



Dismantling Patriarchy and Gender Inequalities in African Cultures: A Case Study of Macaulay's the Regent

Abiodun J. Macaulay

macaulayaj@abuad.edu.ng

&

Wole Balogun

wolelovs@yahoo.com

Abstract

The patriarchal nature of traditional African society, which enables men to dominate women, has continued to negatively impact on the participation of women in formal and informal sectors of the continent. Taking an historical approach, this paper examines the conceptual and material bases of patriarchy as the roots of gender inequalities in Nigeria. The paper examines certain aspects of gender inequalities within our society from the perspective of the Yoruba world as presented in Macaulay's "The Regent." Through a theoretical approach of radical feminism, the play attempts to open the eyes of women to the possibility of making smart efforts to free themselves from certain bondages and oppressions imposed by patriarchy by taking advantage of certain privileges they enjoy from certain cultural practices that recognize that women could also take up, even if temporarily, some roles of men i.e. regency among others. The submissions from the findings of this study revealed that, though most African traditions do not empower women to attain enviable heights in the society, women could challenge these practices and subvert them to their own advantage. It is therefore suggested in this paper that women are as good as men and can match the men mentally and otherwise in virtually all areas of human endeavour'. For this reason, they should be equally empowered to contribute to the growth of the society. Research tools used are contextual analysis which makes it possible to explore both the religious and socio-cultural history of the people that exist in the play text.

Keywords: Patriarchy, feminism, Inequality, Gender, culture, Tradition

Introduction

Unequal treatment of individuals based on their sex has reflected and manifested in numerous dimensions of our life. Unequal gender attitudes and resultant discrimination in

varying degrees on the grounds of sex are commonly witnessed everywhere in the world. These inequalities exist in different dimensions such as rape, violence, girl child abuse, sexual harassment in the work place, and faith based organizations among others. In Africa, it is believed that women are not expected to attain the highest position like men because they were purposely created to assist men when God took some bones from the men's rib to create the first woman according to the Bible Women are supposed to be procreating and not expected to hold any high position in the society. This is an indication that the genesis of gender inequality is from our cultures and traditions. Africa is a massive continent with diverse traditions. The three main religious practices, Christianity, Islam and traditional religion presently in Africa constitute the triple religious heritage of the African continent. This heritage has a long history and influence on our society among the Africans. Long before the arrival of Christianity, there have been African ways of doing things which were guided by our cultures and traditions. According to Lonner and Malpass as cited by Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, "culture is the programming of the mind or is the man-made part of the environment." (23)

First, by referring to "human-made" it makes it clear that culture is concerned with non-biological parts of human life. This allows for explanations of behaviour that are innate and do not have to be learned (such as eating, sleeping, crying, speech mechanism, and fear which form part of our culture.). Speaking on the roots of culture, Harrison and Huntington explained it as the "subjective" elements or the culture-elements such as "values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in the society."(24). A more detailed explanation as to the functions of culture is offered by Sowell as documented by Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel in their *Communication Between Cultures*, "Culture exist to serve the vital, practical requirements of human life- to structure a society so as to perpetuate the species, to pass on the hard-learned knowledge and experience of generations past and centuries past to the young and inexperienced in order to spare the next generation the costly and dangerous process of learning everything all over again from scratch through trial and error-including fatal errors."(24)

The indication of this is that culture serves a basic need by laying out a predictable world in which each of us is firmly grounded. It thus enables us to make sense of our surroundings. As Haviland notes, "In human, it is culture that sets the limits on behaviour and guides it along predictable paths" The English writer Fuller echoed the same idea in rather simple terms when he wrote two hundred years ago, "Culture makes all things easy." It makes things easy because culture shields people from the unknown by offering them a blueprint for all of life's activities. While people in every culture might deviate from this blueprint, they at least know what their culture expects from them. Try to imagine a single day in our life without the guidelines of our culture. From how to earn a living to how an economic system works, to how to greet strangers, to explanations of illness, to how to find a mate, culture provides us with structure.

Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel state that, "All the past is here." (36) As regards culture, these scholars are correct. Cultures is not only shared, but are passed on to future generations. In this way, the past becomes the present and helps prepare for the future. This process of transmitting culture can be seen as a kind of social inheritance according to Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel. It consists of ideas that may have developed long before we were born. Our society, for example, has history reaching beyond any individual's life, the

ideas developed over time are taught to each generation and “truth” is anchored in interaction by people long before dead (36)

Culture is seen as a whole and that describes human behaviour as well as character of a people who have been raised with particular cultural beliefs. It is also a body of knowledge that contains art, language, clothing and, among all else, traditions. Tradition is used to describe an event/ritual that is often practiced by individuals, or human behaviour on certain occasions. It is also a set of rituals that a group of people practices.

What we deduce from the definition of culture is that it is a collectively regarded manifestation of human intellectual achievement. In other words, it is everything a certain group of people (nation, tribe, clan, etc.,) has amassed or acquired over the time in the course of their history. Culture includes a people’s cuisine, style of clothing, art, religion, traditions, superstition and so much more.

When we learn about some nations' cultures, we can get a glimpse into their pasts, understand certain things about the people and at least get a general idea about what we can expect from an individual that belongs to this nation based on how close they are to their own culture. When you think about it, anything can be a tradition, as long as it is passed on from one generation to another. In the era of modernity, traditions are slowly starting to fade. Therefore, in order to preserve them as a part of their culture, some countries create laws meant to protect traditions and the historical knowledge they carry.

In Africa, these laws are strictly followed. They are the constitutions that guide people, protect the community and put people on a straight jacket. Therefore, the issue of gender inequality has been embedded in our culture. In African culture, there are certain things women are not expected to feature in, like rituals in some cultural festivals such as ‘Oro’ in Yoruba culture. In ‘Oro’ rituals, women are barred as such practices are considered an exclusive reserve for men. ‘Oro’ is a ritual for correcting some ills in Yoruba society and it is exclusively reserved for men. There are certain positions women are not expected to reach because it is seen as rubbing shoulders with men; therefore this limits women’s role to only the kitchen and to procreate and take care of the family and attend to children. For instance, women are not allowed to become substantive monarchs in Yoruba land. They may become a temporary leader like a Regent but that is for a defined time as such occasions are rare. What is being said in essence is that gender inequality is a product of African cultures and traditions and this will further be expatiated on during the content analysis of the text in focus in this study.

The Concept of Gender Inequality

The idea that women are inferior to men is not limited to the northern part of Nigeria alone, but rather, it’s all over the country. In the southern part of Nigeria, Yoruba to be precise. There are ideologies behind gender inequalities in Nigeria, whether they are rooted in cultural or religious practices: that they have existed for a long time shows that their causes are as strong as their impacts. While writing on the common causes of gender inequalities in Nigeria, Chinasa observed that they include, “improper Education as “Knowledge is power, tradition and culture, mentality and religion.”

Scholars use the concept of gender to denote the perceived differences between ideas about women and men, male and female. Fundamental to the definition of the term “gender” is the idea that these differences are socially constructed. What is meant to be

man and what it meant to be woman, the definition or understanding of masculinity and femininity, the characteristics of male and female identities all are the products of culture....sex and gender have been considered synonyms and frequently are used interchangeably in popular discourse. But the term "gender" was originally used by feminist scholars to mean the cultural construction of sex differences in contrast to the term "sex", which was thought to mean "natural" or "biological" difference. (3)

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, "Gender means the condition of being male or female. When writing or speaking English, it is important to use language that includes both men and women equally. The following notes give help with doing this; the human race. Man and mankind have traditionally been used to mean 'all men and women. Many people consider the use of these terms discriminate against women and prefer to use humanity (440). It goes further to define what equality means; that it means indifference in size, degree, circumstances etc., especially an unfair difference in rank, wealth or opportunity etc. (608). While writing on gender inequalities and the causes, Okere (2018), opines that:

Unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals wholly or partly due to their gender or sex. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles. Thus, ideology is the centre of almost all efforts to explain gender inequalities. People's conceptions of masculinity and femininity, ideas concerning the fairness of differential treatment or expectations of women and men, help to evoke different judgments of women's and men's actions, rules about proper male and female behaviour applied to children. All these and more concern the influence of ideology on gender identities, differential treatment of women and men, and the organization and persistence of gender inequality.

