NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
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**FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES – DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

# EXPLORING FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN *THE COLOR PURPLE*, *THE PURPLE VIOLET OF OSHAANTU* AND *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

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**THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS AT THE NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (NUST)**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores feminist consciousness in three black female writers' works: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013). This is a qualitative, desktop study grounded on the radical feminist theoretical framework, whose main argument is that the main cause of female oppression is patriarchy, and hence the female characters in the select texts challenge patriarchy in an attempt to regain their voice and identity. The aim of this research is to enable the reader to understand the impact that patriarchy has on women in male-dominated societies, and the manner and context in which the select black female writers have expressed this concern. The argument is that the Walker, Andreas and Adichie negotiate spaces for women through their select works, which conscientise women of their oppression so that they can unite, subvert patriarchy, and become emancipated in all aspects of society. The study also establishes that the select texts' reference to the purple colour represents women's strength and resilience, freedom and equality.

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DEDICATION

With love to Godwell Snr., Rumbidzai Blessing, Kudzai Godwell Jnr., and my parents, Phillip and Magna Magomo

# Table of Contents

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the study. Sections 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7 provide the background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, significance, delimitation and key terms of the study, respectively. Section 1.8 provides this thesis' chapter layout. This chapter is concluded in Section 1.9.

### 1.2 Background of the study

In general, most black women's writing focuses on societal issues that directly affect women. Black female writers are conscious of the fact that they have a social responsibility of expressing the needs and concerns of black women, thus they assume the role of being spokespersons for all black females from all walks of life, and hence giving voice to the voiceless. Some of the common themes that are addressed by female writers include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, exploitation, oppression and abuse of women under patriarchy, celebrating womanhood, and women's quest for freedom and gender equality.

Feminism is a theoretical approach to the position of women in society, which was born from the contention that women are particularly marginalised and oppressed by various social structures. The primary tenets of feminism are a response to the male view of the woman, which simultaneously make her invisible and silent. This is coupled with other forms of oppression which women suffer as a result of race and class distinctions especially for black women who do not limit their struggles to the gender question.

Feminist literature's main goal is to define, establish and defend women's equal rights in all aspects of society. Men enjoy status, privilege and power, but women are oppressed and disadvantaged. The desire to end sexist oppression forms the nucleus of feminism, which makes it a radical political movement.

Most feminist literature has mushroomed as a counter discourse to male representation, or rather misrepresentation, of women, and hence Keohane (1982, p.vii) argues:

> Feminist theory brings the awareness that the construction of the woman has never been adequate. Whether the experience was made trivial or enviable, sanctified, or mystified, it was peripheral, described and explained primarily not by women themselves, but by men.

There is, however, no clear cut definition of feminism, as there have been many schools of feminism which are both contradictory and complimentary. Various forms of feminism have emerged and these have been defined in terms of their ideological inclinations, and these include radical feminism, liberal feminism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, womanism, and African feminism. In response to the hegemonic nature of European theories, African as well as African-American women have also evolved their own forms of feminism, which take into consideration the uniqueness of their experience.

It is against this background that this study explores three black female writers' works: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013). This research will evaluate Walker, Andreas, and Adichie's feminist ideology and whether they negotiate spaces for women. Central to their writings are issues that deal with history, identity and marginality in relation to women, and how women are forced to endure without having a nervous breakdown.

**1.3 Statement of the problem**

The main problem is that patriarchal society does not allow women the freedom to express themselves and their desires. Patriarchy strips women of their joy and self-worth through heavily marginalising them. This research becomes a way of examining patriarchal structures that oppress women as manifested in the select texts, but at the same time conscientising women to work together, and also men to cooperate with women, in women's struggle against the oppressive chains of patriarchy. As long as women themselves, and men and women, are not united, discussions on female empowerment and equal rights are meaningless. Social and economic injustices need to be annihilated in order to subvert the subaltern status of women in patriarchal societies.

As a way of inquiring into the complex nature of the relationships between men and women, and among women themselves, in society, how do these women negotiate a space for themselves? The aim and purpose of this research is to evaluate whether the female characters in Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) eventually acquire a sense of feminist identity all through their difficult period, the feminist consciousness which helps them to cope with the hardships that they have to face and overcome.

**1.4 Research objectives**

The main research objective is to explore feminist consciousness in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

(2013).

The specific objectives are to:

- determine whether Walker, Andreas and Adichie negotiate spaces for women in the select texts
- compare the significance of the color purple in the three select texts
- evaluate the success of the use of radical feminist criticism as a legitimate theoretical tool for the analysis of the three select texts

**1.5 The significance of the research**

This research seeks to expose how in every aspect of society, regardless of whether we are aware of it or not, gender issues play a part. The view of women as "the other" by men in particular, and society in general, should change as a result of this study and therefore change the world through promoting gender equality. This can also contribute to a better understanding of the widespread cases of gender-based violence mostly perpetrated by men against women, particularly in Namibia. This research can also serve as a stepping-stone for future literary studies in the same field.

**1.6 The delimitation of the research**

Though cross-reference will be made to other literary texts, this study is mainly concerned with the select literary texts and as such will predominantly concentrate on Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013). Though other feminist literary theories can be applied to the study of the same texts, this research is limited only to radical feminist critical theory in the analysis of those texts.

**1.7 Key terms**

Feminism, feminist, radical feminism, patriarchy, consciousness, sex, gender, culture, sisterhood

**1.8 Layout of chapters**

There are six chapters in this thesis. Chapter 1 introduces the study and its objectives. Chapter 2 reviews related literature, and acts as a launch pad for this study. Radical feminism, the theoretical framework on which this research is grounded, is discussed in Chapter 3. The research methodology employed in this study follows in Chapter 4. An intense analysis and interpretation of Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) from a radical feminist's standpoint is provided in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 summarises the research, provides recommendations and concludes the study. Finally, a reference list of all works cited in this thesis is attached.

## 1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study and its orientation. It presented the problem statement, research objectives, significance and delimitation of this research. The next chapter discusses the literature that this researcher reviewed for this study.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The following literature review examines literature related to this study of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) to show how these select texts have been previously studied, and identify gaps in previous research, with the purpose of addressing them. These reviewed related works are useful to a very large extent as they serve as a source of inspiration for this researcher and a stepping-stone to this and future research.

This literature review has been divided into sub-sections that are thematically arranged, including patriarchy, womanhood, sisterhood and lesbianism, silence and voice. Each theme will be defined in its own sub-section. These themes have been selected because they relate to the research objectives, and are common in the select texts, which ensures that related ideas from different scholars are integrated. Though these themes are discussed separately to aid understanding, they form part of the whole. Most of the articles reviewed discuss more than one of the themes identified. Though many scholars have explored these themes in relation to raising feminist consciousness, this researcher seeks to identify gaps in literature that might have been overlooked in previous studies.

Firstly, this researcher will define and discuss patriarchy with a view to understanding male-female relations in a male dominated society, and how this has led to the rise of feminism.

### 2.2 Problematising patriarchy

This section will provide a definition and discussion of patriarchy, women's role in a patriarchal society, and an examination of what critics say about patriarchy in the three novels taken up for this study.

The 8th Edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010, p.1076) defines patriarchy as "a society, system or country that is ruled by men." Lee, Lynch and Clayton (2013) in Thorpe (2018, p.305) describe patriarchy as "a social hierarchy that privileges men over women, and masculinity over femininity". According to Amos and Pamar (2001) a clear definition of patriarchy should place male-female relations in a wider political and economic framework, not just look at the men's power over women. Weedon (1987) further asserts that social meanings that are given to biological sexual differences are what upholds patriarchal power. Weedon (1987, p.22) also argues that women are not regarded as independent as they

are defined in relation to men, which explains the use of words like “man” and “he” to encompass all humankind. This implies that in a patriarchal society, men believe that women cannot stand alone without male support, and hence the patriarchal view of women as the weaker sex. In this regard, men are accorded a higher status while women are seen as inferior. Patriarchy thrives on looking down upon and oppressing women. The power that men have over women is also reinforced by cultural traditions. Gender inequality is attributed to traditional misogynist attitudes that view boys to be superior and more capable than girls.

Andima and Tjiramanga (2014, p.79) argue that the female spirit is disrespected, devalued, suppressed and destroyed by some cultural values, and hence they identify these traditional structures as “mountains on the back of an African woman” to emphasise the extent to which patriarchy in particular, and traditional culture in general, oppress women. Krishnamurthy (2008) asserts that patriarchal society oppresses women because it sees them as “the other”, the subaltern who do not deserve recognition in society. However, while patriarchy oppresses women, it cannot survive without the same women it oppresses.

Many critics have pointed out that patriarchal society, as represented in the select texts, does not allow women the freedom to express themselves and their desires. Sexual, racial and class oppression triply burden women. Men regard themselves as more important and greater than women, while viewing women as useless, helpless, and dependent on men, and hence Rao and Kiran (2017) state that patriarchal power has denied women their rights and humanity. The contention that women were particularly marginalised and oppressed by various social structures resulted in the birth of feminism, which is the struggle for women by women to have the same rights and opportunities as men. The primary tenets of feminism are a response to the male view of women, which simultaneously makes her invisible and silent, thus Ross (1988, p.70) notes that feminism aims at restoring to women their bodies, which were “appropriated long ago by a patriarchal culture”.

Akingbe (2017) argues that because patriarchy is so entrenched in most societies, feminist criticism is seen as very offensive by most male critics, and hence men fight to maintain their status quo, even if it means oppressing women and denying them their voices. According to Fochingong (2006, p.135), “African literature is replete with write-ups that project male dominance and inadequately pleads the case of the African woman”. Patriarchy victimises women and squashes their voices to such an extent that they cannot contribute meaningfully to community matters, and hence Rao and Kiran (2017) criticise male writers for presenting women as men’s possessions with small brains and reproduction tools to enhance

men's status and boost their ego. In building their world, men exploit women as helpers, yet they look down upon the latter.

Kalawole (1997) in Fochingong (2006, p.10) notes that most male writers encourage the lowly status of women through either "omission or commission" and this places most women on the margins of the fictional plot. In other words, the male literary discourse sidelines women. Male writers such as Chinua Achebe present their female characters as passive, voiceless, docile, and dependent to a very large extent on men for survival. Achebe's female characters are mute, submissive, and do not show any signs of resistance. Nnolim (1989, p.98) observes that Achebe's earlier works regard men as superior to women because "the man is made the subject of the narratives: he is significant and dominates".

The woman's place is not in the law courts or decision-making but on the margins of society. Women are expected to obey, not to give, orders. Stratton (1994, p.25) comments that in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), "women are also systematically excluded from the political, the economic, the judicial, and even the discoursal life of the community". Stratton (1994, p.26) also portrays how women are unfairly treated under patriarchy when she explains how men can "intrude into the domestic domain" while women are not allowed to invade the domain of community power which is male dominated. Not much voice is given to Okonkwo's wives. Stratton (1994, p.32) argues that "a subjective view is evident in the portrayal of women. Furthermore, the narrator does not always maintain an objective stance on the issue of gender relations, but aligns himself with the sexist views of male characters".

What strikes the reader of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is the voicelessness of Achebe's female characters and how they do not show any signs of resistance. They are presented as passive beings who can only be swayed by their male counterparts or by the traditional system. With the presentation of such flat female characters, the question becomes: What really is the position and role of a woman in a society where she is treated as such?

Shober in Smith (2015) posits that in African societies, male success is the impetus behind the men's need to control women. Controlling women becomes the main focus of the men in a patriarchal society, and one of the means through which they control women is denying the girl child the right to education. Men have realised that education is a means to emancipation, therefore denying the girl child that right is a deliberate attempt by men for men to remain in control and continue oppressing and exploiting women, and this limits life opportunities for women. If the women are uneducated, they remain economically

dependent on men, and hence men can retain their power over women, whom the men consider to be "the weaker sex".

Sharma and Sharma (1995, p.22) propound that an educated woman receives enlightenment and true freedom, but if she is denied education and not enlightened, "she will remain dejected, oppressed and incapable of sharing men's pursuits and ideals". As a result, men keep her away from school to ensure that she remains ignorant. Men are united in this plot to reduce women to economic dependency so as to continue dominating over women (Hartmann, 1997). It is in the light of this that Andima and Tjiramanga (2014) assert that in a patriarchal society, educating boys is a priority as compared to educating girls, thus men are afforded power by traditional culture.

This kind of oppression prevents women from taking a direct part in the world outside. Household chores confine women to the home where they are expected to submit to male domination (Karl, 1995). Traditional culture teaches a woman that she is inferior to men and her place is to run her home as a good wife, mother and also take care of the extended family, which are responsibilities created by society. Greene and Kahn (1985) note that male supremacy is a result of patriarchy which creates gender imbalances. A man who does domestic chores is mocked by society and as a result men refuse to take part in what they consider to be feminine work (Wolpe and Martinez, 1997). This denial of responsibility in caring for the family traps women in traditional roles.

Patriarchal ideology gives the woman the inferior position of "the other" who cannot take responsibility for her own actions, and has to dance according to the tune and the beat of men, thus presenting "woman as immanence, man as transcendence" as argued by Moi (1985) in Moyana (1994, p.39). Echoing this sentiment, Sattar (2014, p.527) describes patriarchal ideologies as hurdles in women's way of getting self-awareness and true identity, thus "serving as the choking wreath hanging around their necks".

Patriarchal societies support and enforce female oppression. The power that men have over women is also reinforced by cultural traditions. Many women suffer silently because they have accepted this patriarchal status quo, which has become normalised as part of being female. Schulz (2014) notes that cases of gender-based violence being experienced in society are mainly a result of patriarchal cultural norms, which to a large extent have been distorted.

Whilst in African society, marriage is seen as a way of legitimising a woman's existence, Victor (2013) observes how the marriage institution, which should be long-lasting and fulfilling, is negated and mocked by violence and abuse as exemplified by Shange in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and Eugene in

*Purple Hibiscus* (2013), and further argues that silence of the victims and their families allows the violence to go unreported. However, this "silence becomes a powerful tool for speaking against oppressive social customs" (Victor, 2013, p.58). This researcher will also add on Mr _ in *The Color Purple* (1982) to this discussion brought up by Victor (2013) on the marriage institution because Mr _ is also violent towards Celie.

In relation to Alice Walker's presentation of patriarchy, Robinson (2012) states that much of Walker's unappealing depiction of father figures in her works stem from her strained relationship with her father who was also a violent and almost always bad-tempered man. There was violence in Walker's family whose roots were grounded in her oppressive and domineering father's need to feel more superior to her mother and siblings. On the other hand, Walker's mother, though oppressed doubly by her husband in particular and society in general, was strong and supportive.

Ross (1988) argues that patriarchal culture appropriated women's bodies long ago, and notes that Celie in *The Color Purple* (1982) does not regard herself as a human being, but likens herself to wood after Mr. _ violates and insults her, telling her that she cannot curse anybody because she is black, poor, ugly, and a woman. It is because of this that feminism aims at restoring to women their bodies. In the same vein, Wall (1988, p.83) claims that "patriarchy maintains power by forcing the female body into a position of powerlessness" and hence Celie's attempts to redefine herself against the patriarchal system through her writing.

Lewis (2012, p.167) observes that when *The Color Purple* (1982) ends with Albert and Celie as friends and not husband and wife in conflict, "the failed patriarchy becomes the symbol of successful, feminist heterosexual masculinity and the shameless black same-sex desiring woman becomes emblematic of successful black female articulation".

An almost similar pattern is observed in Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001). Through Kauna, societal injustices towards women are highlighted (Fallon, 2007). The marriage institution, which is supposed to be a source of love, happiness and comfort, especially for women, becomes hell for Kauna as she is unfortunately abused both physically and emotionally by Shange. Despite Shange's womanising and the physical abuse she regularly suffers at his hands, Kauna remains loyal to him in line with her society's tradition of patriarchy, and hence Rhode (2009, p.46) describes Kauna as "a mere instrument of her husband's will". Coxson (2006) asserts that the social institution of marriage as depicted by Andreas (2001) is responsible for the injustices and violence perpetrated against women, and bemoans the fact that

unfortunately the novel never develops a fully-sustained argument against the traditional system of patriarchy.

Hangula (2016) observes that the death of a spouse also poses problems for the black woman in African culture as she is multiply accused especially when she refuses to mourn her husband as expected of her by her society. The suffering that Mee Kauna experiences does not end with Shange's death, but continues at the hands of Shange's relatives, and hence Hangula (2016) notes that in Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), Mee Kauna's in-laws mistreat her after Shange, her husband, dies because traditionally her in-laws have power over her and so express their power by denying her any inheritance. Kauna's refusal to speak at her husband's funeral may be seen as a form of protest against customary laws that require her to mourn her late husband, thus in being quiet she is ironically speaking against regarding and excusing domestic violence as normal, and hence Weiss (2007, p.28) argues that when Kauna refuses to speak at her husband's funeral as according to custom, that silence is "an instrument to rebel against patriarchal conventions".

Chindedza (2017) notes that Celie's ill-treatment by Mr. _ and Kauna's torture by Shange, in Walker (1982) and Andreas (2001) respectively, demonstrate how women are abused by their husbands, and how women's lives are in the hands of men. It is only after they become conscious of their circumstances that Celie and Kauna begin to challenge the system. Against this background, Chindedza (2017) advocates for the need to conscientise society against oppression and assist the oppressed women to question the oppressive men.

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), even men as "honourable" as Papa Eugene lack an understanding of what love is. The way he punishes his own children, Kambili and Jaja, makes them passive and fail to accept their true selves. According to Wallace (2002), Kambili's reference to the tea which Papa Eugene gave them which was always hot and scorched their tongues is symbolic of Eugene's staunch belief in patriarchy that if he has to be respected in his family he has to gain that respect through violence, pain and depriving his family their voices, with only his voice as head of the house to be heard.

Describing Papa Eugene, Sandwith (2016, p.101) refers to him as an "abusive patriarch who controls the domestic realm through a combination of violent punishment, exacting schedules and ritualised performance". In the same vein, Stobie (2010) in Ordas and Hand (2015) propounds that Eugene does not stand alone as an individual, but is a microcosm of patriarchal power abuse when it goes unchecked.

Basterretxea (2016) argues that the sexist fathers like Papa Eugene destroy the self-esteem of their girl children, who are the psychological and physical victims of abuse, and hence there is serious need to challenge patriarchy. Therefore, Chindedza (2017) argues that in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), as a challenge to patriarchy, Beatrice poisons Eugene because he is the cause of her suffering and for her to get rid of him symbolises an end to her suffering leading to her family's freedom.

Acker (1989) argues that the problem with patriarchy is its treatment of women as inconspicuous, insignificant and unexciting social actors. As a result, if women are to be emancipated then the whole patriarchal structure needs dismantling. For this to materialise, Sowards and Renegar (2004) advocate for consciousness-raising as women have to first acknowledge that they are oppressed and exploited by men and then be able to effectively address their concerns in relation to men. This notion is cemented by Chindedza (2017) who also argues for consciousness-raising as discussed earlier in this section.

It is in the light of the above that Basterretxea (2016) calls for men to turn away from violence and all traditional systems and beliefs that entrench it, as it is evident that patriarchy and sexism pose harm to the society. Violent thoughts have to be rejected as well as stereotypical gender roles that discriminate against women and make them objects and not subjects in their own right.

The next section will discuss ideas put forward by critics on the burden of being a black woman in a patriarchal society that looks down upon women, and introduce possible solutions to ease this burden.

**2.3 The burden of womanhood**

Against the background given in the previous section, it is worthwhile to look at how women suffer in society. Many critics point out that being born black and a woman at the same time is a heavy burden. Robinson (2009, p.310) describes female suffering as "double oppression" because women are looked down upon and ill-treated by both their husbands and the society they live in. While the experiences of the black woman are different from those of the white woman, they all point towards how male supremacist attitudes oppress women, therefore both black and white women fight for the males' approval, indulgence and support, and hence Clarke (1981, p.135) asserts that "such is the effect of imperialist, heterosexist patriarchy". Rao and Kiran (2017) posit that the black women of Africa and America are victims of sexual, racial and class oppression, and hence fight to move to self-realisation from victimhood.

Simone de Beauvoir in Hsiao (2008) argues that it is culture which defines a woman, as culture defines femininity. This is what brings about the contradictions and antagonism between femininity and

masculinity, as gender roles are a result of these contradictions. Hsiao (2008) observes how gender roles and gender dynamics feature Walker's presentation of her characters as well as in her development of plot. Furthermore, Hsiao (2008) notes that Walker, in *The Color Purple* (1982), calls for a turnaround of gender, coexistence of men and women, and lesbian sexuality, and recommends an amalgamation of masculinity and femininity for both sexes. Rao and Kiran (2017) argue that Walker's works highlight the challenges faced by African-American women and how they fight against and resist racial discrimination, sexism, violence, and the way their human rights are exploited.

The world teaches women that they are abused because of their own fault, and seeing their suffering as normal, women remain silent and suffer in silence without questioning the system of patriarchy. Dawjee in Thorpe (2018) identifies the household chores performed by women, such as ironing clothes, washing dishes, cooking, cleaning, raising children and looking after their husbands, as stereotypes in the home which women live out silently as patriarchy's nucleus. Violence perpetrated by men against women becomes normalised and the women victims tolerate it and regard it as justified. Dawjee (2018, p.67) further argues that women such as Celie in *The Color Purple* (1982) find themselves accepting the stereotypes, seeing their abuse as normal, and not fighting it, and hence defines patriarchy and sexism as "the thieves of a woman's life". Thus Mkhize in Thorpe (2018) furthers this notion by asserting that women's oppression becomes internalised as they are conditioned by it. It needs independent and strong women to question and challenge it. Only when women challenge this can their suffering under patriarchy end.

*The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) also illustrates how women are burdened by society in general, and patriarchy in particular. Rhode (2009) discusses how traditional society in Namibia, especially in villages, gives women a subordinate role. Even when in abusive marriages women remain faithful and loyal because both society and religious convictions dictate that they keep their marriage vows by preaching subservience and remaining faithful to marriage vows despite problems encountered in the marriage, thus women find themselves trapped in abusive unions since marriage is considered a measure of their identity. As if that is not enough, the suffering continues after the death of the husband as Mee Kauna is accused of bewitching him and denied inheritance. The same applies to Mee Sarah, whose promiscuous husband dies of AIDS, who is also denied inheritance as she is accused of being a witch responsible for her husband's death. Thus Rhode (2009) argues that traditional African society is not merciful towards women's suffering. The society in which a woman should find solace is the same society that labels and frustrates her.

