

WOMEN STRUGGLING FOR THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN KENYAN SOCIETY:MARGARET OGOLA

¹Koravi Naga Naveen Kumar, ²S. Prasanthi Sri

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Adikavi Nannaya University, MSN Campus,
Kakinada District, Andhra Pradesh.

²Principal and Professor, Department of English, Adikavi Nannaya University, MSN Campus,
Kakinada Dist. Andhra Pradesh

ABSTRACT: The author of this paper offers a fresh perspective on African women fighting with men in this struggle. The researcher aims to demonstrate that Ogola departs from the traditional path of women being subdued, inferior, and abused in The River and the source by showing them as bold, intelligent, self-assertive, and cooperative while demonstrating a great deal of love, respect, and understanding with men. The study will also follow the struggles of women throughout a number of generations against all the hardships they face inside Kenyan society. Here, the womanist aspect of the female characters personalities will be highlighted by analyzing how they interact with their male counterparts in their stories. The stereotypical image of African women is challenged by the womanist approach. By closely examining the text, the study also explores the author's different perspectives of integration, solidarity, and complementarities between the two genders. She uses a range of literary techniques, such as characterization, symbols, and foreshadowing, to further support her vision of a new integrated society and to convey the novel's theme.

KEYWORDS: African, Feminism, Struggles, Kenyan Society, Ogola

I. INTRODUCTION

Male dominance remains a defining aspect of the modern society. It is a world in which women are oppressed and reduced to a very low status. The primary goal of Feminism is to protect female members of any society from suffering and degradation. Women are also marginalized subjugated, and oppressed as a result of their considered unequal status with men. As a result, women writers have taken on the responsibility of protecting women's rights by supporting Feminism as a movement whose primary goal is to enhance, defend, and protect women and their rights in a world defined by phallic dominance. Feminism developed as a movement in the West to defend women and demand equal rights with men. As a result, feminism has taken on many various forms, all of which are focused on increasing the status of women in society despite their external differences. Generally speaking, feminism originated in Europe as a movement to support European women before expanding to other parts of the world. Depending on the perspective from which a feminist writer views the status of women in a particular society, it has taken on various types[1]. Radical feminism, African feminism, Black feminism, Islamic feminism, implicit feminism, explicit feminism, and many more are among them. Like in every other region of the world, women suffer in Africa, but because they live in a culture that has long been controlled by the imperial force, their sufferings are more serious. Living in Africa under a colonial or postcolonial system has made women's suffering worse and their situations more difficult. Women in Africa experience different levels of suffering. Socially, they suffer since they live

5855

in an environment that is dominated by male chauvinism as daughters, sisters, wives, and widows. [2]

Long-term sustainable social and economic growth of any given society depends on providing chances for all genders to actively participate in social and economic welfare [3]. It is possible that women's exclusion from social and economic activities is reflected in failures that would effect economic choices and growth, given that women make up more than half of Kenya's population and economic potential. Thus, social stability and economic growth are the outcomes of women's empowerment in any given community. Because without the participation of both genders, no society can reach its full potential. Any society's socio-cultural concept of gender is impacted by social changes[4].For this reason, a new feminism is essential to further the cause of women. Concerning the predicament of African women, and Kenyan women in particular, a non-traditional point of view is urgently required.

Stratton's demands that gender be represented equally in African literature. In addition, he calls for women's independence and liberation. Stratton suggests that contemporary African fiction should follow a different set of literary traditions than those found in the male literary tradition [5]. These tendencies include a tendency to identify women with tradition and the use of themes like redemption through motherhood or return to the village to ease narrative tension in the story. Literary conventions in contemporary African fiction should stray from these tendencies. For example, this type of literature can change men's strongly established perceptions of women by rewarding the friend who challenges patriarchal authority [6].

II. Women Claiming Their Rightful Place in Society Ogola's Vision of the Kenyan Society

In general, Akoko presents a positive example of a widow and wife should be like. Once more, Ogola is keen to give Akoko multiple roles in order to present her as an example in which to live in a society dominated by men without being subjugated. In a tirade against the chauvinistic Luo tradition, Akoko chooses to be her brother-in-law's wife. She sees a path to self-actualization apart from the standard when she rejects tradition. By presenting a complaint to the District Office, she eventually is prevalent against Otieno in their battle. She succeeds in giving her grandson back the chieftom chair. According to the story, "Akoko came back to her village with more than just a victory for her infant grandson." She had given her family new perspectives that revealed a different world and the potential of going in a different direction. She becomes a confident woman who can create a new perception of the African woman after fighting Otieno in this manner.

