

CULTURAL TERRORISM IN BINEBAI'S *KARENA'S CROSS*: A POSTCOLONIAL OVERVIEW

Ruth Etuwe EPOCHI-OLISE, PhD

Department of Theatre Arts
College of Education, Agbor
Delta State, Nigeria
Email: epochiruth@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Postcolonial theory emerged from the literature of oppression and resistance, which focuses on colonial experiences of the colonised. The Postcolonial discourse is the beginning of the movement towards redefining, reformulating and reconstructing the colonised self, the marginal status of women and the literature exploring it. This paper therefore argues that Ben Binebai's *Karena's Cross* should not be understood only as a mono-dramatic and literary text, but as a Postcolonial text which treats the issues of cultural terrorism on subaltern woman by a patriarchal society under the guise of tradition and cultural practices. These patriarchal terrorists wearing the cloak of neo-colonialism have refused to let go of their patriarchal psychology, but doubly exploiting the subaltern woman and placing her under the shadow. An analysis of the impact of the cultural practices on women and their effects on the lives of most third-world women are examined. An analysis of the impact of the cultural practices and their effects on the lives of most third-world women is carried out, using this play. The paper advocates that a fair playing ground should be allowed for effective impact on the communal, national and global scenes for both sexes, breaking down the cultural, political and historical barriers for the voices of the subaltern woman to be heard. The paper concludes with the various strategies that women can employ to counter cultural terrorism in their homes, communities and nation at large.

Introduction

When we talk about cultural terrorism, our discourse focuses on the means of terrorism, the terrorist and the terrorised. Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in human history, but has been part of human existence that took a new dimension in the mid-1990s and it has since become part of our lives as it increases daily. Terrorism is the use of violent tactic or technique of psychological/physical manipulation to stir up unnecessary separation among the people within a community or against other people or community in order to effect the desired change. Terrorism has a complex and multidimensional nature, so has no universal definition. However, the definition of Walter Lacquer shall be looked at. To him, terrorism is the

Use or the threat of the use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to achieve certain targets... it aims to induce a state of fear in the victim, that is ruthless, and does not conform to humanitarian rules... (43)

This act or threat of coercion or violence to achieve whatever aim of partial or permanent intimidation and subjugation is caused by many reasons among which is religion, racism, oppression, financial and political gains, relative deprivation, and defeating globalisation among others have now become an integral part of social behaviour in the world over several decades.

Culture can be defined as the set of shared spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of human experiences that is created and constructed within social praxis (Ertürk 8). Culture, therefore, represents the totality of the way of life of a given society, and it stands for habit, for some kind of instinctive activity whose rules are inscribed, legitimised and imposed on a community or the society. It is a known fact that all societies represent the social formation and arrangement of the people who share these have their own cultural beliefs, norms and practices that guide them, shape their values and motivate them to actions that might be unreasonable to themselves as well as observers. These beliefs, norms or practices become terroristic tools used against the female gender, thus, “reducing them to sub-human assets belonging to men” (Wadesango et al. 11). Since these cultural practices are not frowned at and questioned, they are taken as a principle among the people and, therefore, persist in the society. Serapin observes that, “terrorism is not justified by any group identification or affiliation, but that culture underpins and influences terrorists’ thoughts and actions” (62). In other words, culture plays an essential role in spurring and sustaining violence.

Cultural practices, therefore, consciously and unconsciously have promoted negative thinking, propagated hatred and violence in the society, and they range from child/forced marriage, female genital mutilation, son preference, female infanticide, honour killing, early pregnancy, wife battering, sexual abuse, widowhood rites and prostitution, among others (Cassman 128, 130; Coomaraswamy 8; Nussbaum 8; UN 3-4; Wadesango et al. 123-124). Terrorism has become concretised by the approaches and means in cultural practices that is why Rachelle defines it as, “the practice that inflicts immense psychological and emotional pains and sufferings...” (130).

