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**Aspects of Feminism in the Literary Works of
Mariama Ba's Novels: "So Long a Letter" and
"Scarlet Song"**

المظاهر الأنثوية في الأعمال الأدبية للكاتبة مرياما با في روايتها
"الخطاب الطويل رسالة" و "الأغنية الغرمزية"

**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Ph.D. in English Language (Literature)**

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Dedication

To my loving parents.

To my loving family.

To Nida Hood

To my dearest sister Dr. Rahama Tahameed

To my only brother.

To my beloved friends Mr. Ezzeldeen Badawi Mamoun & Mr. ALagib Fadllalah

Ali

I dedicate this research.

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ABSTRACT

The study attempts to investigate some aspects of feminism in the African literary works of Mariama Ba's "*So Long a Letter (SLA)*" and "*Scarlet Song (SS)*". The main concern is to identify the issues behind the endless conflicts between genders in social life, particularly in marriage relationships, polygamy, patriarchal, racism, and men/women oppression. Furthermore, the study is concerned with the voices of women who keep demanding for their social rights. The plot analysis, descriptive and analytical methods are used to examine the data which were collected. The researcher tries to answer the main questions that the study concerns with as to get suitable results through standing on the themes and characterization of the Mariama's two novels "SLA and SS". The findings have revealed a group of results that play great roles in destroying the traditional-communities. The study further reaches to the reasons that drive women to empower themselves in order to have their rights. Furthermore, the results, which prove the validity of the assumptions that mentioned above, are concluded to the most important points of the study that deepen the awareness of unity in families as well as the importance of the right way in dealing with women now and then. The study has recommended that life must be governed with law and justice to control each person. Additionally, the thesis suggested that literature is an interesting way to transfer ethics and the concealed feelings of human being. Thus, writings about the main problems such as gender conflicts that truly affect the society should be focused on.

ABSTRACT

(ARABIC VERSION)

مستخلص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة التي إعتمدت على روايتي الكاتبة الإفريقية مرياما با " الخطاب الطويل" و " الأغنية الغرمزية" إلي التعرف على القضايا والصراعات الغير محدودة بين الجنسين في الحياة الاجتماعية التي تتمثل في: (المعاملات الزوجية، التعدد، الهيمنة الذكورية، العنصرية، الإضطهاد، إلخ) ولا سيما تلك التي تتعلق بالحياة الزوجية، بالإضافة الي اصوات النساء المتعالية بحثاً عن حقوقهم الاجتماعية. كما تركز الدراسة على إستنتاج الطرق السليمة في كيفية التعامل مع النساء. ومن خلال المصادر التي إعتمدت عليها الدراسة، بجانب استخدام كل من المنهجين الوصفي والتحليلي، هدف الباحث إلي التوصل إلي إجابات مناسبة للأسئلة أساس المشكلة، وذلك بالتوصل إلي نتائج مرضية تفيد الدراسة. ولقد توصلت الدراسة إلي نتائج هامة. دوماً ما تلعب دوراً كبيراً في تدمير الحياة الأسرية. كما توصلت الدراسة أيضاً إلي بعض الأسباب التي تقود بدورها إلي إشعال نار الصراعات اللامتناهية بين المرأة والرجل. كما أيضاً أثبتت الدراسة صحة الإفتراضات المذكوره أعلاه، وخلصت إلي أهمية تعميق الوعي الأسري في التعامل الذي يؤدي بدوره إلي ضمان وحدة الأسر وإستقرارها. فضلاً عن أهمية الطرق الصحيحة في التعامل مع المرأة في الحاضر والمستقبل وبين الحين والآخر. وقد أوصت الدراسة بأن يحكم الإنسان بالعدل والقانون للسيطرة عليه في حياته المجتمعية. ولقد إقتاحت الدراسة إلي أهمية دراسة الأدب على أنه طريقة ممتعة لنقل الأخلاقيات و الأحاسيس الإنسانية، لذلك تعتبر الكاتبات التي تحوي المشكلات الرئيسية مثل الصراع النوعي في المجتمع الإنساني من القضايا المهمة التي يجب التركيز عليها.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Meanings
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
SLA	So Long a Letter
SS	Scarlet Song
MWLD	Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary
CCLD	Collins COBUILD Lexicon Dictionary

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In Africa, women still suffer from the continuation of the cultural practices that chiefly insult and affect their normal lives. As is said by Bond (2003), "There is still so much injustice In the family, in the street, in the institutions, in society, in political organizations, discrimination reigns supreme". Therefore, African women still experience lack of planning their own life styles, enjoying their normal live stages or having their legal rights. Hence, the African men mostly were, and are the only decision makers of their paths, the African women sustain and still suffering in many different areas. This patriarchal society represents the nucleus of their endless suffering that result from male dominance over female, which has been as old as the Black Continent existence.

Cultural practices continue to overwhelm nearly every aspect of female lives; beginning from the discriminatory of sharing food and education. Kamara, (2001) states that, until now education was considered an unnecessary burden for African women. Furthermore, health care, and the traditions of marrying young girls to much older men for illogical circumstances are also considered as the negative practices that women experience in Africa. (Uche, 2009:1) This unjust marriage, which is still practiced in many cultures, results into a serious social issue in which the family is the backbone that helps in building a healthy society. Carole Boyce Davies and Graves (1986) encapsulate the problems facing the African women in six points: "...that African women have additional burden bearing down on them: 1) oppression from outside 2) heritage of

tradition 3) her own backwardness, 4) her men 5) her race 6) and herself". Literature plays an immeasurable role in the growing up, keeping, developing and assisting the society as well as human condition and urging social cohesion and burning issues by suggesting alternatives, as a means of reflection to face its problem (Oladipupo, 2004). Moreover, literature is nearly the only field through which authors can express their feelings towards what is notable and affecting their normal lives. Thus, a number of great African female writers carve powerful-words within literature to express their feelings toward gender issues. This is very clear in the works of writers such as: Mariama Ba, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nadine Gordimer, Zaynab Alkali, Ama Ata Aidoo and many others (Uche,2009: p3). Therefore, in order to study the African Literature in the feministic features, a special attention must be given to the cultural traditions and historical experiences in both social and political life of the African authors' inspirations and techniques. Accordingly, almost all African writers commonly share such cultural issues and imaging the characteristic features of the people of Africa who were mainly affected by colonization. For instance, Chinua Achebe (who is considered as the father of the African Literature), Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nagib Mahfouz, Eltayb Salih and others, professionally express their own African cultures and transfer their voices to be recognized. However, a great number of African female writers appear to voice out their feelings towards their needs as well as to express their own opinions through their masterpiece literary works. Consequently, certain issues must be stated on these female writers, as their male counterparts, express their African culture, and an aim for recognition to understand their writings. Therefore, to clarify why and how the African women create what they write, we must examine their

writings. Nnaemeka (1994) states that “To understand why and how African women write what they write, we must examine the specific location in which they are situated; but because any specific location/positionality is circumscribed by gender realities and cultural boundaries, we need first to revisit the issue of marginality to reexamine the site where women are silenced and where they break their silence” (p141). Additionally, the literary works are mostly categorized according to their historical background. Thus, they are recognized through their specific genres of the related literary school characteristics such as linguistics, culture and religion. Therefore, literature demonstrates the value scheme and the expectations of the society from which it appears. Since some of the European Languages imposed into the Black Continent during the era of colonization, a black African contact with Europe has been continuous. This led the African authors to write in the European Languages, which they learnt as a master language to write. For instance, Mariama Ba the Senegalese was one of the greatest Black Continent’s feminist writers whom had progressively received a worldwide appreciation through using European Language in writing her novels.

1.1 The Statement of the Problem

The inherited oppressiveness of marriage and the inequality of the two sexes represent the heart of the different feminist matters that made out of the inheritance African traditions. These traditions play a big role in destroying many families. Furthermore, the African culture is a fertile environment in which women lost their own rights due to the effect of men domination. Consequently, an endless conflict has been raised between the two genders, particularly after the notable change in women’s lifestyle that

results from the effects of colonization, which changes the African women by the way in which the European women live.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The thesis aims to ...

- display the way in which Mariama Ba portrays her visions towards the *patriarchal and polygamous societies*.
- reveal and to forecast the cultural dilemmas as to find the true lives and the equal rights for the African women.
- portray the changes that happened to the African women because of colonization.
- manifest the phenomenon of demanding equality, and the re-styling of the unacceptable traditional lives for African women.
- draw the attention of the African genders towards the importance of building fair and healthy communities.

1.3 Questions of the Study

Since the thesis aims to research on the social feminism issues in Ba's literary works, some questions are set as follow to be investigated in this study;

- (1) Why does Ba concentrate on marriage relationships than other gender relations?
- (2) Do Mariama Ba's points of view represent all African women's issues?
- (3) How does Ba depict the African women's wishes by her visions on their future?

(4) Does Ba succeed in drawing the attention of the two sexes to look toward each other positively?

(5) Do Mariama Ba's two novels discuss why the feminist ideas became active among the African women?

1.4 Hypothesis

1. Mariama Ba concentrates on marriage relationships than other gender relations.
2. Mariama Ba's points of view represent all African women's issues.
3. Ba depicts the African women's wishes by her visions on their future.
4. Ba succeeds in drawing the attention of the two sexes to look toward each other positively.
5. Mariama Ba's two novels discuss why the feminist ideas became active among the African women.

1.5 Significance of the Study

In her two novels; "*So Long a Letter*" (SLA) and "*Scarlet Song*" (SS), Mariama Ba addresses the inheritance social-life of the African people. She particularly concentrates on the lives of the Africans' women before and after colonization. Therefore, Ba acknowledges some common feminist issues such as gender conflicts, inequality between the two sexes, marriage in Africa versus Europe, as well as many other different feminist matters. Although the two novels focus on the feminist issues in the African society, but nearly that what is contemporarily happening in many different parts of the world. It mostly happens to the third world women where traditions have still drawn the paths of almost most of them.

In the contemporary world, the western women in general have been enjoying their rights in their different fields of social lives. However, the situation is different for most of the African females who live below their needs of rights, and who try to live as normal as they could, away from gender issues. Consequently, during the era of the western colonization over the Black Continent, some of the colonized people began to like the idea of gender-equality, which has been firmly found for decades in the West. Despite the fact that normally people resist colonization, yet the existence of its effects are still alive within societies. While some of the Semi-European females around the world especially in Africa are enjoying their full gender equality in all aspects of life. Thus, the feminist ideas became active among the African women especially those who advocate for social rights. Therefore, African women prefer to have the same rights of western women. However, the religion principles and traditional rules may sometimes stand against the wishes of the African women, yet they insist to change. As a result, the rationales of the thesis due to the mentioned issues are to understand how the author states and sheds the lights on the African society problems before and after colonization. This focus may help in solving many feminist issues globally.

Consequently, the significance of the thesis is that, it is a trail attempt to explore, through literature, many social issues such as patriarchal and polygamous societies, gender and marriage conflicts. Through Ba's two novels "*SLA*" and "*SS*", the thesis therefore investigates the feminists' ideas in Mariama's works, which, in fact, is seen as a major issue that led women to struggle for a better fair life especially in their societies. Besides that, the thesis also endeavors academically to move

away from focusing only on the study of the chosen texts (about Senegalese women's gender issues), to act as a tool for shedding light on such phenomenon in Sudanese societies.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher analyzes in this thesis, the two chosen literary works of the Senegalese novelist Mariama Ba: "*So Long a Letter*", (1981) and "*Scarlet Song*", (1986), using the plot, characterization, and thematic analysis to explore the message the novels reveals. The researcher further uses stylistic method as to clarify the beauty of the literary work. The study therefore tests the hypothesis that Ba uses to investigate the phenomenon of the demanding equality between the two sexes, which was raised due to the influence of Western cultures that resulting from colonialism. Therefore, the analysis is based on the following approaches: Post-colonialism Approach, the Autobiography Approach, and Feminism Approach as well as the Feminism in Islam (a unique approach) to analyze the literary works under questions.

1.7 Limits of the Study

Many works had written about the term feminism. In this thesis, the researcher is based on Ba's two novels: "*So Long a Letter*" and "*Scarlet Song*" taking advantages of their themes and characterizations. Moreover, the researcher has also taken advantages of any materials that have a link or may serve in building up the thesis. Therefore, many studies, papers and researches done about Mariama Ba or her works that available on the internet have mainly used.

1.8 Structure of the Study

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One is *An Introduction* of the research. It includes the introduction, the statement of the problem, the objectives, the questions and the hypothesis, the significance of the study, research methodology, the limits, the structure of study, as well as the definitions of terms. Chapter Two, *The Literature Review*, focuses on Mariama Ba's life and works (her early life, civil servant besides her work), the emergence of the feminist movement, and the previous studies on Ba's novels. While, Chapter Three, is *Methodology and Procedure*. In chapter Four, which entitled *Data Analysis*, the researcher investigates the aspects of feminism in Ba's Novels. Finally, Chapter Five contains the Summary, Findings, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies of the research.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

Feminism:

- *The belief and aim that women should have the same rights, power, and opportunities as men.*
- *The theory that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially.*

Feminist:

- *The one who believes in that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially as defined above.*

Cultural feminism:

- *The theory that wants to overcome sexism by celebrating women's special qualities, women's ways, and women's experiences, often believing that the "woman's way" is the better way.*

Individualist or Libertarian Feminism

- *Based upon individualism or libertarian (minimum government or anarchocapitalist) philosophies. The primary focus is individual autonomy, rights, liberty, independence and diversity. Individualist Feminism tends to widely encompass men and focuses on barriers that both men and women face due to their gender.*

Polygamy:

- *The custom in some societies in which someone can be legally married to more than one person at the same time.*

Gender:

- *The fact that they are male or female.*

Oppression or Oppressiveness:

- *The cruel or unfair treatment of a group of people.*

Patriarchal:

- *It is the society, family, or system in which the men have all or most of the power and importance.*

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to give a detailed overview on Mariama Ba's life as well as her own experiences that influenced her way of writings. It therefore, makes an over view on her early life, civil servants and her work experience. Furthermore, the chapter deals with feminism in some different terms including definitions, backgrounds, and etymologies, besides social and religious theories of feminism. This chapter further correlates with the earlier studies (researches, critiques, papers and others) that connect with the thesis topic.

2.1 Mariama Ba's life and works

2.1.1 Biography of Mariama Ba

Mariama Ba, who is the central focus of this thesis, was born in Dakar – Senegal in April. 17th 1929, and raised a Muslim by her traditional grandparents after the death of her mother. Ba's grandparents did not believe that girls should be educated, thus Mariama had struggled to gain an education as a result. Moreover, at an early age she came to criticize what she perceived as inequalities between the two sexes in the African traditions. (African Novel: 2014)

Ba was a divorced mother with nine children. In her first novel “*So Long a Letter (SLA)*” that has been appreciated as one of the Africa's 100 best books of the 20th century (Waveland Press, 2012). Mariama Ba puts into words her frustration with the fate of the African women as well as her ultimate acceptance of it. In this same novel, Ba portrays the sorrow

and nonresistance of a woman who must share the woe of her late husband with his second younger wife. This short book was awarded the first Noma Prize (A Japanese annually prize that has been awarded to an outstanding new work published in Japan between October and the following September) for publishing in the Black Continent in 1981 (Zell, 1980: p199).

The second novel, under investigation is the “*Scarlet Song (SS)*”. As “*So Long a Letter*”, this work also gains international attention. Its themes are centered on love, racial animosity, traditions versus modernity, as well as education and betrayals. However, in spite of the differences of multiple themes, yet love is regarded as the major theme in Mariama Ba’s “SS”. In her novel “SS”, Ba represents the lives of totally two different youngsters; a Senegalese youth, and a French young woman, of whom she gives an idea about the two lovers who came from very different backgrounds, yet they were tied together by the uncontrollable power of love. Nevertheless, after returning to Africa, the French woman discovered that it is the land of *polygamy*, where according to traditions and religion, it is acceptable for men to have more than a wife. Mariama herself lives this kind of marriage. The book therefore most notably criticizes the oppression of tradition and expounds upon the despair of cross-cultural marriages.

Mariama Ba herself suffered from the traditions that seem very unfair to her. This unjust is due to the oppression society as well as the non-equality between the two sexes which mainly occurs in the Black Continent. On this account, Ba had a vision that the Africans should reduce the destructive impact of their culture. Moreover, women must

have a complete lack of the regard for the consequences of men's actions on families.

Due to her notable activities and for her honest feminist visions with the unlimited support of curing the African Society especially in her homeland (Senegal), a school was founded in 1977 by the first president of Senegal; Leopold Sedar Senghor and named after her. Furthermore, in 2009, Anna Rodriguez Rossell, the director of Jana Films, a Spanish Production Company, filmed a documentary film about the daily activities in Ba's school on Goree, an island in Senegal.

2.1.1.1 Ba's Early Life

Mariama Ba (1929 – 1981) was a famous and popular Senegalese novelist woman. Her popularity was due to the publication of her first novel “*SLA*” that came into view in French in 1980 after 51 years of her born. At the time, her literary work was seemed scarcity in that an African woman had written such a novel. Additionally, a special notable vision was given to this work because Ba's origin is in an Islamic country.

Mariama Ba had witnessed the time when the West administered Africa. As a result, she came to be a writer who made precious inspections of the terrain where African traditional cultures mixed with the effects that transported by European colonialism.

However, in poor health for many years, Mariama Ba died in 1981. Her death came before the publication of her second novel “*SS*”. Therefore, she did not notice the rewards of her own growing reputation. Nevertheless, Ba obtained wide concentration from Western critics as well the people who interested in such works including the students of

literature. Following her death, her feminist inclination as a postcolonial writer led her to be famous inscribing the two remarkable novels: (*SLA and SS*). Although they are only two novels, yet they mount the memorable of the difficult conditions that faced by African women. Therefore, the two novels are seen as a representative vision towards the growing social consciousness of African women. On that account, Ba became the focus of numerous studies in American and European journals. By the late 1990s, “*SLA*”, showed up around the world as a curriculum in the fields of literature for many colleges and universities whom are interested on women's studies, especially African studies.

