



FEMINIST DISCOURSE IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S NOVELS

*Monika Devi and **Dr. Mandeep Singh

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan (India)

²Associate Professor, Department of English, SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan (India)

Email: monikageetu1512@gmail.com

Abstract: The changing roles of women has been one of the significant subjects in African women's fiction. This paper is an assessment of five books by Buchi Emecheta, a conspicuous female Nigerian writer, and it brings up the manners by which she utilizes the idea of work to feature the challenges that women face in current Nigerian culture. That's what Emecheta claims, while conventional ideas of suitable work for people have changed, women are as yet expected to accept jobs that keep them from accomplishing self-satisfaction. The paper presumes that Emecheta's female characters show a rising comprehension of the basically inconsistent nature of orientation jobs, as they try to understand their true capacity as individuals and as a woman.

[Devi, M. and Singh, M. **FEMINIST DISCOURSE IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S NOVELS**. *Researcher* 2024;16(5):1-5]. ISSN 1553-9865 (print); ISSN 2163-8950 (online). <http://www.sciencepub.net/researcher>. 01. doi:[10.7537/marsrsj160524.01](https://doi.org/10.7537/marsrsj160524.01).

Keywords: Feminist, Novels, Buchi Emecheta, Afran Women

Introduction:

A person or individual is known by his or her identity through various aspects such as name of the person, country, class, culture, religion, way of lifestyle, gender, profession etc. With the help of these aspects; an individual is identified in the society. However, when the individual faces struggle in living his life, he is unable to identify himself with the country or culture he is living with. And due to this crisis of identity, he searches for his "home" where he can develop as an individual, find a stable life and brings a balance between his wishes and the culture and tradition of his land. In the context of a female individual, the reason for the loss of identity of a woman is due to the fact that her identity is overshadowed by the presence of male individuals who possess the supreme power and position in every patriarchal society. Women are generally identified in connection with male members such as father, husband, son, uncle etc. and not by her own name or profession. Woman is the "other" of man. And this notion of "otherness" is a socially constructed one as Simone de Beauvoir had aptly remarked: One is not born, a woman rather becomes, a woman. [1]

The effect of migration on individuals is severe when they are not treated properly and equally by the host country. Such effect leads to psychological, sociological and economic breakdown of the migrants. The experiences of such migrants living outside their countries are often reflected in literature such as in the form of a fiction or poetry. As for example, African writers as well as African-American writers reflect

upon the lives and experiences of migrants living in London or America. More severely affected group of individuals due to migration are the women of African origin who leave the host country for the West in search of their great "American dreams", selfhood and liberty from traditional bindings. In this context, the present paper attempts to analyse the novel, *Second-Class Citizen* (1974)[2] written by the African woman novelist Buchi Emecheta in which the issues of migration, search for identity and home through the protagonist's life and experiences in an alien country like the United Kingdom are reflected upon.

The changing roles of women has been one of the significant subjects in African women's fiction. This paper is an assessment of five books by Buchi Emecheta, a conspicuous female Nigerian writer, and it brings up the manners by which she utilizes the idea of work to feature the challenges that women face in current Nigerian culture. That's what Emecheta claims, while conventional ideas of suitable work for people have changed, women are as yet expected to accept jobs that keep them from accomplishing self-satisfaction. The paper presumes that Emecheta's female characters show a rising comprehension of the basically inconsistent nature of orientation jobs, as they try to understand their true capacity as individuals and as a woman. Fiction, similar to some other literary genre, is made inside unambiguous social, Cultural and financial settings. As to Africa, the impossible to nature of the mainland's verifiable advancement has made the fiction created by African novelists be predominantly worried about the significant issues

