WOMEN AS PERPETRATORS OF FEMALE VICTIMIZATION IN RAZINAT MOHAMMED'S *HABIBA*

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Abstract

Victimization exists in every aspect of human relationship. Most research findings in African literature usually identify men as the main perpetrators of women oppression, thereby downplaying the fact that women also carry out oppressive acts against their fellow women. This study, therefore, examines women as perpetrators of women subjugation in Razinat Mohammed's Habiba with a view to establishing that women also contribute to their ill-treatment and relegated status in the Nigerian society by victimizing one another. Habiba is purposely chosen for this study because of its portrayal of female characters that perpetrate oppression against fellow women. Foci-feminism is adopted as theoretical framework and the novel is subjected to textual analysis. This study discovers that, apart from being victims of men's oppression, women are agents of women oppression. Hamsatun, in Habiba, represents an oppressive female character who makes lives of other women around her miserable. This study concludes that men-to-women oppression saga in African society requires a painstaking re-examination in order to end all forms of oppression against women whether it is from inter- or intra-gender perpetrators.

Keywords: Foci-feminism, Intra-gender discourse, Razinat Mohammed, Gender discourse

Introduction

Literature of any society cannot be complete without women being in representation; this is owing to the indispensability of women to the sustainability of humanity. Representation of women in literary works varies from one cultural environment to another. It also depends on what is fashionable about women's life at the time of a literary production. It equally depends on the perception about women in a society in which such literary work exists.

Portraiture of women in literature is as old as literature itself. Women feature as important characters and play significant roles in both oral and written literary materials. Prejudiced perception of women by men determines how they are treated in African society. This perception explains why women usually play "second fiddle" to men in every sphere of life – economy, politics, social and even religion (Nwabueze, 2016, p.83). Description of women by ancient Greek and Roman writers, Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas respectively validates this point. Aristotle opines that a female is a female because she lacks certain qualities which a male possesses. Aquinas (1974, p.218) describes a woman as an imperfect man. He substantiates his opinion about the woman by stressing that "the woman is subject to the man on account of the weakness of her nature, both of the mind and of the body … Man is the beginning of woman and her end, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature …". The description of women in the above expression clearly betrays Aquinas' relegation for women. In Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, women are depicted negatively. To the above-mentioned writers and most of their contemporaries, women are inferior beings and "harbingers of misfortune" (Evwierhoma, 2002, p.53). In fact, to them, women are always the cause of men's ill luck and do not have any good thing to offer beyond child-bearing.

Image of women in the pre-colonial Africa is still under contention. While some scholars like (Kolawale, 1997), (Akorede, 2011), (Krama, 2006) among others argue that women wielded great influence and were not oppressed as some critics sing it, (Amaefula, 2016) vehemently disapproves of that opinion by

asserting that such influence amounts to insignificance when juxtaposed with the weight of the men's influence in that period. Portraiture of women is not only noticed in written literary materials but women also feature as important characters in its oral counterpart. Akorede (2011, p.64) concurs with this view by stating that "the oral traditions of most African communities confirm the active roles of women in the socio-economic running of the indigenous African societies". She substantiates her position by emphasizing that women function meaningfully in the African oral narratives and poetry, which are among the major means of acculturation and socialization, evident in female characters in African indigenous folktales, legends, myth, proverbs, stories, oral poetry, etc. Evwierhoma (2002, p.84) corroborates Akorede's view when she observes that "African oral tradition and history are full of the exploits of … women". Akorede (2011, p.64-65) further illustrates that in the "oral history of the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Fon of Benin Republic, the Kikuyu of Kenya, and the Ashanti, the Akin speaking people of modern-day Ghana showed that the non-literate African women occupy very important positions in the political and economic administration of their different society." The historical accounts of many African communities clearly attest to the important roles played by women in the management of their communities. In the pre-colonial era, the influence of women in the religious, socio-political and economic settings confirms their relevance to the society. Women occupy very sensitive socio-political positions in Yoruba, western part of Nigeria. I*ya-Oba, Iyalode, Iya-Kere, Iyaloja* are some of the titles of female kings and chiefs who were known for their remarkable influences in their various areas. There are also Yeye-Sorun in Akure, Basorun in Oyo, Lobun in Ondo, to mention but a few influential positions of women in different areas of that region. Ogunshakin (1976, p.56) notes that "the Lobun is the woman chief, who supervises markets and plays an important role in installing the Oba". There is Magira (Queen mother) in Borno who also left an indelible footprint about what the existence of women should be not only in the Northern Nigeria but also anywhere around the world.

