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## **Women as Capable of Claiming Their Rightful Place in Society: A Critical Reading of Margaret Ogola's *The River and The Source***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study aims at examining the Feminist aspect in Margaret Ogola's *The River and The Source*. It is a critique of African Feminism as a new form of Feminism that is concerned with improving the situation of women in general and the African woman in particular. The main argument of the study is that, through presenting her African feminist vision of a new Kenyan society, Margaret Ogola wants to refute the different traditional forms of Feminism through portraying both male and female characters that are capable of making changes together for the well-being of both the family and the society. Of primary concern to the study is the way Ogola sketches different male and female characters throughout four successive generations to reinforce her vision. The study further examines the different types of the cultures, traditions and experiences over successive periods and the way the author presents her characters in responding to them. Through a close textual analysis the study also investigates the different visionary forms of integration and solidarity and complementarity between the two genders presented by the author to reinforce her vision of a new integrated society through employing a variety of techniques, namely: symbols, foreshadowing and characterization, as tools in presenting the theme of her novel.

**Keywords:** African, Feminism, equitable, vision, integration, solidarity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Male-dominance is still one feature that characterizes modern world everywhere. It is a world where women are oppressed and demeaned to a very low status. The main concern of Feminism is to defend female members of any given society against suffering and degradation. Women are also marginalized, subjugated and oppressed on account of being considered as unequal to men. Therefore, women writers have taken it upon their shoulder to defend the situation of women through adopting Feminism as a movement whose main concern is to improve, defend and protect women and their rights in a world defined by its phallic dominance. As a movement, Feminism first appeared in the west to defend women and call for their equality to men. In so doing, Feminism has taken a variety of forms that, though they appear as different, they are all concerned with the improving the status of the women in society.

Generally, Feminism has started in Europe to defend the European women and then has spread around the globe. It has taken a variety of forms depending on the perspective from which a feminist writer looks upon the situation of women in a given society (Kumar, 2021). There are Radical Feminism, White Feminism, Black Feminism, African Feminism, Islamic Feminism, Implicit Feminism, Explicit Feminism and etc. In Africa, like in any other part of the world, women suffer and their sufferings are greater given the fact that they live in a society that has been under the grip of the imperial power for long. Living under a colonial or postcolonial order in Africa has contributed to the sufferings of women and intensified and degraded their situation. In Africa women suffer at different levels. Socially, they suffer as daughters, sisters, wives and widows as a result of living in a society characterized by male chauvinism (Liang et al., 2022). Here, Black Feminism has been dominant. It has called for women emancipation, liberation and equality to men. It sees women as a separate entity who should be given equal representation without providing a comprehensive picture of society where both genders can live side by side. As such, such a traditional form of Feminism has failed in providing a new outlook of improving the situation of the African women. Even Bettina Aptheker comments on the inadequacy of this form of Feminism. He states that modern feminism is defined as the advancement of women to positions of political and economic power. It is impossible for women of colour to successfully establish their racial and cultural identity if the community in which they reside does not support equality and empowerment on par with other members of society (Aptheker, 1981)

Giving opportunities to both genders to actively participate in social and economic welfare is crucial for long-term sustainable social and economic development of any given society (Khan et al., 2021). Given that women constitute more than half of the population and economic potential in Kenya, it is likely that their exclusion from social and economic endeavor is reflected in failures that would affect economic choices and growth. Therefore,

empowering women results in social stability and economic well-being of any given society. Because no society can achieve the maximum of the potential of its ability unless both genders are included. Social changes in any society affects the socio-cultural perception of gender (Kumar & Supriyatno, 2021). It is urgently necessary to adopt a new feminism in order to advance the cause of women because of this. A non-traditional point of view is urgently needed when it comes to the plight of African women, and Kenyan women in particular. a novel perspective that provides a more complete picture of contemporary society by including the experiences of both men and women. This perfectly captures the dilemma an African woman faces within the confines of African society. the unconventional idea that it is preferable to distinguish between men and women based on their humanity rather than their sexual orientation. It calls for unity between both genders. Hudson-weems, an African female writer, in her book *Africana Womanism and The Critical Need for Africana Theory and Thought* addresses the extraordinary condition of the life of the African women. She criticises Black Feminism for having a limited scope in terms of helping the situation of African women and reversing her plight, which is one of the reasons why Black Feminism was founded. She contends that since African feminism has its origins in African culture, it is imperative that its primary emphasis be placed on the unique experiences, struggles, requirements, and aspirations of African women. From a critical vantage point, it investigates the dynamics of the conflicts that exist between mainstream feminism, black feminism, and African feminism (Hudson-Weems, 1997).

