



REIMAGINING THE NORTHERN NIGERIAN WOMAN: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF AN ABUNDANCE OF SCORPIONS BY HADIZA ISMA EL-RUFA'I

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Abstract: The Nigerian woman writer has focused her energy on creating stories of women experiences in relation to other aspects of their lives. The Nigerian woman writer is also determined to face many challenges and obstacles that she might come across, hence her venture into new territories. The Northern Nigerian woman writer is no exception in this regard. She has been paying attention to matters relating to the society and those that relate to the woman. The new vision of the Northern Nigerian woman writer is that of power, beauty and endurance in creating powerful characters. It is against this background that this paper surveys Hadiza Isma El-Rufai's novel, *An Abundance of Scorpions* from a feminine viewpoint with the aim of showcasing the new strides taken by the Northern Nigerian woman writer.

Keywords: Feminism, Northern Nigeria, Woman, Women Writers

Introduction

The history of contemporary literary writings by women in Northern Nigeria had its beginning with Zaynab Alkali's novel *The Stillborn* (1984). She later wrote *The Virtuous Woman* (1986) and then *Cobwebs and other Stories* in (1997), *The Descendants* (2005) and *The Initiates* (2007). Zaynab Alkali focuses on the role of education in the upliftment of the woman, she believes that education will bring the required change and emancipation to the woman. In her first novel, *The Stillborn* (1978), the character of Li is an example of this change. Li's dream is to get married and have children, she also has dreams of becoming a teacher and living her life in the city. Unfortunately, things don't work out smoothly as she had hoped. Li's decision to marry Habu and live in the city is flawed when Habu abandons her in the village and marries a city wife. "This is the turning point for Li: the point at which the spirit of independence she has shown since her childhood assumes the form of a steely, feminist determination to rely, not on a husband, but on herself for the fulfillment of dreams" (Otokunefor & Nwodo, 1989, p.49.).

In Zaynab Alkali's second novel, *The Virtuous Woman* (1986), Nana Ai a young cripple is the subject of her inquiry. The central theme in *The Virtuous Woman* is morality, how a young woman Nana Ai tries to live a chaste life, wary of temptation. She is an epitome through which the ordinary woman looks inwardly at herself. Nana Ai is described as quite and good natured. "At seventeen, she was more composed than many an adolescent woman she never hurried and had a positive outlook of life" (p. 10). Her deformity is a symbol that even the physically

challenged can lead an exemplary life. Nana Ai's character is portrayed as a role model for young female readers to emulate.

Zaynab Alkali's third novel, *The Descendants* (2005) centers on the role of the woman and the place of marriage in the life of a woman. Alkali believes that education plays a key role in the development of the woman. This is aptly portrayed in the character of Seytu, the daughter of Ilia, Magira Milli's son. Seytu is married off at an early age and later after the birth of a baby girl she is abandoned by her husband, and comes back to stay with her uncle Aji Ramta and her grandmother Magira Milli. With the support of Magira she follows the village children to the mission school. Seytu is introduced to the world of education, where she succeeds in changing the course of her life.

Magira Milli is the facilitator of this change she encourages her grandchildren to seek for education, because this would protect them from a life poverty and ignorance. Magira had fled from her ancestral land after her children kept dying, to have a fresh start in life. She is a clever woman who has noticed the changes taking place in the society, she also loves listening to the radio "she knew education is the master key to opportunities for a better life. Education open doors and gives an individual options in life. She may have missed those options but she wanted those options for her grandchildren for she no longer had children, except Aji" (p. 18) Magira makes sure that all her grandchildren go to school, only Peni did not have the privilege to go to school, and she pays a huge price. Her novel's main pre-occupation is about the plight of young girls who face challenges in a patriarchal society, where tradition and religion are used as weapons to oppress the female. The characters in her novels are able to overcome these challenges by attaining education thus empowering themselves. Thus, "Education therefore with its inherent ability for consciousness raising and the changing of people's perception, becomes a tool that Alkali explores to the fullest in determining how far the woman can go in a society that had hitherto literally caged her" (Ojinma & Egya 2005, p.130). This has indeed remained the main focus in the works of other female writers from this region, who are gradually emerging from the shadows. These include Razinat Muhammad, Asabe Kabir Usman, Bilkisu Abubakar, Safiya Yero, Edify Vakusak, Maryam Bobi, Phoebe Jatau, among others. Thus, Daura & Muhammad (2012, p.5) states that the female writers are critical of the exploitation of women and this is why they write about their assured realities of women; African women writings reflect what women see as the major issues of their lives; which includes; cultural change, inequality and their identity, as Africans they lay emphasis on the patriarchal system that dominates the society which keeps the woman subservient to man.

