

Setbacks in Religious Education as seen in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Djoletto's *The Strange Man*

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Abstract: Religious education has taken multidimensional ways in the contemporary Africa and sometimes threatens children's future. This paper expounds the setbacks in religious education as seen through Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Djoletto's *The Strange Man*. Remarkably, children cope with indoctrination, hypocrisy, and an inflexible life shaped by patriarchal fathers and teachers. This work is framed with postcolonialism to assess the impact of the western ideologies in the current African society. The paper concludes that education is a weapon which can be used to change the world. This calls for seriousness, carefulness, love and respect. When it is taught wrongly, it may become a destructive weapon. Furthermore, children must be allowed to make their own path; this will favour their blossoming to good citizens.

Keywords: Education, religious fanaticism, dogmatism, religious mechanisms, indoctrination.

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Introduction

The introduction of Western religion in Africa has greatly influenced the education of children in African communities. In fact, religious education has started with the European missionaries whose goal was to teach the Western precepts throughout the African continent. That is why the African writers of the mid-twentieth century invariably refer to this teaching as being implicated in colonialism as its fundamental aim was to brainwash African people and wipe away the local cultural values and languages. Successfully, African people have fallen in this trap for it is nowadays remarked that children are basically taught that all that is African is devilish. They are urged to hate and not to mingle with their fellow people who do not share the same beliefs as them. In some extent, they are taught to manipulate and build societies upon lies; what endangers the social mutual understanding and the whole continent at large.

This paper finds its roots in *The Strange Man* and *Purple Hibiscus*, respectively by the prolific writers, Amu Djoletto and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who spared no effort to draw the audience's attention on this social contention. They have manifestly depicted the ideology of cultural indoctrination and how some parents and school educators represent the waves of fundamentalism that corrupt faith in the society, what has especially been the mission carried out by the settlers who invaded the continent with an unknown agenda and for their interest.

Logically, people have been brainwashed and religion, education and other western elements have been tailored to pattern African traditions and practice as diabolic and evil. In this regard, characters like Mr Lomo and Eugene Achike are part of the "millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkys" (Césaire 7). Consequently, this ideology is taken up; children are inculcated that the indigenous cultural values are devoid of civilisation, diabolic and they must not, in any circumstance, have anything to do with anybody who practises the African values, though being the latter their relative. More importantly, they are unconsciously taught religious hypocrisy and selfishness; what eventually leads some children and people to the discovery of that religious machinery.

The paper is decrypted into three axes: Christian religious mechanisms for rethinking a new type of African; Christian religion as an obstruction to progress; and the outcomes of institutional hypocrisy vs. teaching moral values.

1 Christian Religious Mechanisms for Rethinking a New Type of African.

The psychological and ideological mechanism set up by the missionaries has mainly been brainwashing through indoctrination and dogmatism. The first African people who have come into contact with these missionaries have learnt these manners and taken up the mission of teaching children the western

precepts. For better understanding, it is necessary to clarify the key terms which are: indoctrination and dogmatism.

Indeed, the word indoctrination stems from the verb indoctrinate which is “to force somebody to accept a particular belief or set of beliefs and not allow them to consider any others” according to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (765). As for Petrus (84), “The concept of indoctrination is often used in a negative sense to refer generally to a process whereby an authority structure, whether an individual, group, government, state or agency, seeks to impose a set of beliefs on individuals or groups in such a manner that the questioning of those beliefs is not tolerated.” It is guessable from this definition, especially from the use of the expression ‘authority structure’, that indoctrination implicates using force or power to make oneself convincing. Petrus puts it clear when he asserts that “indoctrination typically involves an entity, group, individual or institution that assumes the authority to impose its view on those it seeks to indoctrinate” (Petrus 84). Moreover, “By virtue of its authoritative status, whether real or imagined, the indoctrinator persuades the indoctrinated to accept what they are told uncritically” (Petrus 84-85). As a corollary, indoctrination can be viewed as the process through which no matter what means is used to make people adhere to a belief or a set of beliefs without allowing them to criticise the rules and the dogmas.

As for dogmatism, it is defined as “behaviour and attitudes that are dogmatic” in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (453). The same dictionary goes further clarifying that the word ‘dogmatic’ is “being certain that your beliefs are right and that others should accept them without paying attention to evidence or opinions” (453). Obviously, indoctrination and dogmatism are interlinked. One is the process through which people are made to believe in a given ideology, while the other is the doctrine of positiveness considering that one’s ideology is the right one regardless evidence and people’s opinions. In such situations, people, especially children, who are being indoctrinated are not allowed to think by themselves. They are not permitted to make their own paths either. In this regard, it appears that Igwe is right when he says:

Africans go through religious indoctrination from cradle to grave. African are not allowed by family, society and the state to think, reason or live outside the religious box. In Africa, religion is by force, not by choice. Religion is by compulsion and not according to one’s conscience. Africans are brought up to believe that there is NO alternative to religion, when in fact there is. In Africa, either you are religious or you are nobody (Igwe 2).

