

The Psychological Impact of Domestic Violence on Teenage Development in

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

* Ifrah Shahbaz, MS in English Language and Literature



Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel Purple Hibiscus shows how Kambili and Jaja, two teenage siblings, ultimately develop a tendency to combat their psychological tensions in a domestically abused environment under the God-like dictatorship of their father. Their father's extremely imposing attitude induces anxiety in both teenagers while subjugating their necessary freedom. The research focuses on the development of both siblings as adolescents, as adolescence is an important phase of life in developing a person's individuality. The work attempts to show the necessary transition in both siblings, Kambili and Jaja, leading to a healthy growth process as they display defiance to overcome the psychologically traumatic experience.

Keywords: Teenage, Psychological Tensions, Subjugation, Individuality, Healthy Growth

Introduction

In the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, domestic violence is one of the main issues. A pattern of behavior used in any relationship to gain or maintain control over an intimate partner is known as domestic abuse, often referred to as intimate partner violence. Abuse can result in feelings of control, dread, terror, agony, humiliation, or harm and can be psychological, sexual, economic, or physical. In many African societies, it has been observed that the majority of men and women feel that a husband has the right to use violence in retaliation for a woman acting inappropriately for her gender, such as when she disobeys, neglects her domestic responsibilities, or is unfaithful. The book is set in postcolonial and post-war Africa, and it seems that the war gave men authority over their oppressed women. Young guys who grew up in African society saw that violence was widely condoned, including in their relationships. The men who fought in the war adapt violence as a natural response to problems. According to studies, domestic violence is the root cause of other social issues like drug abuse, child misbehavior, and violent crimes. Domestic abuse of children, also known as child abuse, typically occurs when the perpetrator is younger than 18, according to the World Health Organization. It includes exploitation, sexual abuse, abandonment, harm, and physical and psychological abuse. The perpetrator could be the victim's parents or other members of their immediate family who wish the victim or their loved ones harm.

The narrative centres on Kambili, who is the narrator and protagonist, and her older brother Jaja. There is a double meaning to the novel's title. The flower of purple hibiscus is unique in its sense, just like the siblings who, unlike others, are "precious" (p. 142) in the eyes of their father, who makes strict rules and regulations for them to follow strictly. They are not allowed to play, watch TV, present their mind, or laugh openly. Kambili is a 15 years old narrator of the novel, who goes through adolescence, a transition between childhood and adulthood. Different stages mark her teenage development. In her paper titled "(Re) writing postcolonial Bildungsroman in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*," Nilima Meher cites Okayadu, who defines four characteristics of female Bildungsroman: (1) the protagonist comes to terms with her condition; (2) the protagonist develops awareness through making contact with women who help for self-realization; (3) the protagonist comes to terms with the femininity within herself; and (4) the protagonist reaches the final stage of maturity (p. 208). For Kambili's journey, her self-realization occurs through her Auntie Ifeoma and her cousin, Amaka. Despite all the obstacles in her development journey, Kambili eventually grows and flourishes and reaches her final stage of maturity, ultimately conquering her neurosis.

The psychological anguish inflicted on Eugene's family by his position as head of the household is well documented; even little Kambili lacked the confidence to open up to her cousin Amaka. She is unable to communicate with anyone. Thus, she does not have many friends at school. Through the novel's narrator, we see that her world continues to exist and grow inside her while her

* COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus Email: wisefu@gmail.com

brother Jaja takes on the role of the defiant son who refuses to listen to their father. The obstinate side of Jaja's personality is seen only in front of his father, who is the reason for the development of such behavior. At the same time, he feels responsibility towards his mother and sister. Seventeen years old Jaja is unlike his sister, as he shows an outward response in front of his father. Jaja is more aggressive and openly defies his father. The research shows the childhood memories of Jaja as shared by his sister, Kambili showing how his father abused him since he was a small child. This treatment of Jaja is based on molestation, which leads him to defy his father's orders. To cope with his neurosis, he found shelter by going against his father. His surrogate mother, Auntie Ifeoma, made him realize that defiance is not bad. Jaja is quiet but an observant teenager. He carefully observes his cousin, Obiora, who makes him realize his responsibility towards his mother and sister. Kambili narrates how Jaja develops mentally and physically in his aunt's house because that environment connects him with his missing roots. She observes changes in his body that she never knew of, which results in filling the gap between his id and ego, which is necessary for his growth. Adichie's upbringing of Nsukka is the basic traditional African essence that helped the teenagers grow towards hope for a better future through the sibling's inherent desire to struggle for their freedom. The freedom for their self and individuality to be expressed makes them unique and truly African, just like the Purple Hibiscus flowers.