A Woman plays various roles in the society and holds various roles as a mother, wife, sister, daughter, friend, grandmother, teacher etc. In all of these capacities she is expected to give her best in order to lay the foundation to a good home and family. A woman who is enlightened either with Islamic education or western education is able to play all these roles successfully. She will be able to empower herself in such a way that she becomes an asset to her family and society and not a burden or liability. It is rather unfortunate that the northern Nigerian woman faces a lot of challenges when it comes to issues regarding her education. In most cases she is not encouraged to reach her full potential. The issue of early marriage is also quite prevalent in many societies in Northern Nigeria. According to Isaiah (2012, p.29):

Girls' educational opportunities are usually guarded by patriarchal attitudes. If the father or relatives of the girl child sees girl education as a financial waste, then the girl child is on the path of illiteracy. Parents attach greater importance to the education of boys than girls. In the urban areas, because of socialization and modernization most parents are enlightened and know the importance of education for their children, the girl may have equal right with her male sibling. But when there is a financial constraint, and the parents lack resources to enroll all the children in school, the male child is often favoured.

Marriage is the most challenging aspect in the women's lives. In Northern Nigerian societies, the Hausa society in particular, marriage is believed to be the most important aspect in a girl's life. She faces a lot of criticism when she remains unmarried especially if she reaches a certain age in life. In the course of marriage, some of the most common problems that may come up may include infidelity, polygamy, barrenness, mother-in-law issues etc.

A woman is expected to calmly accept that her husband has the right to marry up to four wives, even if he fails to provide enough sustenance for the family. In the case where the woman does not bear a child for her husband, she faces a lot of ridicule and may even prompt the man into marrying more wives. Some mother-in-laws can be worst than co wives, in a situation where a woman faces a troublesome mother-in-law, there is always disagreement and conflict in the home. Recent events and development have prompted the northern Nigerian female writer to extend her scope not only in the home front but to other social issues as well. These include politics, insecurity, ethnic clashes, human trafficking, sexual harassment, corruption etc.

What makes it more interesting is that all these issues are portrayed based on the experiences of the woman, and from a woman's point of view. In Hadiza Isma's *Abundance of Scorpions*, the narrator is a woman who tells the story from her own perspective. She is frank about so many issues, most especially about religion and tradition. She bares to the reader the inner conflicts in her mind concerning death, destiny and human nature.

A discussion on the Northern Nigerian female writer would not be complete without making reference to the indigenous Hausa Female writer. The Hausa female writer has continued to attract the attention of the Hausa communities. They are popularly referred to as "littattafan soyayya" meaning "literature of love, a special kind of narration that revolves around love and marriage in northern Nigeria. But not all the stories are about love, their names have developed into exploring more issues e.g. child trafficking, politics, women as an entrepreneur, among others. Some of these writers include Balaraba Ramat, Bilkisu Funtua, Saliha Abubakar, Rahma Abdulmajid, Amina Abdulmalik, Talatu Wada, Zuwaira Isa, etc. Despite strict governmental censorship and social stigma against female writers. This form of literature has become a source of inspiration and a major channel through which women can tell their stories. Some of the popular works by some of these writers include, Balaraba Ramat's "Wa Zai Auri Jahila", "Alhaki Kuykuyo". "The novel Alhaki kuykuyo has been translated into English (Sin is a puppy that follows you home). It has also been turned into a film. The story of the novel centers on a woman, Rabi whose husband does not care for her or their nine children but spends all his earnings on prostitutes. In "Wa Zai Auri Jahila", the story centers on Zainab, a young woman who is rejected by the young man she is in love with, because she does not have formal education. She is later married off to an old man, but the marriage does not work out and Zainab runs away to live with her aunty in the city. Her one desire is to get educated in order to prove to the young man who rejects her that she was not given an opportunity earlier on. Others include "Mugun Zumunci", Wani Jinkiri" by Saliha Abubakar. "Allura Cikin Ruwa", Sa'adatu Sa'ar Mata, "Ki Yarda Dani" by Bilkisu Funtua. The novel; "Ki Yarda Dani has also been turned into a film. It is the story of a woman, Aisha who faces the challenges of polygamy in her marriage.

