

**Baroka as Lion; Sidi as Jewel with Reference to  
Wole Soyinka's *Lion and the Jewel***

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**Abstract**

The present study makes an immense attempt to bring out how far Wole Soyinka has brought originality in his play with the title that Baroka as a Lion and Sidi as a Jewel in the play *Lion and the Jewel*. Further, the study portrays the standard of African writer Wole Soyinka. Baroka is considered as a real lion in this play. Sidi is considered as a real jewel, then the play has a comic end with the decision of the playwright Wole Soyinka who further points out Barako as lion, the reason is, Barako still stands strongly in his position to win the heart of Sidi and prepares some monkey tricks and fox techniques at the end of the play. Barako wants to break all the obstacles that surrounded Sidi that this is made by local school teacher Lakunle who is the initial lover to Sidi. She is not only a woman, but in the high imagination of the author, she is given a title that she is a precious jewel for the lion Baroka. Lion is the king of the forest. Likewise, Barako is the king of his village. If this lion wins the jewel, there will be he crowned as a real king. Although Baroka, the lion married, he uses some strategy to marry Sidi, the jewel.

**Keywords:** Wole Soyinka, African Culture, Society, Character of Baroka, Character of Sidi.

**Introduction**

*The Lion and the Jewel* is a comedy play of Wole Soyinka. The story is set in a village called Ilujinle. Three main characters are only leading the whole play interestingly. The protagonist of the play is Baroka, who is considered as lion and another important character of the play is Lakunle, a school teacher. Baroka is the village chief who wants to break the modern ideas of the school teacher Lakunle. Sidi, the jewel of the village, who makes both Barako and Lakunle fall in love with her through her immense beauty. Barako is a craftsman. Lakunle is an arrogant. But Sidi is innocent. The play is clearly portraying about the love and its affection of men. Wanton love of Barako defeats the nuptial love of Lakunle.

Barako would like to lean aside tradition and its old custom. But Lakunle wants to change that tradition in to modernism. Barako is experienced in marital life than Lakunle. As a village chief, he does not like any modern progress in his village, but Lakunle would like to change all against him. The play is dealt with the normal mentality of African women and their choice of selecting husbands. At the end of the play, Sidi selects Baroka to marry him who considered here as the lion of that village, even he is very older than Sidi. There is a doubt that that's why Sidi doesn't select younger Lakunle, but she has selected Baroka, an old man, because Lakunle refuses to offer bride-price it is a custom that strongly followed in the Nigerian society. Baroka is ready to give any bride-price to Sidi to impress her. In order to respect his culture, he is able to win the hand of young lady. Hence the play is completely reflecting the Yoruban elements.

### **Wole Soyinka: A Post-Colonial Writer**

Wole Soyinka, as a Nigerian, he becomes an unavoidable artist in multiple genres. He is a playwright, poet, novelist, critic, political critic etc., To honour his literary activities, he was offered Nobel Prize for literature in 1986. Wole Soyinka is a writer of realism. Because, he does write his plays for acting not only on the stage, apart from that, he expects his writing to make some revolution in the minds of people. In the post-colonial period, Soyinka attempts to bring the shaping and regenerating the culture and political identity of a people and for nation. He believes that art may connect the culture of a people to come out from archetypal cores that has been followed by Nigerian people traditionally. His writings are consisted of Nigerian society and its culture especially Yoruba deities and folklore.

The plays, the novels, and the poems those were written by whole Soyinka which portrays a direct post-colonial aspect in itself. One supposed find in the literatures of the post-colonial period, which may attempt to return to one's own identity. Post-colonial reading of texts is a conscious exercise in reading texts in relation to their historical, social and cultural contexts rather than accepting them as expressions of universally acknowledged moral principles or aesthetic value. In this context, Wole Soyinka, is considered as the greatest African post-colonial writer and certainly one of the most important dramatists. Hence, it is perhaps after reading whole Soyinka's plays are analyses and interpreted from within the framework of post-colonial theory, a brief survey of all the relevant definitions given by the theories of post-colonialism will not be irrelevant definitions given by the theories of post-colonial will not be irrelevant in this context.