The foregoing ideas about gender and gender inequalities attest to the fact that the cultural and religious perceptions that women are inferior by nature to men is one of the major root causes of gender inequalities. While men are regarded as superior, perhaps as a result of seemingly stronger physical structures, mental ability, the special qualities possessed by women, such as gentility, brilliance, beauty and intellectual prowess among others, have been played down due to ignorance on the part of most and lack of concern or appreciation by others. According to Chinwe –Abara (2012) the 2012 Gender in Nigeria Report shows gender imbalances or inequalities in such areas as: "Education, Health, Property Rights, Violence, Weak Economic Base, Weak political Representation and Gender Preference".

According to Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2009), "Over two hundred years ago, the Roman orator Cicero remarked that history provides guidance in daily life. (25) It seems he was right, because all cultures believe in the idea that history is a diagram that offers direction about how to live in the present. What is interesting about a culture's history is that, like most of the important element of culture, it is transmitted from generation to generation and helps perpetuate a people's worldview. The stories of the past offer the members of a culture part of their identity, values, rules of behaviour, and the likes. History highlights culture's origin, "tells" its members what is deemed important, and identifies the accomplishments of the culture of which they can be proud." (25).

Corroborating the foregoing assertions, Burton writes: "History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, visualizes memory, provides guidance in daily life,

and brings us tidings of antiquity. The world culture can be easily substituted for the word history. In a real sense, both are conduits that carry the essential messages considered important by a culture....history recognizes that our contemporary culture is but one expression of human life within a vast panorama of different communities and societies. Historical events help explain the character and actions of a culture....second, what a culture seeks to remember and pass on to following generations tells us about the character of that culture. (8)

History is comprised of knowledge about the past. As observed by Rose (2010) history is the product of scholarship concerning the past....if someone is interested in history, that person is interested in what has happened before the present day. (1)Gender history is based on the fundamental idea that what it means to be defined as man or woman has a history. Gender historians are concerned with the changes over time and the variations within a single society in a particular period in the past with regard to the perceived differences between women and men, the make-up of their relationships, and the nature of the relations among women and among men as gendered beings. They are concerned with how these differences and relationships are historically produced and how they are transformed. Importantly, they are also concerned with the impact of gender on a variety of historically important events and processes.

Theoretical Framework

The Theory on which this study is anchored is radical feminism. Radical feminism is an aspect of feminist assumptions which is probably most critical of men and most radical of the feminist perceptions. Women's history as a field of inquiry was a product of the women's movement, or what has been called "second-wave feminism." This distinguishing it from the feminist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which sought to gain the vote for women as well as raising a number of other issues relating to women's inequality. Feminism was central in stimulating interest in and generating analytical approaches to the history of women. While those who consider themselves to be feminists today may not be in total agreement about precisely what the project of feminism should be, most would agree that fundamental to feminism is the belief that women should have same basic human rights as men. Feminists argue that generally, women are disadvantaged in comparison to men. They suffer such disadvantages because of how gender has patterned their social worlds. The idea that women everywhere should have the same advantages as men led feminist scholars to want to recover the previously untold story of women's lives in the past, to uncover the reasons for women's subordinate status, and to wonder about the apparent omission or exclusion of women from the historical record.(5)

This essentially, is a war against patriarchal hegemony which is a tradition that privileges men over women. A tradition that radical feminism seeks to dismantle to give women equal rights with men in virtually all spheres of human endeavours.

Dismantling Patriarchy and Inequalities in Nigeria: *The Regent* as a paradigm

The feminist movement spread to Nigeria over forty years ago. As reported in Feminism history in Nigeria, the activities of late Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, mother of late radical musician, Fela Anikulapo, are attributed to the development of feminism in Nigeria. Armed with sound education through the British schooling system, she supported and fought for

women's rights, as well as for women having more participation in the Nigerian government. She was a part of the Women's International Democratic Federation, (WIDF) which helped more women to gain participation in governance and therefore enjoyed more liberation in the nation's political terrain. Ransome –Kuti died in 1978. One of Nigeria's well-known newspaper referred to her as "a progressive revolutionary "and "a Pan- Africa visionary."