2.1.1.2 Ba’s Civil Servants

After the death of her mother, Mariama Ba raised by her grandparents when she was very young. She descendent from a well-known Senegalese family that had given a well placed in the French colonial spheres for long. Her grandfather Sarakhole was an interpreter for French officials in Saint-Louis before coming to Dakar. Furthermore, her father worked with the colonial government too. He employed as a treasury teller in the French West African government. Years later, her father was appointed as the first Senegalese minister of health in 1956.

The early death of her mother, results in raising her traditionally by her motherly grandparents in a very extended family. One of the aspects of her grandparents’ traditions was clearly noticed when they showed their strong opinions that as a girl, should not receive a formal education and should only learn Islamic studies. Therefore, she began to study the Qur’an with one of Dakar's leading Islamic clerics. Nevertheless, Ba’s father takes an interest in her benefit thus became her supporter. Her father’s

diplomatic position assisted her to receive the best education at hands in Senegal at the time. On that account, Mariama Ba was registered to study with a woman called Berthe Maubert who takes her side against the wishes of her family. Consequently, she was listed in a French-language school in Dakar.

As a little Senegalese woman, Ba had to do the work that expected to do besides her educational duties. She admitted that to the *African Book Publishing Record* saying:

"The fact that I went to school didn't dispense me from the domestic duties little girls had to do. I had my turn at cooking and washing up. I learned to do my own laundry and to wield the pestle because, it was feared, 'you never know what the future might bring!'"(African Book)

Although of Ba's desires of being well-educated woman, she had to pass through the two paths that had drawn to her educational life besides their conflicting demands; she won an access to a top French language teacher-training school, where she met Mrs. Germaine Le Goff. Mariama ergo expresses her appreciations towards the encouragements that Mrs. Le Goff did to her:

"Taught me about myself, taught me to know myself," "She preached for planting roots into the land and maintaining its value.... A fervent patriot herself, she developed our love for Africa and made available to us the means to seek enrichment.

I cherish the memory of rich communions with her.... Her discourse outlined the new Africa." (Mariama Ba)

Following colonization, there were opposition groups among the authors.

"Ba's judgment of the colonial school stands in radical opposition to those voiced by the anti-colonial, national liberationist authors of the 1950s and 1960s who saw in the colonial educational institutions an extension of the repressive mechanisms of the colonial enterprise." (Kenneth, 2008)

In addition to her success career as a teacher, Ba had also gained a gifted proficiency of writing. She studies the environment in which the Senegalese lived in before independence, and then however, works on finding ways to better her people coming lives after getting independence. "Thus she judges her generation to be "the first pioneers of the promotion of African women" (Kenneth, 2008: p15). Therefore, the way of her thinking, helps in strengthening her future visions towards the community; though gives a moral depth to her literary works as Adele King states,

"A desire to "return to traditions" after independence leads, she feels, not only to the subjugation of women but also to corruption and a dangerous political conservatism. Raising questions of what is best for both individuals and the state in independent Senegal gives a moral depth to Ba's work."(Adele, 1994: p1)

Therefore, she scored a notable style of writing novels. As a writer, she would join the forms of the skills of the European novel and the essay with a moral fearlessness that had roots in her traditional belief system.

2.1.1.3 Ba's Life Work

Mariama Ba had awarded her teaching certificate in 1947. She then spent 12 years working at a medical high school in Dakar. During her school life, she wrote a book about the colonial educational system. Thereafter, she fell in love of a Senegalese politician Obeye Diop and soon they got married, however, years later, they divorced.

The unexpected divorce, forces Ba to struggle to raise her large family alone. She had to take care of their nine children. Unfortunately, life stood against her and things became difficult to be handled. Additionally, things became worse when she began to suffer from health problems that forced her to give up her teaching job. However, of all, she continued competing and later became a regional school inspector and worked as a secretary.

Doubtless, Ba benefited from her life experiences that assumed her two novels; *SLA* and *SS* at a very end of her life. Nnaemeka summarizes Mariama Ba's writing personality as follows,

“A superb organizer and an indefatigable worker, Ba was a feminist activist whose membership in many women's organizations enabled her to make meaningful contributions to activities aimed at women and children. As an African, a Muslim, and Western educated, Ba lived her triple heritage with dignity and great understanding. Writing from this

vantage point, Ba is able, in a most insightful and poetic way, to portray the different ways in which women fight for survival in an environment of cultural conflicts and change.”
(Nnaemeka, 1990: p34)

Her interest of the idea of feminism affects her writing scope. Therefore, she was concerned to write about such feminists' issues for African newspapers besides lecturing such subjects as education. Ba widely focused on the lacks of legal rights of women who are trapped on the notion of *polygamy*.

In 1979, *The Editions Nouvelles Africaines Publishing House* published her first novel *SLA*, which was sooner gained the attention of both the African and French critics. However, this literary work translated from French into many languages; English, Dutch, German, Japanese, Russian, and Swedish.

The novel was a long letter that exchanged between two lifelong friends; Ramatoulaye, a widow of Moudou Fall and Aissatou, Mawdo Ba's ex-wife. In this book, the protagonist reflects her own life, and other women in her circle. Professionally, Ba bridged that distance between the African forms of spoken storytelling and the traditional structure of a novel. What summed up is that, this work won the first Noma Award, a prize funded by a Japanese publisher for publishing in Africa in 1981(ibid).

“Mariama Bâ's novel offers a testimony of the female condition in Africa while at the same time giving that testimony true imaginative depth. The distinguishing feature of

this novel is the poise of its narrative style, which reveals a maturity of vision and feeling. As a first novel, it represents a remarkable achievement to which the Committee, with this Award, is giving recognition.”(Zell, First Noma Award: p199)

2.2 The Emergence of the Feminist Movement

The term feminism according to Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary has two meanings; “*the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities, and organized activity in support of women's rights and interests*”.(MWLD:2016) Subsequently, the word feminism is aimed to create equal rights and legal protection for women through the different stages of lives; politically, culturally and economically. It is also defined by Adele King who “... defines feminism as a recognition that women are always in a subordinate position and as a concern for improving the place of women in society.” (Adele, 1994:178) Therefore, the feminist movement involves some theories and philosophies that concerned with gender issues, which mainly recommends for gender equality for women and crusade for women's rights and interests. Consequently, Maggie Humm (1986), and Rebecca Walker state that, the history of feminism can be divided into three waves while others extend the waves into four as follows:

2.2.1 The First Feminist Wave

The first wave initially emerged in some parts of Europe and the United States of America. This period of feminist activity turns to the era of the Nineteenth Century and extended to the early of the Twentieth. It clearly

emerges as a new era for women during or after the First World War (Marlene, 2012: p197). At first, the pioneers strike at men's monopoly over every aspects of life as Marlene LeGates states,

“Participants attacked the male monopoly of education, professional careers, and culture; married women's economic and legal dependence; sexual and moral double standards; women's lack of control over their bodies; the drudgery of homework; low wages; and, not least, women's exclusions from politics.” (Marlene, 2012: p197)

As it has been stated above, this first idea concentrates on the upgrading of equal contract and property rights for women; “first wave feminism inevitably reflects the social and political conditions of its time is also to acknowledge that any discourse inevitably has within it a range of consequences, potentially positive and negative” (Phillips, R & Cree, V 2014: p11). Moreover, their antagonism to the way of marriage and ownership of married women by their husbands, in a addition to the changes that happened due to the time of industrial revolution that turned the women's minds to get ways out of miseries that greatened by the class system. Marlene LeGates has further mentioned that,

“While social inequality remained very much what it had been before the industrial Revolution, society became more diverse with a wide range of subgroups between rich and the very poor.” (Marlene, 2011: p199)

These dilemmas had strengthened women's visions yet they began offending men's dominations. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was one of the

pioneers of feminism who merged at in the view of the fact that women seemed “ignorantly made ladders of themselves by which fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons reached their highest ambitions” However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the right of women's suffrage was chiefly focused on to be acquired.

Due to the period of this first wave, many feminist activisms appeared and made great changes then, for instance, Florence Nightingale created female nurses to the military in 1854. Moreover, in Britain women granting the right to vote to, in 1918, yet by 1928 this was extended to all women over twenty-one. Margret Walters states that English women’s role began to change then particularly under some men’s feelings and agreements that a woman’s party might have helped them:

“... English women achieved legal and civil equality... Some women, those over the age of 30, were allowed to vote from 1918 ...” (Margret: 2005: p86)

In the United States, leaders of such movements were all strongly influenced by Quaker thought (Christian group of religious movements generally known as the Religious Society of Friends). Therefore, they push for the cancellation of slavery prior to advocate women's right to vote.

“The First Wave focused on political change, ignited the suffragettes’ successful lobby for women’s right to vote, championed the abolition of slavery, and broadly supported women’s education.” (Harriet, 2015: p1)

Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony were almost the pioneers of the American first-wave feminism, which is held to be concluded with the course of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1919 that granting women the right to vote in all states.

2.2.2 The Second Feminist Wave

This wave emerged in the early 1960s and lengthened up to the late of 1980s (Phillips, R & Cree, V 2014: p12). According to scholars, the second wave was a supplement to the first wave of feminism in UK and USA. Harriet states that,

“The Second Wave critiqued rigid sex roles; claimed economic parity; validated women’s desire for sexual pleasure; and widened feminism’s scope to take in critical differences among women, from sexuality to class to race and ethnicity.” (Harriet, 2015: p1)

While the scholar Estelle Freedman says that, the first wave concentrates on rights such as suffrage, yet the second wave was mainly focused on other issues of equality, such as ending discrimination. Phillips, R & Cree state that; “Second wave Feminism saw individual, social and political inequalities as inevitably interlinked; ‘the personal is political’ was one of the popular radical feminist slogans of the day.” (Phillips, R & Cree, 2014: p11)

Furthermore, generally, the feminists of this second wave saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inseparably fastened, thus;

they inspired women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures.

2.2.3 The Third Feminist Wave

The third feminist wave has its origins in the mid of 1980s and emerged in the early 1990s. This era born as a reaction to the failures, and as a response to the resistance against the new thoughts that created by the second wave.

“The Third Wave, finally, has emphasized the body as personal expression (e.g., Riot grrrl (feminist punk movement that originated in the early 1990s in Washington state and the greater Pacific Northwest) material girls, tattoos and piercings), sex positivity, and subject positionality, incorporating theories of postcoloniality, queer sexuality, transgenderism and transsexuality, and disability activism.”
(Harriet, 2015: p1)

Moreover, it aims to challenge or avoid the second wave’s definitions of femininity, which according to them over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women. Gender and sexuality were the nucleuses of its ideological thoughts. Accordingly, the focal point of its feminists often centre on "micro-politics" and challenge the second wave's ideal as to what is, or is not, good for females.

Some of the Third wave feminist’s principals are rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldua, Bell Hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other black feminists,

who tried to bargain gab within feminist thought for consideration of race-related subjectivities. (Wiki: 2016) Furthermore, the third wave feminism accommodates inner discussions between different feminists; particularly those who believe that there are no inherent differences between the sexes and contend that gender roles are due to social conditioning, versus who believe that there are important differences between the sexes like the psychologist Carol Gilligan.

2.2.4 The Fourth Feminist Wave

This last wave extends up to date, as some scholars note that there is a fourth wave. It is in fact becomes as a daily media demands. Many sources support the idea of feminism within young women and men in different fields. Phillips, R & Cree state that;

*“The rise of instances of public commentaries in popular media reasserting a need for feminism in some form or another. This has been driven by a mix of ‘old-guard’ feminists, and young women and young men within public domains such as **politics**, business and entertainment. Many of these debates took place on the Internet, often revealing the extremes of Polarisation between pro and anti-feminist opinions.” (Phillips, R & Cree, 2014: p13)*

The waves of feminism are set on chains as their extension continues since the beginning. For instance, the agenda of the fourth wave are extracted mainly from the third wave as asserts by Baumgardener who points that the starting of this wave is 2008. She further indicates that

technology helps in spreading the ideas of feminism through the daily usage of the internet.

'They commented on the news, posted their most stylish plus-size fashion photos with info about where to shop, and tweeted that they, too, had had an abortion. "Reproductive justice," coined by women of color in the 1990s, became the term of choice for young feminists. Transgenderism, male feminists, sex work, and complex relationships within the media characterized their feminism.' (Baumgardener: 2011)

Referring to what Baumgardener has claimed; although technology has been playing a great role in broaden the idea of equality between genders, yet she questions about whether if the sex-equality has been achieved yet? However, the answer does announce the continuation of the conflicts between the two sexes hence women feel that they are in need of being equalized to men in everything (Phillips, R & Cree, V 2014: p16).

"if the question of the extent to which we have achieved 'gender equality' or women's emancipation is asked , there is no answer that points to evidence of global success , as the numerical majority women in the world continue to endure inequality when compared with their male counterparts" (UN, 2013; Hausmann, et al, 2012).

2.3 Feminism in Literature

The term literature according to CCLD is "a written information produced by people who want to sell you something or give you advice". It is,

therefore, a written production in which, authors have a way of creating a new kind of thoughts through their points of view. Through literature, authors mostly portray the unsaid issues in every day people's life. In fact, authors usually lay down words on their pages to draw attention towards human's needs. Rita Felski (2003) states that,

“Creating artful, difficult, self-conscious works of literature was a way of creating a new kind of reader and a new way of reading. ... then the truly modern reader would be guarded and critical, always aware of the distance between the carefully laid out words on the page and the distracting buzz of everyday life.” (Felski, 2003: p37)

Furthermore, “literature plays an immeasurable role in the growing, up keeping, developing and assisting the society to face its problem and burning issues by suggesting alternatives, as a means of reflection on the human condition and urging social cohesion (Oladipupo, 2004). However, a notable barrier between authors has been evidently noticed. Being a male writer is not as being a female writer because, “There are no like visions of creative power available to women (Rita: 2003)”. This male domination, affects women writing products as their work has often been seen as derivative and secondary, minor rather than universal, authorized by others rather than self-authorizing. (Rita: p85) However, a great number of African female writers appear to voice out their feelings towards their needs as well to express their own opinions through their masterpiece literary works. Rita further claims that,

“Women have not been readily granted the numinous powers of world-making and self-fashioning.... Thus, authorship was

vigorously defended as an indispensable part of the feminist toolkit, a way of tracking the historical injustices faced by women writers and of moving toward more adequate and inclusive forms of scholarship (Rita, 2003: p 85)

However, female literature rapidly and with a notable position appears besides male literature. Literature after feminism witness a great change because women voices have been raised. For instance, the African female writers were affected by the world feminism. This change plays a clear role in showing the inner thoughts and sustains on their daily life. However, there are some issues that must be focused on to comprehend why and how the African women pen what they write. (Obioma Nnaemeka, 1994)

2.4 Feminism in Africa

“Since Christopher Columbus's fateful "discovery" of the New World. ... Nowhere has the impact of those revolutions been more dramatic than on the African continent. ... Africa quickly became an object of European attention ... as a treasure trove of possessions to be transferred from one European power to another ... as a source of slave labor for the new plantations in the Americas, and as a group of colonies supplying European empires with raw materials, markets for finished goods, and career opportunities for European civil servants.”(Owomoyela, 1993)

Consequently, Africa was transformed into a storehouse destination to so many ethnics, who landed to have its own fortunes (economical and

humans) for their own. Accordingly, the back and forth of those outlanders saddled the black continent with their cultures; new customs, languages, ways of thinking, etc. Unquestioned, these assortments would have restyled and injected unfamiliar notions to the inhabitants.

Feminism was one of the Western sensations that had been gained by Africans during colonization. Kenneth W. Harrow in his reading of African Women's Writing, utters the effects of that invasion:

“Since its inception, African feminism has been concerned with social questions. In the colonial era, it was common for European colonialists to cast modernism as emancipatory: the civilizing mission would end slavery and bring “modern” thought and values to Africans, who were generally depicted as lacking those qualities.”(Kenneth, 2002, p1)

The new era of thinking, made a double thought-minded that leads to a deep inner discords to African women. Therefore, they began to try to loud their inner voices to be recognized. Thus, some female writers such as Mariama Ba, who voices and represents women, showing the changes that have occurred due to the captivated thoughts of modernism. Kenneth further attaches that,

“Women were ostensibly kept in states of ignorance and oppression, so that the advent of European values, the argument went, would serve to free them by turning them into modern_ that is Europeanized_ emancipated women. For all the praise that has been heaped on Mariama Ba's Une si longue letter (1979) ... indicate how much she depicted her own

education in the French school Flora Nwapa duplicates this positive vision of modernist western education ...” (Kenneth, 2002, p1-2)

Therefore, so many great changes had taken their bearings, and however, they began to replace the old traditional costumes. Those incomer alterations played a gigantic role in restructuring the African society.

2.5 A Hint of Feminism in Islam

Since the appearance of Islam, revisions views have given to bettered the status of women and noble their position to a higher standard level of life that was not found in the era of Pre-Islam. Ergo, this unfamiliar Islamic phenomenon then, made great changes in women’s life in Arab society in the seventh century (Souad T. Ali, 2010, p180). However, recent Muslim women changed their life styles by developing new methods and interpretations. Alina Isac articulates that development in her Short Introduction.