The aforementioned quotation is a keen remark, from Igwe, which typically represents the African society. Most of the time, it is imposed to children to summarise and recite what has been said in church. He literally points this fact out when he declares that “At a very early and impressionable age, infants are taught to recite meaningless syllables called prayers” (Igwe, 2). This undoubtedly fingers teachers and parents like Mr Lomo and Eugene Achike in the corpus under study. As a proof, one of the rules set by Mr Lomo is that “every boy in [his] house shall go to church on Sunday, rain or shine, and, after the church service, be able to give a reliable summary of the sermon if called upon to do so” (Djoleto 96). Furthermore, he has ordered Mensa to say ‘yes, sir’ or ‘no, sir’, whenever he is put any question by him. He does not have any right to argue. Addressing the boy, he states: “‘Aha!

There you are!’ cried Mr Lomo. ‘You’ve already broken the eighth rule. You want to argue. You want to argue, don’t you? I’ve finished with you. All you have to say is ‘yes, sir’ and go away. Go away at once” (Djoleto 97). This is purely indoctrination because he has additionally stated that a boy who dares “to report to anyone whether it be his parents or just anybody at all that he’s not being properly fed in this house” (Djoleto 96) is “learning to tell-tale which cannot be tolerated in [the] house” (Djoleto 96). Indirectly, he insinuates that he could use power to force the children to tell tolerated stories or tales. That is the reason why he warns Mensa on his outspokenness when he declares: “I can see you’re determined to make firm friends with the cane” (Djoleto 95) starting by tell him not to ask any question when he is talking. This phenomenon gangrenes many African households nowadays and eats up the evolvement of the society. People are not let to think by themselves so as to make scientific contribution which instils development. In fact, children are compelled to shyness in the young age, what prevents them from blossoming so as to make decisions by themselves. This shyness they develop is just to please their parents or teachers. Corrupted by their religious extremism, such parents and teachers do not realise the children are just docile to fulfil their expectations:

“They are always so quiet,” he said, turning to Papa. “So quiet.”

“They are not like those loud children people are raising these days, with no home training and no fear of God,” Papa said, and I was certain that it was pride that stretched Papa’s lips and lightened his eyes (Adichie 57-58).

One can deduce from this passage that Papa, Eugene Achike, is proud that his children are quiet; that shows they are well coached at home and so, they fear God. The question is: what is the relationship between quietness and fearing God? As a product of western precepts, Papa wants children who fear God. As a result, he trains his children following this pattern. However, the problem lies in the way the children are trained at home so as to fear God. In fact, Papa is a multifaceted catholic extremist. At home, he is strict and violent with his family. He forces the western precepts on his offsprings, not allowing them to question anything because, to question anything, one must be free to speak one’s mind. That is not the case in Eugene’s household. When his father, Papa-Nnukwu passed away, Jaja, his son, said something that he does not tolerate:

“Papa-Nnukwu is dead,” Jaja said.

Mama’s hand flew to her chest. “*Chi m!* When?”

“This morning,” Jaja said. “He died in his sleep.”

Mama wrapped her hands around herself. “*Ewu!* so he has gone to rest, *ewu!*.”

“He has gone to face judgement,” Papa said, putting his glass of water down. “Ifeoma did not have the sense to call a priest before he died. He might have converted before he died.”

“Maybe he didn’t want to convert,” Jaja said.

“May he rest in peace,” Mama said quickly.

Papa looked at Jaja. “What did you say? Is that what you have learned from living in the same house as a heathen?

“No,” Jaja said. (Adichie 190-191)

From this familial discussion, it is obvious that Eugene takes profit from his father's death to focus his children attention on Christianity, but what is interesting is when he verbally represses Jaja due to his statement. Clearly, he was not expecting his son to say such a thing regarding how he educates his children. But, following the time they have spent in their aunt's abode, the children have discovered how free at speaking their cousins are. What is weird is that the outspokenness of the cousins does not prevent them from believing in God. From that point of view, the children have started doubting what is told to them at home. Jaja's stating “maybe he didn't want to convert” is a step to start challenging his father intolerable belief. As if he has not heard what his son has just said, he asks what he has said using authoritative tone: “What did you say? Is that what you have learned from living in the same house as a heathen?” (Adichie 191). From his questions, one can guess he is intolerable to what Jaja has said. He has felt that his indoctrinating them is threatened.

