Patriarchy Through the Eye of Mariama Bâ in So Long a Letter

1Amal Mustafa Fadelseed Al Balola, 2Dr. AbdulMahmoud Idrees Ibrahim

Faculty of Graduation, Al Zaiem Al Azhari University

Abstract: Mariama Bâ’s So Long a Letter Published in 1980, recounts the stories of two women and their husbands, lifelong friends living in Senegal during the post-colonial period of national reformulation. The novella is written in the form of a lengthy epistle from one woman, Ramatoulaye, to her beloved friend Aissatou. Ramatoulaye, the book's speaker, has just experienced the death of her husband, Modou, and as a devout Muslim woman, she is central to the ceremonies performed for her husband's burial. Like Ramatoulaye, Aissatou also is without her husband, Mawdo Ba, having divorced the man after his taking of a second wife. This paper dealt with the Patriarchy Through the Eyes of Mariama Bâ in So Long a Letter. Society remains a central aspect for discussion as people form society and society is people. This paper aimed at discussing feminism, the role of woman, masculinity, divorce, motherhood and widowhood. Thus, revitalization brings nuanced and novel approaches in the analysis of So Long a Letter. The significance of this paper lies on the importance of the family integration and dividing the roles among the family within the novel so long a letter. The method conducted on this paper is an analytical descriptive method for collecting data. The findings of this paper revealed that, the necessity of conducting many studied on the African families to detect the tradition and customs towards the family mechanism under the umbrella of patriarchy in so long a letter. This study recommends that Feminism as a socio-political movement, should be geared towards the recognition of the potentials of women as human beings. It should emphasis that women be given equal opportunities with their male counterpart in various areas of human activity and de-emphasize the issue of achieving equality with men, because from creation time down to the message in the holy Bible and the Koran, women are made to be under men and submissive to men. The paper suggest conducting in the internal bonds of the family in the Africa Muslim community.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Feminism, Divorce, Motherhood, Widowhood and religion and Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

So Long a Letter is a semi-autobiographical epistolary novel originally written in French by the Senegalese writer Mariama Bâ. Its theme is the condition of women in Western African society. So Long a Letter, Mariama Bâ's first novel, is literally written as a long letter. As the novel begins, Ramatoulaye Fall is beginning a letter to her lifelong friend Aissatou Bâ. The occasion for writing is Ramatoulaye's recent widowhood. As she gives her friend the details of her husband's death, she recounts the major events in their lives. The opposing pulls of custom and progress that Ramatoulaye encounters in the Senegalese political climate become personal and particular in her struggle to reconcile her abiding faith in Islam with her feminism. Their position in Senegal, one of the poorest countries in the world, is often unenviable – as in many countries, they are always the first victims of poverty, violence, injustice and oppression. Women are discriminated against in Senegalese family law and have no rights to land ownership. So Long a Letter is written as a series of letters between the main character Ramatoulaye Fall and her best friend Aissatou following the sudden death of Ramatoulaye's husband Modou from a heart attack. Through the letters Ramatoulaye describes the emotions that flooded her during the first few days after her husband's death and speaks in detail about how he lost his life. She then discusses the life that she led with her husband, leading up to when Modou betrayed her by taking a second wife without her knowledge.
years of marriage. Ramatoulaye details to Aissatou how she dealt with this betrayal emotionally and how she grew throughout each event in her life. Despite the many mechanisms of discrimination in all areas of Senegalese society, it still possesses fundamental requirements to achieve the effective and efficient participation of women in its political, social and economic development. One of these fundamentals, and an important one, is the status of women in Senegal’s pre-colonial history. As in many other countries in Africa, during this era women were held in high esteem. They were considered to be the bedrock of society and often held high positions as priestesses and rulers. This paper critically examines the Patriarchy Through the Eyes of Mariama Bâ in So Long a Letter and the nature of feminism and its African varieties against the background of issues relating to motherhood, parenting and womanhood. There is no doubting the fact that the increase in single parenting in Africa which has made women to combine the dual roles of fatherhood and motherhood requires critical attention of both literary writers and critics. It is debased motherhood, the profiteering mother, domineering in hard, arbitrary and devious manner and using her daughter as a revenge and a smokescreen for her own lack of fulfillment in marriage. For instance, Ramatoulaye is carved in the figure that combines patriarchal ideals with clear visions, values and pragmatism, unlike Kouasi Koko, who sacrifices her daughter’s wellbeing and self fulfillment on the altar of perfidious pecuniary gains. To discuss the concept of the ‘Patriarchy’ as depicted in Mariama Bâ's novel So Long A Letter 2. To show the artistic quality of the novel by discussing the underlying themes. 3. To explain how characters, motifs, symbols and images are embodied to enhance the central theme of the story ‘Patriarchal’ as shown in the contrast of the material and the spiritual part of the ‘Patriarchal’. The study follows the Descriptive Analytical Method. It begins by an introduction forming a background to the study; followed by a summary of the plot, a literature review, a discussion and a conclusion. So Long a Letter is a realistic work of art. The work is a fictionalized real life experience partly of the author herself and that of the people around her. The diction is clear and direct as the author educates the readers about the plight of women under polygamous set up. In doing this, Mariama Bâ argues for the womenvictims but against men and women who indulge in polygamy under religious or cultural guise. The novella provides a solution or a way out for women in a polygamous set up through formal education. The author clearly states that sex should not be a barrier for the acquisition of western formal education especially by the girl-child even interns of choice of course of study. The tone is inciting and lamenting as the author sympathizes with the victims of polygamy. She equally attempts to awaken the consciousness in women all over the world to rise against polygamous practices. There is political undertone as the author takes the fight to all that matters politically with the intent of legislating against polygamy. It is a letter meant to warn, caution, educate and persuade young men and women against polygamous practice.