“Islamic feminisms propose a series of more or less courageous reforms are disputed in the traditionalist and neo-traditionalist Islamic world. However, these feminisms, constructed within a general Islamic paradigm, are continuously developing new methods and interpretations.”(Alina, 2015: p31)

In recent years, the term *Islamic feminism* begins to be evident clearly not long ago. It begins to be discernible in various locations

globally in some Islamic countries as it is mentioned in Margot Badran's study that entitled "Feminism in Islam" (1993),

"Islamic feminism began to be visible in the 1990s in various global locations" (Badran, 1993: p243)

Badran says it firstly appeared in Turkey in 1991, Iran 1992 and Saudi Arabia 1996. These changes have been appeared due to the effects of some issues such as modernity or Westernization, and therefore greeted commonplace in the Middle East and Africa since the nineteenth century. On that account, although of the mentioning of the ways in which women must be treated legally (by men) in the Holy Qur'an, yet Muslim women have started to struggle against taking away their rights. Elizabeth Fernea (1998) notes that,

"Muslim women in subsequent centuries have struggled against much of the same misogynistic behavior and attitudes that Islam had denounced and sought to abolish in the seventh century as stipulated by the Qur'an with its powerful new legislation in favor of women" (Pp414-422).

Therefore, the idea of gender equality (as what has been set in Qur'an for both parties) in Islam is already existed in the Qur'an. It needs nothing but to be understood by its careful interpretation, Souad T. Ali, details that,

"Muslim feminists have contended that the notion of gender equality need not be introduced to Islam (as some have argued) because the idea already exists within the Qur'an itself, if it were only properly understood by its exegetes" (Souad, 2012: p180).

The ideological thoughts in feminists Muslim is, however differs from the Western feminism, where women's agendas are set in advance. Nevertheless, the effects of western ideology during colonization play a greater role in changing the thoughts of Muslim women since and then. Margot Badran states that in her work *"Independent Women: More Than a Century of Feminism in Egypt"*:

"From the colonial era to the present day, women across the spectrum from right to left have continued to ground their feminism in Islam and nationalism, as they have persisted in challenging a patriarchy transcending, in different ways, political and class formations". (Badran, 1993: p129)

Consequently, Ba in her literary works *SLA* and *SS* represents some cases that led women to suffer from male oppressions. Hence, her characters betoken about Muslims women; therefore, she focuses in criticizing the abuse of polygamous men and the way in which they misunderstand or misinterpret the religious teachings that work in building a healthy family away from getting others rights (wives) just to please and exonerate their base desires under the mode of a transcendent authorization.

Accordingly, in *SLA*, Ramatuolaye and her intimate friend Aissatou sustained this kind of marriage, thence; they rejoice their genders' bonding in the face of male oppressions. Souad T. Ali has further summed up that saying;

"Ba explores her themes through an epistolary exchange between two intimate friends who both suffered the abuse of

their polygamous husbands and highlights the contrasting reactions of the two women in regard to the mistreatment by their husbands. Within a distorted misinterpretation of religion, the analysis reflects on how Islamic teachings are exploited by some Muslim men in order to gratify and justify their base desires under the guise of a transcendent sanction.”
(S.T. Ali: 2012)

The quotation above is almost summarized the soundness of feminism notion in Islamic communities in recent years. The calling of such ideas is due to the feeling of inequality between sexes though of their existence according to the right-godly teaching that women must have. Therefore, a conspicuous distance between what is written in the Qur’an and must be obeyed to have the right balance, and what is practiced in reality is increasing.

2.6 The Plot Summary of Mariama’s Novels

2.6.1 The Plot Summary of “SLA”

“*So Long a Letter*” is stated by Ogunyemi 2009 as “a pioneer work in being one of the first novels by a Senegalese writer to give a close portrait of a woman in an Islamic African context.” (Hong: 196). Thus, this winning prize novel of an African female author Mariama Ba the Senegalese is being criticized globally by many researchers.

In this work of fiction, Mariama Ba explores and focuses on the noticeable disparities between men and women in Senegal, Islam and as well the African society. Ogunyemi and Tuzyline remark that as, “a

pioneer work in being one of the first novels by a Senegalese writer to give a close portrait of a woman in an Islamic African context” (ibid).

In the first chapters of the novel, Mariama Ba creates an assumption of a long fictional letter between two friends. The letter was sent by Ramatuolaye, a schoolteacher in Senegal (Africa), to her lifelong friend Aissatou in (America). As in Islam’s costumes when a woman’s husband dies, she must be secluded in mourning for four months and ten days (Gueye, 2012: p2). Ergo Ramatuolaye, a recent Muslim widow, is now sequestered. During this time, she recalls hers and her schoolmate Aissatou’s old lives as students as well as wives. (SLA: 1).

Years back, the two friends grew into adulthood at a time when women’s liberation was globally fired. It was also a time of gaining independence in Senegal, and the struggle of being a model society in a modern world. Therefore, Ramatoulaye observed in her writing to Aissatou:

“It was the privilege of our generation to be the link between two periods in our history, one of domination, the other of independence.”(SLA: p25)

Consequently, both Ramatoulaye and her friend Aissatou became teachers, contributing to the new outlook of education for girls and boys, rich and poor alike, because they both believe that teaching is the way of building a healthy and educated generations. Their future views towards their own community shown on page 25 as follow;

“We remained young and efficient, for we were the messengers of a new design. With independence achieved, we witnessed the birth of a republic, the birth of an anthem and the implantation of a flag” (SLA: p25).

For their own wishes, as any woman, the two friends started their marriage lives. The men they married were modern in their views. Aissatou married a noble heritage caring doctor, Mawdo Ba. While Ramatoulaye married Modou Fall who worked as a lawyer, and who wanted to help shape the country's future. However, unfortunately trouble began to take place the marriages that were accomplished over twenty years. First, Aissatou divorced Mawdou Ba when he wed a second wife although of his fundamentally hope to continue to live with her. (SLA. p32) Three years later, Ramatoulaye's husband Modou Ba also got a second wife and abandoned her, and her twelve children. Thus, however Ramatoulaye unlike her friend Aissatou, decided to stay legally married, though Modou never set foot in their house again.

At long last, a sudden heart attack put an end to Modou's life after five years of his betrayal, however neither destiny nor his friend Mawdo the doctor able to rescue him.

Traditionally, his mourning and burial were carried out, and his two wives (Ramatoulaye the old and Binetou the young) were gathered together under one roof. “They must take *cottonwool* to the hospital for the washing of the dead one. The *seven metres* of white muslin, the only clothing Islam allows for the dead ... The *Zem-Zem*, the miracle water from the holy places of Islam ... is not forgotten” (SLA: p4).

However, during the time of her mourning, Ramatoulay found a way to make peace with the past, which she suffered, and a time to hug the coming future. She thereafter began to exchange letters with Aissatou in long series that Ba professionally sets them to give her masterpiece *SLA*.

The book intends to summarize perfectly the two friends' lives, which in fact represent the whole community. Through chapters and characters' tongues, Ba masters her words to move in a zig-zag waves; flashing back the past, moving to the present and again raising to the future.

2.6.2 The Plot Summary of “SS”

After achieving a great success with her first novel “*So Long a Letter (SLA)*” Ba wrote another novel “*Scarlet Song (SS)*”. This second book first published in French in 1981, and first translated in English in 1986 and 1995. Ever since, the book worth a great reverence for it has republished eight times. The book itself indicates that the author Mariama Ba was dying as she wrote it;

“Mariama Ba was aware that she was dying. This great-hearted woman never rebelled or cursed her fate during her short Calvary. She wept sometimes, but her Islamic faith had taught her to accept an unjust fate...” (Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines: iii)

In this attractive and simple literary work, which must be worth reading, the author accompanies herself and us to dive into the world of Ousmane Gueye, the young Senegalese student, the son of a prayerful Muslim. Who although of his growth under the roof of a religious family, yet the youthful student is more wholehearted to Yahe Khady, his beloved

mother, than to religion or tradition? However, his mother's love plays a greater role in changing his married life later.

Moreover, "SS" also gained international attention as it reveals the women's needs to create a solid social body for themselves where they are not bear in mind as "a defenseless gender". Nevertheless, the book is full of thoughts and differences of multiple themes, yet love is regarded as the major theme that considering the lives of totally two different youngsters. Ousmane the Senegalese youth and Mireille the French young lady of whom Mariama Ba, the author portrays the life of two lovers that came from totally different backgrounds, solely they were tied together by the uncontrollable power of love (ibid).

The cross-cultural marriages, sometimes leads to demolish families as what the author images in this literary work. After returning to Africa, the French woman (Mireille) discovered that her African-Muslim husband (Ousmane) is a member of a polygamous society, where according to the religion; it is acceptable for men to have more than a wife, thus she suffers this kind of marriage and decides to return home (ibid). As a result, the happy marriage at the beginning turns to devastation at the end.

At the outset chapters of "*Scarlet Song*", Ba presents the life of Ousmane before college when he then used to both helping his lovely mother and striving for getting knowledge. In fact, Ousmane gains his great academic success after he teased by his childhood friend Ouleymatou. However, his admiration towards his family and background, yet his prosperous education was mainly to get out of his poor working class on the suburbs of Dakar.

Therefore, after a long denial Ousmane's romantic life begins in college, when he met the young Mireille (the daughter of a white French diplomat) who seems his way out of poverty. Over time, the two youngsters fall in love developing an excellent romantic story. However, their well-told romantic story has fully rejected by Mireille's father, the liberal politician. However, his hypocrisy authorizes him to send back Ousmane's white-little lover home on the first plane, thus, by this action it seems that the novel is going to become a tale of frustrate cross-cultural lovers.

Due to the unsatisfactory separation, the coming chapters briefly picture the lives of the two lovers after being in two different continents. Here, Ba shows us the awareness and political devotion to Ousmane who partakes in student rebellion back in Dakar, and Mireille takes part in the student demonstrations of 1968 in Paris. Mireille seems to appear here indeed as a representative to her time as a late-60s French teenager.

Through the half-journey of *Scarlet Song's* chapters, Mireille and Ousmane happily get married in France. Their interracial marriage has resulted from their belief in love though of the oppositions which they faced. Thereafter, when they back to Senegal a pressing dispute had come into view when Ousmane parents' opinions crossed. Yaye Khadi, (Ousmane's mother) shows her dissatisfaction towards that marriage, believing that the white girl bewitched her lovely son and she cannot be a traditionally proficient to proud her on the eyes of her fellows. However, his wise-religious father calms him after he makes known his marriage as a fait event. Sylvester Matunda observes that:

“Unlike her husband who has left fate in God's hands and decided to give his daughter-in-law a fair chance, Yaye Khady objects to Ousmane's marriage because Mireille will not be able to fulfill all the traditional responsibilities of a daughter-in-law towards her in laws, especially her mother-in-law.”
(Matunda: 2007: p107)

Time passed and things change, and complexity comes to view into the black-white family. Ousmane wants to live his own African-life with Mireille. He tries to be well mannered in the eyes of his parents, companions as well his customs in their middle class. The changes those done by Ousmane were due to the continuation of his mother's refusal of the *Toubab* (A white woman) who she portrays in page (66) saying:

“A Toubab (white woman) can't be a proper daughter-in-law. She'll only have eyes for her man. ... And I who dreamt of a daughter-in-law who'd live here and relieve me of the domestic work by taking over management of the house, and now I'm faced with a woman who's going to take my son away from me.” (SS: p66)

Nevertheless, the French wife rejects that way of living because she has already planned fully the way of life that should both live. Things either become worse due to the failure of being accepted and good enough for Ousmane's mother. Matunda further declares Yaya's desires in getting rid of the *toubab*:

“Ousmane's mother sees nothing wrong in encouraging her son to marry a woman of her own choice, what matters to her is to

see her son marry a traditional Senegalese woman , whom she believe would care for her in her old age.” (SS: p108)

Consequently, the written lines explain the main reasons of the raise of sadness and the drop of happiness of the French-Senegalese young lovers. For love, Mireille the French wife decides never to give up her own husband, son as well her interracial house, therefore, she opts to stay:

“Pathetically, Mireille chose to stay. She attributed no greatness to her attitude. Her choice was not an evasion nor cowardice, but the only possible choice for a woman in love ... for a woman with a black child on her hand ... for a woman who has burnt her bridges behind her.” (SS: p162)

On the contrary, back to the roots is the picture that Ousmane portrays to his own life after begins to reject and set apart Mireille for his mother’s suitor Ouleymaton the traditional African woman.

Yaye Khadi feels satisfied and welcomed Ouleymaton’s company as a daughter-in-law. Hence having more than a wife is permit in Muslim society (ibid), Ouleymaton seems supported in taking a part as a second wife that makes it easier for such women to accept sharing a man if they do not come to be replaced. On the other hand, life becomes harder for Mireille the first wife to be a part of a polygamous community that does not exist in her Western-society. Therefore, the French wife feels loneliness although she has a husband and a lovely son.

In the direction of the end, the denial of sharing husbands is a normal feeling that normally all women share. Ergo, Ba clarifies that when one of Ousmane’s sisters had sided with Mireille thought of her knowing

of the idea of polygamy in Muslims' as well as the Africans' societies. On that account, Mireille goes mad, kills her own lovely son and stabs her lover who turns to be her enemy. At the end, Ousmane is said to recover and return to life, while Mireille has lost her mind, as well her child.

Ba through this book traces her character Ousmane as a delegate to an interracial relationship. He tries to stand against costumes and traditions, facing various obstacles by picking Mireille as a lover then a wife. However, his lust becomes stronger than his vows, therefore, he hands his life to Ouleymaton who spells him by her sexy shape, thus, Ousmane failed to protect his Western-love that cost him a loss of a white-wife and a brown-skin son.

2.7 Literary and Stylistic Analysis of the Structures of SLA and SS

Many factors help the authors to build up their works. These factors can often be traced to a writer's experience, environment and intensity of passions. Thus, their thoughts and emotions play a greater role in constructing their literary works (Uche, 2009: p41). For instance, In Ba's case, colonialism, patriarchy, polygamy, and their manner of prosecution in their different backgrounds have always been a source of strong emotional reaction. To stand on those devices and patterns of expression, therefore, a stylistic method should be used as to clarify the beauty of the literary work because "only stylistic method can define the specific characteristics of a work of art" (Wallek and Warren, 1942: p14).

2.7.1 The Use of Allusion

The term allusion according to Collins E-Dictionary means "an indirect reference to someone or something". Additionally, Mawreen Uche states

that, “Allusion can be defined as a reference to an event, phenomenon, idea or personality in history or contemporary life made to show its similarity or relevance to the issue under discussion” (Uche, 2009: p41). Mariama Ba in her novel SLA uses Quranic allusions to indicate Islam. Mawreen Uche (2009) further notes that,

“Ba alludes to the Islamic religious and juridical precepts of “Mirasse” (an Islamic religious as well as juridical principle that defines and stipulates in precise mathematical terms, the nature of inheritance in the Islamic family). This nature of inheritance, laid out in the chapter on women in the holy Quran, implies the disclosure of all known and unknown material possessions of a deceased for division among survivors. Mariama Ba invokes this aspect of “Mirasse” in the case of the estate of Modou Fall, deceased husband of Ramatoulaye and Binetou to outline the manner in which his estate is divided.(Uche: p41)

Mirasse, therefore, becomes the principle that legitimizes and regulates Ramatoulaye’s act. It makes a systematic personal revelation which simultaneously constitutes a systematic analysis of some of the most pressing socio-economic and cultural issues that women challenge in society.

2.7.2 The Use of Satire

Hence, satire defines as “the use of humor or exaggeration in order to show how foolish or wicked some people’s behavior or ideas are (Collins),

therefore, “It is a term applied to any work of literature whose objective is to ridicule.” (Uche: p42)

“Ba in these novels is to create a shock of recognition and to make vice repulsive and expunged from the society intended to benefit from the attack regardless of who is the immediate object of attack.” (Uche: p42)

Ba through her novel SLA stands against the unacceptable ways that African women are treated with. Her oppositions are due to the injustice and brutalities of male oppressors in the Senegalese Muslim world. Authors usually use satire as a corrective measure for human voices and follies. In SLA, the author satirizes Modou when having a young pride as his daughter’s age. She describes his act as a shameless attitude.

“The graceless sag of a double chin, the gait hesitant and heavy at the slightest cool breeze” (SLA: p48).

Mariama makes satirical scene to neglect any man who does not responsible towards his women, particularly the ones who do not follow the Islamic rules. Furthermore, Ba also satirizes men generally. She does not feel shame to reduce men’s positions in society. For instance, she offers them nothing than being headache to their families. On the contrary, she proves through her novels that her female characters can perform better even in the absence of a man.

2.7.3 The Use of Irony

Mariama Ba utilizes irony in the criticism to portray and to shed light on the destructive inherent in her society. She therefore, desires to correct and

to find a way to cure it. Maureen Uche (2009) states that, “Irony results when there is a difference between what appears to be happening and what is actually happening” (Uche: p49). For instance, Ba presents the hypocritical characters of the male protagonists Moudo Fall and Mawdo Ba in her novel SLA. Therefore, through those two main characters, she points out the conflicts that pervade the contemporary African atmosphere and the injustices and corruptions that are plaguing the society.

In “*So Long a Letter*”, the religious aspect of the novel seems only to show how men interpret their own meaning of Islamic laws to satisfy their selfish needs. Modou’s sudden change of attitude and the subsequent marriage with Binetou received the community’s support of family members and the Islamic priest as revealed from this extract:

“God intended Modou to have a second wife; there is nothing he can do about it” (SLA: p37).

In Mawdo’s case his hypocrisy and reasons for taking a second wife becomes the decision to prolong the life span of Seynebou his mother:

“If I spurn this child, she will die. This is the doctor speaking and not the son. Think of it, her brother’s daughter, brought up by her, rejected by her son. What shame before society” (SLA: p30).

