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MODERN COMEDY (ELS 240)

PRESENTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN THE COMIC DRAMA THE LION AND THE JEWEL BY WOLE SOYINKA AND THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA BY EFUA SUTHERLAND.

Gender determines how one is being treated, referred, and one's social responsibilities. It is the state of being male or female with reference to social or cultural difference rather than biological ones. Gender determines what is expected of a man or woman in the society. It determines what is allowed and restricted. In most cases there are conflicts and inequalities between women and men in decision making, opportunities, responsibilities assigned and activities undertaken and access to and control of resources.

Gender is a great phenomenon in the society. It's been subjected to varieties of debates and symposia the society trying to determine whether men should be treated equally, given equal rights, respect, privilege, power and authority. It was this argument that brought the term **GENDER EQUALITY AND FEMINISM**.

Gender equality and Feminism is the argument that men and women should be treated equally. This has given birth to many **advocacy group**. Here in Nigeria, notable figures like Oby Ezekwesili, Chimamanda Adichie, Okonjo Iweala et al have been a strong advocacy for **gender equality and feminism**. Whenever this issue is raised chills are sent down men's spine. Men usually come up with the cliché that **"women's education ends in the kitchen"**. The society places no importance on women's education eg, Hausa tribe in Nigeria, India etc.

Sexuality in the other hand implies sex or sexual activities. Women in most part of the world are seen, subdued and equated to a mere sex toy, baby machine, and house servants while their male counterparts are assumed to be superior. Once a woman is mentioned, what come to one's mind is beauty, sex, marriage, cooking, baby makers, pregnancy, virtue and absolute modesty. In other words, you talk about women without bearing those things listed above in the mind. The question is, can't women be other things they desire to be? In this part of society where women are denied the right to inheritance, what happens if women own lands and properties? What happens if they are treated fairly in politics? Won't absolute modesty be restored if both men and women are thought the dignity in staying virgin till marriage, won't absolute modesty be restored and the teeming premarital sexual relationship be curbed.

Let us couch our argument on the two comic African texts **LION AND THE JEWEL BY WOLE SOYINKA AND MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA BY EFUA.T. SUTHERLAND.**

From the **lion and the jewel**, Baroka was portrayed as a man with dubious character, he is the lion of the story. He is gender and sexually conscious. He is married to many wives and concubines. Baroka sees women as very inferior humans that are nothing in the society except being sex tools and object for domestic work. Irrespective of his numerous wives he still wants to add Sidi to the train. He wants to marry Sidi just for fame's sake and not for love. He wants himself to be placed side by side with Sidi in the magazine. Since Sidi is referred to as the Jewel of Ilujinle, he also wants himself to be called the Lion of Ilujinle. He also wants to marry her for her beauty. Baroka lures women to his bed with his sweet tongue (Soyinka 23) **"...the tales of Baroka's little suppers, I know all....every woman who has supped with him one night, becomes his wife or concubine the next.**

In the side of **Lakunle** the educated weakling, he is seen as someone who is dominantly attracted to **Sidi** cause of her beauty (Soyinka 8 and 9) when he is talking **Sidi** into growing up in a high heel shoes and lipsticks. **Lakunle and Baroka** are seen as selfish men. They are just after their own desires. Expecting **Sidi** to be what they want her to be and not what she chooses for herself. **Lakunle** on his civilization speech made us to know that women are meant to serve in the kitchen and also the husband's bed when he said on (Soyinka 37)...**"we'll buy saucepan for all the women....no man shall take more wives than one....that' why they are impotent too soon.."** **Lakunle irrespective of his civilization still wants women in the kitchen.** He abolished polygamy not because of gender equality but for fertility sake. **Sidi** on the other hand enjoys her life of servitude and takes pride from it. This shows how far the society has gone in enslaving women and getting them convinced that they are created to serve cause they are the weaker sex. **Lakunle** also made us to understand on (Soyinka 2) that absolute modesty is expected of every girl. Women are meant to cover their shoulders so as not to call the attention of idlers, good-for-nothing-shameless men casting their lustful eyes where they have no business, are women not also attracted by men's nakedness? I believe that what arouse boys arouse girls.

The assumption that women have smaller brains can also be seen on (Soyinka 4) when **Lakunle** said **"for as women, you have smaller brain than mine"..... the scientists have proved it. It is in my books. Women have smaller brain than men that's why they are called the weaker sex".....**

Sidi also on (Soyinka 7) made us know that much importance are placed on bride price and virginity in the African society.....**" they will say I was no virgin, that I was forced to sell my shame and marry you without a price"...** this is purely gender partiality. If women are to stay virgins till marriage I think the same should

be applicable to men and I believe that no girl loses her virginity without a boy being involved. Once a girl gets pregnant outside wedlock in the society today, the girl is expected to go and hide in shame. What happens to the boy that got her pregnant? He walks freely looking for another prey. When girls like this give birth, their names are called thrice in the church they attend in the name of religious scandal. The question is, do these girls get themselves pregnant? Why won't the names of these boys not mentioned? This simple act had led to many girls resorting to abortion when they find out that they are pregnant. Many of them end up endangering themselves with some dying at the process.

In **Marriage of Anansewa**, Efua T S tells how women are merchandised in the society. They are mere object to be sold away into marriage all in the name of **bride price**.

Ananse is seen in the drama as a dubious educated man. He is a desperado who can go beyond any length to achieve his desires. He is egocentric. The role he played in the drama is like that of a slave merchant who auctions slaves to the highest bidder. This was known through the four letters he sent to the four notable chiefs. This letter will lure these chiefs to indicating interests on his daughter **Anansewa**. By indicating interest, they would send maintenance money to him for the upkeep of **Anansewa** whom he referred in these letters as "**INTEREST**" which **figuratively meant Anansewa**. what a contempt!!!

In **Ananse's** world, women are just likened to object of interest and nothing else. **Ananse** is not after the happiness of his daughter when she eventually enters into marriage, he is after fortune this matrimonial union will offer him.

The chiefs are not also left out. Their being part of this bargain shows that they are after a young girl to add to their fold of women. None of them have seen this girl but they fell to **Ananse's** trick. This shows pervasion. What they see in **Anansewa** is her mere beauty and not her potentials. They never care on how matured she is, if she can handle marriage. They never asked her level of education and civilization. They are just after an object who would offer security to their dirty desires.

In conclusion, the two plays revolve around gender and sexuality discrimination and marginalization in the contemporary society. The both discussed women as inferior to men and object for domestic servitude. Women are meant to be taking care of the domestic chores. They can't stand out and participate in some public affairs. The more women clamour for gender equality the more they are subdued and their voices suppressed. More attention should be placed on women upbringing. They should be allowed to pursue education, political ambitions and they should be accorded as much respect as possible. Women shouldn't be regarded as inferior and weaker sex. Much credit should be given to them because no matter the oppression, the impact they make in the society can never be buried. Women contributes more in shaping the society, from changing the world's population to ensuring that

children become responsible rather than being nuisances. Women shouldn't be thought to sweep on bent position because they are women but because it will help them to sweep better. They shouldn't be thought to sit with their legs closed because they are women but because such position dignifies one's self. If covering one's head will make her uncomfortable, why force her to do so. Women tend to keep their hair for beauty unlike boys and so should be allowed to aerate this hair so as not to smell. Men should be greeted with gesture, why not do the same to women too? The society should be fair to everyone irrespective of the gender.