Literature Review:

A. Amoko, in his study, "Autobiography and Bildungsroman in African Literature", observes,

The creation of the African Bildungsroman, like that of its European forebear, took place during a time of profound social upheaval and drastic change after colonization, when the conventional ways of being were severe, if not permanently, altered. [. . .] In a way, the genre uses the father's passing to represent a dependable, unchallenged tradition (p. 200).

The novel falls under the Bildungsroman category. A Bildungsroman is described as "a class of novels that depicts and explores how the protagonist develops morally and psychologically" by the editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Literature professor X.J. Kennedy defines a Bildungsroman as "the kind of novel in which a young person struggles to mature, perhaps in search of some stable worldview or philosophy of life". Parenting styles are very important aspects that shape the kind of family ties within a given society. Art Rolnick and Rob Grunewald emphasizes this claim by suggesting that a kid is more likely to thrive academically and make a positive contribution to society as an adult if they get assistance for healthy development in families and communities during their early years of life. Healthy child development depends on responsive and consistent parenting .

According to Deborah L. Ruf's article, "How Parental Viewpoint and Personality Affect Gifted Child Outcomes", children are likely to feel less safe and, regrettably, less significant when their parents are not together. Children are left wondering about their worth when one parent is either not interested or completely absent. All characters in the novel adopt a defence mechanism to cope with the circumstances. The main character, Kambili, adopts denial as a kind of resistance. "When we find denial, we know that it is a reaction to external danger," says Anna Freud in her chapter on defence mechanisms in *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*. "When repression occurs, the ego struggles with instinctual stimuli." (p. 104).

Female Teenage Development:

Purple Hibiscus is a Bildungsroman novel that especially focuses on the coming-of-age process of both teenagers. The growth process is very important in the development of a person as he goes through different stages physically as well as mentally throughout his process of growth. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie not only chooses a female as her narrator, but it also regulates the development of the plot of the novel from the perception of a teenager. The growth process in males and females depends on their sex hormones, such as progesterone in females. These hormones impact the individual differently, especially during the coming-of-age process.

In his Psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud presents different models of the human psyche. The Topographical or Tripartite model also refers to the structural model, which divides the psyche into three parts that are the id, the ego, and the superego. The id, ego, and superego create human behaviour and shape personalities. The id, ego, and superego all have an impact on personality during adolescence as it is in the process of developing. According to Freud, the ego regulates the id and plays an important role in development. The ego acts out when the balance between the id, ego, and superego gets disrupted, and certain feelings and ideas get repressed within the mind. It blocks the

outward response, leading to an internal battle between the id and the ego that Freud termed “Neurosis”.

In the novel, both siblings adopt different roles to react to their father’s violence. At the novel’s start, Kambili, being a female, is seen as more submissive and subjugated. At the same time, her brother, Jaja, is more aggressive and defiant and shows open rebellion against the orders given by his father. Freud makes it abundantly clear in a 1915 footnote to his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* that the concepts of “male” and “female” are among the most baffling in science because they can be understood in at least three different ways: as “activity” and “passivity,” as sperm or eggs, or as actual men and women in society. The story’s beginning makes it clear that Kambili’s violent treatment of her father led to a conflict between her id and ego, ultimately leading to neurosis.