Stratton's calls for equal representation of gender in African literature. He also calls for female inclusively of women's liberation and independence. According to Stratton, contemporary African fiction should adopt a literary convention mode that deviates from several trends in the male literary tradition. These trends include the tendency to associate women with tradition and the utilisation of themes such as redemption through and for motherhood or repartition to the village in order to ease narrative tension. Contemporary African fiction should adopt a literary convention mode that deviates from these trends. This kind of fiction, for example, by rewarding the friend who questions patriarchal authority, is able to correct the perception of women that men value so highly (Benyo et al., 2022; Strallon, 1994).

Contrary to the other traditional forms of feminism that resent women as subjugated, oppressed and subdued the new form of Feminism namely: African Feminism presents women as constituting an integral part of the structure of the society. Accordingly, they are presented as strong, sensible and cooperative showing a lot of potentials in their relationships with men. Here, women seek to achieve self-definition that is associated with another sense of ambition for a better life through developing an attitude of solidarity with men for the well-being at both the social as well as the domestic level.

Unlike other conventional forms of Feminism that are self-centered, African Feminism is family-centered. This means that African Feminism gives priority to family over the individual needs of its female members. According to African feminism, women move from marginalization to centrality in society. They should be regarded as socially equitable. Millett contends that it is time for us to acknowledge that the entire structure of male and female personality is arbitrary and that it is imposed by a social conditioning that has appropriated all possible human personality traits. Millett's argument is that it is time for us to recognise that the structure of male and female personality is arbitrary. Intelligence and a reverence for life are both fundamentally human characteristics; it is time for us to face this reality and come to terms with it (Millett, 1977). Here, both men and women should ally together in the face of social and economic hardships. In the context of African Feminism, women see men not as opponent or foils rather they see them as their counterparts. They unite and work together for the well-being of both the society and the family. Living under a colonial and a racist system, men are supposed to play a role in ending female subjugation through uniting together in a bid to defy the shackles of racism and colonialism. Commenting on the features of African Feminism, Hudson-weems points out that in contrast to mainstream Feminism, African Feminism encourages men to join women in their fight for freedom and equality. Unlike mainstream feminism, this usually fights on its own and doesn't want men to join in, these feminists fight together. This is because, throughout their history, their struggle has been the glue that has kept them together and helped them survive in a society that is hostile to them because of patriarchy and racism. (Hudson-Weems, 1993).

As an African female writer whose concern is uplifting the status of women by unconventional means, Hudson-weems rejects all the conventional forms of Feminism seeing them as problematic and do not do for the good of the African women. She calls for a new form of Feminism that is Afrocentric and whose core concern is finding a solution to the condition of the African women in their relationships with men. It is concerned with the importance of the place of men in the lives of women while traditional Feminism sees men as rivals and opponents. African Feminism regards man as an integral part of the life of each woman. Men should play a role in shaping women to develop an attitude of unity and cooperation with men while considering them as their partners. It is a new attitude based on the complementarity between men and women as two poles of the same body.

In the context of African society in general and Kenyan society in particular, the position of women in Margaret Ogola's works represents a shift that has occurred as a result of her writings. Margaret Ogola is an eminent

African female author. In Kenyan society, as in many other African societies, patriarchy is deeply ingrained, and as a result, men are regarded as being more capable than women. In contrast to western feminism, feminism in Africa does not seek to undermine men but rather to find ways to coexist with them. Ogola's contribution in revolutionizing and renewing the call for that shift is unprecedented in the modern history of the African women. She presents a distinctive vision of constructing a new society where the sustainability of its development is based on including its members of both genders. A society that is based on giving equitable social roles to both genders. She finds in African Feminism the principles that aim at drastic changes in the conditions of the African women. She has a distinctive vision which is manifested in her adoption of African Feminism as an unconventional feminist approach in portraying her female characters. She portrays female characters who are not stereotypical.

