

## **Female writings in the dynamic Igbo society: A comparative analysis of Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the clouds* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple hibiscus***

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### ***Abstract***

*Female writing, generally speaking, is a protest literature. Protest in the sense that the pioneer writers of this genre perceived literature written by men as profusely chauvinistic where women were presented as second class citizens in their own society. In some societies, women were seen simply as “heifers” to be disposed at any time by the men. European women in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, obviously not pleased with the poor treatment meted to them by their men counterparts but they remained complacent because of the societal belief that women were only meant to be seen and not to be heard. However, few of them decided to hide under the masculine pen-name to write and strive for their liberation. In Africa, Nigerian women suffered the same subjugation as seen in the works of prominent male writers like Achebe. Thus, African women decided to join their colleagues in other parts of the world to protest against the chauvinism. In this paper therefore, the researchers aim to analyze Ifeoma Okoye and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s concepts of feminism with the aim to x-ray their areas of overlap and disparity. As the work aims to x-ray the views of women as well as how they vigorously fight for their rights using literature, the authors have considered feministic approach as the most suitable theoretical framework for the work.*

**Keywords:** *feminism, protest literature, chauvinistic, comparative and dynamic*

## **Introduction**

Fiction, though a work of art, is an indispensable means of fighting ills in any society. It is interested in the society as literature writers draw their inspiration from the activities of the society. Chinyere Nwahunanya in *Literary Criticism, Critical Theory and Postcolonial African Literature*, is of the view that literature in contemporary Nigerian society bifurcated into the traditional and the modern (55). However, whether traditional or modern, literature focuses on the society; writers of literature write to condemn misdeeds in the society with the aim to make the society a better place. According to Nwahunanya, traditional literature, which is composed and transmitted orally, is autochthonous in rural communities where men are still largely preoccupied with the problems arising from living in an environment where flora and fauna combine with man's awe for the metaphysical to shape his responses to the environment. He goes further to attest that the modern literature on the other hand is a feature of the urban environment, being largely a product of literacy and Western education resulting from colonialism; and it emphasizes the letter and books as its means of composition and transmission. He further argues that although literature is primarily concerned with the problems arising from living in an uncertain and sometimes hostile environment where it has to contend with various metaphysical forces, the traditional imagination still finds time to express itself in basically creative endeavours which help man in traditional society reduce the tensions arising from his existence, and regulate his mode of existence in that cosmos (55). African women, particularly the Igbo women of Nigeria began to write, protesting

the poor treatment of women in the society with a view to salvaging themselves. Flora Nwapa, the pioneer African female writer, in her novels, presented male characters as subtle “beasts” and females as angels. Nwapa, as well as the other female writers after her, aimed to use her writings to discourage patriarchy in the African society.

The word “patriarchy”, according to Kamarae, has been recreated in the past two decades to analyze the origins and conditions of men’s oppression of women (92). The term was originally used to describe the power of the father as the head of the household. It has, according to Kamarea, been used within post 1960s feminism to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination (93). Similarly, “Women, Culture and Society in Amadu Sesay and Adetanwa Odebiyi’s *Nigerian Women in Society and Development*, asserts that patriarchy has to do with a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions (98).

### **Feministic approach**

Feministic theory became prominent in the nineteenth century. It originated from the French word “feminisme” and was coined by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, and was first used in English in the 1890s, in an association with the movement for equal political and legal rights for women. However, before this era, there had been evidence for the struggle for feminism hence Ann B. Dobie in *Theory into Practice: an Introduction to Literary Criticism*, believed that feministic approach evolved in the eighteenth century. According to her, in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, a book in which she depicted women as an oppressed class

regardless of social hierarchy. Dobie observed that Wollstonecraft's views were radical to a place and time that did not recognize women's political or legal rights, offered them few opportunities for employment, and, if they married, gave their property to their husbands. According to Dobie, "Having experienced as a child the imbalance of power between her own mother and father and having observed as an adult the indignities suffered by women of all classes, she recognized that they are born into powerless roles, as a result, Wollstonecraft asserted, women are forced to use manipulative methods to get what they want (104).

