

## Parenting and the Girl-Child: Issues in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames*

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### Abstract

Parenting is an intricate and critical aspect of child rearing. Children are susceptible to danger, and so need to be closely monitored and guided for survival. The girl-child is usually more vulnerable to harm and vagaries of the environment and so requires close guidance. Parenting demands specific efforts to support, protect and promote the physical and emotional wellbeing of the child. Mothers, in particular, learn to form close bonds with their daughters. However, some mothers do not respond or follow up on their girl-child in order to provide the necessary friendship for her proper development. Incidents portrayed in the texts of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Adaokere Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames* reveal issues of mother-child relationship, indicating active and inactive parenting. Scholars have reviewed *Purple Hibiscus* as a cultural, patriarchal, child development or bildungsroman text, whereas *The Forest Dames* has been studied as a war text and as a record of history, among other discourses. Using John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's Attachment Theory, which posits a close parent-child relationship as a hallmark of positive parenting, this study examines the pattern of relationship between the mothers and the girl-children in the narratives. The paper specifically examines the dominant roles of the individual mothers, particularly, Beatrice and Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*, and Dora, in *The Forest Dames* in securing the girl-child from impending and real dangerous circumstances around her. The paper advocates positive and authoritative parenting requiring concerted and critical efforts of mothers in determining the safety and future of the girl-child.

**Keywords:** Parenting, Girl-Child, Vulnerability, Attachment Theory, Authoritative Parenting.

### Introduction

Children need all the care possible to help them attain overall positive development. This attainment can be achieved through proper parenting, which according to Breiner et al. (2016) “promotes positive emotional health and well-being and supports their overall mental health, including a positive sense of self as well as the ability to cope with stressful situations, temper emotional

arousal, overcome fears, and accept disappointments and frustrations” The job of parenting is very critical. It is a learned habit needed to safeguard both male and female children, especially the girl-child, bearing in mind that the girl-child is vulnerable and susceptible to abuse and molestation by unscrupulous individuals. Therefore, she needs the protection and mentorship of the parents, especially the mother, who

usually is readily attached to the child as the caregiver. Therefore, “provision of support by parents help minimize the risk of internalizing behaviours, such as those associated with anxiety and depression, which can impair children’s adjustment and ability to function well at home, at school, and in the community” Breiner et al. (2016). However, it is taken for granted often that the mother builds friendship and close relationship with the girl-child. Parents, especially mothers, are therefore essential resources for children in managing and guiding their overall positive development into adulthood. Parenting practices ensure children’s health and safety, preparing them for life as productive adults. Parenting is a critical task and is more than a biological function. It involves a complex mix of socialization and education of the child, as well as their emotional, social, and mental needs. Failure is readily apparent when some parents, particularly mothers are unable to closely monitor and guide their daughters, predisposing them to abuse and harm.

Narratives in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and AdaOkere Agbasimalo’s *The Forest Dames* indicate critical issues of parenting, some of which could be seen as being positive or negative, especially, considering the mother’s involvement in the experiences of their girl-child. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili’s brutal experiences in the hands of her father, Eugene and the mother, Beatrice’s actions and inactions are issues of concern. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, (2010) observe that “their father, whom they fondly called Papa, maintains an elevated rank among the strictest of disciplinarians in a world where excellence is the most

fundamental and absolute yardstick, where second best is not only unacceptable but also indicates a reason not to live”. Kambili suffers heavily under the crudity of her father who expects perfection and absolute adherence to his rules and those of the church.

Agbasimalo’s *The Forest Dames* published in 2012 is a novel based on war experiences. The book tells the story of four young girls, Adaeze, Ugonma, Sofuruchi and Lelenwa, called, Deze, Gonma, Sofuru and Lele for short, who are the forest dames. In an interview with Nangwu (2012) AdaOkere discloses that her novel is a true story of her experience written as a novel, and can be termed “a fictionalized non-fiction of her personal experience” stressing that it was not a story told to her or what she read up from a book. She explained that it was about a young girl and her experience during and after the Nigerian-Biafran war, shortly after Nigeria gained independence and the evils perpetrated by the Nigerian soldiers in remote communities. *The Forest Dames* is therefore one of the war novels that fictionalizes the events of the civil war. Though it is relayed as the author’s personal experience, but it is a fiction, being an imaginative expose of the Biafran war.