These prevailing cultural practices in different parts of the world have contributed immensely to the various forms of terroristic acts carried out on women; their bodies have become the battleground for the patriarchal society who uses violence as a tactic to subjugate, displace, dislodge and marginalise them, and cause devastating psychological and physical ripple effects on the society. But in this case, the issue of terrorism is culturally/religiously inclined against women, who in various parts of the world have been socially predisposed to endure multifarious experiences owing to oppressive rules against women due to the timeless culture of patriarchy: a culture that is a socially constructed phenomenon which enforces notions of sex and gender that equate to male supremacy and female inferiority, and also institutionally allow all men to oppress all women (Bhasin 3; Gamble 302; Sultana 1). Patriarchal inclinations and views on the relationship between men and women and how they are generally treated

emanated from religion, looking at the relationship between Adam and Eve, which symbolises how many religions view women (Darvishpour 55). These views ultimately caused all forms of abuse against girls/women: as they are social constructs which engender abuse. Religions, as is noted, have therefore become a source of social control, while culture underpins and influences terrorists' thoughts and actions thereby legalising abuse/terrorism. Since cultural beliefs/practices are linked to patriarchy, women become the subject of this cultural subjugation. Cultural terrorism, therefore, is the systematic and structured use of cultural beliefs/ practices to oppress, exploit, marginalise and violate women. According to Shihada, "women are victims of patriarchy fortified by religion, traditions and culture" (167); because patriarchal thinking shapes the values of our culture, male dominance and women subjugation by any means necessary is used to sustain the trend, hence it supports, promotes and condones coercion, violence and abuse of women.

These terroristic acts have made the woman unimportant, invisible, un-respected and silenced, so that she is unable to speak about her experiences in her family. But because the subaltern woman has the urge to speak and be heard, she struggles to be independently minded, educated, and strong-willed, strive to do things on her own and make choices regarding every aspect of her life. It is in this light that this paper shall analyse *Karena's Cross* in the postcolonial Nigerian society.

Conceptual Framework

The colonial ideology was based on the doctrine of cultural, political and economic hierarchy and supremacy in all aspects of the people's existence, but the *postcolonial ideology* came into existence in order to help the oppressed, voiceless and marginalised groups gain freedom from various forms of exploitation. The postcolonial theory is seen as establishing intellectual spaces and representatives for the subaltern people to speak for themselves and in their own voices, producing enabling atmosphere to remove the imbalances between the colonisers and colonised.

Within the postcolonial theory, the subaltern theory emerged as a response to the question of silencing and subjugation of the marginalised, oppressed and voiceless people. Gayatri Spivak's *subaltern theory* draws an inspiration from Edward Said's "Orientalism", which refers to "the way, in which the West dominates, restructures and spreads its authority over the Orient with the justification that their culture and values are superior" (3). Said further explains that the vision of the Orient are mere re-presentations, ideological constructions anchored in a specific perspective and with an inherent agenda (7). Gramsci, on the other hand, refers to the subaltern as, "unrepresented group of people in the society" (55). The oppressed subjects or more generally subaltern were subjected to a consciousness of being inferior, so were made to carry out orders according to the terms and norms of a more powerful 'other' in which they exist (Moretona 8).

Spivak sees the subaltern studies as an avenue through which the subaltern, whether as individual or group, can be liberated, experiencing and articulating themselves, rather than being spoken for, known but represented by those who exploit them. They should be masters and inventors of their own voices because allowing others

to speak for them will, according to Spivak re-inscribe their subordinate position in the society. She argues that:

Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie.... In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference.... They are the groups (outside) the hegemonic power structure (de Kock 45-46).

The hegemonic power structure in this case is the male dominant structure and society, where women are accorded the secondary position and given inferior roles that have no meaningful position.

Spivak basically emphasised on 'the third world' women's struggles and experiences and that there is no space from which they can speak because their voice and agency are so embedded in patriarchal codes of moral conduct and the British colonial representation where she is treated as a victim of barbaric culture that are impossible to recover:

Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works through domination... In certain society... certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are influential than others... (Said 7)

Gramsci posits that once a society is not totalitarian, the citizen are dominated and imposed on by the ruling class who create and maintain the social institutions, in other words certain and any type of cultural enterprise and practices will thrive in the society and among the people. Spivak's major aim on the issue of the subaltern women is to ultimately save them from the burdens of indigenous patriarchal tradition and subsequently empower them. According to her,

the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernisation (102).

The question then is how can the subaltern woman free and disengage herself from the double nature of subjugation of the colonial power structure and the patriarchal cultural terrorism practices in Nigeria?

