

Being a Black Woman in the Post Colonial Africa - A Case Study of African Women Fiction Writers – Flora Nwapa (1931-1993) and Dr Buchi Emecheta (1944 - 2017)

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Abstract: *This research will help us to comprehend the Post Colonial African culture and society from a female point of view. This study will also help us to discover the aspirations of African women with the help of literature reviews and panel surveys. I personally feel that in the academics, African women's writing should be included in the syllabus under the genre Feminism in the Indian Universities. And I hope this research will be an implication for future research scholars. It examines the self-discovery of the protagonists of the novels in the colonial and post-colonial context. It is utilized to form a series of a modern, self-determined girl child who transcends societal limitations and constraints, and also provides historical background, contextualizes the study, and presents the framework of the novel. This research also reveals how the rigidity of gender norms restricts the protagonists to conformity, sacrificing the self to facilitate reintegration into society. Focuses on the post-colonial context, where the conflicts between modern and traditional social structures are seen as the main determining factors in the developmental process. It deals with the developmental process within the African community, a group that has very complex, of identity issues because of its colonial influence, summarizing the arguments and conclusion, written by authors of the novels.*

Keywords: Historical background of Nigeria, colonialism, Voice of African Women, Post colonial, Igbo culture, Yoruba culture, Womanism, Motherhood, Racism, African Folklore, Self Identity, World War II, Civil War, African Women's point of view, Conflict between tradition and modernity. Self Identity and Self discovery, Marriage and Relationships, Women's issue, Feminism in Africa, Gender disparities and patriarchal society, Capturing the voice of African Woman, Thoughts and fears of a disturbed Woman

1. Introduction

This paper is a simple compilation aiming to raise the general voices of many grass roots of African Women. In several African countries women represent the majority of the population responsible for the daily survival of their community and they have also played a significant role in the movements for independence from their colonial apartheid minority governments. The African women have a crucial role yet to play in Africa's future. Women, of course, are not all the same, they are individuals with distinctive educational, class, religious and linguistic backgrounds. And yet people often define themselves and are defined by the communities to which they belong. The voices of African women cry out with expressions of genuine concerns that are not very well understood from afar. It is therefore extremely important that everyone who hears the echo of their voice draws a little closer in order that he or she might hear well and understand this voice. One important factor portrayed in the study is that the African woman's voice as expressed by the circle of concerned African Women theologians (A feminist organization) is a universal voice in the sense that from all walks of life.

2. Research Proposal and Hypothesis

How should readers and critics approach the idea of "African Women Fiction" or for that matter "World Literature"? This wide ranging conversation explores that question. My great hope for African Women writers is that one day they will come into their own. As African women still struggle to claim their rightful place in African society

and the world. The celebration of women writers recognizes the contributions of women writers throughout history. Women have written almost every imaginable works like travel books, religious commentaries, histories, economic and scientific works. The goal is to promote awareness of the intergenerational conflict and tensions between tradition and modernity confronting entrenched social inequality and inadequate access to resources. Women across Africa are working with determination and imagination to improve their material conditions and to blaze a clear path for their daughters and granddaughters. Women too are artists and are endowed with a special sensitivity and compassion, necessary for creativity through prose, poetry, drama, fiction and many other forms. African women speak their thoughts and share their perceptions about their lives and their societies through their writings.

In "Dr James" notes, we discover that women writers have been no less concerned than men to articulate and denounce the poverty, corruption, racism and destructive practices that have impeded development in Africa. At the same time women writers appear to treat more intimately the themes of love and death, transcendence and the struggle, to rise above the traditional limitations responsible for the women's underdevelopment and oppression. Women were left behind to mind the homes, the children and the farms. Their erstwhile dependence on the men deepened their consumerist status is heightened. Men had all the money and the power and we blame that colonialism as a whip horse, but it is colonialism that eventually offered the beacon of light, of women's western education and exposure which propelled into the outer wider world, recognizing and

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commonality of women's subjugation world-wide. Women tend to be autobiographical in their approach in handling the affairs and issues affecting the Women.

3. Significance of the Research

Feminism is seen in Africa as an imported ideology, alien to the African society and it is seen in the newest form of neo-colonialism and so because, most of the African female writers preferred to be referred to as Motherist or Womanist instead of a feminist because Africans believe that most matrimonial homes have been ruined because of feminism. Womanism means matured, responsible and courageous behavior of a girlish gender. It also examines that women too have played great roles in the growth of the society and their immediate families, thus they deserve to be acknowledged and appreciated by the male gender.