Both texts, *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Forest Dames* explore critical issues of parenting that project mother-child relationship. *The Forest Dames* highlights a war situation that informs the disruption of life for the mother and the girl-child. In their corroboration, Onwugbufor and Omagu (2016), note of Agbasimalo’s novel: “*The Forest Dames* (2012) is a post-colonial literature that retraces the impact of the war on the Igbo

woman during the Nigerian civil war". While Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* relays incidents of child abuse and neglect in the home front, Agbasimalo's narrative indicates that at every stage of the development and at every situation, the girl-child should be given adequate nurturing and protection through conscious parenting. The actions and inactions of the mothers, Beatrice and Deze in the texts speak volumes of the different types of parenting, and the implications of positive and negative parenting.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and AdaOkere Agbasimalo are contemporary writers who have received extensive critical and intellectual attention. Their texts *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Forest Dames* have been discussed majorly as feminist centered texts among other critical discussions. For example, Enyeribe (2020) in "Female Bonding: A Panacea to War Trauma Recreated in Some Nigerian Novels" studies Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames* as women centered narratives using a Post-colonial feminist (womanism) consciousness. The paper portrays the traumatic experiences of women during the Nigeria-Biafra war, and how they were able to surmount the challenges and difficulties presented to them by the disruptions of the war. This they achieved through concerted efforts of the women who come together bonded by a common cause to survive the war. Enyeribe states that "the onset of the civil war saw the disruption of family and communal life and as such gender roles were consequently reversed. For instance, traditionally, men are seen as the heads of households but with the war on, most women had no choice but to

take up the role of heads in order to survive the trying period." In relating this turbulent period of the war, Enyeribe "uses trauma and bonding as the analytical category to highlight the argument of women's interactions with war and trauma and their unification along class lines (bonding) in order to support each other and ultimately survive". The idea of bonding is relayed in Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dame* where women are reported to form "relationships that enable them to share information, instruction, knowledge and ideas for survival such as, discovering new markets where wares are sold and resold" In all, women render help to each other in order to ameliorate the traumatic experiences of the war situation.

In a paper, Ikediugwu (2013) portrays Adichie's female characters as subtle in resistance and non-aggressive in dealing with the men folk. She applies "African Feminism" as posited by Carole Boyce who describes African feminism as not antagonist to the menfolk, but that which raises the consciousness of women, challenging them to be aware of certain salient aspects of subjugation against the women. In this essay, the female characters are presented as assertive, firm, independent and at the same time kind-hearted, supportive and generous. In another essay "The Impact of Colonization; A Critical Study of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" by Washaly (2021) seeks to reveal the impact of colonization on Africa in general and on Nigeria in particular as it explores various effects of colonialism on culture, language and religion. At the same time as criticizing the role of Christian missionaries in obliterating African identity and culture, the article

raised concerns of discrimination, white supremacy, linguistic and cultural imperialism. The author noted that certain African countries' policies, as depicted in the story, are influenced by colonial power's dominance and violence. The book exposes the horrible brutality utilized by armed forces to crush the voices that demand for freedom. In doing so, it depicts the tragic episode of Mr Ade Coker, the editor of Eugene's Standard Newspaper, who was tortured and ultimately assassinated by a bomb for his anti-government writings. This military assassination is a re-enactment of a previous assassinations. In the novel, other types of colonization that have been noted include violence produced by strict cultural standards and ideas, such as Eugene's. The character of Eugene, who despises his own tongue, Igbo, and speaks solely in English, reflects a substantial effect of colonization on certain Africans. Only when he is enraged does he speak Igbo throughout the narrative. As a result, he pushes his family to talk entirely in English. Eugene is transformed into an emblem of colonialism characterized by severe brutality.

