'After 'Palm Sunday, indicating the organizing power other religion over the temporarily of the narrative. In this novel we can see so many conventional views which highlights the importance of Roman Catholic observance in Kambili's family and the foreshadows the associations of her father's power. Kambili's narration of this scene shows an awareness of the deeply felt influence other father as she reflects on his going role in her understanding of god.

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Kambili, the author allows her development to be shaped by events around her. Her Family, school and interaction with

Other members of the society shape her world view and how she reacts to events.

Her father, Eugene puts pressure on his daughter Kambili to be submissive and without her own voice. He refuses to allow her develop an independent mind in order not to question his authority and decisions. In his house, schedules are prepared for her and her brother Jaja and nothing is done without his permission. Not even a simple action like turning on the television or stereo. African traditional belief systems are overwhelming.

Purple Hibiscus is a feminist work that challenges the dehumanizing tendencies of the menfolk. This was evident in the character of Mama (Beatrice) who undergoes series of humiliation, dehumanization, and denial from her husband. The novel showcased Mama as a good woman who tolerates everything from her husband and often consoles herself as a result of what the church and society will say. She felt that her marriage to Eugene is a favor considering the fact that he refused to listen to his Kinsmen on the need to take another wife when she couldn't give birth after two children. One can ask whose fault because it is because it's obvious that she lost two pregnancies as a result of her husband's violent action and should be blamed for her inability to give birth to more children.

In this novel, woman who she was facing domestic violence in her childhood were she longing for her hope, love, freedom, independence, happy. There is an ironical tragedy the only happening because of the growth of Kambili. These stories were impossible to ignore. This Novel can also be called as 'Coming of the Ages'. The narration of Kambili her life where she turns a mature, hopefulness, self-esteem, which she finds her identity.

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