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Research Article



(Re)Examining Womanism in Phoebe Jatau's *The Hound*

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Abstract

Over the years, there has been a proliferation of writing by women authors in Northern Nigeria, central to their concern, is negotiating between what culture is and is not, especially as it relates to the women folks. With literature's overwhelming role, in its stance as the mirror of the society, is the forceps with which one can gather the customs, believes, thoughts and value systems of a people, thus; learning about how their culture(s), could make or mar them. This explains why the Northern Nigerian woman as a prototype of the African woman has her role(s)

defined by history, religion and cultural practices. In light of the foregoing, this paper finds that, this phenomenon called culture (in all its social forms, material traits of a racial, religious or social group) with its cancerous fangs on the livelihood of the average African woman, has today been reconfigured by the Womanist strand of feminism to the extent its impact are both felt and visible. Thus; this paper unknots the nitty-gritties of Africans perception of womanhood by the males and how the woman also sees herself and/or expects to be seen with particular focus on Phoebe Jatau's *The Hound*. By this, it shows that contemporary female writers in Northern Nigeria and Africa at large have both re-evaluated themselves and are akin to the significance of their place, thus; crushing the patriarchal hold of their individual societies on them, and in the long run, assuaging their worth as less than humans.

Keywords: Culture, Feminism, Womanism, Patriarchy, Oppressions, Determination, Ethics of survival, Aesthetic of living, Gender role

Introduction

This paper examines the northern Nigerian woman and how her culture permeates and informs her personality, with a huge chunk of control over her intellect in conformity to the drivers of culture and religion as key players. From the above submission, the argument of the famous Kenyan writer and critic Ngugi Wa thiongo (1972:xv) becomes focal, "Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society". This suggests that, the art of writing, has over the years been dosed with capturing realities that portray the connectedness between the writer and the influence(s) of his society, culture, religion and even economic background. In tandem with the progress of the study, the feminist criticism, particularly the womanist strand and its modus operandi are adopted to interrogate Phoebe Jatau's *The Hound*. This is done by undertaking the role of exposing the place and viability of culture and religion on especially female writers from Northern Nigeria and how these women attempt to stand out by negotiating between them and their male counterparts. Pointedly, women's writings are potent in exposing, their realities, yearnings, plights and sensibilities, whether historical, religious and cultural heritage(s) which largely define their role and existence. Given the above view in mind, Phoebe Jatau's, fiction stands phenomenal to this study, by its delineation of the influences and experiences of the Northern Nigerian female writer. Hence, the deployment, of the womanist strand of feminism, to clinch arguments in the text under consideration.

Perspectives to Womanism

The concept of Womanism has its emergence in the inadequacies and limitations of the mainstream feminism. The term womanism as put forward by Alice Walker (1983) and Ogunyemi (2003) re-echoes the African feminist thought by highlighting the oppressive plight of African women. Interestingly, both ideologies (womanism and African feminism) are complementary in their approach. For although womanism is focused on the universal survival

of both males and females, African feminism emphasises female liberty from hegemonic repressive male rule and cooperation. Thus, providing an avenue which fosters a stronger relationship between black men and women. Responsively, womanism, clings to the interest of black women in their quest for liberation, while binding and uniting the survival and accommodation of men, women and children. And though it is accepted as the black woman's intellectual framework that helps articulate her standpoint on self, community and society, its centrality is hinged on family, motherhood and mutual co-existence. Having described womanism as an ideology that is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire humanity (male and female), its central concern aligns with other women centred movements that stand out to actualize the black woman's desire for political, social and economic relevance, in the United States of America, Africa and anywhere the concept is held up high.

Womanism, according to Kolawole is the whole of feminine self-expression, self-recovery, and self-assertion in supportive cultural contexts. In light of the aforementioned, this. She continues by asserting what African women have long held to be true: that the consciousness that gave rise to Womanism transcends individual awareness. This clearly enunciates the core of womanism in its filling the gap created by the White women-dominated feminism that sprang up in Europe and America in the early 20th century. Worthy of mention is the fact that, these early feminists were accused of being more concerned with the needs of the middle-class women in Britain and America while neglecting the peculiar needs of Black African women. Thus, many Black women who felt alienated by Western feminism due to their ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender sought solace in womanism. Accordingly, womanism is an ideology focused on social change that aims to end injustices for everyone, not only women. Womanism empowers black women to acknowledge and celebrate their colour and culture in ways that feminism will not, whereas feminism cared less about other groups.