The Hausa female writer has achieved numerous successes, the recent being the Hausa writer who won the BBC's Hausa short story contest for women. This has brought Hausa female writers into the international spotlight. The story "Maraici" (orphan hood) by Safiya Ahmad won the 2019 BBC Hausa short story contest for women. The story is about a girl Karima, who faces the challenges of orphan hood and abandonment.

The popularity of these female authored novels most especially among women is because they tell stories that the women are able to relate to. The characters tell their stories and have developed from seeing marriage as an only means for the woman, to other endeavors such as a career or economic empowerment.

Synopsis of the Novel

Following the death of her husband and daughter in a car accident, the heroine Tambaya decided to leave Kano in search of new opportunities. She headed to Ghana where her brother, Aminu lived. Unfortunately, Tambaya's dream of starting over was dashed when she could no longer endure the indignity at the hands of her brother's new wife. Tambaya returned to Abuja and with the help of her best friend Esther, she soon found work as a matron in an orphanage, under the watchful eye of the ruthless Miss Scholastica. Although Miss Scholastica was rumored to be a cultist, that did not stop Tambaya from asserting herself at the orphanage. Just when she began to settle in her new life, Aminu came along with his son and explained to Tambaya that his wife had left him and was even planning to get married again. Caught at a crossroad, Tambaya had to make a difficult choice to help her brother. She passed off her nephew as an abandoned child in the orphanage; this was a plan to keep the child close to her, save her job at the orphanage and also give Aminu sometime to sort out himself. When Aminu did not come back after a long time, Tambaya went in of search him. Her, search led her to Alhaji Surajo, Aminu's friend. A relationship developed between the two, which later blossomed into romance. The story charted one woman's journey through grief and uncertainty to a road that led to self discovery, love and redemption. The message of the novel is important because it sent a clear message to women, especially northern Nigerian women, that it is possible to achieve their personal goals, seek empowerment and make valuable contributions to their families and the lives of others even as the culture and religion expected that women allow men to be responsible for their well being. Women can take charge of their lives if and when given the opportunity. Tambaya personified the resilience of the Nigerian woman; strong willed, determined and compassionate.

The Northern Nigerian Woman as a Writer in the novel, *An Abundance of Scorpions*.

Women writers in Northern Nigeria, like their counterparts in other African countries, have gained momentum in recent times. These writers have assigned themselves the role of identifying and bringing out the history of women and their experiences through the centuries. This other side of the story gives first-hand information about women experiences, who have before now been silenced by the domineering master narratives of their male counterparts who had been in the literary field long before them.

Elaine Showalter, in analyzing the history of women's writing, tries to establish the existence of a female tradition, Gynocriticism describing the study "women as writers". She believes that women writers have a feminine way of telling their stories that makes it different from their male counterparts. What they feel, experience or think can only be better expressed by them. A male writer will never be able to present the woman's voice her perception or sensibility or her beauty and sensuality. So, here a woman has to take up the pen to express her position and her feelings, her perspective and also to write about women. The northern Nigerian female writer is no different in this regard, the basis of her stories remains about what she experiences, or see others experiencing in the course of their everyday lives.

In Hadiza Isma's *An Abundance of Scorpions*, her themes explored some of the social changes in a Hausa Muslim society, through a female perspective. The novel opened with an intimate scene, between a man and his wife. This was quite bold given the background of the writer, but it is important to note that it is not just about describing the act of love making, but of exploring the relationship between man and wife. The culmination of a serious discussion about their married life. They were able to reach a life changing decision without the usual interference of family or mother-in-law as in a traditional Hausa society. It was ironic that they took this decision, not knowing that death was around the corner.

The character of Tambaya was educated and enlightened enough to go for fertility treatment and was even lucky to have her husband paying for the treatment even though he could barely afford it. The character of the husband was a portrayal of a loving, romantic and also committed partner. He was so committed to the relationship that

he paid not only for the expensive treatments, but also agreed with his wife when she decided she was no longer going to try having another child.

The writer's reference to religious acts and rituals, against the background of Hausa traditional culture was to acquaint the reader of her knowledge of the two. An example is when Tambaya requested to see the bodies of her husband and daughter, her father-in-law told her that she had been unconscious for over twenty-four hours, she said "that was all Yakubu's father had to say to me to understand that my husband and daughter had already been buried, swift interment was in accordance with Islamic tradition" (p. 12).