Critical works on Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames* includes Onwugbufor and Omagu's (2016), essay, whereby the authors using the cultural position of patriarchy that fuels the fire of female subjugation, concentrate on the image of the downtrodden female gender whose extreme susceptibility enthrones brazenness and the tenacity to flourish in the face of threats of life and hazardous conflicts. Onwugbufor and Omagu state that "most of the times, patriarchy is either harsh or subtle but in whatever case it is geared towards subjugating the

female in order to favour the male". These writers further observe that in *The Forest Dames*, "the soldiers as men and vandals occupy a double position of the oppressor and use this duality to further clamp on the rights of the women. Many of the ladies are forced to indulge in sex though unwillingly. Many are intimidated into it, while a few, willingly gave in for fear of violence or hardship, and are regarded by the people as "Greedy" or "Sabo". Such is the plight of women who experienced the war. It is therefore evident that patriarchy comes with intimidation and violence, while poverty and hardship fuel female subjugation and exploitation. But, despite the persecutions and emotional torture being suffered by the women, they are strengthened in their willpower as they come together to forge ahead. Their resolve is captured in the narrative which mirrors the strangest and most dangerous adventure by the forest dames who would rather take up residence deep in the Mkpore forest and risk being ripped apart by wild animals, than remain in the community and risk being abducted and raped by vandal soldiers who defiled both unmarried and married women with impunity. The women showed strength in the face of all odds. They proved to be heroines during hostilities who still provided for their families and communities at large. For example, the female gender in Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames* showed resilience and doggedness in the ongoing uprising. They therefore, overcame limitations with the tenacity that resulted in self-discovery.

In another paper, Kadiri (2018) made a study of "Lexico-grammatical Analysis of Ada Okere Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames*" which identifies the prevalent

linguistic tools deployed in the novel as style index for plot and theme development. The paper examines the use of lexical categories, Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short's checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories such as nouns, compound nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, registers, collocations, and their different categories. It highlights instances of code-switching of Igbo and Hausa languages. As identified: "for example, in the novel *The Forest Dames*, Hausa words are used in pages 32, 41 and 195 as illustrated, the words *Wake* refers to beans, *gariogo* (cassava flour), *kubewa*". These words are placed alongside English words as mark of creativity and a way of bringing home the themes and ideas in the plot narrative. Similarly, the essay, "Signs and Codes in AdaOkere Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames*", Joekin et al. (2020) make a linguistic study of codes and signs as guides to the meaning of the text. This is achieved using the fusion of Fredinand De Saussure's theory of signs and Roland Barthes' theory of five codes which are applied in the identification and explanation of linguistic signs used in the narrative for easy understanding of the brutal effects of war on the women and the girls. These signs and codes are carriers of meaning in literary analysis. Some of the codes used in the discourse include: the proairetic code, called the code of action; the semantic code known as the connotative code; the symbolic code, referred to as the antithetic code, and the cultural code or the referential code. The plot of the text narrates the ugly incidents leading to the war, and the level of massacre and violence during the war.

In spite of the quantum and spread of themes and criticisms on these texts, there are still rooms even for more. This paper sets out, therefore, to explore parenting and the girl-child in the two selected texts. Specifically, the paper interrogates appropriate and inappropriate parenting styles, of parents, mothers in particular, in guarding the girl child from harm and guiding them towards the future through proper parenting. Using parenting as a key word in the framework of analysis, the issues of proper upbringing and protection of the girl child takes paramount attention.

#### **Conceptual/Theoretical Framework**

This literary analysis is based on the framework of Attachment Theory, a natural social survival mechanism propagated by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth that posits a close parent-child relationship. Attachment is a learned activity and a lasting emotional and psychological bond between people in a relationship, especially, between a child and the care giver. According to this theory, "every child is born with an innate attachment behavioural system that is complementary to a caregiving behavioural system" (Vrticka, 2022). This behavioural biological function is found to enhance chances of survival in times of distress and need. This theory comes into play to explore the importance of mother- child attachment in situations of neglect, physical, sexual and emotional maltreatment being suffered by the young females in the narratives under study. This can be achieved through effective parenting.