From the above submissions, Okonjo-Ogunyemi (1996:55) argues for the appropriateness of womanism over feminism, thus:

...a philosophy that celebrates black root, the ideals of life, while giving a balanced presentation of Black womanism. It concerns itself as much with black sexual power tussle as with the world structure that subjugates blacks. A womanist will recognize that along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural national, economic and political considerations into her philosophy.

The significance of the above submission is that, although feminism and womanism are dedicated to establishing equal opportunities and treatments for women, womanism is specifically focused on the struggle of Black women and it is in tandem with the experiences and histories of Black women, men and families. To put it another way, feminism required a new term to adequately express its complexity and richness. Walker contends, however, that womanism is to feminist what purple is to lavender, and that womanist/Black women are stronger and more capable than feminist/White women. She continues by saying that womanism offers Black women an alternative to the gender segregation that plagues feminism

by framing their survival in the context of the survival of their community, where the fate of women and that of men are inexorably interwoven.

It is with this understanding that, Amartey (2013:1), supports the womanist claim, thus: This gospel is particular to the needs of black/African people and accommodates men, women and children. It also looks at the struggles of African women from a holistic angle incorporating racial, cultural, national, economic, and political issues alongside sexiest issues with the ultimate goal of ensuring the survival and unity of all black/African communities.

The argument above is clear in its stipulation of the womanist needs, struggles and concerns. These demarcations have drawn the lines that justifies and favors womanism as typical and common to Africa/blacks over the submissions and concerns of western feminism. This further draw attention to Walker's declining association with traditional feminists' criticism and feminism itself, preferring to be called a womanist. Sarki (2014:25) projects this clearly, when he quotes Emmagunde as saying ...is a woman who loves women and appreciates women's culture and power as something that is incorporated into the world as a whole. Womanism addresses the racist and classist aspects of white feminism and actively opposes separatist ideologies. It includes the word "man" recognizing that black men are an integral part of black women's lives as, their children, lovers and family members. Womanism accounts for the ways in which black women support and empower black men, and serves as a tool for understanding the black women's relationship to men as different from the white women. It seeks to acknowledge and praise the sexual power of black women while recognizing a history of sexual violence.

Since what constitutes feminism for the whites is espoused to their African/black counterparts. It then means that, womanism as an aspect of African feminism seeks for total inclusion and infusion of the men into a system that stands on a binary parallel with radical feminism especially. As much as bulk of African female writers focus and capture resistance to all forms of patriarchy; insinuating the woman as a forerunner and torch bearer of her livelihood and future. Such African proponents of womanism like; Alkali, Okoye, Ogunyemi, Ovbiagele and Afolabi, encode their view in the strength of African society's resistance to lesbianism, homosexuality, bisexuality, and so on to oppose the notions which white feminist and feminism accommodate, as allowed by their culture. The above submission explains why the womanist writer prefers to tell of life as it is, and sometimes of life as it is thought to be and rarely of life as it ought to be. Little wonder their concerns are more shrouded around the ethics of surviving rather than the aesthetic of living.

Going forward Ogunyemi (p.69), in her article, "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English," asserts that "the ultimate difference between the feminist and the womanist is what each sees of patriarchy and what each think can be changed". Given the above postulation, Ogunyemi, initiates a clear-cut dichotomy between especially radical feminism and womanism. Though this study is not hinged on a comparative analysis between radical feminism and womanism, Ogunyemi's arguments stand sufficient as it buttresses distinctively between the duo. Radical feminism, despite focusing on sexism as

the only patriarchal system that oppresses and marginalises women, has power among educated white women of the middle class, leaving out Black and African women of course. For the radical feminist, this means that if sexism is confronted and altered, women will succeed in all cultures around the world. Despite this flaw, radical feminism aims to create a utopian existence separate from the world of men. This means, leading the way in protestation against patriarchal dominance, which aims at the balancing of inequality for equality, independence, togetherness, survival and other ill and inhuman treatment meted to women by patriarchal traditions, whether as Christians, Muslims or traditionalist. Consequent upon the above, Ogunyemi in Sarki (2014:26) upholds womanism thus. . . Womanism is black-centered, it is accommodationists. It believes in the freedom and independence of woman, like feminism (but) unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black men and black women and black children, and will see that men will change from their sexist stand... this ideological position explains why women writers do not end their plots with feminist victories.