Religious posts held by women in the pre-colonial era show that relevance of women goes beyond domestic domain. Women preside over the worship of gods as priestesses and exert great influence in that sphere. *Iya Leori, Iya Lemole, Iya Naso, Iya-fin-iku* are some of the religious titles confer on women in the western part of Nigeria. Akorede (2011, p.70) reveals that even though "Ifa worship is a semi-secret and predominantly male cult", Iya Lemole was the "head of the Babalawos (Ifa priests) in the city" (Johnson, 1921, p.64).

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, the positions of the woman as *Ezenwanyi* (female king) and also as priestess confirm that women's relevance goes beyond family circle. Umuada and Ndiyom are women groups whose impact in the administration of their indigenous communities cannot be undermined. The post of Chielo as the priestess of *Agbala* in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is an attestation to this influential religious position a woman can occupy in Igbo society. Chika is also a priestess that is greatly respected and revered for her possession of spiritual authority. It is clearly observed that "many years ago, when Okonkwo was still a boy his father, Unoka, had gone to consult *Agbala.* The priestess in those days was a woman called Chika. She was full of the power of her god, and she was greatly feared" (Achebe, 1958, p.13).

Earlier before the encounter between Unoka and the priestess, it is made clear that "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children" (Achebe 1958, p.11). The above description portrays Okonkwo as a stern personality whose verdict to any matter is final. However, despite such austere disposition, he could not insist that Chielo (a woman and priestess of Agbala) should not take Ezima to the god in the night. In fact, it is obviously stated that "Okonkwo pleaded with her to come back in the morning because Ezimma was now asleep" (p.80). But when Chielo ignores what he is trying to say, the authoritative and harsh Okonkwo that would have roared like a lion as he usually does to his wives and children at any minor provocation starts pleading. This is because he is conscious of her

position as a spiritual authority, and cautious of the implication of arguing with her.

Kolawole (1997, p.43) notes that "there is a catalogue of African women rulers and leaders who have charted their people's history in a remarkable way while the marks left by collective group actions remain indelible". Some of these women include Madam Tinubu of Lagos, Efunsetan of Ibadan, and many others who through individual and collective effort display higher level of intelligence, discretion, and activism in the management of societal affairs. Johnson (1921) observes that the oral histories of the Africans show that the pre-literate African women were strong and respectable people. On the image of African women in the pre-colonial era, Akorede (2011, p.75) asserts that women of that period: [R]ubbed shoulders with their male counterparts in the political and economic administration of the society. Pre-colonial African women, especially among the Ashante and Yoruba … were not mere appendages to their men in the socio-political and economic spheres of existence. Women held important political positions successfully before the advent of the Europeans.

Akorede's last statement, "women held important political positions successfully before the advent of the Europeans", suggests that women witness a shift, from positive to negative, with regard to their status in the colonial period. This shift also reflects in the image of women in the earlier stage of African literature (its written form) which was mostly pioneered by men writers. At that earlier stage, "the portrayal of women in African literature is greatly influenced by the beliefs and values attached to the female in the society. In most male dominated society like Africa, women are usually regarded as servants of men within and outside the family unit" (Akorede, 2011, p.114). This servitude against women becomes worse with the introduction of colonial system of government in Africa.

It is true that all Africans suffered the consequences of colonialism, but the negative impacts were more on women. Their voice dwindled as the effects of colonialism create nagging distress for all but heaps piles of burden on them. The negative impacts of

colonialism, to a greater extent, constitutes encumbrance to their development and self-actualisation. The colonial masters give prominence to men by allotting important duties to them while women are plunged into dungeon of silence and invisibility by the denigrating roles assigned to them. Colonialism as a "hydra headed phenomenon" constitutes a great setback for the woman especially in the socio-political and economic aspects of the society (Nkechi Nwankwo,1996, p.15). Parpart and Standt (1989, p.201) agree with this view when they stress that: For most African women, the colonial period was characterized by insignificant losses in both power and authority. Colonial officials accepted western gender stereotypes which assigned women to the domestic domain leaving economic and political matters to men. Although many African suffered under colonialism, new opportunities eventually appeared for them while women's economic and political rights often diminished.