Anyway, to reach his goal, Eugene presents anything that is not related to Catholicism as a sin or at least, he makes his children abhor those who are not catholic practitioners. Commenting this idea, Mmahi and Ojo (37) declare that “In a situation whereby the messages and comments of revered leaders of a particular religious group depict abhorrence of the dogma and practices of other religious groups, prejudice is ingrained in the minds of those under their tutelage.” Then, Kambili and her brother, Jaja, being under the tutelage of their father, have been conditioned to believe that their grandfather is a pagan because the latter still follows the African wisdom's ways:

“I sleep in the same room as my grandfather. He is a heathen,” I blurted out.

He turned to me briefly, and before he looked away, I wonder whether the light in his eyes was amusement. “Why do you say that?”

“It is a sin.”

“Why is it a sin?”

I stared at him. I felt that he had missed a line in his script. “I don't know.”

“Your father told you.” (Adichie 174).

This conversation between Kambili and Father Amadi, a native priest in Nsukka, reveals that she does not know why it is a sin to her to stay in the same room as her grandfather. She has just been told he is a pagan and it is a sin to stay with a pagan. Father Amadi's statement “Your father told you” (Adichie 174) confirms that Eugene Achike, her father, has told her and she has accepted without seeking to know the reasons since the peculiarity of indoctrination is to oblige somebody to adhere a set of beliefs without questioning. Moreover, “The disposition of members of a religious group towards other religious groups is traceable to the manner in which the leaders and teachers indoctrinate them” (Mmahi and Ojo 37). With her brother, they are wrought, not to argue and to criticise. This conditioned way to assert without being able to justify one's opinion is called dogmatism and being dogmatised and dogmatic compromise children future.

To reach their goal which is to mould the African so as to have a new man who fits for their purposes, some parents and teachers have gone to the extent of shaping their children and

students to think that African languages are uncivilised. In this slipstream, Adichie portrays Eugene as conditioned to reject everything associated to Africanity. For him, westerners' deeds and language are the flawless paths to follow. He desires whiteness and befriends with Father Benedict, a western missionary, through whom he sees destiny. As a strict Catholic believer, Eugene prefers that Igbo not be spoken and sung in church and in his household. He has particularly developed a disgust to his homeland language. The writer has gone further presenting a case in which Eugene appears to be sanctimonious to me; what is an exhibition of his irrationality. At an occasion, Father Amadi has paid a visit from another parish to say Mass. During his sermon, he has broken into Igbo song, and “[Eugene] looked side ways to see if [his children] were singing and nodded approvingly when he saw [their] sealed lips.” (Adichie 28). Afterwards, he asserts: “That young priest, singing in the sermon like a Godless leader of one of these Pentecostal churches that spring up everywhere like mushrooms. People like him bring trouble to church. We must remember to pray for him” (Adichie 29). For him, worshipping God calls for seriousness every time and everywhere. Meanwhile, I cannot understand how singing in a native language during a sermon distract people. Yet, it is justifiable since people in the parish are accustomed to Father Benedict who “had changed things in the parish, such as insisting that the Credo and kyrie be recited only in Latin; Igbo was not accepted. Also, hand clapping was to be kept at a minimum, lest the solemnity of Mass be compromised” (Adichie, 4). This shows Father Benedict is on a mission which is to brainwash people through indoctrination and dogmatism. Obviously, he has succeeded since “The congregation drew in a collective breath, some sighed, some had their mouths in a big O” (Adichie 28) when Father Amadi has started singing in Igbo language during his sermon. Having their mouths in O proves that they find it abnormal to worship God in Igbo.

As a corollary, it appears that some African people have gone through a psychological system set up by the western missionaries so as to indoctrinate them and make them dogmatic. Eventually, they are made to believe there is no destiny in Africanity. In most African households nowadays, children are not allowed to choose and follow their own paths. They are not independent religiously. Early in the young age, they are compelled to focus on renouncing what characterises them as Africans and furthermore hate it; they grow up and become machinelike which does what the controller wants. They can neither think by themselves nor decide for themselves. They are forced to accept and abide by what is told them. They become robots to make it simple.

