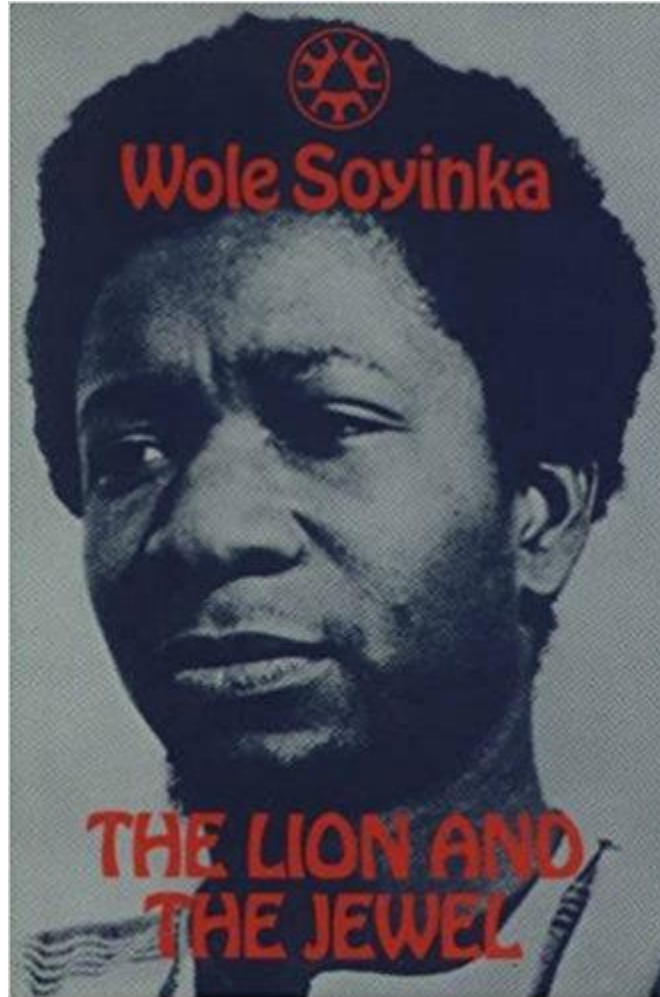


**Cultural Aspects in Wole Soyinka's *Lion And The Jewel***

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**Abstract**

Wole Soyinka is a prolific Nigerian dramatist, poet, novelist, autobiographer, scriptwriter and critic. Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, he is in the forefront of African writers today, along with Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiang'o. His works reveal the major conflict in the post-colonial concepts like domination, suppression, and search for identity.

This paper is an attempt to bring out how his play *'The Lion and the Jewel'* characterized by culture conflict, rude comedy and love, where the old culture represented by the uneducated people in Ilunjunle, led by Baroka, Sidi and the rest, conflict with the new culture led by Wole Soyinka, *The Lion and the Jewel*, domination, suppression, culture, identity Lakunle, who is educated, school teacher by profession is influenced by the western ways. The central idea of this study is to show of how Soyinka through his themes, plot and characters finds out the conflict between the cultures, further the study concludes by proving to the world thoughts and condition of culture.

**Keywords:** Wole Soyinka, *The Lion and the Jewel*, domination, suppression, culture, identity

### **Culture and Tradition**

Soyinka deals with the Yoruba culture in this play. Yoruba people have certain rules and regulation in their life style regarding their religion, laws, marriage, community etc. Yoruba is one of the most popular Nigerian cultures. The concept of bride price is one of the cultures of Yoruba, which was often expressed by the female protagonist Sidi. It is strictly followed by the people of Illunjile especially by the females their virginity before marriage.

Culture and tradition is strictly followed by the Yoruba people. Colonialism is not only pain and sufferings forced by the colonizers to the natives. Every character in this play faced the suppression, oppression, especially, Sidi the jewel of this play suffered a lot to maintain her virginity throughout the play, from the starting scene she demands for bride price in order to enhance and prove that she is a fresh and virgin girl. Sadiku as a first wife of Baroka searched a wife for her own husband, even though he is lost his manhood. Though she portrayed as a character who is very much interested in searching a girl for her husband as a women. This situation torments her lot which is not exposed by Soyinka.

### ***The Lion And The Jewel***

In the very first scene, itself the conversation between Lakunle and Sidi reveals that Lakunle is a person who is totally impressed by Western culture. Lakunle as a village school

teacher traces the influence of Britain, who colonized several European countries. His style of dressing portrays his intention that he wants to be a more civilized person. In each and every scene of this play Lakunle's appearance delivers some information that he has planned to make this uncivilized village into civilized village. Lakunle has a deep love on Sidi. He expressed his love for her several times. Sidi continuously demands for bride-price. She thinks that it is the only treasure of a girl to analyze her whether she is virgin or not. This is one of the well-known Nigerian cultures a man should pay some amount as bride price to whom he marries.