African women obviously had the same experience as Wollstonecraft hence their fight against patriarchy. Ifeoma Okoye and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in their respective novels, have vividly represented their experiences about the humiliations suffered by women in the hands of their husbands in different ages of the same society. According to Ozoh, Ngozi in her article, "Women's Quest for Freedom, and Employment in Chima-Udeh's *Echoes of a New Dawn*" women must be empowered financially and otherwise to enable them fight for their freedom from men's domineering nature.

### **Okoye and Adichie as feminists**

The two female writers in their respective novels, have subtly, represented men as simply unfathomable, unsympathetic, callous and not worth of being trusted. In Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the clouds*, Dozie Apia whom Ije, the wife had sacrificed everything for while they were in London later breaks Ije's heart by messing up with Beatrice and allowing her into their marital home which almost marred their marriage. As a feminist, Okoye has so profoundly presented Ije as an infallible being. Not minding the

kind of vituperations coming from her mother-in-law because of her inability to give her grandchildren, Ije remains static about being so benevolent to the entire family. She had sacrificed a lot while they were in London to see that Dozie became successful. Even when she had every reason to cheat on Dozie, she still demonstrated the infallibility by shunning every temptation. Beatrice, the woman she met in Dr Melie's clinic where they were both seeking solution to their barrenness, later becomes pregnant and she suggests to Ije to meet Apostle Joseph whose divine prowess heralded her miracle. At the Apostle's church, the truth is spilled that some men are impotent. According to him, "... Some men, for some reason, are unable to father children. Wise women who are married to such men tactfully find other men to give them what they so much desire. This is not adultery in the eyes of men. It is not adultery in the eyes of God. Think about this Mrs Apia. I have gladly done it for some women. I can do it for you too (55). This fact is later consolidated by Beatrice who confided in Ije that Apostle Joseph is responsible for her own pregnancy which as a matter of fact, has saved her marriage. One would have expected that Ije would have a rethink but as the "angel" she is, she says to him. "To hell with you and your church!" and leaves the church (56).

In *Purple hibiscus*, Adichie didn't do anything differently. Her character, Beatrice, like Ije Apia is perpetually humiliated by her husband, Eugene Achike and she remains submissive in spite of all odds. Not minding her infallibility, Eugene beats her on any little provocations. Kambili's monthly flow makes her sickly and as a result, she is unable to dress up earlier for Mass. Such is not welcomed by Eugene. Infuriated, he takes off his belt, ignoring his wife who tells him that Kambili's period started and that she has cramps and also Jaja who tries to defend her sister. According to

Adichie, “He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather-covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse (110)..... Beatrice does not make any fuss about her husband’s incessant humiliation. On many occasions, he had beaten her until she has had series of miscarriages. Eugene does not treat her well and does not care about his father whom he describes as heathen as well as his only sister Auntie Ifeoma. But he is benevolent to people outside his family. On one occasion when Beatrice ran to Auntie Ifeoma’s for safety, she laments about Eugene’s callous attitudes to them and how Eugene pays school fees of up to a hundred of people and how benevolent he is to people outside his home. Auntie Ifeoma advises Beatrice not to be in a hurry to go back to Eugene but she is afraid another woman might take over her position as Eugene’s wife (255). The portrayal of the two male characters by the respective authors in their respective novels is not different from the style of other feminists.

### **Towards dissecting of the novels: A comparative analysis**

The setting of the two novels greatly overlap. M. H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* believes that the overall setting of a narrative is the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs. In their *Handbook of Literary Terms*, X. J. Kennedy, Dana Gioia and Mark Bauderlein observe that most narrative works have identifiable settings, but the locale becomes important when it seems to acquire a more than circumstantial significance (142). Okoye and Adichie, have used identifiable locales in their respective novels. The two novels are set in Enugu and some other identifiable places. Setting the novels

in Igbo society, goes to consolidate the message of the authors. Critics are of the view that the setting of a work has to agree with the characters for the message to be coherent. According to Brenda Cooper in “Resurgent Spirits, Catholic Echoes of Igbo & Petals of Purple: the Syncretised World of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie”, “Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie strives for a holistic vision in her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, one that integrates Igbo customs and language with Catholic ritual and which incorporates men into her gender politics and embraces the literary traditions of her elders....” (1). Okoye was moved by her experience of how women were treated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At this period, women were solely blamed for childlessness in any childless family. A woman, unable to get a child, especially a male child is seriously harangued. Nobody ever thought that a man could be responsible for childlessness. In this case, the man would be advised to marry another woman who would give him children as his first wife would be termed barren. Ije Apia alone, is blamed and berated for being childless. She alone goes to various medicine men, medical doctors and to miracle centres because it was believed that only women could be barren. It is even amazing that as educated as the couple are, they are ignorant of the fact that a man could be responsible for such misfortune.

