

CHAPTER IV

MOTHERHOOD IN “*THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*”

The concept of ‘women’ has long been read and re-read. A woman is a female human. It is a gender identity for the females. ‘Women’ have long been regarded as one, a homogenous totality. But they are always marginalized for being weak, dependent, uneducated, jobless, black etc. It is generally or to say universally believed and practiced that a woman is complete only when she bears children to her husband and enjoys her motherhood. Hence, women symbolize fertility, fecundity and fruitfulness. But, to what extent the motherhood that completes a woman, gives women their respective place and space, are a matter of study.

‘Motherhood’ is seen as one of the most essential requirements to complete a woman. It has still been practiced rather with traditional, cultural and religious values than with modern values. The term ‘Motherhood’ has always been a complicated yet sacred thing. Motherhood, in the words of many writers, has got many definitions and assumptions. Yet, it has remained pristine as always. Motherhood is something that one cannot define or explain in words, it is something that a woman experiences and takes it to be the most sacred level. ‘Motherhood’ is at first biological, which connects to every emotions of women and then it goes way beyond its meaning to the extent of social structure, practice, imposition etc. For some, it completes a woman, for some it is a means or way for a woman to escape from being barren, for some it is a heritage provider.

Reproduction and motherhood are the central concerns of feminist and woman’s movement right from the very beginning. Motherhood is understood as an important act which goes way beyond the physical act of giving birth irrespective of class, creed, culture, age, religion etc. In physical language, motherhood is the act of giving birth and nurturing the new life. Therefore, it is regarded as a sacred and powerful spiritual act for being able to bring new lives to the world. But, even if it is regarded sacred, a woman loses her individuality in its sacredness. A woman passes through a lot of changes during her pregnancy, both physical and mental. A woman stops being a carefree and bold individual for she now bears a life in her tummy. She now becomes more responsible

than she used to be, which is no doubt a good thing, but she loses her 'self'; or rather she sacrifices her 'self' and gets totally absorbed in the care of the child.

In mythical aspects, motherhood is sentimentalized and idealized. Virgin Mary is regarded as the supreme mother in Christianity. Hindu religion is seen to worship so many Devi-Ma (Mother Goddess) namely Durga-Ma, Kali-Ma, Lakshmi-Ma, Saraswati-Ma etc. epitomizing the attributes of strength, prosperity, knowledge etc. Devi worship is very much prominent in the Hindu belief and a number of festivals are seen to be celebrated in the name of Devi worshipping through the entire year.

In West Africa, the Afro-Caribbean and the Afro-Brazilian traditions worship the Goddess Yemaya or Yemalla, the Goddess of creation. Yamaya, who is often depicted as a beautiful woman or a mermaid, associated with the moon and ocean. She is regarded as the Goddess of household, conception of children, birth and also ensures the safety of children. Humans are believed to be born from her body.

The concept of motherhood in African context is very much influenced by the religious mythologies and folklores. Motherhood is regarded as a colorful experience of sacrifice. And mothers are seen as the creator, protector, savior, nurturer, provider, goddess etc. In short, the African concept of motherhood is 'sacrificing the self'.

If we look back to the myth; we will find the European, African, Asian etc. mythologies, folklore and classical literatures feeding us with so many tales of mothers sacrificing their everything and at times their own 'self' to feed and secure their motherhood. Published in 1987, "*Beloved*", written by the American writer Toni Morrison is a novel of such kind. Though not actually myth, but it is an instance of the reality. Set after the American Civil War (1861-1865), the novel is inspired by the story of an African American slave, Margaret Garner, who escaped slavery. In the novel, the protagonist Sethe also escapes slavery and fleets to Cincinnati, Ohio. She takes that daring step because she was not at all ready to be separated from her children. But, only after twenty-eight days of freedom, an order arrived to retrieve her and her children under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which gave the slave owners the right to pursue slaves across state borders. When the order came, Sethe killed her two-year-old daughter rather than seeing her recaptured and taken back to Kentucky from where she had fled. Here, the mother in fact sacrifices her daughter rather than pushing her into slavery. Sethe sacrificed her identity which was complete for becoming a mother and moreover

sacrificed her motherhood to feed her motherhood, which is very much ironical. From this instance itself, we get the glimpse of what it means to be a mother and what it takes to feed the motherhood. May be that's why, it is regarded as sacred for it can elude its existence rather letting any outside source do that. A woman, while being excited, desperate and aspiring enough for motherhood, also keeps the courage to destroy it for its sake.

Even though regarding motherhood as a heavenly blessing, it is seen that giving birth is associated with both purity and pollution. In Hindu and Islamic traditions, a woman, right after giving birth is exempted from household chores and burdensome tasks. She is regarded as polluted and hence forced to live separately, untouched from the other members of the household and the society for almost a month. When on one hand, giving birth is regarded as a sacred and powerful spiritual act; it is seen to distort when comes to practice. 'Motherhood' that completes a woman and worshipped in the mythological level, becomes polluted and untouchable when comes to the human level.

In African societies, motherhood holds great significance. A mother is seen as the 'gold', strong, valuable, true, central to a child's existence, wise and self-denying. Even in the West countries, motherhood found satisfaction and pride. Until the postwar years, women were provided with large families and every means to feed their motherhood independently.

'Motherhood' has been an open-to-criticism issue since ever. Irrespective of country, feminists have been dealing with the issue from so many different perspectives. Earlier it was debated over patriarchy, race, gender etc. And nowadays, some contemporary debate issues like abortion, single mother, surrogate motherhood, advance reproduction technologies etc. have emerged and they have re-shaped the experience of motherhood.

The French writer Simon de Beauvoir pointed out in her book, "*The Second Sex*", that, since her infancy; a woman is told or made to believe that they are 'made' for childbearing. She is often told about the 'splendors of maternity' that motherhood is a 'marvelous privilege' availed by a woman only. But, Beauvoir also pointed out that while praising motherhood so much, it happens that the whole burdensome road towards motherhood like menstruation, illness, pregnancy, delivery and the boredom of household chores are overlooked.

The same topic was raised by the feminists during the second-wave feminist movement. They demanded that motherhood has been seen from the patriarchal perspectives throughout human history and hence motherhood has been objectified by male power, female subjectivity has been disregarded and that the voice of the mother has been hushed. The feminist activists insisted on the rights of the middle-class women that they too are allowed to work and participate in public life and that 'motherhood' should not be considered necessary to the fulfillment of women.

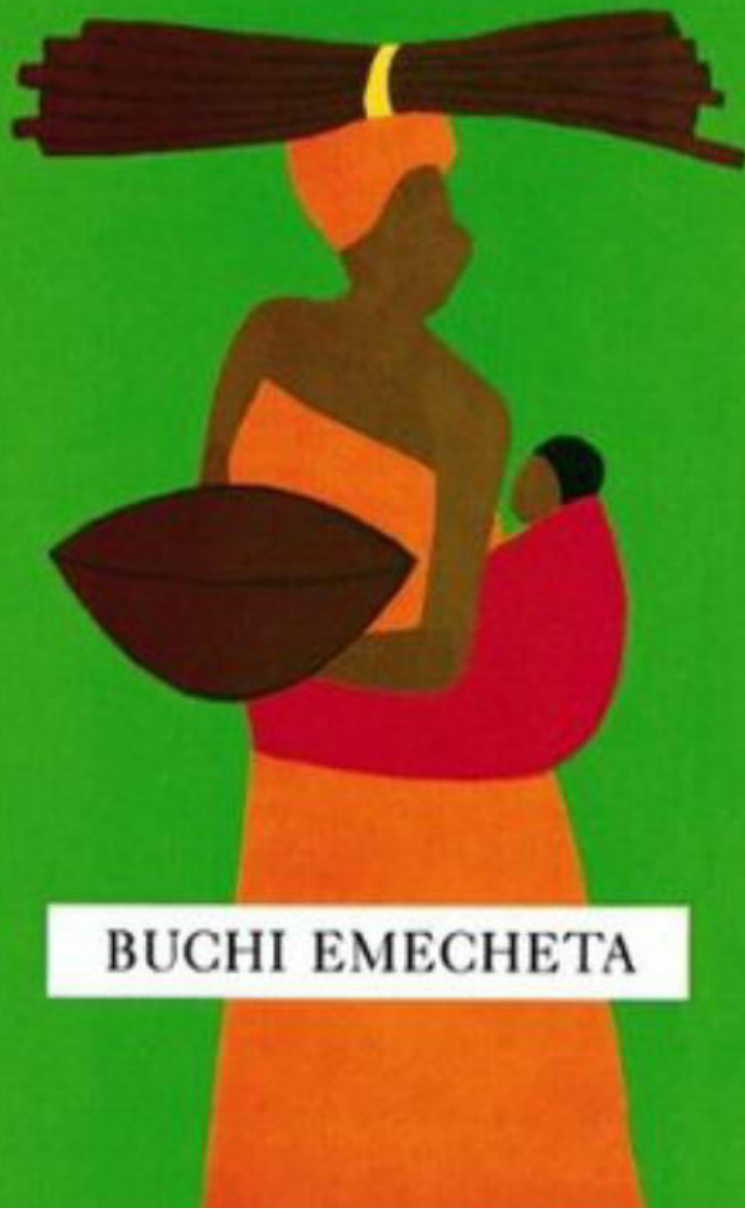
Many feminists raised their 'voice' against the overemphasis on fertility and put their view that women are excluded from other productive roles and restrict them from entering the public life for the sake of their roles as a child-bearer and child-nurturer. They made an appeal to put an end to the assumption, gaze or practice of motherhood that controls both the body and energy of woman.

Even after been argued, discussed and fought over so many times in so many ways, the joys of motherhood were marred for the African women in the early twentieth century. The black women sought to become active mothers but they were repeatedly represented as passive instrument of reproduction. Women writers and activists like Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton, in their sexual awakening works, have shown how motherhood at that period was regarded necessary for certain races, especially the blacks who were living with whites in the same country. It is a well known fact that blacks were bought and sold and used as slaves. In the due course of slavery, women were forced to discard their true feelings and emotions. When in one part of the globe the black women were feeding their motherhood to their utmost pleasure, in other parts the black mothers as servants could only share their left-over time with their children.

Motherhood has different meanings and forms. When it comes to mother-nation, it symbolizes patriotism or patriotic discourse. While the mother-nation protects its citizens, it too needs the protection from its citizens or the children. Women writers like Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton present motherhood in their works as limited to the individual but necessary for the race. Many have responded to the efforts of all such writers by using their diverse strategies that

AFRICAN WRITERS SERIES

THE JOYS
of
MOTHERHOOD



BUCHI EMECHETA

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reflect mothers as active agents and not as some mere passive instruments of reproduction. However, as a matter of fact, their works also focus on the price that a woman needs to pay for her motherhood which comes with the continuous practice of fixed gender roles and social expectations.

The concept of mother-nation has become very much prominent now-a-days. A lot of African writers, both male and female have taken to write about mother Africa, its struggles and sufferings during the reign of colonialism, under the hands of the West. The motherland being enslaved and exploited was much talked and cared about by the anti-colonial nationalist struggle during the period of 1950s up to the point of independence and until Nelson Mandela came to power in 1994. Those were the times that invoked the sentiments of loyalty, duty and responsibility towards the motherland. Many countries celebrate the nation as mother by dedicating patriotic songs and monuments.

On the other hand, African feminism was trying to create a 'new woman' from the remaining of their past. In the writing "Conceptualizing Feminism(s) in Africa: The Challenges Facing African Women Writers and Critics", Naomi Nkealah, African feminism "strives to create a new, liberal, productive and self-reliant African woman within the heterogeneous cultures of Africa. Feminisms in Africa, ultimately, aim at modifying culture as it affects women in different societies." With such a concept, one of the leading novelists of Africa, Buchi Emecheta has created a number of novels. One of her famous novels, "*The Joys of Motherhood*" is nothing but a quest for a 'new woman' who is independent, self-reliant, powerful, and has a voice.

Emecheta's "*The Joys of Motherhood*" is a very renowned work of hers. Here, in this novel, she mainly deals with the concept and ideas of motherhood in an African society. She records the incidents and happenings of Nnu Ego's motherhood. Nnu Ego is the central character of the novel who strongly believed that she needed to fulfill the requirement of being a mother to complete her as a woman. And to make that happen, Nnu Ego had suffered a lot. This novel is all about the sacrifices that Nnu Ego had made to feed her motherhood.

Numbers of writers have taken into consideration, the plight of the women folk upon them and tried to bring that relegated and powerless section to everyone's concern.

Buchi Emecheta is one such remarkable novelist who has contributed a lot of her works on the exploitations of the women folk. *“The Joys of Motherhood”* is one of a kind, where Buchi Emecheta presents the concept of ‘motherhood’ in a patriarchal society. The assumed mythical dignity of a mother and the ironically discarded status of women are well projected in the novel. Emecheta has dealt very well with the hypocrisy of the society; where on one hand women are worshipped as goddesses and as mothers, and on the other hand, those very women are crushed and broken according to the convenience of the men-folk. Another best novel of Emecheta, *“Second-Class Citizen”* presents one such theme where the protagonist suffers and struggles a lot for being a woman. Adah is the central figure of the novel. She is the ‘second-class’ citizen here. The appropriateness of the title lies on the fact that she is the second-class citizen in the Nigerian society for being a woman and in the African immigrant society in the Great Britain.