Experiences of the Subaltern Woman in *Karena's Cross*

From time immemorial, women have been seen as the fabric of human existence, but the predominance of patriarchal system in the third world countries means that women are still perceived and treated as structurally subordinate to men as victims of cultural practices, which are used to terrorise and keep them under perpetual fear and subjugation. According to Karena, the Owe-ama community was "a village in which men freely and physically inflicted injuries on the body of women for little mistakes" (3-4). These acts

are justified and condoned by the hegemonic patriarchal power structure. In *Karena's Cross*, the Nigerian society continued to thrive on the colonial period and the postcolonial era too, since it encourages patriarchal culture that makes it very difficult for the subaltern woman to express herself. But Karena spoke, challenged and fought for herself and by extension, other subaltern women, in spite of the ordeals she went through. The subaltern Karena suffered doubly as a girl-child in her father's house and a married/widowed girl. All these happened because the Owei-ama community is a totally patriarchal society where the male defended their custom as a symbol of integrity of their community's cultural identity. Nemughan, Karena's father, is the head of the clan and his family carries out both domestic and religious functions, which he forcefully enforces,

Karena: ... A village in which law was culture,
Culture was law and the makers
And custodians of culture
And law were the men.

It is a village where women
Lived at the mercy of men.... (3)

Nemughan is the first female in Karena's life who forcefully and trickily dominated her through a cultural condition instilled on women from childhood.

Karena as Nemughan: My daughter every
Age has its ceremony.
As our customs demand
You will soon be circumcised.
We shall celebrate your circumcision
Ceremony to make some money
For the family and you will
Thereafter be given out in marriage (5).

This negative inhuman cultural practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is fortified by economic, social, moral and ideological factors as a result of the patriarchal mentality to dominate women and consolidate the patriarchal image of women as sex objects (EL Sadaawe 65). A tortuous painful barbaric practice that lies on the heart of cherished tradition, values and honour (Rachelle 128), all for the "benefit of men" (UN 3).

Karena as Nemughan: I promised but I don't want you
To get pregnant in school.
The circumcision will deactivate
The sexual urge in you and prevent you
From promiscuity so that you
Remain peaceful within yourself.
That way you will not fall prey

To those sex-crazy dragons.
Trust me after the cutting exercise you
Will rest until the wound is healed
Before you go to school (12).

Women are being treated as the “other”, as “marginal” and as “fairer sex” and the psychological reasons behind this, is to completely subjugate them under patriarchal dominance and utilise their servile existence whenever needed. Adrienne Rich says that,

patriarchy is the power of ideological political system on which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, religion, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which female is everywhere subsumed under the male (57-58).

From the above, it therefore means that only the male have the right of existence, the women are parasites, hence, have no independent existence. That is why Spivak says that, “the sexed subaltern subject has no space from which she can speak” (307)

Karena: ... A village where men were the only
Lords and voices of the land (4).

According to de Beauvoir,

...Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man.... And she is simply what man decrees: thus she is called ‘the sex’, by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him, she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man, and not he with Deference to her; she is the incidental, the in-essential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is Absolute, She is the Other (16).

We see that sex is a dehumanising tool that the patriarchal class uses as instrument of power against women whether by force or by consent. The woman lacks control over her sexuality as a result of rape, an act of forcefully having sexual intercourse against the will of the woman; it therefore showcases male domination over women by force (Brownmiller 209; Kambarami 4).

Karena becomes an epitome of sexploitation as institutionalised by her father, husband and the entire community. Her father giving her out in marriage at a tender age, her husband Daubri raping her in the presence of other young men and the community not punishing the offender rather accepts him as an in-law, all these show the acceptance of women as mere sex object and a show of “triumph of manhood”, a conscious process by which “all men keep all women in a state of fear” (Brownmiller 5).

Karena: ...The storm of

Collective villainy
Fell upon my virgin life at
Owei-ama and frustrated it.
I became a helpless
Puppet dancing to the strings of destiny.
I lived in constant fear, frustration
Humiliation and hardly remember
My dream of life before marriage. (19-20)

The issue of rape is invariably connected to the concept of women as property which the man uses as basic weapon of force against women. This becomes legalised once the woman is married and “paid for”:

Karena: ...it was the belief
In Owei-ama culture that
Women were possessions of men. (3)

Karena as Nemughan: You women are empty possessions.
Training you is waste of money and time.
When you get married, no one
Will know you are still my daughter.
My name will be lost. Why must
I waste my money training you? (6).

The woman, as a legal wife, automatically becomes dehumanised because she is treated like a piece of property that can be used and discarded at will.

The ancient barbaric tradition of marrying young under-age girls, who have not attained puberty to older men, is prevalent in many societies, Nigeria inclusive. Even with all its attendant consequences, most people have turned deaf ears to it.

Karena: ... I lost my husband from the day
I was forced to marry him.
I was dehumanised by his people
Even before he died (2).

Karena as Nemughan: Karena

Karena: Papa.

Karena as Nemughan: Do you know you are thirteen years old now?

Karena: Yes papa.

Karena as Nemughan: Good. What I am about to
Tll you is very important.

Karena: Say it papa.

