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**EDUCATION AS FEMINIST RESISTANCE: ADUNNI'S PATH TO EMPOWERMENT IN THE GIRL WITH THE LOUDING VOICE**

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**Abstract:**

This paper explores the themes of feminist resistance, empowerment through education, and societal oppression in Abi Dare's *The Girl with the Louding Voice*. Through the journey of its protagonist, Adunni, the novel delves deeply into the transformative power of education, the importance of language in asserting identity, and the impact of female solidarity in overcoming systemic barriers. In a world where gender and class intersect to perpetuate systemic oppression, Adunni's journey illustrates how resilience and education act as powerful tools for liberation. This study highlights how Dare uses narrative techniques, character development, and socio-political commentary to critique patriarchal norms and inspire societal change.

The novel captures the struggles of marginalized women, particularly in patriarchal societies where gender-based oppression is both systemic and normalized. Adunni's pursuit of education is not merely a personal goal but a form of feminist resistance, challenging societal structures that seek to silence her. Through her determination to find her voice, she symbolizes the broader struggle of women seeking autonomy in oppressive environments. The exploration of language as both a barrier and a bridge further underscores the transformative power of literacy and self-expression. By examining the societal structures that silence women, the importance of mentorship, and the transformative role of education, this paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-cultural significance of the novel. Additionally, it explores how the novel reflects real-world challenges faced by women in Nigeria and beyond, advocating for greater equality and empowerment. Through the lens of intersectional feminism, the study discusses how class and gender intersect to exacerbate societal inequalities, making Adunni's journey a microcosm of broader socio-political

struggles. The abstract underscores the importance of understanding how literature reflects societal struggles and serves as a vehicle for change. In a world where education is still denied to millions of girls, this paper aims to contribute to the conversation on gender equality and the need for systemic reform.

The study also highlights how mentorship and female solidarity can play a crucial role in breaking cycles of oppression. By placing the novel within the context of feminist literary criticism and intersectionality, this study offers a profound exploration of how voice and education can transform lives and challenge entrenched societal norms. The insights drawn from this paper are intended to emphasize that education is not just a means of personal growth but a radical act capable of reshaping societal values and power structures. The abstract underscores the importance of understanding how literature reflects societal struggles and serves as a vehicle for change. In a world where education is still denied to millions of girls, this paper aims to contribute to the conversation on gender equality and the need for systemic reform. The study also highlights how mentorship and female solidarity can play a crucial role in breaking cycles of oppression. By placing the novel within the context of feminist literary criticism and intersectionality, this study explores how voice and education can transform lives and challenge entrenched societal norms. The insights drawn from this paper are intended to emphasize that education is not just a means of personal growth but a radical act capable of reshaping societal values and power structures.

## **Introduction**

Pursuing Education As A Form Of Feminist Resistance Is A Powerful And Transformative Theme Explored In Abi Dare's *The Girl With The Louding Voice*. This Novel Delves Into The Intersection Of Gender, Class, And Societal Oppression, Reflecting The Harsh Realities Faced By Women In Patriarchal Societies Where Systemic Inequality Remains Entrenched. Through The Journey Of The Protagonist, Adunni, Dare Portrays Education Not Merely As A Tool For Literacy But As A Radical Act Of Defiance That Empowers Women To Challenge Oppressive Norms And Reclaim Their Voices. In Many Traditional Societies, Including Those Depicted In The Novel, Education For Girls Is Often Undervalued Or Dismissed Entirely.

Economic Hardship, Child Marriage, And Cultural Norms Conspire To Silence Women, Relegating Them To Lives Of Domestic Servitude. However, Adunni's Relentless Determination To Pursue Education Underscores The Resilience Required To Break These Cycles Of Oppression. Her Mother's Words, "Your Schooling Be The Only Thing That Will Give You A Voice" (Dare 18), Resonate Throughout Her Journey, Highlighting The Transformative Power Of Knowledge In Fostering Autonomy And Self-Expression. This Study Examines How Dare Uses Narrative Techniques, Character Development, And Socio-Political Commentary To Critique Patriarchal Norms While Emphasizing The Importance Of Female Solidarity And Mentorship.

