

INTERROGATING THE NORTHERN NIGERIAN SOCIETY:

A CASE STUDY OF RAZINAT .T. MUHAMMAD'S

HABIBA

BY

NAFISA ABUBAKAR

1011108024

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS, FACULTY OF ARTS AND ISLAMIC STUDIES, USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO. IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

OCTOBER, 2015

CERTIFICATION

This project work has been read and approved in partial fulfillment for the award of degree of Bachelor of Arts, Literature in English of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

Malama Balkisu Kigo

Supervisor

Date

Dr. Aminu Mode

Head of Department

Date

External examiner

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grant parents Mallam Abdulrahman, Mallam Sulaiman, Mal. Aishatu and Mal. Salamatu. May your souls rest in peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give thanks to Almighty Allah for giving me the health and knowledge to complete this work.

I am very grateful to my able and understanding supervisor, Malama Balkisu Kigo for her guidance throughout this research.

My sincere appreciation goes to my beloved parents Alhaji Abubakar Abdulrahman and Hajiya Hajara. A. Sulaiman for their continuous support and understanding both morally and financially towards my educational pursuit since the beginning of my study. To my brothers Umar and Abdulbaki, my sisters Bilkisu, Halimatu and Fauziyya, my lovely niece Fadimatu Zahra'u and nephew, Muhammad. I appreciate you being there for me.

I am also grateful to my lecturers Mallam Mansur, Dr Aminu Mode, Prof. Bello Bada, Prof. Asabe Kabir, Mallama Aisha and Dr Tahir Mallam, for their efforts throughout my stay in the University.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts of Usman Abdullahi and Murtala Muhammad Sa'ad who contributed immensely to the success of this research.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my course mates, my class rep.

Francis Miracle, Fatima Maccido, Helen Kagah, Maria, Glory Emmanuel Iliya,

Aisha Usman Lamido, Aisha Kiryo, Lubabatu Bello, Gomna and Atanda

Babatunde. May Allah guide and protect you all.

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ABSTRACT.

This research work deals mainly with interrogating the Northern Nigerian Society, a case study of Habiba by Razinat T Muhammad.

This project contains four chapters. Chapter one comprises the introduction, Aims and objectives, Significance of the study, Statement of the problem, scope and limitation and brief biography of the Author. Chapter

Two entails the literature review, chapter three deals with interrogating the Northern Nigerian society by Razinat .T. Muhammad. Chapter four contains the summary and conclusion of this research.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the focus of the research. It gives background knowledge of the study, defines the concept of literature, analyses its function and also the role of the writer in the society.

This study recognizes that when a writer creates a piece of work, they cannot be different to the nature of social relations in whose framework they create, because the writer is a human being living in a given social system. Literature becomes the means through which the writer tells people about the situation of things by creating awareness to the societies cultural, political and socio-economic realities.

Just as literature reflects the society, it also influences and shape society. Literature functions socially to maintain and stabilize the social order. The function of literature in the society is very crucial in the sense that it educates, mobilizes and even enlightens. Achebe (1965:22) agrees with the above when he states that:

'The writer lives in a society and interacts with the

Interaction enables him to take a critical view of

The behavioral pattern of Individual within the

Changing social structure in the society'

In addition, literature reflects the people's social condition. Literature cannot be divorced from the culture of the people because the values of a society are usually expressed in the people's songs, dances, sculpture, rites and ceremonies.

It is important to state that no writer writes in isolation. The writer becomes the conscience of his society since anything produced by a writer is greatly determined by the environment and the time which the writer writes. The writer reflects the social problems and presents them depending on the perspectives with which he operates.

In addition, the writer is a social being who serves as a mirror of the society, no wonder there is room for art for art's sake. This is with tandem with the fact that literature mirrors reality. Literature asserts the development of man's consciousness, It is geared towards improving the social system. In this regard, the writer cannot be exempted from the task of re-education and

regeneration. Since the writer's sensibility is conducted by the happenings around him, the writer ends up being an intellectual and sensitive figure. Therefore, he finds himself in a dynamic society. Hence, uses literature to record the socio-economic, political and social conditions of the society.

It is important to note that literature is a product of historical and social conditions. Each writer expresses a certain view(s) of his time. The writer expresses the problems in which the society is entrapped, he fights against oppression, exploitation and struggle to liberate the society from all forms of socio-political and economic problems.

This study observes that the Northern Nigerian novel has a conscious approach to the life of its people and the society, it reflects the social realities encapsulated in the political, economic, cultural and social life of the people. Therefore, writers such as Razinat T Muhammad, Bilkisu Abubakar, Ibrahim Tahir, Abubakar Gimba, Zaynab Alkali, LaboYari and Helon Habila use the medium of the novel in English to explore on the totality of existence of especially the Northern Nigerian society.

The Northern Nigerian novel attempts to translate traditional beliefs, customs and attitudes in an entirely new context employing a language in which the modern reader can respond. The novel in Northern Nigeria makes

constant allusion to the people's customs, beliefs, ceremonies, language and shows the extent of both internal and external influences on the forces that shape human existence in that region.

