

That killer suitor in Kano

AN apparently impulsive and irascible man, Abdullahi Idris, was recently arraigned in a Kano State Sharia Court for allegedly setting his girlfriend, Sa'adatu Ibrahim, ablaze for turning down his marriage proposal. Idris, who lives in Rimi town in Sumaila Local Government Area of Kano State, had reportedly dated Sa'adatu, a divorcee, for seven days before he proposed marriage to her but she had refused to accept his proposal. The development incensed the "lover boy" so much that he took the law into his own hands, attempting to subject Sa'adatu to a gruesome and painful death by burning her alive! How cruel could someone get to a woman he was in a relationship with to the point of wanting to marry her just days ago!

The illogicality of Idris's dangerous action raises a few posers. One is the question of his mental status and the stability of his mind. It is difficult to fathom how a man who is not insane would make a recourse to such a precipitate action just because his quest to seal his love for his girlfriend with marriage was turned down. Is acceptance of a marriage proposal automatic? Why was Idris not civilised enough to know that the answer to his proposal could go either way? Could it be that he did not reckon with the fact that the woman would have her own opinion regarding the proposal? It is most unlikely that the woman led him on to believe that she was going to marry him because they had dated for just seven days. And why the hurry to marry a woman he had dated for just a week?

Even if Idris believed erroneously that Sa'adatu had fallen in love with him and was ready to marry him, should he not have come to terms with the reality when the woman expressed a contrary opinion? Or could it be that the marriage proposal had motives other than the expression of love? And has Idris's action not proved that the woman was right in rejecting his proposal? Is it not evident that he is an evil-personified person that decent people should not get close to, let alone have an intimate and permanent relationship with? If Idris could treat Sa'adatu so callously when neither of them is obligated to the other, the extent of his cruelty towards her can only be imagined in the event of a misunderstanding that is not uncommon between husband and wife. Assuming but not conceding that Idris was

aggrieved over any other thing in their relationship apart from the rejection of his marriage proposal, why did he not approach the law to seek redress? Or is he oblivious of the fact that he has no right to mete out his own version of justice in his own case? Why did he resort to self-help in a most despicable and cruel manner over a matter that is patently not justiciable?

This case throws up the pernicious idea that men own women's bodies and can do what they please with them. Yet, no law permits anyone, male or female, to exercise absolute authority on, or oppress anyone based on gender. Even the religious books that subordinate wives under their husbands did not envisage that a man would want to kill his wife under any circumstances, not to talk of someone who is not yet his wife. The real emphasis is on the man leading the way to protect and provide for his family, not to seek to oppress or liquidate any of them. And in any case, in these civilised times, and in Nigeria in particular, common law takes precedent over canonical laws. Thus, getting angry because of one's marriage proposal being rejected to the point of wanting to kill the woman through arson verges on lawlessness and insanity. The laws frown on it and it is time lawless citizens did away with the inane sexist concept of male superiority feeding on the denial of the humanity of the female person. The primitive and misogynist idea that gives a fillip to the suggestion that women exist only to serve the whims and caprices of males and to satisfy their desires must stop because it is incorrect, uncivilised and unlawful.

Certainly, the baneful patriarchal culture, in a sense, encourages and feeds the distasteful idea of superiority of men to women, but that cannot be a justification for cruelty and criminality. And besides, it is antithetical to reason and law. Perhaps much more pernicious than the patriarchal culture is the absence of concrete intervening action over time by the society and the government to enforce extant laws and discourage female oppression and objectification. It is axiomatic that the law supersedes culture with respect to universal application and enforceability. We expect the government to treat the instant case with diligence and use it to teach appropriate lessons to dissuade other potential oppressors of women from this kind of queer and sick frame of mind that subjugates females to the male gender.