Parenting shapes the lives of children and prepares them for a healthy and prosperous future. Childhood or youth

hood is critical and tedious, requiring concerted efforts of parents. Parenting is a multifaceted activity, geared towards safeguarding and nurturing children. More specifically, the girl-child requires close guidance and mentoring as she grows. Naturally, the mother is more responsible for close nurturing. According to Breiner et al (2016) “parents and other caregivers are essential resources for children in managing emotional arousal, coping, and managing behaviours. They serve in this role by providing positive affirmations, conveying love and respect and engendering a sense of security”. Parenting, therefore, supports the physical, emotional, social, psychological, and intellectual development of the child.

Attachment theory, which establishes a close parent-child relationship, is important in the area of social and emotional outcomes for children, particularly the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Fundamentally, the purpose of attachment is for a child to feel safe, secure, and protected. The process of attachment usually starts at infancy. Bowlby’s Evolutionary Theory of Attachment re-echoed by Natala (2022) suggest that:

Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space. Attachment does not have to be reciprocal. Attachment behavior in adults towards the child includes responding sensitively and appropriately to the child’s needs. Attachment theory provides an explanation of how the parent-child relationship emerges and influences subsequent development.

The attachment of a child with the mother or caregiver is a natural bond which needs to be sustained for the positive future of the child. Notable parenting styles are identifiable. These are indulgent or permissive, authoritative, authoritarian or uninvolved parenting. They have been categorized according to level of responsiveness, demandingness and psychological control of the child. Parenting therefore is multi-dimensional, and requires that “parents must develop both depth and breadth of knowledge, ranging from being aware of developmental milestones and norms that help in keeping children safe and healthy to understanding the role of professionals e.g. educators, childcare workers, healthcare providers, social workers” Breiner (2016). It is imperative for parents to respond to the varied needs of the child. Darling (1999) posits that “both parental responsiveness and parental demandingness are important components of good parenting.” Authoritative parenting, which balances clear, high parental demands with emotional responsiveness and recognition of child autonomy, is one of the most consistent family predictors of competence from early childhood through adolescence. What happens between parents and children matter a lot. As a complex activity, the parenting style given to a child helps to shape the life of the child and to prepare them for a happy and successful tomorrow.

#### **Parenting in Adichie’s and Agbasimelo’s Texts**

Parents, particularly mothers stay close to the children and follow up with their activities. However, not all mothers have demonstrated the capacity to take up

that duty of looking after their daughters. It requires active parenting through painstaking mode of guidance to impart positively and protect the girl child, especially in a tensed situation. The setting in Agbasimalo's text depicted a war situation filled with harassment and molestations of the female gender. Agbasimalo revealed that "*The Forest Dame* is a true life account of what happened during the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970. While war raged at the battle ground, a lot transpired at the home front", (Nwangwu, 2012). Soldiers fighting for the Nigerian side were busy ravaging the females and young girls in the villages in the guise of war. "Their favourite past time was to hunt for and abduct young females or older ones in the absence of young ladies or mere girls, in the absence of either. They had no respect for females found within the invaded areas. They would not kill them. They would rather abduct and violate them" (Agbasimalo, 2012). The vandals' nefarious activities put the female gender in great jeopardy, leaving the mothers finding critical solution to safeguarding their girls. In *The Forest Dames* "the soldiers sometimes waylaid the women returning from the distant market and dispossessed them of their goods. Every woman who passed by that way had to part with some of the items she was carrying". In particular, the fate of four young girls who are targets of the Hausa soldiers comes to the fore in the narrative. Enyeribe (2020) writes that the four teenage girls: Lele, Sofuru, Gonma and Deze, "go through horrendous and hazardous adventures in the *Mkporo* forest, strongly aided by their mothers: Phoebe, Liliana, and Dorati. The maidens made a temporary home in the

deep forest with the ever abiding risk of beholding spirits and being devoured by dangerous animals". It is in the ensuing challenges that these mothers find it necessary to support the girls with appropriate skills and discipline to escape the ravaging tactics of the soldiers in order to survive sexual molestation, rape or total abduction. It is recorded that "The soldiers usually went into the communities in a lorry as from ten in the morning and roamed about until evening looking for females to prey on, dispossessing traders of farm produce and chatting with some mature male acquaintances, some of whom disclosed the girls' hide outs" (Agbasimalo, 2012). This is the scenario in the war thorn village with women and girls as victims of raids by the vandals.