The Northern Nigerian society has continuously suffered a decline in its value. This is further fuelled by the misconception and misinterpretation of especially Islamic doctrines in the society. As a result of this, the woman especially has been relegated to the margins of socio-cultural environment. Additionally, the situation in Northern Nigeria is reflected in all facet of human existence where honesty, accountability, transparency dedication and so on have been replaced with corruption, indiscipline, dishonesty, immorality and injustice. Northern Nigeria society is undergoing socio-cultural changes that would in all probability have far reaching effects on how its people perceive cultural effects such as marriage, education, meek, virtuous woman, vicious co-wives, rival or step mothers.

The pervasiveness of the above calls for an interrogation .Hence, the study explores the issues that affect the author's immediate environment. The presentation of her characters are not only true to life, the thematic concern are of the North too.

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to expose, as represented in fiction some of the negative experiences that are in Northern Nigeria society. Therefore, this research work shows the effort made by Razinat in her novel Habiba to point out some of these negative experiences.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant because the novel is new and this research work will be among the very first full exploration on it. Another important aspect of discourse in this novel is that the novel brings out the problems of the society.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Northern Nigerian society suffers or enjoys its fair share of life .For example the issue of corruption and exploitation of human resources are problems in Northern Nigerian society. In addition and especially for women, there is problem of gender inequality. Women are degraded,

misused, molested and exploited. Therefore, they do not enjoy the expected basic of human and religious right. This study shows that there are issues in Northern Nigeria which need change.

1.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study focuses on the Northern Nigeria society as seen in Razinat novel Habiba. The author's view on the problems in Northern Nigeria will serve as our main focus. The study will be limited to only Razinat's novel Habiba

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This study involves a historical research, the internet, digging up old document from previous works written by others on the area of study and contextual analysis of the novel.

1.6 BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Razinat T muhammad was born in Maiduguri Northern Nigeria. She holds a PHD in African Literature from the University of Maiduguri where she now lectures.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a brief historical and literary background of Northern Nigeria Society. The aim of this chapter is to give analysis of the representation of other novels which have similar subject matter.

2.1 LITERARY DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

The geo-Political area referred to as Northern Nigeria comprises of the present nineteen out of the thirty six states in Nigeria excluding Abuja, the federal territory of Nigeria. These states includes Kaduna, Katsina, Jigawa, Yobe, Zamfara, Sokoto, Borno, Adamawa, Plateau, Niger, Kogi, Kwara, Kano, Kebbi, Benue, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, and Nassarawa. It borders the Republic of Dahomey in the West, Cameroun in the East and Niger in the North (Adeleye quoted in Joseph, 2004:2) the people are largely Agriculturalist, Artisans and traders .Although predominantly Hausa/Fulani and Kanuri, there are many ethnic groups whose numeric strength far outweighs the predominant Hausa-Fulani and in spite of the complex linguistic structure of the region, there had never been any pointer to the fact that other than the earlier forms of literary engagements which were in Arabic , Hausa and Ajami, anything literary in English could ever emerge or take shape in Northern Nigeria.

The lack of a very early start in the writing of fiction in English in Northern Nigeria until the 1970s might have made many readers not to want to appreciate the many literary works of high value that have been churned from the North. As stated above, the fact that the early literary masterpieces from the North were either in Hausa, Fulani or Ajami have created the impression that literary development in the North was likely to be in that direction. This perceived notion has been exacerbated by the recent explosion of the soyayya novels and Hausa films. Gradually, the need to come to strong term with the new changes and concerns across the state would necessitate the embrace of the language of mobility in the society.

Jibril (1990:9) quoted in Joseph (2004:15) stresses this need further and predicts the future of creative writing in English in the North when he says;

Northern Nigeria is in fact a changing society.

National integration is progressing at a tremendous

Speed and not least of its agents are mass media.

This, in effect, means that northern Nigerians are

*Being brought out of their tiny shells and are having
Their horizons widen consequently, we may soon be
Confronted by a new generation of created writers
From the North who may choose English as their
Medium of expression.*

In the context of the above, Joseph (2004/15) says emergent literature from Northern Nigeria has had a grapple with feudal hegemony, history, power formation and relations .The representation of Northern Nigeria within the context of post-independence Nigerian society and to remove the people from the entrapment of culture, tradition, and religion, the rural and the urban, all of which are encapsulated within social, political, and contemporary concerns.

Therefore, in order to integrate into main stream literary exploitation, English language became inevitable as Jubril (1990:9, quoted in Joseph 2004:15-16) further expounds:

*The utilitarian value that English has as the medium
Of inter-ethnic communication in Nigeria is daily
Being appreciated by Northerners and contact with
South at other levels have always being taken for
granted by Northerners. Moreover, many of the elites
in the North are aware of the literary vacuum which
exists for Northern Nigerian Literature in English*

In this regard the North had to come out of its exclusivity and draw from other cultures and values in order to properly apprehend its own values and experiences. Although, literary values can as well be codified in indigenous Languages, the shift to English Language by Northern Nigerian writers was certainly going to ensure proper codification to mainstream novels from Northern Nigeria in Nigeria, literary arts in general. The fact that most literary works in Northern Nigeria are hitherto either known or little known but are enriching the Nigerian literary scene makes them not only worthy to be explored at only personal or regional levels but at the national and universal levels too.

