
Feminism in the poem *My Husband Tongue is Bitter* by Okot P'Bitek

Madhumitha R, M.A English

Mr. Joshua L, M.A., B.Ed.

Don Bosco college (co_ed) Yelagiri Hills.

**Paper Received on 08-11-2023, Accepted on 05-12-2023,
Published on 07-12-23; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2023.8.4.160**

Abstract:

The word culture is so an important word that is playing a vital role in society. Every culture is respected and followed only by their people and every culture stands against one another by their people. The culture itself is something that is been created and they still believe that those things should be followed with no reason. The poem *My Husband Tongue is Bitter* by Okot P' Bitek a Ugandan poet who most of the time concentrates on his tradition and culture after colonization. This poem is actually taken from the collection of poems called Song of Lowino and it has been translated and widely read by the nations. The researcher is willing to apply the theory of feminism where the main female character Lowino is not given respect and is treated well by her husband itself. Still, people believe that women have to face only the kitchen and they are meant only to sacrifice their happiness for the people in the family. This is what has been followed for years and centuries and is still believed to be followed. The researcher would like to bring out the effects of colonization on the colonized and how

women are not given the right place in the family and society. How education is an important cause that affects women's status in society and how the same culture and practices stand against their life in society are going to be the main concepts in this article. I believe that the author also would have written this poem supporting women's life in the world.

Keywords: Colonization, Feminism, women's Education, and Cultural Practices against women in society.

Okot P' Bitek is very important and we'll know a writer of Africa and mostly known as a Ugandan poet who puts strong words that portray the real life of his people in Ugandan. This poem was written and published in the year 1966 and then translated into many languages and widely read. The poet wanted to bring out the effects and sufferings that they had after the European Colonization and what were the things that changed at and after the time of colonization.

The hegemony of European Culture was forced on them and some were forced to follow and some like Oval volunteered to adapt to the Western culture. This poem is all about how oval disrespects his own culture and stands against their people and his family. The European culture mesmerized him with their education and civilization and made Okal marry another woman called Clementine who looks like a European girl but is not. Polygamy was also accepted by those people which made him leave his first wife Lowino who was black and marry Clementine who looked fair.

Most of the countries here were colonized sometimes. Some escaped and some still would not come out of it. All these happen only when cultural hegemony is done. Every colonized country was forced to do things that influenced their own culture on the other for no reason. In this poem, the main character Okal is been influenced by the European culture and betrays his own. This is where Lowino wants to support her husband's culture and how she is been ill-treated and killed with Okal words is pictured in the poem. The words are strong and effective in the poem which brings out how the colonizer's thoughts were towards Colonized people and that is shown clearly in the words of Okal.

“My husband abuses me together with my parents:

He tells terrible things about my mother

And I am so ashamed!”

These lines picture how a woman is been treated in her husband's house. Every parent believes that their daughter will be happy in the mother-in-law's house but only they know what they face and how their feeling is not even taken into consideration by her husband. These lines portray how Lowino was tortured by her husband. The author has used sensational word abuse which means he has spoken something about her mother in a bad way. Even today men do not only shout at their wives in bad words but they speak about their mothers badly. They shout at their mother for no reason and there are bad words which are towards mothers which some of us still use today even though we are educated. Some people hurt their mothers because they are the only person who does even thing bad to their children and who remains the same in love and affection towards their family. A woman does so much to her family but what do they give in return? They give only pain that breaks their heart into pieces which can be never made up again.

“The competition for a man's love
Is fighting at the cooking place
When he returns from the field or the hunt.
You win him with a hot bath
And sour porridge.”

Yes, I agree that a woman's love is shown in the kitchen room. Her love is expressed in the way she cooks,

and in the way she serves her husband when he returns home from the field. She gives them porridge gives them a bath and tells them that every day she lives for him, not others. But what do men do, they only disrespect and ill-treat others, they don't even consider her words in the family. He is been humiliated every day by her husband and then by her son. No one gives an important place to women in the family but she does everything because everyone is important to her. This is been followed generation after generation that women are nothing only men can and should role the family. Women are not even worthy to talk out before another man in society even if they talk their mouths are shut by their mother-in-law or by the other members of the family. Then how do they think that women can come out for their rights?

"I have never been able to find out previously what feminism is: I only know people call me a feminist whenever I express the sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat"

This is a very important feminist quote given by the British author Rebecca West which tells that women are seen in society as the weaker sex. The culture has created and followed that only women should cry and express their emotions and sentiments but men should not put

down their tears and it is taught to men that their emotions should be expressed on women as anger. It is taught at a very small age itself that only girls should cry and boys should not. Girls should follow so many restrictions that boys don't. All these should be changed first only then society will change. What is the main cause that treats a woman to be like that in her husband's family? The main cause is that only men are given first preference to be educated. Only men should lead the family after their father's death. All these are implemented in a man when he is very young or he sees the society and builds up himself according to the culture that is been followed. Even today in villages girls are not educated for they are only to bear children and do the household work. When the parents are not giving importance to the girl child how do we have to expect them from the husband's house?

Nowadays only when women are educated, they are given respect, at times they don't even have that. All these are happening because the society's culture is followed like that and if something different happens, the society is unable to accept the changes and difference that takes place around us. Most of the time the cultural practices that are practiced in society are against women. Likewise, women should not go to work, especially at night, women should not talk to people loudly, they should not laugh loudly, they should not enter the temple when they are in the mensuration cycle and

they should not even serve food at this time, women should not wear this kind of dress, women should not marry after her husband's death, but none of these are told men to follow because they are men.

Even in the Bible, it is told that man was created and for him, Eve was created. When the holy scriptures itself portray that man to be first then what would the society will follow? In Hindu culture, Kali is a female goddess who is a God of destruction. How women can destroy life they only give life and do good to people. That is why I say that culture and religion is the main enemy of women which restricts and does not allow them to do things as they want. All these can be changed only if we build our children by teaching them what is equality and how both males and females are equal in the hands of the law.

Okay P' Bitek has used so powerful words to express his people's

feelings, especially women, and how their culture is been humiliated by his people with the influence of foreigners are some of the main concepts and ideas that are implemented in the poem *My Husband Tongue is Bitter*.

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How to cite this article?

K.Eedaiah,“ Feminism in the poem My Husband Tongue is Bitter by Okot P'Bitek”
Research Journal Of English (RJOE)8(4), PP:161-164,2023,
DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2023.8.4.164