### **Lakunle**

Lakunle as a civilized person refused, when Sidi demands for bride-price by saying that it is an old foolish tradition followed by the Yoruba people. He explains that we have to change ourselves according to the modern world. But Sidi is very much strong in her decision. She revealed that she will not marry a person who rejects bride-price. Lakunle scolds Sidi for showing her cleavage and he warns her not to carry a water pot on her head.

Lakunle always believes in a western concept of love. When Sadiku approaches Sidi for her marriage with Baroka, Lakunle nervously warns Sidi not to accept this proposal. Lakunle's interest on 'love marriage' explains the westernized culture of marriage. He also explains that 'love doesn't need money to show the power of it'. He thinks this culture of collecting money from a groom is the culture of bribing for love in a relationship. Lakunle's thinks that he does not want to pay bride price which is similar to buying a property or something else.

I have told you, and I say it again.

I shall marry you today, next week.

Or any day you name.

But my bride price must first be paid....

a laughing stock? Well, do as you please

But Sidi will not make herself

a cheap bowl for the village spit....

They will say I was no virgin. (93-94)

## **Tradition and Modernity**

Lakunle explains her about his view on bride price. Lakunle does not want to follow the culture and tradition of African society in customs of marriage. He deliberately loves the tradition of modern society. Even Sidi has some interest on him; on the other hand she cannot leave her tradition. She says, “They will say I was no virgin. That I was forced to sell my shame and marry you without a price” (94).

The head of the village or the bale Baroka is not only a ‘lion’ but also his character portrays a cunning egoistic character like a ‘fox’. He deliberately expressed his urge for new wife. And also he claims that he needs to marry a woman then and there. On the other hand he cannot tolerate his photograph in a magazine shared with one of the village common latrines and on the other side ‘a normal girl’s reputation is higher than him’ when Sidi appears in a front page of that magazine. This appearance of Sidi’s photograph in a magazine made her to enhance her reputation. In order to destroy her reputation and to feel her physical body Baroka, a sixty years old man planned to make Sidi as his wife.

The old generation always focused to customs, traditions, and old aged culture, on the other hand ,the new generation found this old tradition is useless and it does not has any meaning ,because they stick to modern and high-tech life . Same situations occurs in this play, Lakunle, a modern school teacher, tries hard to turn his village into modern town using modern lifestyle. But, he failed in this process because there is a conflict between him and Baroka, a representative of old tradition. It is fact, that a modern thinking people will not show more interest or accept the old traditions very easily. They will always stick to modernity in every stage of their life. It is not that they cannot live in old tradition but they need to change the society, it is their optimistic thought to change the world. Communication is used to learn other’s culture and traditions.

## **Difficulty with Acceptance of Other Cultures**

But, when we analyze the play in a deeper level, we must clearly learn that people cannot take other culture easily. Even though the conflict rose between two cultures, the main reason for

this conflict is they cannot come out from their own culture. Lakunle's sight on old culture and tradition is different from the Baroka's sight on his own old culture.

Thus, the difference in their points of view begins the great conflict between them. So it is quite different and difficult to adapt into the culture which is not acceptable by our own soul. Thus Lakunle cannot leave his modern thought and Baroka cannot take into the new culture and tradition.

Culture is the totality of human actions in a given time and place. People are creating of their culture. Culture gives people their identity and dignity. It is every day expression and future goal.

### **Conflicts in Culture**

This play is totally characterized by conflicts in culture. The lion Baroka has two intentions one is to win the village jewel Sidi, as a wife and other one is to win Lakunle's intention in making Illunjile as a civilized village. This play is about a beautiful young girl Sidi who is in a central position to choose her husband between young chap, Lakunle and the old village chief, Baroka.

This is the major conflict in the character Sidi who struggle to live in a Yoruba tradition and also throughout the play she struggle hard to save her virginity. Here, Soyinka reveals that Sidi's identity was totally taken by the village bale. Even Lakunle who loves her a lot fails to respect her point view in virginity. At first she makes fun of the village bale, at last she surrenders herself under him due to her lost virginity. Soyinka raised a question on Sidi in her last decision whether she will marry Baroka a representative of old culture or she will choose Lakunle, a representative of new culture.

At last, Sidi's decision on choosing her husband gives unexpected conclusion. Even Lakunle's agrees to marry Sidi after known that she was seduced by Baroka, but Sidi refused Lakunle and gives her hand to Baroka, (the lion).

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