# Main Themes And Characters In Purple Hibiscus

## Background

Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie talks about the theme of religious hypocrisy, finding one's voice, and the persistence of love throughout the story of Kambili Achike, a young Nigerian woman struggling to find her way in a world of conflict and strife.

## Plot

The novel centers on Eugene who is also the father of Kambili and Jaja. The husband of Beatrice. He embraces the Catholic brand of Christianity under the European missionaries, so because of the doctrines he denounces his father and vows not to have anything to do with him both in life and death. Eugene was a strict man due to the training he reached and he is also a violent man who does not take excuse from anyone which leads to him beating Jaja because he failed to take the Holy Communion because of his poor preparation and bad presentation which often disgust him and also he beat up her wife because she said she cannot follow him to see Faher Benedict, he sees this as a disrespect to God and His servant which leads to her loss of the pregnant. When it was Christmas time, the family goes home. He gave presentations to his kinsmen and also he gave enough for their Christmas preparation but he did not felt concerned about his father, he and his wife did not pay a visit to Papa Nnukwu but he allowed his children to visit but he gave them a specific time to return. During Christmas, Aunty Ifeoma asked Eugene to allow his children to spend their holiday with her. He agreed but he was actually not pleased with the request but he has no choice. When Jaja and Kambili got to Enugu their behavior was awkward and it was there they had a different view of what they are used to. The environment changed both Jaja and Kambili to become more open, more able to voice their own opinions. And also it is at Aunty Ifeoma place that Kambili falls in love with the young priest 'Father Amadi' which awake her sense of her own sexuality. Aunty Ifeoma received a phone call, which informed her of the state of health of Papa Nnukwu and she went with Obiora to bring her father back to her home. Engene called to inform Aunty Ifeoma that he was coming to take his children back to Enugu because someone had informed him that his children shared a house with his father – a heathen. Papa Nnukwu passes on some few hours before his arrival to take his children back home, Aunty Ifeoma breaks the news of their father's death to him. Instead of mourning, he began to blame Aunty Ifeoma that she did not call a Catholic priest to pray for him before his death. The children return during the confession and Father Benedict got to know that Kambili lived in the same room with Papa Nnukwu before his death. Eugene in annoyance took his daughter to the bathtub and emptied boiled hot water on her legs as a penalty for her sin. He enters the room where his children are sharing conversation and he saw the painting of his father and demand to know who brought it , Kamibili answers him and said she was the one who brought the painting and when her father was tearing the painting she dashed to the pieces as if trying to save Papa's body and Eugene beat her till she could not breathe which makes Aunty Ifeoma convinced Eugene to allow her to take his children to spend the Easter holiday with her.

## Setting:

The setting of the novel takes place in the southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria. The names of such places as Enugu, Nsukka, Ninth Mile, Abba, and names like Jaja, Amadi, Kambili, Ifeoma, Obiora, Amaka, Papa Nnukwu, Mmuo Festival, Aro Festival, as well as the mentioning of the people's staple food (azu, okpa) are testimony to confirm our assertion.

## Themes:

1. **Domestic Violence:** In this Book, Eugene Achike (Papa) justifies the violence he imposes on his wife and two children. Eugene is disposed to fierceness within the family house, subjecting his wife Beatrice and the two children to severe punishment. Papa always thinks that beating them it is for their own good, and these beatings have made the children be mute and afraid of their father. In the novel, it was narrated that Mama loses two pregnancies because of the beatings, so at the end, she resolves in killing Papa because the beatings were much for her to bear.
2. **Silence:** Many characters were enthralled with silence throughout the novel. Kambili was the one who suffers the most, she was unable to speak except to stammer or cough when trying to say something. And this silence was caused by the beatings she received from her father. Mama also could not be able to speak freely in her husband's house. Ade Coker was also silenced by murdering him when he printed an incriminatory story in the standard. Silence is also used as punishment, when Kambili and Jaja used it as a weapon against their father when he called them; Jaja refuses to speak to his father. Silence is also a type of violence.
3. **Religion**: The theme of religion is present in the interactions between characters. Religion alone is not to blame. In this novel, Papa signifies the wave of fundamentalism in Nigeria that corrupts belief. There is a difference between Father Benedict and Father Amadi. Papa loved Father Benedicts because father Benedict conducts his church according to European practice. In this context, Father Amadi is an African Priest who believes that faith is simple and more complex than what Father Benedicts preaches. Papa Nnukwu is a Traditional worshipper, he believes in a pantheistic idea of religion. When Kambili observes his morning ritual, she realizes that their beliefs were not different as they seem to be. Kambili beliefs encompass the limits of one religion. Though, she fears not to sin and is afraid to irritate her father. The nature of faith is discovered in Purple Hibiscus.
4. **Colonization:** Purple Hibiscus is set in postcolonial Nigeria, a nation tormented by political insecurity and economic problems. According to Papa Nnukwu, Colonization is a criminal force that caged the Igbo societies and eliminated their customs. And according to Papa (Eugene Achike), colonization was responsible for his education. But for Father Amadi, he understands that the old ways and new ways can't exist, so Father Amadi signifies modern Nigeria in the world. Papa abandons his customs and chooses to follow way because he was educated by the missionaries and studied in English. Over the course of the novel, Kabila and Jaja must arrive to terms with the haunting effects of colonization in their lives. They both change to life outside their father's grip by accepting old-style customs.
5. **Nature**: The title of the novel represents freedom and hope. Jaja was attached with the Purple Hibiscus that was bred by a botanist friend of Aunty Ifeoma. Bringing the natural world together with brainpower is what was generated by Aunty Ifeoma. Jaja thinks that the flower is faith that something new can be produced. He took a stalk of Purple Hibiscus home to plant it in their garden. He also takes home what he had learned from

