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Authorial Pessimism in Northern Nigerian Female Character Portrayal: A Study of Razinat T. Mohammed's *Habiba*

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Abstract

*The study examines the authorial pessimism in Northern Nigerian literature, particularly in relation to the portrayal of women. The region's literary landscape has been marked by a diverse range of narratives that reflect the socio-cultural challenges faced by women in a predominantly conservative society. Through an analysis of Razinat Mohammed's *Habiba*. The study aims to shed light on the nuanced representation of women and their experiences. Highlighting the interplay between the author, society and the narrative. Using Tomkins' Affect Theory (1991) especially the nine effects. The study showcases instances of pessimism; where women are depicted as marginalised, oppressed and restricted by patriarchal structures. Mohammed's *Habiba* explore the themes of forced marriage, limited educational opportunity, and societal expectations that confine women to traditional roles. The study finds out that Mohammed becomes a pessimistic author in order to critique the societal structures, norms and progress through human nature that is inherently flawed, and selfish. It also contributes to a broader understanding of the complexities surrounding women's lives in the region. The study underscores the importance of satire in literature as a platform for exploring societal issues and promoting discussions on gender related issues and women hopelessness.*

Key Words: Pessimism, Women, Patriarchy, Northern Nigeria, hopelessness

Introduction

The creation of a work of art is a human action, and it is by the presence of intention that we distinguish actions from other behaviour. An action is what is done

on purpose as oppose to what is been done by accident, reflex or through autonomic process. Authors have authority over the meaning of their words because their words have value only when connected to



the author's intention. The author's intention is classified into three according to John Farrell's *The Varieties of Authorial Intentions*, thus; communicative intentions, practical intentions and artistic intentions. Communicative intentions are the author's communicative actions which are the most basic ones – they provide the meaning that comprises the work's information content and make it a work. It has a simple, fixed criterion of success. All that communicative intentions require is that a competent reader be able to recognise what they are. If you recognise what I intend by each of the sentences in this book, getting their drift in the light of the whole, my communicative intentions have succeeded (36-37). Practical intentions are that intentions that motivate the composition of literary works. By definition, they seek some impact on the author's condition or the condition of the world around him that goes beyond the simple recognition of meaning by the reader. Authors compose with various egoistic or idealistic ambitions in mind.: to impress others, give them pleasure, earn a living, gain status, sexual opportunities, the power to influence opinion, change the world, or keep the world the same (38). Artistic intentions, mean the author's attempts to provide a valuable reading experience by creating literary effects – to move, amuse, perplex, inspire, instruct, or infuriate the reader, using all means at hand – verbal skill, mastery of structure, imagery, metaphor, narrative forms and genres, or the flouting of any of these (39).

Having known that an author can have three different intentions that can be interwoven in his/her work. It would not be wrong if we arrived at a point that a literary text is the outcome and creation of the collective views and philosophy of an author. Since the authors are at liberty to create their stories imaginatively; hence an author can decide to portray his characters either in an optimistic or pessimistic light. Pessimism, as explained by the *Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica*, is an attitude of hopelessness towards life and towards existence, coupled with a vague general opinion that pain and evil predominate in the world. Pessimism is the antithesis of optimism, an attitude of general hopefulness, coupled with the view that there is a balance of good and pleasure in the world (para 1).

Pessimism, however, is not involved with the absence of hope at all. It may locate its object of hope and of appraisal in a region beyond ordinary experience and existence. Authorial pessimism, therefore, refers to the outlook or attitude of an author regarding human condition, society, or the world at large. Pessimism, typically manifests in their works especially through the themes, narratives, and character developments which is the focus of this paper. Authors that are pessimist in their works mostly focus on the aspect of human nature, societal critique, isolation and alienation, ambiguity and lack of resolution, and finally existential themes. The aim of this paper is to look at authorial pessimism as an aspect of human



nature hence a societal critique. Razinat Talatu Mohammed, a northern Nigerian author happened to represent her characters via the pessimistic light. In her text titled *Habiba*, Mohammed becomes a pessimistic author by critiquing the societal structures, norms and progress through human nature that is inherently flawed, and selfish. She emphasized on the themes of despair, futility, and an inevitability of suffering.

As a northern Nigerian author, it will be of utmost importance to explained what is northern Nigeria and its type of literature. Northern Nigeria, a land of culture, warmth and vibrant traditions is one of the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The region is known for its diverse culture, and homogeneous entity. The region consists of Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists; who share similar cultures, attitudes and physical traits; where the Hausa language serves as the region's lingua franca. The language of Hausa is spoken in almost all the ethnic communities that make up the region (Abuakar Othman & Razinat Mohammed's *Re-thinking the Woman ...* 198).