The novel describes Kambili’s mental condition as “Inside my head, thousands of monsters played a painful game of catch, but instead of a ball, they used a brown leather-bound missal that they threw to each other” (p. 14); after Papa Eugene tosses a missal in the opening scenes. According to Kurtz, who wrote the above quote, “Kambili is a nervous wreck, never knowing when to expect another outburst of physical abuse from her father” (p. 9). The novel revolves around a need for freedom since its start; freedom is not only from the domestic abuse of the father figure but also the healthy freedom that can make her develop and the freedom to get rid of the anxiety that affects her personality; therefore, she urges a desire to run away. In the novel, both siblings find that world in the dreamland of Auntie Ifeoma’s house in Nsukka, which finally helps them in their growth and development, whereas to cope with the neurosis existing within them, Kambili adapts a defence mechanism of denial as a need to adapt to pleasure principle to escape from the anxiety she faces as a result of the violence committed by her father. Freud says that the onset of puberty leads to repression in the personality of females. Continuous repression gives rise to anxiety. Childhood experiences play an important role in developing the unconscious that affects the id. Painful experiences mark the teenage development of Kambili and Jaja since childhood. The mental state of Kambili can be seen in her acts of denial that serve as an escape for her to accept the reality that her father is the source affecting her physically and psychologically until she goes to her aunt’s house.

Because of Kambili’s denial, she succumbs to her father’s decisions and acts without protest, stating that her father would order them to recite sixteen different novenas. The pardon of her mother. She questions what her mother has to be forgiven for, which depicts her situation as unconscious due to abuse and control occurring in her home. Kambili complies with her father’s expectations, but she senses the cramped atmosphere in the house. In the first eating scene, she has a sense of suffocation in her large dining room. On page 9, she gives an account of the suffocation that she would feel at her large dining table. This is also because she cannot connect to her identity because of the dispute between her id and ego that made her prone to neurosis. The only way for her is to resort back to her world of denial, where she somehow feels relief from the painful reality and ultimately represses more of her individuality. Freud writes about the personality of women that “Women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing of their own” in a 1925 paper entitled “The Psychical Consequences of the Anatomic Distinction between the Sexes”.

The issues that Kambili faces can be seen in the words of D. Tunca, who, in her article, states that Kambili finds herself unable to reconcile the gap between the doctrines her father has ingrained in her with her own visual experiences. She cannot completely remove her father from the higher status she has given him. Even when she hears the news of her father’s death, her response is, “I had never considered the possibility that Papa would die, that Papa could die. He was different from Ade Coker, from all the other people they had killed. He had seemed immortal” (p. 205).

Kambili’s teenage development can be compared to the fourteen-year-old main character in Alice Walker’s novel, *The Colour Purple*. Both Kambili and Celie, the protagonists, benefit greatly from strong family ties. The home is transformed into a hegemonic setting utilized to stifle liberty and the growth of women’s identity, to take an idea from Antonio Gramsci. A young adolescent named Celie experiences abuse at the hands of her father, making her a victim of violence and instilling in her, like Kambili, a lack of self-assurance and silence.

Due to the upset of her id and ego’s equilibrium and the consequent neurosis in her psyche, Celie’s suppression of identity is similar to Kambili’s. She adopts the defence mechanism of denial, like Kambili, from the beginning; unable to question her father’s methods, she instead attributes all of her life’s misfortunes to God. “At last, she inquired, “Where is it? I believe God snatched it. He seized

it. While I was sleeping, he took it. There in the bushes, kilt it. If he can, also kill this one” (p. 6). She writes letters to God to speak with Him in her silent world, much as Kambili’s world is silent. Due to a lack of confidence, there exists a lack of expression in their personalities. In the novel, Kambili narrates how she and her brother strictly follow the schedule their father handed over to them as she says, “We always soaked tiny sections of fabric in the foamy water first to check if the colours would run, although we knew they would not. We wanted to spend every minute of the half-hour Papa allocated to constant washing” (p. 17), and she wonders if her father would make a schedule for her unborn brother before or after his birth. Such a way of treatment suppresses the individual development of a person and makes him succumb to his self-confidence and creative thinking of his own.

