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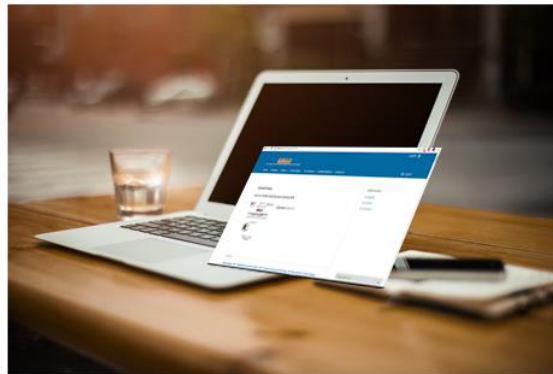
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Adumbrating the attributes of African Culture in Marita Golden's A Woman's Place

Abstract

This article ventures to glean the particularity of African culture, having explored individuals, and groups based on their confederation with communal, economical, geographical, spiritual and virtuous facets. It also toils to discern the justifications for the following questions: What is hypostatized out of this relationship? Does it abet for the amelioration of African Society? Is Golden enraptured by such relationships? Which doctrine of culture is she abiding to or persuading? The answers are being apprehended with the special reference to her cameo, A Woman's Place. In this context, the researcher does not simply like to cater the defensive answers. Any rebuttal originating in this process is for attaining a comprehensive apprehension.

Keywords: Culture, Relationship, Colour, Ethnicity.

The term, 'Culture' is encompassed two pivotal facets namely, Material and Non-Material elements. Material Culture comprises of the visible objects whereas, Non-Material Culture consists of the rules and norms, having been adhered by the people in a clan. Aziza, a leading critic comments the rubrics of culture as:

Culture refers to the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group

of people for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs. (31)

As far as the African context is concerned, Culture encompasses the conflicting connotations such as, values, beliefs, and practices, which illuminate the unique inclination and identity of a community. It also embodies as the replica of struggle, hope and survival in establishing the identity and self-esteem of a clan or community in a piece of land. Further, it is assimilated that cultural ethos are being transferred from one generation to others and have become as an outlet of socialization.

In addition, songs are the reflection of African culture to the world and have become the painkiller having endorsed the ointment to the soul, which has been fervently wounded by the inexpressible pains of the world. For instance, in *A Woman's Place*, Crystal accords how the songs having been crooned by her mother, give her comfort and solace during her hard times:

The songs my mother sang
were unexpected
substantial
melodies,
. . . . carved into women's ears. (86)

In this scenario, it is grasped that wittingly or unwittingly every individual, who is the part and parcel of the African society imbibes the ethics and codes, having been conferred by their parents divulging themselves through social interaction.

As a part of cultural civility, Africans do uphold due reverence towards their forefathers and staunchly postulate that they are guiding them in all the ways. In *A Woman's Place*, Faith recapitulates the personal experience towards her ancestors, while she visits to Winthrop University to meet her two friends named, Serena and Crystal: "I swear, sometimes I hear the voices of people from centuries ago as I'm walking to class. I guess

when they built the school they wanted it to look like it had always been here, like Winthrop University had a history. . . . and they're always talking about tradition''(12-13).

In addition, having eloquently accorded the life of Serena who is one among the trio, Golden intensifies the life and culture of middle class coloured women: “we were sitting in a fancy sandwich shop not far from campus, one of those places where a cup of coffee costs two dollars and they sell delicate pastries instead of doughnuts and buns. My father looked around at the people reading the New York Times and slid his chair closer to my mother” (27). As Serena hails from a middle class family, she gets the best opportunity to do her education in a reputed university, having been compared to other people of her own age in her native.

On the contrary, Golden also equally epitomizes the life of the people, who are in the lower level of the society: “the women are picking cotton standing at the entrance of the village. I watch them in the field that stretches against the horizon. They work, their backs bowed beneath clouds that seem as fragile as the cotton balls filling their palms” (179).

In spite of being disclosed to the external world, Africans always have an auxiliary feeling, which has deeply been rooted in their subliminal psyche. It is further proved, while Carrie, Faith's mother, works in the house of whites in doing the trivial household works. Carrie instructs her daughter to inherit the protocols to be followed during work, having also unveiled to her the inner trait of whites without any dire necessity to reveal the same.