Discussing *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), Azuike (2009, p.81) states that "the story of a woman is basically the story of a second class citizen" as observed through Kambili and Beatrice who remain silent whenever Eugene tramples on them. On the same note, Basterretxea (2016) observes how women's voices are stifled as exemplified by Beatrice who suffers in silence, trapped in a cold marriage like Mee Kauna because society has made her internalise the idea that a husband and children define a woman. Basterretxea (2016) further argues that patriarchal society abuses women to such an extent that, like Kambili, they develop a low self-esteem. Akung (2013) posits that as exemplified in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), women are relegated to an inferior position and struggle to define themselves in a society that wrongly defines them. Thus, Azuike (2009, p.80) suggests that "a woman needs to burst the system and set up her own parameters within the society or risk being treated as a doormat for life".

In the light of the above arguments, Akung (2013) propounds that women need to be liberated from their subordinate status by doing away with gender roles. Davies (1995) in Akung (2013) claims that a woman struggles to define herself, as her power to construct her identity is regulated by the society and the woman's ability to rise above those regulations and achieve self-understanding and self-identification while remaining a full member of her society. This is what makes it problematic and complicated for women to define themselves. Ward (1996) in Akung (2013) poses questions on what an African woman is in relationship to men, motherhood, patriarchy and culture. In response, Akung (2013, p.28) argues that such questions explain the emergence of the feminist novel aimed at reconceiving women's identity and readdressing women's place, position and role in society, which has been misrepresented in male-authored texts, and hence the feminist novel is meant "to create a parallel character to correct these ills against the woman".

Bowler in Thorpe (2018) argues that feminism is required to provide the lenses through which women can clearly see themselves as it helps them understand themselves in particular and the world in general. In its quest for human completion, feminism enables women to understand their experiences as women, and hence the capacity for women to take action is increased; agency becomes a possibility. O'Grady in Hammonds (1994) refers to this process of gaining consciousness as mirroring, explaining that one has to see oneself before one can name oneself, and acknowledges that this is not an easy, but a necessary, process for many people. As long as one is "unmirrored", one cannot forge ahead (Hammonds, 1994, p.9). It is in working towards annihilating the burden of womanhood by defending women's rights that feminism is considered a political movement. Lesbianism and sisterhood are some of the ways through which feminists seek to ease the woman's burden, so these will be discussed in the next section.

### 2.4 Celebrating lesbianism and sisterhood

In this two-part section, the researcher will discuss lesbianism and sisterhood, which many critics have identified as key to the emancipation of females. In Section 2.4.1, the researcher will first define and then discuss lesbianism in relation to what critics say about lesbianism in *The Color Purple* (1982), the only text among the three select texts which explicitly examines lesbianism. Section 2.4.2 will provide a definition of sisterhood, and then present what the critics say about sisterhood in the three select texts.

#### 2.4.1 Lesbianism

The 8th Edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010, p.851) defines a lesbian as "a woman who is sexually attracted to other women". Lewis (2012) argues that the ideas of sex that female characters are subjected to that are masculinist can be countered by women's sexual relationships with each other. Clarke (1981, p.135) posits that "for a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture is an act of resistance ... This rebellion is dangerous business in patriarchy". This is because men feel entitled to women's bodies, and hence Eromosele (2013) describes sex as an oppression and exploitation metaphor.

On lesbianism, Clarke (1981) propounds that women have spent so much time fighting against each other, yet the key to winning the resistance against patriarchy is to love themselves, just like Shug Avery and Celie in *The Color Purple* (1982). Abend-David (1999, p.17) argues that "through her discovery of lesbian sex Celie arrives at the rejection of men-oriented values, the most of which is her reconceptualisation of God as Patriarch". Thus Celie stops writing to God and begins writing to her sister, Nettie. Abend-David (1999) further comments that as depicted in *The Color Purple* (1982), there are endless possibilities in the absence of a male-dominated society.

Lewis (2012, p.159) argues that "black lesbian shamelessness is defined by its celebration of the fact that same-sex relationships sustain and nurture the lives of countless black women as well as by its acceptance of vulnerability and mutual dependence as fundamental conditions of human existence". As a result, black female lesbian writers present stories about black women who were left out from the literary discourse of blacks that hid behind the politics and veil of black pride, to express their concerns such as physical, emotional and psychological abuse in their broken families at the hands of men. It is only when Celie opens up without shame to Shug Avery about her traumatic sexual experiences that she becomes aware of who she is, and hence Lewis (2012, p.170) argues that "articulation of violation can lead to an awareness of individuals' indebtedness to one another for their identities and thus become a fundamental ethic of human care".

The lesbian relationship between Celie and Shug therefore manifests the importance of women uniting, sharing their problems, and working together to find solutions. Hsiao (2008) argues that in order to overcome patriarchal oppression, women need to speak up against their abusers and reclaim their submerged voice. Lewis (2012) asserts that in *The Color Purple* (1982), the ideas of sex that female characters are subjected to that are masculinist can be countered by women's sexual relationships with each other. The wounds inflicted on Celie by Alphonso and Albert begin to heal when she becomes closer to Shug Avery, thus Celie is transformed to an independent, happy and successful woman from being a sorrowful wife.

### 2.4.2 Sisterhood

Cloete and Mlambo (2014) define sisterhood as a friendship between women, a support structure which enables them to cope with the pressures at home as well as societal demands on women through inspiring one another. In addition, Chindedza (2017, p.27) discusses sisterhood as "a kind of consciousness call for women advocating for unity in their fight for recognition". Women cannot succeed against patriarchy if they are divided, therefore they need to unite and uplift each other. The oppressed women only regain their voice and confidence through the assistance of other women. Eagleton (1996) states that when women figure out their problems amongst themselves, they form an alliance which enables them to stand against patriarchy, speak with one voice and achieve freedom from male domination.

Women need to advance in society so as to promote gender equality for the good of the society, and they try to achieve this through sisterhood. Rao and Kiran (2017) posit that if women stand up together and help one another, they can overcome the system of patriarchy that oppresses them and put an end to male domination.

In *The Color Purple* (1982), it is from a network of women that Celie derives strength and fights for her identity as a woman. Cheung (1988, p.168) states that Sofia, Shug and Nettie are to Celie "feminist models daring to assert autonomy, challenge patriarchy, and shed feminine decorum". In other words, it is through strong and independent women such as Shug, Sofia and Nettie that Celie begins to question and challenge patriarchy.

Echoing the same sentiments, Sattar (2014, p.527) asserts that through Shug Avery, Sofia and Nettie's support, Celie is "transformed into a new woman – a woman of resistance and a woman who could retaliate and protest". In the same vein, Tanritanir and Boynukara (2011) argue that it is only when Celie regains self-confidence supported by other women, especially through her relationship with Shug Avery,

that she is able to talk back at Albert and curse him. When former rivals, Sofia and Mary Agnes realise and accept their shared responsibility, they stop being dependent on Harpo, which would have maintained masculine power, and hence signalling that their commitment to "matrifocality" is parallel (Ross, 1988, p.81). In other words, patriarchal oppression can be overcome through women sticking together, as alone they cannot succeed, and hence the importance of unity is emphasized through the concept of sisterhood. Thus Gqola in Thorpe (2018, p.17) states that "sisterhood, brilliance, courage, and laughter" is feminism.

The importance of sisterhood is also highlighted in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001). Arich-Gerz (2014) observes how the women of Oshaantu village successfully come together in solidarity to help Mee Kauna till her field. Had it not been for their support, Shange would have come home and beaten up his wife, Mee Kauna, if he had found the work incomplete. Through working together in communal spirit, the women save one of their own from physical abuse at the hands of her husband.

In supporting and helping Kauna to till her land, Rhode (2009) asserts that the women of the village encouraged her to remain strong in the face of all the abuse she was experiencing at the hands of her husband, Shange. The "okakungungu" (working festival, group cultivation) saved her from further beatings from Shange who would regard her as a useless wife if he had found the tilling incomplete, and from village gossip, thus sisterhood stands out as assuming the role of communal responsibility. In providing this supportive network, the Oshaantu women help Kauna endure and overcome her hardships.

Basterretxea (2016) observes that while patriarchy oppresses and marginalises women, they can acquire freedom through bonding and solidarity as women. In order to defend themselves from the onslaught of patriarchy, which abuses and oppresses women, the most effective way is female solidarity. *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) presents Papa Eugene who victimises and silences his daughter, Kambili, through his abusive behaviour, and it is only through Aunty Ifeoma's support that Kambili becomes free and gains her voice. Thus, Basterretxea (2016, p.12) further argues that the main concept of *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) is "the hope for freedom and recovery for women by building feminine spaces of comfort and establishing female solidarity where women feel comfortable and respected".

Ruiz (2011) analyses the concept of sisterhood as providing a support system that sustains the abused women in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), but excludes *The Color Purple* (1982) from his analysis as he argues that Walker is not African but African-American. However, this research incorporates Walker, an African-American female author, to present different challenges affecting black women in different geographical contexts as it is this researcher's aim to establish the

commonality of the three select writers even though they belong to different contexts. Acker (1989) posits that radical feminists view patriarchy as a worldwide phenomenon; the oppression of women is universal and the ways are more or less the same, and hence Gouws (2007) argues that women's experience is the impetus behind feminism, and global connections with local events and situations are required as the global level may provide solutions that are not locally available. This justifies the inclusion of Alice Walker in this research.

The black woman struggles as an individual to achieve selfhood and freedom. However, with unity among black women, they become empowered and can help one another in their fight against the institutions and culture of patriarchy. Thus Mindi (2014) asserts that the most important aspect of the identity of the black female is female bonding.

Sowards and Renegar (2004) acknowledge that though sisterhood has not appealed to all women, it has greatly contributed to consciousness-raising, and hence leading to women identifying themselves collectively as a group with a common goal rather than perceiving themselves as individuals. This, according to Cheseboro, Cragan and McCullough (1973), is true to the radical revolutionary's belief that political theory and action arise from personal experiences that are shared among individuals as they interact in a group. Thus, Daly (2016) asserts that the walls demarcated and defined by men under patriarchy are demolished and burnt down by sisterhood and female friendships. One of the means through which sisterhood can demolish these walls is articulation, and this paves way for the importance of voice as the next section in this research.

**2.5 To speak or not to speak: Articulation as politics**

This section presents the role of silence and voice in the three select novels as addressed by critics. Cultural pressures and society are responsible for women's silence as they deprive them of their confidence and audience. Eagleton (1996) states that what women fear is not being heard even if they speak because nobody listens to them. Echoing the same sentiment, Sveinsdottir (2012) analyses how women suffer under patriarchy, being forced to remain silent and how the women cope with and try to resist the silence. While acknowledging that many literary researchers have widely focused on enforced silence and written a lot about it, Sveinsdottir (2012, p.4) argues that the argument is ongoing as "silence is not simply the act of 'not speaking' but the social pressure applied by men who don't even hear them even if they try to speak".

Sveinsdottir (2012) argues that for Celie in *The Color Purple* (1982), letter-writing is a form of escapism, an outlet for her suppressed voice. Since nobody around Celie listens to her, writing to God becomes the only outlet for her voice, and it is through this act that she begins to comprehend her pathetic situation. Men, society and God are identified as agents of silence, while Celie's revolt is considered as not only claiming her voice and life, but also life-changing for the people around her.

Similarly, Ross (1988) observes that Celie's speech is controlled cruelly by male dominance, and there is neither body nor audience for her language, and neither self nor identity for her existence. Pa strictly forbids her to talk about how he abuses her to anyone but God. As a result, Celie's only form of 'speaking' is through letters to God. Sattar (2014) argues that the fear of being punished severely by the dominant group silences women and in turn shields their true identity. To subvert this order and find their voices and being, there is need to destabilise the centre by unsettling patriarchy.

Middleton (2015) argues that child sexual abusers exploit their position of authority to target and access their victims, thus gratifying the former's need for sexual satisfaction, supremacy, exploitation and sadomasochism, and thereafter silence their victims, who are neither likely to access a reliable support system nor legal solution. Cheung (1988) makes reference to the Philomena myth in which a victim of rape is cruelly forced to remain silent by having her tongue mercilessly cut off. Similarly, Celie is instructed by Pa to tell nobody but God, and as an alternative to speaking she begins to write letters to God. Hsiao (2008) blames female speechlessness on patriarchal restrictions that prohibit women from expressing their concerns. Pa threatens Celie and makes her mute in order to cover up his crime of raping her. Tanritanir and Boynukara (2011) note that as an outcome of male-domination on her, Celie does not speak freely. Celie's letters illustrate how she journeys to articulation from silence. It is this tonguelessness that Hammonds (1994) calls for an end to, and develop articulation.

Celie does not verbalise her experiences and thoughts because she is horrified at the thought of her mother discovering the incestuous relationship between her and Pa, and this is compounded by Pa's authority and threat which renders her speechless. McKever-Floyd (2007) argues that the journey to Celie's freedom is through the vehicle of letter-writing. When it is later revealed to Celie that Pa is not her biological father, it liberates her from the guilt and trauma of having had an incestuous relationship with Pa.

Shober in Smith (2015) asserts that the muting and marginalisation of black women has been a subject of discussion for years, and argues that in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), Andreas employs silence in

two contradictory ways. Andreas silences the abusive Shange by killing him prematurely in the text and empowers Mee Kauna by having her remain silent when she ought to speak as the deceased's widow at Shange's funeral. Arich-Gerz (2014) argues that when Kauna refuses to speak when she should, the dominant ideology is subverted. Ibrahim (1997) in Rhode (2009) argues that silence is also a voice as it is pregnant with meaning and eloquently speaks volumes, and hence the oxymoron, 'deafening silence'.

Male dominance, traditional norms, community and religious authority all work together to silence the woman, but acceptance of the silencing should not be entertained. Shober in Smith (2015) further argues that female writers present female characters resistant to patriarchy and who are able to voice their cares and joys in a variety of ways and are able to shape their own destiny. Rhode (2009) questions whether the subaltern woman fully understands herself in order to represent herself, and propounds that it is the subaltern woman's place to demand to speak and be heard, which is well within her rights as a human being. Speaking or not speaking should be a conscious decision, as is the case with Kauna, and not something dictated by society. Kauna even refuses to designate someone to deliver her speech on her behalf. Rhode argues that "by silencing and un-silencing herself by choice, she asserts her status as subject, exercising her authority over her own actions and her lived experience" (2009, p.51-52).

Akung (2013) argues that the female characters created by feminist writers become the voice of the voiceless as they rise from voicelessness to articulation of their experiences as women. Okuyade (2009) observes that the beginning of *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) portrays Kambili as a victim and mere observer, who develops consciousness and gains her voice with the novel's progression. Wallace (2012) comments that throughout Kambili's story in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), she finds it difficult to express herself verbally as her father, Papa Eugene, has, according to Hewett (2005), literally burnt her tongue and made her passive and fearful of his rule. Wallace (2012, p.470) further observes that Kambili repeats the phrase "my words would not come" four times, on pages 48, 97, 139 and 141 in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013).

Silencing in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) becomes a symbol of both domestic enslavement, and male supremacy and control. Uwakweh (1998) in Okuyade (2009, p.248) argues, "Silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously and culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure". Okuyade (2009) describes Papa Eugene's family as a world lacking ventilation due to the magnification of the loud silence in his home. Kambili is tongue-tied and can only stutter, thus is regarded with total contempt by her classmates. Papa Eugene's "doctrinaire attitude ... creates a cyst around [his family], which makes rays from the outside impenetrable" (Okuyade, 2009,

p.249). Furthermore, Okuyade highlights that the word 'silence' features forty-seven times in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), with the repetition of the word so many times being an illustration that it is a pregnant silence denoting aspirations and desires.

It is important to note that when the victims of domestic violence remain quiet about the abuse, they continue suffering while the perpetrators benefit. Only the dominant group's interests are served through a conspiracy of silence. If the victims remain silent, it breeds more violence, which becomes difficult to purge and control. Okuyade (2009) notes that spouse beating seems normal, yet it is insane. Sorensen, Morck and Danneskiold-Samsoe (2012, p.134) propose speaking out and naming the unspeakables such as domestic violence by breaking the silence, relinquishing all terms that are euphemistic and addressing these issues directly, arguing that breaking the silence is a significant first step towards the emancipation of victims. Sorensen et al (2012) also identify domestic violence as a universal evil with traumatic effects on the lives of women, and hence the need to problematise it and encourage, not silence, discussions on violence.

The next section will address the significance of the colour purple in relation to all ideas presented up to this point in the review of related literature.

**2.6 The significance of the purple colour**

The suitability of a title can best be judged after discussing the text so that one can assess the ideas put forward in relation to the title. The three select texts all include "purple" in their titles, and it is fitting to discuss the significance of this colour at this point in the research, having highlighted what critics say about the texts. It cannot be a coincidence that the three select black female writers all include "purple" in the titles of their select texts. Gombrich, Gombrich, Gombrich and Gombrich (1977) comment that artists use colour for various reasons such as exploring visual perception and effects, or representing and evoking emotions. This means that there is symbolism and cultural connotation in the choice of colour, which makes it a significant area for study.

Symbolising both achievements gained and those yet to come, the colour purple prominently features in women's artistic representations. In the early 20$^{th}$ century, British women's suffragette movement associated purple with their campaign for gender equality and right to vote as they argued that in every suffragette's veins flows royal blood (Florey, 2013). In this light, purple can be regarded as counterculture.

Thompson (1998) states that the colour purple symbolises polite discourse for race and hence the colour is employed by feminist writers as euphemism for colour-blindness, so as not to distinguish between

blacks and whites, for those who argue that skin colour does not matter. However, Thompson (1998, p.524) disputes this as he argues that "colorblindness is a willed ignorance of colour, that although well intended, insists on assimilating the experiences of people of colour to that of whites". Thompson claims that this results in losing the distinctiveness of each person. Blacks and whites have different experiences, and so cannot be classified together as "purple", and hence the argument that whatever feminism applies to whites does not apply to blacks. However, this researcher will argue that radical feminism applies to both whites and blacks, as shall be discussed under the theoretical framework section.

Pliny the Elder, in Krafts, Hempelmann and Oleksyn (2011, p.8), reveres the colour purple as he observes that it is a beautiful and superior colour that "distinguishes the senator from the knight". As the purple hibiscus is only found in Aunty Ifeoma's garden, Andrade (2011) describes purple as a symbol of freedom in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) because it is at Aunty Ifeoma's house that Kambili and Jaja feel free to express themselves, and like flowers, grow and bloom.

Tracing the meaning of the purple colour in Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), Diwakar (2014) asserts that many different black female writers use different colours as symbols to state the unspeakable. Liberation, wisdom, aggressiveness, resilience, beauty, life, indomitable spirit, creativity, hope, individual thinking, courage, royalty, and transformation are some of the themes that Diwakar identifies as being manifested through the colour purple motif. Through employing the symbol of the colour purple, Adichie and Walker both strive to accord voices to the experiences of the African and the African-American black woman, respectively. Diwakar (2014) argues that in both texts, purple as colour represents that there is no mountain too high to climb, because even though the novels begin on a pessimistic note, there is a sense of optimism at the end. Thus for Diwakar, the purple colour in both *The Color Purple* (1982) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) symbolises resilience, courage and determination of women to make their way out of oppression and suffering, freedom and transformation. What lacks in Diwakar's discussion of the purple colour is Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and this researcher will address this important gap.

Having said that, it is important to place the black female writer in context. This becomes the next and final section of this chapter.

**2.7 And now the women speak: Black female voices up in arms**

All the sections discussed to this point highlight the fact that the main problem is that patriarchal society does not allow women the freedom to express themselves and their desires. Black female writers are

conscious of the fact that they have a social responsibility of expressing the needs and concerns of black women. They assume the role of being spokespersons for all black women from all walks of life, and hence give voice to the voiceless. The transformation of societies can be achieved through acknowledging the existence and validity of the experiences and views of feminist writers. Regardless of their different circumstances and environments, there are striking similarities seemingly connecting black women writers (James, Etim, James and Njoh, 2003).

Through the act of writing, black female writers illustrate how literature can be employed as a legitimate political tool and demonstrate that they have reclaimed their voice and right to resist male domination. The attempt by women to tell their own stories is a counter-reaction against male-authored texts. Most feminist literature has mushroomed as a counter-discourse to male representation, or rather misrepresentation, of women. Only women can tackle issues about women as they have first-hand experience of the condition of women in society. In other words, writing enables women to articulate their problems and seek liberation from male dominance. Chukukere (1995) comments that female characters in male-authored texts simply stick to their feminine roles of mother and wife. Stratton (1994) presents a challenge to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by offering an alternative reading of it, especially concerning male-female relations. She argues:

> Achebe does not tell African women "where the rain began to beat them". Nor does he attempt to restore "dignity and self-respect" to African women. However, although women have been explicitly excluded from the constituency of readers, they have, in contrast to his female characters, refused to remain silent. As writers they have undertaken the task of refuting Achebe, of presenting an alternative view of colonisation and of African society, one which challenges Achebe's underlying assumption that things could not fall apart for African women because they never had been and never would be together (Stratton, 1994, p.38).

In an effort to give voice to the subaltern, female feminist writers such as Walker, Andreas, and Adichie have come to the fore. Akung (2013) observes that through patriarchy, men have colonised and reduced women to a second class position, and hence female writers have come up to take the task of recreating women's identity by countering the male literary discourse which denigrated women as inferior citizens. This has brought to light the unspeakables that male writers evade in their literature. For example, Hsiao (2008) argues that in her epistolary novel, *The Color Purple* (1982), Walker voices the unspeakables, stories of women that were unheard, and reverses gender roles. Furthermore, Rao and Kiran (2017) argue that *The Color Purple* (1982) explores spousal abuse, subjugation, dehumanisation, sexism and racial

oppression of blacks in both Africa and America, incest and lesbianism, subjects considered taboo and enshrined in silence.

Walker's voice as an author, sharing her pain and suffering with the readers, paved the way for her to share the African-American woman's wounds and scars with the whole world. As Walker writes from an insider's point of view, addressing women's concerns such as oppression and suffering, her hope as a writer is to uplift and heal the wounds and scars of African-American women. Robinson (2009) draws parallels between Walker's background and Walker's works, highlighting that after a minor accident that scarred her right eye while playing with her brothers, she isolated herself from the world and sought healing through writing. Robinson further discusses how Walker's abusive, domineering father is depicted in most of her fictional male characters, and how the support and strength she drew from her mother, despite her mother's suffering, is presented in her female characters who rise above adversity.