In the fictional world of Ogola, female characters represented as going through considerable changes that see them as contributors in their society sustainable development. They play symbolic roles as makers of changes and transition in an ever-changing world. Her female characters are defined through their abilities to coexist, work and live with their male counterparts. Contrary to the way other female writers have presented their female characters, Ogola's female characters are presented as visionaries, dynamic, capable of change and active participants in the development of the social change and agents of transition. They strive to get out of the stereotypical roles assigned by patriarchal power by involving themselves in actions that are meant to create a reversal of this stereotypical image. In her novel, Ogola seeks to reimagine the place of women in the context of the African society in general and the Kenyan society in particular. She represents the role of women in the context of a traditional society through presenting the traditional practices and cultural beliefs that impedes her female characters' progress. Ogola seeks to reconstruct a new image of women through repressing the patriarchal conventions. She presents these female characters as subjects rather than objects in a way that defies the stereotypical image of women.

In *The River and the Source* Ogola presents high models of both male and female characters for the upcoming generations of African people to follow. In this novel, she presents unconventional models of African characters to stress that changes in the situation of women has become a necessity. Ogola believes that the job of every female writer to highlight the need of women for solidarity, integration within the context of the African society. Ogola has written a number of novels and short stories in which she calls for change in the situation of women through adopting African Feminism as an unconventional way to reinforce her vision of a new Kenyan society. In other words, in her novels, Ogola seeks to construct a new image of the African women through presenting female characters as missionaries and agents of changes in a society characterized by male chauvinism. *The River and The Source* and *I Swear by Apollo* are two of her novels that have been constructed in some way to present women as distinguished members in society. Both novels deal with the story of successive generations of women.

Written in 1994, *The River and The Source* is the narrative of four generations of women throughout different periods in the context of the Kenyan society. The novel won two prizes; The Jomo Kenyatta Literature Prize and the Commonwealth Prize. In *The River and The Source*, Ogola portrays female characters that are very capable of making changes in the society through placing them in the center of the narrative. She presents them as an integral parts of the structure of the society while living side by side with men. The narrative spans four successive generations, offers different experiences and expose different cultures from the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial to the modern period. Akoko, the main character and the source mother of other three generations of women. In narrating the story of Akoko, her daughter and granddaughters, Ogola touches upon very substantial aspects of life that best convey her vision of a new unconventional situation of the society.

Ogola's African feminist vision lies in deconstructing the stereotypical image of women while attempting to construct a new image of them as contributors to the development of their society and as agent of changes to highlight the fact that any society cannot achieve integration or stability by excluding any of the two genders. Ogola's female characters are capable of exhibiting African feminist ideals in many ways through assigning instrumental roles to them. It has been brought to Jose's attention that Ogola gives women the leading roles in her books, accurately portrays their sensibilities, and elevates their consciousness while taking care not to alienate the men who play those roles. As a result, rather than being conformist, her portrayal of female characters can be seen as conciliatory because of how she approaches portraying them (Jose, 2014).

Ogola is quite concerned about advocating African women liberation through gender equality. She is against any convention that denies women their dignity and impedes their success as contributors to the development of society. In *The River and The Source* three successive generations of women are presented as capable of overcoming the different types of hardships rooted in the traditional society of the Luo. Early in the novel, the narrative of the birth of Akoko and the reaction of Chief Gogne, the father, foreshadows that change is coming in the situation of women in society. According to the tradition of the Luo, the Chief's offspring should be males and a baby girl is not welcome. Contrary to the traditions, Akoko's coming to life is welcomed by the father for the first time in the history of chiefdom. Chief Gogne states "A house without daughter is like a spring without a



source” (Ogola, 1994). Of course, the remark made by the chief is highly significant. It signifies that change in the outlook of the society to women has just started. Here, the author employs foreshadowing as a technique to enhance her feminist vision. Despite the fact that, according to the principles of chiefdom, only male children are capable of perpetuating the legacy of chiefdom, Chief Gogne accepts to Akoko’s birth. On the other hand, as a crawling baby Akoko makes another significant remark in the first words she pronounces. She says “dwara mara” (Ogola, 1995) The statement means “want mine”. It signifies protest against the existing norms. Generally, it is consensus that the legacy of a father can be extended only by a male offspring. The male gender is always privileged and mostly wanted by virtue of tradition everywhere (Jabeen et al., 2022). However, in Ogola’s vision such a legacy can also be extended by a female lineage. Here, Chief Gogne’s legacy is going to be extended by his daughter and granddaughters. It is really a new convention that is contrary to the norms of the Luo. Agnes Magu points out “He (Gogne) assigns the girl child the role of extending his legacy.” (Magu, 2014) Here, Ogola envisions a society where female are as capable as males of extending their parents’ lineage. Ogola wants to make it clear that giving men and women the same amount of importance is the only way to guarantee that a legacy endures. In his commentary on the subject, Jose claims that in order to give African women the same opportunities for success as men, their sociocultural empowerment is required (Jose, 2014).