Karena as Nemughan: I love you, my daughter.
You are my pride.

A great source of my daily happiness.

Karena: Thank you papa.

But you have not told me

Why you called me.

What is it papa?

Karena as **Nemughan:** My daughter every

Age has its ceremony.

As our customs demand

You will soon be circumcised.

We shall celebrate your circumcision

Ceremony to make some money

For the family and you will

Thereafter be given out in marriage.

Karena: Father, what about my education?

I am just thirteen how can I

Get married at this age

When I know nothing about men?

Karena as **Nemughan:** Karena,

Your education is not important.

All your sisters were given out

In marriage less than thirteen years.

They are in their husband's houses

Taking care of their husbands and children (4-6).

Child marriage breeds other things that are not palatable to human beings, more especially as they are not matured enough to hold a home. These things psychologically and physically destroy the victim, building them into monsters, misfits or even morons that can be pushed around.

Karena: On the day I was discharged from the

Clinic I was told to prepare for

The post-circumcision ceremony and to be married

To my father's friend.

I realised that my father was a man

Who did not set empty traps.

From his promise to train

Me I was circumcised.

From circumcision I found myself in

The village clinic, from the village clinic,

I returned home to be married to a man

Old enough to be my father.

Love, pride

And dignity of womanhood

Collapse for the triumph of greed

Empowered by culture (14).

These girls become bond, living under the spell of magical powers especially when there are resistance from them. El Sadaawi says that women are “treated with all sorts of magic or traditional rituals, including exorcism until all the participants reaches a trance-like state” (89).

Karena: ... I vowed not to accept
The forced marriage
Despite the rape because it
Was not inwardly driven.
I cried in gruelling pain until
I slept off.
The next morning I was hungry
So the old women under the
Pretext of being nice prepared me food.
After eating I had no inner and
Outward steer to resist the
Marriage proposal anymore.
My resistance died
Through the ritual way.
They used African magic on me.
I was not better than a glove-puppet.
A human vegetable because
I was not in the right
Biological frame of mind... (17)

These manoeuvres are carried out by other women who act as eager collaborators as well as devout guardians of patriarchal mores and values in order to avoid conflict and assist in further subjugating their women folk. This is worst of the terroristic methods – subjugating the woman by the woman.

Karena: ... My husband’s sister from the city
Came, bought me clothes and
Promised to take me to Benin to stay
With her for some time before
Returning to the village.
My dark, dry and dead world
For once experienced regeneration (29).

Karena: ... Make up and jewellery by my sister in-law
Who vividly unveiled herself as
An international sex contractor
And was to be taken to Italy for prostitution,

Mainly to satisfy her sex exploitation.
My sister in-law has put on infamy
For human trafficking, particularly for
Sexual exploitation. She has set up
Fashionable channels and networks for
The easy and unnoticed flow of
Trafficked persons. I was tricked
Into *modern day slavery*:
An underground or gorilla economy
To undergo another round
Of physical and psychological
Terrorism and cruelty in the
Hands of my sister in-law... (32).

The subaltern female is forced to accept and be what she never desired to be: a voiceless creature, a workaholic, an object and a property.

Karena: The old women took me to
A bathroom for the circumcision.
A woman with big buttocks
Carrying a weight I can't struggle
To lift and throw away
Sat on my chest. Two other women
Held my two arms backward
And pressed them down while others
Held my two legs down with resolute force.
The woman who did the
Circumcision sat on my lower abdomen.
Six of them held me down to do the
Circumcision. I shouted madly, I bled and
Fainted several times.
It was the cruellest
Breed of genital cutting (12).

Karena: ... I was forced into a polygamous home.
A home where the husband is the lord
And wives voiceless creatures.
A home where the good, the bad
And the ugly hearts are brought
Together under the umbrella of a husband.
A home where the individual spirit is
Placed against the cooperative spirit.
My co-wives envied me disdainfully
And didn't care about me.

I was the youngest and smallest
In the harem of wives.
It was such a home where I was abused
As a child, as a woman and
As a wife and as marital colleague.
My life was a voluminous book of tragedy
Every day was a page of that book
That punished my soul... (18-19).

To compound her state of voicelessness, the woman is given most of the worst jobs, even when the work is undervalued. These women are the producing class, while the men are the expropriating class. They do this to please their men since they are not allowed to think independently, playing the role of mere shadows and pleased to live with their men and carry out a lot of household duties that come under the category of unpaid labour (Spivak 248).