Writing down black women's struggles from black women writers' point of view highlights lessons and helps women remember where they are coming from, where the rain began to beat them. Rhode (2009) argues that *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) is a text about the Oshiwambo culture in Namibia, and having Andreas, who is Oshiwambo herself, writing the story, gives the reader an insider's point of view and thus enabling the reader to relate closely to the women of the fictional Oshaantu village's experiences, and thus their voices can be heard. Rhode (2009) also states that while most male writers place women on the periphery of society as women are mute in most of their narratives, African women writers undermine this male practice and fill a literary gap by letting African women be heard as they speak in their own voices.

In their works, Nigerian female writers have birthed characters who, through their portrayal, interrogate patriarchy and call for transformation of society on socio-economic terms as males begin to support women (Akingbe and Ogunyemi, 2017). According to Keton (2015), there is now a shift from this one-sided representation of women as feminist writers attempt to turnaround this marginalisation of women. Thus, Kivai (2010) notes that Adichie's works, such as *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), are an attempt to push women to the centre from the periphery where male writers have condemned them.

Shober in Smith (2015) argues that as women realise that they are not being listened to or paid attention to, African women writers employ the pen as a means to erase the humiliation and violence they suffer at the hands of psychologically and sexually abusive men, and use their voice to resist and silence their abusers, even if they have to silence the male in radical form. Thus Diwakar (2014, p.135) argues, "Striving

to have, to do, and to be more, and attempting the formation of an inner drive toward the assertion of selfhood are usually the dominant themes in the works of Black women writers".

The female writers' lived experiences and points of view presented in their works become an agent for change. Thus, Mindi (2014) also echoes the sentiment that an insider's point of view in the works of female writers clearly depicts a genuine search for self, quest for identity, and how being black and female at the same time is a double burden. Culture and tradition are exposed for they sustain the torture inflicted upon women in patriarchal societies.

Khan (2016) posits that it is a breakthrough for women writers' voices to be heard, and gives three definitions of the term "breakthrough". Firstly, women are now writing and speaking with one voice, offering new perspectives on historical and topical issues. Secondly, women are taking control in telling their stories in a previously male-dominated literature domain, thus making a strong political statement. Thirdly, it is her hope that her analysis of female authored texts is a breakthrough in the literary discourse. In line with Khan's three definitions of "breakthroughs", it is also this researcher's hope that this research also presents a major breakthrough in the literary sphere.

Drawing on these views and with reference to the three select works, this researcher seeks to compare and establish the commonality of the three select black female writers in order to determine whether they prescribe, create and safeguard equal civil, political, economic and social rights for women.

**2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter began by giving a review of related literature organised according to thematic concerns raised in the select works, such as patriarchy, womanhood, sisterhood and lesbianism, silence and voice. All these themes were defined and discussed from different scholars' perspectives. This was followed by an analysis of the colour purple as a symbol employed in the select texts. Although Diwakar (2014) explores the significance of the colour purple in detail, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) is not part of that study. It is important to add this text to the study so that more light into the colour purple is shed. One needs to understand why the select three black female writers, from different parts of the world, incorporated the purple colour into their works. The discovery of this aspect will be a breakthrough in the study of writing by black female writers. Finally, the role of female writers in the feminist discourse in general, and in establishing identity and negotiating spaces in society for women in particular, was presented. Several scholars have analysed the select works and how the female writers move their female characters to authority and empowerment from being the helpless, marginalised subaltern. In their quest

for equality and emancipation of females from the firm grasp of patriarchy, it is evident from the review of related literature that though Walker, Andreas and Adichie come from different backgrounds, to a great extent they share similar experiences, thoughts and ideas. However, it is also evident from the reviewed literature that although a lot of scholars have written on Walker and Adichie, not many people have written on Andreas, therefore this researcher aims to address that gap.

The next chapter will discuss Radical Feminism, the theoretical framework in which this research is grounded to help readers comprehend ideas raised and discussed.

# CHAPTER 3

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Introduction

For purposes of this research, the researcher will employ radical feminist theory. This section serves to highlight the main tenets of radical feminism. Firstly, the term 'feminism' will be explained, and then radical feminism will be discussed to ensure full understanding of this theoretical framework and how it applies to select works.

### 3.2 Feminism

Ogundipe-Leslie (2007, p.547) bases the following definition of feminism on its etymological roots:

> Femina is "woman" in Latin. Feminism, an ideology of woman. This definition of feminism gives us enough leeway to encompass various types of feminisms. Generally feminism, however, must always have a political and activist spine in its form.

The definition of feminism is one that lacks consensus as different dimensions are emphasised by both feminists themselves and scholars. Dawjee in Thorpe (2018, p.71) posits that despite the fact that all feminists know what they want, which is to be emancipated, "feminism is not a one-size-fits-all kind of thing" and hence the many variants of feminism. This means that feminism has different meanings to different people depending on one's perspective, political or sociological observations, and how one comprehends and perceives the word 'woman' (Sheila, 1980).

While Barrow and Millburn (1990) define feminism as a movement committed to achieving women's equality, Cuddon (1991) interprets it as a way in which different literature tries to describe, explain and interpret the experiences of women. This means that through feminism, women recreate their identity that has been trivialised by the culture of patriarchy as it provides them with the lenses through which they can clearly see themselves. While for Humm (1999), feminism is both believing in equality of the sexes and a devotion to transform society, for Weiner-Mahfuz (2002) in Sowards and Renegar (2002), feminism raises consciousness and brings to life one's dedication to fighting injustice as it makes individuals aware of their oppression, establish self-confidence, quest for new identities and discover their dignity and prestige. This implies that when women understand their experiences as women, agency becomes a possibility as the capacity for them to take action is increased. Staggenborg and Taylor (2005) sum this up by stating that feminism arises out of women's interactions and accomplishments as they

struggle for change in their status and opportunities, thus giving them a collective identity. From these definitions of feminism, one can argue that feminism was born from the contention that women were particularly marginalised and oppressed by various social structures, and hence the primary tenets of feminism are a response to the male view of women, which simultaneously make women invisible and silent.

Donovan (1989) defines feminists as those who believe that women have been oppressed and suffer inferiority as a result of culture's dominant attitudes and customs. In the same vein, Rwafa (2016) argues that society presents these attitudes and customs as if they cannot be removed, changed or contested, and yet because these are social constructs, they can be challenged, especially the aspect of gender roles. Rwafa's argument is that if women are to fully participate in the development of their nations, gender stereotypes need to be interrogated, deconstructed, and demystified.

The feminist movement, though it has its roots in the United States of America (USA), has had its impact felt almost everywhere as since time immemorial women have always been regarded as "the other" and suffer the burden of womanhood under male-dominated society (James et al, 2000). Gender inequality is rife in Africa and, in African context, feminists are those working aggressively to transform gender inequality as well as uphold women's rights deliberated in the African Feminist Charter of 2006 (Mama, 2011). It is in defending women's rights that feminism is considered a political movement. However, some people are misinformed as they naively argue that feminism is unAfrican, and yet feminism is a concept that meets all nationalities and is absolutely necessary for African societies.

James et al postulate that as a political movement, feminism seeks to present female concerns from a woman's angle and assert equality between the males and females. This has the aim of uplifting the position of women in society thus promoting gender equality and empowering women. A diversity of feminisms that are defined by women for themselves and responsive to their different needs and concerns are "the first step towards articulating and acting upon a political agenda" (Grown, Catagay & Santiago, 1986, p.41). These diverse feminisms that Grown et al discuss are, however, not going to be part of this research as the researcher will be informed only by radical feminist critical theory.

**3.3 Radical feminism**

Willis (1984) defines radical feminism as a philosophy that criticises patriarchy as the root of inequality between men and women, and is based on the idea that the main cause of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures constructed by male supremacy and patriarchy. According to

Willis (1984), radical feminism developed with the 2nd wave feminism in the late 1960s to 1970s in America as a political movement to end male supremacy in all areas of social and economic life. Thus, radical feminism has its foundation in the oppression of women, and that all other forms of oppression are grounded in male oppression of women. Radical feminism does not only focus on achieving equality in distribution of power, but rather on completely eradicating patriarchy by transforming the entire structure of society. It seeks to rid society of traditional gender roles which oppress women.

According to radical feminists, men are the source of women's oppression. Conscientisation of society is required so that the oppressed group can adequately question the oppressive culture which is dominant. Chindedza (2017) asserts that since radical feminists believe that women's problems are caused by men, they advocate for separatism, and the need to unite and fight as sisters for recognition and uplift each other to dismantle patriarchy which is the cause of all their problems. Therefore, Dawjee in Thorpe (2018) defines true radicals as those who work daily to subvert patriarchy.

Radical feminism gained great momentum within its first two years of formation, having established itself as the most vital and imaginative force within the women liberation movement. Though women had won the right to vote and were now working more outside home, they still experienced oppression. Male dominance remained a topical issue for radical feminists, whose focus was to achieve total freedom, thus Greene and Kahn (1985) assert that radical feminists argue that women's oppression stems from the male's need to control women and female sexuality. In other words, male patriarchal power mainly oppresses the woman's body, and hence this is the base of radical feminism (Rusharyani and Candraningrum, 2017).

Radical feminists challenge religion and traditions which promote oppression of women and essentially seek to get to the root causes of oppression in order to dismantle it. Acker (1989) posits that radical feminists view patriarchy as a worldwide phenomenon, cutting across historical and cultural boundaries, and therefore the oppression of women is universal and the ways are more or less the same.

Shober in Smith (2015) quotes Arndt (2002) who argues that radical feminist texts portray women as objects oppressed, mistreated and discriminated against by sexist and immoral men, and hence the men are forced to leave the story through the most possible dramatic way, premature death. Radical feminists believe that eliminating patriarchy and other systems which perpetuate the domination of men over women will liberate everyone from an unjust society. Therefore, radical feminist writers drastically invert the female silencing paradigm.

Radical feminists advocate for separatism from men because they blame men for the oppression of women (Chindedza, 2017). In addition, Otkin (2009) in Chindedza (2017) argues that it is the role of the radical feminists to conscientise the subaltern as consciousness is what aids the oppressed to question and challenge the oppressive culture that is dominant. Silencing of women began with gendered power structures, and hence Mama (2017, p.11) argues for the strengthening of consciousness, which is "a dynamic dialectical relationship between radical thinking and action" and identifies published works of feminist writers as the key in the feminist conscientisation process.

According to Fiorenza (1998) in Akung (2013), radical feminism acknowledges that women are people, and hence need to be recognised and treated as such. This means that the rights and well-being of women, just like those of men, need to be fully recognised and accorded. Stryker (1993) in Staggenborg (2001) propounds that for feminists, being a woman should not be a stumbling block to personal growth and opportunity. Taylor (1999) comments that feminist research aims at making women and their experiences visible and significant, and employ this to rectify previous distortions of reality.

Merchant (1990) propounds that radical feminism could actually emancipate both females and nature as in critiquing patriarchy it also analyses problems associated with the environment and provides alternatives. In celebrating the female reproductive system, radical feminism celebrates the woman-nature relationship. Radical feminists distinguish sex as biological and gender as socially constructed, thus objecting to society's view of women as being inferior to men and gender roles attributed to women. Annandale and Clarke (1996) assert that in valuing what is distinctive about the female body, and not the body of the male, radical feminists subvert patriarchal privilege.

The battle against patriarchy, however, is quite a daunting task. Daly (2016) posits that radical feminists encounter and battle the dangerous demons of patriarchy, and all its various manifestations, to be exorcised in their journey of discovering the past and creating a patriarchy-free world. Fwangil (2011) claims that in Africa there is stiff resistance against feminism, especially by men, because feminist movements are not unanimously accepted as they are regarded as going against African culture and values. This just serves to show how the oppressors would like to defend and maintain their status. This claim is supported by Richards in Thorpe (2018) who argues that while feminism is shunned in Africa by most African men, it is as much an African concept as it is absolutely necessary for African communities, as Africa has the highest numbers of violence against women, circumcision of females and other traditions that are harmful to women, and hence in the index for global gender, Africa ranks lowest.

Acker (1989) posits that radical feminists view patriarchy as a worldwide phenomenon; the oppression of women is universal and the ways are more or less the same, and hence Gouws (2007) argues that women's experience is the impetus behind feminism, and global connections with local events and situations are required as the global level may provide solutions that are not locally available.

Black radical feminists bemoan the trauma caused by the violence the women have been subjected to and stress the need to overcome that trauma in order to comprehend what transpired to the black woman, find out where the rain began to beat them, and then be able to move forward. However, they admit that it is quite a daunting task.

According to Brown (2001), contemporary radical feminists join hands with black men in the fight against racism, while at the same time in a battle with the black men over sexism. In other words, even though they are feminists, they are willing to work in solidarity with those black men who are progressive and side with or support women's cause. Oyewumi (2003) propounds that though Walker puts forward 'womanism' as her ideal version of feminism in the black woman's search for self as opposed to white women's feminist discourse, her works with their reference to lesbianism and separatism, lean more towards radical feminism and so in practice she does not divert much from the ideas that she criticises.

Fwangil (2011) postulates that *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) can be read as a radical feminist text because of how Beatrice liberates herself from Papa Eugene by poisoning him to his death. Also discussing *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), Azuike (2009, p.81) proposes a radical approach by arguing that "the story of a woman is basically the story of a second class citizen", and hence "a woman needs to burst the system and set up her own parameters within the society or risk being treated as a doormat for life" (Azuike, 2009, p.80). Therefore, Azuike (2009) and Fwangil (2011) concur that radical feminism is ideal because it calls for a peaceful coexistence for both genders without one subordinating the other.

To sum up on radical feminism, Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz (1997) pinpoint the following main tenets of radical feminism:

- Women suffer because men oppress them.
- Masculine and feminine class distinctions are socially constructed.
- All other forms of oppression have their roots in male oppression of women, and hence the anger towards men, rejection of patriarchy and the birth of lesbianism and sisterhood as an alternative.

### 3.4 Application of radical feminism to research

This researcher has chosen radical feminism as a theoretical framework to study the three select texts because even though this movement started in America, the oppression of women, which leads to the nervous breakdown condition of the black woman, cuts across boundaries of race, culture and economic class (Dangarembga, 1988). Radical feminists believe that eliminating patriarchy and other systems which perpetuate the domination of men over women will liberate everyone from an unjust society. The researcher aims to explore whether women's oppression is really a result of patriarchy and whether it is possible to dismantle patriarchy, as radical feminists argue that if patriarchy was created by culture, it can be overturned by a new culture.

Radical feminist theory will thus be applied to a comparative study of *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker, *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) by Neshani Andreas, and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to explain the significance of the texts in the context of the topic of this research. This researcher will argue that female solidarity is a radical and political act that seeks to dismantle patriarchy, and hence frank conversations between black women are vital for social change. Through the radical feminist perspective, this researcher seeks to examine female characters in the select texts, the root cause of their struggles, and how they challenge patriarchy. Particular attention will be paid to how, through a radical feminist approach, black female writers negotiate spaces for women in a male-dominated environment. Though other feminist literary theories can be applied to the study of the select texts, this research is limited only to radical feminist critical theory in the analysis of those texts.

In line with the research objectives, in applying radical feminist principles to the study of the three select texts, radical feminism's main goal of achieving gender equality will be the main guiding principle throughout the research on this topic. With cases of gender-based violence on the rise, especially in Namibia, radical feminism's call for an end to patriarchy and oppression of women is very important in highlighting issues of gender-based violence which are rooted in patriarchal structures. This research will deal with this aspect in detail as this contributes greatly to the significance of the study.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the radical feminist theoretical framework which will be applied to and guide this study was discussed and its major tenets identified. This theory allows researchers to critique patriarchy and all its manifestations, and whether it is indeed possible to dismantle it as demanded by radical feminists. This chapter will serve as a guide to this researcher in interpreting select works from a radical feminist perspective, as well as guide future research in the same field.

All scholars whose works have been reviewed in this and the previous chapter agree that the select texts are feminist texts and have explored the themes identified in this research in relation to raising feminist consciousness, though with varying degrees of success. What they do not agree on is which feminism to apply to the study of those texts. Of the three select texts, only *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) has been discussed as a radical feminist text, and yet the same theory can also be applied to both *The Color Purple* (1982) and *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) as this researcher shall argue. Although existing scholarship shows that *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) has already been subjected to radical feminist critique before, there are gaps identified, for example, in the sense that much of the focus is on Beatrice alone, and important minor characters like Sisi, who assists Beatrice poison Papa Eugene, and Papa Nnukwu, an epitome of tradition, are left out of the discussion. This line of argument will be developed in Chapter 5 of this research. Also, the text has not been addressed in relation to this research's objectives.

Whilst Oyewumi (2003) observes that though Walker puts forward 'womanism' as her ideal version of feminism in the black woman's search for self as opposed to white women's feminist discourse, Walker's works with their reference to lesbianism and separatism, lean more towards radical feminism and so in practice she does not divert much from the ideas that she criticises, Oyewumi (2003) does not develop this argument further. Therefore, to this researcher's knowledge, based on desktop research, no researcher has employed radical feminism to the study of *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and *The Color Purple* (1982) though this is a theoretical framework very much applicable to the study of these texts. As such, this research will be the first study of the three select texts together from a radical feminist standpoint.

In the next chapter, the research methods employed in this study will be discussed.

# CHAPTER 4

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods and ethics employed in this study. Rosnow and Rosenthal (2008) assert that in an effort to increase our understanding of a phenomenon which we find of interest or concern, we carry out research, which is a process that is systematic in collecting, analysing and interpreting data. They further observe that there is no end to the research cycle as more insights continue being shed on the same subject. The research question probes the researcher into clearly stating the research problem for which solutions are to be found through reasonable hypothesis, which directs the researcher to appropriate data, which is then collected, organised and interpreted, thus solving the problem, but yet at the same time creating another gap and research problem that begins another research, and so the research cycle continues.

It is crucial to understand the research design first, therefore Section 4.2 highlights the research design and provides a justification for the desktop study employed in this research. Section 4.3 outlines the procedure that this researcher followed in carrying out this study. Section 4.4 explains how the data collected was analysed. In Section 4.5, ethical considerations are presented. Finally, Section 4.6 summarises this chapter.

### 4.2 Research design

Research design, according to Kothari (2004), refers to how conditions for collection and analysis of data are arranged in line with the research purpose. Vosloo (2014, p.316) posits that the research design is "the functional plan in which certain research methods and procedures are linked together to acquire a reliable and valid body of data for empirically grounded analyses, conclusions and theory formulation". The methods and procedures are determined by the research problem. The research design outlines the process of research followed by the researcher right from the research question up to the analysis and interpretation of data. In other words, the research's blueprint is the research design, which ensures that all research operations function smoothly.

The research design aids the researcher in achieving research objectives or answering research questions. For purposes of this study, this researcher did not carry out any field work, but conducted a desktop literature study of both the select texts and related literature. The three select texts for this study provide

a small sample necessary for an in-depth study and interpretation, which Jupp (2006) regards as the nature of qualitative research. Therefore, this makes this research a qualitative study aimed at achieving in-depth understanding of Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), related works, and the contexts in which they are written. This is meant to deepen understanding of the development of feminist consciousness in the select works.

The major concern of qualitative research is meaning and interpretation of various aspects of social life. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005, p.vi) propound that "the great contribution of qualitative research is the culturally specific and contextually rich data it produces". They also argue that "intangible factors, such as social norms, socio-economic status, gender roles, ethnicity and religion" are effectively identified through qualitative methods (Mack et al, 2005, p.1). In other words, qualitative research makes it possible for a specific phenomenon or social context to be fully comprehended, and one can extend findings to other social groups with similar characteristics to those in the research population. The meaning of the data collected in relation to research objectives was the impetus behind this research. This study adopted a qualitative approach because it examines feminist consciousness, which is also an aspect of social life, in the select works.

Quantitative research cannot achieve this research's objectives because it deals with quantities and its rigid cause-and-effect relationships constrain the researcher, and hence the justification for qualitative research, which searches for meaning and deals with words. Qualitative research also gives the researcher some flexibility in terms of how the complex data is analysed, and hence providing rich, explanatory, and unique findings (Mack et al, 2005). Since the participants', not the researcher's, perspective determines the data obtained, the findings can be regarded as dependable and substantial (Amora, 2010). The select texts inform the research's results, therefore one can consider these findings as verifiable, well-grounded and sound.

The next section presents the procedure followed in this research.

### 4.3 Procedure

This study involved in-depth reading of the select texts and desktop collection of related data to determine the extent to which patriarchy oppresses women and how black female writers attempt to conscientise women and address the issue. No field work was carried out in the literary analysis of the select texts. Peer-reviewed, published and relevant sources available were read and analysed in order to draw conclusions.

Related themes in select works guided the research, therefore all ideas discussed are thematically linked. Rooted in secondary sources, the presentation of these themes in select works in relation to research objectives was carefully examined by this researcher. While *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) were the primary sources of data, crucial to the study were insightful secondary sources from literary critics. A number of credible, recently published scholarly journals, particularly in Southern Africa, were studied for this study to be firmly grounded and substantiated.

To achieve the research objectives, this researcher also employed content analysis, which is defined by Leedy and Armrod (2010, p.44) as "a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying the specific characteristic of a body material". This definition is also echoed by Krippendorf (2013, p.40) who describes content analysis as "a systematic reading of a body of texts, images and symbolic matter not necessarily from an author's or user's perspective". The researcher deemed content analysis appropriate because the subject under study cannot be mathematically quantified, therefore no statistical evidence was given in this study.

Vosloo (2014, p.299) propounds that "a theory describes the relationship among key variables for explaining a current state or predicting future concurrences". In other words, previous information can be summarised, and the course of future action guided, by the theoretical framework. The radical feminist theoretical framework was employed in stimulating knowledge advancement and analysing the data, which was presented in narrative form and categorised thematically. The argument by radical feminists that patriarchy is responsible for all forms of oppression that women experience strongly presents itself in all three select works. For example, this researcher argued that the major cause of suffering for Celie, Mee Kauna, and Beatrice in *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) respectively, is patriarchy, which is respectively represented by Mr _, Shange, and Papa Eugene. There is an attempt in all three select texts to subvert this male dominance in line with radical feminist principles, though with varying degrees of success. Thus, content analysis enabled the researcher to closely examine radical feminist ideas manifested in the three select texts.

How the data collected was analysed is presented in the next section.