2. DISCUSSION

This paper delineates the Patriarchy Through the Eyes of Mariama Bâ in So Long a Letter . Society remains a central aspect for discussion as people form society and society is people. This paper aimed at discussing the feminism, the role of woman, masculinity, divorce, , motherhood and widowhood. Stubb wrote: Conventional notions of marriage and women’s natural sphere were taken for granted as feminists concentrated their efforts on women who as they saw it, for accidental or numerical reasons were not likely to marry. Ramatoulaye is the narrator of So Long a Letter; the book is both her diary and a long letter to her friend Aissatou. Ramatoulaye belongs to the generation that grew up under the French colonial regime and came of age just as Senegal was achieving its independence. Accordingly, she is very politically engaged, and reflects often on the future of her country, the role of tradition in modern life, and the prospect of women’s liberation. She is fundamentally a feminist, although she holds certain beliefs that some feminists might find unfamiliar or perhaps even disagree with. For one, she is a devout Muslim, and follows the dictates of her faith even when they seem to advocate the unequal treatment of women. Though she is a teacher and has a professional life of her own, she is also a devoted mother. Her faith and her patience are tested when her husband, Modou, decides to take a young second wife (perfectly acceptable in Senegalese-Muslim culture) and proceeds to abandon Ramatoulaye and her twelve children. Despite Modou’s infidelity, though, she chooses to remain married to him. Patriarchy is a system of sexual relationship in a social order where males rule females as a matter of birthright priority [3]. And it has been so long in societies and so worldwide that men have always regarded women as their inferior both physically and mentally. Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, custom, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. The women were unapologetically submerged into repressive collectivism and chauvinistic extensions. The women are never called by their names but referred to as somebody's wife or somebody's mother. Social institutions and interactions are
conditioned by patriarchal constructs that dichotomize the man and the woman along binary opposites such as superior/inferior, master/servant, public/domestic, vocal/silence, independent/dependent, strong/weak, cultured/unrefined. Shedding more light, [4] explains that Silence and passivity are two principal features of the good woman.... Apart from being passive and silent in the face of radical change, she is also the embodiment of culture and tradition. The important issue however, is that her passivity and docility have turned out to be potent fodder for her objectification by patriarchy. In other words, she is good because she naturally fits into the mould shaped for her by patriarchy. The need to deconstruct and subvert patriarchy and phallocentric tendencies led to the creation of authentic female characters that are vocal, assertive, subversive, independent, and educated. Women writers have continued to achieve this gender reconstruction of the woman through various means. Mariama Ba's So Long A Letter presents an allegory of that journey from colonization to independence by using the fictional predicament of women as a parallel to that journey. Two novels that we have read for this course have depicted societies in which polygamy is a part of the cultural past, and also a part of the relevant present. The two novels that we have read that depict the question of polygamy in West African culture are Mariama Ba's “So Long a Letter” and Ama Ata Aidoo’s “Changes”. Both of these novels depict polygamy in a changing cultural context. “Changes” along with “So Long a Letter” are stories about West African women, but, to say just that does no justice to the complexity of these stories. In Mariama Ba’s “So Long a Letter” the protagonist Ramatoulaye is a woman caught between two generations. She is caught between the traditional religious culture of her upbringing and the modern culture that she acquired through schooling. Polygamy in this novel is seen when Ramatoulaye’s husband Modou decided to take a second wife after thirty tears of happy, loving marriage with twelve children to show for it. There are many reasons why the polygamy led to the downfall of their marriage. Ramatoulaye loved Modou and that is the first reason why a polygamous marriage would not work for them. Love does not fit into a polygamy setting. Anger and jealousy will occur if love is involved in polygamy. Ramatoulaye loved Modou very much. The fact that for thirty years Modou and Ramatoulaye had a loving, healthy relationship with twelve children to show for it and then in the twilight of their marriage when they were supposed to get old and gray together Modou left her for Binetou is unbelievably devastating to her. Her generation was the first that could marry for love. They were also the first to see that love and polygamy do not go together. It would have been completely different if Ramatoulaye was only educated in