Some of the literary artists that can be found in Northern Nigeria include authors like; Aliyu Jiba, Abubakar Gimba, Zaynab Alkali, Late Ibrahim Tahir, Labo Yari, Muhammad Sule, Ahmad Maiwada, Atabo Oko, Joseph Mangut, Muhammad Tukur Garba, Hauwa Ali, Moses Abwa, Audee T Giwa, Maryam Ali Ali, B.M Dzukogi, Denja Abdullahi, Sumaila Umaisha, Jerry Agada, Yahya S Dangana, Ibrahim Sheme, Helon Habila, Muazu Maiwada, Olu Obafemi, Ahmad Yerima, Chris Obudumi, Biyi Bandele, Dul Johnson, Aliyu Kamal, Emmy Idegun, Halima Sadiya Asekula, Bilqis Abubakar, John Tafida, Razinat T Mohammad, Adamu Kyukah Usman, E E Sule, Ismail Abdullahi, John Haynes, Patrick Wilmot, Domkat Bali, and the late Mamman Vatsa.

Most of the writers above have found expedient to adopt the realist's technique in their works, apparently because of the social commitment of works. Nothing is best understood like what people have seen, known and experienced before. It assists the novelist to write novels that express life in its real form. Hence, makes their works more accepted.

By realism, it is meant that the novelist is attempting to tell a story that is convincing to the readers. In doing this, the novelist uses techniques which ensure that fiction is an imaginative writing that accurately reflect life as it was lived in the past or as it is lived in the present. Realism is of importance to creative works because it is a representation of reality, that is, of the truth. The novel is a creative

in which realism is used most because it is the best form in which reality can be exposed.

Realistic works take their characteristics from the way they are written. First, the subject matter, that is, the subject the writer is writing on is literarily realistic, they have to be real. The writer chooses areas that are popular, social, modern, and comprehensive.

In essence, treating different events and characters is very important to the realistic novel. Characters must be true to life and must represent actual human beings because they give exact image of life. Realistic novels have narrative which ends on a less emphatic and less resolved manner, this implies that the story has a heightened conclusion. These novels begin with the action straight away, the characters and situation will be learnt as the story progresses. This study observes that in general terms the features above being some of the characteristics of realistic novels are also discernable when one reads it from Northern Nigeria. Hence, it discusses the novel in question from that perspective.

2.2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Northern Nigeria, women have been subjected to oppression, depression, suppression, rejection and segregation and unfair and undue victimization. Zaynab Alkali writes to deconstruct and at the same time to correct the evils of patriarchy in her society. The novelist captures this in her novel.

In Stillborn (1984) by Zaynab Alkali, Li's husband abandoned her in the village for four years whereby, married to another wife in the city. Li suffers the stress of life and unfavourable treatment from the hand of her husband after she eventually reached the city. Li therefore resolves to seek for freedom, independence that will bring happiness to her life. She successfully completed her studies which enable her to assume a position of leadership in her family.

Faku on the other hand married a womanizer called Garba, who had another wife in the city and six children.

Li and Faku move out of their matrimonial homes, when it became clear to them that polygamy only offers humiliation.

In Cobwebs and Other stories (2004), Zaynab Alkali exposes the fate of the woman in the society when she shows the suffering women goes through to please their husband while he goes ahead to please others. Maya almost worshipped her

husband and his family not knowing that he had a secret family somewhere else and enjoys life more than she did when he was alive.

It is forbidden to gain wealth or property through fraud, bribery and corruption, kidnapping, killing, soothsaying and injustice.

Abubakar Gimba angles on the above when he exposes these issues in his novel, Witnesses to Tears (1986). Lahab within a blink of an eye became very rich, but behind his riches lies bribery and corruption, soothsaying, kidnapping and killing. Lahab in Witnesses to Tears bribed a police officer so that Anas, his father-in-law will be set free. The freedom Anas received marked the beginning of fear in Anas, he seems to have lost the trust he has for Lahab and he fears for his daughter who has fallen in love with Lahab quickly without knowing him very well.

Lahab became involved in dirty business which earned him a lot of money. He killed his only son without knowing in order to become rich. Saahir killed Serah Bello and Sani Tanko in order to shut their mouths not to expose his secret. Most rich men in Northern Nigeria are involved in the above just because they want to become very rich and popular and to achieve their aim.

The issue of injustice is also exposed in Witnesses to Tears. The Messenger is an important character through whom the issue of injustice is being portrayed. It

justifies how people are treated that is, the lower and the upper classes, the rich and the poor. The messenger is not a completely bad person, he was tempted to take some part of the money Lahab hid in his locker which Lahab intentionally did to make him take the money. The Messenger was unjustly sentenced to ten years in prison for taking thirty three thousand naira. Hussaina was not happy with the punishment given to him, she cited an example with Mr Brawole who stole three and a half million naira but was only sentenced to seven years in prison because he belongs to the upper class and has someone to stand for him. This shows that if you are rich, you receive less punishment but if you are poor, you receive a harsh treatment in the court of law.

Abubakar Gimba also exposes the carelessness of medical personnel in Witnesses ToTears. Hussaina's mother died in Khartoum hospital during child birth, she died as a result of severe bleeding and lack of blood in the hospital. This makes Hussaina to take a vow not to go to Khartoum hospital again

Some of the death cases in Northern Nigeria is as a result of carelessness of medical personnel, sometimes there is insufficient blood, medicine or facilities in the hospital, patients are transferred to other hospitals and most times, before they reach there they become no more.