The novel has two settings. The first projects Adah’s life in Nigeria where she was refused of education and all the money of the family was bestowed upon her brother’s education only. In the African patriarchal society women are discriminated from men for being weak in gender. Adah suffered from identity crisis for taking birth as a girl, “She was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant.” (p.1)

Since her childhood, Adah always desired for freedom. She wanted to make herself independent. And she thought that that would become possible once she set her foot in England. Through her marriage the dream of going to England was fulfilled. With Francis, her husband, Adah settled in England. But, at the outset, when she expressed her desire to accompany her husband to England, Francis’ had said, “Father does not approve of women going to UK.” (p.24) “It is allowed for African males to come and get civilized in England. But that privilege has not been extended to females yet.” (p.34) According to her culture and tradition, a woman is expected to engage their lives in domesticity. As if, it was the ultimate destiny of the women to play their roles mainly as wives, and as mothers.

It is a well known fact that blacks were bought and sold and were used as slaves. In the due course of slavery, women were forced to discard their true feelings and emotions. When in one part of the globe the black women were feeding their motherhood to their utmost pleasure, in other parts the black mothers as servant could only share their

left-over time with their children. But that is not the case with the black women only. Motherhood is something that a woman wants to enjoy to the fullest but is deprived by the customs in a patriarchal society and the overburdened works in a modern society.

In her book *“Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism”*, Catherine Obianuju Acholonu stated that ‘motherism’ has no sex barriers. It is the whole concept of rearing, nurturing and taking care of the child. Both the man and woman could play the role of a mother right from the point where the biological role of a woman ends. But, that is violated and the whole concept of motherhood is endowed upon the women only. Acholonu also stated that to make the ‘motherism’ work, there must be co-operation, understanding, love, tolerance and a balanced existence of both the parents. But, such ‘motherism’ is missing and not seen in the famous works of Buchi Emecheta like *“The Joys of Motherhood”*, *“Second-Class Citizen”* etc. In both the novels, motherism is more to be played by the womenfolk than the men-folk. The fatherhood is absent from both the settings. There cannot be seen any of the co-operation, love, understanding, tolerance and a balanced existence of both the parents as Acholonu had stated. Rather, in these novels, we can see only the domineering and the demanding existence of the husbands/fathers. Instead of helping and co-operating with their wives, the husbands here only keep the pre-conceived notions regarding their wives’ duties, that they should do as and everything they are asked to do.

In 2012, The Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC) conducted national surveys in twelve Western European countries: namely Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. The survey data provide a lot of cross-cultural perspectives on motherhood. According to the survey the Western European mothers have an average of 48 minutes-a-day to be called as her ‘me time’. Strangely enough, even when a woman is successful to free some of her time with the help of labor saving devices and techniques, they happily contribute that earned extra time in the name of their children. But, in comparison to that their husbands are seen to contribute very less time with their children. Then also the mothers are so overwhelmed for that did not happen in their previous generations. Moreover, it is clear that compared to the motherhood, the fatherhood doesn’t make a stand of up to the mark. Also, whether it is in the East or in the West, when it comes to motherhood, a woman is seen to sacrifice everything of hers.

Even after sacrificing almost all of her time, a woman is often seen suffering from mental guilt during her motherhood. She is always seen concerned regarding if she could become a good mother or not, and if she should spend more time with her children etc. This mental guilt is seen more in the employed women. In short, the survey could prove that a woman is far more attached to her children than the man. Even after being physically and emotionally involved with her children all the time, she is seen quite disturbed and concerned regarding her children. Moreover, what Simon de Beauvoir stated regarding a woman that she is prepared right from her childhood to consider herself to be made especially for childbearing and childrearing, happens to be true. The survey proved the fact that whether or not a working woman, a woman can never cross the barriers of motherhood for she believes that it is 'her duty' and 'her responsibility'.

Motherhood is a very vast topic and a major theme in contemporary women's literature. Barbara Christian, in her "*Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers*" notes down that motherhood is an "unwritten story" which, is beginning to be told while being narrated the women's struggles to become "all that they can be". (pp. 212)

Since their early childhood, women are taught that once they enter into 'womanhood', they need to get married. Emecheta said in "*The joys of Motherhood*": "Every woman, whether slave or free, must marry." (pp.112) They should be owned by a husband, a male. They should take care and fulfill all the needs and demands of their husbands. Soon after their marriage, they should conceive and bear children, especially sons for their husbands' family heritage, and then spend the rest of their lives by nurturing and looking after their children and husbands. This is taught in such a way that a woman begins to discard her identity as an individual. She forgets her own dreams and desires, tastes and likings etc. and starts to live her life for the pleasure and fulfillment for others' dreams and demands.

But, the hard reality shatters all the built hope of women when their motherhood fails or they fail to have a good relation with their children. When that happens, a woman fails completely. An Indian novelist, Manju Kapur's one of the most famous novels, "*Difficult Daughters*" can be taken as a relevant example in this regard. This novel succeeds in projecting a kind of relation between the mother and the daughter which is way too different than the usual ones. In Aachal Mundafale's words, in her article "Difficult Mothers in Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur" published in "IOSR Journal

Of Humanities And Social Science”, “When we utter or think of the word “mother” the thoughts and feelings that rise in our hearts and minds are of love, affection, care, understanding, selfless devotion and all that is soft sweet and noble in human nature.” (pp. 38) Kapur does not portray the difficulties of a mother but also the difficulties faced by the daughters when they do not get the ‘motherly’ support and care in the actual sense. The novel is a projection of how daughters become ‘difficult’ when they do not get the guidance or the ‘motherly’ support. The ‘motherly’ support and care differ because they too at times need to follow the rules and regulations of the patriarchal society because they are designed by the set practices. The mothers are hence bound not to think any differently for their daughters and to follow the long believed and applied practices. For this reason, some daughters are seen to be distancing themselves from their own mothers and having different opinions and thoughts than their mothers. It so happens because of the impact of colonialism and hence modernism. In the light of colonialism and modernism, some women could think and see differently. The impact of colonialism and modernism gave them some rays of hope and freedom. But, patriarchy never ceased to control and govern their lives which eventually left the women-folk dwelling somewhere in between patriarchy and modernism which caused more difficulties to their lives. They could neither fully embrace modernism nor could break free from the grasp of tradition.

“*Difficult Daughters*” is set at the time of partition of Amritsar and Lahore. But, the novel concentrates more on the ‘women sentiment’ than the ‘national sentiment’. The story is narrated by Ida who is a divorcee. Her mother, Virmati who is the central character of the novel, preferred her love over any traditional values and married a professor who was already married. Ida’s grandmother is Kasturi through whom Kapur has presented the central theme of her novel, i.e. the difficult relationship between a mother and a daughter. We find some similarities as well as dissimilarities in “*The Joys of motherhood*”. The daughters that Nnu Ego had were far obedient and not defiant like Kasturi’s. Though only Kehinde disobeyed her parents when it came to her love and marriage, most of the time Nnu Ego’s daughters never went against her will. At some points her daughters too raised their voice as to why they were being deprived of education and why do they need to work so hard to earn their living instead of their brothers etc. But, they never protested or to say, they did not have an educated background or an allowing grandfather like Virmati.

“Difficult Daughter” is a novel of identity crisis. It is a story of a woman’s desperate struggle to establish an identity, which resembles with the struggles and sufferings of Nnu Ego too. The novel also focuses on the struggle of an educated woman who is forced to follow the belief and values of the family. Virmati is the central character of the family. As her grandfather was a progressive person, he allowed the daughters of his family to have basic education but, he too supports the societal norms and conditions and believes that higher education should be banned for girls. Nnu Ego, on the other hand, had never fought for her rights to education or love or anything else; but, she only struggled for her role and responsibilities as a ‘mother’, which she was snapped off at the end.

Virmati is the eldest child of Kasturi who is ever pregnant which left Virmati always to look after her young siblings. She plays the role of a ‘second mother’ and was always entrusted with the responsibilities of her younger brothers and sisters. Her story can be related to Uma as presented by Anita Desai in her *“Fasting Feasting”*. Uma too had to sacrifice her dreams and desire and mostly her childhood for the sake of her young brother-Arun. Anita Desai presents a family who preferred a boy over girls. Papa-Mama wanted to have a boy whom they could provide all the education and the career of papa’s wish. Uma too wanted to have education and a job to break free from her everyday life. But, she was deprived of her education and her schooling was discontinued when Mama was pregnant with Arun because, she would now have to look after her siblings; and she was also deprived from her job which was offered by Dr. Dutt because, Mama-Papa were used to Uma’s presence. They rejected the offer on the ground that Uma had to nurse her sick mother which was a lie. Without having Uma around, they felt every task incomplete. Though they had a number of servants for each kind of tasks, they needed Uma to deliver their wishes and orders to that particular servant. Thus, Uma’s life was led in delivering orders and pleasing her family members.

Aruna, the other daughter of the family, could have education, a different life, a marriage, a house, an identity but, her elder sister Uma did not get anything of that sort. Aruna was fair and good looking without any pimples or melanin on her face, like her sister Uma. She had the courage to voice her thought for which she could demand and convince her parents for a cocktail party at her wedding which was not at all possible for Uma even in her nightmares.

Uma too wanted something to call her own. She always looked and hoped for a different opinion from her Mama because; a ‘mother’ is believed to be the best friend, healer, and supporter who understand her daughter very well. But, here “MAMA AND PAPA. MamaPapa. PapaMama.” (pp. 5) was merged into one when it came to the point of making decision. And Papa was always the decision maker. Mama always supported and stood by her husband in every decision he made because it was taught to her when she was a young girl not to oppose or question the decision of her husband and always to follow him. The same education was given to Uma and Aruna also. In the novel, we find that whatever the decision was made, whether the decision resulted in Uma’s ‘failed marriage’ or Anamika’s ‘death’; both Mama and Lila Aunty never questioned the decisions which were made by their respective husbands according to the set norms and conditions of the patriarchal society. Both the mothers here sacrificed their ‘motherhood’ at the hands of the society and were ineffective while accepting the results as the ‘fate’ of their daughters, i.e. the women.

Like Uma, Virmati too had to do all the household chores and added with that she had take care of her ten young brothers and sisters. She was often scolded by her mother for every little silly mistake she made. There used to be no valid reasons for those scolding. Even though she had worked the whole day, her mother would still be dissatisfied with her. She was never a part of her mother’s affection and was deprived of the ‘motherly’ love and care which every child expects from his/her mother. But, Kasturi might have failed as a mother to see that in Virmati’s eyes. Giving birth to so many children, she might have forgotten that Virmati too was her child, that Virmati was the one who gave her the pleasure of being a ‘mother’ for the first time, that Virmati brought ‘motherhood’ to her. Making Virmati do all the chores, Kasturi definitely had forgotten to take care of her as a daughter for she treated her more like a servant than a daughter. As a result, Virmati too stopped obeying and listening to her mother especially in her personal matters. Kasturi tried to put her beliefs in Virmati’s mind that “A woman’s *shaan* is her home.” (pp. 16) But, Virmati never listened to her mother. She wanted to have a life like that of her cousin, Shakuntala, who lived in Lahore and had a very much modern and confident personality as well as perspective. Shakuntala never believed in “Adjust, compromise, adapt” (pp. 236) which had to be followed by the girls in Virmati’s Arya Samaj family. Just like her, Virmati too did not want to submit herself.

Having been inspired by the thoughts and words of Shakuntala, Virmati fought and raised her voice for her deserving right, i.e. higher education and love.

Virmati was engaged to Inderjeet by her family when she was only seventeen years old. But, soon she fell in love with Harish Chandra who was a professor. Though he had a wife and children, he could win her heart for he valued her as well as her education. He had a 'child marriage' and his wife Ganga, was not at all educated. She was very much dull and had no thinking of her own. That was why Harish Chandra was attracted by the talented and educated Virmati. But, she knew that her family would never allow that to happen. Virmati was so much into Harish Chandra that the fear of having a failed-love once made her commit suicide. After she was rescued, her family blamed her education for such an act of hers, "Was this all her education had taught her? To put herself before others and damn the rest?" (pp. 79) As if it was hard for the patriarchal society to see a woman putting her needs, dreams and desires before everyone and everything.

Being frustrated with her actions, soon the family locked her down in a storehouse. But, her love never ceased to flourish. When she pleaded for her freedom and to complete higher education, her mother protested and scolded her. She was permitted by her father to fulfill her dreams. But, her mother who should have been the first one to understand and support her said, "God has put you on earth to punish me." (pp. 102) Her own mother regarded her daughter as a punishment of her sins simply because Virmati defied the norms and conditions of her traditional Arya Samaj family and decided to pursue higher education even after being a 'girl'.

Soon after completing her graduation, she declared her love for Harish Chandra to her family and her decision of breaking the engagement with Inderjeet. In spite of the oppositions of the family, she ultimately expressed her decision to marry the love of her life and thus she became "... the black sheep of the family." (pp. 104) Also, Harish Chandra was afraid to take any further step. He was after all a 'male chauvinist' of the patriarchal society. He feared that none of his mother or his children would accept that. And though he preferred Virmati over his wife for she was educated and could understand him pretty well; and wrote a number of love letters to her at the initial stages; he thought that he was being unfair to his wife. Virmati is what Nnu Ego could never become. While Virmati expressed her love going against her family and society, Nnu Ego could not even express her detest regarding her husband's physique. Virmati had the

courage to speak for her liking and her wishes, whereas Nnu Ego could never have done that because she lacked the amount of courage needed to do so. Viramtai was not ready to get married with Inderjeet for she did not like him. But, Emecheta's Nnu Ego could not even see her husband Nnaife before her marriage. After her marriage, when she saw the physical appearance and behavior of her husband Nnaife, she was greatly disgusted. But, she could never express that, rather she accepted her luck and her marriage, and started to worship him as her owner. The impact of education is the only reason for such a great difference between these two characters of two different continents.