**4.4 Data analysis**

Cresswell (2007 p.148) claims that "data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then

reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion". Content analysis was employed because no statistical evidence was given in this research, thus accommodating different interpretations of select texts, which enhanced meaning through the researcher's close encounter with those texts in an effort to thoroughly examine the details. Cresswell (2007) further notes that the data collection, data analysis, and report writing processes are interrelated, not independent, and hence usually occur concurrently in a research project.

Qualitative analysis heavily depends on the analytic and integrative skills of the researcher as well as the researcher's awareness of the data source's social context (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The researcher makes sense of what they are analysing and draws conclusions which are presented in narrative form. The data collected in this study of the select texts was interpreted incorporating tenets of the Radical Feminist Theory and reduced to smaller, manageable chunks by categorising it thematically. The conclusions which were drawn from the critical analysis of select works and interpretations will be presented in the following chapter of this study.

The next section presents the research ethics which guided this researcher.

### 4.5 Research Ethics

In relation to social research, Edwards and Mauthner (2002, p.14) posit that ethics refers to "the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process". This researcher ensured objectivity by fully reporting findings, citing all sources consulted, avoiding plagiarism, and strictly following the APA referencing guidelines stipulated and strongly recommended by Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). Furthermore, ethical clearance was obtained from NUST and its code of ethics was strictly adhered to. The researcher also declares that this is her original work and has not been published or submitted elsewhere as part of her studies.

### 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher set out the research method followed in this study, which is a qualitative, desktop content analysis of select and related works. *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) are the primary sources of data, while works by critics cited in this research worked as secondary sources in which the research is concretised. The research procedure and how the data was analysed were also presented in this chapter. Ethical considerations were also

observed by the researcher who acknowledged all sources consulted for purposes this study, thus ensuring objectivity and integrity.

The next chapter will present the analysis and interpretation of data collected from the study of the three select works.

# CHAPTER 5

## DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a radical feminist analysis of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013). The chapter draws insight from the literature review chapter of this research and relies on qualitative research methods as discussed in the previous chapter. In all sections of this chapter, the researcher will analyse the texts in order of the year of publication, starting with the earliest published. This means that in all sections, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) comes first, followed by Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and then Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013).

Firstly, the researcher will address patriarchy and the women's burden with the aim of getting to the root of the radical feminist argument that patriarchy is reason behind female oppression. Secondly, the researcher will discuss the means through which men oppress women, which are violence and denying them voice, and how women attempt to regain their voice. Thirdly, the researcher will discuss the concept of sisterhood, followed by lesbianism, as means employed by women in their fight against patriarchy. However, lesbianism is non-existent in Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), so only *The Color Purple* (1982) is discussed under the section on lesbianism because it is the only text in which lesbianism is explicit. A discussion on the significance of the colour purple in all three select texts follows. Finally, a conclusion summarises the chapter.

### 5.2 Patriarchy and the woman's burden

This section looks at patriarchy and how it suppresses the growth of the female character. Radical feminists argue that the main cause of female oppression is patriarchy, and hence it is important to discuss patriarchy and the women's burden before other themes discussed in this chapter. Willis (1984) defines radical feminism as a philosophy that criticises patriarchy as the root of inequality between men and women, and is based on the idea that the main cause of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures constructed by male supremacy and patriarchy. All other forms of oppression have their roots in male oppression of women, and hence the anger towards men, and rejection of patriarchy. Andima and Tjiramanga (2014, p.79) argue that the female spirit is disrespected, devalued, suppressed and destroyed by some cultural values, and hence they identify these traditional structures as

"mountains on the back of an African woman" to emphasise the extent to which patriarchy in particular, and traditional culture in general, oppress women. In the select texts, most of the male characters are trapped by cultural beliefs that do not accommodate equality of sexes and hence do not acknowledge the empowerment of women.

The first patriarch one encounters in Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) is Alphonso, also known as Pa, an abusive male who sexually exploits Celie from a tender age thus clearly demonstrating that not all families are havens, especially for the girl child. It is because of Pa's threat that she should not tell anybody but God that Celie fails to articulate her suffering. When patriarchy throttles her voice, this becomes the start of Celie's problems. Celie accepts her suffering as her fate and suffers under Pa's claws because religion has taught her to be submissive. Celie tells Sofia, "Couldn't be mad at my daddy cause he my daddy. Bible say Honor father and mother no matter what" (Walker[1], 1982, p.40).

Under patriarchal society, the woman is marginalised and denied the power to make decisions in the home. In order to stay in control men like Pa are guilty of marrying children. When Celie's mother dies, Pa marries May Ellen, who Celie guesses to be her age mate. Celie observes how Pa sexually abuses May Ellen, "He be on her all the time. She walk round like she don't know what hit her" (CP, p.6). Unfortunately, Celie cannot do anything about it being in the same predicament herself. After May Ellen leaves, Pa marries Daisy, who Shug observes looks not more than fifteen years old. Daisy reasons that her people let her marry Pa because they work for him and live on his farm. Marrying a child literally translates to child abuse and if this goes unchecked, the girl child's future is bleak. In one of Nettie's letters to Celie, she wonders if Celie still has an "honest and open spirit" or it has been destroyed because of childbearing and abuse by Albert (CP, p.233). It is this kind of child abuse by paedophiles that Walker seeks to conscientise readers about so that it can be addressed. The revelation that "Pa is not our Pa!" is a turning point in the text (CP, p.159). It is symbolic of how a man who sexually abuses his wife and daughters needs to be stripped of his title as head of the family because the term "father" should be functional not ceremonial. Pa's death serves as poetic justice through radical means to drive the message home that abusive men such as Pa are not welcome in the society advocated for by radical feminists.

Celie's marriage to Albert, also known as Mr _, is dictated by Pa, who is later proven to be her stepfather. After parading Celie before Albert like a bull on the market, thus revealing how women are regarded merely as objects to satisfy the male eye, Pa marries Celie off to Albert, a man she does not love, and who

[1] henceforth referred to as CP for all quotes from the text

does not love her back. Since Albert's wife is late, what he needs is not a wife to love and cherish, but a woman to satisfy his sexual appetite and look after his children and home. Nettie, Celie's younger sister, observes that seeing Celie with Albert is like seeing Celie buried.

It is unfortunate that men dictate the marriage ceremony, the one ceremony which a woman should be in charge. The male members of Albert's family deny Shug Avery a chance to marry Albert, whom she loves and is the father of her children, thus demonstrating how unfair patriarchal society is for women with regard to marriage. "His daddy told him I'm trash, my mama trash before me. His brother say same. Albert try to stand up for us, git knock down" (CP, p.111). The interference of Albert's father and brother in his affairs indicates that not only does patriarchy oppress women, but weaker men too. After Albert fails to marry his love, he marries Annie Julia, whom he despises. Albert laments, "After they married her off to me her folks behave like they'd throwed her down a well. Or off the face of the earth. I didn't want her. I wanted Shug. But my daddy was the boss. He give me the wife he wanted me to have" (CP, p.245).

Not only does patriarchy oppress women in terms of who they marry, women are ordered around like puppets by men who expect them to do all household chores.

> He tell me, Wash this. Iron that. Look for this. Look for that. Find this. Find that. He groan over holes in his sock.
>
> I move round darning and ironing, finding hanskers (CP, p.25).

It is ironic that even some women criticise fellow women for not performing as expected. When Albert's sisters visit, they criticise his late wife for not working as hard as Celie. Because Celie manages to do all that the late Albert's wife couldn't do, they refer to her as a "good housekeeper, good at children, good cook" (CP, p.21). However, the male members of the family are reluctant to do any work around the home. Harpo refuses to bring in water when asked to do so by Kate, Albert's sister, arguing that as a man he cannot do women's work. Albert sends his sister away for making his son do women's work. Before Kate leaves, she urges Celie to fight for herself, but Celie is reluctant to fight and even gives up before trying, having accepted her inferior position in society.

> You got to fight them, Celie, she say. I can't do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself.
>
> I don't say nothing. I think bout Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive (CP, p.22).

Kate asking Celie to fight back is a radical standpoint in that she is not only asking the latter to challenge Albert and Harpo, but to stage a battle against patriarchy in general. However, one sadly notes how Celie hopelessly accepts her subaltern position.

In one of her letters to God, Celie bemoans how Albert drinks through Christmas while she and Shug do all household chores. At some point while Celie is in the field chopping cotton, Albert only shows up three hours later, chops thrice, returns to the house and relaxes on the porch while Celie continues to labour in the field. Without consulting Celie, Albert brings home Shug Avery, his mistress, after she falls sick and expects Celie to take care of Shug until she fully recovers. Unfortunately, Celie feels powerless to protest against this torture of having to take care of her husband's mistress as she feels that is beyond her control. She states, "But I don't say nothing. It not my house. Also I ain't been told nothing" (CP, p.44). This illustrates how men are callous towards women and how women fail to react because the men own them.

Even though it hurts to look after one's husband's mistress, Celie has no option but to do so. When Albert's father visits, he pities Celie for looking after Shug. However, he does nothing to improve the situation, yet he has power over Albert. This demonstrates that Celie's plight does not move him enough to push him to take action. In other words, even if men realise that women are suffering, they turn a blind eye to what is happening. It is only women who can act to free themselves.

Tobias, Albert's brother, exhibits qualities of an oppressive man who values women for their labour as demonstrated by his wish for Margaret, his wife, to be as busy and hardworking as Celie because that would save him money. This manifests the idea that getting a wife for some men is actually a means of getting cheap labour.

Unlike Celie who is docile, Sofia is a warrior on her own. When asked why she challenges Harpo, Sofia responds that a girl is never safe in an environment dominated by men, and all her life she had to fight against her father, brothers, cousins and uncles. She swears to kill Harpo if he beats her up the way Albert beats up Celie. Like a true radical, Sofia tells Celie that the latter's suffering is due to her indifference as she is not moved by her pathetic situation to fight for change and recognition, and yet she should fight.

Sofia portrays how gender roles oppress women by confining them to the domestic space and yet their potential lies elsewhere. She is happier out in the field than washing dishes, and is happy to have a husband like Harpo who enjoys housekeeping. Sofia states, "I rather be out in the fields or fooling with the animals. Even chopping wood. But he love cooking and cleaning and doing little things round the house" (CP, p.57). Harpo even changes the baby's nappy too, which is something frowned upon by

patriarchal society. This serves to show how gender roles limit women's potential to excel in fields that patriarchy regard as manly.

The description that Celie gives of Sofia fixing the roof proves this. When Celie looks across the yard, she sees Sofia "dragging a ladder and then lean it up gainst the house. She wearing a old pair of Harpo pants. Got her head tied up in a headrag. She clam up the ladder to the roof, begin to hammer in nails. Sound echo cross the yard like shots" (CP, p.58). The fact that Sofia is wearing Harpo pants is also symbolic of women's quest for the same recognition accorded to men. Wearing pants frees men and women from gender roles that are specific. If men can wear pants, women should too.

Later, Celie observes, "She out to the woodpile making shingles. She put a big square piece of wood on the chopping block and chop, chop, she make big flat shingles" (CP, p.62). It is this kind of world that seems ideal to Walker, where men and women do what they love to do, not what society dictates they should do. After Sofia's mother dies, Sofia wants to be one of the pallbearers. However, Harpo disapproves of this arguing that women are weaker than men, so at funerals women ought to cry if they want to, take it easy and let men take over. "What it gon look like? say Harpo. Three big stout women pallbearers look like they ought to be home frying chicken" (CP, p.196). Sofia's argument is that what men can do, women can too and should be allowed that opportunity to show what they can do, regardless of the field of work. Ideally, men and women should be accorded equal opportunities in all aspects of society.

In true patriarchal spirit that looks down upon women and expects them to be submissive, Harpo expresses his need for a woman who follows his orders in the same manner that Celie obeys Albert's commands. Sofia admits to Celie that she is tired of Harpo because all he thinks about since getting married is "how to make me mind. He don't want a wife, he want a dog" (CP, p.62). Harpo feels emasculated by Sofia who fights back when he tries to beat her up. It is important to note that Sofia does not beat up Harpo for no reason, but does so in self-defence, which makes her fighting back a form of protest against male domination. Celie informs Harpo that if asked right, Sofia would be happy to do most of what he asks her to do. This is a powerful statement as it highlights the radical feminist standpoint that women need to be respected and treated fairly in order for society to function well. If men understand this, respect and work together with women for the common good, then there would be no need to fight one another.

The oppression of women by men also extends to men determining how women spend their leisure time. Albert is not pleased to let Celie attend Shug's performance at Harpo's because "wives don't go to places

like that" (CP, p.69). He has many rules about what his wife can and cannot do, which makes Shug happy that she did not marry him. While Sofia thinks that women need to have fun once in a while, Harpo argues that the woman's place is at home. Like Albert, Harpo argues, "It just a scandless, a woman with five children hanging out in a jukejoint at night" (CP, p.77). Having Celie and Sofia at the jukejoint watching Shug perform is a way of women asserting their right to have as much fun as men, and not being restricted to the domestic sphere. What radical feminists argue for are more women like Sofia and Shug who are able to stand up for themselves and enjoy life without being intimidated by men.

The oppression does not end with black folks; white women experience it too. Miz Millie, the Mayor's wife, is a domestic woman who has no friends and does not know how to drive. The Mayor buys Miz Millie a new car but refuses to show her how to drive it. Despite her protest against working for Miz Millie, Sofia goes to work for her after her release from prison, then teaches her how to drive. One can deduce that the Mayor's refusal to teach his wife how to drive is meant to restrict her movements and confine her to the home environment. Sofia shows Miz Millie that women can succeed on their own without men's assistance.

The way women dress is another bone of contention for women in a patriarchal society. When Celie meets Olivia and Corrine buying material for their dresses, Corrine confesses that the new dresses will make Samuel, her husband, proud, thus dressing to impress a man. When Shug suggests making some pants for Celie, the latter argues that she cannot wear pants because she is not a man. Moreover, Albert will never allow his wife to wear pants. It is an indication that patriarchy has been subverted when towards the end of the text, Celie wears pants and runs a business making pants for other women. Even Albert, despite his earlier protests, ends up helping Celie in sewing pants for women. Albert confesses that as a child growing up he used to enjoy sewing with his mother but was constantly laughed at as it is considered women's work, thus indeed gender roles are socially constructed.

*The Color Purple* (1982) presents the view that the oppression of women by men is universal as demonstrated by Nettie's letters to Celie in which she explains the state of affairs in Africa. Nettie observes that the hierarchical structure of the Olinka is not far-removed from the American gender hierarchy. One of her letters to Celie sums up male-female relations when she writes,

> There is a way that men speak to woman that reminds me too much of Pa. They listen just long enough to issue instructions. They don't even look at women when women are speaking. They look at the ground. The women also do not "look in a man's face" as they say to "look in a man's

> face" is a brazen thing to do. They look instead at his feet or his knees. And what can l say to this? Again, it is our own behavior around Pa (CP, p.146-147).

Marriage is presented as an institution which ties women down. Nettie mentions that her reason for being in Africa is that the missionary who should have gone with Corrine and Samuel failed to make it because her husband could neither let her go nor accompany her to Africa. Nettie observes that among the Olinka, a woman can be killed by her husband if he accuses her of either witchcraft or infidelity. It is frightening to note that "among the Olinka, the husband has life and death power over the wife" (CP, p.151). It is this power that men have over women that has given rise to cases of gender-based violence mostly perpetrated by men against women.

Though a different setting, gender roles are also clearly outlined as in America. Nettie notes,

> Everybody in the village crowded round us. Coming out of little round huts with something that I thought was straw on top of them but is really a kind of leaf that grows everywhere. They pick it and dry it and lay it so it overlaps to make the roof rainproof. This part is women's work. Mensfolk drive the stakes for the hut and sometimes help build the walls with mud and rock from the streams (CP, p.135).

Nettie also observes that while the men go hunting, women tend to the crops in their fields close to their huts. Women take care of the family doing chores such as cooking and sewing when they are not in the field. To add to women's suffering, they work with their small children on their backs. Polygamous arrangements among the Olinka are meant to serve the men. An example is given of a chief who marries many wives for them to work on his large area of land. The women work hard, but are unhappy. They complain when he increases the area of land to cultivated, but instead of paying attention to their grievances, they are labelled as lazy women. When the chief is later deposed and ostracised, other men are given his wives. This portrays how women are considered commodities without feelings that can exchange hands at any time depending on the circumstances and dictated by patriarchal laws. These women are not given an opportunity to decide whether they want to leave together with their dethroned husband or remarry.

The Olinka even send women as gifts to the white trader on the coast. Even Doris Baines, a woman missionary, is presented with wives as a token of appreciation. Fortunately for them, Doris sends them to England to learn medicine and agriculture, thus overturning the patriarchal view of women as domestic beings. Some women are married off at birth to old men, thus denying them the power to choose spouses

for themselves. Those women who protest against this are considered social misfits. Tashi's aunt is sold to a trader for refusing both an arranged marriage and bowing to the chief. In her refusal is a challenge to patriarchy, so selling her away to a trader is to set an example to other young women and instill fear in them not to go against patriarchal values.

The Olinka do not believe that girls should be educated, and hence educational opportunities for girls are limited. Tashi, Olivia's friend, does not go to school because there they do "boys' things" (CP, p.141). The following conversation between Nettie and one of the Olinka women indicates how even women themselves have resigned to their inferior position as being better at nothing else than as housewives.

> A girl is nothing to herself; only to her husband can she become something.
>
> What can she become? I asked.
>
> Why, she said, the mother of his children.
>
> But I am not the mother of anybody's children, I said, and I am something.
>
> You are not much, she said. The missionary's drudge (CP, p.140-141).

For a long time, Olivia is the only girl in her class. Later on, Tashi joins her and more mothers begin to send their daughters to school. However, "the men do not like it: who wants a wife who knows everything her husband knows? They fume" (CP, p.154). It becomes evident that in relation to men, women are viewed as the other. However, as Nettie argues, "The world is changing. It is no longer a world just for boys and men" (CP, p.145). As the novel progresses, one realises how Tashi becomes conscientised through formal education. She becomes the first woman to make an independent decision regarding her marriage to Adam. In order to act, women need an education that allows critical consciousness. However, the education curriculum at Spelman Seminary where Corrine attends school reinforces gender roles because girls are taught to sew, clean and cook, in addition to reading, writing and mathematics. This proves why Corrine is a not an agent for change, but a passive woman.

Tashi's father, like Albert who will not allow Celie to go to the jukejoint, argues that Olinka women need to be looked after and cannot "tramp the world as American women do. There is always someone to look after the Olinka woman. A father. An uncle. A brother or nephew (CP, p.145-146). What this means is that women who stand alone are regarded with contempt and pity, and also serves to show how males regard females as domestic animals to be taken care of. However, women can actually do more if they are not controlled and closely monitored, as it is freedom which allows them to spread their wings and make great

things happen. It is against this background that radical feminists protest against male dominance with the aim of freeing the woman from the strings of oppression.

Tashi is heart-broken when her father dies simply because "all her young life she has tried to please her father, never quite realizing that, as a girl, she never could" (CP, p.150). This brings to light the idea that whatever women do, no matter how good, men will never be satisfied as they always seem to find fault with it. Tashi's father's death symbolises how that patriarchal mentality should come to an end as women are also capable of achieving greatness just like men.

As if the suffering that the Olinka women go through is not enough, they have to undergo a painful initiation ceremony to celebrate womanhood, a ritual which Nettie describes as "so bloody and painful" (CP, p.170). This is a dangerous and risky procedure that Olinka women have to undergo in order to please the male members of their society. Part of Nettie and her team's mission in Africa is to help stop such harmful practices. It is important to note that Tashi's decision to get tribal marks is not of her own free will, but that is what patriarchal society expects her to do. Initially, Tashi does not want to go through this, but later decides to be initiated "to make her people feel better" (CP, p.216). The procedure scars Tashi both physically and psychologically. She goes into hiding, loses weight and seems restless and exhausted. Walker questions why all Olinka women have to go through all this when male circumcision among the Olinka men is not compulsory. "Well, some men are circumcised ... but that's just the removal of a bit of skin" (CP, p.216).

Celie writes to Nettie that one cannot separate men from trouble as they find ways to always frustrate women. Albert curses Celie because she is poor, ugly and, most of all, a woman. Shug believes that as long as men are in charge, women will not succeed in their quest for emancipation and recognition. Shug argues that a woman's prayers cannot be answered for as long as they are addressed to God, the main patriarch, and that is why Celie's prayers do not yield the results Celie desires. Shug dismisses the concept of God as "He" and neither should He be referred to as "She", but "It" (CP, p.176). Through Shug, Walker is calling for a society where there is equality and coexistence between men and women, where people are blind to sexual differences, and hence Shug seeks to overturn the patriarchal structure in which God is an omnipotent male, and advocates for the use of the third person pronoun "It" to refer to God.

It is ironic that while patriarchy oppresses women, it cannot survive without the same women it oppresses. When Celie travels with Shug and leaves Albert alone, he is so depressed that he begins to live like a pig, cannot sleep and isolates himself from the world. That separation is a necessary principle of

radical feminism as it enables Albert to think properly and see things clearly. As Sofia states, “Meanness kill” (CP, p.203). Only when Albert gives Celie all of Nettie’s letters to her that he has been hiding does he recover and become a better person. In other words, what men do not realise is that in being mean to women they are being mean to themselves. If they do good, surely good will also come to them. That period of separation is necessary for Albert to realise that in being mean to Celie, he is ironically being mean to himself and his guilty conscience gets the best of him. This is probably why he is welcoming and nicer towards Celie when she returns home.

Like Sofia and Kate, Nettie advises Celie to fight. Unfortunately Celie does not know how to fight the system, and hence she suffers. Sofia is disappointed in Celie whom she sees as exhibiting the same traits as Sofia’s mother who was always under Sofia’s father’s foot, neither saying anything back nor standing up for herself. Unlike her mother and Celie, Sofia does fight, having grown up fighting her father, brothers, cousins and uncles. Though the stunt in prison crushes Sofia’s spirit, she is not completely broken down and there is hope for revival of her anti-patriarchal stance.

Another aspect of patriarchal society that brings women down is how women are always judged by the public in what they do. Fear of public opinion chokes women to such an extent that they fail to grow as individuals. Albert even uses that as a threat to stop Celie from travelling to Memphis with Shug Avery. He asks her to think of what people will say when they hear that she has left her responsibility of looking after her house. To emphasise Albert’s point, Grady states that if people talk, a woman cannot get a man. This is meant to instil fear in Celie so that she stays to take care of her home. However, their threats fall on deaf ears as Celie has become aware that her problems in life are a result of her attachment to the males who abuse her, and hence she leaves Albert without worrying about public scorn.