Abubakar Gimba examines power, culture, conflict and the suffering of the masses in Sunset for a Mandarin (1991). For instance, he comments on the decadence of Nigerian bureaucracy, the gross financial misdemeanour and the abuse of office.

In I'd Rather Die by Audee T Giwa (1994), the novelist gives a panoramic view of issues in Northern Nigeria ranging from poverty, problems of polygamy, immorality, the plight of working class especially teachers, love, psychology of wealth and fate of women. The novel gives a panoramic insight of how women are treated and their psychological problems, the travails of a woman forced into marriage, the obstacle created for the woman in a patriarchal society, and the unpleasant marital experiences of women grossly caused by the misconception of Islamic religion.

Mallam Umar intends to forcefully marry Fatima to Alhaji Maikudi so as to have another source of money besides his salary, since his salary as a teacher is too small to maintain the family. Therefore, marrying Fatima to a rich man can be another source of income to the family, he forcefully marries his daughter out of her will as the only solution.

Zaynab, Alhaji Maikudi's fourth wife was never given the opportunity to choose her own husband. In Northern Nigeria, the woman is seen as a chattel that

can be bought and sold. In I'd Rather Die, the philosophy of wealth takes the order of the day. The feelings and happiness of a woman is irrelevant, what is relevant is what the woman can bring through her marriage into the family. Zaynab is virtually sold out by her parents, her father wanted to have the latest vespa motorcycle and her mother, a sewing machine and the only way out to achieve these material things is to give their daughter to a man she never loved.

The money was there, her father who so much wanted

To have a motorcycle, had the latest model of vespa

Motocycle. Her mother who also loved a sewing machine

Had got a singer sewing machine. She wanted to be married

To a young boy she loved but was given to a sixty year old

Man, old enough to be her grandfather. (p.68)

The issue of polygamy is also seen in I'd Rather Die, Alhaji Maikudi entourage of women namely: Halima the first, Jameela, the second, Hadiza the third and the last but not the least Zaynab, he is not satisfied, since he sees women as chattel, he immediately thinks of whom to divorce to enable him marry Fatima, he later decided to divorce Halima which gave him a chance to marry Fatima.

Consequently, Western culture has affected indigenous culture in Northern Nigeria. The advent of science and technology has highly influenced the youth.

This can be seen when:

Mohammed took out from his pocket a packet

Of Benson and hedges and selected one which

He put between his hips....he held his match

With the middle finger, forefinger and the thumb.

It was an impressive style he practiced for hours

After watching it in a movie. (p.16)

The advent of movies and other mass media are a major influence on the youth. They try to imitate actions or actors, which they see in video films.

Immorality can be seen when Fatima shook hands with muhammad. In Hausa land, this is quite unusual. Muhammad on the other hand encircled his arms around her hips and accidentally brushed his hips against hers (p.95)

Giwa also shows the tricks rich people play in order to achieve what they want. In the case of Alhaji Maikudi who sends his boys to kill mohammed

because of his love for Fatima. He also exposes the neglect of our religions, those actions that are against our religions are the ones mostly practiced in Northern Nigerian society.

In the collection of short story, Sterile Water by Razinat T Muhammad, the novelist shows a world where men rule, a complete patriarchal society, where men have the say of everything. Kulu was given the burden of feeding her children, this make her to perform both the duty of a father and mother to her children. Kulu in Sterile water suffers a lot because of her gender, she was performing the duty of a mother and father and her husband has the right to tell her that it is the duty of the wife to feed her children because it is the tradition of the Buru culture. Kulu has to fry akara in order to feed her children.

Despite the fact that Kulu suffered physically and psychologically, she was determined not to let her children down, and will not allow her feelings to overcome her. Razinat shows how men get all the credit even though they did not deserve it. Sumaila, Kulu's husband was the happy one because the tradition and culture of that village gave him a reason to be happy.

In Silence and a Smile by Aliyu Kamal, the author expresses his dissatisfaction with contemporary realities. In doing this, he depicts the cultural norms and values of the Hausa community, as they relate to the Islamic values.

The issue of payment of dowry is perceived in Aliyu Kamal's novel, Silence and a Smile, the culture of the Hausa as described in the novel, emphasizes more on the trousseau such that the average salary earner cannot afford it. Religiously only the dowry is approved. Because of this violation, Aliyu Kamal indicts his Northern Nigerian Society, which is dominated by Muslims for not following the Islamic teachings to the later.

Parents do not allow their female children to use the dowry; rather, they use it to buy things which husbands are responsible for such as furniture. Pressuring the husband to-be to buy expensive suitcases and textile material is what discourages many men from getting married. Kamal has a visionary insight in the way his novel treats this problem, relates it as it happens and affects the sensibility of the people. One can deduce that from the large number of unmarried girls seen roaming about the streets without marriage.

Aliyu Kamal depicts the manner at which drivers are driving, overtaking and dropping passengers at undesignated places. Likewise, vehicles, with ramshackle structure are playing our roads thus harming or endangering our health. This episode is portrayed at the first chapter when Ashiru returns home from National Youth Service. On his way, he grapples with driving experiences of Nigerian motorist. Some do not have trafficators and windscreen.

The roads are patholed and in a state of deplorable condition. Young ladies are driving cars without adequate knowledge of their maintenance. The incidence of Husna, a close friend to Dije is a good example. Her car broke down as she was driving yet she cannot start the car, it was when Asiru came that her problem was solved. (p.99) Kamal here describes the problem associated with a woman driving in Nigeria in not only creative manner but also with social commitment.