the old traditions, had never known love, and was in a forced marriage from the get go where polygamy was just assumed. Ramatoulaye and Modou married for love and she was so hurt because Modou essentially gave up their thirty years, his good relationships and respect of his children, and a part of himself to marry Binetou, a woman the same age as one of his daughters. It is important to note that “So Long a Letter” was first published in English in 1981. “Changes” was published in 1993. When Ba was writing this novel questions of the West African woman’s identity were coming to the surface. Many West African women and most men were still rooted in traditional practices, which made it even harder for women like Ba to raise the questions that she did in her novel. These question and ideas could not be ignored. Questions about the roles African women could play in society, about love and polygamy, about African men and the oppression of women, and questions of the fate of the African woman were just being brought to the consciousness of a society due to the education being offered women for the first time. Spinsterhood was still regarded as a misfortune and marriage a norm. [5] Feminism as freedom for women is meaningful if it includes the freedom to associate with whom I like, to spend my money on what I please, to choose the topic and ways of communication, to decide on my own life plans and follow them, to decide what I talk about and with whom, to go and come as I like and go where I like. To choose the type of relationship I like and decide whether it should include sex or not. These are not unconnected with shades of abuse, injustice, oppression, persecution, deprivation or denial that the women prey or victim often falls. So in an attempt to capture the complex whole of discomfort, neglect, disrepute or stigmatization that a woman often faces, there has to be other angles to illuminating the concept. Simply put, feminism is about women, the belief that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men. Feminism seems to be one of the numerous academic concepts that have clearly undergone and continue to undergo tremendous philosophical and ideological metamorphosis to a detrimental magnitude. For example, Feminism in its original and unadulterated conceptualization simply means a general re-assertion by women of their inalienable rights as human beings with equal rights and responsibilities with men. The social and not biological origin of these gender roles within a society imply that these rules can be changed, altered, or disregarded completely, allowing for social change and mobility. Ramatoulaye echoes Grosz’s message in her conversation with Daouda in which she seeks to de-objectify women, and stresses the importance of women within a society. Women should no longer be decorative accessories, objects to be moved about, companions to be flattered or calmed with promises. Feminism, in its original conception and perception was a legitimate demand by women for recognition and an assertion of their complete humanity in a seemingly male-dominated world. Primary, fundamental root, from which all else grows and blossoms.
Although Ramatoulaye identifies and celebrates the importance of women as their own separate group, it would that she does without having to subordinate women to men. Using the ability to create life, she acknowledges the inherent difference between men and women without creating a hierarchy between them. Naolim defines feminism as an identity which rallies support for the claim of women for equal rights with men in the aspects of legal, political, economic, social and material matters giving them a source of self-worth as contributing members. [6] The above definitions, in actual sense reflect postulations by the various schools on what constitutes strands of feminism. As earlier remarked feminism covers all types of ill-treatment and subjugation a women may suffer under different canopies of religion, culture, politics, education, sociology, attitude, environment etc. Thus these phases of women condition truly necessitates plethora of definitions or opinions and theories by scholars in a bid to adequately and appropriately capture the scope of feminism. Feminist enquiry is complex, comprehensive and fluid: it is much about formulating and researching questions of fact as it is about exploring those of values and policy, thereby covering the conceptual and methodological ground of communication research and theory. Feminism stems from or reflect incidents or perspectives from which individual scholar, group or society perceive women subjugation, abuse, oppression and deprivation. These postulations, definition or opinions are as well approaches to tackling such. Of all strands of feminist schools, cultural feminism appears foremost and generic interns of tracing the epistemological precept of the unfair treatment given to women the world over from the primordial time. Cultural practices spell out implications for interpersonal relationship, attitude and identity. Our behavioral tendencies are often products of our nature and nurture. More of the abuse, sexist pride, deprivation