A newspaper article, entitled: "Gender Inequality in Nigerian Politics",written by Hannah Chinasa which reflects the sterling contribution of Mrs. Ransom-Kuti to the development of feminism in Nigeria reads in part: "The first taste of feminism in Nigeria was championed by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a Nigerian born but British schooled woman, about 40 years ago. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, described by West African Pilot in 1947 as the "Lioness of Lisabi," wasn't just a "political guru" but also an outspoken women's rights activist and a traditional ruler. You could consider Mrs. Funmilayo a good old super-heroine with an alter-ego of a school teacher. As the doyen of Nigerian women's rights activist, Mrs. Ransome-Kuti was the driving force that advocated for women's right to vote in Nigeria. While Mrs. Ransome-Kuti's activities in Nigeria's political stage might have created a way for people like Diezani Allison-Madueke, Abike Dabiri Erewa, Faridah Waziri, and Amina J. Mohammed (who, by the way, is the current Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations), the Nigerian political system is yet to recognize women for their roles in politics nor has it accepted women as equal to men in all regards."

Gender inequality has prevented women from contributing favourably towards national development. Nigeria is a patriarchal society and women are in a subordinate position and the degree varies across the length and breadth of the country. As documented by Dominic, Amodu, Toluwalope, Azuh, and Oluwatoyin:

Despite the fact that the principle of non-discrimination has been enshrined in Section 2 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999), gender inequality persists.. Women are confronted with lots of socio-economic and cultural impediments which limit their aspirations in life. Women suffer discrimination and marginalization through denial of rights, making it difficult to fulfill their potentials towards developmental process. Despite government efforts in confronting gender inequality through treaties and conventions in gender mainstreaming, it is evident that gender inequality is prevalent in our nation. Equal opportunity for women is imperative for their quality of life and contributions to economic growth and development

In support of the foregoing argument, Fasina also states, "Gender is an explicit issue in women's history. Throughout the world, most women do not have an equal share of the land, credit, education, employment, and political power, in comparison to the men of their society. Yet, in every society, women play vital roles. In rural areas, for example, they perform the bulk of 'unpaid' and unappreciated household work, as well as contributing significantly to agricultural production. "(3) . While this is equally corroborated by Chinasa in her statement about the position of women in the society, Chinwe proceeds to mention nine ways women are deprived of basic rights, using culture and tradition to justify the abuse in the following practices. These ways according to her are: Husbands are the head of

the families and their decisions are final. Women must venerate, respect and obey their husbands at all times; Most women spend their lives within marriage. They are therefore constructed in the minds of men as dependents and inferiors who need to listen to and follow their spousal leadership and instructions; Whereas men listen humbly to their mothers, aunts and older sisters, they would not display the same attitude with women, not in blood relationship with them; Some educated men have internalized the stereotype that women are emotional and not given to rationality like men; Wholesale adoption of gender ideas from fundamentalist religions subordinating women to men; Such attitude has now become a way of life. They affect the way we run the family, implement development projects and practices including national governance; In the cultural setting, traditional belief is strong that for the continuity of the family lineage, preference of male children to females should be encouraged; In similar vein, inheritance laws deny females any inheritance, since she is considered to belong to her husband, on marriage. In rare cases, when considered for inheritance, female children get less than their male siblings; Early marriage of female children is encouraged even though the practice truncates or postpones girls' education, thereby reducing their economic empowerment; Widowhood: Most widows contend with accusations to being the cause of spousal deaths and invariably denied social and economic rights. In many instances, the family of a deceased husband will claim right will claim rights to the couple's property, leaving the widow destitute. This is done under the impression that the family of a deceased husband in customary practices will claim the couple's property as well as claim her. This is done in pretense that they are under obligation to take care of the widow and her children for the rest of their lives. This to them, justifies seizing the man's properties; and Female Genital Mutilation: Traditionally, women play passive role in sex, her active organ in removed to avoid promiscuity. Thus her sexual need and enjoyment are taken for granted. She has no right to enjoy sex because her primary role in sexual intercourse is to satisfy her partner and for procreation.

This disparity between women and women, girls, and boys, have led to the exclusion of women from having a voice or a say in the government of our nation. Women are seen as slaves not as companions to men which is the basis for complaint that eventually lead to the rebellion by women as spearheaded by Chief Esemure, the only female chief in Ilumope in the world of the play in focus.

Synopsis of the Play.