confronting their social orders. One such issue, which has progressively come to the front as of late, is the idea of orientation connections, that is to say, connections among people with regards to their socially characterized personalities. Numerous female novelists have tried to research these connections, frequently endeavoring to show how socially resolved suspicions and predispositions make such connections negative and unwholesome, not simply to woman, who are normally portrayed as being forced to bear these connections, yet to men too, and to society itself. Buchi Emecheta is one of Africa's preeminent female authors in such manner. Emecheta was perhaps the earliest African woman writer to bring up the different manners by which winning normal practices and values deny women the opportunity to create to their fullest potential. In books like *In the Ditch* (1972), *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) and *Double Yoke* (1982), she depicts female characters who gallantly battle for endurance and progress notwithstanding colossal chances set in their manner by a stiff-necked maleoverwhelmed social construction or man controlled society comprised of fathers, spouses, siblings, lovers and bosses. This paper will look at how Emecheta utilizes function as a viewpoint from which to depict the idea of Nigerian women characters and status in contemporary society. It will zero in for the most part on the manners by which work shapes and characterizes people as individuals from an orientation and as people, and will feature the strains and clashes that hence emerge.

FEMINIST DISCOURSE

Generally, work is vital for the improvement of any general public, especially its proceeded with monetary advancement and the support of solid social relations. For sure, the condition of improvement of any general public has frequently been surveyed in direct extent to the nature and kind of work tracked down in it. In this way, "crude" or "in reverse" social orders are those whose ideas and techniques for work are seen to be somewhat unsophisticated or more subject to the caprices of nature than on deliberately arranged exertion. It is in this way thought to be less "exceptional" than rural social orders by most anthropological evaluations to Hunt and assembling social orders. At the level of the individual, work, thought about as the standard execution of specific undertakings and occupations, is vital to each citizen. It frequently decides the situation with the person by laying out a reason for their social, financial and political situation inside society. In current cultures, work is seen basically as far as the positions people accomplish professionally, which are imperative parts of their general character, firmly connected to their

ideas of what their identity is, the way they like to be seen by others, and what they might want to turn into. Consequently, the coupling of expert calling and name in callings like medication and regulation. The incorporation of the work one accomplishes professionally into as essential a part of individual way of life as one's name is plainly definite of the key significance of work to character. Work encompasses the performance of duties, the fulfilment of social expectations and the conformity to dominant social norms, as well as the creation of personal identity. In Emecheta's books, this diverse characterization of work is frequently obvious. In *Second-Class Citizen* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, the fundamental characters are women who all the while complete the elements of spouse, mother and breadwinner. Part of the troubles they face lies in both the test of really playing out these jobs and in causing the work they to do intelligent of their own qualities and desires. The relationship that exists among work and orientation underlines the idea of work as a multi-layered build. Although, a few researchers have contended that, there is little basis for the division of labor by gender, it does appear that work and gender have a close relationship that is manifested in different ways in various cultures (Raza 119-29) As per Amina Mama, Amina Mama, "to say that there is a sexual division of labour means that not only do men and women perform different kinds of work, but that their labour is also differentially valued and remunerated in accordance with the gender of the workforce performing it" (Mama 55). Numerous social orders put limitations on specific sorts of work as a component of their assurance of orientation jobs. In this way, in certain societies, women are not permitted to raise explicit sorts of yields, back specific sorts of creatures, fashion metal or enter the military callings, and are frequently limited to specific situations in the progressive system of the prevailing religion, on the off chance that they are not banished from them altogether. These limitations are many times legitimized on strict grounds, particularly the risk of custom contamination of specific assignments. Then again, numerous social orders have assignments and occupations which are solely performed by women, including child minding, housekeeping, unimportant exchanging, planting and some specialty exercises. It is not surprising that work undertaken by women is often trivialized as not being "real" work, that is, not as significant as the work performed by men in the fulfilment of roles culturally defined as male (Tong 51). As a female character in Emecheta's *Naira Power* wryly observes, "housekeeping is no work, and is only a woman's job" (Emecheta 1982b: 9). Indeed, several studies have shown that unquestioned notions of gender-appropriate tasks and occupations imprison both men

and women within predetermined positions in the public and private spheres of society. Emecheta shows, in her fiction, how the resigned acknowledgment of specific types of work, particularly by women, confines their true capacity for self-improvement, restraints their psychological viewpoint and conditions them to work inside the restrictions of abusive social frameworks as opposed to look for change. Work, in its wide definition, uncovered the cycles of what Barbara F. Reskin refers to separation as: “the practice of distinguishing categories based on some attribute a logical necessity for the differential evaluation and differential rewards” (Reskin 201). Such classes naturally expect the presence of a prevailing gathering and a subordinate gathering relating to given orientation jobs in any general public.