The issue of corruption is portrayed in Silence and a Smile. Alhaji Malle, the uncle of Dije and Isa, is depicted as a character with a corrupt inclination such that he accumulates wealth through it. Being a contractor, he feels he can persuade Ahmad, the elder brother of Ashiru, by giving him a considerable amount of money to offer him contracts. But his attempt becomes futile because Ahmad is a man of high moral standing whose attitudes are focused on religion.

The novel reveals the way unpatriotic contractors denigrate or weakens the Nigerian economy whereby, they receive money and leave the work incomplete. The creative rhythm of the novel gives a moral lesson in the way the personality traits of two characters are shown. Ahmad represents the ideal society nurtured by moral uprightness. While Alhaji Malle is an embodiment of evil that blazes like fire and causes untold but irreparable damage

Family conflict often obtains in a polygamous family and does not only affect the relationship of the wives alone, but also their children. Wives, not the children are the driving force of the conflicts largely traceable to the competition they nurture for their husbands. Kamal's concern for this eradicable problem is a crucial indeed for the fact that it translates into social instability.

The scuffle or fighting between Ashiru and his younger brother, Sadiq, is what gives rise to the family conflict. Ashiru gathers his collar and interrogates him on the charge of breaking into his room while he was away on National Service. But the mother of Sadiq, Dije, intervenes in favour of her son, abusing Ashiru, as she asks Lawal:

What are you going to do with this boy?

Dije asked. What boy? Her husband asked.

Is that what you said? His wife demanded

Angrily. Can't you see he tore Sadiq's shirt?

I didn't said Ashiru, you pulled my hands too

Roughly (p.7).

This typifies and testifies to what exactly happens in a polygamous home of the Hausa. Ashiru's mother has died and because of her absence, Dije feels strong hatred for him. The cultural stereotype is also a contributing factor. Kamal has entered imaginatively into the lives of his characters to explore the strains to which they are exposed as a result of the disruptive effects they bring to bear on polygamy. When the wives are lodged in separate houses, such thing may never happen. As they say, familiarity breeds contempt

The author indicts the society for the tribal sentiment that retards the social progress of Northern Nigerian. Kinship marriage is not compulsory in Islam but it is sometimes associated with arranged or forced marriage. This revolves around a major character, Ashiru Lawan, who deeply falls in love with Dije Garba, a Fulani girl. He is denied marriage on tribal grounds because he is not a Fulani man. Dije, according to the wish of her family, is forced to marry her cousin Zakiy. She hates him. Cultural impediment is seen here as a forcible contributing factor that can potentially promote tribalism. In support of this, Wright (1973:10) says: We sometimes make mistake talking about values (cultural) as though they were fixed and eternal.

Kamal depicts the effects of tribalism in that it deprives two matching suitors from getting married. This underpins the fact that the people do not use or interprets the teachings of Islam well. Alhaji Malle is the stumbling block: He

insists that Zakiy must marry Dije. He is the rich family head and his savings are absolutely uncompromising. He says:

*I will gladly marry her off to Ashiru, but I will give her
Away without a single stick of furniture, without a single
grain of salt or sugar (p.162).*

Here, Kamal has depicted the way richness overshadows everything in the Northern Nigerian community.

Dije is obedient to her mother, she accepted to marry Zakiy, (her cousin) against her will, although, she told her mother that:

*Mother, I can't marry Zakiy just to please you. I
Fear the tiniest speak of your anger, which can
Be so minute that you can't utter it or show it on
your face but only feel it in your heart. Yet, Ashiru
is the man I will ever love. He is the only one I will
ever nurse any tender feelings for. (p.139).*

Dije had no option but to succumb to her mother wish, since that was what she wanted. She had a plan which was to marry Zakiy, divorce him and then marry Ashiru. She agreed to marry Zakiy who she will never lead a marital life with she promised herself never to allow him touch her because she wants to remain a virgin for Ashiru., the man she loves and will forever love.

2.3

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a brief literary and historical background of the Northern Nigerian Society. Succinctly foregrounds its review on the true state of Northern Nigerian nation especially in its political, religious and social life in general. The focus is to show how the novelist in Northern Nigeria ends up being socially committed. Hence, relying on the realist tradition to bring out their stories.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how the values of Northern Nigerian society are presented in Razinat T Muhammed's novel Habiba. Particularly detailed thematic exploration of the novel is conducted to expose the state of the society in question as perceived by the author. The aim is to see how the thematic concerns of the novel contextualise the plethora variegated problems in Northern Nigeria. The above is fore grounded by Irele's comment (1988:104) when he says:

*The direction of Nigerian Literature is towards
a comprehensive social vision, it started from
close attachment of our writers to circumstance
of our corporate existence, it is no exaggeration
that Literature produced in this country is the testimony
of inner realities of the social process at work among
us and the tension these have set up in our collective
Consciousness.*

As expressed earlier, and in line with the above, the chapter proceeds to explore the thematic concern of the novel

3.1 PLOT SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Habiba is a novel which dwells on the issue of girl child education and early marriage. The bright future of a young girl is shattered by the people around her. The novel opens with the introduction of a protagonist, Habiba- her life as a displaced child under the care of another man who is not her father as a result of a broken marriage and an abrupt search for self which led her find her father. The novelist took us through the journey of the life of Habiba in her new found home, her relationship with her step mother who appears to be like an umbilical mother, her relationship with her Grandmother who actually in the real sense appears to be the spell of her doom.