By Placing The Novel Within The Framework Of Feminist Literary Criticism And Intersectionality, The Paper Explores How Gender And Class Intersect To Perpetuate Systemic Barriers Against Women. The Experiences Of Characters Like Big Madam And Ms. Tia Illustrate How Oppression Transcends Economic Boundaries, While Adunni's Evolving Linguistic Skills Symbolize Her Growing Agency And Ability To Navigate Societal Structures. Furthermore, The Research Reflects Real-World Challenges Faced By Girls In Nigeria And Beyond, Where Access To Education Is Still Denied To Millions.

Drawing On Feminist Theories And Socio-Cultural Analysis, The Paper Emphasizes How Education Serves As A Beacon Of Hope, Enabling Women To Overcome Societal Limitations. Through The Lens Of Intersectional Feminism, It Advocates For Systemic Reform, Greater Equality, And The Dismantling Of Patriarchal Structures. Ultimately, This Paper Celebrates Resilience, Hope, And The Transformative Power Of Education. Adunni's Journey From Voicelessness To Empowerment Offers An Inspiring Testament To The Belief That Education Is Not Just Personal Growth — It Is A Radical Act Capable Of Reshaping Societal Values And Power Dynamics. In A World Where Education Remains A Privilege Rather Than A Right For Many Girls, This Study Calls Attention To The Urgent Need For Change, Reminding Readers That The Loudest Voices Often Emerge From The Most Marginalized Places.

#### **Education As A Tool Of Resistance**

For Adunni, Education Is More Than Literacy It Is An Act Of Defiance Against A Society That Attempts To Silence Women. Her Mother's Words, "Your Schooling Be The Only Thing That Will Give You A Voice" (Dare 18), Underscore The Belief That Knowledge Can Challenge Oppressive Systems. This Sentiment Is Echoed In Feminist Theories By Scholars Like Bell Hooks, Who View Education As A Means Of Self-Actualization And Political Resistance. Adunni's Journey Reflects The Universal Struggle For Self-Expression And Autonomy, Making Her Story Deeply Personal And Socially Significant. In Many Traditional Societies, Education For Girls Is Often Viewed As Unnecessary Or Even Counterproductive. This Mindset Is Evident In Adunni's Father, Who Marries Her Off To An Older Man For Financial Gain: "A Girl's Schooling Is Not As Important As A Girl's Wedding" (Darr 42). In This Act, The Novel Portrays The Grim Reality Where Economic Desperation And Societal Norms Converge To Deny Girls The Right To Education.

By Prioritizing Bride Price Over Adunni's Schooling, Dare Highlights The Systemic Oppression That Continues To Affect Millions Of Girls Worldwide. Education In The Girl With The Louding Voice Is Not Merely About Reading And Writing; It Is About The Power To Change One's Life And Circumstances. For Adunni, Schooling Represents Hope, Freedom, And The Ability To Shape Her Destiny. Despite The Constant Setbacks, Her Determination To Learn Remains Unwavering. Even After Being Sold Into Domestic Servitude, She Seeks Knowledge Wherever She Can Find It, Believing That Education Is The Key To Breaking The Chains Of Oppression.

Throughout The Novel, Education Is Framed As An Act Of Rebellion. In A World

Where Women Are Expected To Be Silent And Obedient, The Mere Act Of Seeking Knowledge Becomes Revolutionary. Adunni's Persistence In Learning Is A Rejection Of The Societal Norms That Attempt To Confine Her. Her Assertion, "I Want More Than Just A Voice... I Want A Loud Voice" (Dare 104), Reflects Her Deep Desire Not Only To Be Heard But Also To Be Respected And Valued. Dare Also Portrays Education As A Means Of Empowerment Beyond Individual Transformation. It Becomes A Tool For Questioning And Challenging Societal Injustices.