The relevance of women began to wane in the colonial period. The colonial masters betray their relegation for women by the function they assigned to them in offices, colonial residences and religious centres. In these places, women were only allowed to devotedly carry out domestic works like cooking, cleaning, and most importantly help the colonizers to sexually ease themselves after the day's stress.

Treatment of women by the colonial masters seems to be worse in the political domain. In the system of indirect rule, men were given prominence by the colonizers while women were totally excluded. This point is substantiated by Chukukere (1995, p.4) who reveals that the "colonial officers regrettably failed to perceive the political contributions of women, believing that politics is a man's exclusive domain. Consequently, warrant chiefs symbols of the destructive elements of indirect rule were created and women particularly suffered under their arbitrary jurisdiction". It is deducible from the position of Chukukere that women, who were active participants in the management affairs of their various communities in the pre-colonial era, were excluded by the colonizers in the colonial era. Perhaps, they have low regard for

women and have doubt about their managerial capabilities. This seems to mean that relegation for women has its root with the colonizers and it was glaringly introduced into the colonized continent like Africa during the colonial period. This idea is corroborated by Omonubi-McDonnel (2003, p.10) when she asserts that: Colonialism was disengaging experience that obliterated and stifled the voice of African women. The circuitous control created a gender-oriented executive establishment that endures in spite of colonization. The British government's socio-economic approaches that handicapped women and the political arrangement that empower men to rule women are continually blamed for the current disadvantaged status of women in Africa.

The above opinion is an attestation to the fact that every African suffered pathetically during colonial regime but the consequences were heavier on the African woman. The colonizers did not have any positive consideration for women. Colonialism just like patriarchy relegated the African woman to the background. Patriarchy encourages gender inequality and it is characterized by the male dominating system where the female is subordinate (Ibrahim, 2016, p.476). It prefers and privileges males in every aspect of life. It denigrates women and results to all kinds of oppression against them. This has spurred Nigerian female novelists to use their works to show their disapproval of unjust treatment against women; they employ their literary works to engage in what Canice Nwosu (2016, p.168) describes as "feminist crusade", which is targeted at ending all forms of oppression against women whether it is perpetrated by men or women. Among these Nigerian female writers is Razinat Mohammed who uses *Habiba* to expose all forms of oppression against northern Nigerian women in order to canvass for a positive change in the way women are generally treated by both men and women in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework: Focu-Feminism

Focu-feminism is a model of feminism proposed by Onyeka Iwuchukwu in 2015. Iwuchukwu refutes the notion of blaming

men, patriarchy and tradition as the only sources of female oppression. While she admits that men perpetrate oppression against women, she equally acknowledges that women are also primary agents of female subjugation. She believes that although oppressive structures in most cases are entrenched in the culture of the society, but women are usually the agents for implementation; they hide behind the mask of culture or convention to justify their oppressive actions against fellow women. For this reason, Iwuchukwu insists that feminist fight for the rights of women should be extended to women who are also agents of women oppression.

Focu-feminists believe that there are other forms of oppression and subjugation carried out by women against fellow women that are not forced on women by men, culture or tradition -- detesting relationships some women have with their maids, sisters, mothers, daughters, sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law, fellow female traders, fellow office female colleagues among others. Men, tradition or patriarchy cannot be held responsible for squabbles among women of these categories. Women in these categories are primary conspirators or perpetrators of oppression against their fellow women. A woman as "mother-in-law, sister-in-law or the other woman outside [concubine]" is usually responsible for most broken homes (Iwuchukwu, 2015, p.87). Some mothers and grandmothers, in the same vein, contribute to the ordeals of their daughters and granddaughters either by omission or commission. The pathetic experience of Mohammed's protagonist in *Habiba* is a good example to substantiate this point. Habiba's grandmother is the primary conspirator behind her oppression.

Focu-feminism upholds that "oppression and subjugation of women comes in different forms, shapes, and magnitudes predicated by each woman's cultural background and circumstance" (Iwuchukwu, p.77). Each woman is, therefore, required to "focus on herself, her peculiar circumstances, and cultural background for liberation from perceived oppression, for empowerment and self-actualization" (Iwuchukwu, p.77). It emphasizes that every woman requires to harnessing her inward

abilities and employ a strategy she considers most appropriate for overcoming oppression of any kind whether perpetrated by a man or a woman. The factor that necessitated the emergence of focu-feminism is that none of the already existing models of feminist theory has been able to put into consideration the role of women in the perceived oppression against women; this communicates a lacuna in feminist scholarship and focu-feminism was proposed to fill this gap.

