

**INTOLERANCE AND SOCIAL COLLAPSE IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S
PURPLE HIBISCUS AND SEFI ATTA'S *EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME***

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FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
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AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.HONS) DEGREE IN ENGLISH
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **UCHE OHIZU** with **ART1800599** in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City.

Prof. E.O. Okwechime
(Project Supervisor)

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the cherished memory of my mother, GEORGIAN NDIDI OHIZU, whose unwavering support and encouragement fueled my educational journey.

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My sincerely appreciate the God Almighty father for helping me this far. I also acknowledge the special roles of my supervisor, Prof. E. O. Okwechime who ensured that this work saw the light of day.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Study

This essay examines intolerance and social collapse in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple and Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* with the view to highlighting its effects on familyhood.

1.2 Scope of Study

This essay is limited to Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple and Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* because the two novels deal with different aspects of intolerance and social collapse in society.

1.3 Methodology

This essay deploys the qualitative method of analysis and interpretation. This involves a textual analysis of a text. In this essay, textual analysis of selected excerpts is carried out with insight from the principles of Sociological approach to the study of a literary text. In addition, scholarly essays and articles sourced from textbooks, the internet, library, and print journals are used as secondary materials in this study. That is, they are employed in understanding how intolerance leads to social collapse take in society with its attending effects on individuals.

1.4 Theoretical Background

This essay adopts Sociological approach as its theoretical framework. There is no literary text without a society as a result of this realistic authors place the settings of their works in actual society. Sociological approach studies the relationship between a literary text and the society. In other words, no literary work exists outside society therefore it is important to look at how social institutions and forces in society shape people there. In fact, this is one of the tasks of a sociological critic. M.H Abrams and Geoffery Galt Harpham affirmed this assertion thus:

Sociological critics treat a work of literature as inescapably conditioned in the choice and development of its subject matter, the ways of thinking it incorporates, its evaluation of modes of life it tenders, and even in its formal qualities by the social, political, and economic organisation and forces of its age. Such critics also tend to view the interpretation and assessment of a literary work by reading the public as shaped by the circumstances specific to that public's time and pace. (334)

Abrams and Harpham spoke about the fact that writers always pay attention to how social structures in society affect people's lives. This is evident in works of literature written in different eras. Such works capture the spirit of an era by showing what society allows and how it shapes lives of people living in that society at a point in time. It is on this note that Benson Omonode argued that, "sociological novel is usually concerned with the nature and the effect of social forces on the characters in a given society. Thus, we are made to

understand why characters behave the way they do in the society" (25). Omonode's claim reveals that there are links between people living in a particular society and what happen there in relation to their lives.

Elsewhere, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren noted that literature largely concern "the sociology of the writer, the social content of the work and the influence of literature on society" (96). Wellek and Warren's opinion reveals that sociological approach establishes the close relationship that exist among authors, people (characters), society and literature.

Wellek and Warren further stated that:

The most common approach to the relations of literature and society is the study of works of literature as social documents, as assumed pictures of social reality... literature is simply a mirror of life, a reproduction, and thus, obviously, a social document... literature occurs only in a social context, as part of a culture, in a milieu. (102)

Wellek and Warren saw society as an embodiment of literature therefore the two go hand in hand. In addition, these critics' comment simply reveals that literature is a social document that gives a clear picture of social reality as it affects individuals. Terry Eagleton also added that:

Literature is in fact deeply conditioned by its social context, and any critical account of it which omits this fact is therefore automatically deficient...[It] is in fact shaped by all kinds of factors and readable in all

sorts of contexts, but highlighting its social determinants is useful and desirable...(469).

Eagleton's comment gives an insight into what literature does in shaping human existence. What this means is that literature highlights social happenings as they affect individuals. Sociological approach give writers the room to establish the place of literature in human affairs therefore is an important subject that demands attention for people to understand what goes on society. In a nutshell, this essay uses sociological approach to study the portrayal of social collapse in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple and Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* with the view to pointing out how family and society fall due to pressure from social institutions and forces.