Razinat carefully develops the character of Habiba in a society where survival is of the fittest. Her father, Saleh though represented as an average Nigerian whose means of income is barely enough to cater for his family and his old mother, Hamsatu find solace in maintaining a small kantin. Hamsatu on the other hand represent the circle of the women who take absolute control of their one

and only son. As a result of her build ego, she was the first to commit Habiba- her thirteen year old Granddaughter into the hand of Alhaji Zubairu- a business mogul old enough to be her Grandfather. Though the commitment of the old woman was unacceptable to her son, Saleh who wants his daughter to continue with her studies

Hamsatu spoke of bread instead of love and chastity. Her desire to live the old ways cannot be questioned. She lived in the past unaware of the changing world. She clung to old beliefs by believing that marriage at a young age always carries with it good virtues. She single handedly lures Alhaji Zubairu into marrying her granddaughter by accepting the toshi. Though her life was short lived as events unfold in the plot of the novel, the sand storm which eclipses her life become another turning point in the novel. Her medical expenses which keep on increasing on a daily basis strangled the pocket of her son, Saleh to the extent that he borrows from close acquaintances could not suffice. Alhaji Zubairu, on the other hand carefully used the old woman's sickness to advantage. Ill-conceived donation from Alhaji Zubairu did not at all please Saleh who actually knows the reason of such devilish act. The old woman later died after much un-refundable waste of hard earned and borrowed money, Saleh was left to face the new situation.

The debts Saleh owed were numerous and he had no way of refunding them without any capital at his disposal to fall back on. Mallam Zubairu's money helped

him in no small way, he was even grateful that he knew a man like mallam Zubairu because when his mother died, his shop was not doing well and left alone, he may not have been able to afford the bills, that would have been a great shame on his entire family. In the statement of the problem above, Saleh was faced with the new realities of balancing the equation. He needed more money to offset his debt and restock his stall. He had no option but to go to Mallam Zubairu to get loan which was given to him without hesitation, Saleh was able to balance up again and Mallam Zubairu saw himself as already winning the race of approval.

A journey of million miles they say begins with a step, as usual, Mallam Zubairu knowing quite well the financial predicament of Saleh threw the issue of toshi received by his late mother who no longer had any hold over the destiny of Habiba. As expected, he refused to oblige and Mallam Zubairu had no option but to ask for the six hundred thousand naira which he borrowed Saleh and failing to repay meant handing his daughter Habiba in marriage to Zubairu. Saleh tries his best by working hard in order to repay the debt but all his efforts were not successful, he had no option but to give his precious daughter's hand in marriage to Mallam Zubairu.

Habiba cried day and night, tries to escape severally but all effort failed as she ends up marrying Zubairu against her will. Habiba's marriage to Zubairu marks the beginning of her destruction. Habiba became pregnant and gave birth to

a baby boy, Abba but she dislikes him because he is a product of Zubairu, she always leaves him with ummi and goes about her business, she is always in Rabi's section she didn't border whether the child cries or not . Habiba at the end of the novel is involved in homosexuality

3.2 INTERTROGATING THE NORTHERN NIGERIAN SOCIETY IN HABIBA

In Habiba, Razinat interrogates the effect of economic, social condition, poverty, problems of marriage, early marriage, forced marriage, denial of girl child education in Northern Nigerian Society. The novel is set in the heartland of Hausa society.

The novel begins by showing us how parents are very sensitive with the whereabouts of their children, they believe that immediately after school, a child should return to his/her home without wasting any time or branching anywhere, when this is not done, the parents seem to be very disturbed and awaits for the child's arrival. This can be seen when Habiba was appointed as class

representative, she is the last to leave the school. This frightens her because she is afraid of what will be waiting for her at home. She has to explain everything to her mother to avoid any problem.

The issue of oppression from mothers-in-law is seen in Habiba. Saleh's mother, Hamsatu not only control his life, she is also injurious to his family life. She is very harsh to his wife and children and even Saleh himself, she always complains about any little thing, she made kande's life miserable in her husband's house. Hamstu decides who her son should marry, when to divorce and the type of children his wife should bear. She forced Saleh to divorce kande with three pronouncements out of his will because she is unable to give birth to a male child who will take after her husband's name. Hamsatu when she says: *'This woman will fill your house with women (P.6)'*

Hamsatu dislikes Kande and her female children. This can be seen when Kande lost her baby girl, Hamsatu is not disturbed about it, and this shows how desperate she is with a male child. She says:

Cheer up, it is for the best, that is to say if

The child is truly dead, God the giver has

Taken back His gift (P.13)

Sadia, Saleh's new wife also suffers oppression from his mother, but in the case of Sadia, Hamsatu allows her to stay because she is able to produce a male child who will take her husband's name. Despite all the troubles Sadia went through with her mother in law, she respected and loved her until her death.

When Sadia brings her husband's food first without knowing that Hamsatu is awake, she complains when she says;

You have kept your husband's food first and I must faint

First, from waiting for the food that I am sure will not

Be palatable (P.21).