After overcoming a lot of hurdle and problems, Virmati was at last married to Harish Chandra. As expected, she was not welcomed in his family. But, when she conceived for the first time, Harish Chandra's mother started to care for her. Virmati's mother-in-law's 'motherhood' gets awakened only when she was pregnant with Harish Chandra's child. But, she had a miscarriage which caused her depression. A girl, who never got the mother's affection that she always longed for, who was always a second mother to her ten brothers and sisters, was now suffering the pangs of not being a mother herself. Harish Chandra sent her to Lahore to pursue masters' degree which he thought would divert her attention. But, there too she was lost in her thoughts. She never shared her feelings and emotions with her mother because, since her childhood she craved only for a little attention from her mother which she never got and that was why she alienated herself from her mother. She was at a point where only a mother could have healed her. A mother is the one who can heal her daughter from her emotional breakdown. But, Kasturi lost that right long ago because, Virmati never sought for that anymore.

Virmati at last gave birth to her only child, Ida. She was loved very much by both Harish Chandra and Virmati. But ironically enough, Virmati started to control and govern Ida's life when on the contrary she set herself free from the ties of the patriarchal society. She wanted her daughter to follow the rules and value the custom. Her motherhood and femininity turned her into a stern and strict mother. Because she had had miscarriage and she could not conceive again, Ida was like a prized possession to her whom she wanted to keep in all sort of safety. Thus, the complexity of the mother-daughter relationship has been presented in the novel.

After the death of her mother, Ida realized what it took and what it meant to be a mother in a patriarchal society. Ida not only idealized with her mother in regard of gender but also in everything. She was just the replica of her mother with just a bit more

understanding than Virmati. She too alienated herself from her mother at the beginning stages because of her too much domineering nature. But, advanced education, advanced understanding and advanced modernism made her realize and understand her mother's position and the situations that had occurred between them. Thus, the identification and the understanding which were lacking in the mother-daughter relationship between Kasturi and Virmati; though late, arose in the relationship between the mother, Virmati and the daughter, Ida. Ida herself said: "Without her, I am lost." (pp. 4)

The society and its practiced norms and conditions destroyed the understanding as well as the whole relationship between a mother and a daughter. But that very society, when a bit reformed with the passage of time and the impact of modernism, bridges the gap between another set of mother and daughter.

Uma's case (in "*Fasting Feasting*") is a bit different in comparison to Virmati. She did not get any education, she did not get to live her dream, her pimples and melanin never let her to catch attention of anyone, too much pressure and responsibilities made her confused and nervous. But, Anamika's case is no different in regard of Virmati's. Through Anamika's story, Anita Desai presents a true color of the society which gives no place to a woman who fail to conceive. There is no life for a woman who cannot conceive. Anamika was victimized by the society for her failure to conceive. A woman without children is regarded as a barren woman in the patriarchal society. She is of no use, and such women are left out unnoticed and uncared for; and most of the time they are treated as servants because there has to be some use of such women.

Anamika was raised way better than that of Uma. Anamika got her liberty to educate herself. She was a beautiful and talented girl. Her parents Bakul Uncle and Lila Aunty decided that she was of the age to get married. So, her marriage was prepared without taking her consent and her dream of pursuing higher studies was shattered. To Uma's astonishment, Anamika's suitor (who was chosen by her own parents) was much older and was nowhere to be compared with Anamika in regard of looks. Both Anamika and Nnu Ego had a liberal childhood. Nnu Ego too got freedom and liberty in her childhood though she was a Nigerian. It was because her father was the chief of their village. Like Anamika, Nnu Ego too grew up to become beautiful, pulpy and eye catching. But, like Anamika's, Nnu Ego's husband Nnaife was also nowhere to be compared to her.

Anyway, Anamika was married to the suitor by fulfilling her parents' wish. As Anamika was educated, beautiful and knew every household work and also because her husband was from a well-to-do family; Bakul Uncle and Lila Aunty never thought that they would like to be offered dowry. And that turned out to be the sole reason for which Anamika not only lost her ability to conceive but also her life. Unlike the Indian tradition of dowry system, there was a different tradition in Africa. In there, the groom's family is supposed to pay the bride price in the marriage. Nnu Ego in "*The Joys of Motherhood*", got married twice in the novel, and both the times, her father was paid with her bride price. As in "*Fasting Feasting*", Anamika's in-laws were not offered any dowry, they started expressing their anger by mistreating Anamika and beating her for no valid reason. Soon after the marriage, she lost all her beauty. She became very thin and anyone who saw her in her present condition, pitied with her. Like Anamika, Nnu Ego too was beaten and abused by her first husband for her inability to conceive.

Later, in "*Fasting Feasting*", when Anamika was not allowed to visit her parents and her maternal or paternal relatives; both Bakul Uncle and Lila Aunty tried to hide the fact by telling everyone that Anamika was loved by her in-laws very much that they could not let her out of their sight for a single moment. "They just can't let her out of their sight even for one day, they love her so much." (pp. 86)

Even when Anamika was pregnant, she was forced to do all the household chores, day and night; and was scolded, beaten and even kicked on her belly. Such maltreatment not only resulted in her miscarriage but also took her ability to conceive ever. When she was admitted in the hospital, Uma asked her Mama why Anamika was not taken back by her parents because that way, she would not have to suffer so much. But, to her astonishment, Mama answered: "How can she be happy if she is sent home? What will people say? What will they think?" (pp. 72)

Anamika's inability to conceive ever was the last reason for her in-laws to decide that she was of no use at all. Hence, they decided and planned accordingly to get rid of her. When Bakul Uncle and Lila Aunty got the news of Anamika's death and went to her in-laws; they were told that Anamika could not bear the pain of not being able to conceive again. But, some of the neighbors told them that it was her mother-in-law who had killed her. "What some of the neighbors said was that she herself, possibly in collusion with her son, had dragged Anamika out on the veranda at that hour when it was

still dark- possibly before four o'clock- and that they had tied her up in a nylon sari, poured the kerosene over her and set her on fire.” (pp. 136)

‘Motherhood’ does not vary much in Africa. According to Eviweihoma, “In many African societies, motherhood defines womanhood. Motherhood then, is crucial to woman’s status in African society. To marry and mother a child (a son preferably), entitles a woman to more respect from her husband’s kinsmen.” (pp. 318)

Mariama Ba’s “*So Long A Letter*”, is written in the epistolary form, and falls more in the genre of novella. But, it is no less than a novel in projecting a vast thing of womanhood and motherhood (specially). Like Buchi Emecheta’s “*The Joys of Motherhood*”, this novel also deals with the shattered dreams, hopes and identity of a woman at the hands of motherhood. The story is set in the post-independent era of Senegal. Though there was freedom and independence yet women were bound and curved with the traditional and social roles. But, some women in this novel deconstruct that idea and according to their own will. The important characters of the novel like Ramatoulaye, Aissatou, Binetou, Aunty Nabou etc, act differently than the roles and space offered to them by the society.

As the story unfolds, we get to know that Ramatoulaye, the central character of the novel was observing a ‘mirasse’. According to the Senegalese Muslim custom, if one dies, his or her kinsmen and offspring need to observe a forty day period of isolation and mourning. But, Ramatoulaye wondered if she needed to do that because in his last days, her husband Modou was with his second wife and not with her. Neither Modou’s second wife Binetou, nor his mother Lady Mother-in-law allowed her to touch or to have any money offered by the ones who visited them.

She was telling her story to her old friend, Aissatou, who was living in America. While, Ramatoulaye reflected the happiness of her story, a similar kind of life was also seen to be lived by Aissatou. Ramatoulaye could never understand why Modou had lost interest in her even though they were sweethearts at the initial stages. Aissatou too had a disintegrated marriage even though she was married to the man she loved, Mawdo. As Aissatou belonged to a goldsmith’s family, Mawdo’s mother Aunty Nabou never accepted the marriage between Aissatou and Mawdo for Mawdo was of noble birth.

Mawdo’s mother, Aunty Nabou wanted the better for her son. Her motherhood blinded her and she judged her son’s happiness on the basis of the background of his

wife's family. Aunt Nabou herself arranged a second wife for Mawdo. As Mawdo was not willing to hurt his mother, he agreed to the second marriage. Though Mawdo tried to convince Aissatou that he only loved her and that he was sharing himself with his second wife Nabou, only to satisfy his mother; Aissatou divorced him and shifted to America to work in the Senegalese embassy. Here, Aunt Nabou's motherhood destroyed the happy life of Mawdo and Aissatou.

On the other hand, Ramatoulaye was disheartened when she found out that Modou had brought a second wife who was the friend of her daughter, Daba. She was eventually discarded by Modou. Despite that, she remained as his wife. Neither she had the courage nor did she ever have the thought of divorcing Modou. After Modou's death, according to the Senegalese custom of polygamy, Modou's brother Tamsir demanded to marry her. But, she strongly rejected him and also the polite proposal of Daouda Dieng who was once chosen as a marriage prospect for her by her parents. She decided to live the rest of her life as a single parent of her children. The love and care that she was left with, she wanted to feed her 'motherhood' with that. Her motherhood gave meaning to her life when many people loved by her rejected and neglected her. She found her reasons to live through her motherhood only. When on one hand, one's (Aunt Nabou) motherhood destroyed the happiness of Aissatou; on the other hand, another's (Ramatoulaye's) motherhood brought happiness and help to her life. She said, "One is a mother to lighten the darkness. One is a mother to shield when lightning streaks the night, when thunder shakes the earth, when mud bogs one down. One is a mother in order to love without beginning or end." (pp. 87)

While Ramatoulaye, fearing at first to take the whole responsibility of her children, at last set herself free from that fear and embraced and protected her motherhood and became the confident single parent; Bharati could not even protect her daughter and son and thus her motherhood. In Mahesh Dattani's "*Tara*" (published in his "Collected Plays"), we find a helpless mother, Bharati, who is trapped by the patriarchal society which did not allow voicing her opinions even in the serious matters of the household. Unlike "*The Joys of Motherhood*", Mahesh Dattani's "*Tara*" is a play dealing with a much more serious issue of 'woman deprivation'. But, the experiences of the women are same though the situations and the continents varied. Though in "*The Joys of Motherhood*" Nnu Ego was not divorced or widowed, but she had to play the role of a single parent for three long years while her husband was appointed in an odd job on

a ship. Due to some communication gap, Nnu Ego was not getting the money that her husband, Nnaife was sending by post. All those years, she had suffered a lot because she had to take care of her seven children's food, living and schooling of her sons, all by herself. Emecheta, from her real life experience, could bestow her heroines with the power to struggle as a proud single parent in a male dominated society. Her "*Second-Class Citizen*" and "*In The Ditch*" also deal with this theme.

Bharati's children, i.e. Chandan and Tara, in Mahesh Dattani's "*Tara*", were Siamese twins who were joined from their pelvic region and shared three legs. Chandan and Tara were happy together which used to give happiness to their mother, Bharati. But, as they were gradually growing, they had to be separated. Someone had to be given the third leg and the other a wooden leg. When the parents consulted the doctor about the surgery, the doctor suggested that as the third leg was being generated more by Tara's body, hence, the leg should be given to her. Hearing that, both Mr. Patel and their grandfather opposed. They were of the view that Tara would grow up and get married in which case the third leg would have nothing much to do. But, Chandan would be in need of the third leg more than that because he would be acquiring higher studies and then would need a job and then would be taking the responsibility of the family. Thus, the gender biased opinions deprived Tara of what was her and the third leg was given to Chandan.

But, the fate had to play its role. As the doctor had suggested, maximum of the blood circulation to the third leg was going through Tara's body; hence, soon after the operation the third leg stopped working and that had to be cut off and thrown away. An important limb was properly functioning when being governed by a girl's body. But, that was snatched from her and given to a boy and eventually that stopped functioning. In short, Mr. Patel and his father were ready to throw the third leg away than to give that to Tara, a girl.

How Dattani presents 'motherhood' here in this play is that the mother, Bharati, failed to protect the rights of her daughter. Though she once mentioned before the operation about giving the third leg to Tara, she was shut up both by her husband and her father-in-law. After the operation, Bharati was so much guilt ridden realizing the helpless condition of Tara that she started to lose her mental balance. She was hurt to see that no children of her neighborhood were ready to be friends with Tara because she had a wooden leg. Tara too was hurt to the core that no one liked to play with her. She started

to see herself as an incomplete being. Bharati, always wanted to cultivate a strong will power in Tara, “Why, you are not crippled, you just have a little defect hardly noticeable, even! When people have slight disadvantages like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it- develops charm and vivacity that is all you have to do!” (pp. 247)

Emecheta’s Nnu Ego never had to be confused with her role. She was always clear with her role from the very beginning of her life. She knew that a husband and a father always had the right to take decision in the family. No matter what the changing society demanded or her daughter/s wanted, Nnu Ego never went against the wishes of her husband. She believed that that was what a good wife and a good mother should always do. When Nnaife returned from his three years of service on a ship, he decided to marry off his eldest daughter, Kehinde. He even selected a suitor for her, who belonged to his own cast. But, Kehinde was in love with a man who was from a different tribe and whom her father did not accept. When she expressed her desires to her mother, Nnu Ego rather scolded her and asked her to think about her father and her family. She never supported or tried to understand her daughter’s wish.