What is important to note is that despite the different forms of oppression the female characters in *The Color Purple* (1982) face at the hands of patriarchal society, women like Sofia and Shug demonstrate that emancipation is possible through radical means. It requires women who are willing to challenge and fight against the system of patriarchy to liberate women. Albert confesses that he admires Shug because she “act manly than most men. I mean she upright, honest. Speak her mind and the devil take the hindmost, he say. You know Shug will fight, he say. Just like Sofia. She bound to live her life and be herself no matter what” (CP, p.244). Shug fights, is free, and hence singing is her way of expressing her freedom. Despite what Shug has been through, her resilient spirit is what makes her a heroine, and this buttresses the radical feminist standpoint that only when women fight against patriarchy can they enjoy freedom.

Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) raises more or less similar issues as Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) with regard to patriarchy and the women's burden. Andreas addresses issues related to females and their relationships with males in Namibia after independence. The text discusses how traditional culture views women as the weaker sex in a society dominated by men. Women exist on the margins of society and are treated as objects without any feeling or emotions. This is manifested through Mee Kauna's relationship with Shange, her husband, who beats her up whenever and for whatever reason just to prove that he is a man.

Shange does all he can to belittle and humiliate Kauna, even with their children and neighbours watching, simply because he paid lobola for her. Mee Ali observes that Kauna's life is "controlled and virtually ruled by Shange" (Andreas[2], 2001, p.50). Paying lobola in a patriarchal society becomes a means for men to own women, who are then regarded as objects to be treated anyhow without care. Religion and culture teach women to be submissive in marriage and tolerate whatever comes their way. Refusing to submit or leaving one's husband invites public scorn. Fear of public opinion traps women in loveless marriages. Kauna's mother advises her to persevere because Kauna's father is a pastor and if Kauna were to leave her husband it would tarnish his image. Kauna also stays put because she believes that there is nowhere else for her to go if she deserts her husband.

It is a pity that women rush into marriage without acquiring skills or qualifications necessary to help them take care of themselves and their children. This is why despite the excessive abuse women continue staying with their abusive spouses hoping that the situation will get better. Though she is aware of her suffering, Kauna accepts that as her fate. This defeatist attitude that she exhibits is characteristic of most women in such abusive relationships. This reminds one of Celie in Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), who is abused but does nothing about it as she also believes that is her fate.

When one looks at Mee Ali, Mee Kauna's neighbour and friend, one sees a woman who is strong for her friend but insufficient on her own. Whenever there is a crisis, she wishes Michael, her husband, were home. At Shange's funeral, she believes that the situation would have been different for Mee Kauna had Michael been there. Mee Ali also ponders on what would happen to her family if Michael were to die because like Kauna, she has nowhere to go and no one else to take care of her. After Shange's death, the future for his children is bleak. Sometimes Mee Ali worries about bringing up the children on her own, with Michael working so far away from home. Mee Ali wishes Michael were there to talk to Shiveli, their

[2] henceforth referred to as PVO for all quotes from the text

son, about being a young boy growing up, after Ngonyofi turns Shiveli's proposal down, leaving Shiveli depressed and embarrassed. Mee Ali's fear of losing her husband because she feels insecure on her own seems to support the patriarchal view that women are nothing without men. Ironically, Mee Ali is doing quite well on her own. Michael is away from home most of the time and Mee Ali sees to the family's day-to-day needs. She is even responsible for tending the crops in her field and hence she is capable of making it on her own, but she does not see this. Thus, one can argue that this misconstrued fear of being alone without a husband is entrenched in patriarchy.

When a woman does well on her own, she is accused of sleeping her way to the top. Mee Nangula, who is married to Michael's friend, Jacopo, succeeds as a businesswoman on her own but is despised by her in-laws for not accommodating them in her business. After accusing her of witchcraft, they bankrupt the business until she leaves Jacopo, who never recovers the bankruptcy. However, Mee Nangula goes on to prosper alone in business and this indicates that sometimes the men that are said to hold families together are actually the ones bringing them down, thus stamping the radical feminist stance on separatism.

It is sad to note that Mee Maita, who should be fighting for women's rights through her church work, actually believes that marriage problems are an inevitable evil. Mee Ali says,

> What I dislike most about her is that she does either little or nothing for the women and widows who are mistreated by their husbands and in-laws despite her position. She believes that marriage should be one miserable, lifelong experience. Husband and wife should fight every day, he should abuse her and the children, he should go after other women, otherwise 'okwa tulwa mo'[3]. It is the way of the world. She never has anything good to say about marriage.
>
> "This is what marriage is all about. This is the real world. You have promised to stay in this thing till death do you part," are her usual responses to marriage problems (PVO, p.4).

Despite the abuse, Kauna remains faithful and patiently waits for Shange's return from his mistress who lives in a white house that Shange built for her, thus she is referred to as "the woman from the white house" (PVO, p.26). Mee Kauna continues to shower Shange with love despite that he does not return the love. Unfortunately, Shange is blind to this genuine love for him and continues ill-treating Mee Kauna. Though aware that he is in the arms of another woman, when Kauna prepares meals for her family, she always leaves some food for him to eat when he returns home. Mee Kauna sometimes feels as if she

[3] He is under her thumb.

deserves the beatings, probably a result of how traditional society brought her up. The general social belief is that women have to look after the home, and accept men's adventurous and naughty nature without complaining. Should a marriage fail, society will label the woman a failure. It is also the woman blamed if she is beaten up or abused in whatever manner by her spouse. Shockingly, even women themselves believe that if they are beaten up by their husbands it is because they deserve it. When Kauna's mother notices the scar on Kauna's face, she asks her, "What did you do to get that scar?" thus emphasising that society places so much blame on women for wrong-doing, yet turning a blind eye to the domestic abuse at the hands of their spouses (PVO, p.77). The community does not make it easy for Kauna as it treats her as if the failure of her marriage is her fault.

> It was as if the failure of their marriage was her fault! They laughed at her and stigmatised her.
>
> It was her fault that her husband looked at other women.
>
> It was her fault that her husband beat her.
>
> It was her fault that her husband did this or did that. Oh, it was just too much (PVO, p.51).

Kauna also ends up believing this herself, "Maybe if I had been a nurse, a teacher or any of those office workers, he would have treated me better. Maybe if, maybe if ... (PVO, p.51).

Marriage, as an institution, is always in the spotlight. The gossip Kauna listens to on her way to Omapandu, her parents' village is about "who had died, who had married, who was still not pregnant after so many years of marriage, who is now too old to get married, who has moved, who has this new disease ..." thus illustrating how every aspect of marriage is scrutinised by society (PVO, p.76). While every woman expects a happily-ever-after union, marriage's beauty fades over time for most women who are unfortunate to find themselves married to the wrong men, but unfortunately stay married to avoid public comments. Mukwankala notes that Mee Kauna never had a single happy day in her marriage as Shange's bad-tempered nature always got the best of him. Even Mee Fennie observes how even without any visible scars, Kauna's unhappiness is betrayed by her thin body. Kauna even teases Blacky, her brother, who introduced her to Shange that he had sold her into slavery. Unfortunately, Kauna tolerates Shange's ill-treatment because she is brought up to stand for her marriage no matter what.

After Shange's death, Kauna is expected to mourn him as if he were a good man, in accordance with custom, otherwise she would be accused of being responsible for his death as people would argue that not mourning him is a sign that she is happy that he is dead. Kauna is also expected to deliver a speech at

the funeral about how good a husband Shange was. Her lack of tears and refusal to deliver a speech is a form of protest which reinforces Shange's relatives' argument that she killed their son. What they fail to understand is that she has had enough of him, has cried enough in her marriage, and cannot shed any more tears, especially for him.

While divorce is a possible way out, it is regarded as unspeakable. Mee Fennie advises Kauna that if she thinks that she deserves more in her marriage she should take that bold step of divorcing him. However, she warns her that Mee Maria, Kauna's mother, would not welcome the news as she does not want the family name muddied and the whole clan embarrassed. It is this excessive fear of public opinion that traps women in loveless marriages. Besides, divorce would disorient the children born in that marriage. However, it is unfortunate that sometimes even after sacrificing so much for those children, some women are not rewarded for their efforts. Kuku Nameni's children neglect her while she is alive and even after she dies deny her a proper burial, thus mourners accuse her children of her death. The burden of womanhood is indeed a huge one.

Gender roles are also noticeable in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) as much as they are commonplace in *The Color Purple* (1982). Women work really hard in the fields and at home to provide for their families, while men work at mines and in the city. The text begins with Mee Ali admiring the crops in her field, thus signifying that harvest time is cause for celebration as the women realise the fruits of their hard labour. Even though the women work so hard and the men never set their feet on the fields, the yields belong to the men. Kauna's namesake, Mee Ali's daughter, questions why the land is regarded as Tate Shange's and yet Shange has never worked on the land. Her opinion is that Mee Kauna deserves the land because she is the one tirelessly working on it. As young as she is, she is conscious of the injustices of patriarchy towards women. Should the yields be poor, women are blamed. Mee Ali tells Kauna that if she does not finish ploughing in time for the rain, neither Kauna's husband nor in-laws with be the laughing stock of Oshaantu village, but Kauna herself. Even Mukwankala tells Kauna, "Your *epya*[4] is too big. If you don't finish it in time for the rains, people will talk about you, not about your husband" (PVO, p.111). Despite Kauna's hard work, after she becomes a widow Kauna's in-laws kick her off the land, take everything she worked for and leave her with nothing to show for all her hard work.

At Shange's funeral, gender roles are highlighted through women cooking, feeding mourners and taking care of Shange's children, while men discuss funeral arrangements and other "important matters". The

[4] plot, land for cultivation

undertaker and pallbearers are all men, as this is considered men's work, echoing Harpo's sentiments in Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982). It is because of gender roles dictated by patriarchy that Shange is embarrassed to communicate that he works as a cook, a job patriarchy regards as meant for women. When the truth about Shange's job is revealed to Kauna through a photograph that Mee Ali finds and gives her, Shange beats up Kauna thoroughly for having gained that insight into his life, despite Kauna being his wife. Ironically, women are to blame for raising men who look down up women and "women's work". When bringing up boys, women instil in them a sense of superiority. Mee Fennie refers to Osha, her son, as "the man of the house" (PVO, p.78). As a result, he is likely to grow up indoctrinated to behave in a way that reinforces gender roles and at the same time oppress women. However, Mukwankala can be complimented for raising boys who do the same work as girls and advises Mee Ali and Mee Kauna to pray for their sons so that they become men of both virtue and stature.

It is sad to note that some women in patriarchal societies have joined hands with men to oppress fellow women. Mee Ali's mother-in-law insults the former at every opportunity and is against Michael marrying her. She even insults Mee Ali's mother for accompanying Mee Ali to Michael's house when Mee Ali falls pregnant out of wedlock, instead of sending a delegation. Mee Ali's mother-in-law and Sana, Mee Ali's sister-in-law, always gossip about Mee Ali and are so judgemental to such an extent that Mee Ali is so happy to leave their house and start her own home away from people that she feels suffocate her and would kill her before her time.

A woman who cannot give birth is regarded as useless. While patriarchal society allows the men to leave their childless homes to impregnate other women, married women who walk out on their marriages are considered loose. Even female in-laws pressurise daughters-in-law to have children. When Kauna does not fall pregnant immediately after marriage, Shiwa, Shange's sister, insults her by pointing out to her that as long as she has no children she is useless. One day Shange does not return home to eat and when Kauna enquires where he could be, Shiwa responds that he has gone to visit women with fertile wombs. Ironically, Mee Ali's mother-in-law accuses Mee Ali of bewitching Michael, yet she praises Tauno, her daughter Sana's husband, for showering Sana with love. What Mee Ali's mother-in-law does not realise is that Mee Ali and Michael's relationship is Sana and Tauno's relationship reversed. It is also ironic how in-laws, who should welcome daughters-in-law into the home with love, are the ones giving them a hard time. The following conversation between Mee Ali and Mee Kauna captures this;

> "In-laws always give their daughters-in-law a hard time," Kauna said.

"Especially the women, uuh, they are the worst."

"Yes, the women."

"The bitches."

"And witches."

"You can say that again."

"Yes, the fucking witches" (PVO, p.25-26).

Not only do the men neglect their wives when they cannot give them children, but when the men become rich. People believe that it is Mee Namutenya who worked hard for Tate Oiva to become rich, "but now that he was a rich man and she was sick, he was throwing her out like a piece of broken old pot" (PVO, p.30). Tate Oiva returns Mee Namutenya to her people when she falls sick claiming that he can no longer take care of her. However, when a man falls sick the woman is expected to take care of him as he is her responsibility. When Michael is involved in an accident, Mee Ali stays in Oshakati Hospital for over a month taking care of him. Mee Firida, a distant relative of Michael, spends the whole night awake taking care of Tate Sebuloni, her husband, who has a serious cough.

Sometimes the woman is blamed for the man's sickness and expected to nurse him. If he does not recover but dies, again the poor wife is accused of bewitching him. Most of the men work far from home in mines, factories and on farms, thus subjecting them to temptations of the flesh. Womanising Victor succumbs to AIDS and Mee Sara, his wife, nurses him until his death. However, Mee Sara is accused of bewitching him, even after the society is conscientised on the subject of AIDS. Mee Sara has to wear mourning clothes, yet at the same time she is denied any inheritance.

> They dragged her to the bank to withdraw their relative's money. They took everything from the house, even the electronic appliances. I wondered how some of them would use them, as they did not have electricity in their homesteads. One of Victor's sisters, *a teacher*, mind you – you would think she would know better – "inherited" the television set for her children. It was a mess (PVO, p.104).

When Michael complains about this unfair treatment of the widow, he is told that "this is tradition" and hence one notes the extent to which patriarchal tradition oppresses widows (PVO, p.104). Mee Kauna also experiences this when Shange's family accuses her of murdering Shange for his wealth and grabs all

that Mee Kauna has worked for, arguing that everything belongs to Shange, their son. One of Shange's cousins even moves into the nuptial bedroom. Not only that, but Shange's family does not consult Kauna about funeral arrangements. To them, she does not exist simply because she is a woman. Uncle Sheya invites Kauna to the "oshinyanga"[5], regardless of the fact that she is mourning. Instead of calling her, he should have gone to her hut where she is mourning. It is pathetic that his reason for calling her is to accuse her of killing Shange and also demand her to declare Shange's wealth, which she knows nothing about. This could surely have waited until after Shange's burial. After Shange's burial, while Kauna is trying to raise money to pay for her land, behind her back her in-laws pay for it before her, and hence she loses her right to stay in Oshaantu. Shange's family inherits his land and sends Kauna and her children away.

However, it is important to note that there are some men who sympathise with the cause of widows, like Michael who shares in Mee Sara's suffering though he is helpless against tradition to help her. At Shange's funeral, Tate Mbenjameni raises pertinent concerns. He speaks out against gender imbalances and discrimination as well as the evils of the patriarchal system when it comes to inheritance matters.

> It is our custom that we inherit things from our loved ones when they pass away. I believe we do this to treasure their memories, but I want to remind the relatives of the deceased who are here today, that when they do so, they should please think of the wife and the children, particularly the children's education (PVO, p.161).

Unfortunately, his advice falls on deaf ears as Kauna and her children are stripped of their inheritance by Shange's greedy relatives. It would definitely take commitment from more such men as Michael and Tate Mbenjameni to make the system fair for widows. If men are conscientised on this, then positive change in society is possible. According to Brown (2001), contemporary radical feminists, even though they are feminists, are willing to work in solidarity with those black men who are progressive and side with or support women's cause.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) also presents similar issues raised in *The Color Purple* (1982) and *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) with respect to patriarchy and the woman's burden. Eugene Achike, also known as Papa Eugene, runs his family with an iron fist. Kambili, Papa Eugene and Mama Beatrice's daughter, narrates how Papa's violent nature and tight schedules result in the disintegration of her family. At the same time, the story is a bildungsroman as it exhibits Kambili's struggles as she grows to maturity. The text is radical feminist in the sense that Mama regularly suffers

[5] a large open hut that is part of the homestead used for meetings, mostly by men

domestic violence at the hands of Papa and in the end she kills him to protect herself and her children from him, as that for her is the only permanent solution. Killing Papa serves as poetic justice symbolising annihilating patriarchy.

Papa Eugene is so strict that rather than respecting him as the head of the family, his family fears him. He takes everything he does to extremes, even to the extent of punishing Mama for petty crimes, battering her to such an extent that she miscarries twice in the course of the novel. Papa's behaviour is representative of what men are capable of becoming if patriarchy is uncontrolled. Right at the beginning of the text, Papa's violent temper is manifested when he breaks Mama's figurines after flinging his heavy missal across the room in an attempt to hit Jaja and it misses him.

Mama is a domestic woman who has been brought up to accept marriage in accordance with patriarchal tradition. For her, marriage is a source of pride. In her conversation with Aunty Ifeoma, Mama points out that it is important for a woman to marry so that she can get a man to take care of her. Mama argues that a woman is not complete if she neither has a husband nor children. According to Mama, "a husband crowns a woman's life" (Adichie[6], 2013, p.75). It is for this reason that despite the constant abuse she faces at the hands of Papa, she remains committed to him. Religion has also brainwashed her to the extent that she submits to her husband even when submission seems impractical. After her second miscarriage when she runs away from her home to Aunty Ifeoma's, one would think that is the last straw in her marriage, but she returns to Papa as she strongly feels that it is her duty to take care of her husband. Even though he is at fault, Papa makes Mama believe that she is to blame and deserves whatever punishment he gives her, and because Mama is not enlightened she believes it to be true and that Papa is punishing her for her own good. She remains faithful to her marriage vows as she believes that it is through marriage that a woman's existence is worthwhile, the same belief held in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) by Kauna's mother, Mee Maria.

Mama believes that it is wise for her to fight for her marriage which she sees as a privilege in the view of the fact that Eugene could have taken up his kinsmen's suggestion of taking a second wife as she has only given birth to two children. This highlights how a married woman's worth is judged by the number of children she is able to give her husband. Mama feels that she owes Eugene because he stood by her,

> "Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go?" She did not wait for Aunty Ifeoma to respond. "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do

[6] henceforth referred to as PH for all quotes from the text

you know how many asked him to impregnate them, and not bother paying a bride price? (PH, p.250).

Thus, for her, walking out on her marriage would make her seem ungrateful. Besides, as a Catholic, Mama vowed to love Papa through thick and thin. Despite the rough treatment he gives her, she still wants to protect him. For example, after Ade Coker's death, Mama feels so sorry for Papa that she instructs Kambili and Jaja to hug him tighter and give him maximum support as he is under pressure. Also, Mama cannot just walk out on her marriage as she fears public opinion. This is what keeps her glued to Eugene, thus her burden as a woman is a heavy one.

Seeing Jaja, the village women helping with the food preparation think of marrying off their daughters to him as he will inherit Papa's riches. Thus, for women, marriage becomes a form of investment. When the women see Kambili, they see a ripe young woman who will soon be ready for marriage. Thus, one pities these women as they do not see life beyond marriage. Culture has drummed into them that only marriage can make a person whole, yet there is more to life than that, as exemplified by Aunty Ifeoma who is an independent radical woman who demonstrates that women can go it alone and run homes far much better than men, and hence after visiting Nsukka, Jaja and Kambili become aware of their home environment and begin to question certain "truths". While Papa rules through instilling fear in his family, Aunty Ifeoma encourages cooperation and laughter among her children and sets the pace for them to grow independently.

Through Papa Nnukwu, one realises how men in a patriarchal society view women with contempt and fail to appreciate women's efforts in taking care of the family. Despite the fact that Aunty Ifeoma struggles to put food on her table, she does her best to take care of Papa Nnukwu. Aunty Ifeoma is unhappy that Papa Nnukwu continues to mourn over Eugene, who disowns him as he regards Papa Nnukwu as a heathen and hardly supports him. Papa Nnukwu responds, "But you are a woman. You do not count" (PH, p.83). It is indeed ironic that the one woman whom he says does not count is the one who stands by him until his death while Papa Eugene does not care about him at all. Aunty Ifeoma demonstrates that despite men's view of women as the weaker sex, they are actually very strong, perhaps stronger than men.

It also takes a strong woman to raise her children alone and at the same time take care of her aging sick parent while on a meagre salary as Aunty Ifeoma does. Papa Nnukwu states that since Aunty Ifeoma's husband died, she has suffered a lot, and therefore prays that she gets another good man to take care of her and her children. However, Aunty Ifeoma dismisses the idea suggesting that he prays for her

promotion to senior lecturer instead. This serves to demonstrate how Aunty Ifeoma intends to subvert patriarchal norms, through empowering herself by advancing in her career as compared to sitting back and hoping for a man to come along and marry her. It is highly likely that Papa Eugene's abusive nature contributes greatly towards Aunty Ifeoma's decision not to remarry. She advises Mama to leave Papa, despite Papa being her blood brother. She informs Mama that "sometimes life begins when marriage ends" (PH, p.75). Through Aunty Ifeoma one realises that it is indeed possible to subvert patriarchy and all traditions that oppress women, and yet remain sane, contrary to Papa Nnukwu's beliefs. As much as Papa Nnukwu is an admirable character both as a grandfather and a reservoir of history, Adichie kills his character to symbolise that the patriarchal tendencies that he exhibits, which discriminate against women, should be destroyed completely.

Like Kauna in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), Aunty Ifeoma is accused of killing Ifediora, her husband, who died in a road traffic accident, and then hiding the money that he left. Regardless of the fact that there is no way Aunty Ifeoma could have orchestrated the accident, her in-laws neglect her and the children. This serves to show just how callous in-laws can be. However, like Kauna, Aunty Ifeoma is a strong woman who is ready to start afresh as a free woman, defying the injustices widows experience in traditional African patriarchal societies.