Although the Holy Quran states that men are allowed up to four wives, it also sets strict conditions for polygamy. Moudo and Mawdo however take this statement to mean what is convenient for them. By this means, they would affect women’s rights, and therefore they will have less

importance than they will. According to their interpretation, they demand that their wives should accept their wishes:

“A wife must understand, once and for all, and must forgive; she must not worry herself about betrayal of the flesh” (SLA: p36).

Collectively, Chief Ojo, Moudo, and Mawdo, in the quest for dominance over their wives employ a concerted effort of altering the realities of the past. Just as the colonizers “turn to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it, in a similar manner, Mawdo found the past no longer counted (SLA: p30) and willingly crushed beneath his heels (SLA: p34).

2.7.4 The Use of Flashback Technique

In literary criticism, the technique of using a flashback is when the personal recollection by the character of an event of the past may be unknown to the other characters in the novel. Therefore, this technique betters the understanding of the present situation, the motives behind certain past actions, as well as the response imposed on the character by his environment. For instance, Ramatoulaye’s long letter in SLA, begins by addressing Modou despite the fact that she has not been given the opportunity to speak with him for the past five years, here she talks to him, recalling their shared memory of how Modou worked hard for his degree and for her hand in marriage.

“Modou is dead. How am I to tell you? One does not fix appointments with fate. I endured the telephone call, which disrupted my life” (SLA: p3).

In Letter 10, Ramatoulaye describes Modou's success in his career:

“Modou rose steadily to the top rank in the trade union organizations. His understanding of people and things endeared him to both employers and workers” (SLA: p25).

She further recounts his career:

“He focused his efforts on points that were easily satisfied, that made work lighter and life more easily satisfied. He sought practical improvements in the workers' condition...People relied on his practical realism” (SLA: p25).

Additionally, in Letter 13, Ramatoulaye points to Modou's wedding, and how she survives without him. This announcement, is made by the three men; Tamsir, Mawdo Ba and the Imam (Islamic priest).

“All he had done is to marry a second wife today. ... Modou sends his thanks. He says it is fate that decides men and things: God intended him to have a second wife; there is nothing he can do about it. He praises you for a quarter of a century of marriage in which you gave him all the happiness a wife owes her husband” (SLA: p37).

As has stated above, Ramatoulaye uses the flashback technique as to re-assess the events through. Ramatoulaye keeps her feelings of lust concealed on proposing her. However, she admits in Letter 14 that;

“I cried every day, I lived in a vacuum and Moudo avoided me” (SLA: p46).

2.7.5 The Use of Humour

Humour according to CCLD is “The quality in something that makes you laugh, for example in a situation, in someone’s words, or actions, or in a book or film.” In adult literary works, humour is hardly employed as one of the narrative techniques that authors made use of to bring to light sympathetic laughter in their novels. For instance, they built their characters to appear laughable yet the foolishness in their actions is obviously visible to the reader.

In the same vein, Ba’s SLA presents a little attempt to sneer at human foolish and abnormality. Since the novel is a sad one humour is scarcely employed except for the author’s attempt to describe Moudo’s effort to look appealing in the presence of his young wife as exemplified in the following lines:

“And Moudo would dye his hair every month. His waistline painfully restrained by old-fashioned trousers, Binetou would never miss a chance of laughing wickedly at him. Moudo would leave himself winded trying to imprison youth in its decline, which abandoned him on all sides: the graceless sag of a double chin, the gait hesitant and heavy at the slightest cool breeze” (SLA: p48).

2.8 Critics on Ba’s Works

2.8.1 Contemporary Critics on Ba’s Works

The contemporary critics of moderate feminism argue that Mariama Ba’s two novels: “*So Long a Letter*” and “*Scarlet Song*”, are based on

misplaced trust. This reveals to the impossibility of changing the females' lives due to the patriarchal system that in turn leads to the continuation of women's manipulation. The contemporary critics further claim that traditional affect the romantic life that supposes to be. This affection, therefore, persuades to the myth of romantic love. Consequently, a notable change occurs due to the changes of the African women who feel the necessity of making fundamental (feminism) changes to their thoughts especially after being educated.

2.8.2 Modern Day Critics on Ba's Works

Mariama Ba through her recognizable novels "*SLA* and *SS*" grabs the attention of the modern day critics who focus on studying her works critically. They, however, have nearly same opinions about gender conflicts that lead to unstable relationships in society. This thesis depends mostly on the critical works of the modern day critics on Mariama Ba's literary works.

2.9 Previous Studies on Ba's Novels

This part correlates with the earlier studies that connect with the thesis topic. Here, the researcher sheds light on the foregoing reviews that have been done on Ba's literary works. As there are many different studies about her topics (thesis, critiques, papers and others), the researcher has chosen some of the following reviews that help in building the thesis:

Dr. J. S. Cherekar (2014) intends to investigate the female friendship in Mariama Ba's novel "*So Long a Letter*" to examine the impact of race, class and gender on women's relationships. Moreover, Cherekar emphasizes how women face the challenges of patriarchal institutions to subjugate them through polygamy,

neo-colonialism, and constraints of tradition, caste prejudices, political instability and the patriarchal subjugation. Cherekar adopted characterization and plot analysis to explore the message the novel SLA reveals. In his findings, Cherekar states that the healing powers of female leads to female empowerment and solidarity, which in turns contribute in nation building.

Further to Cherekar's study, Rizwana Latha (2002) tackles on highlighting the empowering and disempowering effects of particular types of education for women in the traditional African-Muslim context of Senegal. Latha in this study compares the marginalization of Muslim women and other countries. One of the key focus areas of Rizwana Latha's study is to alleviate the religious education which would investigate the differences between Islamic principles and cultural practices. The approach which Latha uses to analyze the data is the hybrid identities in postcolonial and other states, this approach has the potential to empower Muslim women to become socially and politically active. The findings reveal that, the forces of traditionalism often overpower both basic Islamic principle and state legislation designed to promote women's rights.

Additionally, Amal Al balola, and Dr. Abdulmahmoud Idrees (2017) attempt to shed light on the patriarchal society through the Eyes of Mariama Bâ in her SLA. This study focuses on various aspects that related to female gender like; the feminism, the role of woman, masculinity, divorce, motherhood and widowhood. The study relies on the analytical descriptive method as to conduct the importance of the family integration and dividing the roles among the family within Ba's novel SLA. The study assumes that, it is necessary to conduct many studies on the African families to detect the tradition and customs towards the family mechanism under the umbrella of patriarchy in SLA.

Moreover, Akinola and Olatipe (2016) indicate that, Mariama Ba creates her novel “So Long a Letter” to reflect or imitate the realities of life, to relay things that happen to human beings. Therefore, Ba's SLA has been lexically and semantically presented, in order to reveal the author's creative deployment of language. A lexico-semantic approach was used to examine how Ba uses words to expose the ills of African society by using figures of speech, lexical and sense relations among others in the text, to develop the themes of political exclusion, evils of polygamy, sadness and loneliness, socioeconomic degradation, betrayal, immorality, among others.

Furthermore, Marame Gueye (2012) through her study on Senegalese women’s writings and the specter of Mariama Bà, intends to show the impacts of the negative effects that are caused due to polygamy on women throughout most of the Western educators. Gueye also shows that Ba by way of her writing validates the Western feminists’ assumption or the myth of a subordinated African woman, who is eternally victimized by her religion and culture. The work concludes that, after thirty years of Mariama Ba’s death, yet her novel “So Long a Letter” has been the text which Senegalese evaluate their cultural practices through.

Sylvester Mutunda, (2007) further re-reads Mariama Ba's two novels: “*So Long a Letter*” and “*Scarlet Song*” differently. Hence, mostly the feminists’ studies concentrate on the conflicts between the two genders, yet this study steps further. It focuses on :female-female' relations in Mariama Ba’s novels SLA and SS that mediated by age, generation, education, exposure, and experience, in order to understand the complexities of patriarchal oppression and to contribute to the debate on the nature of patriarchy and its role in the oppression of women in African societies. Mutunda, therefore, directs on the oppression of the elderly

women showing their selfishness as well their acts that practice to make life harder for other women. Mutunda uses the post-structuralism approach, which takes into account critical differentiating cleavages, heterogeneity and differences inherent among women. Ultimately, the study concludes by calling attention to the necessity of cordial relationships between women in order to save themselves from male oppression and dominance, which cannot be without a good understanding on the part of women themselves.

Further, Maureen Uche (2009) emphasizes to structure the female oppression in the African communities due to the birth of feminism and activism. The study, however, investigates different Africans' literary works including Ba's "SLA", Naguib Mahfouz's, "Palace Walk", and Gracy Ukala's "The Broken Bond" that nearly assemble the African community entirely. Uche uses a comparative approach to study, describe, explore and to analyze the impacts of traditional cultures, which marginalize the identity of the African female gender. The study, sums up with, a collective of messages for the African women, and all women that seeks to take charge of their own destiny, refusing to be denied freedom or reduced to a depressed state.

Another comparative study was written by Hong, Seung Hyun (2013) who, contrasts women in patriarchal tradition. This study explores to shed lights on the philosophy of victims and victimizers, taking advantages of Buchi Emecheta's "*The Joys of Motherhood*", and Mariama Bâ's two novels: "*SLA*", and "*SS*". Hong illuminates women into two categories: the women who trying to do their duties in patriarchal traditions, verses those who independently shaping their own lives outside

patriarchal traditions. For that, the study concentrates on the way of understanding the complexity of women's lives in social context. In this sense, the study ceases by means of the investigation on the performance of the two ways of females' livings within the social boundaries and convection. Moreover, it highlights the means of anger that practiced by women as to criticize the traditions due to the system of male's oppression. The study also intentionally pinpoints the radical change through younger generations.

Additionally, a re-reading study was set on Mariam Ba's novel SLA in 2007 by Derakhshesh Derayeh, who intends to focus on the heroin's spiritual journey of Ba's own life through her character Ramatoulaye. The study, therefore, demonstrates the difficult entanglement of sexism and tradition within the African society. Moreover, it indicates the view of the author towards the conflicts between the two genders that results deep social issues such as patriarchy, polygamy and subjectivity. Furthermore, it also images the cross-cultural conversation about women's identities in Africa. Eventually, the study concludes that Mariama Ba throughout her own life's experience introduces and sends her visions towards the African community via some messages that change the Africans' comings. Furthermore, the study displays the feminist visions of Ba that appeared in the form of her call of regeneration, awakening and the correspondence of Africans.

Reuben Kehinde Akano, (2014) dwells on the analysis of Mariama Ba's novel "SLA", to bring out the issue of polygamy as thematically presented in the work. Reuben takes advantage of the thematic analysis of "SLA" to shed light on women's life in patriarchal communities. The

thematic analysis solely condemns polygamy and its devastating effects on the girl-child in a cultural context and as constraints on the happiness of couples who are usually separated. Reuben however proves that, both males and females are guilty of polygamy, as they collaborate in promoting the practice using religious and cultural platform while these actors have different motives.

In a comparative article, Gibreel M. Kamara (2001) attempts to build an article to analyze Mariama Ba's novels (SLA and SS), and Sembene Ousmane's in an attempt to determine whether the struggle of Feminism in achieving its inherent objectives is gender based. Kamara intends to prove to Euro-Americans critics, who marginalize the African woman novelists works among the African male novelists. The article, thus, reveals that, African female and male novelists pursue the same agenda, the liberation of the African woman from those traditional beliefs that diminish them at a disadvantaged position.

Further, Deborah G. Plant attempts to look into the objectives of the mythic dimensions in Ba's literary works SLA and SS. To support and elucidate those demanding, Plant however uses thematic and characterization to analyze the cases of Mariama's characters. Plant explains that Ba through her work always demands and calls for the actual existence of women by making positive contributions to their welfare of reality as actual beings not only to exist physically. Moreover, the study mentions the visions of Ba on building an ideal society that demands making a balance predicated on the principle of complementarity, on cooperation as opposed to the co-opting of power.

Finally, a 1994 study entitled “*The Personal and the Political in the Work of Mariama Ba*” Adele King seeks to investigate the way of how Mariama Bâ through her two novels “SLA and SS” describes the political and the domestic problems that develop from the tensions between tradition and the modern world. The study therefore, proves that desire for power and money leads to a post-independence society where a woman is treated as merchandise to be purchased by the richest man. Adele, furthermore, finds out that Bâ wants a morality based on respect for others, and a willingness to discard those traditions that inhibit such respect. Consequently, she becomes a critical of any separatism, between man and woman, black and white, European and African.

2.9.1 Western Studies

The western studies on the African Literature have specialized in the intercultural comparisons of literature that produced either under or after colonization. Martin Japtok mentions that, “Race and culture-based studies have merged the fields of African American and African studies together” (Martin Japtok, ed. 2003). The western studies about women works, mostly concentrate on exploring how colonization reflected women literature. Therefore, race, gender-conflicts, patriarchy, women subjugation, polygamy, etc. are the issues that Africa suffers from.

2.9.2 African Studies

The African studies try to draw the paths that create a better balance in the relationships between sexes; they do place great demands to avoid reinforcing cultural and multi-political ideals, which are not concomitant with the principles of a multicultural democracy. Thus, they direct their focus towards the cultural and social values inherent in the field of

literature. In order to promote cultural understanding, and social values such as religious tolerance, it is important for the readers to facilitate an examination of these assumptions. This thesis will therefore investigate the development of cultural and critical literacies in the African literature focusing on the novels by the postcolonial African Muslim woman writer of Mariama Ba “SLA and SS”.

2.9.3 Others’ Studies

Besides the Western Studies and the African Studies there are many other studies that have been created about the literary works of the African novels of Mariama Ba. Most of them as the western studies concentrate on the idea of feminism that centers its focus towards women’s needs.

2.10 The Impact of Previous Studies on Current Thesis

The researcher gets benefits from the previous studies that compiled Mariama Ba’s points of view. They, in fact, clarify the view towards the feminism issue, which must be dealt with more than the issue of sex. As a result, the debate concludes that African women have to modify the word “feminist” in order to articulate their own concerns fully. Therefore, the researcher agrees in knowing women’s rights yet disagrees in having that focusing on emotionally which may not serve in making cordial relationships. Moreover, the misunderstanding of the religious teachings that organize husbands-wives’ relations in polygamous marriage, leads to the inequality that breaks families, and thereafter societies. Consequently, this point serves in building the research; especially the real effects that the author had faced in reality. In addition, the birth of the ideas of feminism and activism play roles in making changes in the African women’s identities. However, slightly disagreements occur due to the cultural

differences of the lifestyle of the women of North Africa. Furthermore, the phenomenon of “female-female” oppressions, strongly affects the thesis as it shows that, there is also women-women domination. The domination commonly causes cracks in families’ lives and serves nothing but weaken the call of demanding a strong females’ unions.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Procedure

Chapter Three

Methodology and Procedure

3.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to present the methodologies that are used to analyze the two chosen literary works of the Senegalese novelist Mariama Ba: “*So Long a Letter*” (1981), and “*Scarlet Song*” (1986). It gives a brief note about each methodology and the reason behind its usage.

3.1 Research Methodology

In this thesis, the researcher depends on interdisciplinary approaches to analyze the two literary works of Mariama Ba. For instance, the plot analysis, and thematic/characterization analysis are used to explore the messages that the two novels reveals. The researcher analyzes Ba’s works thematically, because this leads to grasp the messages which the author intends to send through the roles that play by his/her characters. Therefore, hence Ba’s messages are centered on her main characters, focusing on studying the roles that played by her characters help in catching the messages easily. For instance, in the novel “*So Long a Letter*”, nearly the completely important messages were circulated around Ramatoulaye and Aissatou whom through Ba portrays the complete African community.

Furthermore, the researcher uses the stylistic method as to clarify the beauty of the literary work. The study therefore stands on the idea of creating “SLA” in the form of exchange letters. For instance, writing epistolary novels makes the work to be different from the other types of novels. These differences occur because the styles, which used in epistolary novels, are differing greatly from the tradition form of novels.

The study also tests the works to investigate the phenomenon of the demanding equality between the two sexes, which was raised due to the influence of the Western culture that resulting from colonialism. Moreover, The Autobiographical Approach, Feminism Approach, as well as feminism in Islam Approach (a unique approach) are also used to analyze the literary works under questions.

The Feminists approach has been employed because Mariama Ba's works circulate around the feminist issues. This approach studies "...the ways in which literature reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (Tyson p83). The principles of this approach seek to analyze and describe the literary works that concern of males' domination over females by exploring the economic, social, and political and the psychological forces that embedded through literature.

Additionally, The Post-colonial approach is used to reflect the historical and the political issues that influence written texts. This approach focuses on the study of the theory and literature as it connects the colonizer-colonized experience. Therefore, the analysis is based on the Post-colonialism approach as "Post-colonialism is a broad cultural approach to the study of power relations between different groups, cultures or people, in which language, literature and translation play role" (Hatim & Munday, 2005: p106). Consequently, this approach is used because Mariama's ideas were influenced by the Western ideas that resulted by colonization. Edward Said, the leading theorist in this field and others, state that the reader would look for the effect of colonialism and how are they addressed through the plot, setting and characters' actions.

Furthermore, the researcher also uses the idea of feminism in Islam (the unique approach) to give a general view since Mariama Ba describes her own Islamic culture. Namely and without getting in depth, the researcher wants just to connect the shattered pieces of the conflicts according to the provisions of the Islamic teachings, which are taken from the Qur'an (The Islamic Holy Book), Hadith (Saying of Prophet Mohammed PBUH), and Sharia (The Islamic Law).

At last, some autobiographical resources have carried out. The autobiographical approach looks at how the writing may be explaining an author's life. It therefore helps in discovering the events that happened during the time the author lived, such as war or new philosophies. One of the benefits of this approach is that, it gives the reader the chance to pass through Mariama Ba's life and knowing more about the reasons that influence her works, which may help in understanding the environment that affected her desires to express her two unique texts: "*So Long a Letter*" and "*Scarlet Song*".

