

Efforts Of Buchi Emecheta In Empowering Her Women

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ABSTRACT:

The predicament of women is to be the silent sufferers in any familial background of patriarchally dominated society. Buchi Emecheta a black writer describes the woes and blues of the black women and also suggests them the ways of education and immigration to bring them out of darkness to dawn.

KEY WORDS: Predicament, Empowering, education, immigration, assertiveness.

Introduction

A general predicament of women everywhere is a state of subordination and inferiority into which they are cast down. The biological structure of women seals their fate of suffering with an inferior status. The intensity and severity of the domination of men and the oppression of women depend on national, religious and cultural aspects. The predicament of black women is worse than that of the women in the other parts of the globe. The predicament and the problems of the black women are plenteous and peculiar, due to their patriarchally centered cultural norms. Buchi Emecheta a black feminist and womanist writer addresses the woes and blues of the black women in her fiction and suggests them the ways of their empowerment.

Florence Onye Buchi Emecheta an African novelist and an Igbo writer, was born at Lagos in Nigeria later moved to London. In her novels, being an insider, she clearly deals with the cultural practices of the Igbo tribe, which affect the life of the Igbo women. Some of the customs like the conduct of virginity test, the transaction of bride price, the

expectation of bearing and rearing many children, and the practice of polygamy make the life of these women miserable. These practices laced with the poison of superstitious belief are prevalent not only in the Igbo tribe but almost in all the tribes in Africa with some variations.

Emecheta does not simply leave with the description of the maladies of the burdensome life of the black women. Through her protagonists, she shows them the ways of success. As Naomi Wolf in her writing *Fire with Fire* advocates a move from victim feminism to power feminism, Buchi Emecheta also desires the same in her women characters. She wants her female protagonists to understand the skills and abilities found in them and rise up and prove themselves as victorious women. This paper analyses Nko of *Double Yoke*, Adah of *Second Class Citizen* and Akunna of *The Bride Price* as the victims of the black society and as the overcomers of their predicament.

While women are trying different ways and means to come out of the cultural clutches, Buchi Emecheta through her writings throws light on education and immigration which play a vital role in liberating the women. Education enlightens, empowers and emboldens the marginalised women and brings them to the centre. Education empowers them to emigrate. Education emboldens them to defy the social norms. Education enlightens them to discern and decide their life. Immigration relieves the black women of all the cultural yokes upon their neck. They prefer facing discrimination to suffering in the hands of their black husbands both in their own land and abroad.

Double Yoke by Buchi Emecheta is set in the background of an educational centre. She presents the burdensome life of Nko getting education. It was written in 1981 on Emecheta's return from the University of Calabar where she delivered a series of lectures on creative writing. It is a campus novel which Emecheta originally wanted to entitle "Prostitution: Nigerian style". This fiction is about the struggles of the female protagonist Nko, who aspires to become a graduate at the University of Calabar. As the title of the novel suggests the two yokes borne by the protagonist are to marry Ete Kamba whom she loves and to get a university degree. Nko is shattered by the tortures and doubts of Ete Kamba, who looks for blood stains at the place

where they have had sex. But she recovers and rises up to the occasion and decides to complete her education ignoring him. In her efforts to pursue her education Nko is sexually abused by her Professor Ikot, who is well aware of Ete Kamba-Nko relationship. Determined Nko carrying Ikot's child as a yoke in her womb goes around the university campus proclaiming her fate boldly and not giving up.

Emecheta in *Double Yoke* presents one of her minor characters professor Bulewao as an empowered New woman and through her she speaks to her readers that education has elevated her. Miss Bulewao is introduced in the very opening sentence of the novel *Double Yoke*, "The new lecturer was very eloquent in her talk of reform-in what she would like to see done and in what she would like to see undone in the university in particular and in Nigeria in general" (9). She appears new and strange to the Nigerian students of the Calabar university because she is a woman. She is the highest paid black female lecturer on campus. Emecheta says about her, "But this new Miss Bulewao, did not sound pushful, rather the self-confident type. So sure, of herself, so sure of her subject. Well, she had written over six books on her subject, so she had reasons to be sure." (10). She is better known abroad than in her own country. Education has elevated Bulewao to such a status in the society. Through this educationist Buchi Emecheta tries to educate the young women who are blind folded by their black cultural practices.

Adah of *Second Class Citizen* strives and struggles to get educated living in the most unfavourable situation after her father's demise. As she dreams, education exalts her. With the help of the basic education, she gets at her native land, Adah goes abroad. In the land of immigration, she continues her efforts to qualify herself to become a senior assistant librarian at North Finchley Library. The education she gets emboldens her to stand on her own legs without the support of her husband. Education gives her confidence that she can earn the bread for her family on her own. Education provides her a successful and happy life though divorced from her husband. Education has made her a true conqueror lifting the banner of victory.

Emecheta suggests through the life of Adah, who is author's alter ego, that migration too liberates the black

women from their cultural burdens. This autobiographical novel through Adah reflects the life of Emecheta who herself became a successful writer in the migrated land. Black women bear with discrimination by the whites, since their own men are worse than the whites. Adah finds it difficult to get an accommodation and faces boards hanging with words, "Sorry, no coloureds". But Adah comparing this bitter experience of discrimination with the way her own men treat her, she realises in her mind, "Thinking about her first year in Britain, Adah could not help wondering whether the real discrimination, if one could call it that, that she experienced was not more the work of her fellow country men than of the whites (SCC 70).

The novel *The Bride Price* as its title conveys is about the cultural practice of the bridegroom giving a price to the bride's father on marrying her, which involves getting or demanding a high price for an eligible bride. Emecheta, in her fiction while narrating the poignant love story of Akunna, a young Igbo girl and Chike the son of a former slave, clearly sketches the various cultural aspects of Igbo tribe and the hindrances faced by the girls to get educated. Akunna gets education by the influence of Chike, her teacher and the same education enlightens her to overcome the cultural barriers of caste discrimination and marry Chike, son of a slave. She herself becomes a qualified teacher, who will be able to stand on her own legs by earning her bread. Education encourages her to ignore the superstitious belief, that is if the bride price is not accepted by the bride's father, she will die when delivering of her first child. Education emboldens her to utter a lie that she has slept with Chike, to Okoboshi who kidnaps her and forcefully marries her. She wisely exploits in her favour, Okoboshi's culturally affected mentality of expecting virginity in his first wife.

Nko and Adah, knowing the true value of education are determined and they assert themselves in getting educated. Though Adah is not a university graduate, Nko overcoming all cultural as well as the men made barriers is going to become a university graduate. In spite of the physical and psychological resistance given by the two men Ete Kamba and Ikot, Nko asserts herself to get her degree. As Adah is well aware that education is the only source which will enable her to achieve her dream of going to UK, she is determined to get it at any cost and by any means and

asserts herself to achieve it. These three are the real conquerors in attaining education to be empowered in the male dominated society. Though undoubtedly education empowers enlightens and emboldens the black women and immigration too liberates them, their personal virtue of assertiveness assures them their success.

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