Through Adunni's Journey, The Novel Critiques The Systemic Barriers That Prevent Girls From Accessing Education, Such As Child Marriage, Economic Hardship, And Deeply Entrenched Patriarchal Values. Reports From Organizations Like Unesco And The Malala Fund Have Shown That Educating Girls Significantly Reduces Poverty And Improves Societal Well-Being, A Reality Mirrored In Adunni's Relentless Pursuit Of Schooling. Moreover, The Power Of Education In The Novel Extends To The Emotional And Psychological Strength It Provides. Through Learning, Adunni Gains Confidence And Self-Worth. Her Evolving Language Skills Reflect Her Growing Assertiveness, Allowing Her To Articulate Her Thoughts And Resist Oppression. This Transformation Underscores How Education Is Not Just About Academic Achievement But Also About Fostering Resilience And The Courage To Dream Beyond One's Immediate Circumstances. In The Girl With The Louding Voice, Education Is Presented As A Transformative Force That Empowers Individuals To Rise Above Their Societal Constraints. Adunni's Journey Is A Powerful Testament To The Belief That Knowledge Is A Fundamental Right And A Tool For Liberation. By Emphasizing The Importance Of Education, Dare Calls Attention To The Ongoing Global Struggle For Gender Equality In Schooling, Inspiring Readers To Advocate For A World Where Every Girl Has The Opportunity To Find Her Voice.

#### **Socio Culture Barriers To Female Education In Nigeria**

Nigeria Has One Of The Highest Numbers Of Out-Of-School Children Globally, With Girls Disproportionately Affected Due To Child Marriage, Poverty, And Societal Norms (Unesco). Several Socio-Cultural Barriers Hinder Female Education In Nigeria, Perpetuating Cycles Of Poverty And Inequality. One Of The Most Prominent Barriers Is Child Marriage. In Many Rural Communities, Young Girls Are Married Off In Exchange For Bride Prices, Which Serve As Economic Relief For Struggling Families. As Adunni's Father Remarks, "A Girl's Schooling Is Not As Important As A Girl's Wedding. No Man Wants A Woman With Too Much Schooling" (Dare 42). This Reflects The Prioritization Of Immediate Financial Gain Over Long-Term Educational Benefits. Poverty Is Another Significant Obstacle. Many Families In Nigeria Face Economic Hardships That Force Them To Choose Between Educating Their Sons Or Daughters.

In Most Cases, Sons Are Prioritized Due To Societal Expectations Of Men As Breadwinners. Reports By The World Bank Indicate That Each Additional Year Of Schooling Increases A Girl's Future Earnings By 10%, Yet Financial Constraints Often Compel Families To Marry Off Their Daughters Early. Cultural Norms Also Play A Crucial Role. In Conservative Societies, There Is A Widespread Belief That Educating Girls Is

Unnecessary Since Their Primary Role Is To Marry And Bear Children. This Mindset Is Evident In The Girl With The Louding Voice, Where Adunni Is Told, "You Are A Wife Now, Adunni. Wives Don't Need School" (Dare 58). These Societal Attitudes Discourage Families From Investing In Female Education. Gender-Based Violence And Safety Concerns Further Hinder Girls From Attending School. In Many Regions, Girls Face Harassment On Their Way To School Or Within Educational Institutions. Fear Of Violence And Social Stigma Discourage Families From Sending Their Daughters To School, Thereby Perpetuating Gender Disparities. The Lack Of Infrastructure And Female Teachers In Schools Is Another Contributing Factor.

Many Rural Schools Lack Basic Facilities Such As Clean Water And Sanitary Toilets, Which Disproportionately Affects Girls During Menstruation. Additionally, The Absence Of Female Role Models In Educational Settings Makes It Difficult For Girls To Envision Themselves In Empowered Roles. Despite Government Efforts To Promote Gender Equality In Education, Such As The Universal Basic Education (Ube) Program, Implementation Remains Weak. Economic Inequality, Cultural Norms, And Systemic Gender Discrimination Continue To Prevent Girls From Accessing Quality Education. Addressing These Socio-Cultural Barriers Requires A Multi-Faceted Approach That Includes Community Awareness Programs, Financial Incentives For Families To Keep Girls In School, And Stronger Legal Frameworks To Enforce Child Marriage Laws. Mentorship Programs And The Presence Of Female Role Models Can Inspire Girls To Pursue Education And Break The Cycle Of Poverty.