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

(Aspects of Feminism in Ba's Novels)

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher studies the aspects of feminism in Mariama Ba's two novels: *So Long a Letter*, and *Scarlet Song*. The researcher aims to stand on the main ideas that summarize women issues in the African societies.

4.1 Writing as a Weapon in Ba's Works

“Even though she has two novels So Long a Letter and Scarlet Song, its worthy to note that they have become a reference point on issues pertaining women's subjugation and enslavement in the matrimonial hearth.”(Leonard and Jonas, 2011)

The idea of writing dairies or sharing letters was common in the circle of women decades ago. Women in the past are silenced either because they were uneducated or because of traditions and male domination that played a greater role in silence them. However, women break their silence especially the educated ones using the process of writing as to be their weapon. Laura Patch states that change,

“Grown from a tradition of males imitating females, epistolary novels in modern times subvert gender expectations and stratification. Rather than a male chasing a woman, these

modern novels give women the opportunity to participate as equal participants in their relationship.”(Laura: 2014:1)

As an example, Mariama Ba is one of the greatest African women writers who fight to grant the real identity of the African woman. Dr. J. S. Cherekar states in his study ‘*Women Emerging From Shadow*’ saying, “Ba’s words aptly sum up her approach towards writing as a weapon to assert the true self of a woman. She urges the women writers to write on the contemporary socio-political issues such as the tyranny of male gender and the marginalization of women.” (Cherekar, 2016:3). Therefore, Ba becomes as a model for women writers, thus she was awarded Noma prize. However, the most interesting point is that Ba inquires women writers to recognize that writing is their only weapon, which through they can strengthen themselves. This call is as knocking the door of literature that will help women’s voices to be noticed. Dr. Cherekar further indicates that, “She believes that the only weapon which is true and infallible for a redress of their grievances is literature. Writing will engrave indelible reprints on the public mind.” (2016:3). this point however proves that Mariama’s call is to grab the chance of education to change the public mind through reading because “She firmly believes that education will automatically inculcate in them the hidden potentials and strength.” For that, Ba through her novels begins her journey from ‘traditional heritage’ and to “modernity”. (Cherekar, 2016:3).

Consequently, as has noticed in the era of the 60s, thoughts began to change due to education, as it was a foreign education. Therefore, the new generation acquired new ideas that affect their own traditional ideas, thus a conflict happens between traditionalism and modernism (see page 99) and

therefore traditional people denied sending their kids to schools because they believe that school turns their girls into devils who lure their men away from the right path. (SLA: p18). By the attention, which has noticed globally in her *SLA*, and *SS*, Mariama Ba not only represents the African women, yet the whole women of the world. Dr. J. S. Cherekar furthermore stands on that point,

“Through her novels Ba appeals not only to the African women but the women of the world that the ultimate solution depends upon women themselves. She urges the women to develop capacity for suffering and sacrifice. In this regard Mariama Ba’s novels mark the beginning of an awakening among all the women of the world, the beginning of their true all round development.” (Cherekar, 2016:3)

Additionally, Rizwan Habib Latha states that Ba’s call was to the whole women weather they are from her own community, or abroad,

“Although the novella focuses on the construction and reconstruction of Ramatoulaye’s identity as an individual, her ruminations also encompass the collective identities of women both inside and outside her socio-cultural milieu.” (Latha, 2001:23)

As it has stated above, Mariama insists to change the situation in which women face, *peacefully* through literature because this field is mostly dominated by men. Harrell-Bond articulates in his work ‘*An*

interview with Mariama Bâ’ the plan, which the African women writers must follow to compete men in the field of literature.

“Like men, we must use literature as a non-violent but effective weapon. We should no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother, who in his anxiety, man confuses with mother Africa. Within African literature, room must be made for women...room we will fight with all our might.” (Bond, 2003: 214)

4.2 Generations’ Antagonism in Ba’s Works

Marriage in fact is the element that organizes the relations between genders in human’s lives. It is beyond boundaries. It is judged according to the court of love, respect, and understanding. Mariama Ba in her two literary works stands on the idea of marriage focusing on almost the whole dilemmas which couples may face. For instance, in her novel *Scarlet Song* Ba “looks at the woman in the marriage institution against the backdrop of race.” (Leonard Onwuegbuche and Jonas Akung, 2011: p2) She builds a strong example to represent that love is beyond boundaries. The case of the two young lovers; Osumane Gueye the Senegalese, and Mireille de la Vallee the beautiful French young lady explains how rules and traditions be destroyed by young generations because “marriage is the consummation of love between the man and the woman.” (Leonard and Jonas, 2011) As it seems that Ba wants to show that, the time of racism has gone and people must not stand against others wells hence, they are right. By the above case, Ba agrees with Helen Chukwuma who points in

her work *Voices and Choices ...*, marriage as “a social duty for both man and woman” (1998: p218).

Mariama Ba predicts the new life of the young generation who their lives changed because of education. Education gives a silent woman a voice to be recognized. Dr. J. S. Cherekar states that,

“The women who have received an access to education have played an active role in the social processes rather than being the passive recipients of change” (Cherekar, 2012)

However, Ba represents the old traditions’ deeds by the opposition reactions of the two young lover’s parents. For instance, the first reaction of Mireille’s parents who stood against their daughter’s wish in marrying the man who she loves is flying her back to Paris. Nevertheless, Mireille’s parents made a mistake when they thought that distances disunite lovers, because contrary to their wishes, Mireille asserts herself and marries him (Leonard and Jonas, 2011). The other case of Ousmane's parents who also did not welcome the white *Toubab* as a family member. Leonard and Jonas further point that,

“Yaye Khady swears to do all she could to make Mireille uncomfortable in the marriage. This posture only quickened to widen the apparent cultural gulf between Mireille and the Senegalese society.”(2011: p3)

The opposition reaction of Ousmane's mother Yaye Khady in accepting a strange woman in as a daughter-in-law, explains that although the two young lovers come from very different background, yet the reactions of traditions are nearly alike.

4.3 Gender Conflicts in Ba's works

4.3.1 Marriage in Africa vs. Europe

In Africa, marriage culture is greatly different from Europe as it is seen mostly as a cultural satisfaction. Consequently, unmarried women are not respected in African communities. Moreover, they become worse if they marry and are unable to have children. For that, motherhood becomes the real reason for getting married in the first place. However, this situation does change because of colonization. With colonialism, women are affected by the Western traditional; especially the educated ones, who are caught between tradition and modernism. This affection pushes them to work on finding a way to understand the socio-cultural problem of their society like gender issue.

On the other hand, Mariama Bâ's second novel, "Scarlet Song", further discusses the idea of marriage. However, this time she examines the interracial marriage. Ba builds up her character Mireille to represent European women, and Ousmane who through Ba pictures the African men's characters. The story focuses on the difficulties of interracial marriage that occur either because of the weakness of husbands due to the power of traditions, or because of the opposition ideas from both sides. Therefore, such intercultural marriages always face problems that results to a sad failure.

4.4 Aspects of Feminism in ‘*So Long a Letter*’ (SLA)

4.4.1 Epistolarity in SLA

Letters and letter writing has given rise to several studies that examine the cultural reasons of exchanging letters for ages. However, writing novels as epistolary letters is an interesting topic to investigate, as people practice letter writing for ages. Laura Patch states that;

“The epistolary novel has existed in various forms and understandings since the Roman poet Ovid first used epistles in his writings, but it truly began in its traditional form in the 1600s and hit peak popularity in the eighteenth century.”
(2014, p2)

Moreover, “The letter, is a much older form, dating from antiquity when ambassadors from one kingdom to another sent dispatches home, and, later, when travelers of various kinds reported on their journeys and even the modern novel arose from the letter’s particularity and sharp attention to place and character.” (Stowe, 2000). Therefore, because of its importance in people’s lives, letter writing has being taught as a main syllabus at schools worldwide almost until now. Catherine Gubernatis sheds light on that indicating, “Letter writing was part of the curriculum in schools, and letter-writing manuals taught individuals how to use correspondence to deal with tricky social situations.” (2007: p7). In fact, “A letter is a written message from one person to another, usually put in an envelope and sent by the post.” (Cambridge Adv L Dic). Additionally, Letters are defined by Del Lunge as; “Genuine interaction between

correspondents in which their identities are linguistically and discursively produced.” (2014: p20) Thus, its ease and popularity help in raising its exchanges everywhere because, “... letter writing is a particularly rewarding object of study since epistolary discourse is perhaps the most ancient form of attested writing, thus allowing the investigation of its features across time and cultures.” (Petrucci, 2008 and Del Lungo: 2014). Through ages, the usage of letters as a communication tool has developed to be used as an epistolary novel in the eighteenth century. (Del Lungo, 2014) However, why writing letters as literary expressions on the field of literature?

Catherine Gubernatis in her thesis “*The Epistolary Form In Twentieth-Century Fiction*” indicates one of the reasons that shows the development of novels in the 18th century because of the important role that played by imposing letters and letter writing in literature.

“One of the reasons the epistolary form played a large role in the development of the novel in the eighteenth-century was that letters and letter writing were a pervasive communicative medium at the time; they were a necessary activity in order to continue traditional relationships in a changing society, and their influence stretched beyond just personal correspondence.” (2007: p7)

Catherine also notes that, the development of using letters in fictions further extends to the 20th century for that it creates a relationship between its language, subjectivity, and experience, which makes novels to differ from texts in previous eras.

“Letters are used in the fiction of the twentieth century: they are a protean form that can be replicated or appropriated to comment on the relationship between written language, subjectivity, and experience.” (2007: p278)

In fact, “In the most traditional understanding, epistolary novels are series of letters.” (Laura Patch, 2014). Therefore, the idea of authoring novels in a form of epistolary letters becomes common on the last two centuries though writing letters is perhaps the oldest form of attested writing ((Petrucci 2008). In epistolary novels, the reader has a great chance to comprehend the purpose behind the exchanging message(s) hence **He** (The reader) represents the eye which glimpses upon the content because “the reader of the epistolary novel is aware that within its boundaries there is another reader” thus epistolary writers “refuse the kind of closure informing other narratives” (Campbell 333/336). On the contrary, Laura states that, “The novel reader, however, cannot know more than the characters tell. Thus, she must imagine and understand the reader and writer both” (2014:p3). Hence, a sender usually sends the letter to a receiver(s) with a content that should only be read by those whom allowed to obtain the intended message however, some changes occur when novels began to form as epistolary letters to be judged and criticized within a third eye. Nevertheless, who is to read the letter?

To answer this question I build this study on the literary work of Mariama Ba “*So Long a Letter*” in which the message(s) shared in females’ cycle (female → female). However, although the purposes of authoring a letter normally differ from one person/letter to another, yet the suitable structure takes place to organize the relationship between the

correspondents. According to Palander-Collin; “The letter genre allows us to observe how authorial selves and participant relationships change from one letter to another and how such changes affect the linguistic style adopted by the writer” (2009: p54). For instance, in Ba’s so long letter the messages are sent by a female and received by a female as well. However, why does Ba write in a form of a letter to express her idea?

Back to the era in which the novel was formed, women commonly had their non-spoken views unless in a form of chitchatting dialogues or secret messages, their culture makes “letters seem at first to be strikingly "private" kinds of writing.” (Stowe, 2000) therefore women began looking for individuality, Ian Watt further points that; “Letter writing as a means of creating private relationships because individuals, especially women, became more isolated from the traditional communities they had participated in the past.” (1964: pp177-188). Consequently, to stand closer to the needs and secrets of women at the time, we (the readers) should study females’ works as women become free in expressing their own feelings, Laura states that; “Epistolary novels offer a form in which women can finally speak” (2014). Furthermore, Nevalainen Terttu articulates the importance of letter writing to women; “Letter writing is thus particularly important for the study of women’s language use and literacy; it is also important to analyze linguistic change led by female speakers/writers in this period.” (2002: pp191-209). For instance, in *SLA*, the novel circulates in the women zone, as it was a female-female text. Normally women talks focus on the general issues of life; love, hate, pleasure, etc. Gilroy and Verhoeven state that; “Female letters traditionally focused on domestic life or on love; they spoke in the private voice

appropriate to women whose roles were increasingly circumscribed within the constraints of bourgeois ideology” (p2). Consequently, the novel portrays for the first time the hidden notions of a woman who tries to shout out her voice to be heard. Reuben Kehinde Akano declares that,

“So Long a Letter, exemplifies an outburst and a campaign by a woman as representative of the oppressed women under a polygamous set-up. The author condemns polygamy by highlighting and exposing the many ugly sides of the practice.” (2014, p22)

Therefore, as it is a new phenomenon in the history of Senegalese literature, Ogunyemi and Tuzyline remark Mariama Ba’s work as, “A pioneer work in being one of the first novels by a Senegalese writer to give a close portrait of a woman in an Islamic African context” (2009:178).

Referring to the text of *SLA*, Mariama starts her novel (first letter) using an ordinary speech hence normally personal letters/diaries are orally formed hence “The language of personal letters has been shown to be close to spoken language in many ways.” (Biber and Finegan 1989, 1992). Compared to many other kinds of written sources, Mariama Ba has styled her novel in a form of series letters to exhale her point of view towards the traditional community that she lives in. Although the whole novel becomes visible as an ordinary letters between friends, yet it seems to represent the completely African female lifestyle, especially the lives of Muslim women at that time. Thus, it appears to represent the idea of feminism in Islam, which Ba through, circulates her visions. Therefore, religion being one of the factors that has sealed the fate of women draws attention to the reality of unfair religious practices and their negative impact on women. (Latha:

p72). Furthermore, Akinola and Olatipe conclude that, “*So Long a Letter* has been lexically and semantically presented, to reflect or imitate the realities of life.” (2016).

Mariama Ba in her novel “SLA” focuses on the traditional ways of life especially the conflicts between traditionalism and modernism. She extremely centers her work on the new customs that result from colonization to affect the African females’ thought. Rizwana Latha sums in her study;

“In Mariama Ba’s construction of her imagined reader the small group of elite, mainly Muslim readers and the international francophone audience, have many points of convergence. Thus, the novella focuses on a specific socio-cultural milieu, the contemporary concerns of women on a much broader scale, and the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.” (2004: p56)

As a result, African women began to be affected by the way in which the European women live. Therefore, a clear sign of gender conflicts come into view. Such issues result the African women (especially the educated ones) to look for ways to get the right of a woman to identify and experience her own interests. Ba sends that visions through her character Ramatoulaye,

“My reflections determine my attitude to the problems of life. I analyze the decisions that decide our future. I widen my scope by taking an interest in current world affairs.” (SLA: p88)

Consequently, Ba compares the life of the African woman who lives in a pure traditional life and the one who her ideas changes due to the entrance of western ideology, which will affect their future. Thus, Ba clearly declares her feminism in an interview that her work *SLA* seems as, “A cry from the heart of all women, though first and foremost from that of Islamic Senegalese women” (Stringer 1996: 58).

Referring to the main purposes of writing *SLA*, Mariama Ba tries to shed a light on the way that the African women were treated in their own communities. For instance, Ba focuses on the idea of feminism; therefore, she creates her literary work biographically although biographical texts do not represent the real life authentically as they (the biographical texts) usually portray past events. Ian Watt declares that, “Memoirs and biographies do not accurately depict how we experience life in the present moment, because they are written after the events we experience take place, allowing for reflection, interpretation, and the creation of a coherent narrative.” (Watt: p192) Therefore, authors sometimes work on declining the time and events without focusing on the future results. Richardson “writing to the minute” names this process of writing (Watt: p192).

“Richardson’s ... however, decreases the time between when events take place and when they are recorded, as characters write about events just after they happen, sometimes while they are happening, and without any knowledge of the future.”
(1964: p192)

Nevertheless, Mariama Ba almost narrates her story concerning on past events. She starts her novel as a replying to her lifelong friend Aissatou’s letter.

“Dear Aissatou,

“I have received your letter. By way of reply, I am beginning this diary, my prop in my distress.” (So Long: p1)

In addition, she ends her letter saying;

Goodbye,

Aissatou

*“And you **left**. You **had** the surprising courage to take your life into your own hands. You **rented** a house and set up home there. And instead of looking backwards, you **looked** resolutely to the future.” (SLA: p32)*

The two quotations above show the original form of writing a normal letter, which usually begins with salutation and ends with a conclusion. We (as readers) notice that the author uses past tense to deliver her messages through the conversation lines that sent to her friend. Therefore, she has to have enough knowledge about forming letters as to build an epistolary novel because “An author’s ability to use the epistolary form in new ways depends on their knowledge of how letters in fiction were traditionally used. Thus the moments when authors take the epistolary form in new directions, they are also simultaneously referring to the letter’s origins.” (Catherine: 2007). Accordingly, *So Long a Letter* is a well-organized epistolary novel. Although it arranges in a form of series letters, but it seems as coherent as one story for that it adds to the characters’ understanding of the events in the narrative, making the story

world more coherent, and initially the letter seems to have an impact on the narrative (Catherine: p233).

4.4.2 Men and Women Fluctuations in SLA

4.4.2.1 Ramatoulaye and Aissatou

Ramatoulaye is Ba's protagonist who through she sets her first novel "*So Long a Letter*" to express the Senegalese women's culture throughout her own life-series. In this literary work, Ramatoulaye is the author of the **so long letter** that had sent to her long-lasting friend Aissatou. However, her life passes through three main stages: a successful adult; a wise married woman, and a non-traditional widow. Furthermore, her life thrives as a prosperous teacher, loyal wife, and a mother of twelve children.