On the other hand, Bharati, though had not much courage to do anything against the wishes of the male members of her family; always wanted to help and support her Tara. She had to persuade Roopa with chocolates and gifts in order to make her friends with Tara. When on one hand, Chandan was given education and taken with Mr. Patel to see his office; on the other hand, even though Tara too wanted the same, she was denied and often scolded. Bharati could not help her daughter even in those occasions too. When their grandfather died, he left all his property in the name of Chandan at his will. Mr. Patel gave the news to Chandan, but Chandan had a softer heart for Tara than anyone else. He demanded for Tara’s rights. He was the only one in the family who always supported and spoke for Tara.

Patel: He (grandfather) left a lot of money.

Chandan: And Tara?

Patel: Nothing.

Chandan: Why?

Patel: It was his money. He could do what he wanted with it. (pp. 360)

All these failures perhaps made Bharati realize her failure as a 'mother'. So, she told the complete truth to Chandan. As she herself could not do anything or more likely, could not fight against the society which saw and treated the two children of varied gender in a totally different way; she thought it would be a kind of repentance if she at least confessed everything to Chandan. Bharati had to knowingly sacrifice her daughter's limb, rights and everything at the hands of the cultural inhibition. Her dilemma made her suffer from mental imbalance and she died from that grief.

African motherhood does not differ much from the Indian motherhood in regard of beliefs, practices, assumptions and meaning. Though most of the time motherhood is operated in an oppressive manner yet at times it is bestowed with other meanings which give women empowerment. Women are no doubt regarded as having mystical power for their ability to give birth. Motherhood not always means to produce children in the family line of the husband, but also at times it symbolizes women's power of fertility, fecundity and fruitfulness. Remi Akujobi, in her article, "Motherhood in African Literature and Culture" talks about the Yoruba tribe and their traditional beliefs on motherhood. There's a saying in the Yoruba tribe, 'Iya ni wura, baba ni jigi' which means- 'mother is gold, father is mirror'. This belief has been practiced for long and apprehended by the Yoruba tribe. The comparison is just. A mother is gold because, just like Adebayo stated in his "The African Motherhood: Her Changing Perceptions in West African Fiction", women are known for their "... patience, resignation, labor, self-denial and suffering all of which are enormously considered positive values by which women must be judged" (pp. 181) She is valuable both in the process of giving birth to a child and in nurturing the child. A mother is true and inseparable to her motherhood. And, a mother is a centre of the existence of her child. A mother is not always soft, smooth and delicate; she is at times as strong as the metal (gold) itself. But, even though a mother is bestowed with such assumptions of empowerment, they are yet interpreted by the inexperienced (in the sphere of 'motherhood') men. As Adrienne Rich rightly stated in her "*Of Women Born*", that although only a mother experiences motherhood in the real sense, it is always the men who interpret the experience as well as the whole structure for they are the ones who control the institution. This very concept is dealt by the famous African novelists like Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Bessie Head, Mariama Ba etc.

The society never ceases to criticize and judge a woman. A woman is always needed to prove her 'juiciness' or 'completeness' by giving birth to a child. A man never

falls in such test or judgment. Even though at times the man is impotent, it is always his wife who is seen as incomplete. A woman is thus 'gendered' in respect to her motherhood. If only she succeeds to become a mother, her womanhood is regarded as complete or else a woman without a child is regarded as useless, barren and incomplete. Buchi Emecheta's Nnu Ego in "*The Joys of Motherhood*" and Flora Nwapa's Efuru in "*Efuru*" are such characters who suffer the frustration of being judged and criticized for not being able to conceive soon and inability to conceive respectively. Emecheta and Nwapa present their heroines with the true colors of reality. Their writings may fall in the genre of fiction but their contents related with one or the other woman (or may be every woman) in the African society. They present the actual plight of women whose motherhood too gives the men folk a means of female control.

Before the invasion of colonialism, there was a sense of community, understanding, pride and identity among the African women. But, with the coming of colonialism, that was nowhere to be found. Women were seen only as the producers of children and sex objects. They lost their previous dignity and rights. Childless women were deserted and looked down. Like Emecheta's Nnu Ego, Flora Nwapa's Efuru is such a woman who failed to become a mother. Efuru's story re-presents the culture and tradition of the conventional Igbo society. She was rejected and deserted for not being able to conceive. She was criticized so much that she became frustrated with her life.

The plot is set in a rural Igbo village of West Africa. Efuru was the daughter of Nwashike Ogene, who was both a hero and a leader of his tribe. Thus, through her father, she got respect, power and wealth. She was brought up with a lot of love and care. Her childhood days resembles with that of Nnu Ego's mother's. Both were strong, beautiful and confident women.

Gradually, when Efuru grew up, she fell in love with a poor farmer, Adizua. She knew that her people would never accept Adizua as her husband and also that Adizua was incapable of paying her bride price and giving a feast. That was why she ran away with him making him free of all such bondages. Her action upset both her father and her people very much. But, she was very much happy with her new life. As she was strong, confident and a bit educated; she started to support her husband in financial matters. Soon she became the favorite of her mother-in-law and aunt-in-law. But, gradually her happiness seemed to fade away when years passed and she could not conceive. She was even discarded by her love and soon Adizua brought his second wife.

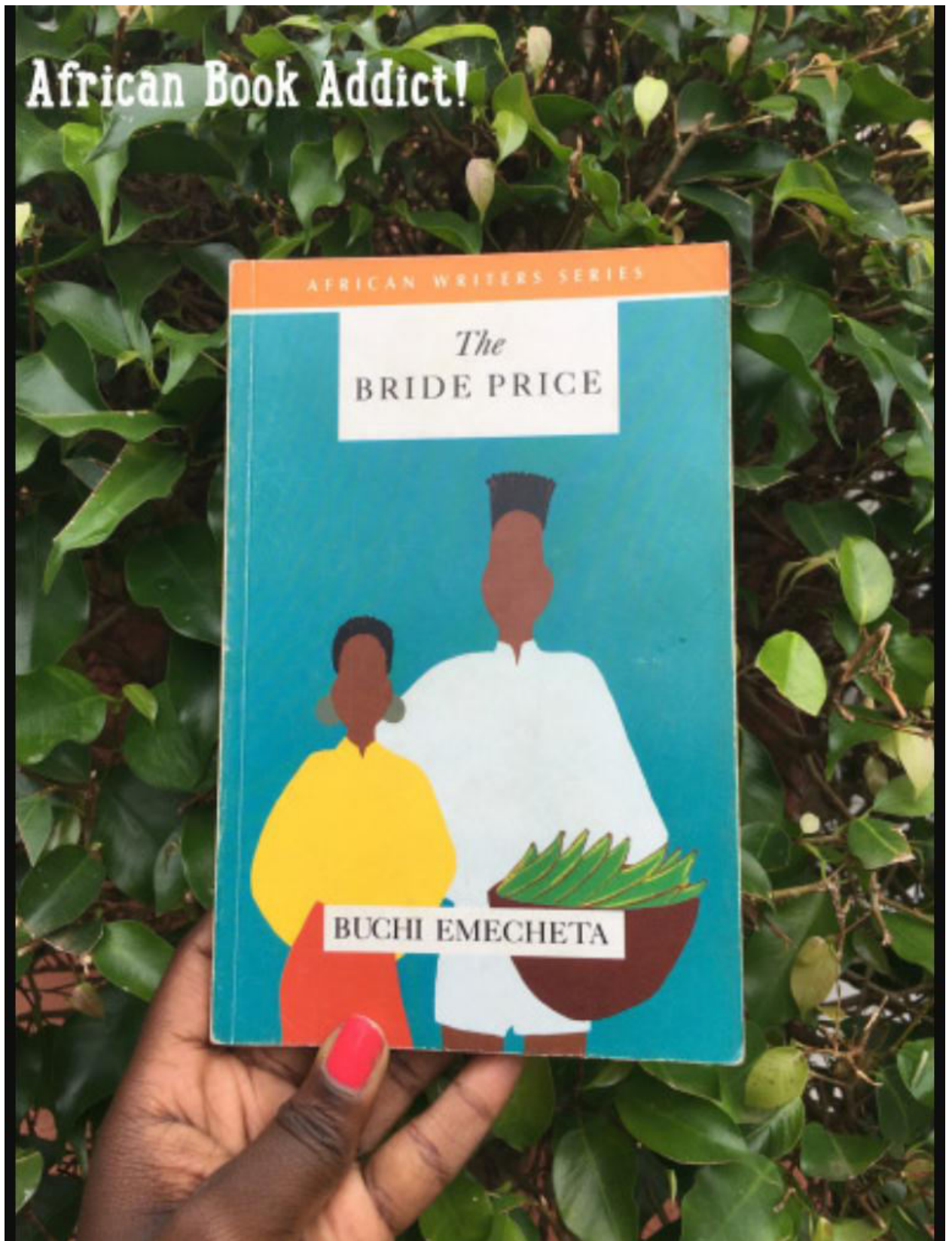
But, Efuru never lost hope. She was frustrated with her life and with the people's gaze on her and their remarks no doubt; but, she never stopped trying. She was ready to undergo any kind of treatment to experience the joy of motherhood. She even went to the extent of taking advice and treatment from a priest, who was believed to have supernatural powers. She went through all the processes advised by the priest. Supernatural or superstition, whatever may that was, that resulted in a good way for Efuru. When after a long period of suffering and frustration, Efuru finally conceived; she questioned herself "Is it really true that I have had a baby, that I am a woman at all?" (pp. 31) Her question definitely speaks the psychology of the women folk of her time and of the society. Now she regarded herself as a complete woman. After going through so much pain and pressure of not being able to conceive, now she could not believe that she was on the process of becoming a mother. Her dilemma is rightly justified. "Is this happening to me or someone I know? Is that baby mine or someone else's? ... Perhaps I am dreaming. I shall soon wake up and discover that it is not real." (pp. 31) Her impatience to become a mother now took over her.

Through Efuru, Nwapa not only projects the concepts and applications of motherhood in the African society, but also she presents a far broader theme than that. Nwapa, in her novel, deals with the root cause of motherhood, which she regards as the marriage itself. Where in a patriarchal society of Africa, a marriage takes place according to the set customs and traditions only; Nwapa's Efuru and Emecheta's Aku Nna (in "*The Bride Price*") are the examples of such heroines who broke through such customs and traditions. In "*The Bride Price*" we find the heroine Aku-Nna, living in a place called Ibuza, a tradition dominated place in Nigeria. Hence, Aku-Nna's life gets ruled and governed by all the customs and rituals prevailing in Ibuza. Though living in a traditionally biased society, Aku-Nna had modern and independent thoughts. And those were because of the impact of her early childhood in Lagos. Lagos was a bit modern than Ibuza during that time because it was colonized. Though the conditions of the black women remained the same, there were white women too, living their lives in all freedom and rightfully. That was why Aku-Nna could gather enough courage to break through the set norms and conditions of the society in a lot of ways. Unlike Nnu Ego (in "*The Joys of Motherhood*"), both of Nwapa's Efuru and Emecheta's Aku-Nna showed courage and raised their voice to gain what they deserved, but they too were judged and recognized

on the basis of their inability to conceive or their failed motherhood just like the process that Nnu Ego had gone through in her first marriage.

‘Marriage’ suggests a bonding that is developed on the basis of mutual understanding, love, respect, care, adjustment, compromise etc.; seems to be applied as an obligation to the women. Marriage in a patriarchal society seems more like a source of benefits for the males and the source of bitterness and sufferings for the females. It is more like an imposition than a choice. Women do not get to have a say over their own marriages. Their consents over their own marriages are denied and ignored. A family, a society, a tradition and a culture decide something for a girl, without even considering her consent and then impose all the exploitations in the name of tradition. Bride price, dowry, etc. are such examples of exploitations done in the name of

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marriage. Anita Desai's *"Fasting Feasting"* presents a true image of the Indian patriarchal society where dowry is an inseparable part. Many brides are tortured, maltreated, beaten and even murdered for dowry. Dowry, as though, costs the value of a girl. If the dowry is paid by the bride's family, then she would be treated nicely. If the dowry is of huge amount, then the bride would be valued. The heavier the amount of dowry, the more value, respect, love and care the bride gets by her in-laws. As though, the girl's grace, hard work, beauty, nature, talent etc. do not count in the eyes of the customs. They have no value at all. And sometimes the marriages fail even after paying dowry. Uma (in *"Fasting Feasting"*) is such an example. She was married only because there was a great need of money in the business of her husband. Even though Harish was already married and had children, he married Uma only because he had wanted the dowry money. Uma's first suitor too, with whom she was supposed to be engaged, faked the engagement because of the dowry money. At the end, without an education, without a job and without a husband; Uma remained a burden to her family, depending on Papa and Mama for literally everything. Such are the reasons that cause fear to the parents of the daughters. And that gave a reason to abort a female fetus in the womb; which means 'no right to live' for the women because of such practices. The custom, the tradition and the society have made it clear that it literally costs a lot to have a girl child.

Aku-Nna in *"The Bride Price"* suffered the hardship for not being able to become a mother even though she was a strong and courageous woman. Aku-Nna had the courage to raise her voice whenever the necessity occurred. She also dared to do the things as she wanted. She married the man she was in love with. Though her husband was neither accepted nor approved by her family, Aku-Nna went against their wishes just to live her life according to her own way. Everything went happily and smoothly as she had wanted until the point of her 'motherhood' came. As she had eloped with the man she was in love with, and as because he was not accepted by her family; her family did not accept the bride price given by her husband. According to the social and traditional taboo of the Nigerian society, it was believed that those who failed to pay the bride price, the bride would either suffer the pangs of not being able to conceive or would die at her first childbirth. Though Aku-Nna had a strong mind yet she failed to retain that until her last part. She feared the taboo to become true as she was not being able to conceive. Her husband, Chike went to his in-laws to offer the bride price but, he was again rejected. And thus, when Aku-Nna died, everyone from her village used to retell her stories just to

make their daughters beware of such a tragic ending. Thus, though aku-Nna tried to be a strong and independent woman, the society crushed all her might after her death.

