

# The Writer and Society: A Literary Study of Balaraba Ramat Yakubu's Reflections on Hausa Society

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DOI: [10.36348/sijll.2022.v05i02.006](https://doi.org/10.36348/sijll.2022.v05i02.006)

| Received: 05.01.2022 | Accepted: 09.02.2022 | Published: 28.02.2022

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## Abstract

Styles were used by different authors to ensure a proper channeling of messages from their novels to the targeted readers. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu who is among the few reputable Hausa women authors combined the position of mother, elder, leader, and responsible married woman. At the time she strived hard to acquire what can sustain her family and relatives she wrote many Hausa fiction books in which she depicted her wisdom and opinions in exposing the need to have a decent society base on her life experience, a society that respects women dignity, display honesty, discipline and promote a violent free society and encourage respect for one another. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu has tried to symbolize some of these issues in her books as her contribution towards sustaining responsible society in Nigeria, Africa, or the world at large. Styles as used by authors is a toolbox in the manipulation of their talents to expose their mission in their works. Balaraba Ramat used her styles to display her opinions on how different dimensions of our lives should be. This paper analyzes how Balaraba Ramat Yakubu addressed some of these issues and analyzes them. The paper used her Hausa novels and the academic works done on them and other things related to her. The paper, however, makes contact with both primary and secondary sources for further justifications. It however concludes with the findings that in Hausa society, men remain behind their wives in whatever they do to earn their lively hood as long as their strives do not contradict Islam and Hausa culture. Again going by the power of the pen, the paper also encourages writers especially women to use their pen as their powerful weapon to fight all forms of insurgency which rendered hundreds of thousands of women and children victims of circumstances in many African countries.

**Keywords:** Styles, books, readers, Hausa society.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The arts of creating styles and their manipulations in writing are very important to writers. Fiction writers use different forms of styles, some use simple styles while others used different styles but it is good to know all styles are used to simplify and make a clearer understanding of the author's message. Hausa writers just like other writers use their styles to expose many problems and as well as offer solutions to them. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, as one of the popular and elderly women writers in Northern Nigeria, wrote nine fiction books some of which gained her awards and prizes.

The paper used two main sources: primary and secondary sources. It also includes contacts made with the author under study (Balaraba Ramat) or people close to her for inquiries on one thing or the other. As

well as of her works analyzed in this study. While secondary source includes some of her works and novels written by her.

## 1.2 Brief History of Balaraba Ramat Yakubu

Born in Unguwar Kurawa Kano on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1958, Balaraba attended Malam Muhammadu Qur'anic School, Shahuci, Kano in 1965. She enrolled in Primary School at Jarkasa Area of Kano Municipal local government from 1965-1971. She was removed from school in 1971 before the completion of her Primary School and married was off to her relative, who was a 40-year-old man while she was 13 years old. Her brother former Head of State (late) General Murtala Ramat Muhammad was against the decision to remove her from school but it was made and executed by their father. Fortunately and unfortunately the marriage lasted for just a year and the husband divorced her in

1972-73. Her brother, General Murtala Muhammad, was assassinated in a 1976 bloody coup when she was seventeen (17) years old. Later she was married to another man of her love and she is blessed with 5 children now.

Balaraba Ramat was later employed as an adult education teacher with the Kano State Ministry of Education, she was later sent to Bauchi in 1983 for a refresher course where she attained a certificate and continued with her teaching until the following year 1984 when she retired from service.

### 1.3 Balaraba Ramat Yakubu Authorship on Fiction Books

1. <i>Budurwar Zuciya</i>	1987
2. <i>Alhaki Kwikwiyo ne</i>	1990
3. <i>Wa Zai Auri Jahila?</i>	1990
4. <i>Kyakkyawar Rayuwa</i>	1994
5. <i>Ilimi Gishirin Zamani</i>	1995
6. <i>Wane Kare ne ba bare ba?</i>	1995
7. <i>Badariyya</i>	1996
8. <i>Ina Sonsa Haka</i>	1999
9. <i>Matar Uba Jaraba</i>	2006

The analysis of the paper involved only two books as follows:

1. Budurwar Zuciya
2. Alhaki Kwikwiyo ne

### 1.4 Balaraba Ramat's Opinions in her Stylistic Approach

Balaraba Ramat Yakubu used many opinions in her fiction stories but the paper used some aspects of her opinions in some of her books.

