

THE CHRISTIAN CONSTRUCTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF TRIAL OF DIVORCE BY KOLADE SEGUN-OKEOWO

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Abstract

*The presence of domestic violence cannot be denied in all cultures and societies of the world since frictions occur wherever there is more than one person; domestic violence is often literally used as metaphor for power relationships. Domestic violence is expressed in different forms and contexts. Scholarships on domestic violence focus more on medical and social aspect to the neglect of its representation in electronic media, which is a product of the society. An analysis of home video films, an aspect of electronic media is worthwhile in expounding the prevalent, causes and effect of this social ill in the society. Hence, this paper unravels the representation of domestic violence in *idààmú ilémoşú*, a popular video film produced by kolade segun-okeowo, a prominent christian producer of christian home video films. The analysis of data benefits greatly from sociology of religion.*

Key words: domestic violence, christian home video films, religion and society.

Introduction

Most literary scholars who are working on domestic violence are mainly preoccupied with the representations of violence in written texts (slotkin, 1973; takaki, 1993; perraudin, 1998; roberts, 1998 and white, 2006) to the neglect of home video film, an important repertoire of sociology of the society. The role of fantasy and the power of images in the (re)creation of persons and societies (meyer, 2003); and that fantasy is now a social practice, which enters, in a host of ways, into the fabrication of social lives for many people in many societies (appadurai 1996: 54). Representation of various this fantasy and other aspects of life in diverse media especially film and video is pertinent to understanding the society. The role of media in propagating religious issue is paramount in nigeria and the entire continent at large.

Domestic violence could be termed as an affliction and abuse suffered by an individual and or as a group in the society. It could be termed as social problem which can lead to untimely death, sickness and stigmatization, to mention a few if not attended to in time.

Domestic violence has been part of the array of experiences of many societies and cultures globally. In fact, it is so habitual that it is frequently ignored, which in turn prevents it from receiving the level of apprehension it deserves. There are numerous ways in which violence is perpetrated against women. Domestic violence in many cases occurs within the solitude of the home. It is a crime that can remain hidden to the outside world and go unnoticed to all except the survivor, especially in societies where there is prevalent of culture of silence. In most cases, domestic violence is often connected with physical abuse only; whereas this is a false impression. Domestic violence may be experienced in the following ways as outlined by some scholars:

Physical abuse

Predominantly, the behaviours that fall into this group are largely agreed upon. These actions include a range of less violent acts such as grabbing, and slapping, to the more hazardous ones as pushing, choking and the use of weapons and even death (sonkin, 1995).

Sexual abuse

In relation to this form of abuse, greater conflicts were evident. Firstly sexual violence includes any non-consensual sexual activity such as rape, oral copulation or sodomy. However, the confusion arises as to consensual sexual activity such as rape, often due to fear of intensifying other forms of violence. In some cases, women may feel that they have no choice but to consent, as a result of previous threats or actual acts of violence by the abuser (melay, 1992).

Emotional abuse:

Lenore walker (1994) puts forward a detailed analysis of actions that represent psychological violence as isolation of the woman, induced debility producing exhaustion, monopolization and possessiveness, threats of death to self, the woman, family or friends, degradation and humiliation, drug or alcohol administration and alerted states of consciousness.

The above observations by scholars are applicable to the nigerian women as well. Women in nigeria have had various challenges from time immemorial, the co- existence of male and female has been observed to witness inequality and discrimination against females. Women are relegated, marginalized and discriminated in the society. The depiction of women in media cannot be overemphasized in which christian home video film has not been excluded. *Ìdààmú ilémoşú* (the scourge of divorcee), the christian video film written and produced by kolade-segun okeowo constructs the troubles associated with practice of spiral polygamy; a woman who had four children for four different husbands; and eventually forced out of marriage. Divorce is a social stigma in africa and inability to maintain marriage is detrimental to most religions especially christianity. This movie enumerates the effects of covenant of a town by an ancient king and the evil effect on generation of children in the lineage that live even outside the town. The domestic violence as a result of intimate partner violence persists until the affect receive deliverance from the as central spirit before she could successfully secure a marriage life. African has its own religion before the advent of the missionary; christianity has both positive and negative effect on our cultural life. Religious diversity has a form of liberation from evil covenant which cause a domestic violence in ajoke's life as depicted in the play.