Anamika's story as represented by Anita Desai, is no less than a tragedy. Anamika's story projects the total insecurity of a girl child in a society where everything is dominated by a man and the custom. Anamika had everything. She had grace, she had beauty, she had talent, she had education, she knew to compose and present herself to an audience; yet she had to lose her life at the hands of custom. Because she had everything, Lila Aunty and Bakul Uncle might have considered that she would be enough for her in-laws and her husband. Her suitor was attracted towards her because of her education, her talent and her ability to achieve a scholarship from the Oxford University. Her suitor too was of her equal. He too had degrees and certificates and had won medals. They seemed an equal match even though there was a huge age gap. But, then also she was not valued by Anamika's in-laws and her husband. Right after her marriage, she was entrusted with the household chores, cooking, washing, and everything. Soon her in-laws, especially her mother-in-law started torturing her. Though her in-laws never expressed in the initial days, their anger for never being offered any dowry money but gradually Anamika realized the reason behind. She was never treated with love and care. An educated family would definitely have been proud of their educated and talented daughter-in-law. But, that was not so in Anamika's case because, the society and its obligations had to play its role. Gradually, she was beaten and kicked even when she was pregnant. She was kicked right on her belly. Her scar marks narrated all her stories. But Bakul Uncle and Lila Aunty kept their eyes shut to those marks. And eventually after getting so much beatings and kicks, Anamika lost her ability to conceive any more. And, in her presence, it would have been illegal for her husband to re-marry. With her inability to conceive, her husband's family line was at stake. Hence, she became a big problem and the ultimate solution came with her death. Luckily that didn't happen to Nnu Ego because; Emecheta had given that much liberty, freedom and love to her through her powerful father. Had Emecheta not portrayed Nnu Ego's father as such strong and powerful leader, she too might have lost her life like Anamika.

A girl like Anamika, failed to satisfy a family (hence, the society) either with her grace or with her certificate of scholarship from the Oxford University or her beauty or her talent or her blooming motherhood. A motherhood, which is imposed in every girl-child's psychology as the only means to complete a woman and every woman's ultimate

role; could not secure Anamika's life. In fact, she was snatched of her joys of her motherhood. In her case, nothing was considered at all. Even after being the epitome of a complete woman, she failed to please her husband and her in-laws.

But, Aku-Nna and Efuru are far more different than that. When on one hand, Anamika in "*Fasting Feasting*", "...could never bring herself to contradict her parents or cause them grief." (pp. 70); Aku-Nna in "*The Bride Price*" and Efuru in "Efuru" had the courage to raise their voice and protest against the wishes of their respective parents. Giving or offering money in marriages in the name of custom is present in the African culture also. When on one hand, the dowry system in the Indian marriages can be interpreted as the selling of girls; on the other hand, the bride price system in the African marriages can be interpreted as the buying of girls. In India, it is the bride's family who offers the dowry to the groom's family in the name of gift, blessing or ritual. And in Africa, it is the groom's family who needs to pay the bride price to the bride's family to have permission of the bride's kinsmen and society to have a marital relationship with the bride. In one way or another, with these kinds of practiced beliefs and customs; marriages seem nothing but the buying and selling of girls- just like the slaves. They have no right to have a say over their own future.

In Aku-Nna's and Efuru's cases, things were different. They both violated the set rules and customs in regard of bride price. Aku-Nna eloped with the man she loved. Her lover, Chike was a descendent of slaves and hence, was not accepted to be married with any free born. Marriage between a slave and a freeborn was forbidden. But, Aku-Nna had firm determination to marry only with Chike and no one else. And she does so even by eloping with him. According to the Igbo culture, if the groom abducts the bride or the bride elopes with the groom then there would be no need of paying the bride price. Though, Chike was ready to pay the bride price, the obligations of the society did not let that happen. And thus, Aku-Nna's story falls into the exception cases of breaking through the barrier of bride price.

Unlike Aku-Nna's husband, Efuru's man of love was not a descendent of slave, but he belonged to an economically poor family. Adizua was incapable of paying her bride price. But Efuru was not ready to give up. She not only eloped with Adizua to fulfill her desire to marry the man she loved but also wanted to bring a change to her culture. She never rejected her culture, but she expressed her desire to trade and through that she wanted to help Adizua earn more money and pay the bride price. Adizua was so

proud of Efuru that he told his mother, “I have no money for the dowry yet. Efuru herself understands this. We have agreed to be husband and wife and that is all that matters.” (pp. 8)

Even after being the only daughter of a hero and a leader, even after having a comfortable life and even after being respected by men-folks; Efuru did not even think for a second time to discard all these for the sake of her love. But, everything became meaningless to Adizua when Efuru failed to conceive. It is the accepted concept of the whole society that with marriage comes the concept of motherhood. Marriage and motherhood are interrelated with each other. The societal and cultural belief is that a marriage has no meaning without motherhood. Though at the beginning Adizua was trying to adjust and compromise and kept hope that some miracle might happen but, gradually with the taunting remarks of everyone who surrounded them and came to their contact; he lost all his hopes. He started to ignore Efuru. The taunting remarks and the criticism had never hurt Efuru so much that she got through her lover’s negligence and ignorance. Adizua’s discarding and avoiding nature gradually frustrated Efuru. And her impatience to become a mother developed day-by-day.

Overcoming a lot of hurdles and problems, Efuru finally could become pregnant. But by then Adizua had lost all his interests over Efuru. Not only that, but he brought a second wife and he was totally lost in her. Seeing all these Efuru wondered how could their love which once used to be the reason for envy and jealousy for others, end so badly that there was nothing left at all from Adizua’s side. Efuru’s daughter, Ogonim who brought her motherhood into reality, failed to bring her back what was once worthy of everything to her. As Efuru’s mother-in-law Ossai and aunt-in-law, Ajanapu were always in favor of Efuru, they were the happiest people when they got to know about Efuru’s pregnancy yet that could make no difference because Efuru was still neglected by her husband.

Efuru’s tragedy never sought to cease. Even after being a mother she was in constant dread of failing to prove herself as a woman. Though she was a successful business woman and was respected by many yet her fear of insecurity always prevailed. When her baby fell sick, she was so upset that she kept on lamenting: “What will I do if I lose? ... If she dies, that will mean the end of me.” (pp. 66) Her psychological beliefs were so strong that she was totally absorbed in her motherhood which was her identity-her means of existence. She feared thinking what would happen to her if she lost her only

means of her identity and existence. She was discarded and replaced by another woman, even when she had a daughter, even when she was a mother. She could not imagine what loss of her motherhood would bring to her.

Soon her fear turned into reality. Her only daughter Ogonim, died of her sickness. According to the practiced belief of Efuru's community a failed woman, i.e. a childless woman brings shame and failure not only to her husband but also to her husband's family and to the whole society. Efuru was so hurt that no one could console her at that time. She told Ajanapu: "I cannot weep any more, Ajanapu. My grief is the kind of grief that allows no tears. ... Ajanapu, my daughter has killed me. Why should I live?" (pp. 73) Her words express her lament. She lost her identity and her 'self'. She became incomplete again. She hoped to be consoled by her husband. She thought that at least in such misery her husband would stand by her side. But all her thoughts and hopes were in vain. Adizua never showed up to lament at the loss of his own daughter. And that was the last point of Efuru's patience. She had tolerated and waited for long enough. She hoped that one day she might get her love back. But, that day, the loss of motherhood gave her crystal clear view of her married life.

Though Ossai and Ajanapu tried to persuade her to forget all the suffering that Adizua had caused her and asked her to forgive him; she never listened. The Efuru who once fought for her love and happiness again fought for her worth and respect. She left her husband then and there and came back to her father. Back home she was welcomed and loved by her father like before.

Later, one of her childhood friends, Gilbert expressed his desire to marry Efuru. Though Efuru's first marriage failed because of her failed motherhood; she never lost her beauty. She was always the epitome of great beauty that many men desired to have her. Efuru responded Gilbert's proposal in positive. And their marriage took place with the blessing of her mother. But, Gilbert turned to be no less than Adizua. He too soon lost his interest in Efuru because; she failed to provide him any child. Hence, he married two more wives and started mistreating and accusing Efuru for every little thing. Even in her second marriage she got no difference. Like Emecheta's Nnu Ego, Efuru was also lucky to be married for the second time and for being given another chance. But, her luck turned out to be unfortunate one. She again failed to conceive which resulted in the loss of her husband's interest in her. Like Adizua, Gilbert too did not attend Efuru's father's funeral and rather accused her later of having adultery. Efuru was at last so heartbroken

and angry that she left her second husband too. She then decided to spend the rest of her life as a devotee of the river goddess.

Efuru's story is definitely exceptional than many other heroines of her time who belonged to the same kind of tradition and culture. Though she was heartbroken, frustrated, impatient, fed up, with all the taunting remark and criticism about her not being able to conceive; unlike many other heroines she never tried to end her life though she once raised such question in her lamentation. Efuru never surrendered. Though from one angle failed, gave up and surrendered; till the end she showed her courage to pick her choice. Though her failed motherhood gave her nothing but all the pain and suffering yet till the end she kept on making decisions of what was best for her.

In a patriarchal society, motherhood has another meaning. According to the traditional and cultural milieu of the society, a woman is considered to be complete only when she gives birth to a child. But, her motherhood valued and given meaning if the child is a boy. A mother of a single son is valued much more than a mother of number of daughters. In short, motherhood has no meaning if the mother has only daughters and no sons. Such obligations are always applied to the women-folks only. Such mothers are regarded as cursed mother. Motherhood is judged on the basis of the gender of the child that the mother gives birth too.

Chinua Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*" (1969) deals with many powerful men, their struggle, an epidemic and the strong society. But, the story does not end with these factors only. "*Thing Falls Apart*" also presents a time when women were treated and regarded as child bearers and help mates of their husbands. Like Emecheta's "*The Joys of Motherhood*", Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*" too is set at a time when the tradition meant everything to the inhabitants and meanwhile changes were taking place with modernism. Both the novels present a crucial time for the locals. They could neither accept the changes fully nor could break free from their accustomed traditions and beliefs.

Chinua Achebe has introduced the idea of Nneka, i.e. 'Mother is Supreme' in this famous novel of his. "*Things Fall Apart*" is a projection of the true plight and condition of the African women from a man's perspective. While throwing light on women's struggles and sufferings, their exploitations in the name of gender discrimination, tradition and the patriarchal society, their miserable conditions etc; Achebe also focuses

on the fact of how a woman (mother) is given the supreme position. It is ironical how one incarnation of women is treated as superior than others (especially when the situation demands) and the rest is always discarded, neglected, deprived, ignored, and treated as slaves. Many critics agreed to this point that Chinua Achebe has pointed out a hard reality of the society that when everything runs smoothly in life, men regard themselves to be belonged to their fatherland. But, the men take shelter of the motherland when things get hard or bitter. “But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you... And that is why we say that mother is supreme.” (Achebe 1969, 98) This concept is projected very well in Emecheta’s “*The Slave Girl*”, where Pa Palagada, the man of the house, who does nothing but owns everything that his wife Ma Palagada earned just because he owned her. The man of the house, who often growled like a lion and whose words were never disobeyed, at times seen crying and seeking for his mother’s care when things got hard. On the other hand, Nnu Ego, in “*The Joys of Motherhood*” was disgusted with this ‘two standards’. She was tired of fighting for her rights. She was frustrated to see the society labeling the children as their father’s when they did well, and when they did something bad or committed some mistake, they belonged to their mother.

Achebe had not only worshiped women as the mother supreme but also brought to light the mistreatments done upon that very woman. In the novel, there are glimpses of motherhood and the mistreatment of women on their ability or inability to provide male child to their husband’s line. Ekwefi was the second wife of a wealthy warrior and respected farmer, Okonkwo. She was treated very badly and always abused by her husband. Though Okonkwo had a great reputation among his clan, he also had the reputation of wife beater. He showed repentance by sacrificing stuff after the brutal beatings and abusive scolding. But, he never stopped being an ungrateful husband and an ungrateful father. Ekwefi on the other hand, was the epitome of love, knowledge, confidence, independence etc. of everything that is good. Yet, she was regarded as a cursed woman because of her deliberated trials of giving birth to ten children, only one child survived. Nine of her children died of sickness and the one who survived was a daughter. “By the time Onwumbiko was born, Ekwefi was a very bitter woman.” (pp. 76) She had seen nine times her husband consulting with a ‘dibia’ (ones who believe in the supernatural) about her failure to keep her children alive. And the dibia would every time say that Ekwefi had failed as a mother not because her children could not live but

because she was unable to provide a son to her husband's family line. She had also seen nine times the dibia dragging her dead children to the forest and burying them there. Her not-valued motherhood might have been dead by the time Onwumbiko was born. Also, Okonkwo was frustrated with Ekwefi and her failure to provide a son. He left no chance availed to scold and beat both Ekwefi and her daughter. "Who killed the banana tree?" He asked. A hush fell over the compound immediately... Without further argument Okonkwo gave her a sound beating and left her and her only daughter weeping." (pp. 39) Every little thing caused Ekwefi great trouble. The novel itself records that Ekwefi was the only wife who was beaten for her inability often in almost every occasions.