In this context, it is divulged that the subaltern psyche is obviously being resolved through the portrayal Carrie. Even though nobody insists Carrie to instruct everything to Faith, she by nature, transmits the cultural blockage between whites and blacks as: “. . . looked like that stuff wasn't even made to be touched. Reminded me how my mama used to warn me not to put my hands on anything in the homes of those people she cleaned house for. I always wondered what my hands would do those mirrors and dishes their hands wouldn't” (12). Thus, having had the hatred towards whites for their unobtrusive attitude towards blacks, Faith as a woman, is not able to object it publically rather, it is internally burning in her heart to eschew the presence of whites from the lands of Africa.

In the same way, Golden also imparts the inner feelings of Serena against the whites for swindling the prosperity of Africa as: “since independence, this country has been flooded with foreigners from all over the continent and world. . . . some come to exploit us, some

come to enrich themselves in some way on the bounty of our freedom'' (193). The similar situation has already been presented by Chinua Achebe in his magnum opus *Arrow of God*: "The man who brings ant-infested faggots into his hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit We have shown the white men the way to our house and given him a stool to sit on. If we now want him to go away we must either wait until he is tired of his visit or we must drive him away'' (191).

In the land of Africa, nature plays the role of cultural abode, having afforded the blessings and benefactions to Africans, who are all injured by the pains and pangs of modern world. Therefore, whenever people are stressed, they come towards the lap of nature to get the solace from it. The rejuvenation of Faith in front of the magnitude of nature is detailed as: "she stood up and stretched, then walked over to the window and began watering her philodendrons, growing rampant and wild, their vines, and leaves twirled around wooden posts. When she watered the plants, she touched the leaves the way you stroke the head of a child you love'' (21). In this scenario, Golden eulogizes the presence of nature in curing the untreated maladies of people and indirectly underscores indispensable need to preserve the same from the evil eyes of the whites. Konadu observes the paradigm shift in African culture in the present days as: "ancient cultures are being transformed through globalized social reengineering into an electronic, legal, linguistic and moral parking lot that blankets the earth in an undifferentiated paved uniformity'' (34).

On the contrary, though the hitherto Africans have the deep inclination preserving and adhering the rubrics of their culture, the youngsters of the present generation do not like to supervene it rather, they are all being allured to the Western culture. In *A Woman's Place*, Golden records her anguish towards youngsters: "I've seen it all over the continent in the young educated Africans sporting American tastes and clothes, in the teenagers aping the dances and hair-styles, the only things black America exports. How I could miss America when it's homogenized the world?" (229).

Golden has also chided the untoward practices, which are traditionally being followed in African culture with due deification. For instance, though it is unconstitutional to have pre-marital relationship, it has been commonly observed in the lands of Africa. In this regard, having presented the pre-marital life of Serena with her lover Randy, Golden presents other side of African culture: "why don't you ever talk about it? I've known you two years. We've had sex, gotten high togetherI've cried on your shoulder. . . . I can't. Hell, I can't tell

nobody. . . I got back tryin to forget and you want me to remember! I'm sorry. I've spent every day since I got back trying to forget and you want me to remember'' (31)

Further, there are many cultural phrases, having been followed in Africa, where the pivotal aspect is Patriarchal dominance. A patriarchy is usually known as the head of a family, who administers the productive resources, labour force, based on his ideology of decision making and thereby, creates an impact in his opposite gender. Kramarae, a critic observes this situation as: "as observed in the literature, the word 'patriarchy' was around before the current resurgence of the women's movement and women's studies courses, the concept has been recreated in the past two decades to analyse the origins and conditions of men's oppression of women" (124).

African culture relies on the axiom of patriarchal dominance, where a father has the ultimate deciding the life of wards in a family. In *A Woman's Place*, It is further proved with the words of Crystal: "I don't quite know how to share this with my father. It was he, after all, who urged or rather decided that this is where I should go to college" (18). Moreover, Crystal also records her condemnation against her father simply for imperialing his ideologies against her: "they wanted me go to school in Detroit, where I'm from. My father thinks Detroit is the greatest place on earth. But that's because he's never been anywhere else" (27).

In this scenario, the hardest fact is that the every mother in an African family also do accept that the father should be the head of the family and all the resolutions should be made with his due consent. It even goes to the optimum extent that they give due reverence even in his absence. Golden explicates this situation as: "we would take turns sitting in the chair and give clues to what was on our mind. We never get to play that game too much now because mama's always saying she'll punish us if we play in daddy's chair. We haven't played that game long time" (203).