In *Purple hibiscus*, Adichie presents the plights of Igbo women in the contemporary society. Beatrice’s case is not a problem of childlessness. No! On many occasions, she had conceived and Eugene beat her until she miscarried. Like Dozie, Eugene is wealthy and benevolent. But unlike Dozie, Eugene does not care about his family as much as he cares for people outside. Dozie cares so much for his mother and he does everything to make her live a healthy life. Eugene has allowed western tradition to overwhelm him to the extent that he despises his own father on the

ground that he is a traditionalist. Papa Nnukwu is only left to be cared for by Auntie Ifeoma who is a lecturer in the University of Nigeria. We understand from her financial status that the poor treatment meted to university lecturers in Nigeria has been a long term affair. Eugene leaves his father to suffer. He becomes sick and he refuses to send money to Auntie Ifeoma to take him to a private hospital since the government hospitals are on strike. Papa Nnukwu dies as a result of poor health condition whereas his son is a billionaire and takes cares of thousands of people outside. It becomes more aggravating that when Auntie Ifeoma comes to tell him about the tragedy, all he could say is “Did you call a priest to give him extreme unction?” (195)

Amazed that he is not even sorry that his father has died a preventable death and no drop of tear is seen on his face, Auntie Ifeoma speaks her mind, with the hope to get him to consciousness. “Is that all you can say, eh, Eugene? Have you nothing else to say, *gbo*? Our father has died! Has your head turned upside down? Will you not help me bury our father?” One would expect that at this time, Eugene would have a rethink and be sorry for his poor attitudes towards his father. But on the contrary, he says, “I cannot participate in a pagan’s funeral.” To further consolidate the fact that he had completely thrown caution to the wind, Eugene suggests that they can still discuss with the parish priest and arrange a Catholic funeral (195). Eugene’s reaction would not appal many as the types of Eugene are everywhere in society. Adichie using identifiable characters in the novel is quite deliberate, clearly denoting that her novel is a mirror of the contemporary Igbo society; many Igbo men and women are more catholic than Pope and they have completely annihilated the Igbo tradition which they have been taught and made to believe to be barbaric. Chinua Achebe had observed the dangers of the new

religion to the African belief and had vivified with Oduche in *Arrow of God* whom his father had sent as a spy to the new religion. At the new religion, they are taught to jettison their tradition, labelled as barbaric. Oduche incarcerates the sacred python in his box because the new converts had been advised to kill the sacred python which they said was the same serpent that deceived Eve to pluck the fruit of wisdom in the Garden of Eden.

One who is ignorant of how Catholicism has brainwashed many people in the society, wonders why Eugene would suggest getting a Catholic priest to conduct a funeral for Papa Nnukwu who wasn't a Catholic while he had lived. Adichie is obviously not enthusiastic about the annihilation of the Igbo tradition by the new tradition. In an interview with Anya in 2003, as quoted by Brenda Cooper, she is quoted as saying that she is "interested in colonized religion, how people like me can profess and preach respect of their indigenous culture and yet cling so tenaciously to a religion that considers most of indigenous culture evil. Like Ifeoma Okoye, she is therefore, meticulous in the use of subtle dialogue to make a valid point. Auntie Ifeoma does not see any sense in Eugene's proposal and she starts shouting on him, obvious to her that Eugene is not ready to repent. "I will put my dead husband's grave for sale, Eugene, before I give our father a Catholic funeral. Was our father a Catholic? I ask you, Eugene, was he a catholic? *Uchu gba gi!*". Many pictures painted in the novel are vivid illustrations of how inferior women are perceived even in the contemporary Igbo society. Not minding that Papa Nnukwu has been abandoned by his wealthy son to be catered by his daughter, Ifeoma who is not very rich, Papa Nnukwu still extols the indispensability of males over females. While lamenting that the western tradition has corrupted his son and why he had allowed Eugene to be educated, believing that it was the western education that made Eugene to

despise him, Auntie Ifeoma quickly reminded him that it wasn't actually the western education that corrupted Eugene, after all, she too went to school. Papa Nnukwu's response that "But you are a woman. You do not count", immediately reveals the position women have been relegated to in Adichie's society.