Hamsatu complains again after Sadia has served her meal, she complains about the meat that is in the food. She says;

What do you think I am? A dog or some kind

Of scavenger? Meat? Meat? Do you call bones

Meat now (p.22)

In Northern Nigerian society today, some women purposely refuse to marry any man whose mother is still alive in order to avoid any oppression from mothers-in-law.

Islam has laid down rules and regulations as regard to polygamy yet, men tend to see women as 'attires' that can be changed at will. Men like mallam Zubairu may not be quite ignorant of Islamic law on polygamy. In polygamous homes, women tend to suffer various degrees of maltreatment that include psychological and physical.

Men like mallam Zubairu want to show their superiority with their ability to marry and divorce at will. Mallam Zubairu's entourage of women namely Ramatu the first, Rabi the second and Hauwa the third, he is still not satisfied He immediately decides to marry Habiba to complete his home since he sees women as chattels

He was a chronic lover of women, he loved each

Woman for her special qualities. Sometimes, when

he was sitting alone, he would reflect on a different

reasons why he loved each woman and often he had

laughed to himself calling himself the old fox (p.115).

Mallam Zubairu's interest in Habiba is because of her young age, freshness and innocence. He wants to marry her because he wants to continue to look young, he dislike being old. This is why he thinks that:

To him, old age was something dreadful and a constant

Reminder of the fact that one was on the verge of

expiration. To handle that, he needed a blossoming

youth that he found in the girl Habiba (p.116).

Alhaji Bukar, Zubairu's friend had two wives and wanted to marry the third, Nana, Zubairu's daughter. Just like Zubairu, Alhaji Bukar also has eyes for young and fresh girls. He also wants to taste the sweetness of a young girl.

Denial of the girl child adequate access to education is also seen in Habiba. Education is no regarded as a necessity to the child. Hamsatu, Saleh's mother is against female education. She believes that when a female is educated, she will bring disgrace to her family and will become immoral. This can be seen when she says:

*I don't want Saleh to make mistake by allowing that
Daughter of Kende's to grow wild like Abubakar's
Daughter who brought shame to his family by getting
Pregnant all in the name of going to school (p.43).*

The novel gives an insight on how some female especially in Northern Nigeria society are deprived of their right to go to school, some of these girls are very talented, and when allowed to go to school can become very intelligent and helpful to the society. Because of some experience encountered by some parents they refuse to send their daughters to school in order not to bring shame to their family. This is why nowadays, you find female children being degraded, maltreated by their husbands. They tend to be disrespected by the people around them.

Hashimu, Maimuna's husband is also against western education. He has the same view with Hamsatu who believes that when a girl is educated, she will bring shame to her family by becoming pregnant and immoral. This resulted to a conflict between him and Saleh whose views were at total variance with his.

The issue of arranged marriage can be reflected in Habiba. Saleh's mother, Hamsatu secretly arranged for Habiba to get married to Zubairu without anyone's knowledge. She purposely invited Zubairu to their house in order to see the thirteen year old girl. She later informs Saleh when Zubairu's people were about to bring Habiba's toshi. Saleh is not happy with his mother decision, he respects and obeys her, he allows her to make decisions for him but this time he is not happy with her. He always obeys her because:

The prophet (peace be upon him) wishes that every

Child remains in the good book of his parents,

Especially the mother in order to receive the blessing

Of Allah (SWT) and Al-janna (paradise) (p.43).

Hamsatu made his life miserable by making him do things out of his will, by making decisions for him for example whom to marry, divorce, what children were accepted and what children were not.

On the other hand, Sadia, his wife is not happy with the way Saleh allows his mother to make decisions for him even if it is against his will. She says:

As much as Allah (SWT) wishes that we respect our

Parents, He would blame us for standing in wait and

Looking the other way while our parents did things

Wrongly. It is our responsibility to protect our own

Parents from eternal damnation when they use their

Powers or influence to oppress people in total

Obedience to them (p.44).

Saleh's family is affected in the prevailing economic hardship as a result of rainstorm which renders him hopeless and his mother takes ill, Saleh spent so much from his business and borrowing from friends to make sure that his mother's health is steady but Hamsatu eventually dies. After her death, Saleh's business began to collapse because he has spent a lot on his mother and had to repay his debt from what he gets from his shop. His family barely have food on the table.

Saleh's bankruptcy compelled him to take a loan of six hundred thousand from mallam Zubairu on condition that failing to repay means handing his daughter Habiba in marriage to Zubairu. This marks the beginning of Habiba's destruction; Habiba, who wanted to be educated, will now be given to an old man, old enough to be her grandfather.

It turns out that Habiba is not just paying for the wrongs of her father, but she has to carry the responsibility of his abandoned wife, Sadia and her children by

remaining married to Zubairu who is willing to assist them as long as she plays his game.

In Northern Nigerian society, the woman is seen as a chattel that can be bought and sold. In Habiba, the philosophy of wealth takes the order of the day. The feelings and happiness of a woman is irrelevant, what is relevant is what the woman can bring through her marriage into the family. Habiba is virtually sold out by her father and she hates him for this, how could her own father do this to her, she felt like stabbing him in order to prove the gravity of the betrayal.