It is pertinent, therefore, to ask, what, and where is northern Nigeria? What ideological thread keeps these diverse people with different cultures, and languages together to qualify as united? This ambiguity in concept makes it more difficult to

define the term northern Nigeria and Northern Nigerian literature.

The Northern Nigeria is been defined by the Premier of the region, Sir, Ahmadu Bello in a speech delivered by him in March 1959 on the occasion of the attainment of self-government by the Northern Region. The definition is captured by Abdulkadir as quoted in Ismail A. Tsigas' *Traversing the Worlds of Literature, History and Identity: Life Writing in Northern Nigeria*," thus:

The Northern Region, as it is today, is the product of three main factors: Geography, History and Character of the people. I need not expand on this, but I must emphasised that these three factors have produced a real feeling of unity amongst the people who inhabits our Region. We have divergences in custom, religion and language. But we have emerged and progressed out of the stage in the life of a People where such differences constitute a barrier to unity. We have sought for unity, not uniformity (15).

To John Sani Illah, in *Without a Spare Tyre ... : The Interstices of Literature in Northern Nigeria*," the North and northern Nigeria have been redefined through the lens of colonial history and the provisions of



the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic. The 1999 constitution has exacerbated the emergence of new divisions by officially acknowledging the scrambling of the regions as 'geopolitical zones', leading to increased identity conflicts and reshuffling thus the creation of North Central, North East and North West in the north (57-58).

Illah, further explains that; the North boasts of an extensive heritage. Its historical evolution has seen the emergence of numerous empires and kingdoms that have left a profound mark on its landscape. These include the Hausa City-States, the Kwararafa Empire, the Borno Empire, the Igala Kingdom, the Nupe Kingdom, and more recently, the Sokoto Caliphate. These entities were not merely monarchies; they embodied epic tales, praises, archetypal figures, poetic expressions, and myth-making. They encompassed galloping horses, clashing swords, severed heads, human foibles, and tragedy. These kingdoms rose and fell, carrying with them their narratives and symbols, shaping the region's rich history (58). In the same light, Abdulrazaq M. Katibi and Aliyu O. Ahmad's "*Northernism in Northern Nigerian Literature: A Study of al-Yaquti's 'Abaratul-Amal'*", see Northern Nigeria as a geopolitical entity, before the amalgamation, as a self-governing section within what is now Nigeria. This area exhibited unique characteristics setting it apart from other regions. Prior to becoming a protectorate between 1900 and 1913, it boasted distinct customs, foreign relationships, an educational system, and security structures. The diverse

ethnic groups, originating from various socio-cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, possessed a collective identity and ideology that found expression in political, social, economic, cultural, and linguistic aspects of life (27). In order to preserve this identity, literature must take a centre stage because "... it preserves the ideals of the people, connect individuals with the larger society and relieves writers and readers from the pressure of emotion. ... literature in the North reflects the socio-cultural and political ideology of Northern Nigeria regardless of the linguistic and religious diversities (27-28)". In essence, literature portrays the identity of its writers as they showcase their socio-cultural nuances of their respective environment through fiction.

Discussing the literature of a people or a nation equates to discussing their identity. Conversations about identity inevitably lead to discussions of literature and, more broadly, culture. It prompts the questions about who we are as a nation, a group, or a cultural collective. What distinguishes us in terms of our defining features, cultural and linguistic connections, values, behaviour patterns, or even physical attributes from those who do not belong to our group? (Yakubu A. Nasidi, *Literature and Identity in Northern Nigeria*, 193)

Identity, according to Bennet and Morris as quoted in Suleiman A. Jaji's "*Prose and Identity in Northern Nigeria: The Antecedents, Contexts and Implications for Literature in*



Northern Nigeria”, revolves around the assertion of unity, emphasizing unity over diversity and pluralism. It represents an ongoing, not fixed condition of an individual or social group, involving the development and appreciation of one’s self within that person or group, with a focus on maintaining sameness and continuity of that individual or group across time (281). Jaji, further pointed out that identity is “instituted through a play of differences, constituted in and through the multiple relations to other identities. Identity derives its meaning and distinction from what it is not, what it excludes, or its position of distinction in the field of difference (282)”. For Anne Holden Ronning as quoted in Abdul-Rasheed Na’Allah’s, *“Literature, History and Identity: Theories, Contents and Perspectives”*, sees cultural identity as the outcome of a process in which individuals or group assess their position in society, either consciously or subconsciously, and strive to build self-esteem and self-assurance. This, in turn, empowers them to embrace their role in both life and society. This concept encompasses recognizing our uniqueness in comparison to others while forging a new sense of belonging (3-4).