Despite her knowledge of the Islamic traditions, she was honest enough to admit the raging conflicts she had concerning some Islamic injunctions. This was manifested through Tambaya, while praying for a good job she felt confused, "I found my thoughts conflicting, I'd been raised to believe that every human being's fate had been written down in Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz, the preserved tablet, fifty thousand years before the universe was created. So, if everything in life, the good and the bad, was predestined, what then was the use of prayer?" (p. 58). Another instance was when she said: "Other times I wondered why I was the one who survived. Why not Fatima? She was just a child, a flower bud cut down before it had bloomed" (p. 15). In expressing her anger, she exclaimed:

There was a lot of anger too. I was angry with the driver that rammed into us, and at whoever gave him a license in the first place. And sometimes, in the depths of despair, I even dared to be angry with God (p. 15).

It was quite an uncommon occurrence for a Hausa Muslim writer to be this daring, especially on matters concerning religion. Laying herself bare for anyone to judge. But it is quite common for people to have conflicting thoughts in the inner recess of their minds when it comes issues concerning their religion, the character Tambaya is unapologetic and sincere about her view. In a conversation with her friend Esther about the fate of her brother's son, she expressed her fears about the boy growing up as a Christian, "Esther, how can I let my own nephew live and die as a Christian" (p. 304).

Esther understood that Tambaya was sincere about her position, because as a Muslim she was expected to believe that the only pathway to heaven was by being a Muslim. Esther was as conflicted as Tambaya in matters of religion. She was of the opinion that "the world would be a better place if religion didn't exist" (p. 304). She also stated that she believed in the existence of God but doesn't know it for a fact. "There is no veritable evidence of God's existence. But maybe someday in the future, man will find it. After all, once upon a time, everyone thought the world was flat" (p. 305).

Yakubu's voice also added to the conflict, he believed "there has to be more than one pathway to heaven... surely the good deeds one does on earth count for something. God created every one of us, and if He had wanted us all to be Muslims, He could have made it so" (p. 305).

Tambaya's character is not only bold enough on issues concerning religion, but also on tradition. After the death of her husband, she rejected the idea of getting married again, but opted to help her father in-law settle her late husband's debts. "I had no intention of sitting around, waiting for another husband. Since I resigned from my job at the hospital, I'd never considered going back to work, but that was what I'd have to do now. I had to make enough money to settle the debt" (p.24). She also rejected her brother in law's marriage proposal, she not only rejects the proposal but also confronts him, calling him "a world class fool" (p.27). She also accused him of being selfish, weak and irresponsible. "Even if you can't help settle the debt, you can at least start taking care of your own family. That would reduce the burden on your father..." (p.27). After her brother in law's weird proposal Tambaya moved to Ghana to live with her brother as her only remaining male relative. But Tambaya could not continue staying with him, because his wife proved rude and inhospitable. She decided to move back to Nigeria and tried getting a job, she referred to it as going on an adventure.

In the course of the adventure, Tambaya found herself, she discovered that she was strong, strong enough to deal with a person like Miss Scholastica. She realised when you stand up to the people, they respect you more, that was how she was able to win the cooperation of her staff at the orphanage and even gained the friendship of Maman Ruth.

Tambaya discovered that in dealing with people like Miss Scholastica, one had to be on his/her guard, because Miss Scholastica told her that “when people have something to hide, they are vulnerable, and it makes them easier to control” (p.279). When Miss Scholastica found out about Tambaya’s nephew being in the orphanage, she waited for an opportunity to use it against Tambaya. Fortunately for Tambaya, she found out about Boniface’s illegal adoption. When Tambaya confronted her about the adoption, she also confronted Tambaya about her nephew. Tambaya is caught in a tight spot. “it was going to be a choice between morality and expediency. Which was better?” (p.281). Tambaya chose the latter, but she wanted to believe that her “reasons were not entirely selfish; it was best for Boniface to stay in Freetown with a family that cared so much for him. There was nothing for him in Nigeria” (p.287). Tambaya also found love, a path she thought she could never cross again, the man she fell in love with, Alhaji Surajo was portrayed as educated and well enlightened and what more even romantic. He took Tambaya on special outings and one day he even took her to his new house and cooked dinner for her. His hobby happened to be cooking and he also read biographies, even though he had a wife and two children, he had grown apart from the wife and they share a platonic relationship. He did not support polygamy but was willing to consider it, if Tambaya would have him. He was also morally upright; he refused to exploit Tambaya’s vulnerability when they kissed. “A lesser man would have done so, and I’d have succumbed too. It was only because of Alhaji Surajo’s restraint that we escaped committing a grievous sin” (p.274).