The girl Deze who is in her early teens becomes a constant target of the soldiers. This situation frightens Dora who tutors Deze on the need to stay indoors to keep out of sight of the vandals. The situation becomes very harassing as the vandals visit homes to search and take away young girls. Deze, a beautiful girl becomes a regular target. In one instance, Deze escaped Sule, a Hausa soldier with ugly tribal marks who swooped on her but was unfortunate as Deze slipped back into the house and "made straight for the small wooden window, which was ajar. Pushing it open, she dropped into the back compound from where she escaped into the surrounding yam and cassava farmland" (Agbasimalo 2012). The ugly event of the war has made Deze to have her abode in the bush around her compound. She usually stays in the bush during the day and enters the house as night comes, so as to avoid being taken away by the enemy soldiers. With this

defense strategy, “moving into the bush in the morning and returning to the house in the evening long after sunset had become a lifestyle” (Agbasimalo, 2012). This includes other incidences of invasion and swooping on the girl’s father’s house for her capture, but for her smartness and that of her mother, Dora. One day, the soldiers drive to her father’s compound in a Land rover heading purposely to their house. Being smart, Deze who had heard the sound of the vehicle and suspected that it must be the soldiers “spontaneously sprinted from the room, through the link door to the back room and then jumped over the short wall. She ran through the compound, flitting past all the other houses until she found herself once more in the bush at her usual hideout, panting” (Agbasimalo, 2012). In order to protect her daughter from constant harassment and possible capture, Dora “decided to do something decisive about her daughter’s safety” (Agbasimalo, 2012). Dora takes a bold and conscious step to ensure the security of her daughter from the ravaging hands of the soldiers. She aligns herself with an older woman, senior Phoebe.

Phoebe is a friend and mentor to Dora. Both women have taken decisive efforts to protect their girls by sending them to the *Mkporo* forest. Phoebe tells Dora about the forest where she sent her daughter Lelenwa in spite of the dangers of the forest. “The women decide to keep their children away from vandals. Dora who is alarmed initially about the evil spirits and thought of wild animals in the forest decided to join forces with Phoebe and keep Deze with other girls” (Agbasimalo, 2012). These women demonstrate positive parenting, going extra miles and taking the risk to

safeguard their children. By taking their children to the *Mkporo* forest secretly, these women are undertaken to take their fate in their own hands. They embark on nocturnal visits so as to seal their ordeal, taking all the risks, even without light, all in the efforts to keep their children safe from beasts, called Nigerian soldiers. According to Onwugbufor and Amagu (2016) “Efforts by the mothers to alleviate the adverse impact of the forest habitation are numerous, including constant visit with water and other provisions, a well-erected shackles, supply of books to Deze who is already in the secondary school before the outbreak of the war and loves reading and also share laughter with the stranded maidens”. For the sake of the girls, the business of *Mkporo* forest becomes a secret knowledge only to the concerned women.

As Deze joins Lele, Gonma and Sofuru, the four forest Dames, she feels grateful to her mother, “Deze heaved a sigh of relief and was indeed grateful to her mother for moving her further away from the indecent soldiers, even though she was now exposed and closer to the ravenous inhabitants of the forest” (Agbasimalo, 2012). The conscious efforts of the girls, especially Deze in imbibing the discipline and motivation of their mothers helped them greatly in guiding their future. Particularly, the relationship between Deze and her mother Dora saved them a lot from being prey for the soldiers. The mother and child outsmarted the soldiers who confessed that “Deze was smart and was capable of escaping at the slightest sign of danger ... Thanks to her wise mother” (Agbasimalo, 2012). Active and positive parenting needs conscious effort and

wisdom from mothers to positively and successfully nurture their girl-child and keep them out of harm's way. The text's narratives indicate that Agbasimalo's female parents Dora and Phoebe, imbibed positive parenting and conscious strategies in nurturing their girl-child. And so the girls come through the ordeal strong and confident.