Some Responses to Women's Portraiture in Nigerian Literary Works

The notion that pioneer African male authors misrepresented the woman in their earlier literary works, is common with some critics like Chikwenye Ogunyemi, Obioma Nnaemeka, Chioma Opara, Modupe Kolawole, Joy Eyisi, Chinoso Okolo, Florence Stratton, among others. This notion, according to them, is informed by the derogatory and insignificant roles assigned to female characters in the earlier works of male authors. They portray female characters whose existence is tied to the service of men in their lives -father, husband, son, and male relatives. Emecheta (1976, p.28) sums up the contrast perceptions on both men and women thus: "it is so even today in Nigeria: when you have lost your father, you have lost your parents. Your mother is only a woman, and women are supposed to be boneless. A fatherless family is a family without parents, in fact a non-existing family. Such traditions do not change very much." Emecheta, in the above juxtaposition, draws a sharp contrast between relegation of women's personhood and promotion of men's dignity in a male-privileged society like Africa. In that kind of society, the woman suffers double yoke of motherhood and wifehood. This study contends that the view of some critics on the perceived relegation of women by pioneer African male authors is not true if the realities of women's lives as at the time in which those male authors wrote, is meticulously subjected to scrutiny. It is important to note that struggle against colonialism, projection of African esteemed cultural heritage, protection of African dignity as well as defence against

inferiorization of Africa and Africans, which orchestrated the production of most of the pioneer literary works, should not be overlooked while making such argument. It appears that such critics fail to consider the above-mentioned factors which inspired the male writers to use literature as a weapon of resistance against the selfish superiority tendencies of the colonizers.

The writers could not have avoided these interventionist roles and such matter of exigency, which were very sensitive to African evolving history to other issues that were considered less-pressing. Whoever that does that at that time, would become "completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeting from the flames" (Achebe 1975, p.78). It is worthy of note that image of women as portrayed in those pioneer texts was not in any way different from the realities of their existence in such patriarchal domain at that time. In a male-centered society like Nigeria, relevance of women is defined by cultural biddings. The woman's experience in the colonial era, which could be described as a period of transition for all Africans in general and the African woman in particular, was different from what it became 'later and now'. For instance, unlike women in the pre-colonial era, any woman that is struggling with difficulty in having a child now has options like adoption, In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) among others. In a case of a hellish marriage, "walk away" could be a better option for the contemporary woman. Such options were not available to the woman at the time in which the pioneer male authors wrote. Ekwefi's act in *Things Fall Apart*, is a very rare case. She courageously runs out of an unfavourable marriage to a desirable one with Okonkwo, a resourceful man of title, wealth and honour in Umuofia.

Some critics frown at what they perceive as an act of relegation for a female character known as Anasi in *Things Fall Apart*. In one of those occasions of Okonkwo's visit to Nwakibie, wine is presented to the guest in which the host has to share. Nwakibie invites his wives to partake in the drinking of the wine. It is revealed that Anasi, his first wife "walked up to her husband and accepted the horn from him. She then went down on one knee**,**

drank a little and handed back the horn" (Achebe, 1958, p.16). Such critics disapprove of the way in which the author makes Anasi to 'go down on one of her knees'. They interpret it to mean relegation on the woman. For this study, the action of kneeling down to collect the wine from her husband does not mean relegation on the woman; it is simply the culture of the people. Kneeling down or prostrating to somebody in most Nigerian communities does not mean denigration; it is simply an expression of culture. For instance, the people (both men and women) of Ajana and Pandagi communities in Abaji Area council in Abuja squat to greet their traditional chief. This does not mean relegation on the individuals; they are simply fulfilling a cultural obligation of giving recognition and respect to their chief based on his office as the community head. Razinant Mohammed, in a more recent text, puts this in a better perspective. It is noticed that in the northern Nigeria where culture is "patriarchal and fundamentally oppressive … [and where] a woman is silenced, unheard, because she is not supposed to be self-assertive" (Hauwa Salihu, 2014, p.48), Mallam Zubairu "brought himself to squat in respect before … [the woman, Hamsatu]" (Mohammed, 2013, p.31). He squats before the elderly woman as a sign of respect for her. It does not mean that the author relegated him; it is simply the people's culture.