Generally, Akoko is portrayed in some way by the author as a wife and a woman whose determination and pursuit for independence is the author’s intention to present her as different. The characters in Ogola strive for recognition by going against the norms of their society. This can be seen in their progression from apparent passivity to acceptance to a willingness to make choices that will significantly impact their lives. Now that she has reached maturity and is of marriageable age, her father thinks of Akoko as a precious jewel. He is adamant that only a respectable man has the right to win her over. Chief Gogni receives multiple proposals from an excellent suitor. Despite this, he is adamant that the highest bidder on the bride get her. Chief Kembo is the suitor who is the most fortunate and resourceful for Akoko to consider. Chief Kembo adores Akoko. As the narrator tells, “He had fallen deeply and irrevocably in love” (Ogola, 1994). Already a couple, the newlyweds lead a happy marital life based on mutual love, respect, understanding and cooperation. Being the first wife of the chief, Akoko goes to present a new model of African woman in her relationship with the Chief. The husband feels proud to express his profound and undying love for his wife. In their relationship, Kembo and Akoko introduce a new model of marital love-relationship that is contradictory to the expectations of the community. Akoko benefits from patriarchy and masculinity as a result of Chief Kembo’s thoughts and actions. This is because, in contrast to most women of her era, she no longer falls under the gender-specific purview of her community (Hawala, 2014).

Child-bearing is one of the most essential aspects of a successful marital life. It is the main concern of both parents for the sake of perpetuating their lineage. According to the beliefs of Hawala, a woman is important at the threshold of a man’s life because she acts as a vehicle for the leader to obtain his male species or descendants. This ensures a steady supply of potential future community leaders through the birth of children (Hawala, 2014). Bearing as many male children as possible is the most crucial aspect of Akoko’s success as a wife of the chief. She is supposed to be a prolific mother especially of male children. Taiwo, in the course of her commentary on the subject of marriage, provides a definition of the role of an African woman by stating that, in most parts of Africa, the entirety of a young woman’s life is spent preparing her for the role that she is expected to play in society. The primary responsibilities of the role include getting married and having children. When a woman is promised in marriage to a man, the man’s family expects her to accept and uphold their own family’s customs and traditions (Taiwo, 1984). Ogola’s goal in bringing attention to the fact that men cannot carry on their lineage without women is in line with the vision she has for the future. According to the narrative, “By the fifth month everything was obvious to even the most unobservant dullard. People waited breath and ten moons from the day she arrived. Akoko delivered herself of a son.... People rejoiced for the continuation of the Chief’s line” (Ogola, 1994). However, being the sole wife of the Chief, Akoko is not a fully-successful mother because of having a problem in the pace of birth rate.

One feature that Ogola wants to defy is fighting polygamy. She advocates monogamy through women as having the ability to satisfy their spouses’ needs and desires. Chief Kembo refuses to go for a second marriage and stands against the traditional culture of polygamy. She challenges male chauvinism through fighting polygamy. Ogola also challenges the African myth that mothers should have so many children to preserve their husbands’ lineages. Being the sole wife of the Chief and having a problem in the rate of reproduction, Akoko is to suffer. According to the traditions of the Luo, to ensure the perpetuation of Chiefdom, the Chief should have more than one wife to increase the number of his children. Therefore, Kembo’s mother asks her son to go for a second marriage. Yet, the son appears to be unrelenting to accept his mother’s request and, contrary to the expectations, the Chief becomes a subject of blame by his mother and the community. Akoko is accused of bewitching her husband. Therefore, on account of her husband’s stance, Akoko turns to be bolder and succeeds in defying the already set tradition of the Luo. Thus, Kembo’s stand conforms to Ogola’s African feminist vision of a new model of African man. In his relationship with his wife, Kembo considers Akoko a stabilizing agent of the whole family, and consequently, of the entire society. Contrary to the norms of the Luo, Chief Kembo goes to

give his wife absolute concessions to present a new model of love-relationship between spouses in the context of African society. Commenting on this, Anne Hawala is of the opinion that Akoko makes intelligent decisions, maintains an open relationship with her husband, and provides him with advice on a variety of important issues. The objective of Akoko's explanation is to convince men that women are not what patriarchal society has imagined and portrayed them to be in accordance with preconceived notions about what women are like. In contrast to the majority of men, the chief acknowledges and appreciates the intelligence of his wife, and he also makes it possible for her to advance in all areas (Hawala, 2014).