Without a doubt, work is a field where the issues of orientation, race and nationality, and social class meet. Orientation, as an acknowledgment of the socially-developed sign of innate organic qualifications, is maybe most plainly noticeable in the jobs doled out to women, for those jobs at the same time legitimize and are legitimate by the social standards which shape meanings of which people ought to be. Race and identity are additionally friendly builds reliant upon frequently erratic impression of public beginning and actual appearance, and, similar to orientation, all the while expect and support the appropriateness of business related jobs. Social class likewise has a close relationship to work, since social renown is close inseparable from the regard where specific sorts of work are held. Together, these components give a complicated, multi-layered point of view from which to see the place of women in Emecheta's imaginary world, and to survey the idea of the different obstacles and detriments they face as a result of that position. Since work is critical to social and individual character, it is nothing unexpected that it is a significant sub-subject in contemporary African fiction. Work is utilized to outline character, lay out inspiration and assist with making the foundation important for an intensive assessment of the issues being dealt with. One of Emecheta's fundamental points in the books being viewed as here is to show that orientation doesn't surmise an individual's capacity to perform specific jobs effectively. This is generally obviously exhibited as for parenthood. A few male characters like Francis in *Second-Class Citizen* and Nnaife in *The Joys of Motherhood* are physically strong and, to be sure, savage safeguards of their intimate privileges. The father children and, in this regard, go about their responsibilities as spouses. In any case, as Emecheta brings up, these men feel that their obligations end with the satisfaction of their sexual jobs and the books show that their inability to

perceive the profound and different jobs intrinsic in their status as spouses and fathers implies that they have not completely done their jobs as men. The ramifications are significant, for they show that, similarly as men can't be limited to simply sexual jobs, neither should women. Such limitations are quite evident in the tension put upon women to bear male children, as though it were a cycle they had command over. Emecheta's female characters are many times women who at first think that the most elevated accomplishment of their lives is that of bearing children, yet the resulting difficulties of raising a family practically without any help make them question this profoundly dug in conviction. It is currently such self-scrutinizing that the erratic idea of numerous orientation jobs is perceived. Basically, Emecheta's books manage female characters who think of themselves as in generalized orientation jobs that force specific obligations and obligations upon them. Some, as Adah, Aku-nna, Adaku and Nko step by step understand that these obligations are contrary to their longing to carry on with satisfied lives, and in that lies the key clash at the core of the vast majority of the books: the decision between expecting ok yet prohibitive social jobs, or defying them. Every decision conveys its own prizes and punishments, so it isn't just an issue of picking either great and terrible. Emecheta underlines the intricacy of the issues required by setting her books in the period between the 1940s and the 1980s, when social mores were at their most conflicted in Nigeria. In *Second-Class Citizen* for instance, the ladies of Ibadan hate Lagos since it is a city whose regulations repress conventional methods of rebuffing offenses, and, by suggestion, debilitate the hold of Ibadan culture on indigenes live there (8). A comparable circumstance is found in *The Joys of Motherhood*, where the bizarre new prerequisites of a pioneer entrepreneur economy make Lagos a spot “where men's flesh hung loose on their bones, where men had bellies like pregnant women, where men covered their bodies everyday” (46). The actual title of *Double Yoke* is an immediate reference to the twin burdens of custom and innovation that ladies bear, and that takes shape the clashing requests that make it very challenging for ladies to find success in current culture.

