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SUFFERINGS OF BLACK WOMEN IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF BUCHI EMECHETA

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Abstract

The biggest problem in the world is that women have to suffer a lot. Most women are suffering from very old times only because they are women. But black women suffered more in comparison than white women. The most the novels in African literature by black women are about the role of women in African society. Most of the studies seem to be about how unfairly the white people treated women and its natives and how hard it was for the natives to keep their peaceful life and culture. African writing is full of stories about old beliefs and myths. These stories not only talk about the past, but also show how to move on. *In the Ditch, Second-class Citizen, The Bride Price, The Slave Girl, The Joys of Motherhood, Destination Biafra, Double Yoke, The Rape of Shavi* and , other works by Buchi Emecheta show how slavery, culture, past way of lives, colonial system suffering can affect the lives of women in African society. Most of the women worried what would happen to all of them. They have a lot of worries which make their lives hard and full of trouble. Traditions and past culture are more important in African culture than the lives of the people who live there. The novels show how myths, traditions and past culture changes the life of African people and their minds. Even though we live in a modern world, people still do strange things. This paper tries to show how writing and getting married in Africa affect each other. What happened to the women in the story shows how powerfully ancient cultures, slavery, past way of lives, colonial system affect African black women today.

Keywords: African, black, women. society, suffer, culture

Introduction

Buchi Emecheta was born in Nigeria on July 21, 1944, in the city of Lagos. Alice Emecheta and Jeremy Nwabudinke were both Igbo. Their names were Alice and Jeremy. Her father worked for the railroad and made moulds for things. Because discrimination based on gender was common at the time, Buchi Emecheta had to stay home while her younger brother went to school. But she was able to

convince her parents to let her go to a missionary school just for girls, where she spent most of her early childhood. Her father died all of a sudden when she was a child of nine years . After that, Emecheta got a scholarship to go to in a Girls' School , which is in Lagos. She stayed there until she was 16. At that time, she gets married to Sylvester Onwordi, a fellow learner with whom she was in love since eleven . In

the fall of that same year, she had a daughter. In 1961, the couple gave birth to their second son.

After high school, Onwordi went to college in London. In 1962, Emecheta moved to London with their first two children to be with her husband. She had three daughters and two sons over the course of six years. Her marriage was hard and sometimes violent, and she wrote about these parts of her life in autobiographical works like the 1974 novel *Second Class Citizen*. But her husband didn't like it when she wrote, so he ended up destroying her first book. *The Bride Price*, a book that came out in 1976, told about this event. That was her first book, but the first copy went missing, so she had to start over. She said later, "There were five years between the two versions." Emecheta got a divorce from her husband when she was 22. Around the same time, she had her fifth child. She has to work for her children. In 1972, she got a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Sociology from the University of London. This is something she wrote in her autobiography, *Head Above Water*, which came out in 1984. She said, "It is a miracle that I have lived in England for the past twenty years, from when I was a little over twenty and had four cold, wet babies and was expecting a fifth. In 1991, she went back to school and got her doctorate.

She wrote more than 20 books, in 1974 she writes "*Second Class Citizen*", in 1976 "*The Bride Price*", in 1977 "*The Slave Girl*", and " in 1983 "*The Joys of Motherhood*. (1979). Most of her early books were published by *Allison and Busby*, a company based in London. Margaret Busby, who was in charge of editing her work, was there.

Critics and awards praised Emecheta's themes of child slavery, motherhood, female independence, and freedom through education. She once said that her stories were "stories of a world where women face poverty and oppression, and the longer they stay, no matter where they came from, the more their problems are the same." Her works look at how tradition and modernity are at odds with each other. She has been called "Britain's first successful black woman novelist who lived after 1948."

The present paper tries to focus upon women characters in the novels of Buchi Emecheta. It deals with the introduction includes the background of African women condition through the novels of Buchi Emecheta. It illustrates the fact that women suffering is closely related to women of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial era. In the post-colonial time women in Africa were triply colonized, first by the society then by husband later by the colonizers. There are no options to avoid the suffering for women in any age. Women characters lose her life fighting her battle against the enemy called tradition. Emecheta is not interested to become as a feminist writer but she has portrayed the women of Africa with all their hard and difficult lives. Margaret Emecheta's novels depict child slavery, motherhood, female independence and freedom of women characters Emecheta also show many examples where victim in the novel try to survive and strives to get identity

It has been observed that most of the research done in this area focus on women conditions in African society. Many researchers best works illuminates, like a flash light in a dim room. Suja Rani Mathew in her research in 2010 has written *Imaging African Womanhood* which takes into consideration the some novels of Buchi Emecheta. R.Siva and T.Ajith, in a research paper, has described the suffering of women on the base of novel *The Slave Girl*. Smt Sasi Bala in 2004 has written on images of women in the novel of Buchi Emecheta. Sukla, Banerji has described about women on base of novel of Buchi Emecheta. By reading Emecheta's novels many critics believe that the women characters struggle in their lives because situations are against them. None of them get freedom in society. They are being victimized, and they need dealing with this problem. All women have been exploited in their lives in many ways. They try to fight against their exploitation. But there is need of more research, which will be done in this research work, about the life of woman in Nigerian society. A hypothesis has been studied as follows:

A suggested explanation for a group of factors phenomena either accepted as a basic for further verification (working hypothesis) or accepted as likely to the true. The present

research intends to review women characters in the novels of Buchi Emecheta. Here are some of the major issues which can be the major part of the hypothesis of the present study. All female writers in Africa have contributed in the development and enrichment of African Literature. Female writers in Africa display all women character by representing a woman in Africa. Female writers today have assumed prominence in the literary and intellectual productions. There is a reflection of intense desire for self identity. We can discover that many authors have been similarly urging and appearing against the violence on women through their writings. Primary data will be the novels or other works written by Buchi Emecheta including *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Naira Power* (1982), *Adah's Story*, *The Rape of Shavi* (1983), *Double Yoke* (1982), *Gwendolen* (1989), *Kehinde* (1994) and other works of Buchi Emecheta.