Papa Eugene and Ade Coker are breadwinners, while their wives, Beatrice and Yewande respectively, are housewives taking care of the home and the children, relying on their formally employed husbands for monetary support. However, unlike Aunty Ifeoma who soldiers on alone after her husband's death, Yewande Coker, Ade Coker's wife, has to rely on Papa Eugene for support after Ade Coker's death as she has learnt to rely on her husband before his death and cannot think of any other means of survival besides being supported by a man. Fortunately for Mama, Papa leaves her more than enough wealth to survive on after his death, without which she would probably also have struggled financially. Besides, Aunty Ifeoma, the few women in the text who try to do something for themselves do not run big companies like Papa Eugene; they are just vendors selling oranges and bananas to those visiting the prison, thus demonstrating that women still need to be emancipated economically in order for them to manage big businesses like Papa Eugene's. Sisi, Beatrice's maid, does all household chores such as cooking and cleaning, while Papa's driver, Kevin, is male. These gender roles need to be dissolved if women are to progress, and Aunty Ifeoma is a perfect example of a radical woman who fights for recognition in all aspects of society. Aunty Ifeoma's presence is felt wherever she goes, and Kambili describes her as follows,

> When she barged into the dining room upstairs, I imagined a proud ancient forebear, walking miles to fetch water in homemade clay pots, nursing babies until they walked and talked, fighting wars with machetes sharpened on sun-warmed stone. She filled a room (PH, p.80).

In becoming a university lecturer, Aunty Ifeoma paves a way for herself and other women into a male-dominated environment, thus giving herself an upper hand in training the younger generation of females to become future leaders. She demonstrates that women are also capable of making it to the top, not remaining stuck in the home environment where their intellectual growth is stunted. It is in that university environment that Aunty Ifeoma's impact is felt, and hence the decision by the university authorities who feel threatened by her presence to relieve her of her duties. It is important to note that the sole administrator at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where Aunty Ifeoma works, is a man, and having a woman like Aunty Ifeoma challenge his administration emasculates him. For being a vocal woman, she is considered a rotten apple and so has to be discarded. The reader is informed that Aunty Ifeoma should have been a senior lecturer many years back but the administrators sit on her file for years because she expresses her mind freely, and most of these ideas are radical in nature, which is why she is suspected of inciting the students' demonstration. After being fired, Aunty Ifeoma resettles in America. It is important to note that leaving Nsukka for America is not a sign of defeat, but a symbol of growth and it enables her to take better care of her children unlike if she had stayed on in Nigeria.

To further demonstrate how men disregard women, Papa does not know Sisi's name even though she is responsible for preparing most of his food and housekeeping. He does not appreciate her efforts, but just looks down upon her as a maid who does not deserve any recognition whatsoever, only referring to her as "that girl" (PH, p.258).

As in *The Color Purple* (1982) where Albert argues against women wearing pants, Papa Eugene feels the same way. Kambili grows up believing that there is a particular appropriate dress code. When she attends St. Peter's Catholic Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, she is stunned to observe women dressed the way they want. She thinks to herself, "Papa would be scandalized. A woman's hair must be covered in the house of God, and a woman must not wear a man's clothes, especially in the house of God, he would say" (PH, p.240). However, through Aunty Ifeoma and Amaka, Adichie highlights that how one dresses is not as important as how one behaves. Despite wearing pants and lipstick, they remain true to themselves and lead a happy life, contrary to Papa's beliefs. Ironically, it is not at her solemn church in Enugu, but at this church in Nsukka where people dress as such that Kambili feels closer to God, thus illustrating that religion goes deeper than dressing, contrary to what patriarchal societies want people to

believe. In the light of this, women should be free to wear what they want as how they dress does not hinder their spiritual growth.

In Aunty Ifeoma's home, children make their own decisions. This is something unheard of in Eugene's home. When Kambili is confirmed a Catholic, Papa buys her confirmation dress and also chooses her confirmation name, Ruth. Neither Mama nor Kambili is consulted on whether she approves of either the dress or the name. However, Amaka has the freedom to pick a confirmation name for herself, and as she cannot be confirmed with an African name as she desires, she decides against being confirmed. Aunty Ifeoma respects her decision and does not insult her for doing so, unlike Eugene who would obviously have had a fit such as on the day Jaja does not go to communion. This serves to show how a society free from patriarchy is ideal as it encourages independent thinking and gives children a major part in the decision-making process, unlike in a patriarchal society where the men do all the thinking and do not consult their wives and children as the men mistakenly believe that since they head their families, they have the power to decide for everyone.

Women are willing to sacrifice for their children unlike men. In the folktale that Papa Nnukwu tells about why the tortoise has a cracked shell, the mothers sacrifice themselves so that their children can have something to eat. It is Aunty Ifeoma's love and resilience that makes her superior to Papa Eugene, as she is able to raise intelligent, bold and confident children unlike Eugene whose children are timid and reigned by fear. When Kambili looks at Papa, she sees a demi-god who cannot do anything wrong. In her eyes, he is a perfectionist who makes Kambili push herself too hard to please him. She does not socialise at school for fear of upsetting Papa, and has to run to the car already waiting for her as soon as class is dismissed. Before saying anything, Kambili ponders whether it would please Papa. Whenever somebody says something that Kambili thinks will make Papa happy, she wishes she had said it herself.

Ironically, though Kambili seems to love Papa very much, her fear and hatred for him is reflected in the nightmares she begins to experience due to the traumatic effects of the physical abuse Papa subjects her to. Kambili freezes on hearing Papa's name, wishes the ground could swallow her when she comes second in class for fear of his punishment, and cannot pave her own way in life. While Amaka already knows what she would like to become in future and which university she would like to attend, Kambili has never thought about it as all decisions are made for her by Papa. Kambili says, "I had never thought about the university where I would go or what I would study. When the time came, Papa would decide" (PH, p.130).

When Papa Nnukwu dies, Kambili wonders if Papa Eugene is crying and whether she should cry too. To further demonstrate her lack of confidence in herself, as she and Jaja go upstairs, Kambili describes how she tries to place her feet exactly on the same spots he had placed his. This is symbolic of how Kambili feels inadequate on her own, all because of Papa's upbringing. The strict environment she grows up in is very unhealthy as it hinders individual growth and maturity. It is a pity that Mama, who should come to Kambili's aid, is also a victim of patriarchy. Decisions such as allowing the children to visit Aunty Ifeoma or Papa Nnukwu, and for how long, are made by Papa. Even Beatrice's movements are controlled by Eugene, who would like her to stay at home except when they go to church as a family.

As an artist in her mother's house, Amaka is free to draw Papa Nnukwu as a sign of her love for her grandfather. However, Kambili has to hide that portrait so that Papa does not find it. Unfortunately, Papa finds it and punishes Kambili severely, demonstrating the intense hatred he has for his father and how Christianity has brainwashed him into denying his own father whom he considers a heathen, and yet it teaches its followers to honour their parents. Ironically, Papa does not respect his father because of their different religious beliefs, yet he expects his children to respect him despite them also having contradictory ideas to his, especially on his methods of punishment. This highlights that the problem with patriarchy is that it observes flaws within other systems, yet failing to realise its own weaknesses. Adichie lays this bare to the reader so that a radical course of action is taken to promote justice.

Aunty Ifeoma regards Obiora, her son, as the man of the house, in the same manner that Mee Fennie in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) treats Osha, her son. When Papa Nnukwu dies, Obiora does not cry out loud because he has to be strong for Aunty Ifeoma. Culture also dictates that men should not cry as it is a sign of weakness. Seeing Obiora taking responsibility on his shoulders makes Jaja resolve to do the same for his mother, "I should have taken care of Mama. Look at how Obiora balances Aunty Ifeoma's family on his head, and I am older than he is. I should have taken care of Mama" (PH, p.289). Jaja realises that his responsibility as a man is to protect women, not hurt them. With this new conviction, Jaja feels that Mama has suffered enough and goes to prison on behalf of her, after she kills Papa in an effort to shield herself and her children from further physical abuse. Poisoning Papa is the most extreme action that Mama takes to emancipate herself, and hence through Papa's death poetic justice is served.

> This is a deliberate attempt by Adichie to prove that radical feminism is a reaction to some circumstances, she believes that one cannot wake up and start crushing anything that stands in her or his way. It is often being prompted by situations that seem to overpower a person. Mama's

> radical way of ending her husband's life was prompted by his violent actions which she brought to an end by poisoning his tea (Ibeku, 2015, p.436).

What interests the reader of *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) is to note that the events in Papa Eugene's home are reflective of the political events in Nigeria at that time. Just like Papa's death is a radical move to overthrow patriarchy, a system which oppresses women, the coup that brings in a new government is also a radical move to overthrow a system of governance that does not serve the interests of the masses.

For radical feminist writers, death of the abusive patriarch serves as a necessary means to an end. Shober in Smith (2015) quotes Arndt (2002) who argues that radical feminist texts portray women as objects oppressed, mistreated and discriminated against by sexist and immoral men, and hence the men are forced to leave the story through the most possible dramatic way, which is premature death. Killing the three fictional figures of Pa, Shange and Papa Eugene, in *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) respectively, is representative of the fact that patriarchy, which oppresses women, must come to an end, thus making all three radical feminist texts.

The next section focuses on how men use violence and intimidation to get women to submit to them. This instils fear in women, who then feel afraid to articulate their concerns. However, with time and effort, the women regain the voice that patriarchy denies them.

**5.3 Violence, silence and voice**

This section will focus on how men in the select texts use violence as a tool to stamp their authority, thus instilling fear in women and thwarting female voices. It will also discuss the means through which the women fight to regain their lost voices. According to Fiorenza (1998) in Akung (2013), radical feminism acknowledges that women are people, and hence need to be recognised and treated as such. This means that the rights and well-being of women, just like those of men, need to be fully recognised and accorded. Daly (2016) posits that radical feminists encounter and battle the dangerous demons of patriarchy, and all its various manifestations, to be exorcised in their journey of discovering the past and creating a patriarchy-free world. Sattar (2014) argues that the fear of being punished severely by the dominant group silences women and in turn shields their true identity. To subvert this order and find their voices and being, there is need to destabilise the centre by unsettling patriarchy. Victor (2013) observes how the marriage institution, which should be long-lasting and fulfilling, is negated and mocked by violence and abuse as exemplified by Shange in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013), and further argues that silence of the victims and their families allows the violence to go

unreported. However, this "silence becomes a powerful tool for speaking against oppressive social customs" (Victor, 2013, p.58).

*The Color Purple* (1982) begins with Pa raping Celie and warning her against revealing the act to anyone, especially her mother as it would kill her. The rape itself is a violent act on Celie's body that traumatises and leaves her physically and emotionally scarred. To compound matters, she is strongly cautioned against articulating her suffering to anybody but God. Unfortunately for her, God does not seem to be answering her prayers as her suffering continues. Pa marries Celie off to Albert, who beats her up like a child, disrespecting and oppressing her until Celie feels dead inside and loses all feeling and emotion.

> He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don't never hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man (CP, p.23).

Celie only comes out of this state when she bonds with Shug Avery and begins to write letters to Nettie, her sister. It is through Shug and Nettie's love and support that Celie feels live again. This argument will be discussed in detail under the next section on sisterhood.

Before Celie, Albert also beats up his wife, Annie Julia, while he is having an affair with Shug. This pushes Annie Julia into the arms of another man, who also abuses her and eventually shoots her down, thus silencing her permanently. Annie Julia's story is representative of other women who have fallen victim to violence in their relationships, dying prematurely, and hence radical feminists call for an end to gender-based violence.

It is heart-wrenching when abusive males pass on their abusive behaviour to their sons. Harpo is disturbed that Sofia, his wife, is a liberated woman who does as she pleases and he observes how Celie is kept "in her place" by Albert, Harpo's father, who advises him, "Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do better than a good sound beating" (CP, p.35).

Ironically, some women even encourage the abuse of fellow women. Celie advises Harpo to beat up Sofia in order to get her to become submissive. This serves to demonstrate how patriarchy survives with the help of women too, misinformed women who support men in oppressing other women. However, it is important to note that these women who do so have been indoctrinated to believe that is the normal state of affairs. Ill-advised, Harpo fights with Sofia, but meets his match. Sofia is a radical woman who cannot be trampled on like Celie and she fights back until Harpo recognises her worth. It is important to note that Walker is not instigating domestic violence through Sofia and Harpo, but highlighting the fact

that women should stand their ground in protest against a system that oppresses them, so that they are accorded the respect that they deserve.

Celie observes that if asked properly, Sofia is happy to do what she has been asked to do as she is neither mean nor spiteful. It is only when ill-treated that Sofia fights back. This demonstrates how radical feminists are happy when men are fair in how they treat women, but provoked when oppressed, and hence fight to end that oppression like Sofia who fights back when disrespected. Even Nettie's first letter to Celie advises her to fight. Not only does Sofia resist the "weaker sex" label, but she also beats up the Mayor after he slaps her for refusing to work for Miz Millie, his wife, a white woman. To crush her spirit, Sofia is beaten up by police officers and arrested. After her release, she goes to work for Miz Millie against her wish, but does not give up fighting. Her thought of killing somebody should not be taken literally, but symbolises the need to press on until female oppression comes to an end.

Another victim of violence is Mary Agnes, also known as Squeak, who is raped by the warden after she goes to his office in an attempt to try and have Sofia released after her arrest. Ironically, the same place that should fight for the protection of all its citizens, the police station, is where Squeak is raped. This presents women with a dilemma as they do not know who to turn to for help or trust not to harm them. Having been raped in the same office where she should report that she has been raped, Squeak's rape goes unreported, and hence she is silenced. Paradoxically, the same traumatic event that silences her gives her voice as it propels her singing career. She starts singing after the rape, with the singing serving as an expression for her pain, but at the same time having a therapeutic effect. The same event that is meant to break her hardens her and reaffirms her identity, and hence she does not want to be referred to as Squeak anymore and proclaims, "My name Mary Agnes" (CP, p.90).

*The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) furthers the issue of domestic violence through detailing Shange's abusive behaviour towards Mee Kauna, his wife. Shange beats up Kauna at the slightest opportunity, disrespecting her existence. At one point, Kauna loses a pregnancy due to the physical abuse that Shange subjects her to. Kauna leaves Shange thrice to escape the abuse. However, she keeps going back to him as he keeps apologising, promising to change and never beat her again. Unfortunately the abuse continues leaving Kauna with ugly scars to tell her sad story. When Shange realises that Kauna knows that he cooks for other men at the mine he feels emasculated and batters her in his anger. In protest against the abuse, Kauna refuses to mourn Shange when he dies.

> "Well, I'm sorry you all feel uncomfortable about my behaviour, but I cannot pretend," she shook her head. "I cannot lie to myself and to everybody else in this village. They all know how I was treated in my marriage. Why should I cry? For what? For my broken ribs? For my baby, the one he killed inside me while beating me? For cheating on me publicly? For what? For what, Ali? (PVO, p.49).

Kauna further argues that she has been angry her whole life about her marriage to Shange and so does not care about public opinion as she has nothing to lose. Kauna's refusal to mourn Shange and speak at his funeral is actually her voice against domestic violence and a patriarchal culture that oppresses women. While her in-laws take that as evidence that she killed Shange, she argues that Shange cannot be mourned like other good husbands. She has cried enough in her marriage and cannot shed more tears.

It is sad to note that women also protect their abusers by not speaking against or reporting the abuse, thus being further abused. When Mee Ali visits Mee Kauna in hospital, the nurses talk about this abuse openly.

> I visited at the hospital as often as I could. The nurses were not always sympathetic. In our presence they would talk about how village women get beaten up by their husbands, and how they lie to the doctors, saying that some cow had kicked them in their faces while they were milking; and that treating those women was a waste of time because they always return, worse! (PVO, p.61).

Through Mee Ali, one is made aware of the fact that women are afraid of voicing their concerns for fear of causing more trouble for themselves. When she hears that Mukwankala has confronted Shange in public, Mee Ali fears that Shange might kill Kauna. Fortunately, it is Mukwankala's act of bravery which stops the abuse. It takes strong women like Mukwankala to speak out against the abuse. Mukwankala, who is famous for speaking her mind and not mincing her words, tells Shange straight in his face that women are not punching bags. In confronting Shange, Mukwankala challenges violence in the domestic sphere. She questions why Shange has turned Kauna from being the purple violet of Oshaantu to a sorry state, and why he married Kauna if all he does is beat her up. To further humiliate Shange, she questions why he does not fight the strong men in the village, but attacks a poor defenceless woman. Mukwankala concludes that men who beat up women are cowards as they cannot fight against other men.

It is because of Mukwankala's boldness in confronting Shange that he stops beating up Kauna. What Andreas argues here is that for as long as women are afraid of men and remain silent when they are

abused, the abuse continues unchecked. It needs strong women like Mukwankala to voice their concerns in order to be heard. Andreas becomes the Mukwankala of Namibia, conscientising women on the importance of speaking out. She also helps men realise that when they attack women they are just broadcasting their own weakness to the world, not the women's weakness. The respect that men deserve is the same respect women deserve, as articulated by Mee Ali who says despite her background she simply does " not deserve to be treated like a filthy animal" (PVO, p.65) and wants "to be a wife, not a punching bag" (PVO, p.172). What Mee Ali means is that for a wife to be treated well by her husband, like Michael does, is not a sign of being lucky as people mistakenly believe, but it is actually a right.

Radical feminists argue that patriarchal rules should be broken and men need to become allies with women, not foes, in order for women to be fully liberated. Women's emancipation can only be complete with men's support. It is in the light of this that men like Michael, Mukwankala's late husband and Kauna's father are admired because they support the female cause and are anti-patriarchal traditions that men misinterpret when they beat women. The best advice comes from Kauna's father who advises her to do what is best for her, not to think of him or his work, as he has seen many women who have died in marriage and would not want his daughter to be a statistic. Poetic justice is served on abusive men like Shange, who dies prematurely in the novel. Michael refers to Shange's death as being "silenced forever" (PVO, p.176).

In the same vein, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) addresses the same concerns. Violence is rampant in the Achike household, with Eugene beating up his wife and children whenever he deems necessary and in the process, silencing his family out of fear of his wrath. Papa Eugene is a two-faced man with a public and private face. Outside his home, he is a respected figure, but in his house, he is feared for his harsh punishment of what he regards as bad behaviour, and hence he is described as being "bulldoglike" (PH, p.14). For example, when Mama Beatrice's pregnancy is in its first trimester and she feels ill, she excuses herself from visiting Father Benedict after Mass, but later changes her mind and goes in together with the rest of the family to visit the priest. However, when they get home, Papa beats her up for having refused in the first place and she miscarries. When Kambili and Jaja share a home with Papa Nnukwu, whom Eugene considers a heathen, Papa pours boiling water on their feet as they have walked in sin. For owning a painting of Papa Nnukwu which Amaka gave her, Papa Eugene violently kicks Kambili until she is hospitalised. Kambili even fakes her pain in hospital to extend her stay there as she feels safer there. After Mama's second miscarriage, caused again by Eugene's beatings, Aunty Ifeoma pleads with Beatrice not to return to Eugene even though Eugene is her brother, but Mama goes back to him because she feels

sorry for him and believes that he will change, the same way Kauna believes that Shange will change and keeps going back to him even though her aunt, Mee Fennie, keeps advising her to file for divorce.

Aunty Ifeoma stands tall and strong, taking care of her children by herself just like Mee Fennie, and believes that women can actually succeed on their own and hence she advocates for separatism. She is described as a fearless woman, who wears red lipstick and heels, compared to Mama Beatrice who is a docile housewife willing to accept whatever Eugene makes her go through for the sake of protecting her family name. There is no laughter in the Achike household, but always a deafening silence, and when they speak, they all hope that whatever they say pleases Eugene. This is why whenever somebody says something that Eugene approves, Kambili wishes she had said it herself.

Most of the time, Kambili's words do not come out and she observes that with her mother and brother, they speak more not with their lips but their spirits, and most of her communication with Jaja is just through staring into each other's eyes most of the time. When Kambili tries to speak, she stutters. She wonders what it would be like to join the demonstrators at Government Square and chant with them, "Freedom" (PH, p.27). Beatrice always speaks in a low voice and, like Kauna in *Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), has scar on her forehead as proof of the abuse that she goes through at Papa's hands. Like other victims of domestic violence, the Achikes do not speak about it. Kambili is shocked that Jaja tells Aunty Ifeoma what happened to his finger and wonders why he told her. "Had Jaja forgotten that we never told, that there was so much that we never told?" (PH, p.154). After Papa beats up Kambili for possessing Papa Nnukwu's portrait and she is hospitalised, her classmates hear that she survived an accident, thus Papa's name is not tainted.

Even when Kambili and Jaja visit Aunty Ifeoma's home, it takes long for them to talk or join in the fun in the home. At first it feels awkward for them to laugh and partake the activities in Aunty Ifeoma's house. However, after a while, they begin to laugh and feel free to express themselves. Even Kambili's sexual self is awakened in Aunty Ifeoma's house when she meets Father Amadi. Through association with Aunty Ifeoma's daughter, Amaka, who has sworn to join activist movements at university and is inquisitive by nature, Kambili slowly begins to open up. Aunty Ifeoma even tells Kambili to talk back if Amaka does or says something to her that she does not like. The first person Kambili opens up to about the abuse after she is discharged from hospital is Amaka. When Amaka asks her if it was Eugene who beat her up like that, for the first time Kambili does not defend Papa, "Yes. It was him" (PH, p.220).

Aunty Ifeoma's house presents picture of what an ideal home environment should be like, one that allows children to grow through laughter, experimenting and questioning, as compared to Papa Eugene's stifling home environment. While meals in Papa Eugene's house are finished in silence, in Aunty Ifeoma's house that is when everyone catches up on the day's events. While Eugene is rigid in his beliefs, Aunty Ifeoma tolerates other religions, and hence curses Eugene for requesting a Christian burial for Papa Nnukwu, yet Papa Nnukwu was a staunch traditionalist. Aunty Ifeoma is the only female bold enough to challenge Papa Eugene. As a form of protest and to protect herself, Kambili and Jaja, Beatrice poisons Papa Eugene's tea resulting in his demise, a radical act to subvert Eugene's iron rule on his household. This event is parallel to the military coup which brings in a new government in Nigeria. Just like Pa's death in *The Color Purple* (1982) and Shange's death in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), Papa Eugene's death can also be regarded as poetic justice meant to thwart perpetrators of domestic violence and create a better place for the subaltern woman. Just like Kauna who refuses to shed a tear for Shange, Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice do not mourn Eugene. "It was only Sisi who had cried in the household, loud sobs that had quickly quieted in the face of our bewildered silence" (PH, p.289).

Nobody believes Mama when she confesses to killing Eugene, and Jaja decides to pay for his father's sins by going to prison in place of Mama because he believes that she suffered enough when Papa was alive. With Papa out of the picture, still Mama and Kambili do not talk much, but it is a different kind of silence unlike when Eugene was alive when the silence was due to fear. The new silence is characteristic of peace, and Kambili prefers the current to the old silence. Now she can sing, laugh loudly and talk about her hopes for the future. However, she continues to say prayers for Papa, an indication that she misses him, though not his violent nature.

