

MAY

2023

NYAM'GONDHO

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

In other narratives and versions, it is said that he found the woman on the shores of the lake. This story has given rise to the saying "Lest you be turned into a tree stump like Nyamgondho, the son of Ombare. It is a story that calls to attention for people never to forget to be thankful for the blessings received and those that brought the blessings for to do so has dire consequences.

Achieng



NYAM'GONDHO SON OF OMBARE

Far to the south-west of South Nyanza District near Lake Victoria there is a location called Gwasi. In here lived a mixture of the Luo and Abasuba people. The people have inter married to such an extent that they are now referred to as the Luo of Gwasi. In this location there was once a poor man called Nyamgondho, son of Ombare. He was so poor that sometimes he had to go without food. His only means of earning a living was by fishing from the lake. He had no wife, because he could not afford to give the required bride wealth. He therefore suffered a great deal from frustration when the girls he desired to marry were forced to reject him because of his poverty.

One day Nyamgondho was so hungry that he felt that if he could not get fish from his snare, he would drown himself in the lake. He had already found it empty three times and when he went to see his snare for the fourth time, he did not find any fish. He thought of jumping into a deep part of the lake to drown, but he soon came to his senses and said to himself, perhaps **Nyasaye** (God) will hear my prayer. He went to one of the rocks nearby, and standing there, he said “**Nyasaye**, why don’t you have mercy on me !?”, he then gathered courage and went home.

NYAM'GONDHO SON OF OMBARE



Next morning Nyamgondho came back to his snare. Instead of finding fish, he saw an old woman in the snare, who ordered him to take her to his house. Soon after, the woman requested him to prepare an enclosure for cattle. He followed the instructions and on completion, the following night a large herd of cattle and a large flock of sheep and goats came from the lake into Nyamgondho's home. The people in the village were amazed at what had happened to the poor man. News went round that Nyamgondho was now the richest man in the area. Important persons in the community came to ask him how he had found the old woman and to share knowledge about his sudden wealth. Nyamgondho narrated the full story. The people advised him to take care of the woman well for she was a gift from God. They also warned him that such a gift, if not well treated, could be taken away by the giver. Nyamgondho took the advice of the wise old men and treated the woman kindly. The woman advised him to marry more wives, for she was too old to bear children. Nyamgondho heeded the advice. He had several children with his younger wives.



Soon he became very wealthy and the wealthier and popular Nyamgondho grew, the less he remembered his past life and difficulties. He became a proud man and abused other people who were poor. Such utterances came to the knowledge of the old woman who advised him against such behavior. She told him never to make such pronouncements again. But he did not pay any attention to her.

One day Nyamgondho went out to drink kong'o (local beer), and when he came back, he found that the gate had been closed. He asked his wives to open the gate for him, but none of them could dare open the gate. Then he became annoyed and started shouting insults and abusing all of them particularly his first wife. These were his words:

"Why don't you open the gate for me, you stupid women. Even the dirty old woman whom I picked up from the lake shore doesn't care for me now."



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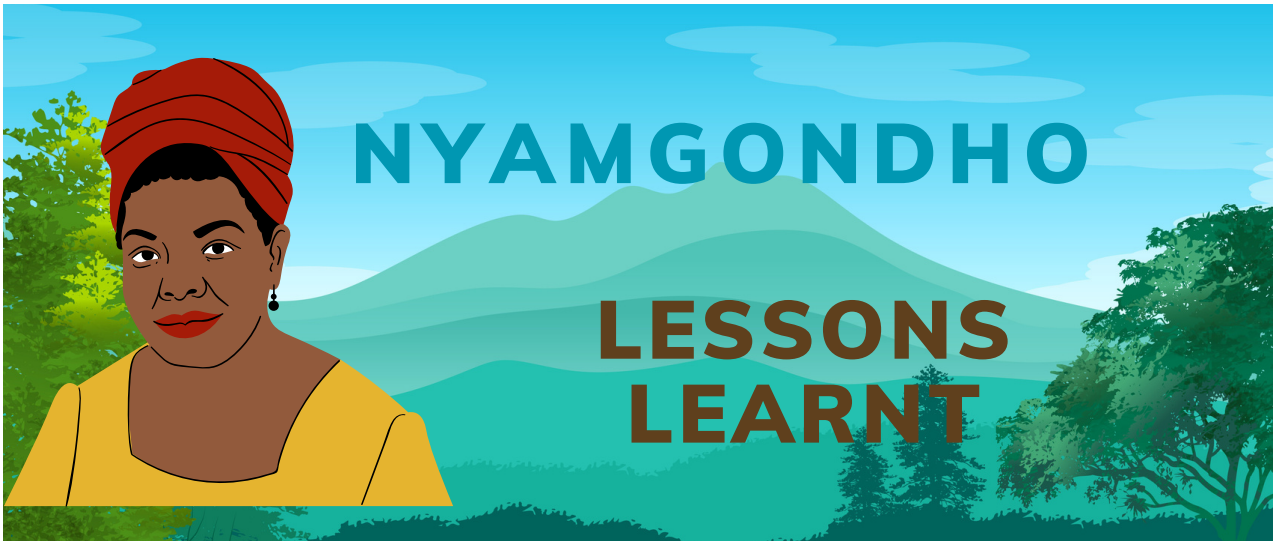


The women were of course awake and heard the abusive words Nyamgondho used about her. She went to the gate and opened it and asked Nyamgondho why he had abused her. Nyamgondho, still in a fit of anger and very drunk, went on calling her names, the woman then declared to Nyamgondho that since he no longer respected her, it was high time she went back where she had come from.

The next morning the woman started off for the lake, and all cattle, livestock, children and wealth that she came with followed her into the lake. Nyamgondho chased after her, but when he reached the lake shore, he died and like the biblical pillar of salt , he dried up and was transformed into a large tree-stump. It is said that upto the 60's, this tree could be seen and the footprints of the animals walking back into the lake were visible. They were only washed away by the uhuru rains of 1962 which also submerged the tree when the water levels went up.



**SHE LEFT AND ALL THE
WEALTH FOLLOWED HER**



This story illuminates that blessings can come into a home through a woman and requires for her to be treated with respect. In due course, the anger of a woman is not easy to pacify and when she abandon the marriage, all the wealth is gone. It therefore constrains the benefactor of the wealth to be circumspect in how to handle her.

This story also stresses the dangers of drinking alcohol and getting drunk to a point where alcohol controls the life of that person to become careless and end up losing things of great value.

Even though, the tables have turned and women are becoming breadwinners, the men must work for their rightful position in the society and be the main provider. A man should never boast on wealth brought by a woman for it takes a very special woman to provide.

"Mwandu dhako ok mari !", so is the saying. This story stresses that a Luo man must work hard and create their own wealth because if he relies on wealth that the woman came with, he will always be conflicted and harbour anger and animosity which leads to destruction.

Achieng