According to African Feminism, maternal life cannot be successful without mutual love and respect between the spouses. The core of this respect lies in granting equal privileges to both partners. Akoko and Chief Kembo interact with one another in a manner that reflects their respective personalities. According to Agnes Magu, Akoko represents an effort to be different from men in order to overcome the subjectivity of patriarchal tradition in the community; as a result, she serves as a model for the examination of the formation of the female self and national identity (Magu, 2014). Akoko takes responsibility for her life and demonstrates self-awareness as well as a clear vision of what should be done and how it should be done. She presents a picture of the African woman that is not conventional at all. She possesses the capacity to seriously undermine the various aspects of the long-standing patriarchy that has persisted in the community. In this regard, Agnes Magu makes the observation that Ogola provides Akoko with a female self and the opportunity to overcome a number of obstacles that historically stifled the female selves of African women (Magu, 2014).

The Chief is blessed with three sons and a daughter by Akoko. The couple leads a prosperous and successful life characterized by harmony and cooperation. Yet, two of the sons die and the third chokes. The loss of the two sons has leaves the father heart-broken. On the other hand, the mother is, of course, depressed and is about to lose belief in everything upon the loss of her children. However, Akoko goes to enhance her existence and strengthen her ability on her own way. She develops a new life-outlook and a new attitude toward the people in her community. She rises above the different oppressive limits of her community to make the codes that govern the society less oppressive. She has to struggle to define herself afresh. As Nyongesa remarks, "She has to rely on other instincts, her inner power and wisdom to forge a life of her destined future." (Nyongesa, 2020; 23) Anne Jose asserts that the author, who is a feminist and a supporter of women, thinks that the time has come for women to speak up and make their voices heard. In the struggle for women's rights, women should take the initiative and lead the charge (Jose, 2014).

Ogola's female characters define themselves through resisting the transitional cultural practices that limit their independence. They embrace changes so that they can change their situations. Chief Kembo died heart-broken upon the loss of his sons. Akoko is left in a community where she has to start anew to define the different oppressive forces in a patriarchal society as a widow. She has to sustain the rest of the family through hard working in farming. As a widow, Akoko has to fight and resist the tradition of widowhood. Otieno, the younger brother of Chief Kembo, by virtue of tradition, is entitled to take over Chieftdom and inherit all the properties of the dead brother even his wife. Otieno seeks to achieve this goal through the use of force and violence while hiding behind the pretext of the norms. Hawala points out, "Otieno is traditionally bequeathed with all right over her (Akoko) by virtue of his gender and relationship. He practices these rights with impunity and glee" (Hawala, 2014). Akoko is brutalized by Otieno upon refusing to comply with his desires. She is aware that the absence of a man who could defend her is the root cause of the deplorable treatment that she is presently receiving, and she blames herself for this situation. According to Agnes Magu, Akoko makes an effort to stand out in comparison to men in order to transcend the subjectivity of patriarchal tradition in the community. As a result, Akoko becomes a prototype in the examination of the formation of the female self as well as the formation of national identity (Magu, 2014). As a wife and a widow, Akoko presents a high model of the African feminist character.

Akoko is portrayed as a catalyst for change in a patriarchal society. In sketching the character of Akoko, Ogola assigns her different roles to be a model of the African feminist character who can survive under a phallic order without being undermined. Akoko refused to be a wife of another man, and she revolts against the traditions. It is rejecting such traditions of widowhood that she finds a personal avenue for actualizing her femininity. By complaining about her brother-in-law to the District Office, she eventually wins the case against him. Akoko's grandson is able to inherit the chieftdom from her. According to the narrator, Akoko went back to her village with more than just a triumph for her young grandson. She had opened her family's eyes to a new world and the possibility of taking a different path (Ogola, 1994). She struggles against Otieno and her victory on him strengthens her self-assertion and enables her to reconstruct a new identity as a widow.