Because of the difficulties and difficulties that Akoko has overcome, she is now strong and confident enough to make decisions for her family's life now and in the future. Akoko makes the decision to go from her married community to an entirely new one, contradicting Luo traditions. She moves into her brother's home from her husband's clan. In addition, her brother Oloo goes to her help, expressing appreciation for everything she has achieved. She makes the decision to become a Christian and live among strangers. The catechist there values her behavior so much that she is asked for advice on church-related issues.

Adopting Christianity as a Means of Empowering the African Woman

She leaves her husband's clan and settles into her brother's house. Her brother Oloo also offers to help her and expresses appreciation for all that she has achieved. She decides to live among strangers and become a Christian. Her behavior is so valued by the catechist there that she is frequently called for advice on matters related to the church.

Nyabera as a Womanist

Akoko and Chief Kembo have four children total, including Nyabera. Nyabera stays behind to carry on the legacy of Akoko and Kembo and maintain their lineage following the deaths of the three brothers. Nyabera increases in Kasumu by her mother and her nephew Aluor. As Akoko's daughter, Nyabera receives many of her characteristics from her mother. Nyabera has grown up to be a stunning young woman who attracts a number of suitors. However, she agrees to marry only the young guy who she believes is the most right for her. Despite Okumu's lack of finances, she agrees to marry him. After her daughter gets married, Akoko gives her a large herd of sheep and cattle to help her settle down. Nyabera enjoys a happy maternal life filled with love and respect for Okumu. Life does not, however, come without challenges. She is fortunate to have several male children, but she loses them before they reach infancy. Elizabeth, her sole remaining daughter, is named Awiti. When Okumu passes away at an early age, Nyabera and Elizabeth are left without enough money to support them. Like her mother, Nyabera has demonstrated throughout her life with Okumu the importance of the woman's role in a good family life, making her another example of a positive African woman. Nyabera represents an example of a determined woman who emphasizes the importance of gender integration through her life with Okumu.

The passing of Okumu signifies a turning point in Nyabera's life. She is left without adequate resources to support herself and her children. She's a widow. Ogomo, the cousin of her husband, receives her and is married. Once more, this marriage will collapse because Ogomo's first wife is jealous of her, forcing the husband to file for divorce from Nyabera. Due of her status as a widow, Nyabera encounters numerous challenges on many levels. Nyabera makes the same decision as her mother to give up her people's traditions. She refuses to remain at the matrimonial house of her dead husband. She is at ease beginning her own life with her daughter by her side. She sets off on a quest to define herself. Her soul and body are troubled; she searches to find peace. She "finds an alternative to her dreary existence as a widow...She breaks free of the prescribed domesticity," as Odhiambo points [7].

Once more, Nyabera looks for a solution to her troubled soul, which she discovers in accepting Christianity. She discovers hope and fulfillment in Christianity. She continues to want to satisfy her need for more children, though. "Children are security, laughter, and comfort". Children are the most important thing. Despite being a widow, she makes the decision to live a free life for the remainder of her days and come to terms with who she is. Marina is the new name given to her. They decide to settle at Aluor Mission together, with her mother following them. There, she gives her daughter and the new faith her entire life.

Here, it is obvious that embracing Christianity as a belief system that offers spiritual comfort and consolation to troubled souls is one way Ogola empowers women. Christianity is a means of integrating family bonds and empowering African women. Here, Ogola sees a society maintained and regulated by Roman Catholic values. Nyabera (Maria) teaches her daughter the Catholic faith in order to give her authority.

Despite being left mentally and physically troubled she discovers that Christianity offers her a solution. Nyabera and her mother both take the same stand against societal conventions. By moving from what seems to be a passive acceptance of their situation to one of questioning and being willing to make their own decisions about a way to live, they reject confinement. "When it came to making decisions, she equated her mother," the story states. As a result, Nyabera and her mother are presented as independent and strong enough to reject traditions that have outlived their usefulness.

Elizabeth and Mark Demonstrate the New Vision of Ogola's Womanist Approach

Both Elizabeth's and Mark's families approve of their marriage. They live a happy and harmonious life together. However, there is some distraction for the wider family as a result of the first baby's death. Elizabeth needs three years to become conceived once more. Of course, Mark's mother treats this delay with contempt. Like Chief Kembo, Mark goes to urge his mother to leave him and his wife alone since he never feels like he can accept her judgment of Elizabeth. Mark acts in this way because he believes that a wife and a husband are both necessary for having a child. In this particular case, Mark departs from the established tradition around maternal life. Elizabeth, on the other hand, exhibits a great deal of tenacity and the inherited that she acquired from her grandmother. She gives off the impression of being a free-thinking individual who does not strictly follow tradition.