Similarly, Saleh Abdu’s *“Filling up the Northern Nigerian Space in Literature: What Role for the Literary Critic?”*, sees Northern Nigeria as a ‘Space’, which is borrowed from Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994). Abdu expatiates that the Northern space of references should be acknowledged as existing outside the scope of a “historical critical gaze”, or a “central causal

logic”. Instead, it is a space that emerges from the fusion of cultural formations and social processes (28). Literature, therefore, should be seen as a creative intervention by individuals, that not only disrupts the cultural landscape but also weaves it together, giving rise to the formation and transformation of cultures, identities, communities, and nations. Drawing from Bhabha’s analysis of hybridized Third World People’s, Abdu perceives Northern writers as a means of collecting the present and reconstructing the past in order to safeguard the future (29). In order to give this postulation a bearing and geared into practice, Munzali Jibril as quoted in Abdu, acknowledge the evolvement of literature in English in the north as a new genre in a seminal critical essay in 1990 through the following statement:

A new generation of creative writers from the north who may chose English as their medium of expression... Our prayer is that this new literature should be truly new both in style and theme and should not start from where the southern Nigerian literature started by mourning our beautiful past but should proceed 30 years forward and explore relatively virgin areas like the ugly past and the ugly present, from which we may



learn to construct a truly beautiful future (31).

Moreover, Illah, portrays literature as a series of storylines, carried out by characters using imagery. He sees writing as a "transaction of consciousness, as the writer can only depict what is in his routine consciousness (68)". Hence, the portrayal of Igbo culture in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the Yoruba history and mythology in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, and the Hausa and Islamic culture in Tahir's *The Last Imam* respectively. Illah, further emphasizes the reason why Edward Said's *Orientalism*, focus on allowing people to narrate their own stories, experiences and history in its original form. If not, "... others will write you out or paint you according to what is homologous to their authorial ideology (68)", which are mostly based on stereotypes and perspective based on the writer's culture. Literature, therefore, revolves around the idiosyncrasies of the writers resonating from their respective cultures thus the literary identity.

Indeed, the literature of Northern Nigeria has a unique identity weaved by the early writers of the region such as Abubakar Imam, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Mohammed Bello, and Mohammed Gwarzo (Othman and Mohammed, 198). Equally important are the writers' individual beliefs, unique qualities, and convictions regarding their own identities and creative personas. Does Zaynab Alkali

consciously and purposefully write as a Hausa or Hausa/Fulani? Similarly, does Abubakar Gimba draw inspiration from his Nupe or Islamic worldview? What are the significant Okun-Yoruba influences on the socio-aesthetics of Olu Obafemi's literature? The broader post-colonial demands of Nigerian literature influence the fundamental literary output of these authors without necessarily diminishing the shared elements of history and experience ... (Olu Obafemi's *Problematizing Northern Nigerian Literature* ... 7). These writers mentioned above share some common experience thus share some similarities in their narratives.

Coming back to today's generation of northern Nigerian creative writers, from the early 20th century, we see works that focus on broad societal knowledge, "adaptations and profundity of insight (Abubakar, 24)". These Northern Nigerian writers have an extensive knowledge of their societal history and their society's relationship with other societies. Being knowledgeable about such issues make them "transcended the limitation of antiphony and in this respect, these categories of Northern Nigerian writers were not different from other Nigerian writers" because they portray their society through uncovering their essences, distortions and direction in history (Abubakar, 24). Interestingly, written literature in English had developed in the north since 1970 with authors of substantial influence such as Labo Yari, Abubakar Gimba, Olu Obafemi, Helen Hail, Zaynab Alkali, Yahaya



Dagana, Chris Obudumu, Dul Johnson, Muazu Maiwada, Ibrahim Sheme, Audi Giwa, Halima Sa'adiya, and Adamu Kyuka Usman amongst others (Abubakar, 25). In a nutshell, the Northern Nigerian creative writer is a visionary, a seer, a learned man, a researcher, an informed investigator, and then a craftsman who weaves his narratives based on practice and scholarship in order to surpass and makes his tradition triumph (Abubakar, 26).