The Regent narrates a moving story of the intrigues that culminate into the revolt against patriarchy as rooted in the land of Ilumope, an imaginary local community in Nigeria. Patriarchy is a cultural system that privileges the men against the women and thereby suppresses women's potentials for greatness and relevance in both informal and formal sectors.

In the case of Ilumope, the patriarchal system bars women from realizing their substansive political ambitions. For instance, women, as permitted by the cultural practices, can only become a temporary monarch of the town, they are forbidden from becoming a substansive monarch who would reign till death like the men. The conflict behind the story of Ilumope thus becomes women's rebelling against this patriarchal hegemony that oppresses them and diminish their potentials.

The intrigues that eventually lead to the coup against men and triumph of women politically is though initiated by aggrieved elderly women led by Esemure, the only woman chief in Ilumope, but it is mainly brought to fruition by the three Guardian Angels who are supernatural beings. These supernatural beings deploy their powers to impress it on human characters in the play to dance to

their tune.

Having being consulted by Esemure and other aggrieved women on the need to take over the rein of power from men, starting from the tenure of Oba Adetunji, the three Royal Guardians set to work and set in motion intriguing events that culminate into victory for women. First, they ensure that Oba Adetunji bears no male child that the tradition would choose as his heir. Second, they choose a feminist oriented Adejoke, the last daughter of Oba Adetunji, to emerge as the Regent, after the demise of her father.

Once she becomes the Regent, the coup plotters, reveal their agenda to Adejoke and impresses it on her to cooperate with them by allowing the culturally abominable to be done, these include she sleeping with her secret lover, Adegoke, while temporarily ruling the town and also getting pregnant for him.

Thus, while the unsuspecting palace chiefs are busy searching for the next man to succeed Oba Adetunji after Adejoke's temporary reign as Regent, the elderly women and the Royal Guardians are scheming for a child from the womb of Adejoke to be born while she is on the throne so that the same culture can make her (Adejoke's daughter) the next substantive monarch. Not even Ifalase, the consultant to the oracles can stop the Royal Guardians as they threaten to take his life should he stand in their way.

Eventually, Adebimpe is born by the Regent and the unspeakable happens: the men become agitated, they swear to stop the women from having their way but the deed is already done. The powers that be are too overwhelming. They kill some chiefs who strongly oppose Adejoke and determine to stop her daughter from becoming the king, and charm Oloduoye, grandfather of Adebimpe, to accept his fate and join the women in their triumph against patriarchy. Although, the story ends with the triumph of women against patriarchal domination in political terrain, a supreme price is paid by Adejoke, The Regent, making the play having a similitude of Femi Osofisan's legendary story of Moremi, as recreated in the prolific playwright's Morountodun.

Suppressive patriarchal practices against women in *The Regent*

Gender inequality in Nigeria is influenced by different cultures and beliefs. According to the dictate of Nigerian culture and traditions, women are considered subordinate to their male counterparts. It is generally believed that women are best suited as home keepers; that their place is only in the kitchen and bedroom and to produce children. These perceptions are expressed and criticized by 3rd Guardian Angel in the Regent

3RD GUARDIAN ANGEL: For centuries, tradition has been in favour of men. It has infringed on our liberty. We are all born equal; we are not born to be their slaves. We are created to be their partners. We are the secret to their world, their joy and happiness but they don't appreciate this. They condemn and treat us like slaves. After all, without us, they wouldn't be existing. (30-31)

Another aspect of patriarchy that reduces women to second class citizens in the Nigerian society is clearly revealed in *The Regent*, during the conversation between Oba Adetunji and her daughter Adejoke.

ADEJOKE: What will happen if a woman becomes king?

OBA ADETUNJI: Tradition forbids it. A woman can only be a regent after the death of the reigning monarch. And it must be one of the daughters of the deceased. (14)

Oba Adetunji's reply to his daughter's the feminist query, shows how deep the patriarchal hegemony suppresses the women. To him, it is simply unthinkable to have a woman become a substantive monarch in the land.

While exploring the depth of patriarchal hegemony as rooted in cultures in Nigeria, Chinasa writes: "In the Northern Part of Nigeria, Women are still largely considered to be lowly to men, as women are only seen fit to be home keepers and child bearers." This notion was, in some ways, re-enacted when the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, said in a press conference that took place in Germany that a woman's role doesn't go beyond the kitchen and the "other room."