With so much obscurity and misconception of the term 'Womanism' it therefore becomes worthy to mention at this juncture that womanism, does not just focus on sexist treatment of black/African women, the binary could be balanced on a scale if juxtaposed with 'Racism'. This argument gets its credence following the position of the white South African journalist Beata Lipman as put forward by Ogunyemi (p.67), when she purportedly talks about the state of women's writing in South Africa thus, "Racism is a more urgent matter than sexism". In Lipman's aforementioned statement, womanism is given a broader and more culturally-specific perspective, with racism and sexism serving as the focal points of black feminism in general and womanism in particular. Progressively, Womanism challenges repressive patriarchal structures by taking into account cultural, national, economic, and political factors in addition to sexism and racism. The oppressive reality that the womanist struggles with as a woman in comparison to her Black or African male counterpart and as a people who have been unfairly treated politically and economically by the white race and patriarchal systems is what the womanist sees as patriarchy. In essence, womanism promotes togetherness rather than exclusivity because it supports a sense of wholeness and oneness that embraces both men and women, as well as children. This is to say that it is not as separatist and hostile to males as extreme feminism.

Similar to this, Bell Hooks supports the issues of womanism from an emphasis on racism when she speaks about the progressive oppressions of patriarchal supremacy and sexism within Black communities:

Every Black person concerned about our collective survival must acknowledge that sexism is a destructive force in Black life that cannot be effectively addressed without an organized political movement to change consciousness, behavior and institutions. What we need is a feminist revolution in Black life. But to have such a revolution, we must first have a feminist movement. Many Black folks do not know what the word feminism means. They may think of it only as something having to do with white women's desire to share equal rights with white men. In reality, feminism is a movement to end all sexism and sexist oppression. The strategies necessary to achieve

that end are many. We need to find ways to address the specific forms that sexism takes in our diverse communities.

The aforementioned hypotheses demonstrate that it is inappropriate to apply mainstream feminism to the difficulties and situation of Black/African women, particularly when black women believe that mainstream feminism is the domain of Eurocentric and Ethnocentric white women. Given that Ogunyemi claims to have created her womanist theory without being aware that Alice Walker had already advanced the theory in a similar vein, the summary is brief. Walker's womanist theory encapsulates black feminist criticism's disappointment and potential. It demonstrates the willingness of black feminists to recast the sexual discussion in terms of the cultural distinctions between white women and women of colour.

According to Margaret Drabble (1971:7-8), womanism is cross-cultural:

The many-sided goal of womanism is geared towards a gender free Pan Africanism – the unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women. This is a different goal to the idea of a Separatist, idyllic existence away from...men's world that preoccupies the white writer. Unlike Drabble, Patricia Hill Collins draws out from womanism, a "humanist vision" born out of black women's struggle against multiple oppressions. Hill Collins demonstrates the womanist idea of "commitment to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female as a recurrent theme among black women intellectuals. She establishes womanist connections with womanists from Anna Julia to June Jordan whose "words and actions resonate with a strikingly similar theme of oneness of all human life.

Going forward Ogunyemi (p.72) captures the difference between radical feminism and womanism thus:

If the ultimate aim of radical feminism is a separatist idyllic existence away from the hullabaloo of the men's world, the ultimate aim of womanism is the unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women.

Given the aforementioned submissions, it is obvious that a womanist worldview is radical in its awareness of the good parts of black life and also raises issues pertaining to the humanity of black African women. Ogunyemi further acknowledges that Alice Walker and herself both have similar ideas about what the term "womanism" means—that is, the transformation that takes place in a young girl as she begins to identify as a woman. For her, a woman who is dedicated to the survival and well-being of all humans, both male and female, is a womanist.

In other words, Womanist writers show concern for the family, but not for the nuclear family as we know it in Western culture, but for the black extended family. They also strive to develop autonomous black women, thus they inject their novels with an affirming attitude that is full of female achievement. They also look at the historical and contemporary links between black Africa and black America. The portrayal of characters in their works is frequently done in the form of amicable co-wives with invisible husbands who cooperate for the benefit of their people in order to further the Womanist cause.