1.5 Review of Related Scholarship and Justification of Study

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* have enjoyed attentions from critics. For *Purple Hibiscus*, Ignatius Chukwumah examined the place of militarism and she drew a link between military rule in society and the one Eugene represents in his house. This reveals that it is not only those in khaki that brutalise others. Chukwumah claimed that, "Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) deal with militarism. Coup in the case of *Purple Hibiscus* and war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*" (NP). The two novels shed light on the effects of destruction in society and it is partially blamed on military rule in society. Ironically, Eugene fights

the military government unknown to him, he is worse than those he criticizes. Daria Tunca looked at the style of the novel and she commented that:

Since the narrator at first applies Eugene's principles on all planes (whether religious, cultural or moral), 'authority' in Bruce sentence might equally read "values", giving the analysis on ideological slant. I would like to suggest that, stylistically speaking the author represents Kambili's intense devotion to her father an admiration that leads to her unwitting internalization of his moral standards by using mechanisms of speech and thought presentation skilfully More precisely, I wish to demonstrate how Adichie exploits the two points of view inherent in both indirect and free indirect speech (Leech and Short 2007:256-257,270) to delineate her narrators ideological stance. (123)

Tunca beamed her searchlight on Kambili and how her reserved lifestyle affected her relationship with people around. Kambili observes how her father's violence attracts further violence that ruins him in the end. Similarly, Florence O. Orabueze noted that "Adichie believes that violence can only stop violence, and those who are agitating for freedom against their oppressors, must be willing to use force if need be. There is the latent violence in him which can stop their father's violence on them. Eugene does not recognise the son's manhood when he demands for the keys to his room"(229). Eugene's violence springs from his religious extremism. Orabueze's view has a place in the

comment of Kingsley O. Ugwuanyi who argued that "religion is the greatest instrument of westernising Africa. The wickedness Eugene unleashes on the members of his family is informed not only by his inclination to western religion, but its abuse resulting from his rigid and sadistic mind set. What this kind of understanding does is to inferiorise the ways of life that are native to the people by tagging them local, pagan or uncivilised" (38). Ugwuanyi comment noted that Eugene's wrong perception of others endangered his family so much that his shy daughter becomes rebellious. This necessitated Shalini Nadaswaran to argue that "the process of transmission is seen in Purple Hibiscus when Kambili challenges her father's domination after her exposure to the liberated lifestyle led by her aunty Ifeoma and her cousin Amaka"(12). Nadaswaran noted that Aunty Ifeoma sows the seed of freedom in Amaka and Amaka in turn opens the eyes of her cousin who later sees the need to set herself free from restricted lifestyle imposed on her and other members of their household. To this end, she argued that:

Adichie in her novel presented two types of women; the good woman (Mama) and the real woman (Aunty Ifeoma). Mama even when her life was endangered to the extent of losing her pregnancy endured her husband's maltreatment but Ifeoma is a kind of woman who is not afraid of anyone and will speak up when things are going wrong. She tactically presented Mama as quiet and obedient at the beginning of the novel but she became radical towards the end of the novel to show that she can react

when pushed to the wall as will be discussed in some details presently.

(427)

Ibeku described radical and conservative women who see the concept of patriarchy from different point of view. Mama could not contain herself so she kills her husband which is an oppressive symbol of patriarchy. In her review she made it clear that the reaction of women is largely influenced by men and societal constructs. Mama and aunty Ifeoma's behaviours are conditioned by their attitudes towards what they face as women. In her review of the novel, Abigail Eruaga looked at the place of male domination in society and how it has affected the place of women in society. She argued that:

Purple Hibiscus is a veiled attack on patriarchy and that Adichie's concern is to challenge the traditional notion of a woman's elasticity to endure brutality for eternity. As common with human nature, when she is pushed to the wall, and presented with no alternative, she will definitely not enter into the wall but will bounce back to pay her oppressor in his own coin

(120)

Eruaga condemned the exploitation and oppression of women. Going forward, she spelt out the possible consequence of pushing women to the wall. For example, she noted that some oppressed women can become aggressive and fight back in the most surprising way.

This is the case of Mama in the novel. Gloria Ada Fwangyil however argued that:

Although the antagonist in this novel is murdered, it is worthy to note that reformist

literature does not always end in the murder of man. This is because of the belief that bad can change in character, values and behaviour which will in turn, lead to a better and improved society. In other words it does not encourage crime, murder, and sexual promiscuity. (264)

Fwangyil's posited that ideally literary text is expected to reform society and not push for its destruction. This is also the view of Tony E. Afejuku who stated that "every writer is a writer in morality or ought to be so. Every critic is a critic in the art and act of morality or ought to be so. In other words, every writer, critic or reader is an inquirer or ought to be an inquirer into meaning of conduct of behaviour which underlines our moral choice as we grope on this earthly plain"(191). Fwangyil and Afejuku are of the opinion that literature ought to reform a society. The death of Eugene instead of his repentance therefore falls short of Fwangyil and Afejuku's assumptions. Ogaga Okuyade critically studied the influence of Aunty Ifeoma on the restriction of Kambili who gains her voice in spite of Eugene's terror. In his view, Okuyade stated that:

...Kambili, as she struggles to make her mouth function within the totalitarian temperament of her father's home. The protagonist is involved with religious and domestic stakes at the beginning of the narrative. She

seems to be a mere observer and victim, but the novel drags towards denouncement as she realizes her voice. (245)

Okuyade acknowledged that Adichie employs the character of Kambili to question the freedom of females that is often curtailed in every patriarchal society. This necessitated Ijeoma Ann Ibeku to examine the types of women presented in the novel.