Christoline evangelical drama outreach ministry

Christoline evangelical drama outreach ministry was established by evangelist kolade segun-okeowo (kso) and his wife sumbo segun-okeowo on november 6th 1993. The initial headquarters was ile-ife, osun state, nigeria before it was moved to ogijo, ogun state. Segun-okeowo hails from ogijo (sagamu area) in ogun state. He studied history at the ogun state university and graduated in 1990. He has his m.sc. In international relations at the obafemi awolowo university, ile-ife. Segun-okeowo, a former member of 'kegite club' became a devoted christian on march 9, 1992 and became seriously involved in christian drama after he watched a christian drama staged by the mount zion institute of christian drama.

This was revealed in an interview with him thus:

When i get converted i was zealous to serve god. While i was in ile-ife as a missionary to a church in town i got to know about mount zion film production. On campus in oduduwa hall i watched a film called 'lost forever' and i was thirsty to know the people who did this film. So, i was impressed that film could be used as a source of evangelism. When i had the opportunity of attending their two weeks training course i jumped at it. In the course i got the opportunity of serving god and that is what i was doing up till today.

In 1993, he founded his drama group called watchtower drama ministry. His first film was produced in 1995 titled *omoge omi* with its english version titled 'daughter of river' popularise him. From the time of his conversion he has attended some pentecostal churches. He started with the deeper christian life bible church and later moved to assemblies of god from where he moved to new covenant church. He later left new covenant church and joined the redeemed christian church of god where he worships up till today (2012). He is married to sunmbo segun-okeowo who graduated from federal polytechnic, ede, osun state. She studied computer science. The duo is directing the affairs of the ministry. Between 1994 and 2011, christoline has produced twenty films.

Segun-okeowo has single-handedly written nineteen films while his wife has written three beside those written and produced with other christian drama ministers.

Ìdààmú ilémoṣú “the scourge of divorcee”: summary of content

Ìdààmú ilémoṣú is a christian home video which centers on marital challenge and uproar. It is in connection with ancestral covenants made by their fore-fathers by one of the king with ancestral spirits, which the current generations of people are ignorant of. The play presents ajoke as a victim of broken marriages, who after bearing four children for four different husbands still found herself in her mother’s house, who happens to take solace in divorce. To ajoke’s mother divorce is a thing of prestige. as the play unravels, bayo a friend to lawon, ajoke’s first husband systematically walks into her life bringing the gospel of jesus christ to her and revealing the secret of her inability to have a happy and long lasting marital home. The movie shows that the blessings of the spirit of the land of *igbòòdú* results into curses for the inhabitants. The curse is that they will have unstable marriages in which they will be producing children outside the marriage wedlock. Ajoke is able to overcome these marital difficulties by accepting jesus christ as her lord and savior. That was how she was delivered from all curses.

Marriage and family issues

To pentecostal christians, social questions are essentially spiritual issues. Many of the christian home videos have strong religious allusions and call audiences to review the traditional and religious values surrounding marital institution. *Ìdààmú ilémoṣú* by okeowo is a typical example of home video film that addresses overtly the pentecostal perception of marriage institution. This pattern is congruent with what happens in real life in many nigerian towns in southwestern nigeria. The thriving story of pentecostal churches confirms their attitude to the institution of marriage and family issues. The video film activates a number of issues regarding marriage.

“ìdààmú ilémoṣú” is a christian home video by kolade segun-okeowo, which centers on marital challenges and uproars. It is in connection with covenants made by the first king (*àgòyemí*) of *igbòòdú* community with ancestral spirits, which the current generation of people of that community is ignorant of. The role of the traditional ruler in this village (*igbòòdú*) ontology is therefore significant in the community, since he bridges the gap between the real and the supernatural worlds, striving to sustain peace and harmony between all members and to also seek the continuity of the community. In the represented community, the so called blessings of the spirit of the land of *igbòòdú* on its inhabitants is that they shall continue to have many wives, many husbands and they shall keep bearing many children. The ultimate of this was to populate the community. The play presents ajoke as a victim of broken marriages, who after bearing four children for four different husbands still found herself in her father’s house. To ajoke’s mother, divorce is a thing of prestige and glory and a means of wealth accumulation from divorced husband.

Bayo, a friend to lawon, ajoke’s first husband preached the gospel of jesus christ to her and told her that the secret of her inability to have a happy and long lasting marital home arise from the covenant made in *igbòòdú* shrine by the first king *àgòyemí* and the spirits (*alálè ilè*) of this community. The play presents it that it was when ajoke accepted jesus christ as her lord and savior that she was delivered from the curses of the land.