### **Widowhood practice in Igbo tradition**

The issue of widowhood in Igbo is another serious issue of concern. Female writers see it as their task to fight for all sorts of injustice using their work. Florence Orabueze in "The Prison of Nigerian Women: Female Complicity in Sefi Atta's *everything Good Will Come*" applauds the efforts of women in salvaging themselves. As she puts it, "Evidently, after four decades of feminist writing, the Nigerian woman has made giant stride in her socio-political and economic standing in the society" (85). Part of what the women fight against include widowhood practices. According to Uche Nnyagu in "Fiction as a Blend of Fact and Imagination in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*",

The fates of widows in most parts of Igbo societies in Nigeria are clearly illustrated through Adichie's fictional characters. Adichie's invented character, Auntie Ifeoma whose husband Ifediora has died helped her pass her historical message across. It has been a common thing among the Igbo that when a man dies, his wife, in most cases, is accused of being responsible for the death. Even when it is categorical that the woman is innocent, the members of the kindred, probably in order to afford themselves the opportunity to share the man's properties among themselves, indict the poor woman of abetting the husband's death (24).

Adichie has aptly used the character, Auntie Ifeoma to vivify the poor treatment meted to widows in the society. It is pathetic that innocent women who are still in grief for the loss of their beloved husbands are usually accused of killing same husband. Auntie Ifeoma laments her experience when she says,

.... I don't have strength for Ifediora's family right now. They eat more and more shit every year. The people in his *umunna* said he left money somewhere and I have been hiding it. Last Christmas, one of the women from their compound even told me I had killed him. I wanted to stuff sand in her mouth. Then I thought that I should sit her down, eh, and explain that you do not kill a husband you love, that you do not orchestrate a car accident in which a trailer rams into your husband's car, but again, why waste my time? They all have brains of guinea fowls.

### ***Umunna as a weapon of oppression of women in the society***

In her *Understanding Gender Complementarity in Igbo Society: the Role of Umuada and Umunna in Peacebuilding*, Ngozi Ugo Emeka-Nwobia writes that the term *Umunna* is derived from two Igbo words, *Umu* (children) and *Nna* (a generic name for all sons). She therefore, describes *Umunna* as a group of men from the same family or sharing the same ancestry. *Umunna* is not only restricted to men from the same family hence Emeka-Nwobia quickly explains that *Umunna*, like in most African societies, include the extended family involving parents, grandparents, children, aunties, uncles, brothers, sisters, and cousins and even extends to their children. In Igbo, *Umunna* play vital roles in marriage, hence we hear people say that one person does not marry a woman alone.

Emeka-Nwobia discloses that the *Umunna* kinship system is a strong socio-cultural institution in Igboland and that *Umunna* maintain and ensure the effective transferring of cultural heritage, settle inter-/conflicts and preside over marriage ceremonies and funerals. This fact is well mirrored by both Ifeoma Okoye and Adichie in their respective novels. In *Behind the Clouds*, on many occasions, *Umunna* summon Dozie to come from Enugu, his base to the village to discuss his wife's inability to bear children. It is evident that each time the members of *Umunna* summon Dozie to a meeting, Ije is always seriously disturbed because the members of kindred and Dozie's mother would always mount pressure on Dozie to get a second wife who would give them children. The fear of *Umunna* makes Ije to seek solution everywhere even to the extent of taking dirty concoctions she couldn't have taken ordinarily. Nutsukpo, Margaret Fafa in an article, "Feminist Consciousness and Assertiveness in Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds* and *Chimere*", asserts that the Igbo culture is patriarchal and upholds the importance of the family, and allots the role of leadership to men as heads of the family. When a woman is unable to get children for her husband, the members of the kindred deride her and mount pressure on the husband to marry another woman. This is akin to the Igbo belief that the major essence of marriage is to have children. Okoye disclosed that Beatrice is one of those women who confide easily in people. From the novel, we understand that she has been married for eight years without a child and like Ije, she has visited many gynaecologists and several herbalists but none had been able to help. Beatrice says, "My husband is worried to death... his parents, his relations, his friends, all keep on telling him to get himself another wife to bear him a heir. I'm sure that one of these days he'll heed their advice" (4). Ije Apia equally suffers the pangs of the *Umunna*. Gabriel, the boy