Dare Owolabi and Omalara Kikelomo Owoeye also study the portrayal of tension which yields suspense in the novel. In their study, they contend that:

The major conflict in the novel (PH) is the struggle against society, seen in both Kambili and Jaja in their desire to be free from the clutches of their father's overbearing attitude. This is not far from one of the negative aspects of globalization, which Tabb identifies as "rapid spread of diseases, illicit drugs, crime, terrorism and uncontrolled migration". Most often, when the idea of globalization is discussed, it is only in positive terms of "sharing of basic knowledge, technology, investments, resources and ethical values." The instances of rebellion in PH: Eugene against traditionalism, symbolized by Pa Nnokwu; Jaja and Amaka against Western religion, among other instances can be traced to globalization. (30)

Owolabi and Owoeye established that the society and the institutions in it have a way of shaping peoples characters and dispositions. In other words, the globalization

phenomenon as presented in this study can be based on society and the people in it. Christopher Ernest Werimo Ouma in his own review of the novel argued that the work is as a historical document which mirrors the dark days of the military era in Nigeria. According to him, the novel alludes to Ibrahim Babangida's regime that kills Dele Giwa the famous journalist with a letter bomb. The below excerpt captures his comment:

Ade Cocker is a fearless critic of the military regime and his relations with the Narrator's family stems from his role as the editor of a paper owned by Papa Eugene, Cocker plays the role of locating Purple Hibiscus within the background of turbulent military regimes in Nigeria. While the text's spatial setting is within the family, the undertones of the military regimes are found in the multiple arrests of Ade Cocker and his eventual death. At the level of Kambili's family Papa Eugene plays another significant role. As the owner of the Standard, he has strong opinions about issues of Democracy and the state. He earns accolades for his human rights crusade against the Military regimes by virtue of him owning a paper that fearlessly criticises the military Regime. His role is complex because of his other firm belief in religion as a key to the Political crisis in the country. (2)

Ouma studies the novel and commends the ability of the novelist who refreshes the reader's knowledge about past historical events that shaped the destiny of Nigeria. The

violence Ade Coker suffers at the state level is similar to the one Kambili and the others suffered under the brutality of Uncle Eugene. Eugene's fight against the government's terror and brutality against the masses is a mockery. He silences his family members just the way the military leader silences Ade Coker who represents the masses.

Audrey Peters studied the novel as a bildungsroman which goes beyond the experiences of Kambili alone but that of children across the universe. He articulated this thus:

Purple Hibiscus explores the issues of ethnic tensions and political unrest in Nigeria as parallels for coming of age and issues of identity definition. The story, although set in Nigeria, is common to adolescents from other times and places a perspective supported by the fact that it has been translated into languages as disparate as Lithuanian, Polish, Castilian, Turkish, and Malayalam. It is the story of discovering oneself amidst cruel peers and crueller parents in a seemingly brutal and uncaring world. The allegory between personal and national identity elevates this story from a typical narrative of adolescent angst into a thoughtful analysis of the formation of self, further, it does so in a way that dissipates some of the isolation that typically marks adolescence, allowing a reader to belong to a larger world. (27)

According to Peters, the experience of Kambili and that of her brother is archetypal in nature in that children across the world go through almost the same pattern of experience. It is on this account that Peters noted that the novel has been translated into different languages to enable readers all over the world to see what children go through regardless of place and time. This may explain why the novel has enjoyed a global attention.