As a young adult, she is unlike many girls. She desires to widen her knowledge as well her life visions. Consequently, due to her educational desires, she becomes a well educated and a profitable teacher.

Regrettably, Ramatoulaye's marriage life fills with miseries. The main reason behind her gloom is that after thirty years of marriage (So long. 13), Ramatoulaye had abandoned by her youth-love husband Modou Ba who takes a second wife (SLA: p59). Yet she feels betrayal due to Modou's deeds, she does not divorce herself as her closed friend Aissatou. She admits her desire in being wife because of her belief in marriage. Letter 17 includes her disagreement opinion with Aissatou:

“Even though I understand your stand, even though I respect the choice of liberated women, I have never conceived of happiness outside marriage.” (SLA: p57)

On that account, the twelve children’s mother further decides to distance herself from her man physically not psychologically. Therefore, Ramatoulaye keeps her youth promises of love and makes up her own mind to be still Modou’s wife. She admits that via her confession to Aissatou,

“The truth is that, despite everything, I remain faithful to the love of my youth” (SLA: p59).

Ramatoulaye’s life with her twelve children perhaps represents Mariama’s own life. Professor Derayeh Derakhshesh declares that as follow:

“Mariama Bâ’s novel So Long a Letter not only depicts a female figure who confronts the persistent presence of culture represented by patriarchal institution, it explores rather a spiritual journey in which the protagonist recognizes the need to rewrite her own story and takes a process of affirmation to proclaim that selfhood, her very own which has been "othered" for so long. She liberates herself because she becomes the teller of her own tale. (Derakhshesh: 2007)

Moreover, Ramatoulaye throughout her so long letter not only represents her own predicaments, yet the entire African women, particularly who face the same issues. The letter however affords a space in which she tells about her own actions.

Undoubtedly, mostly African women sustain from men's domination that come into view within some deeds like polygamy, patriarchy and female subjectivity (Derakhshesh: 2007). She therefore expresses her experiences and choices that Ba structures to symbolize males versus females' conflicts particularly in African community.

On that account, Ba pens the only two choices in which women can follow in such cases when a man gets a second wife. Thus, she articulates the **YES/NO** verdicts through her characters Ramatoulaye and her lifelong friend Aissatou who both respectively and divergently make their own paths.

The **YES** decision is made by Ramatoulaye when decides to stay married to her beloved husband, though he has his best daughter's friend Binetou the teenager as a second wife. Her strength of mind was due to her understanding of the importance of marriage and family that build a healthy society. By that acceptance, Mariama the author shows the importance of society in the African culture for the same situation of other women that have lived the same circumstances. Derayeh states that,

“Her accepting her situation serves to help stabilize the community just as the other women have willing and

conscientiously sacrificed their individualism for the sake of collective harmony.” (Derakhshesh: 2007).

Therefore, Ramatoulaye sells her own legal comforts just because of her awareness towards the importance of her own small community (her family). She realizes that a family is a core of society. Edson states that,

Mariama Ba's central character affirms that "The success of a nation . .. depends inevitably on the family' (89). (Edson, 1993)

Consequently, by means of this wise decision, the author persuades us to comprehend the prominence of families that result a concrete and healthy community in turns.

Nevertheless, could life be simple and easy to be tamed by a lonely woman versus a dozen children? Could she raise her innocent fellows away from the negative effects of modernism?

“As her gradual passage from wife to widow yields to the pressures of single motherhoods, she comes to confront the dangers of modernism to which her children are exposed.”(Kenneth, 2008)

Unfortunately, soon enough things get worse and answers began to come to light. Kenneth W. Harrow into the bargain touches upon the situations that may answer the previous questions,

“She (Ramatoulaye) catches three of her daughters smoking, she has to deal with her son recklessly playing in the street, and finally, most movingly, must handle the delicate situation posed by her daughter Aissatou’s pregnancy.” (Kenneth, 2008)

Doubtless, life would not be easy for individuals, thus humans always gather in groups to survive.

On the other hand, Aissatou represents the women that do not accept having co-wives. As a result, due to the concepts of polygamy, she has come up against her husband’s act; she left him, her country, and the traditions in which she lives.

“Aissatou rejects this notion and chooses her own life without being denied a life of her own by her husband Mawdo. This strong exploration of feminism is perhaps what makes the novel a strong voice for the oppressed women in Africa.” (African Novel: 2014:128)

Accordingly, Aissatou says **NO** and embracing a new culture (the Western culture). Her acceptance refusal appears in letter (12),

“I am stripping myself of your love, your name. Clothed in my dignity, the only garment, I go away.” (SLA: p33).

Aissatou does not suffer when she makes the decision to take her children to the United States. Her verdict shows the group of women who hangs on their strength without fear. Saying **NO**, not accepting the legal and religious as well the traditional men’s actions proves that although women make different choices regarding similar circumstances, they may become strong, continue their paths, and begin new lives. Obioma remarks that,

“By walking out on her husband, Mawdo, Aissatou demonstrates that the initiation of divorce can also be the woman's prerogative. With her head held high.”(Nnaemeka: 1990:19)

Even though Ramatoulaye chooses to stay in her country, accepting the fate of sharing her husband with another woman, yet she physically refuses to stay with him. Her non-traditional thoughts let her not to obey the limitless oppresses that fills her life and result her suffering due to the unacceptable habits of traditions as polygamy, betrayals and sacrificing true feelings. Nnaemeka further claims that;

“Her verdict is done due to the scarcity of her courage. Unfortunately, instead of being a divorcee, she stays to share

her husband with her daughter's adolescent friend, Binetou.”
(1990, p18)

Thus, the pathetic experiences that Ramatoulaye had had along her life's series force her to give up her desires and to shut off the doors of her needs as a woman after her disappoint due to the inequality that practiced by Moudo, though of the Islam's teachings of providing equality between wives,

“From then on, my life changed. I had prepared myself for equal sharing, according to the precepts of Islam concerning polygamic life. I was left with empty hands.”(SLA: p48)

However, a sudden change of fate comes out announcing Ramatoulaye a widow. That fate helps her to free herself from pain and injustice that she suffers. Therefore, she renews her vows not to hand a man herself again though of her needs. Her refusal is a result of the sufferings that she had faced through her journey-life. The case of refusing the proposal of her admire brother-in-law Tamsir is a clear sign of the feminist thought that Ba sends through her character Ramatoulaye. (Derakhshesh: 2007)

Furthermore, loyalty of her true youth love and her believe in love marriage, let her not to accept to build a new life that seems not a heart to heart life.

“You forgot that I have a heart, a mind; that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand. You don't know what

marriage means to me: it is an act of faith and of love. The total surrender of oneself to the person one has chosen and who has chosen you.” (SLA: p60)

However, it seems clear that despite the traditional denial of not accepting marrying a brother-in-law to a dead brother’s widow, yet Ramatoulaye insists to challenge. Her powerful replying to Tamsir in letter (18) are evidently showed her new visions towards traditional marriages,

“You forgot that I have a heart, a mind; that I am not an object... You don’t know what marriage means”. (SLA: p60)

Undeniably, these parts of her replying picture her inside visions towards traditions that appear as signs of her feminism dilemmas towards the African society.

“Because, being the first pioneers of the promotion of African women, there were very few of us. Men would call us scatter-brained. Others labelled us devils. But many wanted to possess us. How many dreams did we nourish hopelessly that could have been fulfilled as lasting happiness and that we abandoned to embrace others, those that have burst miserably like soap bubbles, leaving us empty-handed? (SAL: Pp15-16)

Therefore, Mariama Ba reintroduces the pictures of the Senegalese in particular as well the whole African in the 1960s, concentrating on the great historical, political and ideological changes that occurred, and

brought new notions to conflict with the oldest. Obioma Nnaemeka sheds the light on that point,

“Historically, politically, and ideologically, Une si longue lettre is situated at a point of convergence, a point of ambivalence where old and new ideas, old and new values collide. Mariama Ba resurrects images of the political and ideological turmoils of the 1960s in Africa in general, and in Senegal in particular.” (Nnaemeka: 1990:16)

The two friends (Ramatoulaye and Aissatou) draw the attention of their community towards the new changes that exist due to the Western effects. Both were affected by the outside ideas that injected by the effort of their white teacher who teaches them about the *Western Civilization*. Letter 7 displays that affection;

“Aissatou, I will never forget the white woman who was the first to desire for us an 'uncommon' destiny. ... To lift us out of the bog of tradition, superstition and custom, to make us appreciate a multitude of civilizations without renouncing our own, to raise our vision of the world, cultivate our personalities, strengthen our qualities, to make up for our inadequacies, to develop universal moral values in us: these were the aims of our admirable headmistress.” (SLA: p16)

For those unacceptable changes, the two friends had faced great oppositions. The promotion that they had let some men to look at them as devils that must be controlled.

“Because, being the first pioneers of the promotion of African women ... Men would call us scatter-brained. Others labelled us devils.(SLA: p16)

Moreover, rejecting traditions or even bringing devilish ideas would not be easily accepted at all in an African society. This rejection appears in letter 8 when schools have been accused of playing a great role in changing communities thus in turn destroying it.

“School turns our girls into devils who lure our men away from the right path.” (SLA: p18)

Dr. J. S. Cherekar further sums up the change that has come out according to education, which gives women strength to subjugate the inherited social traits;

“It is education that provides women an opportunity to overcome the impositions laid down by the patriarchal society. The women who have received an access to education have played an active role in the social processes rather than being the passive recipients of change. This new attitude focuses on the way in which women have been active in attempting to establish their authority and independence.”(Cherekar: 2016)

Hence, education was the responsibility of the western rulers; new anti-African social attitudes have stepped over.

4.4.2.2 Modou and Mawdo

In Ba's works *So Long a Letter* and *Scarlet Song*, women are the main tellers of the two stories. For instance, in SLA, Ba as a woman wants to grab attention to the deeds that women face. For that, she builds up her work on the acts that represent her main characters Ramatoulaye and Aissatou. Therefore, the acts of the work are narrated by females' voices. Almost all the actions of the story circulate on the zone of the series letters that exchanged between the two lifelong friends. Nevertheless, Mariama Ba decreases men's roles in her work. In her works, she minimizes the appearance of male characters and maximizes the female appearance. Obioma Nnaemeka in his study "Mariama Ba: Parallels, Convergence, and Interior Space" notes that,

"Mariama Ba and other women writers, such as Buchi Emecheta and Aminata Sow Fall, who appeared on the African literary scene in the last decade, have not only exposed these myths of homogeneity and unchanging "secondary role," but also challenged their validity. By placing women characters on center stage, these writers rescue their protagonists from the quagmire of objectification, impotence, and lifelessness." (1990: p14)

For instance, she minimizes both Modou (Ramatoulaye and Binetou's husband), and Mawdo (Aissatou's ex-husband). In the case of Modou, although he was well educated, handsome, and charming, yet Mariama shows that Ramatoulaye mostly paid the price though of her love, and that her husband betrays their love. Thus, for his own selfish desires he takes another wife. Letter 4 declares Ramatoulaye's feeling towards her husband's acts,

"I measure the extent of Modou's betrayal. His abandonment of his first family (myself and my children) was the outcome of the choice of a new life. He rejected us. He mapped out his future without taking our existence into account. I measure the extent of Modou's betrayal. His abandonment of his first family (myself and my children) was the outcome of the choice of a new life. He rejected us. He mapped out his future without taking our existence into account." (SLA: p9)

If we (the readers) focus on the words that Ba uses in order to picture her husband's personality, we should take some words as examples. For instance, as has been noticed in the above quotation, Ba minimizes her husband's personality using negative words like (*betrayal, abandonment, rejected, and mapped out*). On the other hand, Aissatou rejects to have a co-wife as her friend Ramatoulaye does. As a result, she sums up her decision in the letter that she left to Mawdo,

"Your reasoning, which makes a distinction, is unacceptable to me: on one side, me, 'your life, your love, your choice', on

the other, 'young Nabou, to be tolerated for reasons of duty'."(SLA: p32)

However, hence Mariama Ba wants to draw people's attention towards male domination, she raises the voices of women in her works.

4.4.2.3 Jacqueline

Mariama Ba in her two novels "*So Long a Letter*" and "*Scarlet Song*" focuses on the idea of religion and beliefs. In Africa, Africans have many religions and beliefs. Therefore, there are many cross-cultural issues between the Africans. Mariama Ba, however, pictures such situations, approving those divisions can sometimes occur even between the African people of the same country;

"The same country can change its character and outlook several times over, from north to south or from east to west"
(SLA: p43).

Mariama is a Muslim though she portrays the real situations that the majority faces in Africa. The case of Jacqueline in "SLA" for instance, approves one of the cross-cultural complications (denying others). Although Jacqueline comes from Ivory Coast, which has tasted the same colonial power, yet she suffered in Senegal because Africa is diverse, divided (SLA: p43). Jacqueline (the Christian) tried harder to adapt to her new culture Senegal because of Samba Diack (her Muslim husband) for whom she disobeyed her Protestant parents to marry him. Nevertheless, the mentality of her husband's culture incited her suffer. Diack's People checked all desires in Jacqueline to co-operate or to be accepted in his

culture because for them she is a 'gnac' (Someone who comes from the hinterland; in West African English, 'bushman'). The following quotation, however, is a sign of religious' conflicts. Ba wants to draw the attention on the effects of husbands' relatives on wives, particularly the unwelcomed wives. This unreasonable way extends to touch Jacqueline's ideology and belief as a result she refused to leave her Christianity. Jacqueline's ideological refusal proves that in Africa women always suffer due to their guardians' desires in spite of their religions or beliefs (the case of Ramatoulaye, Aissatou, Jacqueline, Mireille, Binetou and others).

*“Her husband's relatives---always the relatives---were cool towards her because **she refused** to adopt the Muslim religion and went instead to the Protestant church every Sunday”.*
(SLA: p42)

Furthermore, her husband himself increased her sustains due to the irresponsible racism acts. This common mentality freed her husband to misbehave without shame.

“Her husband, making up for lost time, spent his time chasing slender Senegalese women, as he would say with appreciation, and did not bother to hide his adventures, respecting neither his wife nor his children” (SLA: p43)

Mariama Ba through the characters of Samba Diack and Jacqueline sheds light on women's sustains in the African cultures. Contrary, she draws attention on the importance of *female solidarity*. Jayant S. Cherekar (2014), states that Mariama Ba through her writing presents an undeniable type of female friendship, which in turns results to women solidarity.

“So Long a Letter, thus, presents a strong form of female friendship that ultimately extends to female solidarity. The sisterhood they build and maintain secures their survival against the constraints of patriarchy, tradition, polygamy, colonialism and any form of prejudice.”(Cherekar, 2014: p410)

The novel *“So Long a Letter”* shows that women need to stand together. They need to share their joys and sorrows. The following quotation authenticates the importance of women co-operation *“We tried everything to draw this sister (Jacqueline) out of her private hell” (SLA: p46)*. Another example is the concern of Ramatoulaye towards her friend Jacqueline that is a great sign of women solidarity.

“Ramatoulaye shows a lot of concern about her friend Jacqueline, who becomes sick because she feels alien. From Ivory Coast, Jacqueline has trouble adapting to the Senegalese culture. Ramatoulaye comforts and cares for this friend who needs all the help she can get in order to overcome this difficult challenge, thereby accomplishing another form of female solidarity.”(Cherekar, 2014: p410)

4.5 Aspects of Feminism in Scarlet Song (SS)

4.5.1 Elderly women’s oppression

“A woman must marry the man who loves her but never the one she loves; that is the secret of lasting happiness”.
(Mariana Ba)

Women in Africa have been suffering from a long-last struggle with men. Their discomfort is a result of men dominance that vividly displays the ideological thoughts of the African male over female. Thus, inequality between genders has almost found everywhere. In many African cultures, unlike men, women have little power and weak self-determination. Besides men's dominance, women also suffer from the domination and selfishness that sometimes are practiced by *elderly women* who desire to control everything, which damage too many families. Sylvester Mutunda states that:

“Mainstream feminist scholarship all tributes the dominance of patriarchal ideology in African society to the activities of men, while regarding women as innocent victims of patriarchal authority. However, a close reading of texts by some African women writers like Mariama Ba, provides a critique of this standpoint, and examines the direct and indirect roles played by some women in the sustenance and perpetuation of patriarchal oppression. The focus is on elderly women who, often times, are so ignorant, selfish and manipulative that they make life hard for other women” (Mutunda: 2007).

This quotation is almost-nearly about to point on the cases of Binetou's mother in (*SLA*) and Osumane's in (*SS*) that exactly portrays the selfishness, which often times has practiced by elderly women. Binetou the girl of an early age becomes her mother's victim. The selfish-mother forces her daughter to marry a man who is old enough to be a father not a husband. The mother wants to better her social-life by being away from poverty then she will be admired and acknowledged by society. She does

not care about her daughter's coming years, neither her happiness nor her desires. The solitary goal of the mother is to get the life that she has always dreamt of, to be away from poverty and hunger.

"But what can a child do, faced with a furious mother shouting about her hunger and her thirst to live?" (SLA: p40)

Although Binetou is a victim of the process of *wants* and *gives* that cleverly practiced by both her mother and Modou Fall who does his best to displace her from the world of her youth, yet innocently she accepts to obey. This elderly women's oppression is clarified by Mariama Ba in her novel *SLA* delineates the young girl as a slaughtered victim:

"Binetou, like many others, was a lamb slaughtered on the altar of affluence." (SLA: p40)

The young girl's obedient was due to her mother's promises of that their lives will change to better. Maureen Uche describes Binetou's choice says:

"Binetou for her part has no choice because of poverty; the option her mother proposes to her, will enable them to become rich and be recognized in society." (Uche: 39)

As elders' wishes, many young African girls always free their happiness and their plans. They thoughtlessly follow their parents' decisions to give up their own schemes as to marry at very early ages. Ba

symbolizes the sustaining of the African young girls of the unjust traditional system of marrying youngest to elders by force. She shows how Binetou gave up her educational future just before few months from graduation. She does that just to please her parents who wanted to withdraw her from school to marry Moudo Fall. Therefore, she becomes Ramatoulaye's co-wife. As a result, the advantages of marriage turns to disadvantages, Maureen Uche further declares that;

“Though marriage is imbued with numerous advantages, it can also be oppressive in traditional Africa” (Uche: 69).

