Concept Of Silence In Purple Hibiscus

Silence is never the answer when abuse is involved. Purple Hibiscus is a novel made by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie about a very religious Nigerian father who controls his families' lives. In Nigeria, a woman is not allowed to speak unless spoken to. Most people in Nigeria take their religious beliefs too far and begin to do really bad things, like Eugene. The silence about the family leads other family members into not knowing what is going on until they actually begin to observe and find out. Women are most of the time not able to express their feelings and leave other family members or other people to speak for them. In the novel, Purple Hibiscus, Kambili shows how her silence leads her to not being able to express her feelings and makes her leave other people to speak for her.

In the beginning, Kambili does not speak at all, but only speaks when spoken to. She begins to describe the silence between the family on certain occasions. "We all reached for the salt at the same time. Jaja and I touched the crystal shaker, my finger brushed him gently, then he let go. I passed it to Papa. The silence stretched the room." (12) As Papa ask for the salt Jaja and Kambili reach out for the salt. Silence is still expressed throughout the room. Kambili is able to hand the salt to Papa as the silence still stretches throughout the room. Later in the novel, Ade Coker makes a joke saying, "Imagine what the Standard would be if we were all quiet." (57) Ade Coker also says, "They are not like those loud children." (58) Papa did not find that statement funny but Ade Coker and his wife Yewande did. Papa believed that being loud was very disrespectful. Papa trained his children to not be loud and obnoxious. In what way though? There are certain ways to handle your children without abusing them. Papa does make a statement saying, "They are not like those loud children people raising these days, with no home training and no fear of God." (57) Telling them basically that he disciplines them, but they don't know exactly how.

In the middle of the novel, Kambili makes a comment stating, "That night, I dreamed that I was laughing, but it did not sound like my laughter, although I was not sure what my laughter sounded like." (88) Kambili has not really felt a sense of humor in her life. Her life is based upon her dad ho doesn't have that much happiness in his life as well. This shows how her Kambili is influenced by Eugene. Kambili also at most times cannot think of anything in her random silence moments. She states, "For a long, silent moment I could think of nothing. My mind was blank, I was blank. Then I thought of taking sips of Papa's tea, love sips, the scalding liquid that burned his love onto my tongue." (290) Kambili couldn't think of no words but thought about Papa's "love sips". Kambili thinks that his hot tea is Papa giving her his love. Which is not the case. Again, Kambili is influenced by her father and her father influences her into thinking that the "love sips" of his hot tea are out of love. She doesn't express his "love sips" to her family but eventually, Aunty Ifeoma finds out about Eugene being abusive.

At the end of the novel, Amaka says to Kambili, "Why do you lower your voice?" (117) Amaka describes it by also saying, "You lower your voice when you speak. You talk in whispers." (117) This gives us an understanding of how Kambili talks to people. She doesn't talk very loud basically a whisper voice. Eugene did tell Ade Coker that he did not raise his children to be loud and obnoxious, but this is also because she barely talks at home. Kambili only speaks when her mom, dad, and Jaja speak to her. Amaka begins to realize how Kambili is talking and trying to

figure out why she speaks that way. Kambili was sitting at a table and she states, “I had felt as if I was not there, that I was just observing the table.” (120). This shows her silence even at a dinner table. Eugene has influenced her so badly to the point that she doesn’t even tend to have conversations at a table. Kambili begins to feel a little left out because of her not speaking.

Kambili begins to speak on another person and says, “I wanted to say I’m sorry that I did not smile or laugh, but my words would not come, and for a while, even my ears could hear nothing.” (139) Sometimes as Kambili speaks throughout the book no words come out. She does think of the words that she wants to say but it just doesn’t come out. Why can’t she just speak her feelings? Kambili in her head thinks that she should not express her feelings toward other people. But some of her family members speak their feelings. Even when Aunty Ifeoma was telling Mama not to go back to Eugene she still decides to go back and never expresses her situation with Eugene being very abusive. Aunty Ifeoma eventually finds out about him being abusive and tries to keep the children away, but Mama does not let her and still doesn’t speak about Eugene being abusive.

The silence shows how Eugene has influenced his family to the point that Mama doesn’t even want to tell anybody that Eugene is being very abusive. The author shows how silence can lead to different situations and sometimes it won’t get you anywhere in life if you don’t say anything. In my personal opinion speech is the most important part of life. The tongue can lead you to life or death. The novel teaches a very important lesson about the abuse and showing how much silence is involved in the story that leads to someone losing a life because of it. It shows so much power that men think that have that is not okay in this world. Women should be treated like queens no matter what and should always speak out and tell people if something bad is happening because it could lead to someone losing their life like in the book, Purple Hibiscus.

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