The tradition of the Northern Nigerian society especially the Islamic religion is reflected in Habiba. When a Muslim dies, he/she is given a purify bath, wrapped in a white cloth and made ready for his/her final journey. He is then taken with a traditional stretcher used for the conveyance of the dead to its final resting place. Hamsatu is taken with makkara to her final resting place

Mallam Zubairu, the well fed African toad is very rich, highly unscrupulous and suffers from gross moral laxity. He truly believes that money can buy everything including true love and human happiness. Mallam Zubairu demonstrates his unscrupulous nature when he married his fourth wife, Habiba against her will and intends to buy Sadia with his wealth. The novel exposes the insatiable nature of randy old men. These rich men go after young girls for sexual

gratification. Mallam Zubairu a man of sixty-five years forcefully married Habiba, a mere child.

In addition, this novel gives an insight on how women are treated and their psychological problems, the travails of a woman forced into marriage and the unpleasant marital experiences of women grossly caused by the misconception of the Islamic religion. Saleh forcefully marries Habiba to Mallam Zubairu in order to repay his debts.

On the issue of forced marriage, Islam itself frowns at it. Islam has postulated law on marriages, before a marriage is conducted, there must be a representative of the woman (Wali), dower, secondly there must be the absence of illness which is to be proven and most importantly there must be the consent of both partners. Saleh clearly knows these rules, but he desperately wants to marry her off as the only solution to pay his debt.

The conception of children is perceived as the woman's. The brunt of childlessness is usually ascribed to the woman. The man in the place of Mallam Zubairu is not to be blamed but his second wife, Rabi who did not produce any child for him.

Contrary to the views of men in the Northern Nigerian Society, Islam takes care of a woman's needs, respect, love and tenderness as a wife, daughter, or mother. Unfortunately, the privileges given to women in Islam as interpreted by men are at a point of conflict. People like Mallam Zubairu tend to misinterpret the religious tradition and custom that have placed male supremacy over women

The issue of terrorism is portrayed in Habiba. Saleh, Mallam Garba and some men sat down and were discussing about recurrent bombing that were going on in the town and the new advancement in terrorism and the ease with which bombs are planted in crowded places like market places, places of worship, bars etc.

In Northern Nigerian Society today, bomb blast has become a daily activity. Millions of people have been killed over the years as a result of bomb blast. Many have become widows, orphans, childless and many have lost their loved ones. The situation is not getting any better but rather, worse day by day. The surprising thing is that these terrorist are given a little amount of money to perform this operation, some of them are females, and mostly are sent for suicide bombing, some are under age, too small to have the mind to do such things but are poisoned by a little amount of money.

Razinat also points out the issue of homosexuality in her novel.

Her hold on the soft bosom of the young

Mother had triggered off some primitive

Instinct in both women and rather than squeeze

The breast, the older one caressed tenderly and

Licked the milk meant for the infant, first with the tip

Of her tongue circling around the heavy breast until

She had the entire nipple in her mouth. The encouraging

Groans from the other had helped foster the liason

Until they had finally discovered the comfort of the

Bed (p.174).

Razinat shows the impact of forced and early marriage which leads young girls to become involved in homosexuality. Habiba detest her husband and cannot find comfort with him, She went in search of love and acceptance, thus ends up with her co-wife, Rabi and becomes involved in homosexuality

3.3

CONCLUSION

Razinat has touched almost all aspect the aspects of life in Northern Nigeria which need change. The introduction of new values has changed the ssociety from a quiet serene environment to a sophisticated one.

Razinat brings to the fore the socio-cultural plight and challenges that bedevil impoverished Northern Nigerian families and compel parents to scuttle their children's educational ambitions at very tender age in favour of marriage. Consistently, Razinat nails the dilemma of the young Habiba between loving and hating the adults in her life that have caused her pain, and the desire to avenge her lost dreams and ambition.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study has explored and exposed the social realities in Northern Nigeria through Razinat T Muhammad's novel, Habiba.

Razinat gives a panoramic insight of the realities in the Northern Nigerian society. Pointedly, it tells of the negative roles of marital matters. In addition, Saleh's kantin is used as a reflection on the poverty stricken nature of some Nigerians.

The psychological trauma women suffer, in a polygamous home and in a situation of forced and early marriage are explored in the novel, it examines the fate of women in a patriarchal society where the woman is considered to be a chattel. The misinterpretation of the Islamic religion has held the woman in bondage because men in the society use religion to demean their wives.

The novel also exposes some of the problems women go through in the hand of the mother-in law. The philosophy of wealth is also examined in Habiba. The rich people in the society use the power of money to get what they want, they even go to the extent of threatening poor people to get what they want, for example, the

case of Saleh who was unable to repay his debt. Mallam Zubairu threatened him to either pay or give out his daughter Habiba in marriage. The rich can go to the extent of buying ones love and trust; this can be seen in the case of Sadia.

The novel also shows the preference of male to a female child, some believe that if a house is full of female children, then that house is not complete because there will be nobody to take after the father's name. The novel also shows the effect of terrorism and how it has become rampant in our society.

Razinat pointed out issues in her novel which need change, she calls on parents not to marry their daughter off at tender age, she shows the effect of doing this in her novel Habiba.

Razinat also exposes the issue that whoever does right will have a good end. Saleh did wrong to his daughter by marrying her off to an old man despite the fact that Habiba rejected the idea as the only solution, Saleh ends up in exile.

Finally, in order to find the solutions to the problems of Nigerian society, among other issue raised, the novel suggests that women should be given access to education in order to avoid any problem that will arise.

4.1

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