It is also the case that the black mad woman in novels written by black women knows in her sub consciousness that she must survive because she has people without other

resources depending on her. She usually recovers, through superhuman effort, and aids others. After each mental upheaval (in the womanist novel) of a womanist character, there is stasis in the womanist novel when the black woman's communion with the rest of society is established, an agreement that expresses the black way of authenticity and transcendence. Madness therefore becomes a temporary abnormality preceding spiritual growth, healing and integration. Ogunyemi, (p.74).

Ogunyemi (p.75-76) yet insinuates that:

Matrilineal and polygamous societies are dynamic sources for the womanist novel. Bad men are sometimes eliminated in womanist novels so that men and women can live together harmoniously. Also, ostracism and ethnicism rather than sexism cause the development of the strong woman. In addition, womanist writers prefer to tell of life as it is, sometimes of life as it is thought to be and rarely of life as it ought to be. Womanist novelists therefore concern themselves with the ethics of surviving rather than the aesthetic of living.

To further buttress the above claim African cultural boundary, Akorede, Asinyanbola (2010:61) list womanists' manifesto thus:

That there should be cooperation and complementarity between men and women for growth and development, that the stability of society can only come through the collaboration of the sexes; that there is need for the recognition and celebration of positive contributions by women in all fields and that the conscious effort by womanist writers of literary text should not be to subjugate male characters but to evolve a context for cooperation of the sexes in all spheres.

The womanists' manifesto also advances the development of women, men and children's full potentials; while de-emphasizing Western feminists' sway on separation and isolation of one sex from the other. The concern here is in destroying negative images of women and evolution of a strong basis for women's identification and enhancement of women's self-esteem and identity in order to empower them.

Akor (2008:55) argues in favour of Womanism thus:

African Womanism as a movement celebrates African womanhood. It valorizes motherhood and mothering as a virtue and with a sense of power of the domain of woman. It is a philosophy, which sees the woman as woman while recognizing her definite roles which in themselves, cannot stand without those of the men and vice-versa.

Akor's submission above is firm on the relevance of womanism to African women, while at the same time pinpoints the crucial position of men in the empowerment of women. The submission similarly, infuses the celebration of family and recognition of men as integral part of women as the highpoint of womanism, which distinguishes it from Western feminism.

Surmounting Oppression, Subjugation, Abuse and Negation of the Woman's Place

Most female writings have been both subtle and vehement in affirming the oppression, abuse and negation of the woman. Many of these works project the economic, political, social

and even religious subjugation of women. Male figures are shown using culture, physical strength and other such intriguing and dominating structures to suppress the woman.

Shehu (2004:2) shades light on this claim when she purports that, the oppression of the African woman manifests in several forms, some subtle, others glaring. These forms include physical, sexual, psychological, economic, intellectual and social. This dominating tendency is seen in the character of James, a supposed part time pastor, departmental secretary at the Federal University of Education, Zaria and one who will later become the husband of Rebecca. James's role in Rebecca's life re-enacts itself after she narrowly escapes Mr. Bonat's plot of sexual abuse. Pointedly, James exemplifies the oppressive nature of men and their disregard for womanhood. These tendencies begin subtly and later glaring, as the lines below projects:

Whenever he had preaching engagements in Kaduna he would always make out time to be alone with Rebecca. He would ask her personal questions in the spirit of counseling even when she did not ask to be counseled. He wanted to know her ambitions and her future plans. She would pour out her heart. He would give her little cash gifts and encourage her to come to Zaria and visit with him (p. 67).

Despite James's subtlety, Rebecca never saw the need to oblige to his request of visiting him in Zaria. She however, grew soft overtime and trusted him, for whom he claimed to be. But due to her state of hopelessness and despair her experience with Mr. Bonat, She decided to pay him a visit, since she was in Zaria. Having explained her ordeal, James pretends empathize with her, he did all he could to salvage the situation to no avail. He assured her that he will be available in her time of need and promises to give her the comfort she requires. He does so by his arm around her neck by way of comforting her. "I am here for you. I will do anything for you. You can count on me, okay? (p. 69)

After perceiving that she was beginning to have confidence in him, he encouraged her to pass the night in Zaria. To prove that he is not going to take advantage of her he takes her to a sister's house where she passed the night. James's actions above re-situate the universally acclaimed analysis of women's oppression and suppression as victims of male violence with all of its short comings. Amartey (2013:6) clarifies this in the call for:

...a feminist analysis that recognizes that even though women may face similar struggles against patriarchal domination, these struggles are not identical.