The indecision of a culture on the edge of groundbreaking change puts Emecheta's characters, male and female, in an abnormal position, since there could be as of now not an unassailable conviction about what comprises fitting jobs for people. Values that were proper to agrarian social orders are awkward in the city, particularly metropolitan focuses like Lagos, London and Calabar, where the greater part of the activity happens. Overall, the male characters are delayed to understand this major social change and its

suggestions for orientation connections. In large numbers of the books, men actually see ladies in the deep rooted way, as wares, immaterial by their own doing, latent animals to use in bring abundance to the family, for the most part through their lady of the hour cost or the creation of children. In *Peon*, the youthful Adah rapidly understands that no one is keen on her for her own purpose, “only in the money she would fetch and the housework she could do” (9). Fathers in *The Bride Price* and *The Joys of Motherhood* are significantly more straightforward, naming their little girls *Aku-nna* (“father’s wealth”) and *Nnu-Ego* (“a lot of cash”) separately, names which are strict declarations to their status as alienable products with obvious material esteem, whatever amount of they might cherish them as girls. This externalization of women is built up by the act of widow legacy, which happens in the two previously mentioned books. In both, men acquire the spouses of perished family members as nonchalantly as some other resource, with little respect for the sensations of the women in question.

Emecheta's female characters likewise have confidence in the predominance of customary standards, however before long understand that things are changing in new and frequently unforeseen ways. A significant number of them acknowledge, for instance, that the husband wife relationship can't be what Kenneth Little calls a “companionate relationship,” dependent upon the consensus of both partners, and this holds true even in cases where the wife is not socially inferior to her husband, like Adah in *SecondClass Citizen* (Little 129). They understand that men can't take up the obligations that accompany being men in the customarily acknowledged sense, on the grounds that such ideas are no more viable in a quick evolving Nigeria. As a female person states in *The Joys of Motherhood*: Men here are too busy being white men's servants to be men. We women mind the home. Not our husbands. Their manhood has been taken away from them. The shame of it is that they don't know it. All they see is the money, the shining white man's money. (51). Men are feeble, in the feeling of being weak notwithstanding change, and the acknowledgment of this is normal to Emecheta's different books. In *The Ditch*, husband and fathers are for the most part missing in the groups of *Pussy Cat Mansions*; in *Second-Class Citizen*, Francis' errand is decreased to that of siring posterity, a capability Adah becomes tired of after the introduction of their third child ; in *The Bride Price*, *Aku-nna* evades the “true-born” men of the local area for the love of an untouchable. Changing social and monetary circumstances deny men the capacity to keep being men in the customary feeling of being heads of families, providers and mindful family men. The

resultant vacuum is filled by women, and, as a outcome of this, a huge open door arises for them to demonstrate their self-esteem and to lead satisfying, good and intentional lives. What Emecheta does is to show how women rise bravely to the difficulties of the time, featuring their victories, also as their disappointments. Emecheta's characters at first work diligently in satisfaction of their conventional jobs as wives, moms and daughters, yet they progressively start to understand that they ought to look to fulfill their own longings as opposed to just those of others. In *Second-Class Citizen*, Adah gets a generously compensated work, an improvement which startles her significant other, who contemplates whether their marriage will endure: : “Her pay will be three times my own. My colleagues at work will laugh at me” (26-27). Emecheta's portrayal of education as a catalyst for personal liberation resonates deeply, highlighting the potential for individuals to challenge and redefine their identities within oppressive systems. She emphasizes her belief in the transformative power of education for societal improvement by saying that, “I always believe that given the Big E-Education-the position of women can be very positive. . . I believe that if you create a heroine, whether African or European, with education not necessarily money, but education she gains that confidence of being able to cope with the modern world”(99). Emecheta's exploration of education in *Double Yoke* extends beyond personal empowerment to encompass broader societal transformation. Through the lens of her protagonists, she illuminates the potential of education within the confines of Nigerian academia, disrupting traditional power structures and challenging systemic inequalities. In the novel, Buchi Emecheta masterfully depicts the transformative power of education in the lives of her female protagonists. Through the educational journey, Nko navigates the intricate web of societal expectations and patriarchal norms, ultimately finding empowerment. As Nko asserts her newfound independence in *Double Yoke*, declaring, “I do not have to wait for a man to define my worth”(151), Emecheta expresses the fundamental role of education in fostering self-awareness in the face of adversity. In *Gwendolen*, the protagonist's psychological journey serves as educative, which is a means of transcending her marginalized status as a young Jamaican girl, allowing her to confront and navigate the complexities of womanhood and motherhood.