His character was certainly every girl’s dream, and was a breath of fresh air from the normal Hausa male stereotypes. One could see why Tambaya would fall in love with him.

The writer attempted to portray a country of diversities but unified in so many ways. The reference to the Ecumenical Centre and the National Mosque at the nation’s capital was to show unity among the members of the two major religions in Nigeria. The National Mosque had become a tourist attraction of some sort in Abuja, and Esther commended the Muslims for coming together to complete the mosque, she observed that the Ecumenical Centre remained uncompleted because of “wrangling between the different Christian groups” (p.37). Tambaya however stated that even though the Muslims have completed the mosque, they are just as divided as the Christians “the Darika and Ahlil Sunnah sects detest each other, and both groups despise the Shi’ites. As for the members of Ahmadiyya, those ones are not even considered to be true Muslims (p.38).

The characters were also an array of different religions and tribes working together in different roles. There were government officials, board members, civil servants in different capacities, drivers, gatemen, cooks, nannies, etc. there were also marriage relationships. Esther an Igbo Christian was married to Idris a Hausa Muslim. There were even cross border relationships, Tambaya’s father was married to a woman from Niger Republic, and later her brother Aminu married a Ghanaian woman.

The writer also took a swipe at the role of First Ladies in Nigeria. Although the writer of the novel is the former First Lady of Kaduna state, she exposed how the office of the first lady was used to applaud the image of the person occupying the office, rather than the contribution of the person occupying the office. When Tambaya asked Mulikat what the first lady was like, Mulikat “started speaking in a strange robotic voice: ‘Her Excellency is truly a mother who cares for the less fortunate in the society. Her, Excellency, our dear mummy, has been working tirelessly on this orphanage project, which will be a model for the whole of West Africa.’ It was as though she was reciting something she’d memorised for an examination” (p.158).

When the First Lady attended the opening of the orphanage, she did not interact with anybody. Before Tambaya could introduce herself or anybody else, “she and her companions were ushered to their cushioned seats under the special canopy” (p.177). When the First Lady rose to deliver her speech, “There was no life in her voice. She hesitated and stumbled over a few words. Clearly, she hadn’t looked through the speech before hand; she certainly hadn’t written it” (p.182). Tambaya said she felt embarrassed for the poor woman.

The First Lady of Nigeria during the time frame stated in the novel was, Mrs. Maryam Abacha, wife of the Head of state General Sani Abacha, who ruled Nigeria from 1993-1996. Mrs. Abacha was famous for her Family Support programme, which focused on women and children. She also launched the Family Support Trust Fund in 1994. Through the money realized from this fund, Mrs. Abacha built the National Women and Children Hospital in Abuja, which was inaugurated on May 22, 1999 by the administration of Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar. It was, though, renamed National Hospital in 2000.

The office of the First Lady was not without its controversies, and with each first lady setting up a pet project, there was no continuity and no thought of what the effect that would have on the people. It was rather disappointing that Hadiza Isma, a former First Lady herself did not inspire the character; nor did she choose from the many educated and qualified present set of first ladies, but went back in time to draw her inspiration. It would have been interesting to know the facts of the matter, about Nigerian First Ladies.

It is interesting to note that Hadiza Isma is not the only female writer depicting the developing role of the female character and other social issues, other examples include Edify Yakusak, in her novel, *After They left*. *After They left* is the story of Mafeng, a young woman who is caught in a bloody crisis in Jos, months after her relocation from Abuja. She is raped and traumatized by the death of her husband and parents who are all victims of the bloody crisis. When she comes across her husband’s body, “He had been stabbed several times, in various places including his heart. Trickle of blood were still seeping through his flaccid body. A cursory glance at Samuel’s corpse would leave no one in doubt that the killers were propelled by absolute hatred and must have been high on drugs” (p.632).

Inter-ethnic, religious crises seem to occur more frequently in Nigeria, at the slightest provocation, the victims are mostly women and children. The women in most cases are raped, and the children end up in camps or on the streets.

