

we hardly ever stop to analyse it. What does it mean? A woman married to a man? Exactly. A woman is not esteemed, not for her intellectual or leadership capabilities or her political acumen but first and foremost for her performance in the home and the way she brings up her family. She is identified with the home and the husband, her own identity of course having long since been erased by a patriarchal society which makes men the centre of human existence.

Languages such as Kiswahili and Gujarati, which have strong feudal connections, reveal even more oppressive terminology. In Kiswahili, a woman never marries, she is always married: *ameolewa*. It is the man who marries: *ameoa*. He is the active decision maker; she is the passive piece of property waiting to be paid for in dowry and taken by her husband. We have noticed that some modern Kenyan women are saying, in English "I was married by him" instead of "I married him". Here we see the English language being adapted to fit women's non-decision making role.

Among nationalities such as the Wakamba and the Wakikuyu, the woman is known as, for example, "Njoki wa Kamau". Njoki is "of" her husband, she belongs to him but the husband is never Kamau wa Njoki. He would be Kamau wa Maina, the son of his father. In fact the correct and proper way of addressing Njoki would be as Mama wa Kimathi, the mother of her eldest son. Her own name is not even used for of course she has no identify of her own—her very existence is dependent on that of her husband and son, not even her daughter. Western culture follows a similar pattern when women at marriage give up their own family names and take on the husband's family name.

In some Indian communities, including the Gujaratis in Kenya, the bride not only gives up her family name, but even her own first name is replaced by a name chosen by her in-laws. So a woman who for twenty or