Critical analysis will be central agenda of the proposal research. The present research doesn't call for any field work. Here we will discuss about the life of Buchi Emecheta; where she has taken her birth, her parents, education, marriage, children, and life as an author. Florence Onye Buchi Emecheta the female Nigerian writer settled in England. She managed to get an education at a missionary school bound by the custom. She left the school at the age of sixteen to marry a man to whom she had been engaged since eleven years old. She became a mother at seventeen had two sons and three daughters by the time she was twenty-two. She moved to London in 1960, where she worked as a librarian and became a student at London University in 1970. She began to write about the women in Nigeria.

In this paper it has been studied about the position of women in Nigerian African society. The position of women in present day Nigeria is far better than that of colonial and pre-colonial period. The position of women in colonial Africa is the same-oppressed by men, society and by the

colonizers, but the position of women in pre-colonial period differed among the ethnic groups in Africa. From the post-colonial view women in Africa were triply colonized, first by the society then by husband later by the colonizers. Women were sold into slavery in the colonial period. The domestic slaves were sexually harassed; they cannot say no to the male masters. In some places women are raped by the colonizers. The slaves were treated cruelly and tend to work hard. The character of Adah is main character in *The Second-Class Citizen*. She is full of life and has a burning wish to live her dreams. But the tragedy of her life is as it is the same for all women; her wishes/dreams are caught up in a female body. Being a woman she is not free. She is a working woman and her dream is to go to United Kingdom. She sends her husband first and then she goes. Her condition is the same even in her dream world. She works and earns money but she has to live under the thumb of her husband. She has to bear children. She struggles hard to manage her.

In *The Bride Price* Aku-nna loses her life fighting her battle against the enemy called tradition. After her father's death she has to move to Ibuza. Ibuza is her native land and it is the place where her uncle lives. As per the African tradition Aku-nna's uncle inherits her dead father's property. The family is also a part of the property. He also gets her mother as an inheritance, and she becomes his fourth wife. No one has ever asked Aku-nna's mother what she wants. She just needs to do what is told. In the same way, no one is happy about Aku-nna's love marriage to Chike, and her stepfather hasn't paid her bride price. Even the title of the book shows that the girls are a way for the family to make money. As soon as an African girl hits puberty, she is old enough to get married. The younger an African woman is, the more likely it is that she will be married off early and for a higher bride price. The book shows that becoming a woman and getting your period isn't something to be happy about. Instead, it gives African women a mental disorder because unwanted suitors can cut a lock of hair and claim the woman as his wife without even paying the bride price. Longjan Badana, and Dr. Sangeeta Laishram have explained in *Reflection of African*

Marriage and Culture of Bride Price in Buchi Emecheta's The Bride Price

(...) in Ibuza an innocent young girls was not always safe. A man with no money to pay a bride price could hide behind the trees. He could jump out and cut a piece of hair from a girl's head. If he did that, she belonged to him for life and no other man could have her. (71)

Ojebeta is main women character in the novel *The Slave Girl*. Ojebeta is the only girl after her two brothers and they lose their parents to the epidemic that ravaged their town. Okolie, Ojebeta's brother decides to sell Ojebeta to slavery. This is where the real story begins. A young girl who has always known the love and affection of devoted parents is suddenly sent to Onitisha to become a slave to Ma Palagada. In the book *The Joys of Motherhood*, the main character, Nnu Ego, is a victim of the so-called idea of motherhood. A woman is forced to have children in a patriarchal society. It doesn't matter if she wants to or not. It has become a tradition for women to have children and raise them. Nnu Ego is the one who is hurt by this. Surprisingly, the book is not about the joys of being a mother but about being a father. Emecheta writes in *The Joys of Motherhood*:

It has always been like that in Nigeria. When you have lost your father, you have lost everything. Your mother is only a woman; she cannot do anything for you. A fatherless family is a family without a head, a family without a home. (12)

Emecheta has depicted situation of women her all novel. Here are some as *Destination Biafra*, *Adah's Story*, *The Rape of Shavi*, *Double Yoke*, *Gwendolen*, *Kehinde*, *The New Tribe*, *Head Above Water* etc.

Buchi Emecheta has depicted the suffering of women character with the heart because herself she is woman. She has told the suffering and problem of women in Igbo society because has felt in her real life. The women in society are tortured first by the society after it husband and in the last colonizers. She is harassed in every way. The life of women is full of trouble. She has freedom of nothing.

Conclusion

Buchi Emecheta has depicted women suffering in very realistic manner because she has suffered a lot in her real life. The tone of her works seems to explore the suffering of females. She depicts slavery to represent the status of women in Nigeria. The women in society are tortured first by the society after it husband and in the last colonizers. She is harassed in every way. The life of women is full of trouble. She has freedom of nothing. They are sexually harassed. They have to bear child on for the sake of society. They become the source of income for their guardian. The status of women is nothing in African society accordance with the selected novel of Buchi Emecheta. But now the situation of women is far better in the world including Nigeria than old times. There are many female writers to write about the suffering of women but Buchi has shown every kind of suffering of women through her novel. My research will bring into the light of the picture of women of African society more than other researchers.

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