2 Christian Religion as an Obstruction to Progress.

The starting sentence of *Purple Hibiscus* which is “Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion...” (Adichie 3) in reference to Achebe's book is the best way to describe and show the cultural clash when Africa has been invaded. As one could expect, his father's reaction to this situation by “[flinging] his heavy missal across the room” (Adichie 3) which “[has broken] the figurines on the étagère” (Adichie 3) depicts that the latter is violent; what is the fruit of his overattachment to the western precepts regarding his role in the corpus. Simply put, I can assert that he is fanatic and this does not allow him to be reasonable. Eugene's fanaticism is purely religious accompanied by hypocrisy in the case at issue and it is exactly what gangrenes the African society nowadays. So, this section

addresses religious fanaticism and hypocrisy as the direct upshots of indoctrination and dogmatism which appear to be the erected walls that undermine the evolvement of the African continent. Actually, the indoctrinated and dogmatised people ignorantly develop overtime fanaticism and hypocrisy. These two phenomena bring about blindness and intolerance to others' views and the development of a society gangrened by untruth. This situations paralyse progress as people cannot agree on the same points so as to contribute to the development of the communities, the countries and the continent at large.

For further understanding, the online *Cambridge Dictionary* defines fanaticism as: "extreme beliefs that may lead to unreasonable or violent behaviour" (Cambridge University Press 2025). For, Ede (305), fanaticism "can be referred to as over enthusiasm." He specifies that "Those who are over-enthusiastic about their religious beliefs and practices to the detriment of others are therefore religious fanatics" (Ede 305). In this regard, Omomia (60) states: "a fanatic can be described as an over-enthusiastic person." He goes beyond Ede's thought specifying that "Those who are 'over-enthusiastic' about their religious belief/position are mostly blinded to the views of others" (Omomia 60). I can deduce from this explanation that fanaticism goes along with religion. Simply put, Balogun (1988) rightfully presents "Religious fanaticism as violent, and unreasoning religious enthusiasm." In clear terms, this insinuates that fanaticism is associated with violence and irrationality. As a result, I can assert that fanaticism breeds intolerance which in turn threatens peace because it gives way to religious conflicts. Edet Sampson (2015) rightly claims that "fanaticism is one of the causes of backwardness of a nation in terms of achieving her greater goals of development." The development of a nation starts with the education that children receive, being it at home or at school. There is undoubtedly a problem when children are educated brutally. The cases of Kambili, Jaja and Mensa are tangible examples which fictionally expose the African social realities nowadays.

Mr Lomo and Eugene Achike are the kind of parents, teachers and revered leaders that come across fanaticism and somehow hypocrisy. To their mind, educate a child so that s/he becomes a good citizen is to make him/her "as docile as possible" using no matter what means. They are parochial religious leaders who carry their educational mission hypocritically; the kind of leaders that Old Anang, Mensa's father, considers as "malicious and dangerous. Some of them by nature are heartless and wicked" (Djoleto 60). Seeking swift result, they prevent children from flourishing and developing the ability to be situations' solutions seekers. This means such a system produces stagnated citizens who are 'moron' and useless for the development of their nation. The training they receive does not enable them to be independent for their critical thinking is suppressed, and their cultural identity as well. Giving details on this aspect, Djoleto clarifies that this kind of religious coaches

... are impatient too. The only effective method they can use in training a child is the use of brute force. They get quick results but the child becomes docile, hypocritical and permanently cynical. Some of them think a good pupil is the one who is good at sweeping the teacher's house, washing the laundry clothes, fetching firewood, chopping firewood, running errands, keeping discipline in the classroom and managing with sixty per cent average in the terminal examinations. Such a pupil is nonpareil and is

likely to get on in life. What I don't like about this kind of training, though I'm a farmer without any great ideas, is that such a pupil is trained to be an abject, cringing servant. To my mind, he leaves school uneducated because he can't be independent" (Djoleto 60-61).

To analyse this quotation, let me put aside the hypocritical aspect that the children develop due to the way they are educated. Considering the two first sentences of this excerpt, one can undoubtedly figure out that some parents and teachers, in the name of religion, use violence to make themselves convincible. As a result, the victims develop docility and cynicism. The question is 'how can someone who have developed docility and cynicism as an alternative to please his/her master or parent blossom and develop the capacity of seeking solutions so as to progress in life?' To my mind, it is impossible since, in the early age, the person is shaped and obliged to accept, not to question; yet it is in questioning that one thinks and finds solutions through an intellectual inquisitiveness. Moreover, how can a person who has been trained to be a quitter, a coward, a miserable and an inferior become a decision maker? There lies a problem.

Obviously, religious overzealousness is a parasite which poisons the African community and specifically destroys children through their educational mentors. Some of these mentors get vexed when they discover that their tutorial children fail to live up their impossible scheduled and traced lane. In such a situation, the only alternative used to solve the matter is violence:

"Get up! Get away from that painting!"