The lines above affirm the experiences of Rebecca; for a while ago, she barely escaped the antics of sexual abuse from Mr. Bonat, yet subtly and unconsciously fall for James's merciless, oppressive and abusive ploy, as would be figured later. Looking at the characters of both Bonat and James, it suffices to say that, female oppression is universal and not necessarily sexist. Furthermore, men's application of oppression as a social weapon on the woman is inexcusable, even though the approaches differ. This answers to why Rebecca yielded to James's luring's and promptings, marries him and ends up in a deeper mess than she had ever imagined. For just as Amartey explains, the patriarchal displays put forward by both men (Bonat and James) towards Rebecca are 'similar, but not identical' in formation.

Going forward, the character of James is a frantic portrayal of how some men throughout history, use every available and possible means, which includes; distortion and

wrong interpretation of religious text to dominate women. Rebecca on the other hand, stands as the negotiator of the womanist claim of not aiming for exclusivity but togetherness, through advocacy of wholeness and unity that includes men, women and even children. This responds to why amongst many other deprivations, oppressions and suppressions, she submissively accepted the sandwich program against her wish, because her husband argues “it’s good enough,” (p. 73). Inarguably, Rebecca’s cravings and reasons for marrying James was to acquire a sound education. However, she gets the opposite from her husband, who has his own patriarchal plans mapped out. Worse still, her inability to negotiate properly the womanist quest, lands her in a sheepish followership that almost collapsed her dreams and aspirations thus:

Rebecca was confused. She knew the value of university education. She had the promise to her father to keep. Besides, her mates in the certificate course were older people – people who had almost given up on furthering their education except if it was some sort of in-service program. She felt completely out of place. She topped the class effortlessly and that drew the attention of Mrs. Ogunkoya, the program coordinator and a few of her lecturers to her (p. 73).

Mrs. Ogunkoya’s response and interception of Rebecca’s plight enunciates the role(s) women should employ in tackling their patriarchal troubles world over. Amartey (p. 12) rightly quotes Hooks (124) as saying:

...in reality, feminism is a movement to end all sexism and sexist oppression. The strategies necessary to achieve that end are many. We need to find ways to address the specific forms that sexism takes in our diverse communities.

With this borne in mind, Mrs. Ogunkoya takes the lead role in helping Rebecca understand what the womanist nuances, truly represents. She queries Rebecca’s not running a degree programme, takes pity on her and finds it shameful that her husband, a university staff could not secure admission for her. In advancing this cause, she declares to Rebecca:

“I’d like to speak with your husband, she announced sternly to Rebecca on a Thursday afternoon. “Yes ma,” she answered respectfully but fearfully too. Would her husband be willing to come and see Mrs. Ogunkoya? She wondered.

“What about ma?” she pressed to know.

“I will like to talk to him on some issues better disclosed when we meet face to face,” she explained (p. 74).

Men’s abusive, oppressive and disregarding schemes are always highly operational where the woman seems docile and generally conforming to a fault. Though this is not in enshrinement of a revolt or an outright challenge of their place as men, but to say in the words of Amartey (p. 16) that:

The depiction of womanist characters by womanist writers can be regarded as an anti – patriarchal statement on the author’s part. Womanist writers demonstrate concern for the family, not for the western nuclear family, but for the black extended family. Womanist writers also fill their novels with an affirmative spirit that is packed full of

female achievement and this is as a result of the quest to grow independent black woman.