The case of the oppressiveness that has done to young Binetou is just a model of many youngsters that always oppressed and deprived due to cultural and traditional episodes that Mariama pens it in her novel:

“Binetou, like many others, was a lamb slaughtered on the altar of affluence” (SLA: p40-ibid).

Furthermore, hence the idea of feminism lights inside the African women, an endless struggle has been continuing between the two genders. These struggles have appeared in many African literary works. Due to these conflicts, the female author come in to being on the top of their surround community by maximizing their roles in society, however minimizing the men's roles. In letter “seven” Ramatoulaye performs the new generations' ideas when she refuses her mother's wishes in marrying Daouda Dieng. Therefore although Daouda was a man of properties, but Ramatoulaye prefers to marry the man who she loves “Our marriage was

celebrated without dowry, without pomp, under the disapproving looks of my father, before the painful indignation of my frustrated mother” (SLA: p16). Therefore, Mariama Ba has obviously declares that in her book *SLA*. Mariama Ba minimizes the roles of men and neglects the way that they treat women with, Echezona E. Ifejirika sees that in her literary work, *So Long a Letter*, as:

“Men are generally depicted as unfaithful husbands, irresponsible fathers, shameless womanizers or studs/he-goats, who go \ after any woman on skirt. The men are seen as conscienceless victimizers who are grossly remorseless in their actions against women.” (Echezona: p4)

From the kind of the above descriptions, Ba does her best to picture the actions that happened to her female characters through her writing. The first case that Ba displays is Ramatoulaye’s case with her successful husband Modou Fall who betrayed his twenty-five years marriage with his daughter’s friend Binetou the teenager. In a similar case, Mawdo Ba the great medical doctor destroyed his happily marriage to Aissatou and married a young girl named Nabou just to please his mother. Therefore, to show women strength through the actions of her characters, Ba sends her *feminist’s voice* as well her feelings through Aissatou’s tongue who before leaving indicated men in general and her husband in particular, saying:

“You want to draw a line between heartfelt love and physical love. I say that there can be no union of bodies without the heart’s acceptance, however little that may be. If you can

procreate without loving, merely to satisfy the pride of your declining mother, then I find you despicable. At that moment, you tumbled from the highest rung of respect on which I have always placed you. Your reasoning, which makes a distinction, is unacceptable to me: on one side, me, 'your life, your love, your choice', on the other, 'young Nabou, to be tolerated for reasons of duty'. (SLA: pp 32-33)

Furthermore, she continues saying her opinions towards the commonly nature of men:

“Mawdo, man is one: greatness and animal fused together. None of his acts is pure charity. None is pure bestiality. I am stripping myself of your love, your name. Clothed in my dignity, the only worthy garment, I go my way.” (SLA: pp32-33)

As a result, because of feeling oppressed, some families would be destroyed (Ramatoulaye and Aissatou’s families are samples of that common destruction). This destruction always represents the undesirable decisions that always in a benefit of one party, the men party as married women look upon it. Therefore, separation would be the master instead of union.

Similarly, in *Scarlet Song*, the elderly women’s oppression has also shown. Yaye Khadi (Ousmane’s mother) stands against her son’s desires of marrying the person who loves. She refuses to accept her white-daughter-in-law due to her traditions. She thought that the white woman

would take away her lovely son. Accordingly, she does her best to return Ousmane back.

Consequently, Mariama Ba through her two novel's lines, points her eyes toward such phenomenon. The case of young Binetou and her mother in the first novel *So Long a Letter*, besides Ousmane and his mother in her second book *Scarlet Song* proving that youth mostly free their dreams due to the force of their elderly mother's opinions.

4.5.2 Class conflicts

Globally, there is a continuation of class conflicts though it seems clear in some communities as in Africa. This idea of caste system however pieces man's lives and cracks societies. Consequently, as Ba portrays the Senegalese lifestyle, she seems as points to the completely African communities. For instance, the case of Aissatou and her ex-husband Mawdo is a clear sign to how traditions still stands against modernism that calls for at least having rights. Therefore, "Aissatou becomes a victim of oppression on her own part when her husband Mawdo, a noble Toucouleur abandons her in respect of his biological origin for a new marriage." (Uche, 2009: 26). By noting this case, Ba proves that it is as hard as to have a stable relationship particularly if there are barriers in the social-class system. The barriers powerless humans desires and destroy emotions and therefore lead to the weakness of societies as it sowed the seeds of hatred and conflicts. Due to that, Mawdou gives up his own love to satisfy his mother and his society. Ba points to that in (Letter 12) when Aunty Nabou tells her son Mawdou that,

“My brother Farba has given you young Nabou to be your wife, to thank me for the worthy way in which I have brought her up.”
(SLA: p30)

Furthermore, Aunty Nabou after proposing her brother’s daughter, she warns her son Mawdou not to refuse.

“I will never get over it if you don't take her as your wife. Shame kills faster than disease.” (SLA: p30)

Her son Mawdou therefore decides to marry young Nabou as to please his mother, who does not want to mingle her honor and nobility with lower descent. (Uche, 2009:26) He tries to give his old love Aissatou an excuse by telling her that having another wife is better in order to satisfy his old mother,

“My mother is old. The knocks and disappointments of life have weakened her heart. If I spurn this child, she will die. This is the doctor speaking and not the son. What shame before society” (SLA: p30).

Maureen Uche (2009), states that Aissatou however loses her joy and love because she comes from a caste line age and in Senegalese society there are taboos associated with every caste and people strictly observe these societal regulations and divisions. Furthermore, Uche concludes that, “By doing this Mawdou yields to the implacable force of traditional ethos when choosing either his mother (representing

traditionalism), who threatens him or Aissatou (representing the modern female) his first wife (Uche: p26).

In spite of the Islamic teaching of practicing polygamy, yet in the case of Aissatou and Mawdou the situation is different as an outside power plays a role in making Mawdou's decision in having another wife. Such decisions almost lead to shatter families. "His preference for his mother's desire therefore encourages polygamy and to brighten up the situation, he encourages victims of such to forgive." (Uche, 2009: p27)

Mariama Ba circulates on the idea of old women oppressions in her two novels "SLA", and "SS". In both works, Ba sets an example of the roles that usually play by mothers in ruling their sons and daughters' lives. For instance, besides the case that played by Mawdou's mother in *So Long a Letter*, a similar case is shown by Ba in *Scarlet Song* when Ousmane's mother stands against his desire when he marries Merele the French girl (Matunda: 2007:107)

4.5.3 Racism

Racism is one of the master issues of the globe. It happens when some people of some races are inferior to others, and the behavior, which is the result of this belief (Collins: 2001). Racism destroys as many nations as it can. Therefore, it becomes strictly forbidden by the power of law everywhere. However, the African societies suffer quite enough from racism during the era of colonization. This suffering was because of the real interaction between the colonizer and the colonized. Thus, it represents the core of the problems at that time. Mariama Ba in her novel *Scarlet Song* (1981) pictures a clear racism case. The first case was

represented by the cross-refusal of accepting the marriage of the two youngster lovers (Ousmane the black Senegalese and Mireille the white French). Firstly, Mireille's father's refusal of marrying a black man, therefore he sends his daughter back to France. Secondly, the refusal of Ousmane's mother who feels shamed of accepting a white woman as a daughter-in-law. Nnaemeka points to that case saying,

“As she demonstrated in her first novel, Mariama Ba shows in Un chant d'arlate that permanent dyadic structures, generalizations, and categorization rooted in race, sex, age, intellectual orientation, etc. are untenable. Mariama Ba demonstrates that racist attitudes are not the prerogative of any particular race; both whites and blacks are perpetrators and victims of racism. Monsieur de La Valle's resolve to end the relationship between his daughter and Ousmane, like the unwillingness of Ousmane's mother to accept a white woman as a daughter-in-law.” (Nnaemeka, 1990: p28)

However, the case of the two young lovers declares that *both whites and blacks are perpetrators and victims of racism.* (Nnaemeka, 1990: p28) Ousmane and his wife Mireille sustain from racism for nothing but the strong belief of their races.

4.6 Common Themes of SLA and SS

4.6.1 Solidarity and Patriarchy

Mariama Ba's novels circulate on the powerless of women due to the powerful of men who control woman's life. Mostly, the works illustrate

via characters how women fight through their lives in order to get rid of this patriarchal society. Amal Mustafa and Dr. Abdulmahmoud Ibrahim mention that,

“Generally, African culture is considered to be patriarchal as patriarchy is associated with male dominance with the woman at the receiving end. However, this issue of African society being patriarchal raises controversy in that this concept of patriarchy has been inherited from the west through colonialism.” (2017: p339)

In *So Long a Letter* for instance, Ba powers her female protagonists and gives them a strong feeling of friendship, love, and shared beliefs and experiences that unite them to stand against men oppression. For that, Ba succeeds in delivering her messages throughout her novel. Jayant S. Cherekar notes that, “The success of Bâ’s novels demonstrates the strength of female friendship that aims to liberate women from the burden of oppression and gives them a chance to empower each other” (2014: p407). Unlike others, Ba does not set economical-class discrimination as big deal in women’s then rather than setting the families background into consideration. For example, although Ramatoulaye and Aissatou represent two different castes in their community, yet they rise above the margin of caste. Therefore, they acknowledge and strongly assert the potentiality of female friendship (Cherekar: 2014). Additionally, to strengthen the unity of women, Ba chooses one of the issues that most women sustain from which is *polygamy*. She sends her message through the two disparate reactions of her lifelong characters; Ramatoulaye and Aissatou towards

their husbands' acts. The two friends prove that women's disparity should never weaken them or lead to any except their unity.

“Though the different approaches that Ramatoulaye and Aissatou have toward polygamy, Bâ demonstrates that women's differences should not be an obstacle to female friendship. She invites women to consider their differences as positive elements that call more for unity than division.”
(Cherekar, 2014: p409)

Consequently, Mariama Ba in her novel *SLA* presents via the case of Ramatoulaye and Aissatou the reactions that empower women positions in their communities. This example shows the map that Ba directs women towards to obtain solidarity. Jayant S. Cherekar (2014) further points to that,

“So Long a Letter, thus, presents a strong form of female friendship that ultimately extends to female solidarity as Aissatou and Ramatoulaye not only empower each other but also participate in nation building. The sisterhood they build and maintain secures their survival against the constraints of patriarchy, tradition, polygamy, colonialism and any form of prejudice.” (Cherekar: p409)

However, breaking down Jayant S. Cherekar's above state as action/result summarizes the solidier chains that lead to female solidarity, which in turns empower female social position against male oppression. To understand the above quotation, I restructure it into simple chains that explain Ba's recipe for sisterhood. First women should start building a

strong female friendship that leads to a female solidarity, for instance, Aissatou and Ramatoulaye, come together in friendship based on equality and mutual respect. This gained solidarity will empower them since they empower each other as female friendship allows women to face adversity and challenge the masculine attempts to subjugate them. Therefore, the strength of female friendship that aims to liberate women from the burden of oppression and gives them a chance to empower each other will arise. As a result, this will help women to participate in nation building. Ramatoulaye declares that in letter 19,

“Women should no longer be decorative accessories, objects to be moved about, companions to be flattered or calmed with promises.” (SLA: p61)

Consequently, women could finally build and maintain secures their survival against the constraints of patriarchy, tradition, polygamy, colonialism and any form of prejudice.

4.6.2 Polygamy

The term *polygamy* sets for having more than a wife at once. It defined by the Late Greek long time ago (*πολυγαμία, polygamia*) as a "state of marriage to many spouses" (Wiki: 2017). Together with Merriam-Webster as “the state or practice of being married to more than one person at the same time” (M-W: 2017) and in addition to Collins Lexical as “the custom in some *societies* in which someone can be *legally* married to more than one person at the same time” (Collins: 2001). Hence, the previous etymologies place that practicing polygamy dates back to many centuries

and practices by many different cultures all over the world as states by Souad T Ali;

“polygamy is hardly an “Islamic” phenomenon as has popularly been misconstrued. Polygamy has been practiced by innumerable cultures and societies throughout the world for thousands of years, and thus ta‘addud al-zawjat (the concept of plural wives) is a very ancient practice found in many religions and cultures, most of which originate prior to the advent of Islam.” ((S.T. Ali, 2012:182)

However, the polygamy was fully customary throughout the world until the idea of *monogamy* has imposed by the Romans.

In fact, having more than a wife has legally practiced by Muslims recently. Though it has authorized, yet it has strict religious laws to set it into its right direction. Therefore, although a Muslim man has the right to have up to a sum of four wives, but he has to justify between them in all terms of life. There are strict requirements to marrying more than one woman, as the man must treat them equally financially and in terms of support given to each wife, according to Islamic law.

However, Mariama Ba herself lived in polygamous societies; as an African and a Muslim. Both communities have believed and practiced polygamy. Katherine Frank sees the term Polygamy as “ the most glaring inequitable and sexist feature of traditional African society” (Katherine,1987: p18) consequently, Mariama Ba through her own real life had experienced such a relationship in which she creates her *So Long*

Letter's main character Ramatoulaye to portray a life of a woman who sustains of sharing a beloved husband.

Ramatoulaye symbolizes women who had/have experienced sharing husbands inequitably. As it has known, man's nature is complicated in which it usually follows its own instincts, thus needs rules to follow. Modou, the men's representative sets a conflict with his wife under practicing an unfair polygamy. Therefore, rights oppositions have been starting. Each side has its own ethical. Modou as a man of right to have summed up to four wives religiously, wanted to fill his desires' gaps illogically; therefore, Binetou becomes his second young wife leaving his youth love seeking for equality.

“His abandonment of his first family (myself and my children) was the outcome of the choice of a new life. He rejected us. He mapped out his future without taking our existence into account” (SLA- Letter 4: p10)

However, Ramatoulaye shows her views towards the idea of polygamy that she tries as an Islamic woman to welcome saying; “I had prepared myself for equal sharing, according to the precepts of Islam concerning polygamic life (SLA: p48). On the contrary, Modou's misinterpretations (Souad:2012) to his Islamic rights that call for total sharing between wives, yet Ramatoulaye replays, “I was left with empty hands.” (SLA: p48). Those empty hands indicate the selfishness of Modou who forgets the sweet days that they shared once a time. Mariama Ba wants to draw the attention towards women's discomforts; however, she inscribes an innovative literary work that Laurie Edson describes in her

work *Mariama Bâ and the Politics of the Family, 1993* as a revolution thought:

“Her novel is revolutionary because it calls attention to some of the ways in which women have suffered under Islamic law as it is commonly practiced in Senegal, particularly under the institution of polygamy, where the husband often abandons his family upon taking a second wife.” (Edson, 1993: p17)

Referring to the above, although there are rules set for polygamy and clearly mentioned in Qur’an, yet conflicts occur. Selfishness, desires and pleasures always play a great role in breaking that rules. Consequently, Qur’an obviously construes that practicing polygamy needs efforts, which are uneasy to gain (Ni’sa 129). Modou leaves behind his first wife Ramatoulaye as well their children. “... after giving 30 of her life he dumps her for a woman young enough to be his daughter.” (Kamara: p218). Through words’ she confesses to her friend how she feels due to her lover abundant: “... I gave him thirty years of my life ... twelve times over I carried his child He dared to commit such an act of disavowal” (SLA: p13) therefore Laurie Edson reports Ramatoulaye’s new life saying; “The central character is heartbroken that she has to share a husband with another woman, and the situation is rendered even more difficult because the other woman is her daughter's friend, the same age as her daughter.” As a result, “She nevertheless reasons that this is the best course of action for her, given her beliefs” (Edson: p17).

Moreover, Mariama Ba through her protagonist Ramatoulaye’s case, proclaims the difficulties that women face when they abundant, and how situations change when mono-decisions taken not for all’s benefits.

Although the message of the Quran states that, both men and women should be 'mutually beneficial to each other, to the family and to the society at large' (Wadud-Muhsin, 1992: p91). The idea of victim and victimizer sets here; Ramatoulaye and her children pay the price according to their master's wishes. Thus, a broken family comes to life due to the incidents when Ramatoulaye makes her reaction decision in letter 13 and 5 that "He never came again; his newfound happiness gradually swallowed up his memory of us. He forgot about us (SLA: p46)". She further continues, "In loving someone else, he burned his past, both morally and materially." (SLA: p13)

Therefore, hence Ramatoulaye's family broken down as a co-wife showed up, polygamy has been unaccepted to her due to the inequitably that had practiced by Moudo. Mariama Ba has perfectly penned many of the issues that resulted out of polygamy, thus, monogamy wins the position of representing the key of being away of happiness. But would monogamy be the suitable key in all cases? However, Edris Makward answers that due to Ba's compassionate to the idea of marriage itself saying:

"[A]lthough she did not embark on an outright diatribe against polygamy, Mariama Ba was convinced that happiness-and not just women's happiness, but men's as well, a whole society's happiness-must be based on a monogamous marriage. And in the modern context, for her, monogamous marriage meant a close association between two equals . . . "(p273).

Accordingly, Ba calls for thinking of the paths that lead to the all's happiness. This cheerfulness would be for men as for women who are the builders of communities.