Karena: ...It was such a village in which women
Only go into marriage;
Where women were culturally
Prepared to take care of
The husband and the children.
While they toiled all day in
The rain and under the sun sweating
To produce food on the table, men
Only sat to taste and reject food not
Palatable... (4).

Karena: ...Three months after my marriage
I was involved in carrying palm wine jugs
To the town from the forest
And to the point where the palm wine
Was distilled into native gin.
One afternoon I fainted while
Carrying a bigger jug of palm wine
To the town from the forest... (19).

The subaltern female is worse off because with all the travails she goes through, she is not spared from physical assault by the men folk. The beating of women is acceptable in most societies because it is seen as a method of discipline for an erring woman, either for not preparing food on time or refusing sexual advances even for unreasonable issues. According to Herbert, wife battering is the “violent acts – sexual, psychological and/or physical assault – by an assailant against his wife and/or partner by inducing fear and pain” (Herbert 1; see also Ruether 31).

Karena: ... It was a village in which men freely
And physically inflicted injuries
On the body of women for little mistakes;
... and even mercilessly
Beat up their wives for
Cooking an unsavoury food... (3-4).

Karena: I didn't mean to offend you my lovely husband
(*She kneels down to beg Daubri*)
Daubri opened his wide palms and
Slapped me thunderously. I was punched,
Brutally headed and brushed down
With ferocious and electrocuting kicks....
I was beaten mercilessly with
Demonic detestation.
I groaned and fainted.
Neither my mother in-law nor people
Living around us came to my rescue.
I became a punching bag
In the marital ring of Daubri... (22-23).

African culture is patriarchal and patrilineal in nature (Khumabo & Garbus 27); that is why it is anti-woman. The woman is subjected to traumatic situation that is life-threatening and damaging because of her natural and biological composition. The menstruating woman is stigmatised and regarded as impure because menstruation is seen as a taboo, she is barred and banned from performing certain basic duties especially her marital duties (Buckley & Gottlieb 6; Delaney 80; Douglas 34). These women are most times made to live in complete seclusion from their husbands, homes and even communities until the menstrual flow has subsided. They are considered as perennially threatening polluters of men (Ortner 86; Rosaldo 38), until she cleanses herself after the cycle in order to claim her 'dubious' privilege.

Karena: ... The marriage lasted for four years.
One disgusting and
Dangerous experience
I had was that each time
I had my menstrual shed:
The periodic discharge
Of blood and mucosal tissue,
I was regarded as unclean,
Forbidden from cooking for my husband,
Forbidden from staying anywhere near
Him and asked to sleep outside
My husband's house.

I slept alone at the veranda of
 My husband's house
 Where I was exposed to constant cold
 And terrors of the night.
 One fateful night when I was sleeping
 A strange hand touched me
 It was not as soft as the breeze
 Blowing that night.
 When the hand touched me
 I realised that
 I was about to be raped by two men.
 I shouted so they ran away while
 I ran into my husband's abode.
 Instead of sympathising with me
 I was accused of pretence,
 That it was a calculated attempt
 To despoil the tradition of
 Observing the monthly flow
 Outside my husband's abode.
 So I was asked to do
 The ritual of cleansing the desecrated house... (20-21).

Whether as manifestations of jealousy, resulting from exclusion, resentment or ambivalence, the truth is that it is another avenue of men controlling women.

The worst of the cultural terroristic patriarchal acts carried out to further subjugate the woman and permanently silence her is the widowhood rites. It is one of the most heinous forms of cultural violence perpetrated against women. This practice debases, dehumanises, defaces, dethrones, disinherits and denies the woman her rights and dignity (Landa 22; Rodriguez 109; von Struensee 20).

Karena: ...My mother-in-law and
 Accused me of killing her son.
 Anyone that tried to exonerate
 Me was joined in the murder charge.
 What do you expect?
 In the leopard's court of justice
 A goat is always pronounced guilty.
 The day my husband's body was
 To be committed to mother earth,
 The allegation that I
 Killed him intensified.
 The elders of the family then resolved
 That to prove my innocence,
 I must drink the water with which my

Husband's body was washed...
That was another challenging
Moment of my life.
To prove my innocence
I must drink the water
To reject the barbaric
Demand of the elders would mean
I killed my husband...
It was a hard choice in a hard circle.
But I managed to drink the water.
Everyone thought I would die but
I survived... (25-27).

According to Umorem Umorem, a widow is subjected to these indignities, but a widower is not (3). The question is: Why is this so? Once a man dies, the wife loses her identity, but regains it if she remarries her late husband's brother. Widow's inheritance is a practice whereby a widow is passed on to the next surviving male relation against her wish. This according to customary law systems is because the widow is seen as a property of dead husband's family (Amnesty International 8; Gunga 109).

