

## **Representation of Gender and Sexuality in Sutherland's *Marriage of Ananewa* and Moliere's *Tartuffe***

Gender is simply the state of being a male or a female. It can also refer to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. These tell us that gender has to do with masculinity and feminism. Did you just notice something? Masculinity comes before feminism in the sentence above. Why? Well, God created Adam before Eve.

Sexuality on the other hand is defined in Wikipedia as the quality of being sexual, or the way people experience and express themselves as sexual beings. This involves biological, erotic, physical, emotional, social, or even spiritual feelings and behaviors. As humans, we all have this quality in us. How we express it is what differs. We will look at how sexuality and gender are represented in Sutherland's *Marriage of Ananewa* and Moliere's *Tartuffe* respectively.

Taking a close look at *Marriage of Ananewa* exposes the fact that women are viewed as commodity. The condition of Ananewa in this text is like that of an attractive doughnut put in a transparent box to captivate everyone who passes. Since the seller of this product would always want to benefit as much as possible from the product, the highest bidder gets it. Ananewa here becomes the doughnut, Ananewa, the seller and those four chiefs, the bidders. I have always said it that being a woman is a job opportunity with your behind and ahead as assets—the bigger they are, the closer you are to establishment. Ananewa has gotten this understanding and wants to exploit it with his daughter at the centre. Being a man from the impoverished class of the society and knowing the culture and tradition of the society which he lives in, takes maximum advantage of it. If I am asked to give this book a title, I would name it *The Dowry* since it is all centered on the bride's token.

20yrs old Ananewa has been out of school for lack of fees, she acknowledges that the burden of her need is on her father. Hence he identifies and capitalizes on her need for education to manipulate her. Ananewa is subtly pressured by her father to go behind the camera for a snapshot. Ananewa then goes on a tour, covering miles with different postured pictures of Ananewa to market her. A very good advertisement. Reluctant but helpless Ananewa speaks:

“...Oh, my Father is selling me, he is selling me...I will not let you sell me like some parcel to a customer, I will select my lover myself, I will not take part in any photograph engagement.” You can see that Ananewa is now for sale. She will be yours if you have the amount required by her father. She is really beautiful. Think

about it! Attending burials in fine clothes, making open donations in church inside the gleaming collection plate, and finally being buried in a coffin drawn in a private hearse, and not the municipal are Ananse's reason for auctioning this young lady. As said earlier, he is fully aware of the tradition of the head drink ceremony and knowing fully well that her daughter can only be connubially related to one person, creates a competitive environment for her suitors to pay their way with gifts. This guy is really an innovative entrepreneur. What a nice strategy! He has a good commodity though.

One thing I like about Ananse is his trickery. He is able to avoid dowry violence (an act which is perpetrated by husbands or in-laws intending to extort a bride's family of more dowry price when the years of marriage has nibbled away the significance of the paid price. Fuelled by the rising culture of consumerism, their greed is expressed in sexual, physical and mental violence against the woman). How does he avoid this? He uses Ananewa's death trickery to find out her true lover—chief-who-is-chief. One important thing to note is that some people do not marry with love at the centre. Looting such people as they pay dowries could increase the aftermath danger. The Chief of the Mines declares that she could have brought up his children; the Chief of Sapa had hoped that she would replace his 'bitchy, ugly' wife; Togbe Klu's messengers announce that their Chief would have been happy to exploit Ananewa's secretarial skills in his business. These would have been very terrible marriage life experiences for Ananewa.

From these responses of the chiefs, we see men's view of women. They are not valued at all. Chief Sapa no longer likes his old wife and wants a replacement. He would definitely get tired of Ananewa one day if he had married her. Togbe Klu is not aspiring for Ananewa for love sake. He only wants to exploit her secretarial skill. It means that Ananewa would have become a workaholic after the marriage. Chief of the mines is only looking for someone to take care of his children. What this means is that Ananewa would not have received the satisfaction desired from a husband.

Moliere in *Tartuffe* reflects a lot on the role of men and women within a family. During this time, it was common for the man to be the head of the household and women to be submissive to the men. Men held the power in the family and made all the decisions. In this play, a man's point of view is the only view that matters. All else do not serve an importance. His lack of trust and awareness for other people's feelings and needs has caused great conflict in his family. The actions taken by Orgon and his family members express how this play

views marriage and relations between men and women. There are many differences between men and women.

Marriage as we see in this text is a decision not to be countered by the father of the house. This is exactly the role of Orgon. Women and daughters are expected to be docile. Orgon and Mariane are having a conversation about Mariane marrying Tartuffe. When Orgon asks Mariane to prove her love for him by doing anything he asks, Mariane responds by saying, "Then my obedience will be my proof." Despite the fact that her actual lover is Valere, the old man's decision has to stand. Tartuffe being a religious hypocrite would have undoubtedly been a terrible husband but since Orgon is obtuse to this fact, he is insistent in his matrimonial decision between Tartuffe and Mariane.

Something similar in these two works used above is that young ladies are viewed as properties of their father that should be given to whosoever pleases them (fathers). The opinion of the female gender is never considered. Is she even permitted to make any? This is not only an abasement but also an abuse to the sexuality and gender of the female figure.