Justifiably, the lines above are apt in terms of presenting female characters like; Rebecca, Mrs Ogunkoya, Mama and others, not in a radical move of challenging the status quo established for their male counterparts over the years, but to negotiate the balance. For instance, the role of Mrs Ogunkoya was timely, for it was after her pronouncement to see James, that, Rebecca unearthed through her soliloquy, all the oppression, abuse and what not, she has been going through in the hands of James. Most importantly, she damns the consequences and gets ready to chart a new course as the story recounts:

The rest of the day went quickly. Rebecca could hardly bring herself to concentrate on the day's work from apprehension and anxiety: "What could the matter be. Have I done anything wrong? I did not cheat during the last continuous assessment test. I am sure about that. I have not defaulted in paying my dues. Or could it be about the issue of my furthering my education?" A smile crossed her face. "Most likely but how will James take it? I know how uninterested he is about this school thing. He thinks I am ambitious. 'This certificate course should be enough then we'll think of getting you a job,' he often says. I hope I will not get the beating of my life after this appointment because I am sure he will think I came to report him to Mrs. Ogunkoya. He is often very suspicious of my every move. What will I do now o? Anyway, it might just work for me and he may heed the voice of reasoning. Hmm, I pray o!" (p. 74-75)

The above presents a contentious Rebecca and the reality of the hypocritical, domineering, oppressive, suppressive and abusive James in her life. Just as it has been mentioned earlier, some men employ every form of social tool to keep women down and oppressed. James is no exception, the succor Rebecca searches and seeks for via education is what he tries to submerge by every means possible. He makes this clear when confronted by Mrs. Ogunkoya, who had just pleaded with him to allow Rebecca go back to school, stating her brilliance as exceptional and the programme she was running as the wrong one for her. However, Mrs. Ogunkoya would still interfere in defense of her, despite the excuses he presents:

James complained about money and Mrs Ogunkoya was quick to remind him that tuition fee was free. They made the calculation. All Rebecca needed was transport fare from home every day. She could use the library massively so she would not need to buy textbooks. That settled, he again lamented that he did not want her studying such courses where Mao Tse Tsung and Karl Marx would be taught since they would distract her from serving God and teach her to blaspheme against the gospel; he was a pastor and would not want his wife go contrary to his beliefs. Mrs Ogunkoya explained that she could choose courses that would keep her away from those fears if the fears were founded. He promised to give serious thought to her suggestions. Rebecca escaped being beaten up. But she threaded with care through out that week. (p. 75-76)

From the above lines, James's hypocrisies are rife and further exposed. As being a pastor does not allow him for whatever reason to lay a hand on his wife, which he does. However, the intent is to use religion and whatever deployable tool within his reach, to harness the goal of denying

her education and the attendant successes. For even after yielding to Mrs Ogunkoya and Prof. Nwadike his direct boss at the office whose insistence fetched Rebecca her admission, James in his oppressive and domineering spirit takes it farther by displaying his bigotry right in front of everyone:

Make sure you comport yourself as a married woman on this campus,” James angrily commanded Rebecca at the senate building where they went to pick up the admission letter, in the presence of everyone. It was obvious he felt insecure. He was possessive and domineering. He saw himself as a father figure and Rebecca who he considered naïve and one who needed to be guided by the noose as a child (p.76)

James’s displays above did not just end at that point, he monitored her steps every inch in the way. He had a copy of her time table, made her spend her free time with him. There was always little or no money in the house. Invariably, “James was insolvent” (p.77) an attitude he concealed to Rebecca so his deceit and betrayal will thrive. One thing that is glaring in the life of James is that every moment came for him as an avenue to yet sink Rebecca’s boat. Jatau’s exploration of the life of Rebecca is no doubt satisfying Amartey’s claim expressed earlier ‘Womanist writers prefer to tell of life as it is, sometimes of life as it is thought to be and rarely of life as it ought to be’ (p.17)

In light of the claim above, the argument proceeds with concerns on the ethics of survival, rather than the aesthetic of living, where the womanist novelist show that bad men are sometimes eliminated in their writings, so that men and women can live harmoniously. Imperatively, the character of James categorically passes for one of those bad men that needs elimination to ensure this harmony. For the same lying and betraying James was first; quick to hide his insolvency, dodge the payment of dowry and other traditional rites to marrying Rebecca under the guise of being an orphan and a born-again Christian. Then he takes it further, by declining his people’s insistence on getting a wife outside his culture. Horridly, his evil antics are palpitated by his refusal to consummate their marriage until Rebecca undergoes deliverance, and the ‘demons’ cast out of her. She was compelled to fast and pray and to make matters worse, he had a field day, gruesomely enjoying himself by having her virginity, irrespective of how she felt:

A white piece of napkin had been cut under the pillow for the routine cleaning up as intercourse progressed. That routine was maintained afterwards. He penetrated her. She screamed in pain. He continued to go in and out making the ejaculations as several times as he could. He thoroughly enjoyed himself. But she did not. There were blood stains all over. Not a word of appreciation followed for keeping her virginity. She could not sit up for many days afterwards. He came to her every night. She feared the night season (p.81).