4.6.3 Monogamous Versus Polygamous Marriage

“happiness-and not just women's happiness, but men's as well, a whole society's happiness-must be based on a monogamous marriage.” (Edris Makward)

Makward as many other scholars believe that our happiness circulates around monogamy. Though the history of humankind proves that man's life is a collective yet a non-individual. Rizwana Habib (2014) additionally states that saying;

“Individual and collective identities are constructed on the intersecting axes of race, class, gender and religion as well as personal experiences that may defy efforts at simple categorization” (p23).

In facts, Holy books, sculptures on caves, ancient tailings and others narrate us the story of our father Adam and Eve which authenticates that since our Lord sends us to life, annexes the idea of unity as an undivided to the human's nature. Therefore, as someone individualizes him/herself, undoubtedly he/she would be abnormal.

Therefore, although there are many religions, yet there are standards, that human always shares; accommodation, food and clothing are the elementary needs that usually deal with the outer parts of life, while happiness, sadness and joy are the inner. Ergo, people always keep

looking for actions that help them to be satisfied. Consequently, marriage is the ringleader of beginning a society, for that, very strict rules are set to systematize it.

Marriage rules, however, differ according to some beliefs although its core is nearly same. In Islam for instance, there are precise rules help in drawing the right path of human nature especially that organizes the relationships between men and women in marriage life. Islam's teaching wisely urges humans to marry up to four wives at the same time, although it reminds and challenges that justice between wives seems to be unattainable. "And you have it not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you may wish (it)" (An-Nisa:129) this Qur'an clearly indicates the future of polygamous life though the same Qur'an gives the right to have more than a wife at once, "Then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four." This right, however, is given under conditions that differ from one man/woman to the other, however, the message is clearly talks to men who are have the right to marry more than one woman at the same time. It is according to their needs or willing "But if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one or what your right hands posses; this is more proper, that you may not deviate from the right course." (An-Nisa :3) here is the main core of being away of conflicts. Justice is the only way of making a healthy family.

Refer to the incidents of Ramatoulaye and her close friend Aissatou in Ba's so long a letter, their two cases however are slightly different. Ramatoulaye knows that she is a part of a society in which polygamy is normally practiced. She admits that in letter 14 saying; "I had prepared myself for equal sharing, according to the precepts of Islam concerning

polygamy life (SLA: p48). She therefore respects the principles as a Muslim woman although as any lady she hates sharing her lovely husband with another person, consequently, Ramatoulaye accuses her husband who must provide her as well his/her children their needs, but she results with empty hands (SLA: p48). She was astonished due to the acts that Modou has done.

“Modou ignores traditional decorum and religious tenets that require the husband to secure the approval and the participation, in some measure, of the first wife in the process of taking a second wife; Ramatoulaye does not even know about her cowife until the day of the wedding, after the ceremony itself.” (Kamara, 2017: p218)

In spite of all the unacceptable acts that done by her husband (Modou), Ramatoulaye refuses to divorce him but consequently he becomes no longer a part of her family who she begins to take care of alone. (Kamara, 2017: p219)

However, in contrary, Aissatou does not hesitate in separating herself from her husband, refusing the idea of polygamy.

“Ramatoulaye and Aissatou are of the same age group; both are western-educated, but their attitude towards marriage and resolution of marital problems are different.” (Nnaemeka; p18)

The two cases evidently prove the correctness of not accepting polygamy in women’s sphere. I posit here that Ramatoulaye after 30

years, 12 births and services **Modou**, she surprised by never any gratitude. Kamara (2001/2017) points to that refusal saying;

*“Thirty years and 12 children are investments that should have guaranteed everlasting love to the matrimony of Ramatoulaye and Modou. But the ominous potency of polygamy, which tradition and religion encourage, blinds Modou to the extent that he not only psychologically abuses Ramatoulaye by the mere act of **polygamy itself but insults her in the manner in which he takes another wife.**”*

Accordingly, the men that portrays by Ba in her two novels have enjoyed their religious as well their traditional rights in having more than a wife, but they do not do justice as it says in Qur’an. Souad T. Ali (2012) points that some Muslim men misinterpret some Islamic teachings to have their needs;

“Within a distorted misinterpretation of religion ... Islamic teachings are exploited by some Muslim men in order to gratify and justify their base desires under the guise of a transcendent sanction.” (Souad: 2012)

For that account, a reaction always comes out in such cases Kamara (2001) voices that “Any woman who is forced to succumb to such expectations should be richly rewarded with gratitude. She deserves to be put on a pedestal. But selfishness knows no gratitude Thirty years and 12 children are investments that should have guaranteed everlasting love”. Therefore, unfamiliar ideas have appeared especially during the era of colonization. R. Habib (2001) points out that Ba in one of her interviews

stated that “So Long a Letter” is a cry from the heart of all women, although first and foremost from that of Muslim Senegalese women (cited in Stringer, 1996).

Although the novella focuses on the construction and re-construction of Ramatoulaye's identity as an individual, her ruminations also encompass the collective identities of women both inside and outside her socio-cultural milieu. (R. Habib: p23)

Ba's sentiment towards feminists' ideas is negative. Although she suffers in her real life, but she still refuses the new ideas that combined with the Western lifestyle, “In common with other African women writers, Ba publicly rejected the term 'feminist' (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1987: p11). Her rejection, as well the rejection of most of her community companions is therefore, have been based on their belief that the idea of feminist is associated with the whiteness, (Collins: 1996). Referring to the time in which, Mariama Ba narrates her novels so real conflicts between traditional and modernism had happened due to the changes that occurred because of colonialism. Therefore, Ba states in her long letter that saying: “It was the privilege of our generation to be the link between two periods in history, one of domination, the other of independence” (SLA: p25 *ibid*). R Habib (2014) therefore, denotes that, “many Muslim women (both black and white) reject it because of its links with a western style of modernity, which is often contradictory to an Islamic lifestyle.”

4.6.4 Women's Education

Women's education in Ba's works is one of the main components as it plays a role in delivering women's voices and thus having their own rights. In *So Long a Letter*, for instance Ba mentions the necessity of education as a changing tool to the African societies. She said as cited in Rizwana Latha (2002); "People must be instructed, cultured and educated, so that things can advance" (Stringer 1996: p74). However, she voices that out through her character Ramatoulaye because education is a vital area in the attempt to promote a positive change in the norms and values which work to the detriment of Muslim women (Latha,2002: p32). Mariama Ba therefore concentrates on the idea of education because she believes that great changes have noticed due to it. Furthermore, education becomes the most important ingredient for change, for Islamic reform in general and women's status in particular. Rizwana Latha, further states that, "Ba examines the effects of religious and traditional practices on women not only on the basis of her commonalities with her elite contemporaries, but also in relation to the majority of her countrywomen, as well as women in other societies" (Latha,2002: p57). Nevertheless, those changes have put education in the face of oppositional manner as it represents foreign customs.

Referring to the era of postcolonial, education was just preferred to men than for women. This discrimination pushes Mariama to ask about the future of women education in letter 19,

"Nearly twenty years of independence! When will we have the first female minister involved in the decisions concerning the development of our country? And yet the militancy and ability

of our women, their disinterested commitment, have already been demonstrated. Women have raised more than one man to power.... But I had the impression that more than my ideas, it was my voice that captivated him ‘When will education be decided for children on the basis not of sex but of talent? (SLA: p 61)’

However, despite the fact that most of the female characters in *So Long a Letter* are educated, which proves Mariama’s point of view toward the importance of women’s education. “There is a greater focus on the educational experiences of the female characters in *So long a letter.*” (Latha, 2002: p59) but women still suffer of being unschooled. Van Allen sums the reasons of denying women’s education in African society.

“First, an investment in a girl’s education is not considered fruitful because she is lost to her in-laws when she marries. Secondly, even educated men prefer a wife with at most a secondary school education, since too much education is widely believed to make a woman disobedient. Thirdly, most women who marry are expected to devote themselves exclusively to their families, even if they are educated (Stringer 1996: p9)”

The above quotation has represented and summarized the reasons that stand against women’s wishes. These reasons clarify the clear men’s impressions towards the idea of women education.

4.6.5 Traditionalism versus Modernism

Dr. J. S. Cherekar points that, “The novels of Mariama Ba reveal her deeper concern for journey from ‘traditional heritage’ and to “modernity” (Cherekar, 2016:p2). Consequently, in consideration of the criteria of the background of the majority characters in Ba’s novels, and referring to the time and place in which the author lives, education was not common yet locals were mostly stood against, “School turns our girls into devils who lure our men away from the right path.” In addition, “To tell the truth, a woman does not need too much education (SLA: pp18-31)”. Mariama Ba, therefore, professionally pens the point in which traditional-women’s opinions annex with the men. The two quotations above obviously instruct the conflicts between old and young, traditional and modernism. The legal-traditional issues that had practiced by men at the time had in fact leads to light the flame of such gender conflicts. Adele King (1994) abstracts that saying:

“In her two novels, Mariama Bâ describes how political as well as domestic problems develop from the tensions between tradition and the modern world. Desire for power and money leads to a post-independence society, in which greed motivates politicians and in which a woman is treated as merchandise to be purchased by the richest man (Adele, 1994)”

The traditional practiced then, faced great oppositions from the women party (especially in the educated sector). However, although most of the characters that positioned in Ba’s two novels were educated, yet the

men party veered towards traditions. For instance, Modou Fall (Ramatoulaye's husband) and Modou Ba (Aissatou's husband) though they were well educated, yet they prefer enjoying their African-traditions practicing polygamy rather than involving in the European-traditions that ask for monogamy. Kamara (2001), points to that;

“We see that both male and female characters are properly well educated and financially strong. But in contrast to male characters, female major characters Ramatoulaye and Aissatou use their educational backgrounds to sustain their independence and sense of freedom” (Kamara,2001: p220).

The two friends were inspired by their French teacher who transferred her western ideologies to their heads (SLA: p15). They since began to have different notions than theirs.

“To lift us out of the bog of tradition, superstition and custom, to make us appreciate a multitude of civilizations without renouncing our own, to raise our vision of the world, cultivate our personalities, strengthen our qualities, to make up for our inadequacies, to develop universal moral values in us: these were the aims of our admirable headmistress.” (SLA: p16)

The era of the author in which she grows upon was a heterogeneous. It was a time in which most young people live with half sided bodies. The African young during the era of post-colonial live with black African bodies yet with Western minds. This in fact leads to a shake in the society. The new ideas that result from the mixing between the two different civilizations persuades most of the young especially the educated to be

lost in facing with the dilemma of whether or not to return to their own traditions. Adele King (1994) collects most of the issues that Mariama Ba confabulates in her two novels to display the new era of the new African community saying;

“Issues include the relations between men and women and the relations of post-colonial societies to pre-modern traditions. She describes the tensions felt by women educated in modern schools but expected to accept roles in polygamous extended families. A desire to "return to traditions" after independence leads, she feels, not only to the subjugation of women but also to corruption and a dangerous political conservatism. Raising questions of what is best for both individuals and the state in independent Senegal gives a moral depth to Ba's work.”
(Adele,1994: p178)

Hence the changes will affect people of the African societies, Mariama Ba decides to elucidate that a healthy community always results from a healthy family therefore, “Ba links the strength of the family to the strength of the country; each must support the other” (Adele,1994: p178). Consequently, such points approve Ba’s clear sentiments towards the idea of feminism in an Islamic as well a black society. She therefore calls a message through her protagonist Ramatoulaye saying: “Aissatou, no matter how unhappy the outcomes of our unions, our husbands were great men” (SLA: p74). However, Ramatoulaye was a victim of polygamy, but rationally she defends the inherited power of traditions of the black men, “They led the struggle of their lives, even if success eluded their grasp;

one does not easily overcome the burdens of a thousand years.” (SLA: p74)

The above quotations declare the view of Mariama Ba towards the new era of modernism that let many black women especially the educated ones to oppose their black men. Collins (1996) articulates that,

“Womanism supplies a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking black men Ramatoulaye demonstrates this when she declares to a fellow victim of polygyny.” (Collins, 1996: p73)

According to the different views of Ramatoulaye who stood against feminism, and her lifelong friend Aissatou who strongly supported and stepped forwards on its way, the era of modernism during the term of Leopold Senghor (the first post-colonial leader of Senegal) leads therefore to a division in the term of the educated sectors. Those differences of opinions parties directed to the Western ideology (modernism) as an anti to traditionalism.

“These two nationalists refer to a feminism which crosses racial divides, since their ideals concur with those of Leopold Senghor, who was the first post-colonial leader of Senegal. As a French-educated intellectual, Senghor believed in establishing the worth and dignity of African culture as complementary to western civilization” (Innes, 1992).

In consequence, Mariama Ba throughout her main character Ramatoulaye shows her loyalty to this new ideology. The evident clearly appears on her letter numbered (9) “Many of us rallied around the dominant party, infusing it with new blood” (SLA: p25).

Chapter Five
Summary, Findings,
Recommendations, and
Suggestions for Further
Studies

Chapter Five

Summary, Findings, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will draw the threads of the thesis together by answering the questions of the research and verifying the findings. Therefore, it contains Summary, Findings, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies.

5.1 Summary

The thesis is a study entitled “Aspects of Feminism in the Literary Works of Mariama Ba’s novels *“So Long a Letter”* and *“Scarlet Song”*”. The study attempts to investigate the feminism ideas that play a greater role in our contemporary world. The main concern of the study is that, to identify the reasons of the endless conflicts between males/females in the African communities. The thesis thus concentrates on marriage relationships, the idea of polygamy, patriarchal, racism, and men/women oppression. It gives a detailed overview on the author’s life as well her own experiences that influenced her way of writings greatly. The study therefore, includes in details, Mariama Ba’s biography, taking into consideration her early life, civil servant, and work. Furthermore, the study deals with the term feminism including definitions, etymologies, and the social and religious theories those circulates around feminism. The study further correlates with the earlier studies that connect with the thesis topic particularly that have been done on Ba’s literary works. Consequently, as there are many different studies about her topics (thesis, critiques, papers and others), the researcher is chosen some of the reviews that help in building the thesis.

The researcher further aims to stand on the main ideas that summarize women issues in the African societies. The study concludes to some results that; it is important for both male and female to get the right way of dealing with one another in life. It also clarifies the incidents, which cause the conflicts that in turn lead to a disastrous falling like polygamy, patriarchal and racism. The study sheds light on the way of getting rid of such conflicts. Moreover, the study reaches to the main reasons that crack the traditional-communities, and it reaches to the reasons that push women to empower themselves. Furthermore, the results draw a path to the significance of the right way in accepting women as active party in life.

5.2 Findings

This thesis has called for an understanding of the issues of feminism in African communities and Islam as they are affected by the world feminism. Therefore, the researcher finds that, although Ba builds her literary works to emanate a specific socio-cultural setting at a particular time, yet she reflects most of the female sex (Muslim women in particular) worldwide concerning the ways that guarantee women's rights in many (Islamic) socio-cultural communities. Because, "The social conditioning which allows professional and non-professional women to accept traditional, gender-based expectations; class and caste divisions, and strong matriarchal figures who collude with the forces of patriarchy are some of the factors which prevent (Muslim) women from understanding their religious and political rights more comprehensively in order to organize effectively for positive change." (Latha 2004: p78) for that, Mariama Ba pens her works as to draw attention to the problem, its causes, and the way to prevent it. Therefore, "Ba's words aptly sum up her

approach towards writing as a weapon to assert the true self of a woman. She urges the women writers to write on the contemporary socio-political issues such as the tyranny of male gender and the marginalization of women. She believes that the only weapon which is true and infallible for a redress of their grievances is literature.” (J. S. Cherekar, 2016). However, the research sums up with the right way of dealing with women in life, as well as the incidents which cause the conflicts that lead to a disastrous falling; polygamy, patriarchal, racism, and the way of getting rid of them. Moreover, the study reaches to the main reasons that crack the traditional-communities, and to the reasons that push women to empower themselves. Furthermore, the results draw a path to the significance of the right way in accepting women as active party in life.

5.3 Recommendations

The research reveals some recommendations that may help in living life smoothly away from troubles as follows:

5.3.1 Life would not be a life without law and justice to govern each person. Therefore, the researcher recommends putting in consideration the choosing of some international novels and short stories particularly those whom explain the equality in justice under the religious and social laws, as well as giving women their own rights that play great roles in stop breaking societies.

5.3.2 Undoubtedly, women/men have greater roles in building societies, so the researcher recommends the lecturers to teach some literary works that in light their students to be wise in dealing with women/men in life fairly.

5.3.3 A small family is as a nucleus for a big society. Thus, the two sexes must be aware of the importance of family life. Therefore, the researcher advocates focusing on the literary works that clearly explain the statements of the problem of feminism.

5.3.4 Finally, a man is the backbone and the safer of the family, which normally contains his mother, wife, sister, or daughter .etc, which are in need of his care and protect as well as his needs to them. Therefore, the man must be obeyed if he is right. Consequently, the researcher suggests some literary works that organize the relationships between the two genders that put the religious views in consideration.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

5.4.1 Literature is an interesting way to transfer ethics and the concealed feelings of human. Thus, people may find their right path through the moral lessons, which they get through the literary written text, especially the social objects and the dilemmas that people suffer from in their lives. Accordingly, writings about the main problems that generally affect our society particularly, are suggesting.

5.4.2 Moreover, the researcher suggests the careful study of the nature of the two parties of life (male and female), and as well knowing each part's needs is something must care and think of writing about. Since happiness is related to the stability of their moods.

5.4.3 Nearly, most of the social problems that people usually face are exist everywhere. For instance, marriage issues (polygamy and divorce), men domination (patriarchal) or the unbounded conflicts between the two sexes, etc. Consequently, comparing some local literary works

with others from overseas may deepen the way of understanding more about the foreign cultures. Therefore, help in solving the common social issues that globally people are facing, in spite of their different races, beliefs and cultures.

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