Further, patriarchal dominance has paved a way to many social evils in Africa. One such that is bridal price, which has actually alloyed in the cultural portfolio of Africa. The government is ready to abolish to such kind of unhealthy practices. However, the reluctance of the people has made it to exit in the society. Golden bestows the situation, having recorded response from the members of the African society on the issue: "what of a bride price? I ask when they are quiet. The ministry wants to abolish it. A wave of laughter travels among them. And from the rear there is a shout, there are so few men we fear many of us will never again have the need for bride price" (185).

Thus, having familiarized the diversified range of women in Africa, Golden eloquently reckons cultural associations of Africa on colour and customs, having further deciphered the political map, during the Civil Rights movement and its impact on Africans. In *A Woman's Place*, Golden excavates the predicament of blacks in the land of Africa from the words of Faith:

We are like
the stones we throw,
unquenchable
as our people's thirst
fists turn pebbles
into spears
assassinating certitude. (24)

From an external observation, it is deduced that Africans always feel remorse towards their 'Colour' and it is further inferred that mostly the voice of the blacks are subdued and eschewed from the traces of history. Hugh Trevor-Roper comments as: "there is only the history of Europeans in Africa The rest is darkness, and darkness is not a subject of history" (871). Golden has deeply experimented the internal and external mind frame of African men and women, having scintillatingly explored the inner throbbing of Crystal:

I am too much of everything. Too tall. Too dark. Too smart. And I still care too much what others see when they look at me. 'Your skin makes people think of Africa' my aunt told me once. And that makes folks feel uncomfortable. But I wonder, because amidst all the shouting, I am still not sure, if blacks is beautiful, does that mean I am too? (22)

In this regard, it is appraised that African culture represents the totality of the idiosyncrasy, having been assimilated by its people. Moreover, Africans themselves, have instituted a unique order to proclaim the world about the authentic identity of their colour and they are so adamant in exploring the same without any hesitation. For instance, Crystal affirms: "I am a black woman, I finally said I've been working on that definition all my life.

It's just one of the ways I defend and discover myself" (119). Crystal also feels: "and all the lovers I have are black. I am burdened and imprisoned, for the etiquette of infidelity puzzle me" (172).

On the contrary, having emblazoned the peculiar aspects of African culture in terms of their familial relationship, religions, rituals, attire, and customs, as it is singular compared to the people of the other countries across globe, Golden also astutely embellishes her boasting of being black as: "sometimes I feel like an experiment. Like I'm here to prove something to everybody, not really to learn. Most of us, don't hang out with the white kids so much. We kind of stick to ourselves" (28). Hence, it is appraised that the memory of culture and life are always intertwined and the same cannot be segregated at any situation from the minds of the people. Even after having faced a lot of trials and tribulations, people are not ready to go out of that locale: "silently we walked through the fence and across the highway to the car. And as we drove away, I turned in my seat and looked back at my land and then at the memory of it all the way back home" (114).

That is the reason why, in spite of the hardships having been faced by people, they are no way ready to move out of the province, Africans have become one with their land and culture:

I am woman

surprised

and yearning

he is a country

i never

want to leave (128)

The researcher has deduced that the cultural bondage among the members of family and society have boosted their strength to face the difficulties, having been created by the external factors on them and land. In this regard, Golden has effectively fused multicultural values, having been found in African -American societies through plethora of ingredients such as, aesthetic, religious, ethical, and natural facets. At the same time, Golden also laments the unprecedented change in African culture due to modernization. Golden intends to weed

out the factors derailing the rudiments of native culture. In addition, she also equally criticises the whites and her own people in diluting core values of African culture.

In this study, an attempt has been initiated to bring into limelight the attributes of African culture with reference to her cameo, *A Woman's Place*. Golden advocates the rich ancestral history of blacks, having craved her characters as the ardent followers of African culture. As far as the comprehension of the researcher, it is appraised that Golden does not directly oppose anybody in particular rather, strongly feels that many evils of the African society such as, women subjugation, patriarchal dominance, pre-marital relationship and bridal pride can surely be eschewed with the equal contribution and mutual understanding of the both the genders.

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