### **African Culture and Society**

Africa is culturally and traditionally a greatest country. But it has some demerits with the practices of its culture which is partially based on superstitions with a struggle from tradition and modernity. There is no city culture in African society in those days. After the entry of

Europeans, the whole African society comes for city culture by based on modernity by Christianity. Today most of the African countries are following Christianity and some in Islam. If modernity does not arrive at this country, the people may strongly lose their life from their superstitions and other bad rituals. Bride price is an important thing in this country which is followed in regularity. In *Lion and the Jewel*, Lakunle refuses to provide bride-price to Sidi. But Sidi expects it strongly from him. According to the culture of Nigeria, Baroka accepts to offer the bride-price, because he respects his country tradition. Hence Sidi leans aside Baroka and marries him at the end of the play. Child bearing is the significant one in Africa. If a woman does not beget a child, she is pitifully cornered and verbally tortured by other women of that society. Chastity is the second important religion in the society of Africa. Females are grown safely, and they are tested virginity before their marriage. But the society follows the style of polygamy. Wedding is the traditional function in African society. The people are getting to gather in one place, where men and women are playing music, dancing, preparing the meal, eating in group and enjoying it. The custom of bride-price is given a high status for women. But male-domination is in high peak to control and save women from various troubles that occur in African society and culture. The Igbo and Yoruba culture are the two eyes of African people.

### **Baroka as Lion in *Lion and the Jewel***

Baroka is the chief of the village Ilujinle. He is well known figure in that village as “Lion” according to his strength. He is sixty-two years old man with many wives and many concubines. But he has more strength to even beat any youngsters easily. In this condition, he marries a new wife every few months. Baroka decides everything in life through the traditional practice of his society. However, the belief of Baroka is the progress should be done in his own terms and it should not be forced on the village. Baroka is the Bale, who wants to decide anything to happen in his village from his own effort. Baroka is strongly opposing modernity that slowly enriches into his village and he has little fear on Lakunle a village school teacher.

According to the titular ‘Lion’ Baroka is strong and seem as their epitome of masculinity in their village. He wants to conquer Sidi even though he has multiple wives and multiple concubines, and he seeks help from his elder wife Sadiku to reach Sidi and approach her to become the Jewel for this Lion. Sadiku says: “They are lies, lies. You must not believe everything you hear. Sidi, would deceive you? I swear to you”. Sadiku proudly feels to meet Sidi and she praises much about the Lion Baroka in front of her. This is the culture of Nigeria that elder wife supports and help her husband for getting a woman to keep as concubine or wife. This custom will be one of the strange one when compare with western culture. Hence Sadiku says:

“Like the foolish top you think the world revolves around you,  
Fools? Fools! It is you who run giddy while we stand still and

watch, and draw your frail threes from you, slowly; till nothing is left but a runty old stick”

Sadiku is the senior wife of him, considered here as a cunning lady, she wants to reveal in her husband supposed impotency. She actually encourages Sidi to meet Baroka after she assumes and falling for his trick in the play. The Lion Baroka represents the traditional values and ideals of African society, and he seems cunning and very clear then tactically manages and employs his situation that is little touched by the modern school teacher. He is not accustomed and enjoys his present life style and it is a result opposed to progressive such of the building of a railway line. He feels himself proud and prejudice. Once he feels slighted when his photography is not as prominently displayed as Sidi’s, Baroka is ready to offer more bride-price, which states his cunning mind to catch her for his life. So Baroka says:

“As I forget. This is the price I pay once every week, for being progressive prompted by the school teacher, my servants were prevailed upon to form something they call the place workers union and in keeping with the habits-I am told-of modern towns, this is their day off.”