Because Otieno does not let up in his pursuit of Akoko, Akoko makes the decision to abandon the entire marriage community in favour of another. She resorts to her brother Oloo. The brother welcomes her resort and supports her stance. There with her brother, Akoko starts a new phase of her life away from her matrimonial community. She embraces Christianity as a religion and her conduct is highly appreciated by the people of the church that sometimes they seek her advice on matters associated with the church. She is given a house as an endowment by the catechism. Again, she goes to assert herself in her conduct to the surrounding community. As

the narrator tells, “She does not allow herself to descend to bitterness for yesterday is not today and today is not tomorrow. Each day rises from the hands of **Were** and brings with it whatever it will.” (Ogola, 1994) Thus, Akoko has shown a great ability at making unprecedented changes through presenting a model of defiance throughout the different phases of her life. As the incidents of the novel unfold, with the third generation of her daughter and granddaughters, the source mother dies and buried at the church graveyard. Akoko’s burial away from her matrimonial community signifies another aspect that reinforces her Akoko’s defiance to the traditions of the Luo as if she rejects the stifling traditions both in life and in death. It is noteworthy highlighting that the demise of Akokok symbolizes the end on traditionalism.

Chief Kembo and Akoko only had one daughter together, and her name is Nyabera. As the only surviving child of his mother and father, Nyabera is entitled to carry on his family's lineage after the passing of his father and three brothers. Her mother and her uncle Aluor are responsible for Nyabera's upbringing in Kasumu. She inherits a lot of traits from her mother. Like her mother, Nyabera is beautiful enough to attract many suitors. Yet, she accepts only Okumu’s proposal of marriage despite his poverty. She is hard-working and energetic whose contribution is indispensable for integration in the society. Like her mother, Nyabera plays a good role in enhancing the resources of the family. The couple lives a life characterized by harmony and understanding despite the limited resources. With the exception of her daughter (Elizabeth), all of her children pass away horribly soon after birth . The family has few resources left to support them after the father dies when the children are still young. As a result, Nyabera offers yet another unconventional representation of African female members in her life with Okumu. This model places a strong emphasis on the value of sex complementarity for the health of the family and society.

Of course, the death of the husband (Okumu) marks the beginning of a new phase in Nyabera’s life. Like her mother, she leaves her matrimonial community and goes to start a new life in the company of her daughter Awiti. She starts a journey of self-definition. As Odhiambo points out, “She finds an alternative to her dreary existence as a widow.....She breaks free of the prescribed domesticity” (Odhiambo, 2015). Being a widow, Nyabera decides to achieve self-definition on her own and live the rest of her life as free. She devotes her entire life to Elizabeth. She, like her mother, rejects confinement, and she is willing to decide for herself in shaping her life. “When it comes to making decisions, she equated her mother” (Ogola, 1994).

Okumu and Nybera only had one daughter, and they named her Elizabeth (Awiti). Nybera takes care of her daughter as she grows up and helps her develop into a lovely young lady. The resoluteness, obstinacy, sincerity, and doggedness that Elizabeth's grandmother possessed are all present in Elizabeth as well. Ogola makes it her mission to portray Elizabeth in a way that makes her a feminist role model consistent with the African viewpoint she brings to the character. She portrays her as an unconventional example of a young African woman who is involved in issues that directly affect her entire life, a wife, and a mother. These are all roles that she currently fulfils in her life. Awiti has a great interest in education. She is a studious female student who can compete and defeat male students at school. Elizabeth is found to be the best among all of her peers. What is really more significant about Awiti is that the education she is getting is reflected on her conduct with the surrounding community.

Ogola’s narrative calls for women emancipation and empowerment through modernity by means of education. She wants to accord women with outstanding potential and endurance usually considered exclusive to men. It is discovered that Elizabeth's interactions with the neighbourhood are more reminiscent of her grandmother than her mother. Just like her grandmother, she is able to defy social expectations as an educated young woman by breaking a record and finishing first in her class. As a student, Awiti is admired by many of her peer male students at the college because of her beauty. Mark Antony Sigu is the most fortunate to win her love and admiration. Awiti and Mark get married with the blessing of the source mother Akoko. It is noteworthy mentioning that Akoko refuses to settle the issue of bride-price without the existence of Awiti’s male relatives. This implies an African feminist characteristic in the sense of taking into consideration the importance of the existence of men in matters that require the consent of a joint opinion. That’s to say, though she is privileged to preside and take a decision, Akoko does not negate the existence of men in such an occasion. Akoko says:

Accept it Maria, the world is changing. All is not lost, however, we must listen to the suit according to Chik for we are Sakwa at cockcrow and fetch your brother-in-law the girl’s uncle. I shall also send words to Yimbo to my nephews, the twin Opiyo and Odongo. These two rascals must be old men now. Finally, I shall get Father Thomas to send for Owuor at the seminary. He is the closest thing to a brother the girl has and must be there. (Ogola, 1994)

Elizabeth and Mark get married and go on to have a loving, respectful, and understanding relationship. They get permission from both families to get married. It is discovered that Elizabeth's ability to conceive is delayed, and it takes her three years to conceive. As a result, the couple's life as new mothers won't be trouble-free. The mother of Mark looks down her nose at this delay. He never accepts his mother's help, just like Chief Kembo. Mark is quite convinced that making a baby does not rely on the wife only but on both parents. Here, Ogola portrays African feminist male models to convey her vision of a new African society. On the other hand, like her grandmother, Awiti is not liable to being undermined by any external forces that do not directly touch her

maternal life. She shows a lot of tenacity in a way that extends the legacy of her grandmother. She is in a tirade against traditions. She is independently minded who is more concerned about attached to her Mark than with what other people say.

Being a female writer who adopts an unconventional feminist approach, Ogola exhibit an unconventional concept of marriage. According to her vision, women are not compelled to marry to fulfill their role of child-bearing. Marriage is a personal free decision. Moreover, women should be aware that they are not married only for the sake of remaining at home and serving their husbands. They are capable of occupying significant jobs in society to provide financial stability to the family along with her husbands. Again, like her grandmother, Awiti is presented as sensitive, intelligent, tenacious and enduring. Mark, on the other hand, is presented as very considerate, supportive and an accommodating husband who appreciates his wife's endeavor and conduct. The couple leads a happy life characterized by stability and love with their children. As the narrator tells, "All in all the Sigu family was a happy one. There was money but not too much and plenty of love-simple and unpretentious" (Ogola, 1994). Both spouses share the burden of the family and Mark shows unprecedented readiness to share his wife doing house chores. He is quite convinced that men should be active sharers of household responsibilities. Here Ogola wants to reinforce her feminist vision that marriage is a joint commitment between both spouses on equal bases characteristic of African Feminism.

Complementary between the two genders is the base principle on which African Feminism operates and on which Ogola constructs her vision. Ogola disapproves of gender segregation. She is a staunch supporter of achieving gender parity within a single society and actively promotes this cause. The male and female characters in Ogola's works are inextricably intertwined throughout each of the author's creations (Simitai, 2001). Ogola advocates for gender equality while also putting an emphasis on the inclusion of women in the main stream of African feminism. This school of thought holds the belief that women and men contribute equally to the overall health of society and the family. The story of Ogola depicts men and women as being on equal footing in terms of power and participation in decision-making at all levels (Cherop, 2015). Ogola empowers her female characters through assigning them equal roles that both genders can share the construction of a new society based on solidarity and integration.

Again, in *The River and The Source* Ogola provides a distinct manifestation of African Feminism through portraying men and women as high models capable of exhibiting unique qualities in terms of complementarity and integration in the context of the Kenyan society. She empowers women socially, culturally and economically to claim their rightful place in society without denying the importance of men. Wandia Magus is another model of the female character that conforms to Ogola's feminist vision.

Wandia comes from a group that isn't affiliated with the Luo at all. She comes from a different social and culture background. Nonetheless, she is able to come to terms with the Luo people. She represents the third generation of Akoko's lineage. Ogola presents her as assertive, bold and strong-willed like Akoko. She is a college student who is a member of a heterogeneous class of both male and female students. Wandia rejects the practice that students are called by their gender and insists that they should be called by their names. She is referred to as "tough lady" due to her exceptional academic performance, which propels her to the top of her class (Ogola, 1994).