Nsukka, and this made Jaja be rebellion. Kambili's traveling toward nature also indicates her period of transformation. When she traveled to Nsukka things change, she was able to speak freely.

## Characterization:

1. **Kambli:** Kambili is a 15 years old girl. She is respectful to her parents and also obedient to her father. She is very brilliant in school. She loves everyone including her grandfather Papa Nnukwu. Until they travel to Nsukka, Kambili does not mix up with people because of improper socialization. Kambili does not harbor ill-feeling but always admits every action her father takes against her as her own personal mistake. She learns from Father Amadi the act of socialization and incorporated it into her system. Kambili is a yardstick for a spotless, blameless perfect characters in the novel.
2. **Papa Eugene**: He is the father of Kambili and Jaja. He is a wealthy man in the Achike's village of Enugu; Papa has many factories and publishes a newspaper infamous for its criticism of Nigeria's corrupt government. He is a fervent Catholic who also wants perfection from his family. Papa punishes his wife and children in order to correct their behavior. Papa is loved in his community but is separated from his own father and his traditional African culture.
3. **Jaja**: Chukwuka Achike normally called Jaja is the son of Papa Eugene. He is loyal and often obeys the dictates of his father. He is also brilliant and often comes first in his class. His continuous interaction with his Aunt's children and other children in the university gave him the opportunity to evaluate life. Jaja realizing that his right had been trampled upon goes home to fight for his rights. When the news that his father is dead coming, he was not moved, he rather vows to stop his father's inhumanity. And he also claims the responsibility for his father's death. Jaja stands for the resilience of African cultures. He is a champion of women's liberation.
4. **Mama**: Mama is otherwise known as Beatrice. She is the mother of Kambili and Jaja. She is a dutiful wife. She loves her husband. Mama is a daughter of a Catechist. Even with all the treatments, she got from her husband she never complained. She rather accepts everything as part of her ordeal. In this novel, she was used to representing the subjugation of women and the love a wife has for her husband. Mama remains spotless and undaunted throughout the novel. In the end, she killed her husband because of the torture.
5. **Aunty Ifeoma**: She is a widow and the daughter of Papa Nnukwu. She is also the younger sister of Eugene. Aunty Ifeoma is a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She is disciplined and disciplines children by correction, not through brutal force. She often counsels her brother's overzealousness and warns that her brother must not play God by acting for God in executing judgment for God's own offenders. As a hardworking academic, she makes contact abroad and eventually gets the approval of the United States Embassy to travel abroad to continue her career. Aunty Ifeoma is the epitome of women's liberation. She does not allow her gender to dictate for her.
6. **Father Amadi**: In Father Amadi in this novel, we saw how he associates himself with people of low birth like the children of low-income groups in the university whom he often plays within the stadium. He became friends with Jaja and Kambili in Nsukka. His communication with people does not only endear him, it also negates the view that isolation is a yardstick to measure devoutness. He advised Amaka to take an English or Christian name for baptism, even though, he knew that Igbo names are acceptable to

God. In father Amadi, we see the real Christian love and care. He becomes an adviser and companion to Kambili during Jaja’s detention.

## Work Cited:


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