Baroka loves more Sidi. If he wins Sidi, he will feel that he wins the school teacher. Lakunle can easily impress Sidi. But this is very difficult for Barokato easily impress Sidi. Because, he is very old man. Baroka says:

“To think that once I thought, Sidi is the eyes delight, but she is vain, and her head in feather-light and always giddy with a trivial thought. And now I find her deep and wise beyond her years.”

The jewel, Sidi must be conquered by the Lion of the village. Some monkey tricks only would be worked out to win the hand of her. And Baroka wants to prove his youngness in front of his expected angel. The only way for that, that he can use his strong physical body in the wrestling match. So, he indirectly shows his longing that on Sidi, so Baroka says:

“The old must flow into the new, Sidi, not blind itself or stand foolishly apart. A girl like you must inherit miracles which age alone reveals.”

At the end of the play, the Lion Baroka wins his enemy in a match and easily impresses Sidi. But his real enemy is Lankunle. He promises many to do for her future; offering bride-price and her picture on stamp will be released. Hence the Lion Baroka simply wins her heart.

She promises to marry him. Through his crafts and fox method with some monkey tricks, Baroka the Lion takes very young beautiful Jewel Sidi in his life.

### **Sidi as Jewel in *Lion and the Jewel***

Sidi is a village belle of Ilujinle. She seems very beautiful. Men will be attracted very easily when see her at first sight. Her photograph is published in a magazine and goes for a special attention for the spectators. In order to see the pictures of Sidi, she obsessed with her own image and gives her an exaggerated sense of her power over men. One of her images from that photography attracted Baroka and he aims to marry her, and he wants to conquer her beauty completely. Sidi is worth and more beautiful. Both Lakunle and Baroka fight each other to marry her. This is the very big competition for the two men. Sidi does not have any personal decision to whom she wants to marry. As a superficial and beautiful young girl, Sidi initially agrees to wed Lakunle at first. But later she falls aside Baroka. That's why she selects Baroka instead of Lakunle, because, as a modern man made up frustrated Sidi in order to avoid offering bride-price, and he has more modern ideas which is making some irritation for Sidi to come out from traditional custom of her village. Hence Sidi says:

“Lakunle: You could wear something. Most modest women do. But you, no. you must run around naked in the streets. Does it not worry you... the bad names, the lewd jokes, the tongue-licking noises which girls, uncovered like you, draw after them?  
Sidi: ...is it Sidi who makes the men choke in their cups, or you, with your big loud words and no meaning?”

Sidi is extremely proud her photos which appeared in magazine and becomes increasingly absorbed in them. Sadiku is one of the reasons to easily impress Sidi on love by Baroka in this play. Along with Sadiku, she hopes to trick Baroka, whom she also dislikes and does not want to marry, but he triumphs in the end by raping her, taking her virginity, and having her agree to marry him.

“For that, what is a jewel to pigs? If now I am misunderstood by you and your race of savages, I rise above taunts and remain unruffled.”

Sidi becomes popular after a photographer publishes beautiful pictures of her in a magazine. Sidi is considered here as a rude and immature girl who decides to attend Baroka's dinner after hearing the rumor that Baroka is impotent. She aims to make some fun of Baroka during the dinner, but he outsmarts her easily. In a wrestling match, the very old Baroka, easily wins his enemy and proves his manly power in front of Sidi. So, she admires his brave that even

it holds him at his very old age. Further, Baroka promises Sidi, her image will be printed on stamps from her village. She then sleeps with Baroka and she feels ashamed to have sex with him. However, she reminds indignant towards Lankunle and chooses to marry Baroka. Hence she stands as real jewel for him.

### Conclusion

Wole Soyinka is an apt person for getting Nobel Prize with the noble works. He teaches all men to not lose their hope in any situation through the character Baroka. The society and culture of Nigeria is well presented by the playwright is excellent. The play ends comically to ridicule the character Lakunle is highly disappointed. One cannot change one's culture very easily. Lakunle does it in order to wear old fashioned dress is not that much impressed Sidi. The play presents one important matter is that man should not near women except women near man. Baroka has proved that he is the real Lion and Sidi has proved she is real Jewel for him.

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