that lives with Dozie's mother in the village comes to Enugu to inform them that *Umunna* have sent for them. Dozie and Ije know immediately why they have sent for them. The role of *Umunna* is well vivified here. Dozie and Ije together with Gabriel, set for the village to meet the *Umunna* and Ije's inability to have children is the reason for summoning them. Ije's good manner is hyped; not minding the perdurable vituperations especially from her mother in-law. After the meeting, they travel back to Enugu with Dozie promising *umunna* that he would consider what they have asked him to do (40 – 41). That nobody ever blamed Dozie and he never thought of going with Ije to seek solution authenticate the fact that women alone are blamed for childlessness in the society. The case is not different in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* where Auntie Ifeoma laments how *Umunna* have always made her remember her late husband. One wonders why the *Umunna* would not leave her alone. They do not care about assisting her to train her children. All they are after is her husband's wealth. They allege that she killed her husband so that they would justify why they would take all her husband's properties and leave her perpetually in pains. Auntie Ifeoma describes them as having the brain of guinea fowls. Responding, Beatrice says, "*Umunna* will always say hurtful things (83). Like *Umunna* compel Dozie in *Behind the Clouds*, Beatrice says to Auntie Ifeoma, "Did our *umunna* not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his statue cannot have just two children?"

In both novels, *umunna* mount pressure on the major characters to take another wife over their wives' inability to bear children. In Okoye's *Behind the Cloud*, the woman is unable to bear a child at all because her husband is impotent. Ije runs from place to place seeking solution. Dozie is disturbed but he supports Ije in her adventures. He is emotional, caring and supportive. In

every condition, Dozie still believes in Ije and there is never a time we are told that he shouted or raised his hand on Ije. Even when Virginia comes to disintegrate the erstwhile peaceful home, Dozie still never treated Ije with contempt. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene beats his wife in any minor provocation. Each time Ije is emotionally disturbed, Dozie consoles her. He is liberal and not harsh to even James and Teresa the house helps. He plans to send Ije to London to meet European doctors before Virginia the impostor comes to instil disintegration between the couple. In her *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene is direct opposite of Dozie. He is potent and his wife is fruitful, always pregnant but on many occasions, Eugene's maltreatments to her had resulted in series of miscarriages. Not caring to know what Beatrice has been suffering in her home and the number of times Eugene has caused him to lose pregnancy, *Umunna* have always intruded. Beatrice says to her daughter, "God is faithful. You know after you came and I had the miscarriage, the villagers started to whisper. The members of our *umunna* even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else. Not minding how submissive his wife and children are, Eugene is harsh to the entire members of the family. His harshness has great effect in the upbringing of the children. *Purple Hibiscus* is thus, a bildungsroman because it focuses on character development of the children. Kambili is always described by her class mates as possessing strange and odd behaviour because she never associated with the other students.

While Dozie cares so much for his mother, Eugene despises his own father for no cause other than that the man is a traditionalist. Both men are wealth and generous. But Eugene is only generous to people outside and in his own house, he is a beast.