The personality of James in relation to his dealings with Rebecca his wife, exposes how men can use the cultural hold of patriarchy, religion and every means plausible to subject the women folk. James’s actions are not only visible but exemplified in his attempts to take control of her life in all ramifications. He questions and queries all her relationships to both female and male friends, his suspicion of all around her, is not restricted to close allies and even his boss, who

was there to facilitate Rebecca's admission. Though Rebecca had to seek his approval to maintain a platonic relationship with Hedima, it would later arouse a transcending tension.

Her closeness to men began to cause tension in the home though Rebecca got a lot of gratification from them particularly financial gratification. James began to feel insecure. He suspected their closeness with Mr. Patrick as he did with Hedima. He was enraged but will not discuss it. When Rebecca got pregnant with a second child, he ordered a D and C on claims that it was not his child and that not all children are from God (p.85).

The marriage came to the brink of collapse and eventually did, the moment Rebecca came to the point of consenting flirting just to let peace reign:

Life became unbearable for Rebecca. She could not understand the accusations. Amidst counselling she consented to flirtation in order to be allowed to apologize so that peace will reign. That was the worst blunder. She lied against herself and against her conscience. She had never been unfaithful either. But it was too late. She had apologized and James held firmly to that (p.87).

James who would not consent to their use of contraceptives, accuses Rebecca of sleeping with his friend Joseph. He paints a picture of a clear vision of their sexual orgies and a description of the accommodation the act was perpetrated in, and discredited the fact that they were involved in an accident instead (p. 89). Consequently, his bigotry and wickedness would not let him see any sin in suggesting a D and C for Rebecca again, after a successful abortion of her second pregnancy. Her refusal gets her the denial of certain rights and assistance towards the arrival of the baby, which turned out to be a hydrocephalus one. This further burdened Rebecca with the extra responsibility of nurturing her deficient baby, keeping up her studies with no money, care and attention from her husband.

James's hold on Rebecca while their marriage lasted could be given two submissions; first he takes advantage of the cultural enclave of docility and subservience the African, Nigerian and indeed the northern Nigerian woman is known with, as she submits to patriarchy. These accounts for Rebecca's endurance with her husband and the resolve to make her marriage work, thus achieve her dreams and hopes of pursuing a good education. The second is the religious, one that Rebecca finds herself vulnerable to, she first believed she heard God instruct her to marry James, that as a Pastor he would do everything possible to keep his marriage, plus she also believed marriages fail because people do not keep their parts spiritually. Consequently, she was both ready and willing to painfully submit herself to the fangs of cultural and religious domination she finds herself in, she swallows in gulps, all of her husband's accusations and misgivings, down to the point of running a test to prove their baby's paternity after he had disgracefully shown her over used pants to his gullible listeners, with accusations of them being torn because of her sexual escapades (p.91).

Rebecca's ordeal from the beginning and especially her marriage to James, its crisis and failure, is not an appraisal of patriarchy and its evil on the women folk as some may perceive, but to show the doggedness and determination with which women can surmount and combat the patriarchal hold of oppression, abuse, subjugation on them. The portrayal of her

role is an explicit showcase of how through determination women can surmount negativities enshrined in culture and other practices to keep them, under perpetual subjection to a questionable system.

Rebecca as a character is worth emulating, for unlike other women, she did not let the failure of her marriage deter her, she left its pain and regrets behind and charted a new course for herself thus; “Good news was, in the midst of all these, Rebecca graduated in flying colors – second class upper division in English language Education! The future looked colorful and bright again” (p.93).