The quest for autonomy emerges as a central theme in both novels, illustrating the struggle of Nigerian women to assert their independence and navigate patriarchal societies. Through the journeys of the protagonists, *Gwendolen* and *Nko*, Emecheta explores the complexities of womanhood in Nigerian culture, highlighting the challenges and triumphs of

seeking autonomy in a male-dominated world. In *Gwendolen*, the protagonist embarks on a journey of selfdiscovery and resilience in the face of trauma and oppression. Despite enduring unspeakable horrors, including rape at the hands of her own father, Gwendolen refuses to be defined by her circumstances. Instead, she strives to carve out a better life for herself and her child, defying societal expectations and reclaiming her autonomy. Gwendolen's quest for autonomy is a testament to the indomitable spirit of Nigerian women, as she navigates the complexities of womanhood with unwavering determination and strength. Similarly, in *Double Yoke*, Nko's pursuit of education serves as a catalyst for personal liberation and autonomy. Through her journey, Nko challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations, asserting her independence in a patriarchal society. Despite facing numerous obstacles and setbacks, including the betrayal of a trusted mentor, Nko remains steadfast in her quest for autonomy, refusing to be confined by the limitations placed upon her by society. Her determination showcases the transformative power of education in dismantling oppressive structures and fostering personal growth. Emecheta depicts the tyranny, abuses and injustices faced by her women characters, according to Florence Stratton, Emecheta's women characters find themselves constrained within narrow boundaries dictated by traditional male norms, stifling their innate human potential and relegating them to subservience. These characters face both physical and psychological oppression, compelling them to conform to the strict expectations of maledominated societies. Their experiences mirror the silenced lives of enslaved women. (Umeh 100). Her narrative thus intricately scrutinizes societal norms and gender dynamics, challenging prevailing stereotypes by presenting the multifaceted experiences of her characters. Emecheta's exploration of societal expectations sheds light on the intersections of gender, class, and cultural traditions. By examining how characters like Nko and Gwendolen navigate these intersections, this analysis reveals the ways in which women challenge and redefine traditional gender roles. In *Double Yoke*, Nko's journey from a rural village to the bustling city of Lagos exposes her to a myriad of societal expectations and pressures, particularly regarding her role as a woman.

References

- [1] Beauvoir, Simone de, *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973. p.301. Print
- [2] Emecheta, Buchi, *Second-Class Citizen*. South Africa: Heinemann, 1974. Print. All further text references are from the same edition.

- [3] "Definition of Identity and Home". Oxford Dictionaries. 2014. Web 7 May 2014.
- [4] Hooks, bell, *Feminist Theory: from margin to center*. Boston: South End Press, 1984. p.14. Print.
- [5] Aldridge, Delores P, *Towards Integrating Africana Women into Africana Studies*. *Out of the Revolution: the Development of Africana Studies*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2003. Pp. 191-203. Print.
- [6] Hudson-Weems, Clenora, *Africana Womanism*. *Out of the Revolution: the Development of Africana Studies*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2003. Pp. 205-217. Print.
- [7] Hfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi, *Gender in African Women's Writing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, p.7. Print.
- [8] Boss, Joyce, *Women and Empowerment: An Interview with Buchi Emecheta*. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 16(2), 1988, Pp. 93-100. Print.
- [9] Ward, Cynthia, *What They Told Buchi Emecheta: Oral Subjectivity and the Joys of „Otherhood“*. *PMLA* 105.1, 1990, Pp. 83-97. Print.
- [10] A. Cox, Margaret, *Buchi Emecheta: Re-imagining of the African Feminism Self*. In *African Women Novelists Re-Imagining Gender* edited by Mala Pandurang and Anke Bartels. New Delhi: Pencraft International. 2010. Pp. 51-63. Print.
- [11] Baisel, Anu, *Coping with Alienation and Attaining Psychic Wholeness in the novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta*, *Language in India*, 12 (5), 2012, Pp.10-19. Print.

4/22/2024