Northern Nigerian literature is, no doubt, an emerging literary field of study. Like any other regional or national literature, Northern Nigerian Literature concerns itself with the complex issues surrounding the region, one of it is the theme concerning the fate of the Woman (i.e. the northern Nigerian woman): her representation, identity, status, education, rights, fortunes and misfortunes, hopes and aspirations, and the like. It is quite remarkable how frequently cultures worldwide relegate the significance of women to a secondary position, despite being the only 'minority' group that makes up over half of the global population. This perception of women impacts multiple aspects of human society, including politics, the economy, and education (Toyin Falola's *Nigerian Women in History: Past and Present*, 7). In human society, throughout history, the role of a wife, mother and homemaker has been the only designated space for women. However, women have had to struggle to gain recognition outside the boundaries of domestic life. In Nigeria, a country with diverse interests, various socio-cultural

factors tend to reinforce and maintain the subordinate position of women. These factors include religious beliefs and practices, norms and values of different cultures within the country. Nevertheless, these oppressive factors do not mean that women are completely irrelevant or silenced in national affairs. There are also instances where women have been able to showcase their talents and abilities, leaving positive marks on society (Falola, 7).

Women predicament is showcased through Literature which cannot be independent of life and the beliefs people define themselves with. Hence, the writer's liberty in bringing out his/her visions of an ideal society. The women folk have been depicted by various writers in different lights (positive and negative). Different writers (male and female) picked out from their gamut of past and present experience in an attempt to reveal how a true African woman ought to be in a patriarchal society. The depiction of women and the roles they played in the society have witnessed a considerable change with time (Usman, 154). For instance, the early female writers like Flora Nwapa in *Efuru* (1966), *One is Enough* (1982), *Never Again* (1984), Zulu Sofola in *The Deer Hunter and The Hunter's Pearl* (1969), *Wedlock of the Gods* (1972), *King Emene* (1974), *The Sweet Trap* (1977), *Old Wines are Tasty* (1981), and Buchi Emecheta in *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) amongst others. After the



three prominent pioneers of female writing in Nigeria, we witnessed the proliferation of other female writers like; Seffi Atta, Ifeoma Okoye, Irene Salami, Tess Onwueme, Ifeoma Chinwumba, Kaine Agary, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; and Tracia Chima Ezeajugh are the most recent writers among the aforementioned women. In the north, the unfolding of female writers was much slower, "with Zaynab Alkali acting as the lone voice for many years ... (Aisha Umar Muhammad and Abdullahi Muhammad's "Contemporary Northern Nigerian Female Writings ...", 344)". Alkali remained a loner from the north until in recent times that several female writers began to emerge. They attract attention with their narratives about gender and its related issues. Such writers are; Razinat T. Mohammed, Asabe Kabir Usman, Aisha Umar Abdulkareem, Bilqisu Abubakar, Safiya Ismaila Yero, and Azizah Idris Muhammad to mention but a few. The proliferation of these writers represents a significant achievement in articulating the desires and ambitions of women in a society where they feel culturally disconnected. It provides them with the chance to share their own narratives, aiming to rectify the distorted portrayal of women created by certain male writers, while also serving as an inspiration for other Nigerian women (Muhammad and Muhammad, 344).

Despite the proliferation of studies on northern Nigerian literature, many crucial issues related to the Woman are far from

being explored. And one such issue, whether it is the blame-game or just the game that is played, is authorial pessimism attached to her character, which is measurable through the concept of hope. Razinat T. Mohammed is therefore showcased as the pessimist author. In this proposed research therefore, the goal is to explore the struggles of the pessimist characters in Northern Nigerian Literature and how can this possibly affect the identity, status and fate of not just the characters but also the destiny of the woman in the given fictional work under study.

Theoretical Framework

In order to carry out this research, the affect theory is considered in order to bring out the salient issues of the northern Nigerian women. The Affect theory is adopted because of its essentiality in bringing to the fore the triggers for human actions and its consequences. As already stated, this study will benefit much from the Affect Theory, especially Tomkins '(1991) nine affects. Affect Theory – which can be traced to Tomkins (1962) – is highly inter- and cross-disciplinary: it draws heavily on sociology, psychology, literature and other critical theories, including interpersonal communication, psychoanalysis, social psychology and gender studies (Lawler, 2001; Tait, 2016; Hogan, 2016; Gredd & Seighworth, 2010). The sole preoccupation of the Affect Theory is to account for affect or, less technical, the emotion in all facets of human endeavour, with a view to organising and categorizing them.



Silvan S. Tomskin was influenced by Charles Darwin's the theory of Evolution, especially the universal nature of facial responses amongst all people regardless of race or where they inhabit. For instance, people of all races smile the same way in the midst of enjoyment. Hence, Tomskin's perception of the face being an integral part of the affect system and started looking for an explanation and eventually give birth to Affect theory.