Karena: ...On the day my husband's asset
Was shared nothing was given to me.
His new block building which
He completed with the sweat of
Our hard labour was taken
By his elder brother.
I was also shared like a property to
This elder brother of
His who was in union
With his mother to accuse
Me of killing Daubri.
I lost my marital sovereignty
And self-determination... (27).

The woman is denied any entitlement to property ownership, rather she is dehumanised, debased, reduced to nothingness and treated like a piece of property that can be used and discarded.

The subaltern female is subjugated by patriarchal hegemony, forced to keep silent and not speak of all the atrocities in their families especially as they are excluded from having any meaningful position from which to speak. This silence is the result of the failure of interpretation and not a failure of articulation (McLeod 195); it aids the keeping of the secrets, promotes denial and physical/psychological trauma.

Karena: ... My glow as a woman of

Self-respect faded very
 Fast and died. I became an
 Object of ridicule, powerless and voiceless,
 Emotionally traumatised
 By the brutalities,
 The criminalising campaign,
 Blackmail and rejection from
 My husband's family.
 As a widow I experienced
 Deprivation, subjugation
 And humiliation.
 I was avoided like a
 Plague and detested like
 The most horrible witch in the world.
 They called me a witch, a barren goat
 And murderer.
 The pressing wind of my marital tragedy
 Blew every day and every minute.
 I experienced marriage in
 All its inglorious ways.
 I gained consciousness from the
 Drinking of the water with which my
 Husband's corpse was washed.
 My heart was filled
 With pain and hatred
 Towards those who abducted me (27-28).

Countering Cultural Terrorism in *Karena's Cross*

The woman's consciousness has been awakening by the Subaltern theory; hence she tries to resist these patriarchal terroristic acts that subjugate her. This resistance in her makes her to take certain decision that will either make or mar her. Even when they obey their men, these women have a voice within them, a voice of opposition and dissatisfaction, but the patriarchal order suppresses her not to speak and if she speaks, she is not able to be heard. However, since the subaltern female has her own consciousness, she tries to resist these patriarchal terroristic acts that subjugate her.

Karena: ... I was determined to fight against
 Owei-ama culture even with
 The last strength in me believing that
 The cruel barriers of life would be cut
 down for me to realise my dreams.

One evening when my father went
 In his canoe of wives and friends to a

nearby village to pay the dowry for his new wife,
I felt it was an opportunity for me to
escape to anywhere to actualise
My destiny to be an educated
Working class woman.
I packed a few things and thought I was
escaping successfully. But ... (8-9).

This resistance in her makes her to take certain decision that will either make or mar her. The refusal of a widow to remarry the late husband's relation is treated with contempt and the society considers her as a living example of nuptial ingratitude (Spivak 135).

Karena: ... I rejected the family decision
To marry me over to
My husband's elder brother.
I am a woman with dreams,
Dreams that can light my world.
So, I was not in a hurry to run away.
The hen that has children does not
Run fast (28).

The subaltern female has the capacity to articulate things well, making her stand clear and known before the patriarchal order who seem not to be interested in listening to the woman's resentments nor ready to decode the message and accept it.

Karena: ... It was such a loathsome culture which
Underdeveloped women for generations.
A culture manipulated by male dominance,
A tradition in which women's right and dignity
Got constantly abused. A barbaric culture
Which needed a storm to uproot
From the face of the earth.
I have taken so much of its tempest
And now I am determined to take
The tempest of my
Own creation to Owei-ama (34).

Since the subaltern female desires to speak and be heard, she has to struggle to be educated and to make choices regarding all aspects of life. So, she should be given a level playing ground to develop her potentials to speak and be heard, and even contribute her quota to the society.

Karena: ... That fateful day I escaped the
Exportation to Italy

A young handsome man
 Whose name is Daniel
 Met me and saw me
 Crying when I was coming
 Out from the supermarket.
 He asked me to tell him my story.
 I thought he was one of those
 Charlatans fate had directed to me.
 I became more and more scared
 Of people who came around me.
 In the past, every attempt
 I made to trust people brought
 Me troubles and tribulations.
 So I initially refused to talk to him.
 But when he pressed harder and further
 My mouth betrayed me.
 I started narrating my tribulation
 Agonisingly with red hot tears.
 Despite the fact that
 I had lived a miserable life
 Dr. Daniel passionately took me home.
 He cleaned me up and cleared
 The spiteful scars of cruelty
 That crept into my face
 And heart and married me....
 Darkness is defeated each time
 You do what is good for someone.
 My husband defeated my darkness
 And spread the light of glory upon me.
 My dark shadow of yesterday vanished.
 Not only did my husband facilitate my
 Training up to the university as a lawyer, but
 He was also there for me as a faithful,
 Loving and caring husband....
 I now work in a famous legal chambers... (35-37).