The pioneer authors use their works to show what culture of different African communities entails for both men and women as at the era they wrote. In a case of a hellish marriage for instance, some culture requires a woman to remain there even after the death of the man (husband). This explains why Mallan Ilu in Sefiya Yero's *Naja* has the audacity to tell his youngest wife, Naja, "… you will have to live as my wife till the day I die. Even when I'm dead, I'll still have the pleasure of holding on to you …" (Yero, 2019, p.71). Against this backdrop, this study contends that pioneer Nigerian male authors do not intentionally portray women in a negative light. They use their works to show what the culture of the people stipulates for women at the time they wrote; the

woman's negative portraiture is not a literary invention of the male authors.

However, Ramonu Sanusi (2015, p.12-13), in reacting to the perceived battered image of women in the works of pioneer writers, insists that the female writers should engage in "attacking patriarchal traditions and striving to create positive images for African women, these writers sought to bring women out of invisibility". The primary duty of such writers is to create through their writings a balance space that would encourage the African woman to assert her individuality and specifically prove her humanness. Evwierhoma (2002, p.4) agrees with Sanusi when he insists that female writers should engage in "depicting characters [that are] … making great exploits in [literary texts as an indication of their readiness to changing the status quo]". While carrying out this duty, female authors do not totally exonerate women from the oppression saga; they use their works to clearly show that although women are victims of patriarchal system, "where men rule and women take instructions" (Olaitan and Omobolanle, 2015, p.180), women sometimes contribute to this unjust system by becoming primary agents of victimization of other women; this needs to be changed. This is the thesis of Razinat Mohammed in *Habiba*.

Women as Agents of Victimization of Other Women in Razinat Mohammed's *Habiba*

Women in the fictional Maiduguri in *Habiba* like women in most northern Nigerian communities are confronted by lack of regard for female children, preference for male children, forced child marriage, economic disempowerment, domestic violence, as well as discrimination in political and religious spheres of the society. It is true that men exert unhealthy domination over women but what is worse than the domination and its attendant subjugation is when it is enforced by a woman against a fellow woman. This is the experience of Habiba, the protagonist of the novel. Her grandmother, Hamsatu is cast in the image of a victimizer to point out that women are not only victims of men's domination, but also victimizers of other women. Kande, Ummi, Sadia, and Habiba are

all victims of Hamsatu's bias for male children and detest for female children.

Hamsatu has six girls and a boy (Saleh). She has the fear that "her husband's name would terminate if he did not have sons in the lineage to carry on his family name" (p.7). This makes her to become anxious of getting a wife for Saleh. With this aim in mind, she finds Kande at a very young age to marry Saleh, her seventeen-year-old son. Kande has three female children only. Having been disappointed in Kande for not giving birth to at least a male child, she forces Saleh to kick her out of his house. She warns Saleh, "[t]his woman will fill your house with women [if you do not send her away]" (p.6). Even though it could be argued that Hamsatu's action is caused by the already existing patriarchy that places more value on males and lesser worth on females in the Nigerian society, but her reaction is complacent. The query of this study is, if women are not valued by men beyond procreation to sustain the continuity of men's names and lineages on earth, why should women not accept themselves for whom they are? Why should they join force with men to disgustedly reject womanhood in the manner Hamsatu has done? Hamsatu juxtaposed with Toundi, Vincent Egbuson's protagonist in *Love My Planet*, is a primitive and complacent woman whose worth for womanhood is unacceptably low. Little wonder she exerts oppressive acts towards fellow women. She is the exact opposite of Toundi who declares, "I know to accept myself for what I am. I'm a woman. I'm proud [that I am] (Egbuson, 2008, p.85). Toundi's position in the above expression clearly shows an individual whose worth for self and womanhood is not determined by other people's opinion but by personal conviction.