The building blocks of understanding Affect theory is the Affect psychology. Affect psychology is the basic human motivation and personality formation. It contains different ideas about the origins of emotion and how we usually think of them. What one was taught formally or informally by word-of-mouth are the current culturally determined beliefs about emotions and motivation (Vernon C. Kelly Jr's *A Primer of Affect Psychology* 1). If Affect psychology is the basis of Affect theory, what then is an affect? An affect is a biological event, a normal part of the everyday functioning of our central nervous system. Just like a normal knee jerk reflex. Tomskin, further, observes that conscious awareness of anything only occurs after an affect has been triggered. It is only one affect that can be triggered at a time. Any stimulus that triggers an affect is the only stimulus we can be aware of at that instant. He argues that the affect system plays a crucial role in the functioning of the brain. He suggests that human behaviour is primarily driven by the brain, which consists of various systems including the drive

system, the pain system, the cognitive system, and the affect system (system here refers to the brain). Out of the four, the affect system is emphasized as a key motivator in human behaviour.

Affect comes in three basic flavours – positive, neutral and negative. Positive affects are inherently rewarding and one is motivated to do things to have them continue or get them back if they should be interfered with. Negative affects are inherently punishing and one is motivated to do things to get rid of them and avoid things that will have them return. The neutral affect is just one and does not motivate us to do much of anything. The Tomskin's nine affects are viewed under the positive, negative and neutral categories as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| POSITIVE | AFFECT: |
| INTEREST – EXCITEMENT | |
| ENJOYMENT – JOY | |
| NEUTRAL | AFFECT: |
| SURPRISE – STARTLE | |
| NEGATIVE | AFFECT: |
| FEAR – TERROR | |
| DISTRESS – ANGUISH | |
| ANGER – RAGE | |
| DISGUST | |
| DISSMELL | |
| SHAME – HUMILIATION | |

When someone experiences a feeling. It indicates that they have become conscious of the biological



state that has been activated within them, essentially becoming aware of their affect. Affects and the subsequent feelings are inherent aspects of our biology. Innate affective responses begin to be altered into emotions from the time we are born. Every family in all culture handles affect differently. For instance, anger in one family will be encouraged and in another suppressed. Emotions therefore, is the result of our affective biography. It develops uniquely in each of us, scripted from our life experience with our affects.

Reviews on Razinat Talatu Mohammed's *Habiba*

Some insight into the reviews of Mohammed's *Habiba* will enable the reader to understand and appreciate the researcher's choice of Mohammed's novel in depicting authorial pessimism in the portrayal of northern Nigerian female characters. The review of *Habiba* by Ene Edem Ekpo and Jayne Owan (2022) deconstruct the notion of patriarchal dominance in general and specifically in northern Nigeria. They are of the view that man is not an impediment to the growth and advancement of womenfolk but the woman herself. The female, that is the girl child is sacrificed by the gods, that is the older women and the men are only priests who execute orders of the gods. *Habiba* the protagonist is exploited by her grandmother, stepmother, and biological mother while their biddings are carried out by the male folk. Intra-gender oppression enhances gender inequality as women utilize men to

victimize their fellow women. The role of the men in the text is dependent upon the sanctions or orchestrations of the women.

Mohammed's *Habiba*, as stated by Onyeka Miracle Dike (2023) fails in her attempt to dethrone patriarchy. Her solution to the problem is another problem in itself because, though it gives women sexual choices and an opportunity to indulge in their fantasies. It still does not give them the much needed economic, social, and political emancipation that will serve as a precursor to all other forms of freedom. Her (Razinat) prescription of lesbianism as a way out of the problem, inadvertently isolates many of her fellow Muslim women whose sensibilities are insulted by the mere mention of lesbianism (45). This exclusion of the dependable foot soldiers that will fight the war for women liberation is borne out of bipolar ideological leanings, one Western and the other, African, which are traceable to the effects of religion and tradition.

In addition to the above, Moses Aule and Alexander Kure's *A Psychological Exploration of Matronly Influences as Impediment to the Actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals Using Mohammed T. Razinat's Habiba (2021)*, explored factors that lead to matronly involvement in the subjugation of women and girl children especially in northern Nigeria. The paper argues that the actions of these matrons that is *Habiba's* grandmother, her stepmother, and Rabi (*Habiba's* co-wife) are often driven by repressive



memories, hidden desires, unresolved conflicts and shattered dreams.

Nevertheless, Zaynab Ango's *Representing Otherness: Contemporary Nigerian Literature and Emerging Cultural Identities* (2019), focus on the sexual relationship between Habiba and Rabi (her co-wife). Ango is of the opinion that the novel's engagement with the issue (lesbianism) is a bold step, where the inevitable aspect is represented in a multicultural society which such issues are rather kept as taboo. Such endeavour will lead to understanding of differences in sexuality, capable of reversing the discourse which constructs heterosexuality as the norm, "... Mohammed's engagement with homosexuality in Habiba throws up the possibility of reversing the discourse of lesbian relationship (40-41)".