The subaltern female should not depend on intellectuals who they believe “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...” (Prov. 31: 8); instead, a way should be devised for them to freely speak for themselves, to develop their potentials in spite of whatever “hazardous circumstances that might violate her dreams, will and existence based on the violence she goes through” (Evwierhoma 6) in order to triumph over their impediment.

Karena: ... Histories are not made and told
 Without human experiences.

Stars do not shine
Without great achievements.
No song is sung without its lyrics.
When a king's palace burns down,
The re-built palace
Becomes more beautiful.
You have heard my story.
The story of women disempowerment,
Marginalisation and oppression.
But do you just sit there and allow
Culture and law instituted by
Men and women destroy you?
Disadvantage is not disability.
It is only socially constructed.
I realised my strength when
I was thrown into the hot pool of water.

Hope does not kill;
I struggled to live to get
What I wanted despite the obstacles.
The tide will turn if women
Stand in opposition to it.
My father and my husband's cruelty
Taught me wisdom and
Offered me great strength.
I refused to be defined by the narrow
Sensitivity of Owei-ama about women.
A society that saw women as poisoned
Fountains of life. That I am trapped
Inside a female frame
Of physical architecture
Does not make me less than a man.
No mortal can change who you are
As programmed by God.
My story is a story of struggle
Against the mortal flood of oppression... (42-43).

Conclusion

Spivak's subaltern theory is used to critique patriarchal and phallogocentric ideology and hence very relevant in most societies, as this view has helped salvage the woman from cultural terrorism and the patriarchal order which does not allow her to speak. Her theory became a spring board upon, which most women stood to demand for cultural negotiation: whereby the positive elements in a culture are emphasised and the later demystified. After all, culture is not static, and its dynamic nature aids the society in

moving forward, harnessing positive elements to advance human rights and gender equality as well as liberating the productive forces of women for self-actualisation and national development.

The changes in the culture allow the 'once' subaltern female, who is determined to speak make her position clear to all as well as make her choices that will usher in a new voice, a new image and a new dawn that will set her free in order to enjoy its fullness in future. All these are seen in the character of Karena in Binebai's monodrama, *Karena's Cross*.

WORKS CITED

- Amnesty International, Nigeria. "Unheard Voices: Violence against Women in the Family". 2005. Assessed 7 Mar. 2016 from <[http://www.amnesty.org/library/pdf/ AFR440042005ENGLISH/\\$File/AFR4400405.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org/library/pdf/AFR440042005ENGLISH/$File/AFR4400405.pdf)>
- Binebai, Ben. *Karena's Cross*. Ibadan: Temple Publications, 2018.
- Bhasin, Kamla. *What is Patriarchy. Women Unlimited*. New Delhi, 2006.
- Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975.
- Buckley, Thomas & Gottlieb, Alma. "A Critical Appraisal of Theories of Menstrual Symbolism". In Buckley, T., & Gottlieb, A. (Eds.), *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation*. Berkeley: University of California, 1988: 3-50.
- Cassman, Rachele. "Fighting to Make the Cut: Female Genital Cutting Studied within the Context of Cultural Relativism". In *Northern Journal of International Human Rights*, 6.1(Fall, 2008): 128-154.
- Coomaraswamy, Radhika. "Cultural Practices in the Family that are Violent Towards Women". In *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women*. E/CN.4/2002/83. 2002. <<http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/TestFrame/42e7191fae543562c1256ba7004e963c?Opendocument>>
- de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.
- de Kock, Leon. "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa". In *A Review of International English Literature*. 23.3(1992): 29-47.
- Delaney, Carol. "Mortal Flow: Menstruation in Turkish Village Society". In Buckley, T., & Gottlieb, A. (Eds.), *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988: 75-93.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger, 1966.
- El-Saadawi, Nawal. *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader*. London & New York: Zed Books, 1997.

