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Religion, Traumatization, and sufferings in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Purple Hibiscus"

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Abstract

This article is to find out religion, traumatization, and sufferings on children by their Papa in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. In this article the researcher analyzes the characters in the novel that are suppressed, controlled and led by Eugene. Children are traumatized by their father. Children suffer physically and mentally at each point of their life. Children do not have any rights to talk; they do not have freedom, and individual identity. This research is to say that father's love and affection makes children strong and grows confidently and when he fails to show love and care to the children they grown fragile and hopeless.

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Introduction

The novel is about how children in the novel traumatized by their father and how at each point they suffer mentally and physically. The protagonist of the novel is

Kambili and the novel is narrated through the perspective of Kambili. She narrates that how her Papa forces her and her brother to follow the religion which he follows and he sketches the schedule to follow daily activity like machines. The children and their mother are harassed many times, where Mama undergoes lot of miscarriage and Kambili gets beaten up severely and lands in serious illness.

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Kambili's father is very strict man, who adheres to Catholicism. Like he adheres he wants his family also to adhere to Catholicism strongly as he does. The children also tries to follow it because, they feel that the only way to get the affection and love from their father is to following the rules which he has brought it into the house and doing good things as he expects. When the children and his wife fail to do it they get punished. The novel begins on Palm Sunday and it climax also falls on Palm Sunday. In the family, calamity falls when Jaja refused to receive communion. "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the

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room and broke the figurines on the etagere. We had just returned from church. . . ." (Adichie 3). This cruel act of Papa marked the beginning of the end family's happiness.

Though the children do not open up to share their feeling they always talk inside themselves, because they do not have any freedom to talk openly. They have been allocated with a schedule and accordingly they spend their time. So there is no need to ask another to know what she or he is doing because everything is mentioned clearly in the schedule itself.

Still, Jaja knew what I ate for lunch every day. We had a menu on the kitchen wall that Mama changed twice a month. But he always asked me, anyway. We did that often, asking each other question whose answers we already knew. Perhaps it was so that we would not ask the other question, the ones whose answers we did not want to know. (Adichie23)

Eugene is a religious man and in each thing he includes pious preaching in it, where they sat and wait for 20 minutes to eat.

. . . Papa and Mama were already seated, and Papa was washing his hands in the bowl of water Sisi held before him. He waited until Jaja and I sat down opposite him, and started the grace. For twenty minutes he asked God to bless the food. (Adichie11)

Kambili is a quite child and always thinks twice to speak in front of people since she has not practiced it. She has a fear that people will humiliate her for which she cannot talk back. She was encourage and motivated by Aunty Ifeoma to talk back to the people who thinks that she is snob:

Aunty Ifeoma's eyes hardened __she was not looking at Amaka, she was looking at me. "*O ginidi*, Kambili, have you no mouth? Talk back to her!" . . . "You don't have to shout, Amaka," I said, finally. . . . I did not know where the calm words had come from. I did not want to prompt her to say something else to me, because I knew I could not keep up. I thought I was imagining it when I heard the cackling, but then I looked at Amaka__ and sure

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enough, she was laughing.
(Adichie170)

Everyone at school thinks that she is a snob because she is not getting interpersonal with everyone and after the classes she straight away goes to her father's car. So, everybody at school thinks that since she has a rich father she does not want to socialize with anyone. The truth behind her act is, she is motivated by fear and which unable her to form her own identity. Erikson states in his book that:

. . . If I prefer the word "trust" it is because there is more naivete and more mutuality in it: an infant can be said to be trusting where it would go too far to say that he has confidence. The general state of trust, furthermore, implies not only that one has learned to rely on the sameness and continuity of the outer providers, but also that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to cope with urges; and that one is able to consider oneself trustworthy enough so that the providers will not need to be on guard lest they be nipped. (Erikson 248)

The reason behind why they call her as snob is, once she was late for five minute to reach her car so, Kevin had complained to her father for keeping him wait. So Papa slapped her left and right cheek at the time.

Papa does not speak with his Papa-Nnukwu because he refused to convert himself into Christianity. So, Papa calls him as "heathen" who still follows the religion of Igbo. There is difference between Christianity and the religious ritual followed by Igbo people. In the novel the author has shown it beautifully. There should be only one religion and that should be a religion of man, where human beings should have humanity and respect for other human beings.

There is a difference in raising the children in the novel. For example, Ifeoma's children and Mama Beatrice children. Both raise their children differently. Ifeoma's children are very bold, strong, have right to speak what they want to speak and they have freedom and independence. Whereas on the other hand Mama Beatrice's children who are submissive, subjugated, filled with fear, trouble in talking, bound and dependent. Ifeoma gives rights to her children to put forth their opinion, whereas Eugene's children are muted by him, and never try to break the rules of the house made by Eugene and they have never got any chance to express their feelings and thoughts.

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After the arrival of Ifeoma things started changing in children's life. She came in their life as hope, as rebellion who planted the seed of getting freedom from their father's torture in the hearts of the children. Her laughter echoed in the house which they never experienced inside the house that was new, that is where the new life of the children began. “. . . I heard her loud laughter, and it echoed and went on for a while. I did not realize it was my cousins' laughter, the sound reflecting their mother's, until I went out to the living room. . .” (Adichie92).

Ifeoma raised her children with confidence at the same time with faith on God. Whereas Eugene's children are very pious but not confident. Though Father Amadi is priest, he encourages Kambili to be pious but at the same time to be bold enough to face any problem. He encourages Kambili to be herself and to find her own identity.

When Eugene comes to know that the children have share a home with a heathen he draws the children back to home and punished the children by pouring hot water on the feet of children. When he learns that the children brought a painting of Papa-Nnukwu with them, he beats kambili so severely that she lands in a critical condition in the hospital.

kicking. Kicking.Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy. Because I could hear a swoosh in the air. A low voice was saying, “Please, *biko*, please.” More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet. (Adichie211)

Children were suffering inside their hearts. They did not get any chance to express their feelings to anyone. At the age when they have to have innocence in their behavior they had the maturity of understanding what is going on at home and how to behave at such situation. Children were not given freedom and they were forced to follow the religion which their Papa does. Following any religion does not matter much when they isa understanding in the family, which unites the family together. But in the novel it is not so, it is completely opposite and at the end Papa was died, for which the family does not care much.

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