Fatima Umar and Bilkisu Abubakar Arabi's article (2020), however, succeeded in identifying Habiba as a novel typical of bildungsroman form by focusing on the female protagonist (Habiba) development of mind and character. Issues such as marriage, lack of love, and poverty have been identified as part of the obstacles in the growth of the African child especially in the contemporary society. Mohammed, as a writer seems to be urging the society to educate the female child in the right way so that she will be able to assimilate and transform herself properly as she grows from childhood to adulthood. Education and proper attitudes are key in equipping and producing responsible

children in northern Nigeria that will serve as role models to Nigeria and the world at large.

From the reviews above, it is clear that the novel tries to depict the predicament of the northern Nigerian female character that is being dominated by patriarchy, women as perpetrators of evil against their fellow women, lack of economic, social, and political emancipation and freedom, and the depiction of sexual relationship (lesbianism) between co-wives which is termed as a taboo in the society are discussed. In all, none of the reviews focus on the authorial pessimism in the portrayal of the character of Habiba that is devoid of a hopeful future which this paper is out to fill.

AUTHORIAL PESSIMISM IN THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN MOHAMMED'S *HABIBA*

Razinat Mohammed is an author that is angry at the social degeneration and oppression of women in the society. By critiquing the societal structures, norms and progress through human nature that is inherently flawed, and selfish makes her nothing less than a pessimist. She emphasized on the themes of despair, futility, and an inevitability of suffering. The focus of this study is to examine how the author through the character of Hamsatu showcase the influence she asserts on the choices of the members of her household.

Hamsatu portrayed as the villain by the author presented with all pessimistic coloration, ironically



lived a life full of fear, anxiety and anger. Her fear of rejection by the society and treated as an irrelevant woman as a result of giving birth to more female children instead of more male children begins her pessimistic life. Her fears are captured in the following lines: *Hamsatu herself had borne six girls, five of which died in infancy, leaving only Maimuna and an only son, Saleh. Her fears had been that her husband's name would terminate if he did not have sons in the lineage to carry on his name (7).* Hamsatu's fear and anxiety conveniently explained Tomskins negative affect. Negative affects are inherently punishing and one is motivated to do things to get rid of them and avoid things that will have them return. In Hamsatu's case, despite her motivation to get rid/avoid the recurrence of giving birth to female children still haunts her throughout her life. This negative affect as explained by Tomskin will bring fear to the person involve which in turn will culminate to terror. As in the case of Hamsatu, her fears pushed her to terrorizes all that are subordinate to her. Her anger in days gone by is turned into rage that is why all her actions and inactions spelled nothing but pessimism.

To buttress the above point, Hamsatu's fear is triggered by the actions of her late husband who is indifferent on her predicament because he has alternatives from his other wives. Her negative affects are captured thus: *Saleh's father did not worry about his wife's fears because he had other sons which drove Hamsatu into her furious anxiety and frequent anger ... (7).* The

implication of this fear is that, Hamsatu, knows the repercussion of such as meted by the society based on her experience as an older member of society. In order to hide her inadequacies, Hamsatu unleash her terror affect on her first daughter -in- law, Kande.

When Kande gave birth to her third daughter. Her mother -in-law could not hide her disappointment which is triggered by her experiences in life in the following statement:

This woman will fill your house with women, she had said to Saleh with disgust. Kande had been heartbroken on that day which was her first day home from hospital, with the little baby girl. ... Why should this woman hate me so? She wept silently. ... she wondered what it felt like to be loved and appreciated in its real sense. ... what can be 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? She wondered (6-7).

The transfer of aggression by Hamsatu to Kande in order to hide her inadequacies shows the interplay between the author, characters, and the society at large. Mohammed as the author, portrays her authorial intentions of depicting characters with a pessimistic outlook in order to critique the social structure. While,



Hamsatu, and Kande, are portrayed as pessimistic characters that are involved in a conflict of shame that leads to Hamsatu humiliating Kande; as a result of her inability to produce a male grandson for her. Hamsatu's action goes in line with what Tomskin explained as the pain system. He elucidates that human behaviour is primarily driven by the brain, which consists of various systems which include the pain system. The pain system serves as a motivator for specific bodily events, and through memory and learning, we are further motivated to avoid things that cause physical pain. As adults, our avoidance of such things becomes automatic due to our learned experiences. The avoidance of her past experience replaying in front of her is what Hamsatu wants to avoid with all her might even if she shames and humiliates Kande. This action is all together encouraged by society as male children are preferred against female children, thus giving the female children a sense of liability and burden on her family and the society at large.