women are perceived to be going through evolve from cultures. Anzaldua and Hill-Collins argue that: "the norms, values and practices often spring from the dominant culture which seek to impose on everyone". [7] Every culture may have undergone evolution over the years but inspite of that, virtual manifestation of the perceived anti-women practices are entrenched in belief and practice. The notion: foregrounds the diasporic experiences of women (globally) of African descent, finding links transitionally between Africa, the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America. African-American women often find that they have more in common with men from their communities than with white American, Asia or European women and they sometimes organize around diasporic issues that would otherwise be overlooked such as forced marriage, female circumcision, or neo-colonialism. Cultural practices are at the bottom of feminist movement all over and particularly Africa as all facts or signpost of women denial and deprivation, oppression or subjugation stem from cultural prejudices. This notion is often referred to as womanism or African feminism. The Marxist feminist opinion takes off from cultural feminism as it identifies patriarch (male domination) and capitalism as the bane and springboard of anti-woman opportunities and freedom. The Marxist-Feminist fingers capitalists and men as exploiters of women through chauvinism, patriarchy and undue profit or commodification. They are closely followed by the radical feminists who identify such social cum biological roles such as childbearing, gender image and sexual status as the basis of woman deprivation and relegation. This position is summed up by the psychoanalytic feminists as they identify psychological traits in women such as sympathetic and gentle nature which men often decode to be their ‘weak nature. Friedan, Rossi, and Will Stone Craft, are major advocates of the liberal school of feminism. This group of feminists focus on an ideal state where every citizen is liberally treated with respect, rights and opportunities. Their sympathetic position with the woman folk is hinged on advocacy for legal and political apparatus that will bring about the needed change in issues of gender, justice, laws and politics in favour of the women. [8] The new trend of feminism is the Cyber feminist school which appropriates denial and deprivation suffered by the women as technological or scientific accidents. [9] Donna Hardaway is an advocate of Cyborg feminist theory and her position is that women should learn to be women and not as men as against the input canvassed by what she called “western logos”. In all, solutions proffered by the various schools are that woman should come out loud and position and utilize their competence and diverse qualities. Ba’s novels present various dimensions of women’s personality, through the depiction of women belonging to the younger generation. These young women characters communicate a positive message, anticipating an affirmative journey in the vision of socio-cultural changes in Africa. Thus, she sharply veers from the contemporary women novelists. Without presenting the same picture of African womanhood, Ba insists that the literary genres should emphasize harmony and balance at the individual, family and societal levels. Ba’s canvas covers the different women and their locations in the society. As a female writer, Ba anticipates a world where women will have choices and where monogamy would be the order of the day. This world can only become a reality when women re-examine their relationships with each other and with that of their men. Mariama Ba’s novels, thus, present women to be the active agents of change in the society. Her novels display a certain formal and thematic coherence. These include Marriage, motherhood, emotional and economic independence, women’s education, their political and economic marginalization, their resistance to oppression and role in the nation are the recurrent themes in the novels of Mariama Ba. The present thesis intends to explore all these themes in Ba’s writing.
The more reading of her novels reveal Mariama Ba’s pioneering efforts to reconstruct Senegalese womanhood, her broad vision of holding relevance not only for women in Africa but also for the women of the world, her sincere commitment to and positive as well as transcendental outlook of African life, her faithful depiction of the postcolonial mentality, her concern for the female self-hood, her presentation of the balanced picture of the Senegalese society, her insistence on the complementary bonding between men and women, her sincere belief in the youth of the country to change the status quo are the chief reasons which fascinate any sensitive mind. Generally, masculinity has to do with qualities considered to be typical of man, though this statement is subject to contest. Connell defines masculinity as a social and cultural structure that influences men’s identities and practices. [10] So Long a Letter exposes multidimensional masculinities as some female characters, are endowed with attributes considered to be typically of men. Kimmel refers