## **Dangers of polygamy**

Polygamy had always been the custom of the African until the white man came with his tradition and declared the African tradition barbaric. Henceforth, polygamy became abhorrence and African women became aggressive to any woman suspected to be in a relationship with their husbands. In Achebe's early novels, polygamy was the tradition. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo has three wives and they lived gregariously because the women are aware that Okonkwo never committed any crime by being polygamous. In twentieth century when western civilisation had begun to permeate every part of Africa, women detested polygamy. In Ifeoma Okoye's *Behind the Clouds*, the fear that her husband might take a second wife made Beatrice to sleep with Apostle Joseph in order to have children and save her marriage. Ije Apia left Dozie when Virginia came with the claim that she was carrying Dozie's child. On many occasions, Ije has expressed the fear that Dozie might yield to the pressure of his people and take a second wife. Similarly, in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, a novel set in the twenty-first century, the fear of second wife has prevailed. Beatrice has always expressed fear about her husband taking a second wife. Even after being beaten and battered, Beatrice remains grateful to her husband for not taking a second wife. She tells her daughter that because of Eugene's wealth, many people have willing daughters, many of them university graduates who are willing to bear more children for Eugene. According to her, "They might have borne many sons and taken over our home and driven us out, like Mr. Ezendu's second wife did... (28). On page 83, while interacting with Aunty Ifeoma, she says "Did our own *umunna* not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his statue cannot have just two children?" From the novels, we understand that nothing has changed so much between the twentieth and twenty-

first centuries. The desire for many children, especially male children has remained a major issue in marriage in Igbo society.

### **Ideal women in Igbo society**

It is popular belief of majority that women and flamboyance are synonymous. This is true about some women globally; those who would prefer to spend a fortune in costly wears so as to be counted among the aristocrats. However, the assertion does not represent all women. In Igbo society, there are women who are *Ori Aku* (Wealth squanderer) and there are others who are *Ochekwa Aku* or *Odozi Aku* (Wealth Preserver). The *Ori Aku* are interested in their physical appearance. In his “The Necklace”, Albert Guy de Maupassant gives a clear picture of the *ori aku* with his character, Mrs Mathilde Loisel. In the short story, de Maupassant has a distinct perspective on the role of women in western culture in his time. His observation about women being extravagant is true of some women in many societies in the contemporary era. The female characters in “The Necklace” are profusely extravagant. As female writers, Okoye and Adichie were meticulous in presenting female characters who are mainly *Odozi aku*. Both writers’ characters are rounded and to make their works credible and realistic, they have presented other characters who are *ori aku*. In *Behind the Clouds*, we have the *oriaku* and *Ochekwa aku* and Okoye has so naturally presented the different classes of women to cohere with real women in our real society. Ugo Ushie, Ije’s trusted friend and confidant and Ije Apia are both *ochekwa aku*. They are like, Adichie’s Beatrice, frugal and not materialistic. These women have the wherewithal to appear lofty but they chose to be prudent. Ugo Ushie narrates to Ije how materialistic Mrs Okoh has lured her to join their club and Ije says to her, “I can’t imagine you as a member of Mrs Okoh’s club .... Of course you know why, Ugo! I

can't imagine *you* dressing as flamboyantly as the other club members." Ugo Ushie's response, "I don't know how these fashion-conscious women make both ends meet ... with the cost of living rising in leaps and bounds every day," is a clear indication that the *oriaku* women care not about their future. Their priority simply, like Mathilde, is their outward appearance (32).

### **Conclusion**

Ifeoma Okoye and Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie are both Nigerian female writers from Igbo extraction. Their works are ethnographies of the same Igbo society but in different ages. While Okoye wrote during the twentieth century, representing the Igbo society in the era, Adichie, a contemporary female writer x-rays the happenings in the contemporary Igbo society. From the novels, we understand that much has not changed between the twentieth century and the twenty-first century concerning the way women are treated in the society. As female writers, both have extolled women in their works and have subtly presented men as beasts in human form. The researchers discovered that two female writer have different views about feminism. Okoye believes that in whatever condition, a man and a woman should always be together; they may quarrel but after the quarrel, there is need for reconciliation. Ije feels aggrieved over Dozie's infidelity which results in Virginia who comes with pregnancy alleged to belong to Dozie. She leaves the home when tension becomes overcharged and when the truth about Dozie's impotency unravels and Dozie looks for Ije and apologises, Ije reconciles with him and the marriage continues with the intruder leaving them to enjoy their marriage. Adichie on the other hand, preaches unity in marriage but when the man fails to appreciate the unity, the woman can exterminate the man to have her life. To her, the life of the man is as important to him as the woman's is to her.

Towards the end of the novel, we see Mama telling Kambili and Jaja that she'd been feeding Papa poison.

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