Kande is seriously humiliated and oppressed by Hamsatu to the extent that she asked Saleh (her husband) to divorce her three weeks after the death of her baby girl. Ironically, Kande's bitter experience in her first marriage makes her heart hardened. This is exemplified in her interaction with her daughters; Habiba and Umme which is devoid of motherly love and affection. When the youngsters decided to run away from their stepfather's house back to their father's. Kande's show of indifference about the future of her

daughters is captured in the following lines: ... *Early the next day, she packed her little belonging and those of Umme and they left the house quietly. Kande heard the girls as they tiptoed out of the house but made no move to restrain them. She figured they had their own lives to live and their own destinies to define; after all, every woman was in this alone since a mother's love or hate would come to nothing in the end (15).* Kande's action is typical of negative affect of distress and anguish. Her silence implies that she is in a state of anguish a more intense and torturing form of distress, often involving deep sense of sorrow and dread. In essence, she is mentally and emotionally distressed and anguished hence the silence that serve as a response to her grief, and loss.

The fact that she dreads what the future holds for her daughters but she and her daughters are at the mercy of the dictates of the society. As a woman, there are lay down rules she cannot disobey, warrants the silence and her statement of every woman will fight her battle alone with or without a mother's love.

This situation clearly spells out the pessimistic authorial intention because the narrative does not support even an iota of hope in the lives of Habiba and Umme. To further depict how pessimistic their lives will be, Habiba compares their lives with that of the cow in the cowbell advertisement poster pasted on their father's kiosk in the following excerpt: *The cow whose photo they pasted on this kiosk must be just as unfortunate as themselves*



to be moving around with that bell announcing its captivity and bondage to the entire world to see just as they were coming with tiny invisible bells strung to their feet and about to herald their woes of existence to the world (19). This quotation is an implied authorial voice of pessimistic intention that is about to unfold much later. Habiba's thought serve as a reflection of the calamity that befalls her at the end of the narrative.

Saleh and Sadia's (Saleh's wife) cheerful and hearty welcome they give the girls; gives the audience a sudden and unexpected twist in the narrative that we assume a hopeful and well accomplished life for the girls. Unfortunately, Habiba and Ummi are confronted with Hamsatu's anger and contempt. Her countenance does not depict any sign of welcoming for them. It seems that the presence of the girls agitates her and makes her angry. She cannot contain her anger and speaks out thus: *Saleh! ... why do you go to your former wife without confiding in me? She asked in a tone that was calm but heavily weighted with calculated anger. ... So the girls have come for good?... Saleh ... mmm, well I can see that the older is old enough. How old do you say she is (24-25)?*

Implicitly, Hamsatu's rage of seeing her granddaughters which reminded her of her failures is instantly replaced by a happy demeanor because she sees Habiba as a prey which her predatory instinct has apprehended. Hamsatu's statement reveals that she is a champion and an advocate of early and forced marriage. Her asking of Habiba's age exposes her intention

which Saleh automatically respond by saying: *She is now thirteen, Mother, if I am not mistaken, ... the face of Habiba in particular was a pitch ghostly. She hated having the feeling that the old woman was beginning to feign some interest in her... Somehow, she suspected it was bad fate (25).* Habiba's instinct is right about her grandmother. The facial expression that feigned interest in her is an example of a positive affect of interest and excitement. Hamsatu, becomes excited and interested in Habiba because she wants to deprive Habiba the privilege of acquiring formal education that she is passionate about. To her, women education is a waste of time and resources. A ripe woman like Habiba should be in her husband's house. This myopic mindset of Hamsatu is the norm of the society in which they live in. This societal dictate does nothing but confine the woman to traditional roles without giving her the chance to develop herself as a human being first before becoming a wife.

Since positive affects are inherently rewarding and one is motivated to do things to have them continue or get them back if they should be interfered with; is what Hamsatu did to achieve her goal of throwing Habiba into an early and forced marriage with a man old enough to be her grandfather. Hamsatu's interest and excitement is not borne out of good intention but to get back at Habiba because she sees them as her failures/inadequacies living in flesh and blood. Hamsatu's intention to punish Habiba for the crime she did not



commit is captured thus: *Ehenn? Anyway, it is that good -for -nothing daughter of Kande's that started it all. Don't worry, we shall solve you two as a problem sooner than you know, said the old woman with her eyes narrowing in mockery (31).* Hamsatu's facial expression shows a negative affect of disgust for her granddaughters and her intention of punishing them followed immediately with the arrival of Mallam Zubairu to the house which is arranged by her (Hamsatu).