According to Ogola, marriage is not something that women do in order to follow traditions. Instead, people need to be strong about their right to choose between being single or getting married. Despite not being impacted by traditional constraints, Elizabeth is shown to value and appreciate married life. She considers her grandmother as an example of the way to conduct herself. She comes across as sensitive, tenacious, intelligent, understanding, enduring, and flexible. Mark, though, comes out as an extremely supportive husband or wife. They lead a stable, loving life together, supported by their children. Overall, there was happiness in the Sigu family. There was lots of simply costing, unpretentious love as well as almost plenty money. They shoulder the family's responsibilities together without hesitation as a couple. Mark is proud to be his partner and take care of the house duties that other males in his community never perform. He believes that men should understand that taking care of children is not a shaming activity that should be hidden and that men should be the ones to handle household chores. In this case, Ogola reinforces her Womanist belief that marriage is a commitment made equally by men and women, with neither taking advantage of the other. Ogola opposes husband-wife separatism in this instance. "Ogola rejects separatism between men and women," as Simatai puts it. She clearly supports for the two genders to coexist as members of the same society.

Ogola consistently crafts a story that emphasizes the complementary qualities of the two genders. She emphasizes the importance that it is for men and women to play equal roles in society's development. "Ogola's narrative paints a picture of equality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making, at all levels," as Cathryne Cherop points out. She calls for women to be included in society and supports gender equality and the liberty of women. In order to examine these changes, *The River and The Source* represents women as sharing and participating in family matters with their male counterparts. The novel focuses a unique female performance by giving women access to possibilities that advance their social, cultural, and economic status. Ogola allows Akoko, her daughter, and her granddaughter to create new identities in the novel so they can become more authentic versions of themselves.

Women progress from self-awareness to assurance and self-confidence in *The River and the Source*. Ogola provides upon them different levels of bravery, endurance, and capability. By providing them with equal educational possibilities, she empowers them and allows them to participate actively in public life. According to Jose, "women become more aware of the difference between a country's development rate and gender parity as demonstrated by the educational possibilities granted to both male and female children as a result of education. The constructive and upbeat attitude that Wandia Magu has toward her family and society is a strong indication of the beneficial effects of formal education. Education has made it possible for women to work with men to establish a new, new society.

Wandia and Aoro as a Womanist Couple as Achieve Ogola's Womanist Vision of Integrated Society

Wandia Magu is a member of a community that is not Luo. She is able to adjust to the Luo, nevertheless, and spend the remainder of her life there. Ogola becomes activated to introduce Wandia as the third generation of Akoko's line, and she is just as bold and assertive as Akoko. Wandia is a student that belongs to a different group of students. She demands that group members be addressed by their names during class, not by their gender. She is able to succeed in the areas she studies. Additionally, Wandia outperforms all of the male students in her academic category and consistently rates at the top of her class. Her conduct with others in the community has earned her known as "a tough lady." Wandia is a duplicate of Akoko the grandmother.

Wandia is a beautiful and intelligent young lady who attracts a lot of attention. She falls love for Aoro Sigu, Mark Amtony's and Elizabeth's son. When it comes to marriage and maternal life, she is audacious and assertive enough to break from the norm. She considers Aoro as her ideal husband and goes to ask him to marry her rather than waiting for him to make the proposal. Wandia, a strong character and pioneering spirit, defies traditional norms by exhibiting unconventional behavior. She exhibits many qualities that Ogola wishes to highlight in order to present her as a model womanist figure who can significantly improve both the status of women in the community and throughout modern Kenyan society.

Despite coming from very different backgrounds, Wandia and Aoro manage to overcome all challenges to build a family whose members all play important parts in society after being married. They are blessed with six children and live in harmony. Aoro considers Wandia to be a caring mother and wife who demonstrates responsibility for her work and family. He says how happy he is to have her as his wife. "I am extremely lucky." She is really good at working with the children. She is able to contribute to her family's and society's financial well-being since she receives an income. She exhibits excellent ability to take professional responsibility for her work as a medical doctor. She is the most loving mother who has great energy and vigilance in the home. "The relationship between Wandia and Sigu is likely to raise eyebrows because she is a Kikuyu and he is a Luo," as Agnes Magu notes. Wandia is also able to build strong bonds with the Sigus in spite of the fact that they speak different languages and have different backgrounds. However, the Sigus make every effort to accept her as one of them. She has the ability to go across the boundaries of her tribe. With Wandia, Aoro's daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, Aoro's mother, develops a close bond with her. In this period of time, they become closer as she continues to appreciate Wandia's differences. Elizabeth additionally informs her son that he is to have Wandia as a wife, expressing her appreciation for Wandia as a mother-in-law.

