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Gender and Sexuality: a Case of J.P Clark's *The Wives Revolt* and Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*

Every society throughout history has social and cultural practices that discriminate against people on basis of gender. The extent of such discriminatory practices differs from one social setting to another and may range from seemingly innocuous misinterpretations and stereotypes to the exclusion from participation in vital human activities and denial of fundamental rights.

Gender and sexuality have to do with a social construct that explains the biological characteristics of being a male or female and the behavioural expectation of the individual in the cultural milieu.

J.P Clark's *The Wives Revolt* is undeniably an exemplary replica of gender issues and sexuality in the social system (Textual Social System). The readers are introduced to the town crier (Okoro) who comes up with the information that stipulates how money generated from

oil company in their land (Descendants of Udemede and Meghwere) would be shared. According to Okoro's message, the money has been shared into three equal parts, one going to the elders of the town, the second to the men in all their age groups, and the third by no means the least, to the women, also in their age grades. The women folk see the declaration as a discriminatory tendency of the men folk to deprive them (women) economic benefits and also perpetrate cyclic poverty against them. Because of this, they embark on forfeiture of their domestic responsibilities like cooking, fetching water and fire wood and other domestic chores.

This goes a long way to establish the fact that the society is a patriarchal one, that is, with men at the helm of affairs, opinion makers and stakeholders who carry out activities to favour themselves and subjugate women. Men folk see themselves as people that go out to work while women stay behind at home to perform their simple domestic duties which according to them (men) they are able to perform even better in the absence of their wives.

To make matters worse, Okoro the messenger also gives the information that it is offence to own a goat(s) because the animals go along the ways scattering their dung which makes everywhere in the land stink. Looking at the above statement, the scattering of dung by goat along the paths is not enough reason to abrogate the idea of goat husbandry but the laws is intentionally given as a measure to subjugate women who are the people that own goats in the land. Okoro's statement points exactly men's intention of trying to ban ownership of goats. She (Koko-Okoro's wife) says;

Koko: But, oh, no, all you want to do is get on top of us women. There you have your pigs prowling all over the place unmolested, but because you hold the swine in common trust and sell it at inflated prices to Ugheli people at times of their festival, while goats are household animals kept by us women. You protect one animal and expect the other out of town.

The crux of the matter is that men want to be at the top in terms of wealth accumulation and economic buoyancy. It is also worthy of note that the pigs are emblematic of men and the goats that of women. Just as pigs grow at where goats starve, in the same way women are subjugated by their male counterparts, forms plausible reason for gender inequality, but for women, it is high time they woke up to fight for their rights and to something meaningful to remedy the situation before it gets out of hand. To expose the extent of men's upper hand (influence) against the women folk. Koko puts it this way;

Koko: You are no better than the pigs that with his snout digs up our cassava uproot our yams before either is ripe for harvest, and in spite of all this havoc it causes, still enjoys full sway over our lives.

As a result of the obnoxious laws which are passed by men to favour themselves and subjugate women, the women summon and embark on public protest march against the ugly trend. They (women) swear not to accept the situation in good faith. They march to Idanga. When Okoro and his friend Idama go home, they are surprised to see that Okoro's wife has left, which means that the responsibility of the wife is now to be performed by the husband. The wives leave their husbands and the domestic duties for them but unfortunately, what Idama and Okoro see as simple domestic duties are more difficult than the ones they do. For instance, when the two fellows want to cook, they suffer a lot of difficulties including two of them kneeling down to blow the fire and in the process giving themselves head butts and their hands full of ashes. Even when Okoro goes to the well to draw water he confessed that it is not a straight forward thing to do. This scene pinpoints that every kind of work has dignity attached to it, be it domestic or not domestic ones. Okoro also experienced the ordeal of trying to lure his child to sleep in the absence of the wife. Women work diligently but are not seen because they mainly do so at home but that does not negate the fact that they contribute greatly to the development of their community (Erhuwaren). They all yelled at and battered

by their husbands sometimes without cogent reasons but apart from them nobody does what they do in the society.

However, in the play the structurally and gender imbalance linger for a period of time but women are able to protest and bring about revolution of the obnoxious rule by introducing educational system which will bring about for gender equality and sensibility in the land. This suggests that men's attitude to women in the text is just a social construct and stereotype because the duties they perform contribute substantially to the development of the society (Erhaware) irrespective of what men claim. They are able of achieving what men can achieve.

In the same vein, the issues of gender and sexuality also comes to limelight in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husbands has Gone Mad Again*. This time around it is a matter of a man of a family (Lejoka Brown) who resorts to marrying as many wives as possible not necessarily for love but for political ambition.

Prior to the return of Liza, Lejoka Brown is the god of his family. He acquires mama Rashoda from his late brother which he tells Okonkwo his friend and marries Sikira, in order to secure women's votes having known that the young lady is a daughter of the president of the Nigerian union of market women. He has planned to settle her with money and send her away after election.

Though they live together under the same roof, Lejoka Brown's communications with the wives are mostly in the form of commands and orders which they unreservedly respond "yes my lord". The women have neither voice nor choice, neither ambition nor power and are completely dependent on their husband.

The expectation of the coming of a new wife puts Lejoka Brown to tension because the expected woman is not like the other crockets of wives as he calls them, thus he presents it this way to his friend (Okonkwo) I'll....all at once under his very roof! But here i am, with only two little crickets expecting one more canary, and can't just pick her up by the arm and say to her; woman forgot to tell you..... (P.28). Lejoka Brown is agitated about the coming of Liza because the young lady unlike the other wives is undeniably empowered by formal education. She is trained as medical personnel with a Kenyan scholarship.

Liza's presence in Lejokja Brown's house exposes the enslavement of the other women. She refuses to be doomed to becoming one of the sacrificial slaves in the house in the name of a wife. She (Liza) mingles with the members of the family; she helps Sikira to be a house girl, teaches Polycarp the skill of cage-making and also shows mama Rashoda how to boost her business. The fact that those women hold tenaciously to what Lejoka Brown says is an indication to subjugated position of women who lack the traditional family breaks up because the husbands fails to make necessary adjustments to accommodate the new woman. He uses violence and intimidation to force a new woman into an obnoxious old traditional family.

It is obvious that major Lejoka is extremely patriarchal which when the disposition reaches its climax puts dislocations to the cordiality of the family and pushes Sikira out of the family to embrace a favourable atmosphere in the public life. Owing to the severe lifestyle of Major Brown to his wives and by using them for political ambitions, the women are objectified and Sikira resists the ugly manifestation in a more radical and remoras way than any of the wives.

Finally, it is quite indisputable according to the two comic works that there is imbalance as regards men's relationship with their female counterparts but does not imply

that women should be equal with their male counterpart, however, the principle of moderation should be glorified and unnecessary and brutal encroachment either gender's right shunned for actualisation of societal peace and respect for gender.