- Ertürk, Yarkin. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences". In *Intersections between Culture and Violence against Women*. Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of 15 Mar. 2006, Entitled, "Human Rights Council", 2006: 1-27.
- Evwierhoma, Mabel I. E. "Introduction". In Binebai, Ben. *Karena's Cross*. Ibadan: Temple Publications, 2014.
- Gamble, Sarah. *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Trans. & Ed. Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith. Chennai: Orient Longman, 2004.
- Gunga, Samson O. "The Politics of Widowhood and Re-Marriage among the Luo of Kenya". In *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK)*. Premier Issue, New Series, 1.1(June, 2009): 161-174.
- Herbert, Carol P. *Wife Battering*. College of Family Physicians of Canada, 1983: 2204-2208.
- Holy Bible*. New Living Trans. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.
- Ifemeje, Sylvia C. "Gender-Based Domestic Violence in Nigeria: A Socio-Legal Perspective". In *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 19.1(2012): 137-148.
- Kambarami, Maureen. "Femininity, Sexuality and Culture: Patriarchy and Female Subordination in Zimbabwe". In *Culture, Femininity and Sexuality*. Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series. Health Systems Trust, South Africa & University of Fort Hare, South Africa, Sept. 2006.
- Khumalo-Sakutukwa, Gertrude & Garbus, Lisa. *HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe*. San Francisco: University of California, 2002.
- Landa, Jose A. G. "Gender, I-deology and Addictive Representation: The Film of Familiarity". In D'Arcy, Chantal C., and Landa, Jose A. G. (Eds.), *Gender, I-deology: Essays on Theory, Fiction, and Film*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996: 13-54.
- Laqueur, Walter. *The Age of Terrorism* (2nd ed.). Boston: Little & Brown, 1987.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. U. K: Manchester UP, 2000.
- Mehrdad, Darvishpour. "'Islamic Feminism': Compromise or Challenge to Feminism?" In *Iran Bulletin-Middle East Forum*, Summer, 2003: 55-58
- Mendlinger, Sheryl & Cwikel, Julie. "Health Behaviours over the Life Cycle among Mothers and Daughters from Ethiopia". In *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, 12.1(2006): 57-94.
- Moretona, E. "Restoring the History of the Subaltern: A Corpus Informed Study of the History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave". A Thesis in the Department of Humanities, School of English, University of Birmingham, 2008.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Sex and Social Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Ortner, Sherry B. "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" In Rosaldo, M. Z., and Lamphere, L. (Eds.), *Woman, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974: 68-87.

- Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1976.
- Rodriguez, F. C. "Complexity/Controversy: Some Aspects of Contemporary Women's Studies in America". In D'Arcy, Chantal C., and Landa, Jose A. G. (Eds.), *Gender, Ideology: Essays on Theory, Fiction, and Film*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996: 107-20.
- Rosaldo, Michelie Z. "Woman, Culture and Society: An overview". In Rosaldo M. Z., & Lamphere, L. (Eds.), *Woman, Culture and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974.
- Ruether, Rosemary R. "The Western Religious Tradition and Violence against Women in the Home". In Brown, Joanne C., and Bohn, Carole R. (Eds.). *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 1989: 31.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Viking, 1978.
- Serafim, Ana. "Terrorism – A Cultural Phenomenon?" In *The Quarterly Journal* (Spring, 2005): 61-74.
- Shihada, Islam M. "The Patriarchal Class System in Nawal El Saadawi's God Dies by the Nile". In *Nebula*, 4.2(June, 2007): 162-182.
- Spivak, Gayatri C. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In Nelson, C. & Grossberg, L. (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988: 271-313.
- Spivak, Gayatri C. "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World". In *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Methuen, 1987: 241-268.
- Spivak, Gayatri C. "French Feminism in an International Frame". In *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Methuen, 1987: 134-153.
- Stein, Elissa, and Kim, Susan. *Flow: The Cultural Story of Menstruation*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2009.
- Sultana, Abeda. "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis". In *The Arts Faculty Journal* (July, 2010-June, 2011): 1-18
- Umorem, Umorem E. "Enculturation and Inculturation: The Gospel of Liberation and the Culture of African Womanhood". 1995. Retrieved 9 Mar. 2016 from <<http://www.sedos.org/english/umorem.htm>>
- United Nations. *Fact Sheet No. 23 on Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children*. Geneva: United Nations, 1995.
- Von Struensee, V. "Widows, AIDS, Health and Human Rights in Africa". 2007. Retrieved 5 Mar. 2016 from <<http://liphea.org7featurepresentationpages/jameskeytransformationalstewardship/additional-readings-andwebsites7documents-and-resources>>
- Wadesango, Newman, Rembe, Sympohorosa & Chabaya, Owence. "Violation of Women's Rights by Harmful Traditional Practices". In *Kamla-Raj Anthropologist*, 13.2(2011): 121-129.