to masculinity as the behaviours, social roles and relations of men within a given society as well as meanings attributed to them. Now if women can execute roles that are societally considered and ascribed to men then it may be remarked that the masculinity issue is a social concept, not biologically given and may be contested. [11] Kimmel further notes that “since masculinity is a social construct, masculinities do not require genital or chromosomal configurations.” Thus, masculinity is fluid, changeable and malleable. This gives rise to the issue of female masculinities which refers to women who also have male-ish qualities besides their feminine merits. It can therefore be argued that what may matter most is the ability to perform the social roles ascribed to masculinity not exclusively on the grounds of sexual orientation which is biologically innate to an individual but rather on the willpower and competency. This strand of thinking asserts reworking in the meaning of the term masculinity. In So Long a Letter, a typical example of female masculinity is the character Ramatoulaye. After Modou discards and abandons her and the twelve children, Ramatoulaye single-handedly cares for the family, financially and morally. This implies that Ramatoulaye is defying societal expectations, her capabilities of carrying out two responsibilities that of being a mother and a father, gives her the merits of being a female masculine. She has both qualities, that of a man and of a woman. Ramatoulaye took over purported manly duties to add on to her renowned womanly duties implying that masculinities as an area of study is open to criticism and can possibly be changed as well. There is a shift in the distribution of power, women are capable and are equally competent in performing the so called ‘manly’ duties. Another practical example is noted in the character Aissatou, Mawdo Ba’s first wife. Polygamy is one thing that Aissatou repudiated without even considering or caring what society may and will say about her. Aissatou divorces Mawdo and instantly becomes a single mother and an independent woman. Just like her friend Ramatoulaye, she is single-handedly raising her children and is leading a very successful life without a male counterpart to help her or to help. She is two in-one, a mother and a father at the same time, taking up supposedly fatherly role masculinity role. It may therefore be concluded that masculinity is fluid and malleable as it can swing easily, shifting from one gender to another. According to Lisa Lindsay and Stephan Miescher, in Africa there is no typical man and there is no one version of masculinity; instead, there are various ways of being a man. In other words, various African communities have different ideas about masculinity and the ways it should be expressed. They offer the following definition: “we use the term masculinity to refer to a cluster of norms, values and behavioral patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others.” [12]. Ramatoulaye, the protagonist, is writing to inform her childhood friend, Aissatou, of the death of her husband, Modou. The writing of the letter itself is a cascade of past pleasures and present pain collected through a selective process to assuage her present predicament its sharing are part of Ramatoulaye’s personal therapy, regarding Aissatou as someone with whom she shares similar fate after Aissatou had gone through and come out of the other end of the mills and ills of marriede vorce better woman. As the letter unfolds we get to know the exact causes of her pains, the extent of her suffering in the last five years of marriage until Modou’s eventual death and the botheration she was going through even after his death from his family members stealing the family’s properties to his brother proposing marriage at his brother’s funeral. Ramatoulaye’s husband of twenty years (at the time) had married his daughter’s best friend, Binetou, leaving her to her fate and shirking all responsibilities as a husband and a father of a dozen children. But the major question or problem Mariama Bâ tends to answer with the Ramatoulaye character was her decision to remain married to a man who had, for all intents and purposes, ‘divorced’ her whilst at the same time describing herself as part of the new breed of African women. All through the narrative, explicit statements were made about the turning away from the old patriarchal society of the West African country (and West Africa in general) to one where everyone would have equal rights and access. And Ramatoulaye was one its proponents. She was politically-aware, a working mother, and a feminist revolution advocate, rejecting all suitors during and after her husband’s funeral, including her Modou’s elder brother. Yet, some of her decisions seemed to run counter to her preach. For instance, though she argued against the all male National Assembly she would not enter politics. Having pulled down the patriarchal mast, through new readings, recent thematic concerns in women’s writings have made a significant
symbolic detour which invariably recast women and the “debate about African womanhood” in plurality of views.