Ekwefi's story is like that of Efurur's. When she was in her youth, Ekwefi was very much beautiful. "Okonkwo had won her heart by throwing the cat in the greatest contest within the living memory. She did not marry him then because he was too poor to pay her bride-price. But, a few years later she ran away from her husband and came to live with Okonkwo." (pp. 40) That Ekwefi, who showed her great courage to let her and Okonkwo's love win; was now treated so brutally by the same man who once fell in love with her. Her failure to become the proud mother of a son; snatched away every happiness, care and concern from her. Though Okonkwo loved and cared for his daughter, he still preferred his sons more than his daughters, and also he preferred the wives with sons more than the wives without sons.

Chinua Achebe presents an Igbo culture and tradition with all its values, rules and norms. Achebe does not put or paint the society with any extra color, nor does he conceal anything about it. He keeps the authenticity of the culture and tradition of the society that are valued more than anything. But, never forgot to praise motherhood as women's greatest and purest incarnation. He has not only worshiped the women as mother superior in his novel but also, he has tried to put light on the subjugated section of the society who, even after being the 'mother superior', were neglected and ignored.

Buchi Emecheta's "*Second-Class Citizen*" is a novel which is set at a time when colonialism had changed the life-style, social values, traditions, cultures and a lot of things. Though the central character is named as Adah, the novel is regarded to be written in autobiographical tone. Adah's story reflects the life of the author herself. Set in Nigeria, the story revolves round the Igbo tribe and deals with the Igbo customs.

Unlike Nnu Ego, Adah had dreams, aspirations and courage. When Adah was only eight years old, she had heard the name 'United Kingdom' for the very first time. She had heard from many people and from her father too that a lawyer was arriving from the UK for the very first time to their village. There was a great preparation for his arrival. People of the First World Countries were like the source of mysteries for the innocent and backward people of the Third World Countries. Even, to her father, to spell the name UK, was like the noise associated with bomb. Everything in the UK was assumed to be mysterious and advanced. Since then, Adah dreamt of visiting the UK and to see everything there with her own eyes.

Adah spent her young days under the gender discrimination which was strong and prevailing in a Nigerian society. Her mother preferred education for her brother only. She was never the concern for education in her mother's eyes. But, she had a great desire to educate herself for she somehow knew that education was the only way to get herself to her goal, i.e., to visit the UK. She sneaked out of home and without her mother's awareness, attended classes. Not only that, she also managed to pay her examination fees because giving up on her dreams was not an option for her.

When her father died, she was sent to her maternal uncle's care because her mother was unable to take care of both she and her brother with the little money she had. Her maternal uncle brought her in his shelter and took good care of her only with the hope to get a good amount of bride-price through her marriage. Though Adah kept on avoiding marriage over and over again, at last she thought that marriage might be her only way to fulfill her desires. By fulfilling her family's wish, she married Francis, a handsome looking person who had aspirations for higher studies. Soon after their marriage, when Adah was the mother of two children, it was the time for Francis to go to England and continue with his studies. Though Adah had high hopes that she would be allowed to accompany her husband yet her father-in-law came to shatter all her hopes. He did not approve of women going to England. Adah was very much angry but, she decided to handle the situation with great patience. She rather stayed with her in-laws and helped them economically with her job. She kept sending money to her husband and also kept a saving for her visit to England someday. Though Adah was a mother of two children, her motherhood never became a hurdle for her. She kept on working day and night, both in her workplace and in her home to please her in-laws and her husband while fulfilling every need of her children as a single parent in the absence of Francis.

On the other hand, Francis kept on writing letters to his beloved wife from England. In one of those letters, he mentioned that he needed to stay there for at least four or five years and that he needed her help. That was the golden chance to finally visit England. She told about Francis' letter to her in-laws and requested and convinced them to let her go to England. With their due permission she moved to England with her two children. She was so happy that her happiness could not be measured. She was finally witnessing with her own open eyes- the mysterious England.

But, she was shocked to see a new Francis there. He gave her a very cold welcome and kissed her in public, which was never allowed in her society. She soon realized that though Francis tried to show modern in his actions, he was never so in his thoughts. With all those strange and ironical facts Adah kept on loving her life. With the school education that she had, she could manage a job in the library where Francis went to study. While earning money and taking care of her husband and children, she continued her studies. By that time, she was already a mother of three children and was pregnant with the fourth. At that time, in her point of view pregnancy, motherhood and nurturing children became hurdle. She did not want her fourth child to be a hurdle in her education or her job. She went to a nurse and asked: "Please, could I have the pill? You see, I am not twenty-one yet and if I had another child it would be my fourth, and I originally came here to study and bring up two babies I brought from home. Can you help me? I need the pill." (pp. 149) Her desperation and fear both could be felt from her words. For her, her education and her career was more important than her motherhood. According to the values of the Igbo culture, the more the mother is valued and honored, the more the children she gives birth to. Adah was aware of this custom very well. But, to fulfill her dreams, to complete her education, to get the degree and to get a better job was much more important to Adah than to keep mothering a number of children. She went to the extent of forging her husband's signature to abort her fourth child. Her husband's signature was required to let her undergo the abortion. Without taking his consent and without even consulting with him, she went to the extent of forging his signature. What was a dream for other women was like a hurdle to Adah. She wanted to succeed in life. She wanted a better life, a degree and a job. She never considered that a number of children were needed to be recognized as a juicy and good mother. She was happy and content with her three children. She was ready to sacrifice her motherhood.

When things started to get bitter between Adah and Francis, she was in fact ready to leave him if anything worse happened. And that had to be so. Francis gradually became more and more jealous and insecure. He was ashamed to let people know that he was living on his wife's earnings and that his wife was the bread-winner of the family and not him. Finally, when he got to know that Adah was ready with a manuscript and wanted to publish the book; he was so jealous that he burnt the manuscript then and there. He replied with all his anger that Adah's work was 'rubbish', and that women were brainless, and that she could never be a writer for she was a woman.

Her motherhood, which was once thought to be a hurdle between her and her career, was now her only companion. She lived as a single parent, taking all the responsibilities of her four children. She started to live in a flat with her children, separately from Francis. When Francis was humiliated by his own mother for not showing any concern or love to Adah, he got so angry that he went to her flat and beat her brutally. She wanted protection and filed a case against her own husband. When the magistrate asked for their marriage certificates and the birth certificates of her children, she could not show any because Francis had burnt them all. When Francis said, "I do not mind their being sent for adoption." (pp. 185) after being asked by the magistrate about the maintenance of the children; Adah was dumbfounded. She could not believe that Francis could discard his own children just like that. 'Children', who are so much important in an Igbo culture, Francis did not show any concern for them even after belonging to that very culture. There was only motherhood that had to be serene, pure, complete and pristine; but, there was no fatherhood. Even though it was only the father's family line to which the children were given birth yet Francis showed no concern. Adah could not believe if that was the same Francis who had once demanded after looking at his son: "Just my image, I can now die in peace." (pp. 33) But, that was the final strike from Francis to her. When the magistrate again asked her about the upbringing of the children, Adah, the 'mother' said: "Do not worry Sir. The children are mine, and that is enough. I shall never let them down as long as I am alive." (pp. 185)

Towards the end of the novel, it was only Adah's motherhood that gave her enough courage to be confident and independent in any kind of circumstances. Her motherhood gave her enough power to face the biased society even in England, the land of advancement and mysteries. Her motherhood made her even stronger than ever and gave enough power to fight for what was right and to face whatever challenge was

thrown on her way. From that day onwards, she never looked back, nor did she ever give up. She kept on working hard and looking after her children. The vary motherhood, which entrapped Nnu Ego and stopped her from doing anything against her husband's will or from treating her own self in a better way; set Adah free from all the familial and societal bindings and ties. Through Adah, Emecheta shows an empowered motherhood which neither bent its knees nor did it bow down its head in front of the tradition. Adah's had a different kind of motherhood. She thought herself to be overloaded with children and that her children were going to be the hurdles in her life. But, in reality, her motherhood created a strong enough incarnation of herself, who did not depend on the men-folk to live a life. She proved through her actions that a woman does not need to depend on men to live her life and to take care of her children. If needed, a woman also can look after her people with her hard work and her talent. But, what makes us sympathize with Adah is that her tradition failed her, both as a woman and as a mother. Her marriage had failed even after being a proud mother of sons and daughters, and even after earning money and looking after her husband and children.

Motherhood is regarded as one of the central African philosophies and spiritualities. A woman, during her pregnancy, is expected to be treated specially by all the members of her family. In African context, motherhood is aspired by every woman because it's believed that it is the only thing that completes a woman and the role given by God which makes it all the more sacred. But, this is not the exact case in the West, a western woman at least avails that much liberty to decide whether or not and when and how to enjoy the motherhood. It is neither imposed upon them nor is seen as one of the important requirements to complete a woman. The woman has all the liberty and choice of hers and doesn't see motherhood as a scale to measure her womanhood. In this regard, many African novelists are of the view that every woman was encouraged since their early childhood to marry and to bear children in order to express and prove their womanhood in the complete sense. Many writers also regard that the basis of marriage among Africans implied the transfer of a woman's fertility to the husband's family group. Motherhood has become a very critical matter in some societies that it has brought misfortune for its women who are childless because a woman who could not conceive is seen as a barren and incomplete woman in such societies. They are only seen as the source of production. It has become so crucial that in such societies it is gulping down the liberty, rights and freedom of the women.

Motherhood is inseparable part of feminism. Since the very beginning it has remained an incoherent part. But it has not ceased splitting feminist aspects. While struggling for feminism, a lot of women have become mother and a lot of feminists have claimed the rights of women on the basis of motherhood. For being denied the rights and equality, the feminist approach to motherhood took a critical view in the feminist writings up to the mid 1980s.

According to Simon de Beauvoir, women of course have not got the equal rights as men. And she considers motherhood as a hurdle. In her thought provoking critique, *“The Second Sex”*, she says, “[i]t was fraudulent to maintain that through maternity woman becomes concretely man’s equal” (pp. 525). She here considers motherhood as one of the main reasons for which women are seen as ‘others’. Motherhood, as seen by the patriarchal society, is one of the essential parts of life for a woman which fulfills her responsibility while completing her as a woman. That’s why she is of the view that it is performed not “in complete liberty” (pp. 696) but as an enforced duty. It is an outcome of such enforcement that now no change in law, institution or society can change the plight, position and outcome of motherhood in a woman’s life. For such a perspective, de Beauvoir was criticized a lot. Some feminists took the advantage and agreed with her so that women’s inferior social and economic status as ‘objects’ or ‘source of production’ could be razed.

A prominent feminist and political theorist, Carole Pateman as expressed in her *“The Sexual Contract”* was of the view that the construction of sexual differences in a patriarchal society is the sole reason of the deflation of motherhood. On the basis of both the genders’ involvement and contribution, the discrimination is made. Men are seen as the essence of the society who has fraternal values, and women are seen as a relegated section for their nature of being a wife and a mother and contributing a lot in the household affairs only. But, a woman’s pregnancy or childbearing ability is never regarded as a contribution to both the men and the society itself and thus her motherhood is deflated. Motherhood, which is so sacred a task, as believed in some cultures, is not even worthy of recognition in reality, rather it is regarded as the core of women’s nature. This regard has been evoked in almost every sphere. Historically, socially, legally, politically, philosophically, culturally, traditionally etc. from every angle, motherhood is seen as the core of women’s nature. The feminist argued at this point that the society has imposed the motherhood as a duty or job for women, as it is framed as ‘social nature’.

They also argued over the fact that the concept of production has totally excluded the biological motherhood. A mother's feelings and emotions are given very less attention and all the utmost attention is given on the production only. Because of such concept, the womenfolk are forced to be concerned on their motherhood even more than their identity because, men already started to discard the unproductive and barren women.

A woman is always evaluated on the basis of men, i.e. the men folk is regarded as a monolithic scale to measure women's identity, their duty, their rights, their needs etc. Women are seen as the 'other' to the men 'selves'. They are the second sex. In fact, their identity depends a lot on their ability to conceive and the number of children they bear for their husbands. Such discrimination is a hard fact of the society. Even if one doesn't like it, it is very hard to escape it from any angle. Such discrimination and boundaries have already made the experience of being a mother all the bitter, it has destroyed the excitement and serenity of becoming a mother for motherhood is no more seen or regarded sacred. Nowadays motherhood is seen more as a slavery than as bliss because it only feeds women's identity, women's existence and the needs of the men and hence the society.

Women, though not given much recognition, are an inseparable part of the society, whether an ancient or a modern. Women are the ones who are rooted to the culture, religion, tradition etc; they are fully responsible to ingrain such discipline and belief while rearing their children. Women have been constantly shaping the cultures and the societies in which men have been living in for hundreds and thousands of years. Women, in short, are shaping and re-shaping the values of 'society'. But whether they are being valued or not is really a matter of concern.

Since the beginning till date, African women are seen and found to be taking care of each and everything of the household stuff. Not only the household chores and familial stuff, but also they have been finding water, saving seeds, tilling, harvesting, taking care of the animals etc. Such was the setting before the Europeans invaded Africa. African women used to be the co-workers of men and had some values and rights of their own. But, 'colonialism' which is seen as a bright side in regard of positive changes, has only destroyed the traditional values of women in the African society.

The topsoil fell in the hands of the Europeans. They wanted all the cultivation land to themselves. And hence Africans were greatly affected by the alienation of land.