The voice and faith of both protagonists do not fully develop due to mental pressure. Like Kambili, Celie strongly believes in God as the source of her power, but she occasionally conflates God’s authority with that of her father Alphonso. Kambili, too, gives her powerful father godlike qualities because she thinks he will never die, which leads to denial. It is clear that both the young ladies fear their fathers more than God. As a young child, she visualizes heaven through her father’s bedroom, whose “cream blanket that smelled of safety” (p. 32) she finds refuge. Through her development, she begins to get a clear view of her father, as does Celie of God, for whom God no longer remains merely a white beard man. In her book *The Ego and the Mechanism of Defence*, Anna Freud states, “When we encounter denial, we know that it is a reaction to external threat”. She continues, “When repression takes place, the ego is struggling with instinctual stimuli” (p. 104). But despite their repressed lives, both the protagonists finally become able to get out of their neurosis and start developing as they come out of the world of suppression that made them develop. The purple hibiscus blossom is like the young Kambili. She cannot develop because of her father’s irate yet attentive care. Because of how her father treats her, her mother has experienced multiple miscarriages. When her mother breaks the Eucharist fast because of menstruation discomfort, he strikes her and unbuckles his belt to punish her. She described the belt as “a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a subdued leather-covered buckle.” I dropped the bowl at the same time the belt hit my back. (p. 76). This description illustrates how Papa stifles the growing lives of his family.

An experience through Nsukka allowed Kambili to express herself as her ego finally became able to allocate her libido. Nsukka acts as the ground for Kambili’s development. She smiles, chats, and expresses herself with her cousin, sobs, laughs, jokes, and sings. Experience with her aunt and cousins connects her with her traditional African roots and her Papa Nnukwu, whom she sees through another perspective, not as a heathen, as marked by her father, but as a grandfather. For the first time, she can exercise her will, loved and being loved as in the case of Father Amadi, and realizes her sexuality. She sees how her cousin applies lipstick, makeup and listens to African music, allowing her to see life from another vision rather than dictated by her father. Aunty Ifeoma purposefully takes away the schedule of both siblings given to them by their father so that it can make them grow and develop on their own. She says, “I lay on the floor, curled tight like the picture of a child in the uterus in my Integrated Science for Junior Secondary Schools” (p. 152), which illustrates her impending rebirth because, for the first time, she is going to accept defiance in front of her father, leaving her denial behind. This is after her father beats her up and takes Papa Nnukwo’s painting from her after she returns from Nsukka.

Otto Fenichel, in his book *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*, says, “The gradual development of the ego and the reality principle strengthens experience and memory and slowly weakens the tendency to deny” (p. 129). Through the nourishing environment of having Aunty Ifeoma as her mother and father Amadi acting as her substitute parents, the growth of Kambili becomes possible. Kambili says, “I wanted to leave with Father Amadi, or with Aunty Ifeoma, and never come back” (p. 167). For the first time, she can laugh, cry, smile, play and see how people communicate with each other. One night in Aunty Ifeoma’s house, she says, “That night, I dreamed that I was laughing, but it did not sound like my laughter, although I was not sure what my laughter sounded like. It was cackling, throaty, and enthusiastic, like Aunty Ifeoma’s” (p. 66). Therefore, an experience with the healthy environment of Nsukka made her realize her individuality and sexuality and fills the gap between her id and ego, allowing her to strive for her freedom to possess “something lost, something I have never had, would never have” (p. 210). Kambili finally gains her identity in the Post

Colonialist society, overcomes the neurosis that led to her denial, and accepts the reality, unlike her father, who “was too much of a colonial product” (p. 13).