The same patriarchal notion was expressed in another encounter with the men of the land in The Regent during Ifalase's hot argument with the Royal Angels while he consulted the oracle to know who becomes the next monarch after the demise of Oba Adetunji's and the end of Regent Adejoke's temporary reign. Ifalase, the Ifa protege was visited in the spiritual realm by the royal Guardians who revealed to him their plan to make a woman the next substantive monarch of Ilumope and also impressed it on him to accept their decision, after a hot argument which ensures this: "

IFALASE: A woman king? What do you know about leadership? What do you know about human and resource management?

1ST ROYAL ANGEL: Women know as much as you men do, even more....

IFALASE: Your place is in the kitchen, to procreate and take care of the house. That is why and where you are needed and not in the government offices... (28)

Rebelling against Patriarchy

ThisDay newspaper (2017) reports that, "Women are discriminated against at every level, women and girls traditionally have limited access to education, ownership of land and assets in Nigeria. And they are denied equal treatment in inheritance rights, human resources development and sustainable economic growth. It is therefore worrisome that at a time they are seeking equal treatment and participation in issues that concern them and their families, some respected traditional rulers who ordinarily should know better are making utterances that are entirely unhelpful. This is what the first is partially, explicitly or implicitly expressed by Adejoke, Oba Adetunji's daughter when she requests to know the consequences of a woman becoming a king in the land:

Oba Adetunji vehemently makes it clear to his daughter while a woman cannot be installed as king in Ilumope. Also when the chiefs summon Ifalase to spiritually seek the assistance of Ifa to find out about who mounts the throne after the deceased Oba Adetunji, oblivious to the chiefs, Ifalase who is the only one hearing and seeing the Royal Guardians responds to

their plot during the conversations between Ifalase and the Royal Guardians, after the Royal Guardians

However, later in the play, the justification for rebelling against the patriarchal system in the land was given by Royal guardians who served as the initiator of the rebellion, while they are luring Adejoke into their mission:

3RD ROYAL ANGEL: For centuries, tradition has been in favour of men. It has infringed on our liberty. We are all born equal; we are not born to be their slaves.

Thus, the stage was set for a mission towards achieving the unthinkable and up turning an already established but dubious system.

The Regent addresses the socio-cultural norms of male domination over women as well as the discrimination against women. The play exposes how such domination and discrimination have prevented the women from advancing, and serving as catalysts for social development in their societies. It also reveals how the prevailing cultural practices have forced women into subordinate positions while privileging the men for superior positions. The synopsis of The Regent reveals the foregoing assertions:

In traditional Africa, monarchical rule is strictly for men. Ilumope is a town where the tradition holds very strongly. When the reigning monarch dies, his direct daughter becomes the regent while on the throne, tradition forbids her from getting pregnant and giving birth. And she must not die! To bend this tradition will mean a total demolition of custom and an attack on the superiority and supremacy of men of the royal lineage. This is the first woman king of the town. (viii)

In a further effort to justify the rebellion against patriarchy in The Regent, Esemure, one of the female characters that was instrumental to the eventual success of the feminist revolt, explains in this following scenario:

1ST GUARDIAN ANGEL: What do you want from us?

ESEMURE: For many years, the women of this town have suffered greatly in the hands of our men. We have been indiscriminately treated. Now we want our freedom. We want to liberate ourselves and we need your support to break their bond of superiority over us.

1ST GUARDIAN ANGEL: How do you hope to go about it?

Another advocacy, the play makes for the Nigerian women is Gender equality. This is not just a human rights issue, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development and a peaceful, prosperous world. Therefore, circumscribing the access to opportunities that ultimately empowers women and girls is counter-productive. Chinwe submits that, "Women are not the objects of pleasure of men or property to be used and disposed of. Indeed, women have the same intrinsic worth as men. Therefore any custom that seeks to treat them as inferior to men or treats women as the property of their husbands cannot and should not stand".

The Regent reveals Chinwe's thoughts in the following scene where it equally advocates for gender equality.