But, women were seen more affected by the land alienation on several grounds. Women had to depend on men for economic strength. As they lost their earlier access and control, they also lost their earlier free and independent selves. Not only that women had to depend on men, but also it gave the men folk a stronger domestic patriarchy to practice which was reinforced by colonial social institutions. Among the Kikuyu tribe of Kenya, the major food producers were the women which assured them full access to land and also the authority over how to use the land for cultivation. Women's productive labor in processing and producing food let them avail their rights not only in domestic but also in other spheres like cultural, economic, political, social, religious etc.

The advancement of British authority ensured women's loss of access and loss of authority over land. Moreover, land loss meant women were restricted to smaller plots of land for cultivation. Land alienation reduced women's economic independence. The British advancement also reduced women's vital role in agricultural contribution to the household. Though men got more authority over women, they also had to migrate in search of job from the white men for they too lost their independent roles. While the men transformed into migrant labors, the women had to take care of the household while cultivating in the limited land that they had. And as a result, the early situations became opposite; while the rural areas deteriorated, the cities beckoned with prosperity. Women had very little chance of waged employment in town, but their opportunity to earn money existed. For that, a lot of women migrated to the urban areas but met disapproval by the patriarchs for that meant indiscipline of women in the traditional custom. The African patriarchs were very much concerned in this regard mainly for two reasons. Firstly, if women moved to the urban areas, the purity and originality of their clan might also vanish gradually and secondly, it would mean a loss because in urban areas where their customs won't be followed, the African patriarchs won't be getting the bride price as they won't be having any social pressure upon the couple in urban areas because of the changing situations.

It was quite clear that a definite decline was brought to the women by colonialism. Women's economic independence and socio-political status were shattered. On the other hand, it could bring a great deal of power and authority to the African men over the women.

Buchi Emecheta's *"The Joys of Motherhood"* is set in the mid 1930s and 1950s, during the period of World War II. Emecheta here not only critiques the idea of

motherhood but also coming of colonialism that shook the position of a woman in the traditional African society. The traditional set up of motherhood fails to work in the colonial setting. In the pre-colonial society, women were seen only as the producer of children and as the sexual object. Childless women were always deserted and looked down upon. Hence, 'motherhood' was considered as the utmost important possession for a woman. Women were regarded to be 'complete' only when they could conceive and bear children for her husband's heritage. And thus, the women who were born with this notion, and belief, were shocked and disheartened to find a polar apart system in the society with the coming of the colonialism.

The expectations and demands of a husband in both the settings remained the same, only the women's identity got shaken. The privileges that a woman enjoyed in the traditional society were lost in the colonial setting. And therefore Nnu Ego, the protagonist of the novel suffers when she comes to the newly colonized town, Lagos, where her second husband stays and works. Her first marriage was a failure for she failed to conceive and carry on the heritage of her husband, and for which she was regarded as a barren woman.

In the traditional society, a man could marry as many wives as he wanted and then he provided each of them a separate hut to live in and a separate land to produce food. But, in the colonial society, the lands were taken by the Portuguese for their industrial and business purposes and eventually it shook the previous privileges of a woman. In the colonial society, the wives were not getting their benefit; instead, they had to live under one roof, sharing the meager salary of the husband among all the wives and their children. Means of work were very less in that society. While in the traditional society, children were regarded as blessings; in the modern colonial society, children became burden as there was not enough money to feed them. And thus, the pride and the joy of the women of being a mother became sour. Also, with the change of the society the children too became money and self oriented and they didn't even get time to take care of their own parents.

Emma Gross, in her "Motherhood in Feminist Theory" stated, "... women of color were more likely to respect their mothers' struggles while they were keenly aware of the price their mothers had paid to survive." (pp. 269) This is definitely seen in many novels of the colored authors who re-present the setting of the people of color. The struggles of their mothers force the children to understand their plight and pain. But that

too has changed with the coming of colonialism. Instead of reforming the society as a whole, colonialism had caused more and more difficulties to the women folk. Their life style was shaken to the core and neither anything remained same nor did any improvement came.

Emecheta's revolutionary novel; "*The Joys of Motherhood*" revolves round the concepts of motherhood and womanhood. Emecheta here writes with a firm and strong female point of view against all the exploitations and negativity that are done to the women-folk in the name of traditional values. Emecheta here writes strongly against the unfair, unjust and oppressive system of the whole society that has been prevailing in a traditional Nigerian setting. "*The Joys of Motherhood*" from every sense is a critique on the traditional setting of the whole African society and on all the exploitations and violations done against women as a result of gender biasness. Emecheta, like in her "*Second-Class Citizen*", here in "*The Joys of Motherhood*" also questions on the importance of fatherhood and the role of a father as compared to the roles and responsibilities of a mother.

As the title suggests "*The Joys of Motherhood*", the novel does not actually paint the colors of the joys of motherhood. Rather, it gives an ironical concept on the joys of motherhood. "*The Joys of Motherhood*" is a story of every woman of Nigeria or belonging to those places where patriarchy lurks. With patriarchy, comes the domination of the men-folk over the women-folk; and also comes all the other gendered-ills like gender discrimination, women subjugation, women exploitation, women inequality etc. A patriarchal society views a woman as 'complete' only when she proves so by giving birth to a number of children, especially by providing sons to the family line of her husband. In the name of marriage and its customs, a girl needs to leave behind her parents, her people, her identity and everything else. She is entrusted with the rules and regulations of a new family. And to add to that, the children that she gives birth to after going through so much pain and sufferings; inherits the father's name and everything that concerns the father. The mother gets no authority, no name, and no credit to demand her rights over her own children. The sons, especially, belong to their fathers only. A mother's pain and sufferings of bearing a child for nine months in her womb, giving birth to it and then all the struggles of nurturing the child get no credit, honor or even consideration. They are all but her duties. A woman is sent by the Gods to the earth to complete her duties- as taught to the women since their childhood. Hence, the lessons that the women get since their childhood that their lives always belong to a man- to the father before

marriage and to the husband after marriage; and that she needs to complete herself by giving birth. Since her childhood, a woman seems to aspire for children and motherhood. Her psychology somehow accepts that she needs to become a mother to please her father's family line, her husband's family line and especially to please the society. Hence, she enjoys her motherhood more than anything. She gets joy in living her motherhood for it completes her, brings meaning to her life and thus exerts her identity. But, things did not work in that way with Nnu Ego. Motherhood became a burden for her. Her joys of motherhood faded away very soon. Her motherhood not only entrapped her but also made her work like a slave to feed it.

Emecheta tried to give all the strength to her heroine Nnu Ego. She was the prized possession of her father, Agbadi. She was loved by her father very much. Her mother Ona wanted her daughter to be a 'free' woman. She wanted her daughter to have a happy and content life. "Ona's belief that Nnu Ego can be a woman, and at the same time 'have a life of her own, a husband if she wants one', suggest the fluidity in definitions of womanhood that contradict any sense of a fixed and homogeneous value system." (pp. 17)

Ona wanted a free life for her daughter. Like her, she wanted her daughter to have a life to call her own, a life set by her own rules. Through Ona's belief, Emecheta tries to present an expanded platform of possibilities for women. Yet that was not so. Those possibilities are shattered if we have a closer look on Ona's character. Ona, no doubt, tried to have a control over body but when it came to Agbadi's suppressive incarnation, she [played a subordinate role] lost all her power and control. Here she suffered from identity crisis. Another female character, who suffered from identity crisis, is Agbadi's senior wife Agunawa. She never protested nor did she ever demand her rights. Even though she was hurt when Agbadi brought Ona home, she remained silent. She saw with her own eyes how Agbadi took Ona to his room, and gave Agunawa's place to her. She was hurt with the pangs of displacement but she never dared to go against her husband's will and wish. Silently she tolerated everything and kept on suffering. Through her compromising nature, Emecheta presents every Nigerian woman who has adjusted herself with the set norms of the patriarchal society to share her husband with another woman.

Though in a different context, but Nnu Ego too suffered the pangs of identity crisis. When she was grown up, she was desired by many. She was like a prized possession for Agbadi. Firstly, she was the only child that is left of his beloved wife Ona, and secondly, she became such a beauty that she was expected to bring a high bride price to him. Whatever the

conditions or situations may be she was married off to a man named Amatokwu, who paid her bride price. She soon became the most precious asset to her husband. He treated her with all love, care and compassion. The beginning days of her married life were very much colorful. But soon, those colors were fading away as she was taking time to conceive. Gradually she lost all the love and care. When she asked Amatokwu why he did not love her like before and all he said: “I am a busy man. I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you do not appeal to me anymore. You are so dry and jumpy. When a man comes to a woman he wants to be cooled not scratched by a nervy female who is all bones.” (pp. 31)

This dialogue or this reply of Amatokwu puts true color to the lives of all the Nigerian women. That’s how women are seen and expected in Nigerian society. A woman is treated well only when she becomes pregnant. If she fails to conceive her whole very existence means nothing. She is regarded as juicy or juiceless on the basis of her ability to conceive and giving birth. Nnu Ego was soon neglected and ignored. Amatokwu brought a second wife home which caused her pain. She told her father how she was hurt when Amatokwu brought a younger woman home. Soon the second wife conceived and gave birth to a boy. She was then given more importance than earlier as she happened to bestow the Amatokwu’s family line with a boy. Nnu Ego too developed a strong love for the boy. When the second wife was resting or busy, she used to take care of the boy. Though Amatokwu did not like his son to be touched or cared by Nnu Ego, the second wife allowed her to fulfill her desires secretly. When one night, Nnu Ego could not resist the urge and went to the extent of breast feeding the child, she was hit twice by her husband, Amatokwu. She was abused, scolded and misbehaved. At that point, her beloved father came to her rescue and took her back to his home until she was mentally calm. Back home she was nursed and taken care by her father and all his wives sympathized with her. There Emecheta gave her heroine a big opportunity, or to say a ‘second chance’ which is very much rare among the Nigerian women. Agbadi wanted his beloved daughter to remain away from the society which did not value her and rather hurt her like anything. He thought of her second marriage. He even chose a husband for her, Owulum Nnaife, who was working far away in the city of Lagos. He was all ready to let his daughter live away from him, in a place which he neither had visited himself nor had he heard of that. Yet, he was ready to part with Nnu Ego, so that she could have a chance to live and prove her juiciness. It is ironical enough, because: “Agbadi was no different from many men. He himself might take wives and then neglect them for years, apart from seeing that they

each received their one yam a day; he could bring his mistress to sleep with him right in his courtyard while his wives pined and bit their nails for a word from him. But, when it comes to his own daughter, she must have a man who would cherish her.” (pp. 36)

But Nnu Ego was yet to fulfill her dreams. She was no doubt pregnant and ended up giving birth to a baby boy, Ngozi. But that child did not live long. Within a very few days she was snatched of her happiness. She was happy and content a while ago thinking that there would be someone to call her ‘mother’ after she dies and the next moment she found out that her happiness and joys were shattered into pieces. She was all broke down. “She has only just lost the child that told the world that she is not barren.” (pp. 65) She was at such an edge of her life that she wanted everything to end. She ran out from her home to drown herself but was saved, she now was a heartbroken. She believed that “a woman without a child for her husband was a failed woman.” (pp. 65)

She then became a changed person, with no hope. She even stopped her trade. But, her luck had to be different. Only when she lost all her hopes and dreams on motherhood, she was bestowed with a gift of joy. She became mother of a boy, Oshia. And then she gave birth to Adin and thus she became a proud mother of sons and daughters. Even at the age of forty, she conceived and gave birth to a dead child. At some point she felt guilty for not giving much concern to her unborn, for going up to the Zabo market everyday to trade, for bending too low to wash the clothes of her sons. She was guilty as she did not take much care for her unborn. By that time her motherhood had faded. She was at a confused state of mind. She was both proud and sad: “Oh, poor baby(...) I am sorry you are not staying; I am also glad that God has seen fit to take you bake. My own reward, the joy of knowing that at this age I can still have children for my husband.” (pp. 218)

Nnu Ego who is now a proud mother of seven children, who is now boastful of her ability to conceive even at the age of forty, was once seen praying her chi(her personal God) when she could not conceive earlier: “O my chi, why do you have to bring me so low? Why I must be so punished?” (pp. 30) Through these questions of Nnu Ego, Emecheta actually questions the dominant tradition of motherhood and throws light on the biased gender discrimination. She presents the ‘chi’ as a new woman, who is just a woman, an individual; who is neither a daughter nor a wife nor a mother; but just a woman. Her refusal to let Nnu Ego have children shows her powerful inner self who is more away from the domination of the society.

Nnu Ego was once desperate to become a mother and once wanted to put her life to an end; was now tired of giving birth it seemed. Or it might have been that she could not take responsibility of any more children. As she had been the one who contributed more to her family income, she had to go through a lot of struggles in making her business a success. She found it difficult to maintain so much expenditure, starting from buying food to buying clothes, to managing all the costs of the household, to paying school fees for the education of her children. Her husband earned only to eat and drink. He was not at all concerned about any other matters. He did not show any concern on educating either his sons or daughters. He was expecting a good sum of bride price as his elder daughter was maturing. But, when she ended up eloping with the man she loved, he got furious and went straight with a cutler in hand to the boy's family to kill him. The fatherhood seems to be absent.