Central to christoline productions is christian spiritual warfare against the forces of evil. The films warn of dangers, also offer solutions, and it has been amazingly effective in popularizing biblical messages. The film producer, kolade segun-okeowo in an interview with him opines that this presentation is in consonance with god’s warning to the israelites that they should forsake the ways of the heathen in order to enter into their promised land. They were given strict and direct orders as to how they were to deal with the idols in their new land.

God told israel they were not only to destroy the idols, they were to break down their altars and cut down their groves, or destroy completely the high places that the idols occupied. They were also to destroy all their images. It is the contention of the pentecostal christians that the curses on a particular land can be combated and removed only by fervent charismatic prayers, worship and exorcism, usually led by a faithful pastor. The film emphasizes the doctrines of deliverance and sanctification while constantly reminding believers of the dangers of the occult and ancestral spirit. Pentecostals argue that all current problems stem from what they call demonic practices; anyone who has participated in traditional rituals, is seen as someone who has been contaminated by demons and needs deliverance as depicted in the home video.

This play is also a sermon against divorce and separation and the idea reinforced in this film corroborates the way that pentecostals hold the institution of marriage that hinges on the principle of together, forever whatever. The movie portends that religious leaders should be familiar with the historical foundation of the area or territory they are pastoring in order to be empowered for a successful ministerial enterprises. In the play, ajoke was able to know the source of her problem through an european scholar who conducted a research on *igbó òdú*, her native town and discovered that a lady that got married must come back home (*dàlẹmọsú*) in order to populate the town. The covenant in this town has effect on all marriages consummated for all indigenes, which means that all marriages must break and women will be moving from one husband to another. Ajoke, the heroine of the play was a victim of this ancestral curse until the day she came in contact with the christian who had the knowledge of the history of the community. Through this person she got to know the genesis of her problem. At this juncture, the only solution for her was deliverance from the ancestral curse that has been working against her. Ajibade (2013) proves that when two powers clash the strongest emerges which is refers to as religious contestation, here, the strongest suppresses and there was resolution that is regarded as deliverance. In the play, ajoke begins to enjoy blissful marital life after she has gone through much violence in the hand of various husbands as a result of ancestral curse. The power of pentecostals serves as power breaker (ojo 1997, azonzeh, 2008 and ajibade, 2013) but through contestation. The play projects the christians' idea that whenever an individual gives his or life to christ there must be newness of life and experience. This construction in the film is to sermonize that the pentecostal power surpasses every other power. Hence, the play is an appeal to the masses to have a change of mind and life for a better life in the society and the life to come.

Conclusion

The examination of the cinematographic representation of domestic violence establishes the fact that women suffer a lot in most of the violence in life. Domestic violence, such as intimate partner violence has led to much havoc such as untimely death, sickness of various kinds, social stigma and lots more. The play unravels the fact that the place of culture and history in religion is very significance in order to achieve a sustainable development in any given society. More importantly and significantly, a proper understanding of home video films is revealing and illuminating; it shows that home video film is a repertoire of societal issues, especially those that are regarded as hidden. The price of domestic violence to our communities and to the quality of all our lives requires that we take very seriously the need to bring about change in those who use such behaviour by employing every strategies ranging from social, religious, entertainment and political among many others.

Recommendation

Africa is a pluralistic society when it comes to religion. The pentecostal christianity emerges as a counter power to attempt solution to problems in the society. This is sequel to the observation of augustus comte, one of the founding fathers of sociology of religion that sociology of religion is an attempt to resolve issues in a chaotic society. The spiritual dimension of domestic violence should not be underrated in addressing the scourge of domestic violence. Likewise, the role of culture in religion is germane to achieving the desired result of putting an end to violence in all forms. The knowledge of history is also highly essential in the deliverance of a person, persons or group of people. As a result of this, the educational curriculum should be rich enough to educate the students by incorporating religion, culture and history.

In contracting marriages, spouse should be familiar with their cultural background in order to be espoused to things that can be inimical to their marital bliss by being free from violence that be caused by unknown curse. It has been discovered that the best cultural heritage (artifacts) of african origin can be found in europe and american archives; and this does not speak well of africans. The government should provide fund for more research in africa so that african heritage should not witness colonization and neo-colonization. The knowledge of cultural praxes and values intertwined with religion and the intersection or blending of the duo plays a vital role in providing peaceful living for mankind; hence, religious leaders should be more educated and enlightened about this fact. In conclusion, the existing intervention programme should be improved and there should be more intervention programmes aiming at working toward the goal of preventing violence against women and children.

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