Humanism is an ideology created and designed for all the women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African Women. The focus will be on the three approaches - the structure, sociological and linguistic. The structural approach will help us to study the structural patterns of *Buchi Emecheta's "The Slave Girl", "The Bride Price", "The Joys of Motherhood" and "The Second Class Citizen"* *Flora Nwapa's "Efuru", "Women are different" and "Wives at War and other stories"*. The sociological approach presents the advantage of dealing, the relationship between literature and society. Finally the third one will help us to analyze the different styles used by the authors. As writers they believe in the utilization of African folklore and Imagery to the extent possible, and they have used them effectively to translate them almost literally from the African language. And they have also endeavored the words to keep, as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. The realistic representation of the female writers of socio - cultural experiences across Nigeria and Marginalization of their extraordinary abilities to assert their autonomy as individuals.

This study is a comparative analysis of the African female, from different layers of meaning and intention, The study traces the construction of identity of the selected texts by female authors writing in English. The growth and development, by examining the complex interplay of culture, race, gender, historical context, and religious ideology, reveal how these factors combine to condition of the personal formation of the protagonists. The exploration of the emotional terrain, loneliness, alienation and difficulties, particularly for a young child of being very obviously different. Expression of remorse shifted into an empty reflex expression, the corners of the mouth "tugging up into a smile" capturing the voice, thoughts and fears of a disturbed Woman.

4. The Scope of the Study

The research will adopt two African women fiction writers as a case study with the view of scholars in other works reviewed in the study. The scope of this study is limited to, understand the African culture, relationships, social thinking

and awakening, the revelation of character of thoughts, passions, motives, their spirit, struggles, needs, unique experiences, gender prejudice, identity, inner voice, resistance of ethnicity, Tradition and change, redefinition of humanism as portrayed in the works of *Buchi Emecheta's "The Slave Girl"* and *"The Bride Price"*, respectively in order to make a thorough investigation. "*Flora Nwapa's "Efuru"* is enterprises the nature of women, Igbo marriages and relationships, spirituality and superstitions, the practices and beliefs of Igbo culture. The impact of western education complementing several characters in "*Wives at War and Other Stories*" The role of women is elevated in regard to the vulnerability of the pragmatic changes showcased in "*Women are different*".

This research will be undertaken to find out what is slowing down the emergence of Feminism in Africa as a whole and also to determine the significance of the African women's fiction writer's contributions into the knowledge which hopefully will make a new insight into the literary merit. Desire to understand the Igbo culture, Colonial influence and Civil War, their relationships, social thinking and awakening. The concern over the practical problems in Africa initiates the research and evaluating with other studies (Indian Literature).

5. Biographies of the Authors

Flora Nwapa Born in 1931 at Oguta (Ugwuta), Nwapa was educated at the Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls High School, near Port Harcourt, and at the University College, Ibadan, after which she worked as an education officer. After the Nigerian civil war, she served as a commissioner of education in the government of East Central Nigeria. She then retired to a publishing business, Tana Press, which specializes in publishing children's literature and to which she has contributed numerous titles. Her post-civil war titles include works set during and after the Nigerian civil war, notably *Idu (1970)*, *Is Lagos and Other Stories (1971)*, *Wives at War and Other Stories (1975)*, *Never Again (1975)*, *One is Enough (1981)* *Women are different (1986)*. She continues to appear regularly in African literature and African women's meetings, during the 1991-92 academic year she accepted an appointment as a visiting professor of African literature at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. **Efuru** (1966) explores this landmark book with a subject that is quite unusual in African literature as a whole. The unconventional African woman and heroines are generally independent. Minded women who often flout traditional customs.

Dr. Buchi Emecheta was born on 21st July 1944 in Nigeria is an African Novelist who has published over 20 books, including "*Second Class Citizen (1974)*" "*The Bride Price (1976)*" "*The Slave Girl (1977)*" and "*The Joys of Motherhood*" (1979). Buchi Emecheta was born of Igbu heritage in Nigeria near Lagos. With her two children and her husband, she later moved to England. She graduated from the London University with a degree in Sociology. Emecheta's struggle in getting her education in London played a major part in her life. Her themes of slavery, motherhood, female independence and freedom through education have won her considerable critical acclaim and

honors. *Emecheta* once describing her stories as stories of the world where women face the universal problems of poverty and oppression. Though she moved to England in the early 1960's, *Emecheta's* novels draw heavily upon Nigerian beliefs and post colonial culture. Many of her works are autobiographical in nature, feminist in spirit. She gained recognition as the first African Woman writer to settle down in London. Emecheta won the Jock Campbell Award from the *New Statesman* in 1978 for her novel *The Slave Girl*.