Atta's *Everything Good will Come* has equally been explored from different angles. Atteh Oluwaseun Deborah saw it as a bildungsroman, that is, a work dealing with an author's growth and development. Atteh asserts that, "*Everything Good Will Come* is a novel of growth by Sefi Atta, a Nigerian Woman. It reflects the experiences of a female character and her attempts to overcome the constraints placed on women in the Nigerian society" (175). In reality, the novel is an attempt to help women understand the challenges a girl child undergoes from childhood to adulthood when she is a wife or a mother. Jonas E. Akung supported the view of Atteh which posited that the novel is a bildungsroman. The corroboration is put thus, "Sefi Atta presents the various dimension in this novel, among these dimensions are: the child's growth, education, social awareness, fight for ones rights among others" (116). This novel can therefore be classified as a work dealing with the challenges of childhood especially that of a female child. Ayo Kehinde and Ebong Mbipom have also examined the novel differently. To them, *Everything Good Will Come* is a novel that: "captures a passionate and lyrical story through the eyes of Enitan who narrates the events that bedevil the country, her family and the women who are close to her. It is a courageous story about friendship, family, and self-discovery. The

story which is told from a first person perspective- is a bildungsroman" (67). From this, Kehinde and Mbipom examine the aspect of the novel that deals with human relationship and existence. Jason Smart studying the character of "Enitan, reconstructs circumstances in which people have the power to treat her with respect and affection, but also the power to hurt her. She does this in the hope that she will disprove the implications of her trauma (which she assumes culpability for), so that someday she can ultimately escape her past and fulfil her desperate desire to trust and care for people without fear" (137). Smart concluded that Enitan's thought regarding her trauma is partly due to her intense identification with her environment and those around.

From the foregoing, critics have examined Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* from different angles but none has done a work on the issue of intolerance as it affects societal and family collapse. This essay therefore looks at how individualistic view of life leads to the fall of people in close relationship.

1.6 Thesis Statement

This essay argues that Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* reveal that societal and family collapse is mostly caused by religious intolerance and consequences of religion intolerance.

CHAPTER TWO

PORTRAYAL OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

The introduction of modern religions has caused more division than unity in Africa. The conflict that religious intolerance has caused is well illustrated in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. The novels reveal that serious disagreement and argument arise from less important issues and religion fanatics make cases out of them. If two beliefs, ideas, or interests are in conflict, they are very different. Following this background, there can be a conflict between members of the same family over their beliefs, ideas, or interests. Nevertheless, individual differences must be well managed to prevent violent and disharmony. Family conflict can be between parent-child, siblings or husband and wife (parents), and this hampers the close bond that exists among members of the same family. In this regard, Adichie and Atta portray issues of religious fanaticism and misunderstanding, and how they lead to family conflict and disintegration.

Religious fanatical belief or religious fanaticism is behaviour or opinion people consider being very extreme about someone towards his or her religion. Some people believe they are in better positions to guide others and this sometimes leads to conflict of interest. Eugene in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Enitan's mother in *Everything Good Will Come* are examples of religious fanatics. They over do this such that they see others as less worthy of God's grace and man's acceptance. It is this kind of unguided attitude that ruins the home of Eugene. In the words of Kambili:

Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja did not go to communion and papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke

the figurines on the étagère..." Jaja, you did not go to communion," papa said quietly, almost a question. Jaja stared at the missal on the table as though he was addressing it," the wafer gives me bad breath."... "And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me"... His face looked swollen already, with pustipped rashes spread across every inch, but it seemed to be swelling even more "you cannot stop receiving the body of the Lord. It is death, you know that." "Then I will die. Fear had darkened Jaja's eyes the colour of coal tar, but he looked papa in the face now. "Then I will die,papa"(11-15)

In as much as a father has the task of bringing his child up in the way of God, such task must be carried out with discretion. Being a religious zealot can destroy a family bond and this manifest in the relationship between Jaja and his own father. This explains why he could not dialogue with Jaja over his resentment of his catholic orientation. This is an example of the religious disagreements that tear the family apart. Kambili statement depicts the action and danger in Papa's intolerant lifestyle:

Papa looked around the room quickly, as if searching for proof that something had fallen from the high ceiling, something he had never thought would fall. He picked up the missal and flung it across the room, toward Jaja. It missed Jaja completely, but it hit the glass étagère, which Mama polished often. It cracked the top shelf, swept the beige, finger-size

ceramic figurines of ballet dancers in various contorted postures to the hard floor and then landed after them. Or rather it landed on their many pieces.(15)

The action of Papa is devoid of love and unknown to him, he destroys his wife's affection alongside the figurine. At first, Mama gives the impression that the figurine does not matter to her but Kambili thinks otherwise:

She nodded quickly, then shook her head to show that the figurines did not matter. They did, though. Years ago, before I understood, I used to wonder why she polished them each time I heard the sounds from their room, like something being banged against the door. Her rubber slippers never made a sound on the stairs, but I knew she went downstairs when I heard the dining room door open. I would go down to see her standing by the étagère with a kitchen towel soaked in soapy water. She spent at least a quarter of an hour on each ballet-dancing figurine. There were never tears on her face. The last time, only two weeks ago, when her swollen eye was still the black-purple color of an overripe avocado, she had rearranged them after she polished them.(16)