ESEMURE: King Adetunji will soon join his ancestors, his daughter Adejoke will become the regent and you know, Yeye that tradition forbids her to give birth on the throne. Yeye, you know, if she does, the child either male or female becomes the king automatically. We want to break this tradition. We are all born equal, to be their companions, not their servants nor their slaves. We should have a say in the governance of this town. We should not be restricted to procreation and domestic chores. We should have a say in the governance of this town. We should not be restricted to procreation and domestic chores

1ST ROYAL GUARDIAN ANGEL: This is a very hard nut to crack. It is a very dangerous path to thread.

ESEMURE: We know Yeye, we are ready. (6-7)

Despite the danger that they may face, they are ready to go ahead. They desire free and want to be politically empowered. They are ready to break the tradition that holds them captive to men. The radical feminist s in The Regent actually represents women in Nigeria today who have continued to clamour for more political participation and representation. Women are no longer seeing politics as no go area like before. They are no longer seeing it as men's monopoly.

However, the special qualities possessed by women have been played down by patriarchal practices due to ignorance on the part of most and lack of concern or appreciation by others. According to Chinwe –Abara (2012) the 2012 Gender inequalities in Nigeria Report, shows gender imbalances prevalent in the country manifesting in areas, such as: “Education, Health, Property Rights, Violence, Weak Economic Base, Weak political Representation and Gender Preference”.

At the tail end of the play when the child, Adebimpe, has finally been born, Oloduoye who is by tradition, the next person to ascend the throne learns about the women's coup, he makes an emphatic statement to show that women are not meant for leadership roles in the land:

OLODUOYE: The child will not rule. Only men are born to rule

Sadly, Oloduoye's patriarchal views here is held by over 80 percent of men in Nigeria. The men in this part of the world do not believe a woman should be allowed to govern on grounds that they weak, even unintelligent, some say women will be too dictatorial as leaders, while others cannot even imagine a women, the like of whom he controls as wife at home, should become someone he would take orders from at the office!

Writing in this same stream of thought, Minus said: "indeed in public life, the invisibility of women is blinding! They are actively prevented from helping and folk do not seem to notice...in the corridor of power, they are very clear about how helpful women become down the line as loyal foot soldiers, mass mobilisers, faithful congregants and ululating fans." Women liberation is a global issue that has been and is still widely discussed. This

issue of having women among the decision makers in the government is gradually being achieved through campaigns, employment, and financial encouragement.

To buttress Minus point Chinasa citing Adaobi Alex-Oni, the founder of Role of Women in Emerging African Democracies (ROWEAD) revealed, in an interview, that the reason for the incongruity between the educations received by male and female was due to the ideals imposed on women, during colonialism, about gender. The female inferiority mindset limited women's role to just satisfying the sexual needs of men, preparing food for the family, taking care of the kids, field labour, and domestic labour. In other words, the colonial principle was built around women being housewives, and traces of it still linger till date. Furthermore, many girls in Nigeria do not have access to adequate education. Some are even limited by their parents simply because they won't carry the family's name, as it is in many Nigerian customs. Due to this lack of support from parents, many girls perform poorly in school, are unwilling to take science courses, and ultimately drop out from school.

Gender Inequality at the Workplace: The Triumph of women against Patriarchy in *The Regent*

The huge and consistent disparity in education between men and women translates into a lesser number of women in certain fields of work which of course has its root in the culture. For instance, in Yoruba land, tradition forbids a woman from participating in certain things such as becoming a substantive king as earlier discussed in the play text under study. Women in such cultures can only be made regents and this is only if they are eldest daughter of the late king. The regency tradition is temporal as a man from another royal family next in line is soon made the substantive King. Also, a man is entitled to have as many wives as he can afford but it's counted as infidelity and punishable if a woman attempts it. Women are not expected to know the secret codes to rituals in the community. In a family where there is only male child, the father would chose only that male child over the female children and will be the only one to go to school.

Attacking these cultural practices while responding to Adegoke's condemnation of woman becoming the next substantive monarch of Ilumope, Adejoke's says:

ADEJOKE: But what I did was for the good of the town.

ADEGOKE: What good? I have never heard anywhere in the land of the black man where a woman rules as a monarch; tradition forbids it.