6. Background Study

Buchi Emecheta's "The Slave Girl"

Is intrinsically linked to the idea of the Postcolonial. It is the story of a young girl, Ojebeta, who is sold into slavery, in Nigeria, the early years of the 20th century. As one might expect, the novel is a critique and in this case, condemnation of women's role in African society. *Emecheta* makes extensive use of the Metaphor of Slavery to drive her point about women's lot home. The *Emecheta's* novel is a searing indictment both of slavery and of the imbalanced gender roles of the African society in which the story takes place. She also looks at the caste system in Nigerian culture. The book draws on the events that *Emecheta* witnessed growing up in Nigeria. Ojebeta's birth was considered to be unique, that all the other girls had by her mother died immediately after they were born. Everyone loved Ojebeta, including her mother and two brothers, and even her father who went miles to get tin amulets to guard the child's life. And her older brother decided to sell her off to their rich relative as a slave. The novel follows Ojebeta's life with the Palagadas. Ojebeta is warmly received by her people and she basks of being free and doing what her other village age mates do. She is ahead of them as she has firmly secured in her trade with some money she had stashed away during her stay with the Palagadas and she even learnt how to read. Ojebeta later agrees to marry Jacob, an educated, hardworking man who fully pays her slavery money to Clifford and sets her totally free.

"*The Bride price*" although fiction is autobiographical. The industrialized urban center, will later contrast with the family's move back to the traditional, agrarian society of their ancestral village in "*The Bride price*" and the rebellion against the traditional marriage's. The novel unfolds into a very tightly controlled path, following to the bitter end that women were slaves no matter what their actual legal or social status. Slaves as property, slaves as wives, slaves as chattel. Her portrait of Ibo culture is a very different one from *Chinua Achebe's* but her novel is set long after "*Things fall apart*" when traditional structures have begun to malfunction seriously under the impact of urbanization, because she shares many western feminist concerns.

Buchi Emecheta in her novel "*the Bride Price*"(1976), the story is about the clash between the traditional customs of a small Ibo village in Nigeria and the ever encroaching influence of Africa's European Colonizers, seen through the eyes of a young girl. The bride price, a fee that is traditionally paid by the prospective husband's family for the prospective wife is a theme that weaves its way throughout the novel. *Emecheta* uses this practice of bride price

literally, as well as symbolically represents women's submission to men.

"*The Joys of Motherhood*" is a novel written by **Buchi Emecheta**. It was first published by Allison & Busby in 1979 and was reprinted in 2008 by Heinemann's African Writers Series. The basis for this novel is the "necessity for a woman to be fertile, and above all to give birth to sons. It tells the tragic story of Nnu-Ego, daughter of Nwokocha Agbadi and Ona, who had a very bad fate in bearing a child. This novel explores the life of a Nigerian woman, Nnu Ego. Her life is the center of her children and through them, she gains the respect in her community as a mother and as a wife. Through Nnu Ego's journey, Emecheta forces her readers to consider the dilemma associated with adopting new ideas and practices against the inclination to cleave to the tradition. In this novel, Traditional tribal values and customs begin to shift with increasing colonial presence and influence. She struggles with her motherhood and with her being as a wife and supporting her entire family along with being her own independent person.

Emecheta reveals and celebrates the pleasures derived from fulfilling responsibilities related to family matters in child bearing, mothering, and nurturing activities among women. However, the author additionally highlights how the 'joys of motherhood' also include anxiety, obligation, and pain. In the words of critic Marie Umeh, It must have been difficult to draw provocative images of African motherhood against the already existing literary models, especially on such a sensitive subject and "breaks the prevalent portraiture in African writing. The Author tries to highlight the insecurity of marriage Motherhood using provocative images the already existing models. Bush tries to articulate the possibility of women economically and emotionally independent shown through the female character. Being determined how she overcomes the challenges and obstacles of possessive male attitude. World War II interferes into the life of Nnu's life and destroys the happiness and celebration.

"*Second Class Citizen*" by **Buchi Emecheta** is about the struggle of Adah, the main character, not only she struggles for her survival, but also her dreams, while growing as a woman, moving from a high class position of the poor native Nigerian in a predominantly white European society. The invocation of Britain in a novel which has focused exclusively on Africans is curious. In fact the emphasis is put on the author's style and the character's discourse. *Buchi Emecheta* emigrated from Nigeria to London with her young husband to find herself ultimately alone, raising children in a hostile and poverty ridden climate. Through hard work and study, she became an influential writer focusing on the roles of women in both the traditional and emigrant societies. Part of her struggle also deals with the issues of race and being black on the face of English racism. *Second Class Citizen* is a book that depicts the struggle of women in receiving their education in a white society while adopting religious beliefs and still following the beliefs of her own people. This novel clearly represents women as more enduring in the face of difficulties, more resourceful and resentful in the home front of finance management and

better composed in distress situations. The protagonist succeeds in recovering her lost identity in England. She becomes successful in her fight with the outside world and makes England her home and thus gains her identity. Emecheta's novel character gets adapted to the cultural alienation against sexism and racism and asserts a promising new life in England. The first part of the novel set in Nigeria and the second part is the Emigration of the Protagonist to England along with her husband to pursue higher education.