Mama has been shattered and broken along but she tries to hide her feelings. This is a good way of showing tolerance. Some critics may see this as stupidity but Mama sees it as the best way to keep her home going so she picks up herself by picking up the broken:

Then Mama came in, her rubber slippers making slap-slap sounds on the marble floor. She had changed from her sequined Sunday wrapper and the blouse with puffy sleeves. Now she had a plain tie-dye wrapper tied loosely around her waist and that white T-shirt she wore every other day. It was a souvenir from a spiritual retreat she and Papa had attended; the words GOD IS LOVE crawled over her sagging breasts. She stared at the figurine pieces on the floor and then knelt and started to pick them up with her bare hands.(15)

It is obvious that Mama is the opposite of her husband therefore she acts maturely. On the other hand, Eugene extends his lack of tolerance to his extended family. Infact he is guilty of what he accuses his son of. His own pagan father permits him to be a Christian irrespective of the fact that the teachings of the Christian faith contradict that of his own pagan faith. Even after the death of his father, Eugene holds grudges against his father simply because he refuses to be a Christian. This attitude is devoid of any sense of humanity. As Africans, life and death of close relatives are celebrated by their loved ones but Eugene refuses to bury his father as tradition demands:

I cannot participate in a pagan funeral but we can discuss with the parish priest and arrange a Catholic funeral. Aunty Ifeoma got up and started to shout. Her voice was unsteady." I will put my dead husband's grave up for sale, Eugene before I give our father a Catholic funeral. Do you hear me? I

said I will sell Ifediora's grave first! Was our father a catholic? I ask you Eugene, was hea catholic? "Uch gba gil" Aunty Ifeoma snapped her fingers at papa, she was throwing a curse at him. Tears rolled down her checks. (195)

Eugene is truly a fanatic due to the fact that he proposes to have a pagan buried in his line with the Catholic rite of passage. This fanatical belief angers his sister Aunty Ifeoma that she curses Eugene. Eugene wants to be more Catholic than the pope and this becomes a source of disintegration in his home. He becomes blind by being too religious and this makes him descends into the level of a terror.

As Karl Marx noted, "religion is the opium of the masses" (qtd in James Luchte 4). Eugene allows religion to distort his sense of humanity by treating his beloved wife and children as Fulani cattle. Religious convictions must be expressed with care, respecting the beliefs of others. Eugene sees only from the angle of his catholic faith and this makes him a sadist. A sick person requires attention which may sometime go beyond the scope of religion but Eugene does not see things this way:

Her period started and she has cramps "Mama said. Jaja cut her short." I told her to eat corn flakes before she took panadol, Papa. I made it for her." "Has the devil asked you to go on errands for him? The Igbo words burst out of papa's mouth. "has the devil built a tent in my house? He turned to Mama. "You sit there and watch her desecrate the Eucharistic

fast, maka nnidi?" he unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then mama raised her hand as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse. I put the bowl down just as the belt landed on my back.

(110)

On account of his holier than thou attitude, Eugene quarrels with both his immediate and extended family members. This becomes a point of conflict in his family.

In similar vein, Atta looks at the issue of religious fanaticism in *Everything Good Will Come*. Enitan's mother attends a church that is highly spiritual so much that some sentiments are entertained there. The weird superstitious nature of the church often causes division in her marriage but she cares less. Enitan noted that:

The priest in her church had a vision of fishermen breaking into our house: They would come at night, labalaba. They would come unarmed, yimiyimi. They would steal valuables, tolotolo. The very next day, three workmen replaced our jetty with a barbed wire fence and my mother kept watch over them: the same way she watched our: neighbours the same way she checked our windows for evil spirits outside at night...my father had walked out. I knew he would be furious He was away on a law conference and when he returned and saw our fence, he ran outside shouting like a

crazed man. Nothing, nothing, would stop my mother, he said, until she destroyed everything in our house, because of that church of hers. What kind of woman was she? What kind of selfish, uncaring woman was she?
(12)

From her husband's condemnatory comment it is obvious that there is a division in their home. Even Enitan as young as she is, she is repulsive about her mother's church. Her use of words such as "labalaba, yimiyimi and tolotolo" makes mockery about the priest's revelation. Her words "my mother's church" also reveals or shows that it is not her father's church:

'Out of bed,' she said. "And get yourself ready. We're going to church"... I had not been to my mother's church in years, but my memory of the place was clear: a white building with a dome. Behind it there were banana and palm trees, behind them a stream...people buried curses in that soil, tied their children to the palm trees and prayed for their spirits...More than anything else, I was embarrassed that my mother would go to such a church- incense, white gowns, bare feet and drumming. People dipping themselves in a stream and drinking from it. (71)

Enitan says she is embarrassed that her mother attends a white garment church. This points to the division in her home. According to J.H. Plum, "indeed the family ties of all of us have been so loosened that we find it hard to grasp the intensity of family

relationships or complexity, they have disintegrated so rapidly this last hundred years (40). The observation of Plum readily fits what the family of Enitan has degenerated into as a result of religious fanaticism. Her mother like Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*, forces her faith down her throat and this negates what Christianity preaches. Religion according to Will Herberg, should bring "peace of mind" (1079) but in the two families examined in this study, it is the source of disintegration. S.K. Omorogbe, M.E Omohan and M.A. Kadiri sadly remark that, "there is no doubt that contemporary Nigerian family system is beset with a lot of problems thus resulting in very serious crisis" (245). Our primary texts for this study confirm the claim of Omorogbe et al because there is a lot of a disagreement in the families under study. Intolerance is chief among other factors that lead to family collapse. The next chapter looks at the consequences of intolerance on family life of those who allows it to control their inter-personal relationship.

CHAPTER THREE

COLLAPSE AS CONSEQUENCE OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Intolerance is a big challenge in society and it has destroyed so many things. Government as well as individual must be tolerant lest society will crumble. Sociological critics try to find out the socio-political and economic state of a society at a point in time. They probe

the relationship between a government and the people's reactions towards the policies of such government. This is to find out the state of such society and its people. In the Nigerian society described above, there is a high rate of civil disobedience. This is as a result of the political tension. Families are affected by various unspeakable violence and terror that ravaged the country. For example, Ade Coker's household is disintegrated as a result of his brutal death. This further generate into conflicts that many homes experience. The same can be said of Eugene's home.

More to our point, the two families under consideration go through internal crises that split their communal living and happiness. There seems to be a high rate marital breakdown in the world today which is now affecting Africa where the love and unity of the home is highly treasured. Mama finds it hard to live in the same house with her husband who intolerance has changed into a monster therefore she runs away. This alarms her sister-in-law when she sees her unexpectedly:

“Mama, o gini? Did something happen?” I asked, hugging her quickly so I could stand back and examine her face. Her hand was cold. Amaka hugged her and took her handbag. “Aunty Beatrice, nno.” Aunty Ifeoma came hurrying out to the verandah, drying her hands in front of her shorts. She hugged Mama and then led her into the living room, supporting her as one would support a cripple.

“Where is Jaja?” Mama asked.

“He is out with Obiora,” Aunty Ifeoma said. “Sit down, nwunye m. Amaka, get money from my purse and go and buy a soft drink for your Aunty.”

“Don’t worry, I will drink water,” Mama said.

“We have not had light, the water will not be cold.”(252)

Religion which ought to bind humanity seems to be a force dividing homes and society apart. Eugene puts his religion first so that his wife becomes a stranger to him. He maltreats her so much that her life becomes miserable. Psychologically, Mama is badly slackened and this makes her in-law to further question her thus:

“You were in hospital? What happened?” Aunty Ifeoma asked quietly.

Mama looked around the room. She stared at the wall clock for a while, the one with the broken second hand, before she turned to me. “You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly.” She sounded as if she were talking about someone else, as if the table were not made of sturdy wood. “My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it.” Mama shook her head slowly. A thin line of tears crawled down her cheeks as though it had been a struggle for them to get

out of her eyes. "To save it?" Aunty Ifeoma whispered. "What do you mean?" "I was six weeks gone."(253)

It is ironical that Eugene knows love and his so called religion that preaches love fails to encourage him to show love to his family members. On the contrary, he frustrates his wife just to exalt his religiosity. This makes mockery of religion generally.

Going forward, it is observed that the hatred religion causes in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is not different from the one in Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. The novel reveals how religion makes mere argument degenerates to trouble when members of a family could not see reasons for dialogue. In life, every individual has a line of reasoning which may contradict another person's. To strike a balance, it is important to understand the opinion of one another. It is however disheartening that the parents of Enitan constantly engage in arguments that could be settled without bitterness. Enitan notes it this:

...my father slammed the book down. "What is this? She can't make friends anymore?"