Wandia is so intelligent and beautiful enough to attract good suitors. Aoro Sigu, the son of Mark and Awiti (Elizabeth) is the only young man who she believes to fulfill her dream of a husband. Wandia is self-assertive that she deviates from the conventions of marriage dominant in the society. Having found in Aoro what she aspires for as a future husband, Wandia, contrary to the norms, takes the initiative to ask his hand for marriage instead of waiting for him to propose. Ogola depicts a society where women are no longer married for the sake of fulfilling certain traditional social roles but they are given the right to decide for themselves to marry or not. It is Wandia who takes the initiative in proposing to Aoro for marriage instead of the other way round. She deviated from the traditional norms through behaving contrary to the norms. Here, contrary to the traditions of choosing life-partners, Ogola presents a new model of girls who are able to choose their partners in issues related to marriage. Ogola wants to underscore that the society has changed and girls are directly involved in matters associated to their lives. It is a new generation of young women who have changed to cope with the modern world thanks to education. Wandia displays a lot of attributes of the source mother (Akoko). Ogola presents her as a pure African feminist character in the sense of being capable of making transition and drastic changes in the situation of women in the African society in general and the Kenyan society in particular.

Wandia and Aoro, despite being different in backgrounds, get married and lead a successful life and reconstruct a family whose all members complement each other. In the passage of time, they are blessed with six kids. They are very caring and loving spouses showing a great sense of responsibility toward their family and the society at the same time. Being a loving and caring husband, Aoro expresses his pleasure and pride about having her as his only wife. The narrative tells "I am a very lucky man. She does a wonderful job with the kids." (Ogola, 1994) Wandia is a resourceful member of the family who receives a salary and contributes to the economic and financial stability and well-being of the family and the entire society as a result. Of course, this reinforces



Wandia's African feminist status according to Ogola's vision. She is a professional medical doctor, a caring mother and a loving wife. Agnes Magu expounds, "The relationship between Wandia and Sigu is likely to eyebrow because she is a Kikuyu while he is a Luo." (Ogola, 1994) Thus, Wandia is able to establish very solid relationships with the family of her husband, and she is capable of transcending the social boundaries. On the other hand, the Sigus welcome their new daughter-in-law as a new member of the family. Unlike previous mother-in-laws, Elizabeth develops attachment and intimacy with Wandia and accepts the difference she has in background showing a lot of understanding and respect to this difference. Moreover, the mother-in-law goes to express her appreciation of her efforts and endeavor by telling her son that he is so lucky to get Wandia as a wife.

At the professional level, she occupies a tough job that is mostly occupied by males while displaying exceptional ability at accomplishing her tasks. She is self-assertive enough to decide for herself as well as her job. She shows a great sense of commitment toward her family as well as her job. She is so ambitious that she completes her study for higher degrees until she becomes a professor and, consequently, the chairperson of the department of pathology at the college. Aoro and Wandia are blessed with six children. Nonetheless, she never gives up. Early in her professional life, she wins a scholarship at an American institute and her husband helps her to get it in defiance of all the forces in a sign of showing solidarity with his wife. Therefore, such support is highly appreciated and welcomed by Wandia. Moreover, Elizabeth goes to share her son the responsibility of taking care of the kids to support her. The narrator says, "We will all chip in to give her a hand with the children." (Ogola, 1994)

Wandia appreciates her husband's support and values it greatly. Undoubtedly, such support brings about integration and solidarity to the entire family. Like Chief Kembo, Mark Antony and Okumu, Aoro present a new model of the African man in his relationship with his wife. This signifies that the well-being of a family is dependent on the participation and cooperation of all members and that the presence of both genders is indispensable. Wandia is like Akoko, Nyabera and Awiti. They all represent an unconventional model of women who fulfill Ogola's vision of the future of the African woman. She presents them as capable of making changes in their communities. Thus, in her portrayal of Wandia, Ogola presents her as resourceful and an active member capable of claiming her rightful position in the society both at the domestic and social levels. Like Chief Kembo, Okumu and Mark, Aoro adores and respects his wife and values her contribution to the welfare of the society and this is the core of Ogola's feminist vision.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Ogola envisions a society where both men and women are active participants, sharers and contributors to its well-being socially, economically, culturally and educationally and this is the core of the principles of the African Feminism. Ogola treads a path that is unconventional to present her vision of the rightful place of women. It is an unconventional feminist outlook that is both comprehensive and encompassing of both men and women. The study fills a new gap of women's representation by exploring the equality between men and women. Ogola has succeeded in providing an unconventional vision of the role that women can play in improving their society by performing equitable roles to men's through inclusion of both genders. The study has justified Ogola's feminist approach of liberating genders from all other conventional concepts. One important finding of the study is that women's silence caused by patriarchal structures was broken by Kenyan female authors like Ogola.

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