Saleh, immediately, understands the deal his mother and Mallam Zubairu (a friend of his late father) are trying to strike via their facial expression, laughter, and coded conversation; when Habiba and Umami are asked to come and greet the august visitor. The eye communication of the two elders that catches the attention of Saleh is portrayed in the following statement: ... Look at Habiba, she is practically a woman. Ha! We shall soon be celebrating a joyous occasion, he finished with a mischievous laugh. *The old woman was quite pleased that Zubairu's matured eyes had captured the bird in its flight. ... Saleh did not find the conversation funny at all so he quickly shooed the girls back to their part of the compound, away from Zubairu's lecherous eyes and the old woman's evil stare (32).* Saleh could not contain his emotions and he whispered to the elders that his daughter is not a grown woman; she is just thirteen. His mother retorted: *Thirteen? At thirteen I had given birth to Maimuna, your elder sister! The old woman hissed. Thirteen is the right*

age, Saleh. Don't make a mistake and allow her to overstay, you will end up having no one to accept her, Zubairu whispered (32).

This incident showcases that the northern Nigerian woman is marginalized, oppressed, and restricted by the patriarchal structures that shape the thinking and interactions of the region most especially the less educated ones. Hamsatu and Zubairu are typical examples of the less educative in the society thus sees early and forced marriage at the detriment of the woman/ girl is to her best interest. They represent the section of the society that gives the patriarchal structure a continuous support. This is because the conservative socio-cultural set up of the society does not deem it fit to look at the age of the girl that is of school going age or to seek the consent of the girlchild. Despite their ramblings Saleh stood his ground that his daughter is just in primary five, and his intention of supporting/financing her education because she is passionate about school. Saleh is of the opinion that, since he had lost the opportunity of going to school his children should be able to so that their lot may change.

Ironically, Saleh's stand is compromised by Mallam Zubairu as a result of the loan of #600,000 he collected to settle his late mother's hospital bills. Zubairu threatens Saleh to either pay him back or allow him marry Habiba (as arranged with his mother) in place of the money. Saleh has no other choice according to the narrative but to do the bidding of Zubairu because of poverty. He



explains to Habiba that he has given his consent in her marriage to Zubairu. Habiba in a tearful fright asked: ... *Father! Now, what about my school? I want to go to school, please (130)*. From this moment on, Habiba's future has turned bleak by denying her education despite her pleas and the subsequent early and force marriage that awaits her. It is evident that the authorial intention for the narrative have closed all doors of hope for Habiba and her father. As we see how abject poverty denied Habiba education which is the yardstick of measuring a successful live rather poverty opens the door to an early and forced marriage to a man old enough to be her grandfather.

Habiba's forced marriage to Zubairu do more harm to her than good. She feels betrayed by her father thus the Tomskian negative affect of shame that later degenerate into humiliation. Habiba feels that her parents have wronged, exposed, and mortified her being. When she is taking to Zubairu's house as his bride, his lust for young girls cannot make him wait to consummate the marriage in a proper manner thus his anxiety leads him to rape her. The resultant effect of the pain she goes through makes her feels the negative affect of fear, distress, and anger which in turn degenerates into terror, anguish, and rage that she throws caution and shame to the wind and decides to become a lesbian with her co-wife, Rabi as a way of getting back at her parents, husband, and the society at large.

Conclusion

As a final point, it is safe to say that Mohammed's *Habiba*, is a satire of northern Nigeria. Where the pessimistic authorial portrayal of the northern Nigerian women explored the interplay between the author, society and the narrative. To drive home her point, she focuses on the socio-cultural challenges faced by the likes of Habiba, Kande, Sadia, and even Hamsatu in a conservative society. In the narrative, Mohammed, also hammers on how women like, Kande, Habiba, Rabi, Sadia, and Ramatu, are marginalized, oppressed and also restricted by patriarchal structures. Equally, the themes of early and forced marriage, limited educational opportunity and confining women to traditional roles are discussed in line with the emotional affectations of Sulivan Tomskins Affect theory. The affect mostly discussed is the negative affects which suits the pessimistic authorial narrative/intentions. However, her bringing to fore the discourse of lesbian as a solution to the problem is yet another problem in itself because, though it gives women sexual choices and an opportunity to indulge in their fantasies. It still does not give them the much needed economic, social, and political emancipation that will serve as a precursor to all other forms of freedom. Her (Razinat) prescription of lesbianism which is a shushed discourse is a way of portraying the pessimistic outlook of our society. The authorial intention calls on the attention of the populace to stand up against such acts and the need to find lasting solutions to all the problems



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