Wandia and Aoro as a Model Womanist Figures

Once again, Wandia exhibits exceptional abilities at the professional level. Wandia never gives any attention, even though being a medical doctor is a difficult job that is primarily performed by men. She has a strong sense of determination and demonstrates commitment to her own choices. She has the qualifications and improve to pursue postgraduate studies. She receives a scholarship to spend a year studying in America. She has six children already. However, Aoro respects her endeavor and perseverance and supports her as an expression of support for their family. Wandia is first reluctant to go, but she is able to go because of her husband's support. Wandia's husband undoubtedly provides her with the support she needs to succeed and advance to the position of head of the Department of Pathology. In addition, Aoro's mother encourages Wandia to leave the children with him and offers her son support. "We will all step in to help him with the children," she says.

Wandia is appreciative for her husband's and his family's support, of course. She is grateful for Aoro's support and recognizes it. It helps the family become more integrated and solidarity. They both understand the value that the other is to the health and happiness of the whole family. Ogola's Womanist ideal of the African woman is represented in Wandia, a role model for young women. She introduces her as a woman who understands "the true destiny of a woman: to live life to the full and fight to the end." Thus, Ogola demonstrates Wandia's ability and provides her a voice while living a harmonious and integrated life with her husband. Aoro's love for her is so strong that he is completely linked to her, much like a drawing man is to the sea. He strongly believes that his fundamental concept of himself as a man is directly related to how she perceives him".

III. CONCLUSION

By taking a different route and presenting her vision of the just situation of women in general and African women in particular, Ogola breaks the dead lock and hits the nail on the head when she adopts the Womanist approach to portraying the main female characters in *The River and The Source*. This perspective is predicated on an all-encompassing picture of society that includes males and females equally. By using the stories of Akoko and Kembo, as well as Aoro and Wandia, to demonstrate men and women who have committed their entire lives to one another, Ogola has been successful in reinforcing her womanist vision in *The River and The Source*. Ogola envisions a community that includes both men and women. She envisions a society that can be reconstructed and reformed. She imagines a society where everyone, regardless of gender, respects and understands each other. It is a world in which all genders must be included rather than excluded in order for people to reach their full potential. It is a world in which men and women can work together to bring about positive social change. The representation of the modern African woman provides fertile ground for Hudson-Weems' Womanism theory. By providing role models of men and women who understand, appreciate, collaborate, and show respect, Ogola has demonstrated the Hudson-Weeds perspective in the river and its source.

IV. REFERENCES

- [1] 10.Kumar, T. (2021). The culture of patriarchy, gender bias, and class discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5 (S1), 60 -69.<https://doi.org/10.37028/lingcure.v5nS1.1314>
- [2] Liang, W., Akhter, S., & M., Kumar, T. (2022). Relationship between unhappy musicians, resistance toward innovation and uncreative music products: psychological security as moderator. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13:922404.DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.922404>.
- [3] Khan, R. J. I., Kumar, T., Supriyatno, T., & Nukapangu, V. (2021). The phenomenon of Arabic-English translation of foreign language classes during the pandemic. *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning*. Vol. 4 No. 3 (October). 570-582. DOI: 10.18860/ijazarabi.v4i3.13597
- [4] Kumar, T., & Supriyatno, T. (2021). Revisiting the theory of translation: Investigating the translation *Divan-e Hafiz*. *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning*. Vol. 4 No. 2 . 457-467. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v4i2.12036>
- [5] Chelule, June Chebet (2020). *Deconstruction of Literary History in Margret Ogola's The River and The Source*. Dept. of Literature. University of Nairobi.
- [6] Benyo. A., Supriyatno, T., Borah A. &, Kumar, T., & (2022). Is It Justified To Use Arabic In English Class? Efficacy Of English-Arabic Bilingual Teaching For Teaching English At Elementary Level. *Ijaz Arabi Journal of Arabic Learning*. Vol. 5 No. 1. 165-173. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18860/ijazarabi.v5i1.15490>
- [7] Odhiambo, T. (2006). Writing alternative womanhood in Kenyan in Margret Ogola's *The River and The Source*. *African Identities*, 4(2).