On the other hand, even after giving her whole life and soul to feed her motherhood; Nnu Ego got nothing. She was not even given any recognition by her own children. She got nothing from her sacrifices. She changed her thoughts and with her experiences she did her best to cope up with the changing Lagos. With the impact of colonization, Lagos had changed its views and concepts of motherhood from that of the rural Ibuza's beliefs and notions. Michael Worton has rightly stated in his edited book "*National Health: Gender, Sexuality and Health in a Cross-Cultured Context*": "As a new context, Lagos anticipates several of the novel's own questions: how do the normative concepts of manhood, womanhood and motherhood change in situations where men have lost their power base? How do men and women reconstitute identities and shape new language of legitimation? How do characters, particularly Nnu Ego, negotiate such contexts?"

But, even after working under other people and being dominated by the white-men, Nnaife had not released his grip on one traditional practice, i.e., the demand and control of a husband over his wife. When Nne Ego was staring at him, while he was having his meal, Nnaife asked her not to stare at him like that. "You know a wife is not allowed to do that." (pp. 50) And when Nnu Ego protested against that saying that they were in Lagos and such rules were applied in Ibuza only, he said, "What did you say? Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner?" (pp. 50) This shows how colonization actually changed the lives of women than that of the men. Men's demands and expectations remained the same in both the traditional and the modern societies. But, women lost their freedom and position. Earlier, in the traditional setting, each of the wives used to get a separate hut to live with their children and was provided with at least a yard of land to cultivate and make their living easy. But, with

the coming of colonization that did not remain the same because, the white-men took many of their lands for construction and business purposes. Hence, the earlier provision for the wives vanished. Nnu Ego suffered the pangs of such loss when Nnaife brought Adaku home. Adaku was the wife of Nnaife's elder brother. According to the polygamy, when the elder brother dies, all his wives and children belonged to his younger brother. When the senior Owulum died, Nnaife went to Ibuza to perform the rituals but, when he came back he brought the youngest wife of his brother with him. Back home, in Lagos, Nnu Ego now had to suffer. It was firstly, because of the congested place in the hut, and secondly, because Nnaife started to pay more attention to Adaku than on her and her children. On the other hand, Nnu Ego enjoyed being the senior wife too.

But, the saddest part is that, ironically the novel does not talk about any joys of being a mother. The title of the novel gives a very contradictory meaning to the plot. Nnu Ego, the heroine suffered at the beginning for not being able to conceive, for failing to become a complete woman, for being neglected, discarded and even hit by her first husband, for not being able to keep her first born alive. She lost all her hopes and wanted to kill herself. Since her childhood, she had been made to believe "My daughters, you will grow to rock your children's children." (pp. 27) This statement shows how girls were brought up, making them believe that their ultimate goal on this earth was to bear children and rear them. Hence, that belief tried to kill Nnu Ego when she found herself to be a barren woman. As Mary Wollstonecraft mentioned in her book, "*A Vindication to the Rights of Men with A Vindication of the Rights of Women and Hints*", "to their senses, are women made slaves, because it is by their sensibility that they obtain present power; taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its guilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison." (pp. 116)

What catches our attention is that towards the end of the novel, when Nnu Ego was blamed of bringing her children in a bad way after the elopement of Kehinde against the wishes of her father; she surrendered that day. All her struggles and efforts to be a good mother, to give all that she could to her children etc. went in vain. She was "...fed up of this two-way standard. When the children were good they belonged to the father; when they were bad, they belonged to the mother." (pp. 232) Nnu Ego was very much hurt when Nnaife blamed her for Kehinde's elopement. He blamed her saying that he had to see such a day all because of her. Kehinde was in love with a Yoruba man, which was not accepted among the Igbo men. Hence, Nnaife took as an insult and burst out giving all the blames to Nnu Ego.

She wondered, “Why, he had thought the woman’s children were a blessing to him. Now he was beginning to see that they were a curse.” (pp. 231)

So, in a Nigerian patriarchal society, a woman is expected to do all the chores of the household, take care of the children, please and fulfill all the demands of her husband and also contribute to the family income. In spite of all the labors, hard works, and giving her heart and soul; the woman is not given any recognition. Rather, she is blamed to fail as a woman. From carrying the children in her womb, to giving birth to them, to breast feed them and to up-bring them- everything is done by a woman. And, a father’s duty does not seem to even exist. It is as if a father’s duty is over right at the point when he makes his wife pregnant with his children. May be that was why Nnaife blamed Nnu Ego for what Kehinde had done because, it was only a mother’s duty and responsibility. But, even then she was never been praised for the other six children who never caused such issues that led to an insult or a five years’ imprisonment to their father.

When Nnaife was in jail for slaying the arm of a Yoruba man and all her children were set in their own lives, Nnu Ego, having not much to do in Lagos, went back to Ibuza. Even when Nnaife was released his hatred for Nnu Ego never ceased. He abused her and kept on blaming her. His views for her never changed. The punishment of 5 years made him all the crueler and hard hearted. He did not want her back in his life. Rather he went to Adaku. On the other hand, all her grownups were set in their own lives. Oshia went to abroad to have a better life there. Adim asked his mother to let Taiwo take Obiageli with her after her marriage. Adam too would be going to the far off land. They all asked their mother to stop working for them and to enjoy the rest of her life by wearing good clothes, having good food and going to dances. But, Nnu Ego said: “I don’t know how to be anything else but a mother.” (pp. 251) She was no doubt happy seeing her children happy. But, she started to feel lonely. All her life, she only thought and cared for her children. She never made any close friends to roam around and to spend time with. She always told herself that her big family was enough for her. But, at this point she felt lonely. Even after being a mother of seven children, she felt no one cared to stay by her side. When she told about her habit and being used to taking concerns for her children, Adim told her that as Kehinde was pregnant, she would soon need her mother beside her. Hence, she would be having a grandchild to take care of. And for that reason she would have to spend half of her times in Ibuza and half in Lagos.

Nnu Ego wondered where she went wrong. Her husband and her husband's people believed her to be a bad mother and blamed her for all that had happened. Her children, for whom she sacrificed all her life, her time, her energy, her hard works, and even her individuality; were now only concerned in their own lives. None of them thought about their mother. She could not believe the impact of drastic colonial changes that had took place in her life. According to the Igbo culture, a woman with many children is a juicy and happy woman. But, for Nnu Ego, even after being the mother of so many children, she had to "...face a lonely old age, and may be a miserable death all alone, just like a barren woman. (pp. 247)

She questioned herself what had she been paid in return for all her devotion and dedication towards her motherhood. "What with worrying over this child, this pregnancy, and the lack of money, coupled with the fact that she never had adequate outfits to wear..... But, had she been right?" (pp. 247) According to Wollstonecraft, women do not desire to look good, be powerful either economically or mentally, rather they desire to have "sweet attractive grace". (pp. 87) Nnu Ego found it really hard to adjust with the changed concepts of everything that they earlier believed to be important. All the changed concepts hurt her more than that of how her husband and her children hurt her. Since her childhood, what she was taught, what she believed in, what she had faith in, what she was accustomed with; could not be found in the colonized city of Lagos. Nnu Ego herself said, "But I don't understand it. Why were they all laughing at me? Was I saying the wrong things? Things surely have changed, but Nnaife still owns us, does he not? I'm afraid even that has changed." (pp. 246)

While writing about women's relation with language, Nelly Furman in her writing, "The Study of women and Language", states: "It is through the medium of language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity, which in turn allows us to comprehend the world around us." (pp. 182)

But, for Nnu Ego, it was not any creation of new language. But, analysis and re-invention of the old concepts on the basis of experience. She could know the concepts but, could never decipher them because of their changed meanings. Her mind kept on receiving everything and failed to apply them in action. Hence, we find a deliberately muted Nnu Ego in the end. At the end of the text, we find her dying all alone. Despite her every trial and effort to please her community and making a big family by giving birth to a number of children, she was left all alone. No one was there to cry at her death.

She spent her last days all by herself, and at the end she died by the roadside unnoticed, and uncared. Such a lonely ending came because of her failure to understand and adjust with the changes. But, her silence seems powerful. She embraced isolation and loneliness rather than embracing the changes. She kept sticking to what she believed important to her. Her womanhood, motherhood and wifeness everything failed because of all the changing aspects of colonization.

The ending of the novel is very much interesting where we find that after the death of Nnu Ego, all her children had arrived and gave her a great funeral. In fact, Oshia and Adim made a shrine of their mother. In the eyes of the society, that was a great act, and that Nnu Ego was very much lucky to have such children. Later, the women who could not conceive began to come to her shrine and pray her for children. It was as though she became the goddess of motherhood. But, she never listened to those prayers and refused to fulfill them. By doing so, she went against the whole patriarchal system of the society and the very notion of motherhood. Nnu Ego never answered the prayers and she never spoke because language was the construction of the dominant group, i.e., the men-folk. She did so because of her failure as a woman and as a mother even after going through all the sacrifices. All her problems, contradictions and failure reflect on the women's relation with culture.

Emecheta throws light on the fact how pregnancy and motherhood are made the sole parts of womanhood. But, she gave her heroine all the strength to try to create or at least hope for a new woman, who is free from such obligations and bondages. A woman needs to conceive and get pregnant only to fulfill her husband's wish. It has never been the concern if the woman wanted and desired that or not. Through Nnu Ego, Emecheta reveals the truth, i.e. how a woman, her wishes, desires, hopes etc. are trapped in her own body. That is reflected through Nnu Ego's prayer and wish: "God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being not anybody's appendage?" She prayed desperately. 'After all, I was born alone and I shall die alone.'" (pp. 209) It reflects Nnu Ego's understanding of the practice of patriarchy to such a great extent and how it prohibits women from fulfilling their own dreams and especially prohibits them from being fulfilled as humans. The independence of individuality that she sought for all her life never was allowed to her. Therefore, after her death, she protested against all that she was denied of by not fulfilling any woman's wish to become a mother. She protested against the patriarchal society and against the male domination. By doing so, Emecheta

gives her heroine the power to assert her rights above the social obligations of her womanhood.

She craved for freedom. All her life, she wanted to be happy with her children but, was at the end left all alone and uncared. She was tired of managing everything-taking care of her children, managing their school fees when Nnaife was away, pleasing her husband with all she had and with all she could, doing all the household work, and doing trade at the market etc. She asked herself “When will I be free?” (pp. 210) But, Alas! She got that freedom only when she was dead, when her soul was set free from the traps and bondages of the body.

Emecheta, through her novel, tries to present the concepts of gender, identity and subjectivity from a totally different angle than what was believed and applied at her times. Michael Worton stated that such meanings of gender, identity and subjectivity were always shaped by specific locations and histories. The incidents in the novel take place both in the traditional and rural of Iboya in the Eastern Nigeria and in the evolving colonial city of Lagos. The characters in the story shift from village to the city and negotiate with the changing meanings of gender in the changing world.

In the whole novel, Emecheta ironically criticizes the whole masculine culture. She shows through her narration how in the name of norms and conditions, rituals and practices etc. women are actually exploited and mistreated. According to Mary Wollstonecraft, women “must return to nature and equality”. (97) But, women are not even given the recognition of a human. Emecheta throws light on the social issues and concepts in which women are just used to fulfill all the men’s desires and wishes. It is as though women have no right over their own bodies and minds. It is as though they need to like and dislike what their men liked and disliked. But, Emecheta never stopped in simply presenting the true color of the society. She went to the extent of giving her heroines the most required ‘space’ where she could become a complete human or a complete individual or more likely a complete woman without any help or dependency on men. She made her heroines immortals with the hope and possibilities of the creation of ‘new’ women.

The protagonist, Nnu Ego gets her desired freedom only after her death. The honor, respect and love that Nnu ego had been seeking since her entire life, were bestowed upon her only when she died and her well settled sons erected a shrine of her.

The love that she kept urging for till her death, and the love for which she had given her whole life, was showered upon her in the form of a great funeral. Ironically enough, the society still saw the 'men' as the epitome of love for they had organized such a great funeral and thus showed their love and honor but, they could never see the 'men' of Nnu Ego's life to be responsible for her sad demise. But, by that time Nnu Ego had learnt her lesson, she had understood pretty well that in such a society, women were simply used for the benefits and needs of men and were never cared or respected or recognized. Maybe that was why, she never fulfilled any of the women's wish to become a mother, who came at her shrine and worshipped her for child. Maybe she preferred not to see any more Nnu Ego struggling and suffering all her life pleasing and fulfilling the needs of her family and at the end dying a miserable death. Her ignorance to all the prayers and worships suggest thus for she herself had said when she was alive that she was tired with the double standards of the society. She actually was tired of the false notions, she was tired of believing that women were sacred, she was tired of not being recognized by any of her family members for whom she had sacrificed everything, and mostly, she was tired of her great 'joy', i.e. her 'motherhood'.

And, that's how Emecheta leaves a possibility, a chance, and a hope of the creation of 'new women', who are free from all the familial and societal ties. The new women would be free and independent. They would be happy and content. They would be able to be their own selves and there would be nothing that would be able to tie them again with the fake lessons that women are taught since their early age in a patriarchal society. The new women would be able to deconstruct all the set norms and conditions applied for them because they would be free from their great fear, i.e. the fear of not being able to conceive, the fear of being called 'barren', the fear of not being able to provide sons to their husbands' line, the fear of being rejected, ignored, and discarded by their husbands, the fear of not being able to become a good mother, the fear of not being cared by their children at their old age, the fear of being left all alone, and the fear of dying a miserable death by the roadside. After her death Nnu Ego was free from all these fears. And that was why she refused to respond to any of the prayers of the women for she wanted to help the other women from dying of such fears. Fears, that are led by 'motherhood' in a patriarchal society where no matter how juicy a woman is, or how many sons she provides; her hopes, dreams and believes will always be crushed.

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