Efuru (1966), was the first internationally published book, in English, by a Nigerian woman. Ergo is a substantial stepping stone in the Nigerian literature. Flora Nwapa (1931-1993) sets her story in a small village in colonial West Africa as she describes the youth, marriage, motherhood, and eventual personal epiphany of a young woman in rural Nigeria. Efuru lived in a male dominated society elopes from her father's house to live with her poor Lover, who could not pay the customary bride price, bringing shame to her successful warrior father. Efuru has no regrets, but follows her heart. The respected and beautiful protagonist, an independent-minded Ibo woman named Efuru, wishes to be a mother. Her eventual tragedy is that she is not able to marry or raise children successfully.

Alone and childless, Efuru realizes she surely must have a higher calling and goes to the lake goddess of her tribe, Uhamiri, discovers the path she must follow. A rich exploration of Nigerian village life and values, offers a realistic picture of gender issues in a patriarchal society as well as the struggles of a nation exploited by colonialism. In Efuru, the protagonist agrees to marry without waiting for the customary premarital investigations of the groom's family background and the payment of the bride price - two extremely important traditions in Igbo culture. Marital compatibility, a secondary theme in Efuru, is the main theme. Adah becomes a predator in the hands of Francis and his family members because of her resourcefulness and Efuru's husband, Adizua, squanders her money on his concubines is abhorrent in the story.

Women are Different The moving story of a group of Nigerian women, which follows their lives from their Schooldays together through the trials and tribulations of their adult lives. This novel shows Nwapa at her finest through the story we see some of the universal problems faced by women everywhere in the world. The struggle for financial independence and a rewarding career, the difficulties of relationships, and the dilemmas of bringing up a family, often without a partner which was set against the background of a developing Nigeria, The Women Issue in Flora Nwapa's Women Are Different aims to analyze the gender patterns in Nigerian society with reference to Flora Nwapa's novel. Women are Different. Flora Nwapa narrates how the Nigerian women begin to gain consciousness about their rights such as having access to education, the advantages and disadvantages of living in a newly independent Nigeria. Nigerian women are brought forward by Flora Nwapa, paradoxically and has been observed that some Nigerian women characters begin to long for the old British colonial days due to the fact that freedom brings some responsibilities as well. The leading characters include urban and rural women, a wife and mother of seven who

was constantly saving, but did not buy a new dress in the last four years, Chika, whose rich, handsome and responsible husband had become too busy and less compassionate as he became richer, a professional woman caught up in an interracial relationship and an illicit love affair with a married man, and a girl who nurses a young man of a lifelong obsession.

The Writer gives us a chance to explore into the culture and history and gender patterns of the Igbo culture.

In "**Wives at War and other stories**" Flora go beyond the conventional images of women as victims of war. In the first couple of stories, she shows a diversity of 'women's experience of war' with a cast of displaced wives and mothers who develop strategies to cope with war-induced changes and meet their responsibilities for the survival and well-being of their families. We also see women mobilizing social networks as they face conflict and struggles over self identity and self definition, status and power. The mood in the stories is well described in the background. It "varies from comedy to tragedy, satire to drama" but "reveals a compassionate insight into the lives of women fighting heroic-wars.

"Flora Nwapa's collection of absorbing short stories revolves around women's involvement in all kinds of wars in West Africa and in the central Africa. We perceive a variety of experiences of different kinds of women who underwent in the Nigerian civil war. We see the militant leaders of Biafra's women's organizations waging war against the bureaucracy which denied them an opportunity to represent their country in abroad. We also see women who hate the war, and are also indifferent to the politics and are concerned about the survival of their families. But some women are prepared to sacrifice everything they have to prevent their relations being conscripted into the army. Compared to other women in Nigeria, Nwapa is more conscious of the political game change situation in Nigeria after the Independence. After the Civil War (1966-1970) the awareness and catalogue of the events of the War present women as an unsung hero of the War. The new turn stakes the dynamism and resourcefulness of a Nigerian Woman. They also begin to stabilize the life of their lives and their immediate families.

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