#### 1.4.1 Balaraba Ramat's Opinion on Common Man

In one of the mentioned books "*Budurwar Zuciya*" there are about 50 characters in the book but there is no abuse or neglect of common man in characterization. (Sulaiman 2019:234).

Likewise in "*Alhaki Kwikwiyo*" there are about 66 characters in the book (Sulaiman, 2019:33-34) there is no abuse of common people rather rich characters such as Alhaji Abubakar and his father Alhaji Barau have esteem respect and regard for common people.

In the book "*Matar Uba Jaraba*" 76 characters featured in the book, there is element and abuse of common people. Characters like the scenario of Alhaji Abdu who appeared to have no regard or respect for common people, just like the scenario of what happened between him and people who came to reconcile him with his wife Rabi, he just divorced. When they came to see him in his house:

"An fi minti goma sha biyar kafin Alhaji Abdu ya fito wurin masu sallama da shi. Ya fita kuwa a murtuƙe,

fuskarsa a ɗaure kamar sun zo roƙon gafara a wurinsa". (Balaraba Ramat, 1996:138).

#### Translation:

"It took Alhaji Abdu more than fifteen minutes before he came out to see the people who came to see him, he came out in a bad mood with frown face as if they came to seek forgiveness from him". (Author's translation).

One can trace the direction of the opinion of Balaraba Ramat on her sympathy over the common people. This is because most of the characters in her fiction have respect for common people, except Alhaji Abdu. Common people constitute the highest societal population. If rich people have respect for common people, the common people will respect the rich and this will enhance respect for each social class and this will lead to a peaceful and harmonious society.

#### 1.4.2 Balaraba Ramat's Opinion on Respect for Traditional Rulers

The author, Balaraba Ramat depicted her opinion to have respect for traditional rulers. She portrayed traditional rulers as people who should maintain their position as leaders and fathers of the people. Regarding two of her books "*Budurwar Zuciya*" and "*Alhaki Kwikwiyo ne*," no traditional ruler that is featured as a character.

However, in "*Matar Uba Jaraba*" she used traditional rulers and the importance of their role in the history of the community. She used the district head of Daƙwale and district head of Fanshekara. The district head of Daƙwale played his fatherly role of settling the misunderstanding that happened between Alhaji Sa'idu and his wife Ladidi. The traditional ruler made Ladidi return to her matrimonial house. He then made her husband Alhaji Sa'idu also sponsor her pilgrimage same way he did for her partner Daso:

"Ta dawo ne cikin arzikin domin kuɗinta jaka da rabi cif, Dagaci ya karɓar mata a hannun Sa'idu. Ba yadda Sa'idu bai yi ba a kan ya samu sauƙi, amma Dagaci ya ce bai san wannan ba. A cikin kuɗin ne aka saya mata kiyo da shi, karsanarta biyu da tumaki huɗu da akuya huɗu da kuma raguna shida, sannan aka canza mata gadonta da tabarma". (Balaraba, 2006:42).

#### Translation:

"She returned in wealth because her money was two hundred and fifty Naira but the district head forced Sa'idu to pay her money back, Sa'idu tried to avoid the repayment, but the traditional ruler made sure Sa'idu settled Ladidi her money. Out of the money two calves, four sheep, four goats, and six rams were bought for her to rear and new bed and mats were bought for her". (Author's translation).

These are the roles expected of traditional rulers in our society which will continue to fetch them mutual respect and dignity. I believe both Ladidi and Sa'idu will continue to regard their district head not only as a traditional ruler but also as their father. However, if the traditional rulers will play similar roles in such domains there will be no cases in courts and peace will rain and society will prosper. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu has certain opinions about education, economy, religious men, and women.