Male Teenage Development:

The Male teenage development of seventeen-year-old Jaja, the novel’s male protagonist, is influenced by male hormones such as testosterone. Freud believed that somatic influence affects the behavioural development of an individual. The world of Freud is a male-regulated world that revolves around a Phallic source regulating the dominating role in all situations. In the novel, Eugene is the male source of power that dictates the Eugene household. Papa Eugene uses an authoritative parenting style to impose his complete power on his family, which causes an ego-identity problem in each member’s personality. The Austrian psychoanalyst Otto Fenichel writes in his book *Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* that anxiety frequently causes partial regressions throughout puberty. This clarifies the paradoxical conduct of adolescents towards items. Teenage boys’ “rudeness” is occasionally intended to scare others, frequently in an effort to calm their anxiousness (p. 99). Jaja, being a young teenager, goes through the coming-of-age process. His development process is affected by the treatment that his father applies to snub his identity under his rule, and he treats his son in an abusive way. The Physical and domestic abuse disrupted the basic equilibrium between the id and ego of the young boy and created neurosis in his personality. According to Freud, to cope with his unpleasant reality and search for a means of the pleasure principle is a necessary channel through which the ego resorts as an escape and makes the individual adopt some behavioural changes. In his renowned book, *The Ego and the Id*, Freud compares the relationship between the ego and the id to a rider who must restrain a horse’s superior power. The difference is that the rider makes an effort to do so using his strength, whereas the ego uses borrowed energies. According to Freud, the libido is an active masculine drive. Therefore in the story, Jaja is more aggressive and defiant and openly rebels against his father’s commands

From a childhood perspective, Jaja’s growth is characterized by traumatic events that cause anxiety in his personality, which then results in neurosis in his personality. When Kambili describes her brother Jaja, who is still a teenager, at the beginning of the book, she says of him: “His seventeen-year-old face had grown lines; they zigzagged across his forehead, and inside each line, a dark tension had crawled in.” Lines or wrinkles on the face give an account of the mental state of the young boy who, unlike normal teenagers, neither rise nor shine but rather wilts in the claustrophobic compound walls created by their mighty father. It also shows the environment of Eugene’s house, where healthy growth cannot be possible. Karen Horney, a German psychoanalyst, explains this neurotic condition in her book *Neurosis and Human Growth*; she points to the cultural conditions as the core of neurosis, which, she says

Instead of developing basic confidence in self and others, the child develops basic anxiety, creating feeling isolated and helpless toward a potentially hostile world. In order to keep this basic anxiety at a minimum, the spontaneous moves toward, against, and away from others became compulsive (p. 341).

From the start, the novel shows the Defiant and aggressive character of Jaja when things fall apart at home because Jaja denies attending the communion, resulting in the wrath of their father, Eugene. Jaja’s defiance is not useless. In his research analysis, Sidney S. Furst says about aggression during developmental stages as a manifestation, “a defective pattern of ego development which involves impairment in the ego’s ability to organize and deal with the experience of hate” (Furst). Aggression in Jaja is a response to hate that is repressed within himself against his father and his father’s demands, threatening the young boy’s freedom which mean a lot to him. The defiance and aggression of Jaja are seen even after Palm Sunday, as in the words of Kambili who states that Jaja didn’t listen to his father’s orders.

Furthermore, “Papa could not open his door because he had pushed his study desk in front of it” (p. 184) Jaja defies his father here while marking his territory within the circle of his room, and closing the door signifies the hate that is repressed within him related to his father and that there is no place for his absolutist father within his territory. The impact of Papa Eugene on Jaja can be traced back to his childhood when he was ten years old. In the novel, when Chima asked Jaja what made his finger “deformed like a dried stick” (p. 94); then Kambili tells about the barbarity that ten-year-old Jaja faced: “When he was ten, he missed two questions on his catechism test and was not named the best in his First Holy Communion class. Papa took him upstairs and locked the door. Jaja, in tears,

came out supporting his left hand with his right, and Papa drove him to St. Agnes hospital. Papa was crying, too, as he carried Jaja in his arms like a baby all the way to the car. Later, Jaja told me that Papa had avoided his right hand because it is the hand he writes with (p. 94).