Bungaro, M. says: breaking off from the conformation of surrogate living articulated through mythic norms of wifehood and motherhood, which creates ambiguity in the perception of roles that characterized the portrayal of woman character and her dilemma in earlier texts, African women writers have increased the level of dominance of female characters. In recasting their stories, writers offer us a concentrated vision of the female experience. [13]Senegal was home to many indigenous peoples during pre-colonial times. Around the 9th century AD Islamization spread throughout Senegal due to the expansive trade routes throughout Western Africa. Today, roughly 90 percent of Senegalese society follows Muslim religion while the remaining 10 percent follows forms of Christianity or mixed religions. Although many people follow Muslim religion, Arabic culture is not practiced in Senegal nor is Arabic spoken as the language. Much of their legal codes are from translated passages of the Qu’ran. French colonialism came to Senegal in the 1800s and enforced a separation of church and state. However many still abide by the Qu’ran’s laws which shape ideas of gender roles, family life, marriage, and the patrilineal male dominated society.

[14]Exorcising the double burden of religion and culture is like dealing with a double edged sword and this proves to be very difficult in that both culture and religion are two extremely powerful forces that are glued to people’s lives. Culture is about a reputable way of doing things and religion is a specific belief of how life must be lived. In So Long a Letter both religion and culture look down upon the female figure and the male figure is always at the advantageous side. The Islamic religion has it that a woman is under the man and the woman must be subservient to the males. 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. Back in times before colonialism, African males and females complemented not that males would subjugate their females. In So Long a Letter Ramatoulaye suffers under the Islamic religion as she is devoted to it disregarding the oppression she directly and indirectly receives from the religion. After the betrayal from Modou Fall, she remained in marriage with her husband with hopes that Modou would follow the stipulated ways that religion has laid down of treating and caring for the women equally. Instead, Modou rejects and abandons Ramatoulaye and the twelve children. This results in Ramatoulaye suffering silently inside and forcing her to adjust accordingly lest she crumbles. On the other hand Modou is spending extravagantly with the new wife Binetou which becomes the didacticism in So Long a Letter and which Mutunda remarks, “here, Bâ reveals the injustice or lack of fairness and equality for women in her society were tradition outvalues modernity.”

[15]Ramatoulaye suffers grossly whilst holding on to her frozen marriage but as an educated woman, she decides to move on with life and forget about her so called “husband”. In Aissatou’s case, she divorces Mawdo after the betrayal and chooses to walk out of marriage and receiving so much criticism from society for taking such a move. Their religion has it that the woman should accept when the husband chooses to take other women into the marriage provided they are treated equally but disregarding the psychological impact this has on the first women. Ramatoulaye stayed in the marriage and she suffered more in the marriage. Aissatou walked out of the marriage and suffers the criticism from relatives and society. Of the two decisions that these two women did as they reacted to betrayal and polygamous relationships seem to be the only possible ways available if faced with such a situation but none of the options really sets a woman free. Women can never be free as long as some cultural and religious values are in place and those values not re-examined and reviewed considering women’s plights. Religion has its own ways of oppressing women and so does culture. So, it is difficult for a woman to survive in such predicaments. A woman has nowhere to run to and will always suffer under the oppression of region and culture which concede the male to oppress the woman. Didacticism is that there are some institutions that are in place that instigate the suffering of women whose values need to be reviewed in order to reduce and if possible eliminate the oppression and suffering of women emanating from such institutions.

3. CONCLUSION

Over thirty years after her death, Mariama Bâ’s specter has stands over Senegalese women’s writings. Her novel So Long A Letter has been the text through which Senegalese culture and the practice of polygamy in Africa are evaluated. Western scholars and readers are particularly drawn to this novel because it substantiates their stereotypes of Africa. They identify with Ramatoulaye because of her attempts to evaluate her culture through Western standards. African society, in general, is a masculine society. It is the same particularly of Senegalese society. There man made law. It serves as an umbrella of custom and religion to manage the company to its purposes. Thus, women marginalized, becomes an instrument, an object under the laws of institutions appointed by man to suit his tastes. From paternal roof to marital home, the woman is very thankful to the sacred custom that women participate more in favor of man and his institutions.
The work will present the image of women in Senegal as it is seen in the novel by Mariama Ba in “So Long a Letter”, according to the African tradition and Islam. So Long A Letter is the statement about Senegalese women’s lives. This seemingly fixation on So Long A Letter suggests that Ramatoulaye’s representation is applicable to all Senegalese women, and that her vision of the culture is absolute. The novels emphasize how women face the challenges of patriarchal institutions and other attempts to subjugate them through polygamy, neo-colonialism, constraints of tradition, caste prejudice, political instability and the Biafra war. Bâ and Atta present female friendship as a form of empowerment that helps women build new identities and survive their misfortunes. This form of sisterhood usually extends to female solidarity, which involves more women who benefit from this care and nurturing.

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