After seeing her husband’s body, the thought of her children and the events that took place came rushing back to her, “how she felt when the sharp, blade of the machete passed through Samuel’s chest, how they had pushed another knife through her thighs, how they had hit her head on the floor when she screamed” (p.64).

Mafeng ends up in the psychiatric hospital, from where she escapes and goes in search of her missing children. The children on the other hand end up in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, where they are sold off by the ruthless Madam Mati. They are however saved by the guards at a military checkpoint. They are lucky they did not end up with the Surabs a child trafficking syndicate. “These were not your average barbarians; they molested, raped, abused, and sold the girls they abducted; they were monsters. And when they were done with a girl, they harvested every organ with a market value from skin to bone marrow, to all vital organs” (p.206).

The plight of women and children in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, and the issue of human trafficking are some of the major concerns in Nigerian societies and have inspired many stories including Edify’s *After They Left*.

Another interesting example is Habiba Alkali Nur’s novel *The Phantom Army*. It is the story of Karudia, a low-level illiterate man with an ambition to fight for his people. With no political experience and no educational background, he becomes a pawn in a deadly game of terror. The novel narrates the story of terrorism in the state of Rebni, in the country of Generia. There is wide spread poverty and the government is corrupt and has no regard

for human life. The writer is inspired by the activities of the Boko haram in North-east Nigeria. The outcome of greed and overzealousness on the part of someone who considers himself a saviour to his people. Karudia is a thirty-three-year-old man, with a wife and four children, and with a great ability to appeal to people and a compulsive charm that had the power to influence people “over the next few years, the man who emerged from the district of the impoverished and who was invisible to the world suddenly became visible, powerful in utterances that succeeded in sowing seeds of revolution in the hearts of so many young men that had taken him to be their mentor... Karudia, armed with the skills of an orator, watched the effects of his words on a new society and he was overwhelmed by the outpour of loyalty” (p.15).

Karudia’s lust for power is fuelled by ambitious politicians who sought to use his growing army for their benefit. After the elections and the victory dance was over, “a damning silence and rebuff came from the government whom the group felt they had literally helped to get into power through the sheer art of intimidation and manipulation” (p.20).

This would be the start of a series of blood bath and a full-scale war that the nation has never experienced before, deaths are being recorded in hundreds, villages are being raided and burnt down, and every living thing moving and breathing was killed including infants.

The narrative is not without a ray of sunshine, there is the character of Dr. Sayf, who is always trying to find a meaning to the terror going on around him. He thought about how young men had a strong conviction to engage themselves in a fight with a system some of them did not even understand. “At what point did their harmless activism turn to premeditated murder? Was the society so oblivious of the plight of the people or did things really happen that fast” (p.41). In the midst of the horror, darkness and gloom, Dr. Sayf was able to find love in the heart of Azeef, he reasoned that “when in the midst of all this ugliness, you find your quota of light, you try to hang on to it” (p.198). It is a story of hardship and despair, but it also shadows that there is still hope for the people because “for every hardship, there is ease” (p.192).

The popularity of these female-authored novels most especially among women is because, they tell stories that the women are able to relate to. The characters tell their stories and have developed from seeing marriage as an only means for the woman, to other endeavors such as a career or economic empowerment.

The northern Nigerian female writer has been able to achieve considerable attention to her presence. Their novels have become mirrors through which people see their lives. This has forced the society especially the men, a change of attitude that benefits both man, woman and the society as a whole.

Conclusion

Hadiza Isma’s novel, *An Abundance of Scorpions* is proof to showcase the emergence of abundant talent possessed by the Northern Nigerian female writer. The new twist in her story is that the Northern Nigerian woman is not only functional in the home, but also functional as an individual in the development of her society. The character is not portrayed as overly too independent, but as one willing to conform to the dictates of her religion and tradition. She is also not without her weaknesses or conflicts which are common human traits. The character is not confronted with issues about marriage or childbirth but issues which take the character on a journey of self-discovery. Tambaya personifies the resilience of the Nigeria woman, strong willed, determined and compassionate. The female characters in this novel are women with varied levels of education, age and socio-economic dynamics, but they all have strong ideals and sense of self.

The story is a subtle reminder that women can achieve their personal goals, seek empowerment and make valuable contributions to their families and the society.

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