Adichie purposefully employs the symbolism of a “dried stick” (p. 94) to depict the condition of Jaja’s finger. However, it also represents the condition of the young boy as a whole due to his father’s suppression of his identity and self, which makes growth not only impossible but also “deformed” if it does. After Kambili tells the story of Eugene’s brutal treatment of his son, Auntie Ifeoma changes the subject. She mentions the flowers, saying to Jaja, “This is about to bloom” (p. 107), pointing at an ixora bud. However, the experience of the world of Nsukka prevents the teenage boy from deforming and shattering, instead connecting him with his roots. “Another two days and it will open its eyes to the world” (p. 107). The blooming of Jaja and bringing the aggression and defiance out to display can be seen in the words of Kambili: “Jaja’s defiance seemed to me now like Auntie Ifeoma’s experimental purple hibiscus, rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. Freedom to be, to do” (p. 15).

This desire for freedom is what, according to Freud, is necessary for adjusting his libido to regulate so that it can prevent him from going into a neurotic state and prevent him from becoming defiant and aggressive like his cousin Obiora. Adichie deliberately links the memory of Kambili back to the red hibiscuses that can be found within her compound walls, associating the violence committed by her father while highlighting the psychoanalytical approach, hinting back to the effect of past experiences on young Jaja that affected his development. Sigmund Freud, in his lectures, highlights the impact of anxiety on the development process during puberty, saying, “The influence on anxiety disorders of certain phases of life to which, as in the case of puberty and the time of the menopause, a considerable increase in the production of libido may be attributed”.

Jaja, here rather, questions the faith that his father possesses, a faith that, according to him, is sceptical, and he is not ready to accept that with blind eyes as his father does. His perspective of faith shows a struggle with the notion of evil, asking why the innocent should suffer and why redemption can only be attained through sacrifice in his father’s religion. Jaja is grown enough to make decisions that mainly aim to deny his father’s orders because of the influence of Auntie Ifeoma’s house and especially of his cousin Obiora who acts like the man of the family, trying to protect his mother and siblings. In the novel, when his mother attempts to associate him with childish activities, Obiora says, “I was never a child” (p. 157), resulting in the same morale growing in Jaja. Like Kambili, Nsukka enables Jaja to culminate in his growth process, uplifting the clouds of silence, and making him embrace defiance while linking him with his true Igbo roots. He announces his mother’s pregnancy to his sister and promises to keep the baby safe. In Auntie Ifeoma’s welcoming home, Jaja finds a chance to develop. When Auntie Ifeoma tells the siblings that their father wants them to stay at her home for a few more days, living at her aunt’s house, Kambili states, “I saw him enter into the flat. He had never done any vehicle washing at home. I questioned if it was feasible for a teenager’s shoulders to expand in a week because his shoulders appeared wider” (p. 114). These lines shows the actual physical growth of the teenage boy that shoot-up just like the growth of the Hibiscus flowers in the environment that provided him with the necessary dignity and freedom. Adichie shows how the neurosis of Jaja started curing in the presence of Auntie Ifeoma and Father Amadi, which act as his surrogate parents and helps in removing the imbalance between his id and ego.

The pre-colonial Nigerian hero King Jaja of Opobo is described by Auntie Ifeoma as being “a defiant king who refused to let the British come and control all the trade.” The British deported him to the West Indies because, unlike the other kings, he did not sell his soul for a little gunpowder. He never visited Opobo again” (106). This is the tale of Jaja, who, like the King of Opobo, is a stubborn person by nature. However, unlike his father, Jaja never claims to be Igbo, which prevented his neurosis from developing into psychosis. He establishes a bond with his grandfather and cousin by saying, “I have Papa-Nnukwu’s arms,” as Kambili put it. Could you see it? I possess his arms. He sounded as if he were in a daze and had lost track of his identity. He seemed to have forgotten how little feeling his finger had (p. 151). In Eugene’s compound, where a gesture of love is the love sip as Kambili tells how her father would show his love through the Love sip

Have a love sip, he would say, and Jaja would go first. Then I would hold the cup with both hands and raise it to my lips. One sip. The tea was always too hot and always burned my tongue, and

if lunch was something peppery, my raw tongue suffered. But it didn't matter because I knew that when the tea burned my tongue, it burned Papa's love into me (p. 9)

