

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HOMECOMING CEREMONY

- The homecoming ceremony is meant to re-establish the severed links with culture caused by many years of absence from Nasila.
- Ole Kaelo intends to re-unite with Nasila people and receive their blessings. So representatives from all the five clans (Ilmolelian, Ilmakesen, Ilukumae, Ilaiser and Iltarrosero) are invited.
- The Ilmolelian clan is well known for generosity and when Ole Kaelo throws a party, he lives up to that expectation and slaughters a fattened ox, six rams and four he-goats.
- The elders are supposed to bless the home in order to receive back their son who had gone out to hunt for fortunes and returned safely. After that, the wife, children and property would be blessed.
- On the material day, a retinue of young men and women are gathered and charged with the responsibility of organizing the activities and chores of the ceremonial day. They are led by a young local primary school music teacher called Joseph Parmuat.
- The kind of **brotherhood** demonstrated by his clansmen during the ceremony leads Ole Kaelo to decide never to abandon the culture of his people and live outside his clan again. He feels fully re-established in his roots.
- Mama Milanoi is a good hostess ensuring that food is equitably distributed to the visitors while the girls help in other areas.

- There is music and dance-a carnival mood-all over the home.
- Sitting among the ecstatic crowd of spectators, Taiyo and Resian take notice of Joseph Parmuat's good looks.
- Joseph's primary school pupils also perform a special dance celebrating Ole Kaelo's return. The performance attracts quite a crowd.
- Watching the dance, Taiyo reminisces over her high school days when she would excel in drama festivals. Broadcasting stations got to know about her talent and encouraged her to take music as a career.
- When an FM Radio station offered her a chance to discover and explore the worth of her talent by sponsoring her to attend a music extravaganza in Mombasa, the father curtly refused, thereby crushing the vision of making music her career.
- At three o'clock, the carnival mood explodes into a frenzied celebration and everybody gets dancing including Simiren and Ole Kaelo.
- Suddenly the girls bump into the young man who had accosted them earlier as they took a walk in the neighborhood and their happiness fades immediately.
- At five o'clock, dancing stops and dining begins. After beverages are served, young people depart having acknowledged that a true descendant of Ilmolelian has finally arrived and taken his rightful position in the clan.
- At seven o'clock, the traditional *esugoroi* drink is served in generous measure which makes the party get noisier.

- Taiyo finally meets Joseph Parmuat, the object of her admiration, in the full glare of her parents. According to Simiren, Taiyo should be taught not to have any relationship with Joseph because he is of the same sub-clan. *“Their illicit contact would be a taboo that is bound to have untold consequences on them all.”* (Pg. 49).
- Resian, on her part, thinks that should Taiyo get involved in a relationship, she (Resian) would be the one to lose a companion and a friend. She cherishes her dependence on her sister.
- After Taiyo introduces Resian to Joseph, uncle Simiren and their mother arrive to warn Taiyo of her clan’s relation with the young man. She is quite annoyed by this.
- Ole Musanka, the oldest man in the crowd, leads the ritual of receiving Ole Kaelo and family back to the clan. In his speech, he likens Ole Kaelo to a strand of hair that was blown away by the wind and has now been blown back to the owner’s head. It was the duty of the strand to attach and coil back onto the rest of the hair. This means Ole Kaelo has to deliberately re-assimilate himself into his people’s culture.
- The old man urges the community to embrace the family and bring them back to the fold, and warns Taiyo and Resian never to listen to the known anti-female circumcision crusader.
- After the speech, the old man blesses the Ole Kaelos and singles out Taiyo for a special blessing for having brought him special food earlier in the day.

- Ole Kaelo is elated to learn that it is Taiyo, not Resian, who is the target of the blessing. On the other hand, Mama Milanoi fears for her daughters following this incident.
- The girls ,too, are troubled and wonder which woman crusader is being referred to by Ole Musanka.

TASKS

- i) Why would you say that the homecoming ceremony was meticulously planned?
- ii) Which people help Ole Kaelo in the preparation of the ceremony?
- iii) From what happens in this chapter, prove that honour, brotherhood, and selflessness still exist in the village.
- iv) Why had Ole Kaelo refused to let Taiyo go to Mombasa for a music extravaganza?
- v) How does Taiyo now plan to pursue her music career?
- vi) What does Mama Milanoi like about Taiyo's meeting with Joseph Parmuat during the ceremony?
- vii) Why does Taiyo bring old Ole Musanka special food?
- ix) State all the proverbs Ole Musanka uses. Comment on their meaning within the context of the speech.

COMMENTARY

- The homecoming ceremony is a significant step in the **re-entry** of the Ole Kaelos into the culture of the Nasila people.
- The novelist uses the stereotype about the Ilmolelian and

Ilmakesen clans to realize **humour** in the text. While the former are generous to a fault, the latter are ridiculously stingy, to the extent of denying dogs the afterbirth of a she-goat.

- **Poor parenting** is highlighted in this chapter. Resian cannot stand the presence of her father and breaks glasses. Ole Kaelo also crushes his daughter, Taiyo's vision to pursue a music career by refusing flatly to allow her attend a music extravaganza in Mombasa.
- **The strictness of culture with regard to love relationships** is brought out in this chapter. Taiyo cannot be allowed to have an affair with Joseph Parmuat because they come from the same clan and therefore are a brother and sister, even though there is no blood relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE AFTERMATH