Hamsatu does not consider the negative implication of the child-marriage on the destiny of innocent Kande. She is only interested in getting her expectation of male child met to the detriment of her daughter-in-law. Little wonder Kande refers to her third child (girl) as "bundle of unhappiness"; this is because of the pain of having only female children has caused her (p.7). This experience makes her feel that there is nothing "more wonderful in

this world than to give birth to a male child and be loved and spoilt by both your husband and his mother" (p.7). Hamsatu pushes a fellow woman out of her matrimonial home with her oppressive attitude. Hamsatu's portraiture as a victimizer reveals the author's focu-feminist posture; she uses the female character to illustrate that beyond agitation against men-to-women oppression, women need to re-examine themselves in order to cultivate the right attitude to changing their situation. The position of this study is not to refute the fact that women suffer in phallocentric environment; it is its opinion that oppression-against-women saga is already an old cap and is fast fizzling out in both physical and literary world. It is dissipation of energy for individuals and groups engaging in this agitation if the women have not lived up to the adage, 'charity begins at home'. If the women have not loved and accepted one another, what justifies their demand for love and acceptance from men in the larger society?

Hamsatu makes the life of every woman around her miserable. Sadia, her second daughter-in-law is also a victim of her oppressive attitude. She makes Sadia's marriage frustrating by dictating what happens in her matrimonial home. There is nothing Sadia does that is "right in the eyes of her mother-in-law" (p.54). In fact, she "felt so sorry for the household; they were all victims of the old woman's hideous manipulations" (p.43). This lack of love and acceptance for fellow women on the side of Hamsatu is obvious in the way she relates with other female characters in the novel. She neither considers their feelings nor their opinions in any matter. An instance is seen in the way she rejects all attempt made by Sadia to dissuade her from forcing innocent Habiba into early marriage as revealed in the conversation between the two women. Sadia tells Hamsatu, "I think you are not right to get her marries off so young" (p.43). She, instead of considering the opinion, rather reminds her that, "[a]t her age, I was already a mother" (p.43). This indifferent and inconsiderate attitude for other women's opinion abruptly ends the conversation and Habiba is at the receiving end.

Hamsatu insists that Habiba should not go to school but be married off at the age of seventeen. She is one of those women in the northern Nigeria that rigidly believe that a girl-child has no destiny other than marriage and child-bearing. Such women have an erroneous belief that "young girls must be married off as soon as they experience their first sign of womanhood" (p.49). Hamsatu single-handedly initiates a marriage between her granddaughter, Habiba and Mallam Zubairu who already has grandchildren that are of the same age as Habiba. She does this without Habiba's consent or that of her father. She forces her into a tormenting marriage that swallows her voice, shattered her educational dream and ends her destiny. Habiba's marriage to Mallam Zubairu is a prison and what is more painful is that it is masterminded by her fellow woman.

Furthermore, the attitude of the following female characters - Rabi, Hajara, Hauwa, Salamatu, and Mamu to their fellow woman, Aisha, substantiates the position of this study that women also perpetrate oppression against one another. They are all first wives of their husbands. They are close friends and do not accept other women in their group. They betray their hatred for other women with their hostile attitudes towards the co-wife of Maimuna and second wife of Hashimu. It is revealed that: "When Hashimu had married Aisha, they … without having met the new bride, each one of them had hated the girl; even before they had the chance to meet her for the first time. Since then, they had had nothing to do with her because they all belong to the first wife kind of club" (p.91). They refer to other wives apart from themselves as "tenants" (92). This suggests non-acceptance of other women. Mohammed, through *Habiba*, proposes a positive change of every kind of hostile attitude against women. This would not only promote healthy human relationship, but also would facilitate societal development.

Conclusion

This paper has examined women as agents of victimization of other women in Razinat Mohammed's *Habiba*. Built on the

premise of focu-feminism, this study reveals Mohammed's position about the struggle for women's rights and welfare in Nigerian society. While she does not refute the fact that women are victims of patriarchal traditions which encourage male domination over women, it is her view that women also perpetrate unjust acts against fellow women. The depiction of female characters who are primarily responsible for other women's ordeal establishes her conviction and shows her advocacy for a positive change in the way women treat one another. For this study, it is a self-deceit for women to clamour for acceptance and fairness from men in the larger society when they have not truly demonstrated such acceptance and fairness for one another in the female intra-gender covert. It argues that it is not enough for women liberationist movements to demand better treatment for women in African/Nigerian society, it is necessary for them to engage in the task of enlightening the women to positively change their attitudes to one another. Mohammed's proposal is significant to the realisation of this task through a focu-feminist leaning of *Habiba*.

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