I lay there, did nothing.

"Get up!" Papa said again. I still did not move. He started to kick me. The meta buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones. Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hellfire. The kicking increased in tempo, and I thought of Amaka's music, her culturally conscious music that sometimes started off with a calm saxophone and then whirled into lusty singing. I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of the painting; they were soft, feathery. They still had the metallic smell of Amaka's paint palette. The stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal landed on open skin on my side, my back, my legs. Kicking. Kicking. Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the meta buckle seemed too heavy. Because I could hear a swoosh in the air. A low voice was saying, "Please, *biko*, please." More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet (Adichie 210-211).

This extract exposes how violent some parents are in the name of religion. When they are overshadowed by their extremism in religion, they become irrational. What has led to this barbarism toward the protagonist here is a painting of her late grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu. According to the instruction and educational guidance received from her father, she is not expected to have the painting of a 'heathen' in his house. She has failed to live up her father's standards. As a fanatic, her father has used cruelty to make himself clear. However, the question is to know whether the child can understand anything in those barbaric manners since her little experience in Nsukka with Auntie Ifeoma's family and Father

Amadi has aroused some questions in her mind. Following this, with her brother, they have started realising their father's wrongness about what religion is. This wrongness and the starting of their awareness associated with their father's barbarism can only bring about hypocrisy development in the children; something they have always been unaware of though their father practises it.

Hypocrisy is defined by *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as (739) "behaviour in which somebody pretends to have moral standards or opinions they do not actually have." According to the online *Merriam-Webster* (2025), it is "a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not: behavior that contradicts what one claims to believe or feel." In this regard, I can openly state that hypocrisy is associated with pretension. When one's deeds and behaviour do not reflect what one ideologically defends, it is hypocrisy. Basing on the events in the corpus under study, I can associate hypocrisy to religion and consequently talk of religious hypocrisy which is a clash between one's inner convictions and one's outward expression of faith. In clear terms, religious hypocrisy is to publicly exhibit religious beliefs and values whereas privately acting in contradiction to them. This fingers people who claim to be religiously rigorous and virtuous while secretly offending the religious professed principles.

Both Adichie and Djoletto voicing the happenings around in Nigeria and Ghana have not only presented Eugene Achike and Mr Lomo as the products representing the religious hypocrisy. They have also distinctively exhibited the multifaceted hypocritical manners one can encounter in Christianity. Christianity as largely practised in Sub-Saharan African countries should show good practices through its lieutenants who are revered teachers and priests. Following this, children would see in them role models through which they could make some paths. Unfortunately, when revered teachers like Mr Lomo appear to practise what they prohibit children to do, clearly, there is double standards. In this regard, the whole represented institution is considered as instrumentalised to protect the interests of some individuals. For instance, it is unbelievable and confusing for the protagonist, Mensa, and his mates to figure out that their master, as a catholic church lieutenant, enjoys the fish they have stolen and actually refuses to recognise that it is a theft:

Antwi entered the room and went close to Mr Lomo. As he watched the fish his mouth watered and, for the first time, he was sorry he was not the son of Mr and Mrs Lomo. He told his master, 'I've come to make a confession to you, sir.'

'Out with it, my dear boy!' Mr Lomo said affectionally. He had never called any of those boys my dear before, but, for the moment, the unusual meal has altered his normal disposition.

'I want to tell you, sir, that the fish we brought home this afternoon was stolen.'

'How?'

'We got them from the net without asking the fishermen, sir.'

'Ah, my dear boy, that's not stealing at all. It's the practice at the beach. Any other thieving is forbidden and an honest confession welcome. I'm thoroughly enjoying your fish. It's not a stolen item. You may go and tell your friends they need not worry!' (Djoletto 129).

It is unbelievable to hear in the same house and from the same mouth which has been used years back to tell Mensa that "no boy shall steal in this house or take anything into his possession or his own use without first asking Aunty Adzoa or [himself]" (Djoletto 95), that stealing some fish at the beach is not a kind of thieving. It is purely hypocritical to read and hear this from a revered teacher. Mr Lomo has even gone beyond cherishing the boy, calling him 'my dear boy', what is unusual to him. This unveils the double face of religion. When it comes to interests, it loses its values; that is expressed through its lieutenants. This confuses children and makes them the cheaters of tomorrow.