- After what transpires during the homecoming party, Taiyo and Resian go through confused feelings of anger, panic, helplessness and hopelessness. They do not know what to expect from the society now that they are *intoiye nemengalana*.
- Taiyo had promised her sister to approach their father over the matter of joining Egerton University but appropriate opportunity has not presented itself.
- Taiyo's earlier encounter with Joseph Parmuat has caused her a "*restlessness that she would have considered totally alien to her nature*".(pg 55) Due to this infatuation, she now feels a little estranged from her sister, Resian.
- The sisters have a troubled night .Taiyo weeps endlessly over the fact that she cannot be allowed to have Joseph as a boyfriend due to ancestral links and she blames uncle Simiren for spoiling matters. She feels culture is unfair in stopping her from falling in love freely.
- Now her only hope of enjoying Joseph's company again is if her father agrees to let him coach her in traditional music and dance.
- On her part, Resian cries over the inescapable loneliness when Taiyo switches her love to Joseph, a sense of insecurity in Nasila and the declaration of Old Ole Musanka that she and Taiyo must undergo the circumcision rite.
- She shudders at the thought of the circumciser's earlier visit to their home when she showed them her tools of

trade, especially the *olmurunya* (the circumciser's knife). She considers circumcision a barbaric operation.

- Resian fears that the young man who attacked them earlier might appear anytime, grab them and forcefully circumcise them or abduct them and send them to *enkamuratani* (the circumciser).
- She has all along expected to escape all this by enrolling at the university but Taiyo has let her down by not approaching their father on the subject.
- In contrast, Ole Kaelo and his wife are quite satisfied with the homecoming ceremony. Ole Kaelo praises his wife for being a perfect hostess. They truly understand the import of the ceremony- that they have now been ushered firmly into the Nasilian culture. The man cannot continue to be a loose adherent to the traditions.
- Mama Milanoi blames herself for keeping girls as *intoiye nemelanga* instead of transforming them into young women. On this matter, she faces a dilemma of either losing her girls' love, faith and confidence through the ritual or becoming a pariah in the Nasila society by refusing to abide by tradition.
- In Ole Kaelo's world, culture comes first and family interest second. He immediately directs his wife to start counseling the daughters to understand their role as potential wives of the men of Nasila. Joseph Parmuat will also be allowed to teach the girls aspects of the culture before they face the knife.
- When Ole Kaelo mentions the matter of circumcision, Mama Milanoi, hurting and tormented, is torn between her love for her daughters and her role as a faithful wife.

- Then, Ole Kaelo shows his family the new shop opened two days earlier. Resian intimates to her sister that she hopes the shop has not taken all the money required for their learning at the university. Taiyo feels the father has done well to set up a well stocked shop that radiates opulence and attracts customers.
- Taiyo is enthralled to learn that her father has given consent to her request to be coached by Joseph. The man arrives the same evening.
- Joseph is readily well-liked by all the Ole Kaelo women because of his hearty chuckle, peals of laughter and rich sense of humor.
- A strange man also comes into the home to enjoy Nasilian hospitality. He does not say his mission and no one asks him.

TASKS

- i) The two sisters have a troubled night after the homecoming ceremony but in different fashions. Contrast their different mental struggles.
- ii) What makes Taiyo not want to bother consoling her sister this very night?
- iii) Why is Resian angry with her sister this night?
- iv) In which specific ways does Mama Milanoi show that she has no opinion of her own before her husband?
- v) Explain Mama Milanoi's dilemma between the love for her children and the love for culture.

“And once uttered, she knew, the words instantly became an inviolable edict.” (Pg 61)

- In a patriarchal society like Nasila, cultural demands must be upheld and a woman has no room for dissent. If she were to save her daughters, her recourse would be Minik ene Nkotoi , a crusader against practices that violate the rights of the girl child. But enlisting her help would automatically turn her against Nasila people, who hated Minik with a passion.
- She notices that ever since her return to Nasila, her husband has been turning into a strict adherent of Nasila culture.
- She is at a crossroads. She cherishes circumcision as a rite of passage which ensures no girl gets pregnant before marriage. During her girlhood, no girl got pregnant before circumcision. Such a girl would be held in derision and married off to the oldest man in the village. This was a deterrent to keep girls chaste in mind and body. But she would not want to force her daughters to go through the ordeal of the operation. *‘The last thing she would have wished on her daughters was mental torture.’ (pg 63)*
- The FGM issue has not been discussed once in her family while in Nakuru because they thought it was archaic and should be done away with.
- On realizing Resian is reading a book while her sister is busy ferrying breakfast to the table, Ole Kaelo gives the girl a tongue lashing that leaves no doubt his dislike for her. Ironically, her mother blames her for annoying her father.

vi) Resian and Taiyo view opulence in two different ways. Which ones?

vii) How is father-daughter relationship strained in this chapter?

COMMENTARY

- The homecoming party heralds a **new phase of life** that does not augur well for the girls as *intoiye nemengalana*. Resian is depressed at the thought of facing the knife but Taiyo is more concerned about the culture blocking her from loving Joseph Parmuat.
- Mama Milanoi is hanging **in-between traditionalism and modernism**. '*Were they traditionalists or were they modernists?*' (pg 62). What she had thought was an archaic and decadent practice while in Nakuru has come to haunt her. While she knows the value of the age-old female circumcision according to Nasila culture, she cannot bring herself to allow her daughters to go through it.
- A victim of Nasilian tradition, she is a **subservient and obedient wife** and cannot question her husband's decisions. To her, his word is law. She is, therefore, not able to come to the defense of her daughters even when she knows they are hurting under some of their father's harsh edicts.
- The society respects the male's voice above the female's. The cultural **practices** seem to be **skewed against women**. They subjugate them, bring them under control and mostly satisfy masculine avarice. This explains why Mama Milanoi is voiceless against the suffering her children undergo under their arrogant and chauvinistic father.

- Although considered by the family as a pessimist, Resian's criticism seems to target certain weaknesses of the family that need to be addressed. For example, she does not find logic in showing opulence in a shop in the village when you have not taken your daughters for university education. Is she **the voice of reason** in the text?