#### **Patriarchal Structures And Domestic Servitude**

Patriarchal Structures In Society Often Perpetuate The Systemic Oppression Of Women By Maintaining Rigid Gender Roles And Hierarchies. In The Girl With The Louding Voice, Abi Dare Explores How These Structures Manifest Through Domestic Servitude And Forced Marriages, Denying Women Autonomy And Voice. Adunni, The Protagonist, Experiences This Oppression Firsthand When She Is Sold Into Marriage By Her Father For Economic Gain. "If I Sell You, We Will Have Food To Eat, Your Brothers Can Go To School" (Dare 42). This Line Reflects The Economic Desperation That Forces Many Families In Patriarchal Societies To Commodify Their Daughters. In Such Contexts, A Girl's Value Is Often Measured By Her Ability To Bring Financial Relief Rather Than Her Potential As An Individual.

This Dehumanization Perpetuates Cycles Of Poverty And Gender Inequality. Forced Marriage Is Not The Only Avenue Where Patriarchal Norms Subjugate Women. Once Married, Adunni Is Expected To Conform To The Role Of A Submissive Wife, Whose Primary Purpose Is To Bear Children. "You Are A Wife Now, Adunni. Wives Don't Need School" (Dare 58). This Sentiment Echoes Societal Beliefs That Prioritize Domestic Responsibilities Over Personal Growth For Women. In Many Nigerian Communities, Women Are Viewed As Caretakers Whose Ambitions Should Not Extend Beyond The Home. This Not Only Limits Their Education Opportunities But Also Reinforces Economic Dependence On Men. Dare Also Highlights How Patriarchal Norms Perpetuate Domestic

Servitude Beyond Marriage. Adunni's Subsequent Experience As A Housemaid For Big Madam Demonstrates How Economic And Social Hierarchies Exploit Marginalized Women. Despite Being A Woman Herself, Big Madam Upholds Oppressive Norms By Mistreating Adunni. "You Are Nothing, Just A Girl From The Village. You Are Lucky I Even Allow You In My House" (Dare 150). This Illustrates How Patriarchal Values Can Be Internalized By Women In Positions Of Power, Perpetuating Cycles Of Abuse. Feminist Theorists Argue That Oppressed Individuals Often Replicate The Structures That Once Subjugated Them, A Phenomenon Evident In Big Madam's Character. Moreover, The Novel Explores The Intersectionality Of Oppression, Where Class And Gender Work Together To Trap Women In Cycles Of Servitude.

Wealth Offers Limited Protection For Women Like Big Madam, Who Remains In An Abusive Marriage Despite Her Economic Power. "Even The Powerful Women, They Too Are Not Free" (Dare 176). This Quote Underscores How Patriarchal Structures Transcend Class Boundaries, Affecting Women Across Socioeconomic Statuses. However, Adunni's Resilience Offers A Counter-Narrative To The Inevitability Of Domestic Servitude. Through Education And Mentorship, She Begins To Reclaim Her Voice, Challenging The Oppressive Norms That Sought To Silence Her. "I Tell My Story. I No Longer Be A Girl With Small Voice. My Voice Be Louding Now" (Dare 290). This Journey Illustrates The Importance Of Dismantling Patriarchal Structures By Empowering Women Through Education And Support Systems. The Novel Calls For Systemic Change Where Women's Voices Are Not Only Heard But Valued, Breaking The Cycle Of Gendered Oppression In Both Domestic And Societal Spheres.

### **Intersectionality Of Class And Gender**

In The Girl With The Louding Voice, Abi Dare Explores The Intricate Ways In Which Class And Gender Intersect To Compound The Struggles Faced By Marginalized Women In Nigeria. Through The Experiences Of Adunni, Big Madam, And Ms. Tia, The Novel Highlights How Societal Hierarchies Based On Both Economic Status And Gender Operate Simultaneously, Influencing The Opportunities And Limitations Placed On Women. Adunni's Journey Is Marked By Her Status As A Poor Village Girl, Where Poverty Dictates Her Fate As Much As Her Gender. Her Father's Decision To Marry Her Off To An Older Man For Financial Gain Is Emblematic Of How Economic Desperation Forces Families To Prioritize Immediate Survival Over Long-Term Empowerment. "If I Sell You, We Will Have Food To Eat; Your Brothers Can Go To School" (Dare 42). This Quote Underscores How Girls Are Often Commodified Within Patriarchal And Class-Based Structures, Their Education Sacrificed For Familial Welfare. The Intersection Of Class And Gender Is Further Emphasized Through Adunni's Role As A Domestic Servant.