Moreover, education, as a weapon which can be used to change the world is both simpler and complex and children always follow the steps according to which they are trained. Obviously, Kambili has performed the action in the extract below to please her hypocritical father. Yet, surprisingly, she has been punished:

The Igwe's palace was a few minutes from our house. We had visited him once, some years back. We never visited him again, though, because Papa said that although the Igwe had converted, he still let his pagan relatives carry out sacrifices in his palace. Mama had greeted him the traditional way that women were supposed to, bending low and offering him her back so that he would pat it with his fan made of the soft, straw-colored tail of an animal. Back home that night, Papa told Mama that it was sinful. You did not bow to another human being. It was ungodly tradition, bowing to an Igwe. So, a few days later, when we went to see the bishop at Awka, I did not kneel to kiss his ring. I wanted to make Papa proud. But Papa yanked my ear in the car and said I did not have the spirit of discernment; the bishop was a man of God; the Igwe was merely a traditional ruler (Adichie 93-94).

This quotation unveils the hypocritical training Eugene has received and is transmitting it to his children. The direct outcome of the situation in the abovementioned extract is confusion in children's mind. Obviously, Eugene means his daughter should respect the elders of church and disrespect those who do not belong to her religion, especially those who still have hands in what determine African identity. It is a lie that has been inculcated to Eugene during his school days, to disregard his homeland tradition, teaching people to fear themselves, to lie so as to survive as it is what they have always done. From this, one is not stunned when Mr Lomo thinks that:

A good educational system should, no doubt, make a boy as docile as possible. It should make a boy a good diplomatist who would say he was not aware of something, not because he was not really aware of it, but because he could not be proved to be aware of it; he must be the kind of boy who should specialize in manufacturing white lies as a means of profiting from life (Djoletto 93).

As a product of the missionary school, it is clear that Mr Lomo has taken up his masters' job which is to render African children docile and hypocritical as he is. Saying the boy should be trained to manufacture lying so as to survive means that he recognises that a lie is a lie. However, hypocrisy would not allow him to be reasonable. He has even openly stated that "the good life demanded lying" (Djoletto 93) and that "Mensa's natural honesty was not to be tolerated; it was not to be fostered; he needed training to get rid of it otherwise, in future, he would embarrass

organized society and organized must survive not on occasional honesty but on endemic subtle lying” (Djoletto 93-94). This is what they call ‘civilised society’ which does not need trouble when itself is troublesome. Children are born, naturally, honest and would be good citizens whose outspokenness can help wipe away the wrongness which gangrenes their society, but are compel to docility through a hypocritical settled system. They do not educate children to be free and self-reliant. That would not favour the *organised society* to their mind. As a result, children learn to do evils without being caught. That is the way the society is organised and remains.

Concludingly, one would follow Old Anang’s steps to assert that some revered leaders

are malicious and dangerous. They don’t want anybody to progress in life beyond their own status because they think their profession is not as rewarding to them as they deserve. If they are down, everybody must be down. They therefore train their pupils to make sure they get stuck somewhere, presumably below their level, or, at best, at their level (Djoletto 60).

Basing on this slipstream and considering that these revered leaders are the lieutenants of Christian religion and trained by this institution, one would not hesitate to draw the conclusion that it is the institution that constitutes a hindrance to progress in the African societies. Obviously, Edet Sampson (2015) is right when he asserts that “One of the major hindrances to achieving unprecedented transformation in a fast-moving world is the rise and influence of religious fanaticism in the society, especially in nations with a rapidly developing economy.” Set in Nigeria and Ghana, regarded as developing countries, the corpus under study vividly exhibits the daily realities which is common to most African countries. Here and there, revered leaders like Eugene Achike and Mr Lomo prevent children from blossoming to honest citizens so as to be profitable to their communities. They suppress their critical thinking and their cultural identity, leaving them with shyness. The latter openly work for the stagnation of the African communities through the education they administer to children.

3 The Outcomes of Institutional Hypocrisy vs. Teaching Moral Values

As stated in the previous axe, fanaticism and hypocrisy are two phenomena that bring about blindness and intolerance to others’ views and the development of a society gangrened by untruth. These two factors represent an impediment in the process of children’s education. In fact, when I talk of institutional hypocrisy, this is expressed through the figures representing the institution which is Christian religion. What often happens is that these lieutenants of the institution act in contradiction with what is professed in their religion. When a system holds some ethical beliefs that clash with the actions and the deeds of its representatives, there are hypocrisy and moral contradictions. This situation leads to confusion in the minds of the children under the tutorial of such revered tutors. One must confess that children are human beings after all. They see, they listen, they understand, they judge, and they know the happenings around, here and there. Aside all this, some of them have wise parents, who, though uneducated, tutor their children in the wiser way that they eventually learn to do evil without being caught at school, but never forget about the good and pure values they have received from their progenitors. At the end of the day, they become upright, self-reliant people and