### 4.3 Balaraba Ramat's Opinion on Education

In Northern Nigeria, there are two types of education. Islamic education and Western education. Islamic education used to be the only popular existing education in the entire region before the conquest of Northern Nigeria in 1903 and the change of the Islamic system to the British secular system. The people in this area recognize the importance of the two types of education i.e. Islamic education and Western education. Balaraba Ramat reflected the importance of the two educational systems in her novels. For instance, in "*Budurwar Zuciya*" she symbolized Asma'u who is versed in Islamic education and who imparts knowledge to children even in her matrimonial home with the support of her husband Alhaji Usman. This is what the author says:

"Mahaifinta babban malami ne a nan bakin Kasuwa Unguwar Koki. Lokacin da ma take ba ta fara haihuwa ba, har nan gidan Alhaji ake turo mata yara tana koyar da su" (Balaraba Ramat, 1987:3).

#### Translation:

"Her father is a great scholar who lives near a market in Koki area. Before, when she was younger, children were sent to her place to learn Islamic education from her in Alhaji's house (Author's translation).

It is a normal tradition in the predominantly Muslim Northern Nigeria that children follow their brothers from the ages of 5 to 6 to Qur'anic school so that by the time they attained the age of joining Western education school they can recite and write Qur'anic verses. Some even memorize the entire Qur'an and other books.

Balaraba Ramat Yakubu reflected in "*Budurwar Zuciya*" that a woman should be a scholar in Islamic knowledge before she is taken to her matrimonial home. In Balaraba's opinion on the importance of Western education to the youth in her book "*Matar Uba Jaraba*". She indicated how important it is for a father to support his child to go to University instead of petty occupations, her opinion is openly seen here:

"Batun tafiya jami'ar tashi, nan ma Aminu ya tagayyara domin Malan Sani ya ce ba zai je jami'a ba, kasuwanci zai yi. Ya yi kuka kamar ransa zai fita, yana gani ajinsu wadanda suke da sakamako iri daya suka tafi jami'a,

amma shi yana kasuwa tsakanin shanu da raguna sayarwa". Balaraba Ramat, 2006:82).

#### Translation:

"On the issue of going to University for his studies, Aminu suffered a lot in this struggle, but Malan Sani insisted that he will not go to University rather he will make him embark on business. He cried much on this decision. He imagined his classmates who had results similar to his own who are in University, while he is at Kara market selling cows and rams (Authors translation).

Balaraba is making a strong appeal to parents like Malam Sani and guardians to allow their children to further their education, especially to the University. There are millions of young men and women in Nigeria especially in the northern region that are victims of this kind of decision. To some extent, these extracts exposed the feeling of the author and the situation she found herself in when she wanted to continue with her education but was denied the opportunity because her father ignorantly objected to it and got her married off at the age of 13 and unfortunately the marriage lasted for only one year and she became a divorced young lady.

However, it is known that education is the bedrock of every development in any nation. This opinion encourages parents to give financial support to their children to attend University because this will assist in the development of the nation. If the parents did what they are supposed to do by allowing their children to acquire quality education, the children will become decent and patriotic citizens. This will reduce violence, insurgency, kidnapping, cattle rustling, thieving, armed robbery, and other vices in our society today.

### 4.4 Balaraba Ramat's Opinion on Economy

The economy continued to remain one of the main factors for development, and Balaraba Ramat ensured that she maintained the style of exposing her opinion. She made many reflections on the economy in her books. Some of them are as follows: In one of her fiction books "*Alhaki Kwikwiyo ne*" she reflected on how people should embark on business whether big or small which could gradually assist and push the economic position of anyone to the status of Alhaji Abdu who has a big provision and textile material shop in Sabon Gari market Kano. Let us see the following text:

"Alhaji Abdu dan kasuwa ne yana da jarinsa daidai gwargwado kuma runfarsa a nan kasuwar Sabon Gari take. Yana sayar da yadudduka atamfofi da 'yankwalaiye. Ba za dai a ce rumfar Alhaji Abdu a cike take da kaya ba, sai dai akwai kaya na sama da Naira dubu dari da ashirin a ciki". (Balaraba Ramat, 1990:1).

**Translation:**

Alhaji Abdu is a businessman who has moderate capital. His shop which is situated at Sabon Gari market contains both provision and textile material. Although the shop is not full to its capacity, it contains materials that worth one hundred and twenty thousand naira". (Author's translation).

This is in line with the government agitation that people should find or explore more sources of generating revenue for themselves not to rely on the government. If people can embark on business as Alhaji Abdu did, the services of more people will be needed.