It is not only at home where women are silenced. The workplace is also a volatile environment. The woman suffers in silence because those in power are men, and when she speaks, she is fired. Aunty Ifeoma is threatened with dismissal for speaking out against the university council. To further frustrate her, a raid is carried out at her house. When she does not give up the fight, she is fired from the university. When she starts making plans to leave for America, Amaka questions why they should run away from their country instead of fixing it as according to her, women should be free to express themselves through asking questions that disrupt, contaminate and create. Amaka attempts to have her grievances heard through writing letters to the press but her voice is thwarted. In the end, she leaves with her family for America. It is important to note that leaving for America is not a sign of accepting defeat, but relocating to an environment that enables her family to survive and at the same time further her interest in feminist

activism without being judged harshly by a misogynist society. This move enables them to step out of the shell of voicelessness and into endless articulation possibilities.

Having discussed how patriarchy burdens women, and how through violence women become fearful and silent, though at a later point gain voice, the next step is to look at how females forge friendships in order to resist male dominance and support one another through it all. The next section discusses the concept of sisterhood as presented in the three select texts from a radical feminist standpoint.

**5.4 Sisterhood: armour against male domination**

This section assesses the role that sisterhood plays in the female characters' quest for freedom. Chindedza (2017) asserts that since radical feminists believe that women's problems are caused by men, they advocate for separatism, and the need to unite and fight as sisters for recognition and uplift each other to dismantle patriarchy which is the cause of all their problems. When women are united, they become empowered and can help one another in their fight against the institutions and culture of patriarchy, thus Mindi (2014) propounds that the most important aspect of the identity of the black female is female bonding. In the select texts, female friendships give women strength to believe in themselves and the will to fight against patriarchy to the end. When they work together, women inspire and motivate one another towards a common goal. This, according to Cheseboro, Cragan and McCullough (1973), is true to the radical revolutionary's belief that political theory and action arise from personal experiences that are shared among individuals as they interact in a group. Thus, Daly (2016) asserts that the walls demarcated and defined by men under patriarchy are demolished and burnt down by sisterhood and female friendships. There is joy in the female spirit and in female achievement.

*The Color Purple* (1982) introduces us to a world in which women work together for their common good, a world in which women are willing to sacrifice themselves in order to make other women happy. Celie is protective of her younger sister, Nettie. After Pa sexually abuses Celie, Celie realises that Pa also has his eyes on Nettie. Despite her own suffering, Celie decides to protect Nettie by asking Pa to take her instead of Nettie, who Celie wants to continue with her education as she is intelligent and has a promising future. After Celie is married off to Albert she wonders whether Nettie is safe with Pa, thus signifying how Celie is concerned about Nettie's welfare. Nettie is grateful to Celie for playing the role of a mother to her, for example when Nettie has her first menses. It Celie's concern that enables Nettie to sail through life without being sexually abused like Celie.

After Pa tries to abuse Nettie too, she runs away to Celie's house because that is where she feels welcome and loved. Unfortunately Albert sends her away because she refuses to succumb to his sexual needs. Again Celie is there for her and directs her to a loving couple she has met before, Samuel and Corrine, who play a major role in Nettie's growth as a woman. Before leaving, Nettie advises Celie to fight and not let herself be run over, a sentiment which is echoed by Kate, Albert's sister, that nobody can fight for her but herself. In other words, Nettie and Kate work towards conscientising Celie on the need to stay alert and not allow herself to be tossed around by men, but fight.

When Shug comes to Celie's home, the former helps the latter become a strong independent woman. Shug helps Celie to discover herself. Celie admires Shug's strength, freedom and self-sufficiency. Shug's presence has a positive effect on Celie's life to such an extent that Celie admits to Sofia that her life, which was meaningless, "start up again with Shug" (CP, p.77). It is Shug who makes Albert stop ill-treating Celie, comes up with a plan to steal Celie's letters from Nettie from Albert's trunk and helps Celie read them. The letters become a window to Nettie's life in Africa and an outlet for Celie's emotions as she responds to them, thus highlighting that both African and American women share similar experiences and can work together to find solutions.

Through the strength she derives from Shug, Celie is able to curse Albert and declare her worth, "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here." (CP, p.187). With Shug's help, instead of using a razor to injure Albert and inflicting pain on him, Shug encourages Celie to get a needle instead so that she can sew pants. Shug highlights that women have better ways of fighting the system, without resorting to violence. Where Celie could have used a razor to harm Albert, she now uses a needle to empower herself. If she fights back with a razor, it would defeat the radical feminist campaign against violence, as violence begets violence. Sewing becomes a way for Celie to free her mind from any thoughts of killing Albert. It also enables to get on her feet and become economically independent that she does not need to stick to Albert so that he can look after her. Therefore, Shug empowers Celie to earn her living by helping her to start her own sewing business. Celie's business grows through the help of other women who help her with cutting and sewing. Celie even make pants for Sofia with whom she has established a strong bond. After Celie ill-advises Harpo to beat up Sofia, the latter finds out, but forgives the former for that. The two women work together to quilt pieces out of old torn curtains. Piecing the quilt together symbolises forgiveness and how working together is productive and hence the pattern is called Sister's Choice (CP, p.56).

Even though Squeak and Sofia do not get along at first, Squeak volunteers to go to the prison to have Sofia freed after she insults and humiliates the Mayor by beating him up after he slaps her for refusing to work for his wife. Squeak and Sofia realise that fighting each other will not get them desired results, so they stop fighting and start working together. Sofia offers to look after the children when Squeak goes out to pursue her own newly-found career as a singer. Shug, a seasoned singer, also helps Squeak with her singing so as to get her to perfect her singing. Sofia and Squeak even work together in the kitchen when the family has its reunion and because they are united in purpose, Harpo becomes powerless over them. Through Squeak and Sofia, Walker highlights the fact that liberation for women is only possible if they put their differences aside and work together.

In Africa, Tashi and Olivia forge a friendship that enables them to learn from each other. The Olinka women work together in the fields and this camaraderie gives them identity and pleasure in having a common purpose. It is in work that the women get to know and care about each other. It is through work that Catherine becomes friends with her husband's other wives. However, Walker admits that there are challenges to sisterhood and as such women need to guard closely against letting anything came between them. Nettie writes,

> And God forbid that the child of a favourite wife should fall ill! That is point at which even the women's friendships break down, as each woman fears the accusation of sorcery from the other, or from the husband (CP, p.151).

If women can rise above the accusations and the fear, they can do great things together. In Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), many women suffer oppression, but are able to drive strength from the support they receive from fellow women. As expensive as life is, Me Ali shares the little she receives from her husband, Michael, with Mee Kauna, her friend, whose husband, Shange, spends money on a mistress and beer. Mee Ali feels angry at how Shange ill-treats Mee Kauna especially that he does so publicly. Going to visit Mee Maita to try to find a lasting solution to Kauna's suffering is an indication that Mee Ali is a true friend who wants her friend to live happily and enjoy her marriage. Unfortunately, Mee Maita does not provide the support needed, but Mee Ali's effort deserves recognition because it is friends like her who make a better life possible for women and radical feminism encourages such friendship.

Mee Ali provides emotional support to Mee Kauna by giving her a shoulder to lean on. Mee Ali cleans Mee Kauna's wounds after Shange beats up Mee Kauna and she also regularly visits her in hospital. When Kauna is not well and at home, Mee Ali always goes to the clinic to consult Sustera, a female nurse, on

behalf of Mee Kauna as she always wishes her friend well. Mee Ali is there for Kauna all the way and even looks after Kauna's children when Kauna is away, just as Kauna looks after Mee Ali's children when Mee Ali is in hospital taking care of Michael after he is involved in an accident. Mee Ali advises Mee Kauna to call together women to help her in her field fearing that if the field is not ploughed in time Shange would beat up Mee Kauna again for embarrassing him by not getting his field ready. The support is immense and the success that the women achieve after working together in Kauna's field is indicative of how together women can stop the abuse of fellow women.

> The women understood Kauna's situation. There was a wonderful spirit, a spirit of sisterhood. For once, all ill-feeling and hate were forgotten. We were one again, sisters sharing a common cause (PVO, p116).

The stories they tell each other during the "okakungungu"[7], bring them even closer, and sharing their problems makes their burdens lighter. Mee Ali notes,

> Although this *okakungungu* lasted just one day, a feeling of sisterhood and communal responsibility enveloped us in a strange and cheerful sense of oneness. I felt connected to these women, these sisters, these mothers, these aunts, and grandmothers. As we parted, I looked at them and thought, yes, girls, you have done it again" (PVO, p119).

After Shange dies, Mee Ali stands beside Mee Kauna throughout the mourning period until burial and afterwards. Mee Ali tries her best to be strong for Mee Kauna even though the former is going through her own internal struggles, wondering what would become of her if Michael were to die. When Kauna refuses to mourn Shange, Mee Ali reminds her of the consequences of such behaviour out of fear that her friend will be accused of witchcraft and ostracised. Out of concern, Mee Katilina advises Mee Ali to hide all of Kauna's personal belongings so that she does not lose them to her greedy in-laws. This shows how fellow women feel sorry for widows who suffer patriarchal injustices.

When Mee Kauna is invited to the "oshinyanga" by her in-laws to declare Shange's wealth, Mee Ali stands by her side. After they deny Mee Kauna any inheritance and leave her and the children penniless and homeless, Mee Ali advises Mee Kauna about organisations in support of widows that she can approach. However, Mee Kauna dismisses the idea as she does not want to fight against her husband's people and opts to leave Oshaantu village with her children to make a new start. Kauna feels grateful that Mee Ali

[7] working festival, group cultivation

has been her pillar of strength since her arrival in Oshaantu. Even Sustera wishes she had a friend like Mee Ali, a friend who becomes family.

Mukwankala is a fearless old woman who is bold enough to confront Shange when she cannot tolerate Shange's abuse of Kauna anymore. Mukwankala inspires and motivates women from all walks of life to get up and fight for their rights and help women to be aware of the immense power of speaking out without fear. She attacks Shange in public for beating up Kauna, and calls him a coward for not beating up other men, but a woman. Since that time he is openly confronted by Mukwankala, Shange never lays his hand on Kauna again. Mukwankala's friend gives Kauna brown shoe polish to apply to her face as she claims that it is good for bruises and scars. Mukwankala supports Mee Ali's suggestion of a working festival for Kauna and advises Kauna to be strong. It is through Mukwankala's advice and through Sustera's help with vitamins, syrup and diet plan that Shange allows Mee Kauna to visit her people. Kauna is thankful for Mukwankala and Sustera's assistance because their plan works. Had it not been for their support Shange would not have allowed Kauna to visit her people. On her arrival home, Kauna advises her younger sisters against early marriage as she has experienced pain because of that. This means that women's experiences can be shared to help other women by preventing them from making the same mistake and hence sisterhood plays a major role in improving women's lives. Before she leaves Oshaantu, as a sign of gratitude for the support she receives from the Oshaantu women, Kauna distributes the few belongings she has left among her female friends, especially Mee Ali, Mukwankala and Sustera.

Tate and Oiva's first wife, Mee Namutenya and his second wife get along well at first, but when Mee Namutenya falls sick such that she goes crazy, a herbalist accuses Tate Oiva's second wife of bewitching her so that she becomes Tate Oiva's only wife. The community sympathises with Mee Namutenya. Just like the Olinka women whose friendship break down with accusations of witchcraft, Andreas highlights the fact that female friendships are strong when there is no man involved. Once men became part of the equation, the war starts. This idea is furthered through the woman from the white house, Shange's mistress, who is not in solidarity with other women because she is having an affair with a married man. The idea manifested is that women should not destroy each other's marriages, but work hard like Mee Ali to try and find solutions to friends' marital problems, because sisterhood is about women supporting one another, not breaking one another. One can argue that Andreas does not name Tate Oiva's second wife and the woman from the white house because they are blind to the concept of sisterhood, blind to the woman's cause, and seem to derive pleasure from other women's suffering, and hence they do not deserve recognition.

*Purple Hibiscus* (2013) also deals with the concept of sisterhood in a more or less similar manner. Beatrice and Aunty Ifeoma are sisters-in-law who share their joys and sorrows in a world made difficult for them by patriarchal structures. Aunty Ifeoma is a strong radical woman who acts as a friend and confidante for her sister-in-law, Mama Beatrice. When Papa Eugene beats up Beatrice, she runs to Aunty Ifeoma for comfort and safety. Seeing the pain and suffering that Eugene subjects Mama to, Aunty Ifeoma advises Mama Beatrice to leave Papa, even though he is Aunty Ifeoma's brother. She tells Mama, "When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head," thus suggesting that Mama should not wait until the abuse kills her (PH, p.213). One would think Aunty Ifeoma would turn a blind eye, considering that Eugene is her brother, but she is vocal about it, thus demonstrating the value of sisterhood. Aunty Ifeoma stands up for Beatrice who is too weak to fight Eugene alone. Even after Beatrice confesses to killing Eugene, Aunty Ifeoma does not judge her, but keeps on supporting her. When Aunty Ifeoma goes to America, she frequently writes to Beatrice updating her on her new life and also inquiring about Mama and children. Aunty Ifeoma provides the much needed support that Beatrice needs, as she has no friends, having stayed so long under Papa's strict rule where going out was not allowed.

Aunty Ifeoma who struggles financially before going to America, also gets help from Beatrice who talks Papa Eugene into giving Aunty Ifeoma some cooking gas cylinders. Whenever Aunty Ifeoma needs someone to talk to, Mama Beatrice is there for her, thus the burden becomes lighter after sharing. When women sit together and tell each other stories of their lives they can help one another to come up with solutions to their problems.

Just like the working festival in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), the "okakungungu", when the Achikes visit their village, many village women come to help with the cooking to help ease the burden on Beatrice, who is receiving many visitors in her home. They help to feed everyone, thus covering Beatrice's flaws as a host. This gives Mama time to rest and relieve stress as she hardly does any of the cooking.

Aunty Ifeoma supports many other women too and feels for them as their struggles are also her struggles. She gives Mama Joe, the hairdresser, her old clothes. Aunty Ifeoma also feels sorry for the woman who is denied a visa, even though that woman is a stranger. The woman cries so much because she needs a visa to attend her sister's wedding. The woman is pained because she cannot be there to support her sister, and Aunty Ifeoma is unhappy because the woman's pain is also her pain. This demonstrates the extent to which sisterhood affects all women. When one woman is happy the other is happy; when one women is sad the other becomes sad too. Knowing Aunty Ifeoma's struggles, her friend, Aunty Philipa invites her to America where her work will be recognised. Indeed, when Aunty Ifeoma goes to America as advised by

Aunty Philipa her life changes for the better. Before leaving Nigeria for America, Aunty Ifeoma gives her dresses to her neighbours, just like Kauna in *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) who distributes her belongings among her friends. This serves as a gesture of solidarity, which demonstrates that sisterhood is about shared experiences and shared engagement at all times in order to uplift one another, which is what radical feminism advocates.

Aunty Ifeoma's positive influence on others and her fighting spirit are reflected in her daughter, Amaka. Kambili gives the following description,

> "Amaka was a thinner, teenage copy of her mother. She walked and talked even faster and with more purpose than Aunty Ifeoma did. Only her eyes were different; they did not have the unconditional warmth of Aunty Ifeoma's. They were quizzical eyes, eyes that asked many questions and did not accept many answers" (PH, p.78).

Though Kambili and Amaka begin their relationship on shaky ground, with each judging the other for her upbringing, they later become closer. Kambili is even surprised that Amaka finds her funny. One can argue that Kambili"s speechlessness is a result of being traumatised by being physically abused by Papa Eugene. The trauma leaves her bereft of language and she only opens up in Aunty Ifeoma's happy home. Amaka is the first person that Kambili tells about Papa's abusive nature. Amaka enlightens Kambili's mind about so many issues such as love, religion and activism, issues that had never existed in Kambili's world. Amaka's relationship with Papa Nnukwu and the gift of Papa Nnukwu's portrait that she gives Kambili make it possible for Kambili to also develop a bond with Papa Nnukwu, though too late, as Papa Nnukwu dies before Kambili fully accepts him. It is unfortunate that Papa Eugene sees the portrait and severely punishes Kambili for keeping it. However, Papa Eugene's beating is not strong enough to break the bond Kambili and Amaka have established, but only makes it stronger.

Another sisterly bond that one comes across in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) is that between Sisi and Mama Beatrice. Though Sisi does not feature much in the text, she provides Mama with much-needed support. As a maid, she helps Mama to do household chores, thus easing Mama's burden. Sisi silently observes Papa Eugene beating up Mama and the children often. Mama Beatrice's suffering becomes Sisi's pain, and hence the saying, "injure one, injure all". Unable to tolerate seeing a fellow woman suffering, Sisi gives Beatrice the poison that she puts in Eugene's tea and kills Eugene. On her own, Beatrice would have continued suffering. Fortunately, Sisi comes to her rescue. After Sisi gets married, Mama gives her a lot of kitchenware to start her new home. Even after marriage, Sisi still comes to visit Mama once in a while to

offer her support and assist Mama on anything she needs. Sisi also instructs the new steward, as she realises that Mama Beatrice needs all the support that she can get. It is through such small acts of love from a sister that Mama Beatrice keeps going, and hence justifying sisterhood as a means to an end.

It is important at this point to note that killing Papa Eugene should not be taken literally, but as symbolic of the fact that patriarchal structures that oppress women need to be annihilated. What Adichie is saying is that this is only possible through women from all walks of life working together. Had it not been for Sisi's help, Papa would have continued oppressing Mama Beatrice and the children, thus Kazinga in Thorpe (2018, p.11) refers to sisterhood as a "game changer".

The next section discusses lesbianism, a radical means of separating men from women, in an attempt to thwart male domination.

**5.5 Lesbianism as a means to an end**

This section discusses lesbianism as radical protest against male ownership of female bodies. Greene and Kahn (1985) assert that radical feminists argue that women's oppression stems from the male's need to control women and women's sexuality. Rusharyani and Candraningrum (2017) highlight that male patriarchal power mainly oppresses the woman's body, and hence this is the base of radical feminism. Annandale and Clarke (1996) posit that in valuing what is distinctive about the female body, and not the body of the male, radical feminists subvert patriarchal privilege. Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz (1997) pinpoint that the birth of lesbianism as an alternative is an indication of women's anger towards men and rejection of patriarchy. This theme is explicit in Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) but non-existent in Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013). As a result, this section is limited to a discussion on the portrayal of lesbianism in *The Color Purple* (1982). Oyewumi (2003) propounds that though Walker puts forward 'womanism' as her ideal version of feminism in the black woman's search for self as opposed to white women's feminist discourse, her works with their reference to lesbianism and separatism, lean more towards radical feminism and so in practice she does not divert much from the ideas that she criticises.

Celie's first sexual experience is at the age of14 years when Pa rapes her, thus violating her body. After countless rape episodes and giving birth to two children, Pa marries her off to Albert, whom Celie does not enjoy having sex with because it lacks intimacy and seems like a chore for her. This gives the idea that men simply use sex to exploit women and quench their own wicked thirst. Celie's sexual self is only awakened when Shug Avery, Albert's mistress, comes into the picture. Before meeting Shug, for Celie sex

is equivalent to torture because there is no feeling of excitement aroused in her. It is Shug who teaches Celie to explore her own body and derive pleasure from sex. Celie's concept of beauty is centred on Shug and she only feels alive when with Shug and not Albert. The rape that Celie is subject to at a tender age probably is what makes her lose all feelings for the opposite sex. Through Shug, Celie feels loved and appreciated for who she is. When Shug sings a song she calls " Miss Celie's Song", Celie notes, "First time somebody made something and name it after me" (CP, p.70). The kind of love Celie feels for Shug is so strong that she feels jealous when Shug and Albert get close, and is even hurt when Shug marries Grady. Shug's presence brings happiness for Celie and when Shug leaves, happiness deserts Celie.

The sexual abuse that Celie suffers at the hands of Pa and Albert is enough to turn her off men as the experience is an ugly and nasty one. The frog is a metaphor that Celie uses to illustrate how she does not see any good in men who sexually exploit women, but only sees the good in women. She says to Albert, "Take off they pants, I say, and men look like frogs to me. No matter how you kiss 'em, as far as I'm concern, frogs is what they stay" (CP, p.230). Even when she and Albert mend their relationship and he asks her to marry him again, she turns down his proposal with the argument that she "still don't like frogs" meaning that she does not have any sexual feelings towards men (CP, p.257).

What one learns from Shug and Celie's lesbian relationship is that even sexually, women feel oppressed by men and hence lesbianism becomes a way of protecting themselves against sadomasochism. The men seem to enjoy inflicting pain on women in order to experience sexual pleasure. Female relationships provide an outlet for women as they enable them to experiment with each other's bodies without one feeling subjugated by the other, as in male-female relationships. In other words, Celie opting for homosexuality and denouncing heterosexuality is a form of advocacy for separation. It is a protest against rape and male abuse of the female body. While patriarchy teaches women to submit to men, radical feminism discourages men from disrespecting the female body, raping and treating women as sexual objects, and encourages women to have control over their own bodies, freely expressing their own bodies and their sexuality in a way that they deem fit.

Though Shug is disowned by her father for her free-spiritedness and curiosity about sex and sexuality, she does not succumb to his pressure to behave like a "decent woman" and experiences freedom and pleasure. Shug teaches Celie to take pride in her body, love and respect herself without any feelings of guilt and shame as Pa and Albert had made Celie feel. This is a radical move that downplays patriarchal and religious values of sexuality, thus giving women the freedom to enjoy their bodies in a manner they

deem fit. In so doing, women are a step towards attaining total emancipation. Economic, political, social emancipation alone is not enough without the freedom to choose one's sexuality.

The next section discusses the significance of colour purple, a very important aspect in the study of the select texts as they all include the colour purple in their titles.

**5.6 Why purple?**

This section scrutinises the significance of the colour purple in the select texts and provides insight into the colour purple as a symbol in black female writers' works. Scholars such as Diwakar (2014) have given invaluable insights into the colour purple and its significance, but more still needs to be addressed, especially considering the fact that *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) has not been explored in depth.

In Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), purple is a beautiful colour that celebrates black females. Unfortunately, many people overlook this colour at times and yet it is everywhere in nature. This implies that as beautiful as it is, people fail to notice it in the same manner that beautiful black females go unnoticed and are undervalued. Celie wonders where the colour purple came from, then concludes that it is one of God's creations. For Celie, purple represents royalty. When she goes shopping for clothes with Kate, Albert's sister, Celie comments that Shug is like a queen to her and therefore looks for something purple for Shug. Unfortunately, she cannot find it and settles for blue. What this represents is that bold and daring radical women like Shug are difficult to find, and hence women settle for less. Being a colour representing royalty, it needs to be revered. Shug also echoes the sentiment that purple is to admired and loved, a metaphor representing that women need to be showered with love, "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it" (CP, p.177). In other words, treating women as subaltern, non-existent or irrelevant in society angers God because it is him who created women.

Having spent most of her life feeling guilty of incest, the discovery that "Pa is not Pa" frees Celie's conscience. Having had her life dictated by men, now she is in her own space where she can decide for herself what to do and how to do it. When Celie moves into the house that she and Nettie inherits from their parents, she opts for purple and red for everything in her room, except the floor, to symbolise her maturity and celebrate her independence. Now she owns a house and runs a business sewing pants. That Celie is able to rise and make a name for herself in the business world cements Nettie's observation that change is happening in the world. Women are making in-roads into previously male-dominated spaces, and hence "it is no longer just a world for boys and men" (CP, p.145).

In solidarity with Celie's newly-found freedom, the little frog perch which Albert carves for Celie is purple in colour, and can be regarded as a peace offering for how he used to cruelly treat Celie in the past. In the end, Celie and Albert sit together talking, laughing and sewing, thus indicating that patriarchy has been subverted. Now that Albert is doing "women's work" too, Celie embraces him. The pleasure associated with being free from male domination is also reflected in Squeak, Mary Agnes, who now has a lot of new songs and attributes this to her separation from Grady, with whom she could not have composed many songs. She states that after being with Grady for a while, she could not think. Only when she moves back to live with her mother and sister in Memphis does she become inspired.

On the other hand, purple is also a symbol of women's struggles, pain and suffering, and how they are able to rise above it all. After beating up the Mayor, the police beat up Sofia until "she just about the color of a eggplant" (CP, p.82). An eggplant is purple in colour, and being beaten up to that extent and survive the experience symbolises her resilience and the will to live. This dismisses the claim that women are the weaker sex.

In celebration of women's victory over patriarchy Celie's last letter is addressed to "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God" (CP, p.259). This is a dedication to all that makes her whole, all that makes her free, and hence she rejoices in her victory.

*The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) presents the purple colour as representative of the physical and inner beauty and strength that women possess. Kauna's beauty when she arrived in Oshaantu village as a new bride earns her the title "the purple violet of Oshaantu". Everyone admires her beauty and innocence, until Shange turns her into a punching bag.

> "We all remember how beautiful she was when she arrived here as a new bride. Don't you remember?" Mukwankala asked. "We called her the purple violet of Oshaantu. She was so delicate and she came when these flowers were in bloom." The women nodded. "Shange turned that child's beautiful face into something that looked as if it had been through some strange incisions made by a clan from outer space." Mukwankala spoke her mind. "Where have you seen a man chasing his wife who is running way from his claws into the neighbors' houses? Eh, tell me. Tell me, young woman, when have you ever seen anything like that?"(PVO, p.148-149).

The metaphoric reference to Kauna as a flower, a purple violet, suggests that like a flower, women deserve proper care to grow. The abuse that Kauna is subjected to by Shange is beyond what any flower can take, and hence Kauna's silence at Shange's funeral is a form of protest. Her will to rise above her sad

experience and start anew indicates that like a flower her seeds of determination will help her grow again, thus illustrating the immense strength she possesses.

She says to Mee Ali,

> You know what happens to the *mahangu*[8] millet? After it has been knocked down, stepped on and mercilessly destroyed by cattle, it finds the strength to repair itself and grow better, it is often bigger and more vibrant than the millet that has not been threatened by any danger and cut the ground (PVO, p.174).

In other words, Mee Kauna portrays how difficulties that women encounter in life help them to grow. The oppressive patriarchal system teaches women to fight and become bold in stature, and hence though the struggle is tough, the end result is worth the struggle. Mee Kauna comes out of it all a stronger purple violet.

As a symbol of inner beauty and strength, purple violets grow at Mee Ali's, Mee Fennie's and Mukwankala's homestead. Mee Ali's homestead has beautiful purple violets along the fence. Her loving and caring nature is manifested through the shoulder to lean on that she provides for Mee Kauna throughout the latter's stay in Oshaantu, especially after Shange's death when Mee Kauna's in-laws frustrate her and villagers gossip about Kauna having gone mad. Mee Ali's support makes it possible for Mee Kauna to go through it all with someone she can count on by her side. In the eyes of her husband, Mee Ali is a "kangala"[9], because of the unconditional love she gives him and his family (PVO, p.127). He also admires the way she cares for people. Though her mother-in-law does not like her at first, Mee Ali treats her so well that she ends up returning the love. In return, Michael also showers Mee Ali with love and is a responsible husband and father. He even fights for her against his people. In Mee Ali is bestowed inner beauty in contrast to Mee Kauna's physical beauty. Despite different backgrounds, Mee Ali and Mee Kauna's friendship survives through storms. Important to note is that they have Kauna's goodbye dinner in Michael's "oshinyanga". An "oshinyanga" is a large open hut at the homestead used mostly by men for meetings, and for Kauna and Mee Ali to sit there it is an open challenge to male dominance. Unfortunately these women do not successfully represent the female struggle as their different backgrounds get in their way, and most patriarchal values in their community remain unchanged.

[8] millet
[9] violet

It is at Mee Fennie's home that Kauna finds solace and strength to carry on as Mee Fennie does not judge Kauna as harshly as Kauna's mother does. Mee Fennie advises Kauna to divorce Shange though she leaves it in Kauna's hands to decide what to do, unlike Mee Maria, Kauna's mother, who imposes her will on Kauna. Though she divorced her husband, Mee Fennie is a successful woman whose hardworking nature and love for her children enables her to make ends meet, keep the family together and raise well-balanced children. Mee Ali observes that "Mee Fennie seems to stand so tall and strong ... confident, full of guts" (PVO, p.126). Mee Fennie reminds one of Aunty Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) who also possesses similar traits and hence purple hibiscus grow in her yard.

At Mukwankala's homestead purple violets grow abundantly. This symbolises royalty and the beauty of Mukwankala's strength and caring nature. Mee Ali notices that "Mukwankala has the stature and grace of royalty" (PVO, p.147). It is through Mukwankala's voice that Shange stops beating up Kauna. When everyone else fails to intervene, Mukwankala stands up and confronts Shange about the way he abuses his wife. Her fearless nature and ability to use her voice and be heard in a patriarchal society that does not listen to women makes Mukwankala a woman to be admired. Through her, Andreas is advocating for women to rise above all fear and use their voice to attain the change and freedom they desire. As old as she is, Mukwankala becomes Mee Kauna's friend and continues to support and mentor her throughout her stay in Oshaantu village, thus the presence of purple violets at her homestead.

It seems ironic how purple violets also grow at Mee Maita's homestead. Unlike Mee Ali, Mee Fennie and Mukwankala who support other women at all times, Mee Maita, a church elder and Sunday school teacher, "does either little or nothing for the women and widows who are mistreated by their husbands and in-laws, despite her position" (PVO, p.4). Mee Maita's position allows her to help other women, who should feel free to go to her for counsel. Unfortunately, all she does is demoralise them by telling them to endure their marriages and then gossip about their problems. Through Mukwankala, the reader is made aware of the fact that Mee Maita is actually a beautiful woman whose bitterness towards marriage is a result of having been betrayed by the man she intended to marry, and then marrying a widower whose heart belonged to another woman, his late wife. Mee Maita later proves to be a beautiful woman indeed when she joins the other women at the "okakungungu" and helps Kauna plough her field before the rain comes, thus previous grudges are buried and her sense of solidarity is respected.

Another female character whose commitment to the female cause is to be recognised is Mee Fudheni, also known as Sustera. "The purple epaulette on each shoulder with its three stars was the sign of a registered nurse and educated woman" (PVO, p.44). Despite her educational qualifications, Sustera does

not look down upon other women. She is ready to assist whenever asked and even shows up at the "okakungungu". Through her assistance as a nurse, Mee Kauna and many other physically abused women in the village recover. Her humanitarian spirit makes it possible for Mee Kauna's recovery to be quick. It is such women like Mee Ali, Mee Fennie, Mukwankala, Mee Maita and Sustera that radical feminism calls for, women that nurture, protect, inspire and motivate fellow women, and hence those women are associated with the purple colour, which is closely linked to feminist movements. Women who concientise and work together with other women open spaces for transformation. At the "okakungungu" when the women discuss their husbands who work very far from home, the women realise that they are actually in charge, and so the working festival concientises them of their reality.

> Most of our husbands, in fact most able young men, worked hundreds of kilometres away from home, except for the headman and a few older men, this village was headed, literally, by us, the women (PVO, p.118).

The beauty of the festival lies in the fact that while getting work done, the women experience how it feels to be free from patriarchy as the men are away and they are in a world of their own in which they are happy singing, talking, laughing, sharing and caring. Therefore, the purple colour in this case represents the freedom and joy that women experience at discovering the power they possess to lead a village if they work harmoniously without men hindering their progress. Overthrowing patriarchy is not an event but a process requiring women from all walks of life to work together.

*Purple Hibiscus* (2013) presents the purple colour as a symbol of freedom. In Papa Eugene's homestead in Enugu are red hibiscus, with red symbolising violence and bloodshed as Eugene is constantly physically abusing his wife and children to the extent that Mama Beatrice miscarries twice. After Papa beats up Mama "the area around her right eye was the black purple shade of an overripe avocado" (PH, p.190). This reminds one of Sofia in *The Color Purple* (1982) who is beaten up by the police until she turns purple. This physical abuse silences them, but at the same time acts as the impetus for change. There is no freedom at all in Enugu due to fear of Papa's severe punishment. However, when Kambili and Jaja arrive at Aunty Ifeoma's home in Nsukka, Jaja is drawn to Aunty Ifeoma's garden in which purple hibiscus thrives. For the first time Jaja and Kambili feel happy and free to express themselves. For them, laughter, singing, dancing, running, watching TV, questioning certain truths, among other things, only become possible when they visit Nsukka. While in Enugu, Kambili has to run to the car after school for fear of Papa, but in Nsukka she runs with Father Amadi for fun, and hence the association of Nsukka with freedom. Jaja begins nurturing Aunty Ifeoma's purple hibiscus and when they return home he even takes some stalks back

home to plant during the rainy season. Taking these stalks to grow in Enugu is representative of how he wishes his home environment could be as happy and free as Aunty Ifeoma's.

In Enugu, Jaja does not learn responsibility at all because Papa Eugene gives orders and takes care of everything single-handedly. During Jaja's stay in Nsukka, he observes how Obiora takes care of Aunty Ifeoma and ashamed of himself for not protecting his mother, becomes determined to take care of her. As a result of this determination, he confesses to poisoning and killing Papa and goes to prison on behalf of Mama who actually committed the act. Jaja changes a lot while in prison, and begins to notice things he never noticed before, like Mama's dressing when he tells her that her scarf is not tied well. Through him, one sees a new breed of men being born, men who are willing to help women in all aspects of life, dressing included. This reminds one of Albert sewing pants with Celie towards the end of *The Color Purple* (1982).

Moyana (1994, p.41) claims that "it isn't a question of men and women fighting each other. Rather, it is a question of men and women cooperating and working together to achieve emancipation from stifling conditions." Buttressing Moyana's sentiments, Akingbe and Ogunyemi (2017, p.91) argue that Adichie is "not in any way against men but is only responding to women's feelings in Nigerian society which demand some commensurate level of assertiveness." Through Jaja, one is made aware of the fact that radical feminism is not a battle between men and women but a call for men to behave better towards women.

Kambili becomes so attached to Amaka and Aunty Ifeoma, and is thankful for their role in awakening her consciousness. Kambili admits that after Nsukka they all changed. It is quite interesting to find the shy, reserved Kambili proposing love to Father Amadi. Traditionally, men are the ones who propose love and not the other way round. Unfortunately for Kambili, Father Amadi as a priest can neither love nor marry a woman. This prompts Amaka to think of protesting against compulsory celibacy for priests. Even after Aunty Ifeoma's family leaves for America, Kambili goes back to Nsukka to visit their old home where happy memories were made. On her way back home she sings and laughs loudly, the main reason being that "because Nsukka could free something deep inside your belly that would rise up to your throat and come out as a freedom song" (PH, p.299). When Kambili and Mama visit Jaja in prison just before his release, one sees a commendable change in Kambili as she begins to make future plans, something she has never done before.

> "We will take Jaja to Nsukka first, and then we will go to America to visit Aunty Ifeoma," I say. "We'll plant new orange trees in Abba when we come back, and Jaja will plant purple hibiscus,

too, and I'll plant ixora so we can suck the juices of the flowers." I am laughing. I reach out and place my arm around Mama's shoulder and she leans toward me and smiles (PH, p.307).

*Purple Hibiscus* (2013) ends with hope for the new rains which will soon come down, thus planting trees and flowers represents life and hope for a new beginning. The rain will symbolically wash away the remnants of the oppressive patriarchal system. Kevin, Papa Eugene's driver is dismissed from his job because he represents Papa's oppressive regime. Mama employs Celestine, a new driver with a gentle voice, thus giving the family new identity and new endless possibilities.

Based on the above analysis of the three select texts from a radical feminist perspective, one can argue that the colour purple is relevant to all the major concerns raised in the texts, thus *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) are to a great extent suitable titles for these texts.

**5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher analysed the three select texts from a radical feminist's perspective. This chapter stood on the ground made firm by scholars discussed under the literature review chapter of this research. Qualitative research methods employed enabled the researcher to critique and interpret the select texts in accordance with radical feminist principles. Pertinent issues were identified and discussed, with patriarchy and the women's burden being the major theme, as radical feminists argue that the main cause of female oppression is patriarchy. In addition, the significance of the colour purple was discussed with close reference to the concerns raised in this chapter. The researcher discovered that despite Walker, Andreas and Adichie's different cultural and geographical backgrounds, they share similar concerns about the plight of women in male dominated societies, and hence propose a radical overhaul of patriarchy. In so doing, these writers illustrate how literature can be an effective tool for change. The next chapter presents the research findings, provides recommendations and concludes the research.

# CHAPTER 6

## RESEARCH FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to summarise and conclude the study that has been conducted with the main research objective being to explore feminist consciousness in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Neshani Andreas' *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2013). A qualitative, desktop approach was adopted and the radical feminist theoretical framework was employed with the aim of addressing the following specific objectives, which are to:

- determine whether Walker, Andreas and Adichie negotiate spaces for women in the select texts
- compare the significance of the color purple in the three select texts
- evaluate the success of the use of radical feminist criticism as a legitimate theoretical tool for the analysis of the three select texts

This chapter sums up the major findings presented in the previous chapter in relation to the specific research objectives mentioned above, and provides recommendations for future studies in feminist literature by black female writers in particular, and literature in general.

### 6.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS IN RELATION TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

#### 6.2.1 Objective 1: Determine whether Walker, Andreas and Adichie negotiate spaces for women in the select texts

The study revealed that despite their different cultural and geographical backgrounds, Walker, Andreas and Adichie address common female concerns from a female's perspective. Regardless of their different circumstances and environments, there are striking similarities seemingly connecting them. Rhode (2009) states that while most male writers place women on the periphery of society as women are mute in most of their narratives, African women writers undermine this male practice and fill a literary gap by letting African women be heard as they speak in their own voices. The female writers' lived experiences and points of view presented in their works become an agent for change, thus, Mindi (2014) asserts that an insider's point of view in the works of female writers clearly depicts a genuine search for self, quest for identity, and how being black and female at the same time is a double burden.

Walker, Andreas and Adichie are conscious of the fact that they have a social responsibility of expressing the needs and concerns of black women. They assume the role of being spokespersons for all black women

from all walks of life, and hence give voice to the voiceless. The transformation of societies can be achieved through acknowledging the existence and validity of the experiences and views of feminist writers. Through writing, Walker, Andreas and Adichie recreate women's identity by providing them with mirrors through which they can visualise themselves clearly. Their literature serves to conscientise women about how men in a patriarchal society oppress them, and the need for women to speak up for themselves without fear like Shug, Mukwankala and Amaka in *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001), and *Purple Hibiscus* (2013) respectively. This consciousness is necessary for the oppressed women to question and challenge the dominant oppressive culture. These three writers concur that patriarchy should be dismantled because it does not put everyone's interests at heart, but only furthers men's greed for dominance through oppressing women. Dismantling patriarchy will pave the way for women's emancipation and allow them to enjoy the same privileges as men. The select works demonstrate how women are also capable of achieving success in all fields, just like men.

The research has revealed that these three female writers are advocating against the violence that women experience at the hands of men, as it strips women of their voice and sense of self. Shober in Smith (2015) argues that as women realise that they are not being listened to or paid attention to, African women writers employ the pen as a means to erase the humiliation and violence they suffer at the hands of psychologically and sexually abusive men, and use their voice to resist and silence their abusers, even if they have to silence the male in radical form. Walker, Andreas and Adichie call for an end to gender-based domestic violence, and are unapologetic in meting out poetic justice to abusive males, as symbolised by the death of the abusive males in their works: Pa, Shange and Papa Eugene respectively. Despite the suffering women go through, their resilience and will to live is celebrated, and hence dismissing the misrepresentation of women as the weaker sex, the subaltern.

It emerges from this study that the three select authors believe in the power of sisterhood to subvert patriarchy. The female bonds presented in the select works demonstrate the strength of female friendships in ensuring female emancipation. When women join hands, work together and support one another, great positive change can take place.

Through the act of writing, Walker, Andreas and Adichie illustrate how literature can be employed as a legitimate political tool and demonstrate that they have reclaimed their voice and right to resist male domination. In providing the lenses through which women view and re-define themselves, these three black female writers successfully negotiate spaces for women.

### 6.2.2 Objective 2: Compare the significance of the colour purple in the three select texts

Florey (2013) observes that in the early 20th century, British women's suffragette movement associated purple with their campaign for gender equality and right to vote as they argued that in every suffragette's veins flows royal blood. Women's artistic representations prominently feature the colour purple, symbolising both achievements gained and those yet to come. The three select texts concur with Florey's association of the colour purple with royalty, freedom and equality.

In all select texts, purple represents both the physical and inner beauty of women. Black females' bodies, achievements, maturity, strength and resilience are celebrated. The struggles that women encounter help them to become bold and determined in their quest for equality. Through sisterhood, women care for, nurture, protect, inspire and motivate one another towards a common goal. This enables women to gain voice and freely express their concerns, with the desired result: freedom from male domination. With that comes along positive change characterised by peaceful co-existence with men who support the woman's cause. All three texts end on a hopeful note for the female characters who now are free from patriarchal structures that oppress them, and hence purple represents freedom and equality, which radical feminists advocate for.

### 6.2.3 Objective 3: Evaluate the success of the use of radical feminist criticism as a legitimate tool of analysis of the three select texts

Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz (1997) identify three main tenets of radical feminism. Firstly, women suffer because men oppress them. Secondly, while sexual differences are biological, masculine and feminine class distinctions are socially constructed. Thirdly, all other forms of oppression have their roots in male oppression of women, and hence the anger towards men, rejection of patriarchy and the birth of lesbianism and sisterhood as an alternative.

This study has proven that although radical feminism originated in America, shared experiences between the American and the African woman make it applicable to Africa also. For example, in *The Color Purple* (1982), Nettie's letters to Celie highlight that the plight of women in Africa is the same as that of women in America. Shared experiences require shared solutions, and hence the justification of applying radical feminism to this study. It is evident from the select texts that women in patriarchal societies are oppressed and passive, but once they regain voice and a sense of agency, they challenge patriarchy, acquire their full identity, and adopt new gender roles that dismiss those gender roles defined by patriarchal traditions.

Radical feminism is a fundamental part of women's quest for equality and freedom in all aspects of society. The study has revealed that radical feminism aids women in achieving the emancipation that they desire. Radical feminism's main goal is achieving gender equality, and the texts studied indicate that if patriarchy is eradicated, everyone experiences liberation from an unjust society. Through their works, Walker, Andreas and Adichie address women's struggles and relieve women of their burdens through radical feminist means. These select female writers are in agreement that the root cause of the woman's burden is patriarchy, and for women to be emancipated there is need to subvert patriarchy through challenging religion and patriarchal traditions which promote the oppression of women.

The texts studied also reveal that peace and stability reign when gender roles are reversed and patriarchy is eliminated. It requires active participation of women from all walks of life in order for women to achieve their goal. As active agents, women can push to achieve recognition and equality in all societal aspects. In line with radical feminist tenets, sisterhood and lesbianism are also proposed in the select texts as means to an end, with great success. Emphasis is on the revolutionary nature of the theory with regards to sexuality and reproduction, elimination of patriarchy and transformation of the entire social structure. In the light of all this, one can argue that indeed radical feminism is a legitimate tool of analysis of the three select texts.

**6.3 Recommendations**

Firstly, the researcher recommends further studies in literature by black female writers following the radical feminist theoretical framework, particularly in poetry and drama, to gain deeper understanding into the problem of patriarchy and enable women to draw solutions on how to solve the woman's burden from all three literary genres: prose, poetry and drama.

Secondly, the texts could also be addressed singly in order to allow readers to gain more insight into these works of art. On that note, other theoretical frameworks are worth considering. For example, one could employ Queer Theory to a detailed study of *The Color Purple* (1982) especially when one considers the text's presentation of issues of rape and lesbianism. To deeply understand Kauna's state of mind after Shange's death, one might adopt a psychoanalytic reading of *The Purple Violet of Oshaantu* (2001). Trauma theory would provide much insight into Beatrice and Kambili's fear and voicelessness in *Purple Hibiscus* (2013). These various standpoints provide a multi-dimensional approach which allows a holistic reading of and deeper engagement with these texts, thus individual works can be comprehensively appreciated.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter summarised the research through relating the research findings to the research objectives. The study demonstrated that radical feminist literature by black female writers is considered politics because it is a powerful tool in transforming the lives of black women who are oppressed under patriarchy. When the women are conscientised of their existence, they become agents for change. This study addresses a knowledge gap in terms of raising radical feminist consciousness as presented in the three select works. Furthermore, recommendations for further research were also provided, and hence this research can guide future studies in the field of literature by black female writers.

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