The scenario of active, concerted and close parenting exhibited by Dora, and Phoebe in Agbasimalo's *The Forest Dames*, unfortunately is not felt in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, between Beatrice and her girl-child, Kambili. Major incident in the narrative is domestic violence, whereby Eugene constantly physically abuses his wife Beatrice and daughter, Kambili, and other members of his household. Kambili suffers domestic abuse coming from her father, Eugene, a situation which according to Oshindoro (2019) may be due to the parenting type of Eugene and Beatrice. He states that "a major factor in the enduring regime of abuse in the Achike family is that Papa, Mama and their children are distant, from their extended families. Representing Eugene as a pariah, with his isolationist style of parenting." Beatrice's style of parenting tends more to the uninvolved or neglected parenting, characterized by inaction and silence. Beatrice is a character "who silently accepts domestic violence because she has internalized the secondary status and suppression of women. She is a mother of two children Kambili and Jaja, and Mama puts up with all the physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by her husband Eugene who often gives his violence a religious justification" (Aswin & Antony, 2019). Beatrice does not

respond to the issues concerning her children, especially, her girl-child, Kambili. She stays mute and watches her daughter Kambili being molested. She offers no support and guidance for Kambili. She watches Eugene scold Kambili and Jaja even for merely holding Papa Nnukwu's picture. The spate of physical violence meted out on Kambili by Eugene is unprecedented, unfortunately, Beatrice does not show capacity in supporting Kambili. Owing to her inactions and unresponsiveness to her plight "Kambili has become disappointed with her father and with great effort she resents her mother for failing on protecting her from her father's attack and for making excuses for his actions" (Astrick, 2018). The situation clearly shows Beatrice as a negligent mother whose permissiveness predisposes her daughter to harm and molestation.

However, unlike Beatrice, Ifeoma, Beatrice's sister-in-law tries to bond with Beatrice in safeguarding her children from the violent clutches of Eugene, but Beatrice remains docile. She sees her ideas as unconventional and so cannot save Kambili from her father's brutality. This is because "she never has the confidence and assertiveness of Aunt Ifeoma because Mama has always been economically dependent on her husband. She accepts the position of being the other thrust upon her by patriarchy" (Aswin and Antony, 2019). Ifeoma's style of parenting is involving as those of Dora and Phoebe in Agbasimalo's text. She nurtures a thriving relationship between herself and girl-child Amaka. She is projected as one of Adichie's strong women and one whose parenting style is positive. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010)

affirm that “she encourages Obiora his son to participate in the *ima mmuo* initiation rites, even as she prompts Amaka to embark on the baptism and confirmation rites of the Catholic church...”. Ifeoma’s activeness is acknowledged by Oshindoro (2019) who writes that “rather than purely a result of formal education, Ifeoma’s wisdom and idiosyncrasies show a mix of both formal and native intelligence, with the latter most highly valued in the novel. We see her demonstrate her native intelligence” Ifeoma is bold, hardworking, strong, assertive, and economically independent.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the two books showed that the women, Dora and Phoebe in Agbasimalo’s *The Forest Dames* and Beatrice and Ifeoma in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, have demonstrated various capabilities, both positive and negative to reach beyond themselves to nurture and protect the girl-child who is vulnerable and susceptible to harm and danger both in the home and in the larger society. Parenting comes under a huge challenge in providing effective cover and guide for the girl-child. This can be overcome by positive parenting, a parenting which makes huge demands from mother as the primary care-giver, confidant and close friend to the girl-child. It is imperative for parents, particularly the mother to establish a close-child relationship with secure attachment. Mothers inevitably should encourage and support the girl-child to think and act and more importantly to respond to their individual needs. Mothers must first equip themselves by being financially independent, assertive and firm in decision and action so as to

build strong mother-child relationship and provide the needed support. Positive parenting should equally demand responsibilities from the child and offer prompt responsiveness to the needs of the child through close monitoring and friendship, as manifest by Dora and Phoebe in Agbasimalo’s text. This active mother involvement in the affairs of their girl-child, sharply contrasts with Adichie’s Beatrice’s who obviously remains detached from the plight of her girl, Kambili. Attachment between mother and girl-child helps the girl-child navigate through domestic and societal abuses, and ushers her into a protected and confident future.

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