good citizens who work for the development of their countries. They forge their own paths of life. Still in the same wake, some children come across serious and wise religious leaders who open their eyes on what religion and spirituality really are. In any of the mentioned cases, children discover and know the religious multifaceted practices. The problem is that at the discovery of the lies and the fallible system which has been painted to them as infallible, they might become rebels regarding the brutal, and the hypocritical way they have been trained to live up to the prescribed principles. That is the motive behind my saying that it is unfair and purely hypocritical not to let children know what is truthful around them as religious practices. Children like Kambili, Jaja, and Mensa are bullied; what does not favour their blossoming under their religious leaders.

The point in this axe is to contrast two viewpoints related to religion to determine how children should be religiously educated and in agreement with my position here, I think one must be thankful to parents and religious leaders who infuse in children that an identity does not change, and people must avoid teaching children to imitate western ways of doing that suppress the African aspects which actually determine one’s identity. I am talking about parents and religious leaders like Old Anang in *The Strange Man* and Father Amadi with Auntie Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*, who profess that any good education needs speaking freely and preserving the homeland cultural values. They are diametrically opposite to what Eugene Achike and Mr Lomo represent. They think a child has to take into account his homeland cultural values and it is his right to be independent while speaking and must be curious and question authorities. My point is that this develops one’s critical thinking and that is why during their promenade, Father Amadi has urged Kambili:

“You haven’t asked me a single question,” [...].

“I don’t know what to ask.”

“You should have learned the art of questioning from Amaka. Why does the tree’s shoot go up and the root down? Why is there a sky? What is life? Just why?” (Adichie 179).

This conversation proves that the girl is shy, and that is the handmaking of her fanatic, hypocritical, and violent father, but Father Amadi, a native priest is urging her to get rid of that timidity. She must learn to speak her mind. From this angle, she would grow up to a good person for herself and profitable for her country. Undoubtedly, Old Anang, the protagonist, Mensa’s father is right to raise him in such a way that the boy embraces what is good for life in both his homeland cultural practices and the western ways. The old man is an intelligent village man who believes in educating offsprings in such a way that they become, not religious fanatics and parochial members of the community, but they have a free broadminded view of life and consequently become good citizens with an active conscience. Though he has not had an education, he knows that “convention and conformity are the foundation of decadence” (Djoletto 62). So, “[he wants his] children to be free, bold, self-reliant and capable of changing the phase of that portion of the earth where they live” (Djoletto 61). To achieve his goal, he has managed to send Mensa to missionary school, but educate him so that the boy does not become bound to the white precepts taught by the hypocrites. He avoids the boy become religiously fanatic. At an occasion, he has said:

Speak your mind freely; but if you think there are too many people around who will destroy you because don't or can't understand you, translate your ideas into that harmless personal way of life that makes for peace, hope and light in your dark corner (Djoleto 156-157).

In addition to these precious words from his father, his mother has put him before his own life's challenges, making him understand that he is a man at another occasion:

'Don't talk like a child! You're fourteen now and must begin to think like a man. Your father has told you enough. Think about what he's said to you and make your own decisions. You've got to face life and feel satisfied you've not treated it crookedly. I can't tell you don't do this or that. I have to leave you to yourself. Think before you act. Still, you can never be too sure!' (Djoleto 161).

These pure values and precious pieces of advice are meant for a boy of fourteen years old, who is referred to as a man. He is expected to make his own decisions, probably fail at some occasions, and yet find his way in life. Obviously, none of the fanatic and hypocritical figures of Christian religion would advise a child, telling him/her such wise words. Compared to Kambili, the difference is unquestionable. She is fifteen and she knows nothing regarding making her own decisions. She is not even urged to do so. She cannot do anything by herself. She is the shadow of her father. While at fourteen, someone is regarded as a man and must make his own life's decisions, at fifteen, she stipulates: "I had never thought about university, where I would go or what I would study. When the time came, Papa would decide" (Adichie 130). This unambiguously proves that there is a problem with her educational process. With her brother, Jaja, they are not allowed any space of freedom. They are not trained to think by themselves. When they come across their age mates who speak their minds freely and are even allowed to do so, they are overwhelmed, wondering whether they could do so. They could not believe how free at speaking their minds their cousins are when they visited their aunt at Nsukka. Aside this, they have discovered that their cousins know a lot about Christianity and their homeland culture.