**4.5 Balaraba Ramat's Opinion on Attitudes of Men Towards Women**

This paper analyzes the attitudes of some men towards their women, as portrayed in the following books: "*Alhaki Kwikwiyo ne*", "*Budurwar Zuciya*" and "*Matar Uba Jaraba*". Starting with "*Alhaki Kwikwiyo ne*", Balaraba Ramat portrays some men as injustice and narrow mind in treating their wives or members of their families. This is reflected in the following text:

"Da farko dai sai da ta kwashe kwana bakwai cif tana kwana a turakar Alhaji Abdu. Abinci kuwa a kullum ita ce mai dafa masa da safe da rana da dare. Da aka kwana biyu ma, sai ya zamanto ko da a ranar girkin Rabi Alhaji Abdu ba ya cin abincinta sai dai dai na Delu...." Balaraba Ramat 1990:30-31).

**Translation:**

"At the initial, she spent seven days spending night at her groom (Alhaji Abdu's) room. She is the one preparing his meal every day in the morning, afternoon, and night. After two days even on the days of Rabi's turn, he boycotted eating Rabi's food rather he eat Delu's food instead of Rabi's food". (Author's translation).

If the bride has never married before she will spend seven days with the groom before other wives start sharing the husband with the new bride, but if she was married before i.e. the groom married her as a divorced lady, she will spend only three days with the groom before they share the husband turn by turn <sup>[1]</sup>.

In the above text, the author is referring to an example of how men often injustice fail to do justice to and between their wives. Alhaji Abdu spent more days in Delu's side than the days he is supposed to stay and he boycotted eating Rabi's food even on Rabi's days. In this case, Balaraba Ramat is not just exposing the problem but also asking men to do the proper action and do justice to and between their wives.

<sup>1</sup> The essence of doing this the bride has never marry before the groom will have the whole one week which will be enough for him to teach her some basic knowledge for her body purification and prayers.

Similarly in a related book "*Matar Uba Jaraba*" Alhaji Sa'idu is accused of doing injustice to and between his two wives. Ladidi, the senior wife, is always looked down upon by his new and favorite wife Daso. The author Balaraba Ramat exposed such a case in her text:

"Wato komai aka yi sai ka goyi bayanta duk gorin haihuwar da take yi mini ba ka taɓa tsawata mata , sai ni za ka dinga zare wa ido". (Balaraba Ramat, 2006:33).

**Translation:**

"Although whatever happened you are always behind her, all the mockery talks and attitude she has been doing to me for not having a baby in the house you have never asked her to shut up, but you are always good of accusing me and making all sorts of threats against me". (Author's translation).

In the above text, one can see that Ladidi is loudly crying against the injustice against her by their husband Alhaji Sa'idu. Rabi i.e. Alhaji Abdu's senior wife in "*Alhaki Kwikwiyo ne*" and Ladidi Ahaji Sa'idu's senior wife in "*Matar Uba Jaraba*" are crying for justice for the women worldwide, especially in Hausaland. It is good to observe that two women share two or more things in common, they are all senior wives and they are all making similar complaints. There is a need to pose a question here thus "does it mean that if men marry new wives they normally abandon their senior wives?" I believe the answer is no! Although the paper can neither speak the voice of entire men nor can it speak the voice of Balaraba Ramat.

The fact observed by this paper is that there could be more other attitudes apart from injustice men may be accused of like beating, lack of feeding, lack of clothing, etc. However, it is good for these kinds of men to hold their responsibilities properly. They should also handle each wife in their families with justice and sympathy.

**CONCLUSION**

As goes a popular slogan: "Pen is mightier than the sword", this can be firmly testified as we remained a living witness of the 1970s Iranian revolution which was influenced by late Ayatollahi Khomeini's Pen, and the 1960<sup>th</sup> Nigerian civil war precipitated by write-ups. The paper, therefore, is making weighty advice to not only the women writers but also the men across Nigerian tribes, Muslims or Christians. They should come together and focus their work on fighting insurgency and kidnapping that are trying to destroy the country. Senior citizens should provide moral and financial support to the Writers Associations to do the job.

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