Her Experiences In Big Madam's Household Reflect The Systemic Exploitation Of Poor Girls, Who Are Seen As Disposable Labor. Despite Big Madam's Struggles With An Abusive Husband, She Perpetuates The Cycle Of Oppression By Mistreating Adunni. "You Are Nothing, Just A Girl From The Village. You Are Lucky I Even Allow You In My House"

(Dare 150). This Power Dynamic Illustrates How Economic Privilege Does Not Necessarily Translate To Solidarity Among Women, As A Class Often Overrides Shared Gender Experiences. Big Madam's Character Reveals The Complexities Of Power And Victimhood. Although She Holds Financial Power, Her Life Is Controlled By Her Abusive Husband, Demonstrating How Wealth Does Not Exempt Women From Patriarchal Control. This Dual Oppression Reflects The Broader Societal Reality Where Women Can Occupy Positions Of Authority While Still Being Subject To Male Dominance. Conversely, Ms. Tia Represents A Different Dimension Of Class And Gender Intersectionality. As An Educated And Affluent Woman, She Is Free From Economic Hardship But Remains Bound By Societal Expectations Regarding Motherhood. "If I Don't Give Him A Child Soon, I Am Afraid I Will Lose Him" (Dare 230). This Pressure Highlights How Societal Norms Surrounding Reproduction Persist Across All Social Classes, Placing An Immense Burden On Women To Conform.

The Contrast Between Ms. Tia And Big Madam Demonstrates How Class Influences How Women Experience Gender Oppression. While Big Madam Wields Economic Power But Suffers In Her Personal Life, Ms. Tia Faces Societal Judgment Despite Her Relative Privilege. Adunni, On The Other Hand, Struggles Under The Weight Of Both Economic And Gender Oppression, Reflecting The Compounded Disadvantages Faced By Those At The Bottom Of The Socio-Economic Hierarchy. Language Also Serves As A Marker Of Class And Power Within The Novel. Adunni's Broken English Signifies Her Low Social Status And Limited Access To Education. However, As She Improves Her Language Skills, She Begins To Navigate Societal Spaces With Greater Confidence. "I Am Learning, Small Small, And Each Word Is A Step Closer To My Dream" (Dare 221). This Linguistic Evolution Mirrors Her Journey Toward Empowerment, Challenging The Notion That Class And Gender Should Determine One's Voice Or Future. The Novel Critiques How Class And Gender Inequalities Are Sustained Through Systemic Barriers.

Poor Girls Like Adunni Face Numerous Obstacles, Including Limited Access To Education, Economic Exploitation, And Societal Silencing. These Challenges Are Not Isolated Incidents But Rather Reflections Of Deeply Ingrained Structural Inequalities. Through Adunni's Perseverance, Dare Emphasizes The Importance Of Resilience And The Transformative Power Of Education In Breaking These Cycles. Ultimately, The Girl With The Louding Voice Illustrates How Intersectionality Shapes The Experiences Of Women In Patriarchal Societies. By Examining The Interconnected Nature Of Class And Gender Oppression, The Novel Calls For A More Nuanced Understanding Of How Systemic Inequalities Operate. Adunni's Journey Serves As A Powerful Reminder That Empowerment Requires Not Only Personal Determination But Also Societal Change To Dismantle These Intersecting Barriers.

### **Overcoming Oppression: Resilience And Hope**

Abi Dare's The Girl With The Louding Voice Is A Testament To The Power Of Resilience And Hope In Overcoming Systemic Oppression. Throughout The Novel, Adunni Embodies The Strength Of The Human Spirit, Refusing To Succumb To The Societal Forces

That Seek To Silence Her. Despite Facing Child Marriage, Domestic Servitude, And Gender-Based Violence, She Remains Unwavering In Her Determination To Find Her Voice And Change Her Circumstances. Adunni's Resilience Is Rooted In Her Unwavering Belief In The Transformative Power Of Education. From The Very Beginning, Her Late Mother's Words Serve As A Guiding Force: "Your Schooling Be The Only Thing That Will Give You A Voice" (Dare 18). This Belief Propels Her Forward, Even When All Odds Are Stacked Against Her. Whether In The Oppressive Environment Of Her Husband's Household Or Big Madam's Home, She Clings To The Hope That Education Can Liberate Her From A Life Of Servitude.