My mother rounded on him." You continue to divide this child and me"

"You're her mother, not her juror." "I am not raising a delinquent. You look for evil and you will find it". My father shook his head. "Arin you can quote the

whole bible if you want."

"I am not here to discuss myself."

"Sleep in that church of yours."

"I am not here to discuss myself."

"It will not give you peace of mind" "Get up when I'm talking to you, Enitan," my mother said." Up. Up."

"Sit" my father said.

"Up" my mother said.

"Sit" my father said.

My mother patted her chest.

"She will listen to me." I shut my eyes and imagined I was... (40)

The above excerpt shows that Enitan's parents are cat and dog living in the same cage. They find it difficult to relate like a family and this makes Enitan sad. She least expects constant conflict from her parents. The matrimonial expectation of Enitan's parents fails Lewis Coser's definition of a family which maintains that, "the members of the group are united by moral, legal, economic, religious and social rights and obligations. These include a network of sexual rights and prohibitions and a variety of socially patterned

feeling such as love, attraction, piety, awe and so on" (35). A "patterned feeling such as love" is definitely lacking in the family of Enitan whose father's objection to her mother's desires constantly warrants the latter to be angry. In the thinking of Plumb, "a secure family life breeds stability. A capacity not only for happiness but also to adjust to society's demands" (40). In line with the psychological approach to the study of literature, it is evident that the id, ego and superego of Enitan's parents are at war. This prompts their inability to conform to communal living ethics. The failure of Enitan's parents to embrace dialogue in times when there is division pulls their family apart.

My parents separated while I was in school in England. My father delivered the news to me and I remember feeling like I swallowed a worm in a glass of water; I wanted to throw up... A squabble began between them over ownership of property and me. My mother vowed to have my father disbarred... soon I began to spend vacations in London working as shop assistant in a department store to supplement my allowance to avoid stay with either of them.(79)

The cord of the family is cut off and what makes up a family is destroyed. Every member of the family is destroyed. Every member of the family goes in different directions and this makes Enitan a property that must be shared between her estranged parents. Unresolved crisis is a big challenge in a family. Maria Cristina Azcona on this issue contends that:

Conflict in a family group is the resultant of the dynamic forces and the energies that flow in different directions, among the members, through verbal and non- verbal communication. The interaction of the members produces continuous conflict, all the time, so the existence of a conflict is absolutely normal in the group. The presence of the continuous influence of minor arguments and disagreement's is a signal of psychological health. The intensity of a conflict is a crisis. It is normal to find several crises along the long term family life. The problem is to resolve or help to resolve the crisis and intense conflict to avoid separation, divorce or disintegration of the group. Termination of the group always brings all of a variety of symptoms in the youngsters and children. (12)

According to Azcona, conflict is supposed to strengthen family relationship but when it is not well managed it degenerates into a big problem that moves from home to society. This is the kind of problem the families of Enitan and Kambili go through. They experience a shabby relationship that breaks down their family life. José Frantz, Zinzi Sixaba and Mario Smith also observe that changes have taken place in the family structure such that children and parents especially the mothers find it difficult to relate as expected of a family. They hold that:

In order to understand family structure, we realise that it may change over the lifespan of a child and may vary from, two parents at home to one

parent of either sex or to a relative. More importantly, it is necessary to understand that family structure in the African context and globally have changed over the years for various reasons such as economic conditions, education and disease [20, 21]. With the increase in women joining the labour force in Africa, single female-headed households have become a popular phenomenon. (3)

The account of family structure in *Purple Hibiscus* concurs with the assertion above. Auntie Ifeoma is a single parent who does everything possible to earn a better living for her and children. Auntie Ifeoma and her children represent the changes that have taken place in typical African homes.

A wedding is an important event that brings people far apart together. Enitan expects her parents to shield their swords on the day of her wedding but to her disappointment they intensify their disagreement. This further strengthens the disintegration the family is being confronted with. "Go on," she said. "Who asked you to come with your trouble? Not one minute peace did you give as a child. Now you want to criticise me. Asking me why I should stand next to him? For any reason?" (97). Enitan's mother sees her estranged husband as a contagious disease that should be avoided in order to have a healthy life. This deepens the cracks in their family bond. The same problem is treated in Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*. Down in our id are reckless desires which could lead to dangerous decisions and actions. Mama Kambili whose ego and superego

have dominated her id suddenly changes. When her id actively takes charge, it pushes her to kill her husband. Eugene is rigid and his unwillingness to respect others' point of view persuaded Aunty Ifeoma to say that," Eugene quarrels with the truth that he does not like" (103). Eugene's disagrees with everybody around him and this leads to disintegration described here:

This cannot go on, nwunye", Aunty Ifeoma said." When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head." "it has never happened like this before. He has never punished her like this before," mama said. Kumbili will come to Nssuka when she leaves the hospital." "Eugene will not agree."(219) Eugene has degenerated into a monster that nobody could live with. He treats his wife and children as worthless slaves and this weakens the central pillar that upholds his household. When it became clear that Eugene can no longer change, his sister advises his wife to leave the house. Out of frustration, she killed her husband Eugene by poisoning him. In sociology of deviance, it is a common fact that when the oppressed could not bear the yoke of the oppressors, they revolt. Jaja and his mother revolt against the oppressive power of Eugene. To get rid of their problem once and for all, they kill him. To borrow the words of W.B Yeats, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold". Eugene's household suffers disintegration due to his inability to respect others' opinion. This has been rightly summarised in the words of Robert Cliquet quoted thus:

The important changes in family structures observed in the past decades are partly the result, but also partly the cause, of changes in the relational contents, dynamics and processes (Deven, 1996). Both partner relations and parent-child relations are characterized by several changes in the values that prevail, in the balance of power and decision making, and in the emotional content of the relations among family members. Partnership shows shifts from complementarity towards egalitarianism, from normative action towards individual choice behaviour, from a commanding towards a negotiating housekeeping. Parent-child relations equally undergo changes from paternal power to parental authority, from submission to self-development, from obedience towards exploration, from unilateral towards bilateral transmission of values and knowledge. All in all, both partnership and parent-child relations are subject to much higher cognitive and emotional exigencies. Family relations have, consequently become more vulnerable, less stable. (7)

Cliquet hits the nail on the head because there is a high level of conformity between his assertion and what the primary texts for this study present. Inferring from Cliquet's words, Eugene abuses his paternal power as he could not relate well with his household members. The fact that Jaja stands by his mother who kills his father echoes the Freudian "Oedipis complex." Jaja resents his father but always seeks to protect his mother and sister. Psychologically, he is attracted to his mother. Every society craves for harmony or

peaceful co-existence but Jaja and his mother display a non-conformist attitude towards societal codes that forbid murder or patricide. Atta and Adichie tend to indict parents for most of the factors that cause family breakdown in societies. The crises between the parents examined in this study affect their children. This calls for a mature way of handling family issues in order to safe guide children well-being and the family oneness.

It is clear from the above that a family can disintegrate when its members fail to live as one. Religious fanaticism and lack of tolerance are identified as factors that bring a family apart. In every society, the family is respected because it is the core of the society. The actions of Kambili and Enitan's parents undermine the sociological framework of family. They allow personal interest to crumble their homes thereby leaving their children helpless. The crisis in the two households examined show that the crisis in societies can be traced to broken homes.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Family ties keep crumbling because many people find it difficult to control their temper. In the long run, this essay has been able to critically study the portrayal of family disintegration in our primary texts.

Religious intolerance that is fanaticism and poor conflict resolution in the family are identified as causes of family collapse or breakdown in society. In line with our

theoretical background, it is evident that some of the key characters looked at in this study are temperamental especially on religious related issues. Eugene and Enitan's mother see their religious beliefs as what must be binding on everyone around therefore they confront those who do share their line of thoughts. They exalt their religion beyond limit and this seriously has a negative impact on their family members. Eugene's Western orientation makes him irrational such that he cannot dwell harmoniously within African traditional society. He quarrels with his family members who do not share his extreme view on Catholic faith. He disowns his father on the ground that he fails to follow him to church. In addition, he refuses to help his sister because she does not conform to his overbearing way of life. This is similar to Enitan's mother too in Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. She attends a church whose doctrine sees non members as strangers. This makes her contradicts her husband from time to time. The teaching of her church and her total submission to it makes her daughter to see her as a weird woman and this becomes toxic when it becomes obvious that she is being ruled by the passion of her church's doctrine and not reason.

On the whole, this essay has demonstrates that Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* are texts dealing with intolerance which often leads to family collapse. Every individual has the right to adhere to any religion that suits his or her persuasion in life. It is clear from the above that a family can disintegrate when its members fail to live above individual religious view. Sociologically, religious fanaticism and lack of tolerance are identified in this study as factors that bring a family apart. The

crisis in the two households examined show that the crisis in societies can be traced to broken homes. Homes are not just broken but different factors lead to it. In a nut shell, this essay opines that people should learn to tolerate others in order to promote strong harmony in homes and society at large.

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