About speaking one's mind, the narrator has longed for the freedom prevailing in Nsukka: "[...] I was just observing a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished" (Adichie 120) she has said. This entails that they are in prison under the roof of their violent and fanatic father. By the way, Auntie Ifeoma, Eugene's sister, is a lecturer at Nsukka. Unlike her brother who incarnates all I have talked about in the previous axes, she allows her children a great deal of freedom, in contrast to the tight rules Eugene maintains. Respectful of cultural tradition but not bound to it, and educated in Western thought forms, Ifeoma represents the religious option in which everyone is free. She incarnates a world where all people, regardless their religion are allowed to have a voice. The way she raises her children is diametrically opposed to the way Eugene raises his. Eugene raises his children on the principle of a strict religion and fear. They are able to achieve only what Eugene wants them to achieve, and then they only achieve because they are afraid of the consequences of failure. Kambili and Jaja do not nurse any ambitions of their own, but are simply being made into machine. On the other hand, Ifeoma is a parent who is concerned not with forcing her viewpoints onto others but instead with teaching others to become actively engaged in forging their own viewpoints. Though she is sceptic of traditional religion, she has let

her son, Obiora be initiated into the Igbo spirit world by taking part to *ima mmuo* rituals. That is why with their experience in Nsukka, Eugene's children have started changing.

At the discovery of how it feels to be free and independent when children have been bullied all their life, they can turn into uncontrollable children. This can create rebellious children because they seek to revenge for all they have lost. I am sure this is psychological and I bet that is why Jaja has started getting out of the hands of his father following their return from Nsukka. Aside refusing to go for communion which has called for his father throwing him missal as I have mention in the previous axe, that evening, he has left the dining table before his parents and before his father saying the after meals' prayer; an attitude he has never had before. "[...] he was [...] doing what we never did: he was leaving the table before Papa had said the prayer after meals" (Adichie 14) the protagonist sates. This is a defiant act from the boy because he has discovered at Nsukka that they have been overshadowed by their father religious overzealousness for nothing and that pains him. Thinking of how the whole situation has started, the narrator has ended up confessing:

Nsukka started it all; Auntie Ifeoma's little garden next to the verandah of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence. Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Auntie Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom [...]. A freedom to be, to do (Adichie 16).

I have preferred using 'confessing', because not only does her saying justify my point, but it also unveils that they have all their life been imprisoned and their education empoisoned by their father's dogmatism, indoctrination, fanaticism, and hypocrisy. The last sentence of the extract shows that they have never had a free life under the roof of their father. Furthermore, as I am concerned, the protagonist is in support of her brother defying their father. In this regard, I think children need to be educated in such a way that they feel free to live and to do. They must be allowed a space of freedom. From this angle, they blossom, and develop their own capacities of dealing with challenges that might come their life way. They grow up to people shaping themselves lives. They are responsible, self-reliant, and bold. That is why I value and praise parents like Old Anang and his wife. Their precious pieces of advice and the pure values they have transmitted to Mensa are what have shaped the latter's life later. Though, he has stayed with one lieutenant of the hypocritical institution, who did everything possible in his best to wipe away the values from him, he has never lost them. Eventually, he has grown up with a spirit of discernment and stands out for his integrity, noble attitudes and blunt opinions. No one influences or makes decisions for him. He forges his life in his own way. He is respected in his old days. This is what must stand as a way of educating children, being the education religious or not.

Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to recall that this paper has explored the setbacks in religious education in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Djoleto's *The Strange Man*. My point is that education is, in fact, the key to self-reliance, boldness, and the sense of responsibility. A good educated person is as free as a bird and I can assert that a good education contributes to children's psychological health. It takes carefulness, respect and love to educate children, especially religiously because religious education

is delicate. In this regard, I think parents, religious educators or revered leaders must learn how to educate children so as to avoid making them religiously overzealous or fanatic. Referring to the corpus under study, religious intolerance, overzealousness, hypocrisy, and violence for the sake of religion are factors that confuse and stagnate children to critical thinking people. Furthermore, these practices clash with the moral values professed by religious agents. I must confess that when children are religiously dogmatised, and indoctrinated, they would become fanatic, hypocritical, and cynic. My urge in this regard is that parents, religious educators or revered leaders must allow children a great deal of freedom to prepare them for the choice of the religious life they aspire to live. Religion, especially the imported must not be by force. In the educational process, forcing one's opinions on children does not prepare them to forge their own opinions and consequently, does not allow them to develop their critical thinking. In my opinion, no religion is to be imposed to children. It is better they are initiated to their homeland ways and the imported precepts; from this angle they would choose what aspects seem better to make life better for them. So doing, they embrace what is good for life in both their homeland cultural practices and the western ways.

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