ADEJOKE: You men made it to be so. You set the tradition against the women gender because you are egocentric and self-indulgent. Because you are afraid to lose your superiority to us; you are scared and feel threatened by our ingenuous sense of organization. Your pride has blinded you to accept the fact that we are all born equal. That women are born to be men companion not their slaves. You imposed limitations on us, on our activities. Tradition should be dynamic not rigid, and any tradition that does not give way to progress has to be bent for progress. Since men have been on the mantle of power, what have they achieved other than to enrich themselves and subject the masses to hardship? A deity that has been worshipped for years without deriving any benefits from it should be discarded. We need a change of power.

In support of this move, Okere (2017) in his write up makes it clear what the law says and provides concerning the equality of sexes or humans whether male or female:

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) provides reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. " Article 2 of the UNDHR also re-emphasizes the equality of human persons as follows: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

The foregoing points were supported and made clear to Ifalase, a patriarchal oriented man, by the Guardian Angel when he questions their (women's) competency on leadership, thus she says:

2ND GUARDIAN ANGEL: There is nothing under the sun that women cannot do, even better... (29)

Supporting this view, after the child has been born and Adegoke is rebuking women for their action by saying that he has never heard anywhere in the land of the black man where a woman rules as a monarch because tradition forbids it , Adejoke responds:

ADEJOKE: You men made it to be so. You set the tradition against the women gender because you are egocentric and self-indulgent. Because you are afraid to lose your superiority to us; you are scared and feel threatened by our ingenious sense of organization. Your pride has blinded you to accept the fact that we are born equal. That women are born to be men's companion not their slaves. You imposed limitations on us, on our activities. Tradition should be dynamic not rigid, and any tradition that does not give way to progress has to be bent for progress. Since men have been on the mantle of power, what have they achieved other than to enrich themselves and subject the masses to hardship. A deity that has been worshiped for years without deriving any benefits from it should be discarded. We need a change of power.

The views frankly expressed by Adejoke's above represent the yearnings of many women today and they are consciously working towards achieving them. Speaking further about existing laws that protects women, Okere says:

Article 2 of African (Banjul) Charter On Human And Peoples' Rights re-enacted the aforementioned provisions of the UNDHR on equality of human beings, which African countries including Nigeria adopted as follows: "Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, color, sex, language,

religion, political or any other opinion, national and social, origin, fortune, birth or other status.

The Regent amplifies the rationale behind the foregoing law through third guardian angel's outburst in scene two:

3RD GUARDIAN ANGEL: For centuries, tradition has been in favour of men. It has infringed on our liberty. We are all born equal; we are not born to be men's slaves. We are created to be their partners. We are the secret to their world, their joy and happiness but they don't appreciate this. They condemn us and treat us like slaves. After all, without us, they would not be existing.

By deliberately creating female characters moulded as radical feminists who are hell bent on breaking patriarchal hegemony that has reduced them to second class citizens for so long and combating these cultural practices to a point where the political system that sustains them is over thrown, *The Regent* encourages the Nigerian women, and at large the African women not to just sit on the fence but rise up and become active to free themselves from all forms of patriarchal practices that suppresses their potentials in all ramifications..

Conclusion

Gender equality is not just a human rights issue, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development and a peaceful, prosperous world. Therefore, circumscribing the access to opportunities that ultimately empower women and the girl child is counter-productive. Women are not the objects of pleasure of men or property to be used and disposed of. Indeed, women have the same intrinsic worth as men. Therefore, any custom that seeks to treat them as inferior to men or treats women as the property of their husbands cannot and should not stand. Writing in the same stream of thought, Faniyi (2017) submits, "Women today have come to be accepted as the pillars of the smallest economic unit, the family and from them all great people, both male and female, have been birthed. This goes to show that women are forces to be reckoned with in terms of nation building and economic development.

Radical feminists in *The Regent*, i.e. Esemure, First, Second and Third Guardian Angels and Adejoke who single handedly paid the supreme price to empower her daughter, Adebimpe, to become a substansive monarch of Ilumope, thus breaking the age long patriarchal tradition that denies women of such political power, are the heroes of the play and are presented as signposts to women liberation from suppressive cultural practices in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that Nigerian women must possess the radical feminists' qualities of these exemplary characters which include combative spirit, resilience, courage, love, sacrificial spirit, selflessness and being ambitious among others to extricate themselves from the shackles of patriarchy.

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