Her Journey Is Not Without Setbacks. Adunni Experiences Repeated Instances Of Abuse And Exploitation, Yet She Refuses To Be Defined By Her Suffering. In Her Darkest Moments, She Finds Strength In Small Acts Of Kindness And Solidarity From Others, Such As Ms. Tia And Kofi, Who Recognize Her Potential. These Relationships Illustrate How Hope Can Be Nurtured Through Human Connection, Even In The Bleakest Of Circumstances. Moreover, Adunni's Resilience Is Not Portrayed As An Innate Trait But As A Learned Response To Adversity. Her Growth Throughout The Novel Reflects How Hope Can Evolve Through Experience And Perseverance. "If I Stop To Fear, Then I Will Be Nothing. I Must Be Something" (Dare 293). This Powerful Declaration Underscores Her Refusal To Be Defeated By Her Circumstances.

The Theme Of Resilience Is Also Reflected In The Broader Societal Context Of The Novel. Adunni's Story Is Not An Isolated One; It Represents The Struggles Of Countless Girls In Nigeria And Around The World Who Face Similar Barriers. By Showcasing Her Journey, Dare Challenges Societal Norms That Perpetuate Inequality And Calls For Systemic Change To Create Opportunities For Marginalized Individuals. Hope, As Portrayed In The Novel, Is Not A Passive Emotion But An Active Force That Drives Change. Adunni's Determination To Pursue Her Education Despite Overwhelming Obstacles Serves As An Inspiration, Demonstrating That Resilience Can Break Cycles Of Oppression. Her Journey From Voicelessness To Self-Empowerment Is A Powerful Reminder That Hope, Coupled With Action, Can Lead To Transformative Change.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, The Girl With The Louding Voice Celebrates The Resilience Of Those Who Dare To Dream Beyond Their Circumstances. It Portrays Hope Not As A Fleeting Sentiment But As A Profound Force Capable Of Challenging Societal Injustices. Through Adunni's Story, Dare Offers A Message Of Empowerment, Urging Readers To Recognize The Power Of Resilience In Overcoming Oppression. Abi Dare's The Girl With The Louding Voice Is A Compelling Exploration Of Resilience, Empowerment, And Societal Transformation. Through Adunni's Journey, The Novel Highlights The Systemic Oppression That Women Face Due To The Intersection of class and gender.

By addressing issues such as poverty, limited access to education, domestic



servitude, and gender-based violence, Dare portrays the struggles of marginalized women while emphasizing hope, perseverance, and the transformative power of education. A central theme of the novel is how intersectionality shapes the experiences of women. Adunni's journey contrasted with the lives of Big Madam and Ms. Tia, reveals how societal hierarchies determine opportunities and limitations.

While Big Madam's wealth offers her power, she remains trapped in an abusive marriage, illustrating that economic privilege does not ensure freedom from patriarchal control. Ms. Tia faces societal pressures regarding motherhood despite her affluence, reflecting how societal norms transcend class boundaries. These dynamics underscore the need for systemic change. Language serves as both a barrier and a tool for empowerment in the novel. Adunni's transition from broken English to greater linguistic fluency mirrors her journey from voicelessness to self-assertion. This evolution demonstrates how literacy enables individuals to navigate societal structures and challenge oppressive power dynamics. The novel emphasizes the societal importance of self-expression in fostering empowerment and change. Ultimately, *The Girl with the Louding Voice* is not just a tale of personal triumph; it is a profound commentary on societal oppression and the resilience required to overcome it. Adunni's journey inspires readers to recognize the transformative power of education and hope to challenge entrenched societal norms. Dare's work serves as a reminder that finding one's voice is the first step toward societal change and that resilience, coupled with hope, can lead to transformative and lasting impact.

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