Evidently, Rebecca’s ordeal did not redefine her quest, she would not settle for less in spite of her plight. She enacts this at the instance, where Aunty Maimuna from whom she found succor, encourages her to get a job and promises to get her one through her influence;

She encouraged Rebecca in her job search and chipped in a word with her Deputy Governor Sister-in-law to help out so that Rebecca could get a teaching job at the state school. But Rebecca dreamt higher. She dreamt of a university job (p. 96).

Good news is that, it paid off eventually for Rebecca, to the joy and amazement of her loved ones, including Aunty Maimuna;

Aunty Maimuna was overwhelmed with joy to learn of Rebecca’s employment at the university. In her excitement, she offered Rebecca all the initial things she needed to start her new life in the university apartment which she was given almost immediately (p.100).

Rebecca as a figure reclaims and re-writes what her society and culture has allotted her, for at the university where she lectures, her resolve to stand out, impact and influence lives within and outside the university community precedes every other thing for her. Thus, she modelled most of her students and even her family members were not left out. In saddling the responsibility of crushing the barriers and hurdles of patriarchy and culture, Rebecca would rather go without savings than to fail or disappoint the family that look solidly up to her as their life wire (p.103). This she did gladly, defying the odds of her definition as a woman.

Rebecca’s role is both re-defining and a monumental model for women everywhere who are still bound by the enclaves of culture and other such forms of mental, physical and psychological slavery. She employs education as a necessary and only tool for women everywhere, not only in surmounting culture and its other attachments, but to enshrine the need for the woman to take her place in nation building. Resultantly, she strove and ascended the academic ladder, leading to her acquiring a second Ph.D in the United States as a climax of her dreams and aspirations. And while in the USA, the understanding of her purpose gets better awakened:

She began to read the question of women’s education in northern Nigeria in a different light. She got excited. She had identified her passion which process of discovery started from when she applied for the Ford Foundation Fellowship. She was resolved to return home to make a difference for women like her who were marginalized and who suffered all forms of discriminations (p.130).

Most importantly, she was able to enshrine her stance and role by building women and the nation at large through the relevance of her second Ph.D in Literacy Education. She assiduously affected the rural community she came from, this way she enabled them surmount culture and all other tools of oppression binding on women, by helping them do school and be self-actualized in spite of challenges and limitations. She also affected the lives of the students she taught at the university upon her return as a way of reaching and affecting the nation positively at large;

Rebecca decided to stay focused on the terms of her sponsorship. She was resolute. No attraction in God's Own Country was strong enough to keep her back. She had a dream to pursue, her passion to actualize. She was grateful that coming to America helped her name all of her life's challenges she had been passing through and to see the solution options at her disposal. Her dream made her feel complete: it defined her person, her world view and her perspectives. She would truly return to her country to make a generational impact.

There was no stopping her... she would actualize her dream that: "Every Nigerian child should have access to quality education and basic free health care. They needed to be healthy to be educated".

She would help women like her who had been left behind. She would help them find their own voice. She would bring the type of education, one which is humane and effective in addressing issues of social justice, one that would enable the students think for themselves, make decisions on their own, discover knowledge by seeing with the inner eye and then apply facts to reality and reason productively (p.135).

Thank goodness it paid off, for she truly stood by her resolve, shunning all forms of distractions enacting her purpose and pursuits amongst women, her community and family, by surmounting these cultural and religious abuse, oppression, and subjugation to properly front the dignity, place and vitality of the woman.

Conclusion

This study, particularly investigates how female writers in Northern Nigeria from a cultural stand point capture their experiences as seen in Phebe Jatau's *The Hound*. The study, emphasizes the fact that patriarchal societies employ the services of culture, religion, social, psychological, emotional and much more as its modus operandi to subject the average woman to its fangs and heinous oppressions. With the extent shown by Phebe Jatau's creativity, she through the eye of her lead character, Rebecca unearths the attending issues that permeates the average African Woman. The studies adoption of the womanist strand of feminism, represents the conundrums and heinous negation of the woman's voice and place and how they have been able to orchestrate a great paradigm shift in the narrative that keeps the woman as second class and worthy of use and disposal at will by their male counterparts. On the whole, this study has shown against all odds that, for the Womanist there is always the quest to negotiate and mediate between women and the society in general. And through these mediation, one can of a certainty surmount and bring crumbling the hold of patriarchy as placed on the woman by the drivers of culture, religion, and the society at large.

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