Among these circumstances, where the ménage is rather insulted in the name of love, growth is impossible, rather it would ultimately bring out the inner aggression and defiance as it happens in the novel that all members of Eugene's household ultimately display an act of defiance towards the mighty Papa Eugene. The ultimate growth of Jaja, because of the nourishing environment of Nsukka, resulted in his mental and physical development. Karen Horney, in her book *Self Analysis*, claims that under all conditions, a child will be influenced by his environment. What counts is whether this influence stunts or furthers the growth. And which development will occur depends largely on the kind of relationship established between the child and his parents or others around him, including other children in the family (p. 43) Adolescence is the transition from a child's safe haven to the outside world; they must think like adults, and with age comes responsibility, as we observe Jaja's evolution into a decision-maker during the book. J. W Santrock, in his work *Adolescence*, says that "adolescence is the development from the comfort zone as a kid to the world; they have to think like an adult" (Santrock). Jaja finally starts thinking as an adult, like his cousin, Obiora, who is younger than Jaja but he takes care of his mother; Jaja says to Kambili, "I should have taken care of Mama. Look how Obiora balances Aunty Ifeoma's family on his head, and I am older than he is. I should have taken care of Mama" (p. 206) Living with his cousin and watching him carefully, shows to Jaja, how to retaliate against difficult circumstances while protecting his loved ones, showing that he not only starts thinking like an adult, but he also starts acting like an adult. Jaja eventually sacrifices himself to save his mother. Erik Erikson, a German-American developmental psychologist, in his work *Childhood and Society*, claims that "the adolescent mind is essentially a mind of the moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult. It is an ideological mind" (p. 236).

At the news of his father's death, Jaja wrapped Kambili around his arms, providing a sense of solace and protection to his younger sister and expressing that she is not alone in this world. Jaja takes immediate measures to avoid arrest and accepts responsibility for his father's death. "Jaja did not wait for their inquiries; he told them he had used rat poison, that he had put it in Papa's tea," claims Kambili. Before they brought him away, they let him change his clothing. Jaja's perseverance in prison demonstrated his will to assist his family. Jaja shrugs, as stated by Kambili, "He does not mind sleeping with mice and cockroaches" (p. 212). Even the flesh of his neck is covered in scabs that initially appear to be dry before the yellowish pus beneath them begins to leak out when he scrapes them. After getting rid of his father and struggling against the unhealthy worry and neurosis that stood in the way of Jaja's adolescent growth, the fresh rains that are on the way towards the end are a symbol of the growth and prosperity that would enable Jaja to blossom.

Conclusion:

Teenage development in a domestically abused environment cannot be a healthy one. Adolescence is the age of life in which a teenager strives within himself as well as with the outer environment. During adolescence, the positive support of parents is necessary for the proper growth and development of children. Violence creates anxiety in children, which hinders the physical and psychological growth necessary for teenage development. The research shows that the maltreatment by the father gives rise to anxiety in both siblings. Kambili and Jaja live under the strict fatherhood of Papa Eugene in their ironically mansion-like house, where they feel suffocated because it is the environment that snubs the identity and individuality of both teenagers, resulting in disturbing the balance between their id and ego that affects their growth and they lose their self and voice. Papa Eugene's house is the environment where both teenagers cannot present a mind of their own. They cannot do what they want; they cannot laugh and even talk openly.

The only language through which they communicate includes major non-verbal exchanges such as eye movements. They strictly follow the schedule their father handed them and, as a result, prevent them from exercising their own will. The novel's title is an allegory, showing the state of both teenagers and the need for their growth that could not be possible within the confined walls of Papa Eugene's house. The impact of Aunty Ifeoma's family residing in Nsukka brings a huge transition in the character of both teenagers. When they first arrived there, they had been impacted by the claustrophobic environment of their father's house, which gave their cousins the impression that there was something wrong with them because of the anxiety that made them prone to neurosis. Both

siblings belonging to different sexes inhibit their neurosis differently; Kambili, being a female, adapts an internalizing defence mechanism of denial, while Jaja, being a male, adapts an externalizing portrayal of aggression and defiance towards his father, as his aunt made him realize that defiance is a not always a bad thing.

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