



Portrayal of Altered Gender Roles in The Joys of Motherland: A feminist discourse analysis

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Abstract- The aim of this research is to look at Emecheta's novel *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) through the lens of a postcolonial feminist. The study casts doubt on the idea that British colonialism had a civilising mission in Third World countries. The current research, on the other hand, contends that the British Empire thrived on slavery, degrading and marginalising native women as colonial subjects who were marginalised by both colonialism and the local patriarchal structure, making them doubly oppressed. In several respects, white men's culture has been forced on the socio-cultural lives of African people, posing a direct challenge to their cultural ideals and traditions. To address the postcolonial feminist viewpoint in this African novel, the study incorporates Holst Petersen and Rutherford's (1985) critical views on double colonisation. This research is a fine attempt evoking empathy in Pakistani readers due to common historical and psychological experience under colonial rule.

Key words: postcolonial feminism, marginalisation, double colonization, gender roles

I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to look at Emecheta's postcolonial novel *The Joys of Motherhood* as an effort to rewrite the history of African colonial subjects in general, and black women's experience in particular, which had previously gone unheard. The novel published in 1979, was a major addition to African postcolonial literature, which had become a source of subaltern black people's voices being heard around the world. The African literary revolution brought Africans together and inspired them to break free from the physical and psychological shackles imposed by a foreign colonial force. The popular fictional works of Achebe, Frantz Fanon, and Ngugi embody the characteristics of that era.

Buchi Emecheta is a Nigerian Ibo woman writer whose work captures the essence of Nigerianness. The analysis of her fictional and autobiographical works necessitates an understanding of Nigeria's historical and cultural context which has played a significant role in deciding the changes undergone by Nigerian Ibo women in the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras, with a particular focus on the impact of British imperial power, which changed their established roles as woman, daughter, wife, and mother but did not result in any positive shift in their social status. Despite the so-called colonial mission of introducing social reform to Third World communities, Nigerian Ibo women were and remain socially and economically oppressed. *The Joys of Motherhood*, according to Palmer is African literature's first work presenting feminine viewpoints in recording male chauvinism disgust and patriarchal satisfaction with the system of oppression against women (Parekh & Jagne, 1998). In this review, we'll look at how Emecheta's fictional work *The Joys of Motherhood* represents Ibo women's bravery in the face of adversity.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonial Feminism is a recent expansion of postcolonial studies that arose in response to Western traditional feminism. In his analysis, Mishra (2013) points out that Postcolonial Feminists reject Western feminism. He believes that Western Feminism is completely "Eurocentric," and that it has always overlooked the ethnic, racial, and class disparities of women from previously occupied areas (pp. 129-134). Women do not face injustice in the same way all over the world, according to postcolonial feminism. The degree of oppression experienced by women in developed Western countries and underdeveloped Third World territories is influenced by class, gender, and race categories. The study offers a postcolonial feminist analysis of the chosen novel in order to show how Britain's civilising mission did little to change the situation of African women and only worsened their misery under colonial rule. Edward Said, Bell Hooks, Chandra Mohanty, Hazel Carby, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak are among the notable Postcolonial Feminists who have addressed the gender issues of women in once colonised countries.

III. DOUBLE COLONIZATION

The concept of double colonisation is significant because it refers to the status of women in colonised countries. Marginality and subalternity, as wider categories of oppressions silence the people of these nations. Under the dual structures of imperial and cultural subordination, subaltern women became far more oppressed. The aim of this research is to discover the dual effects of colonization on black women. In their seminal work *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing* (published in 1985), Holst Petersen and Rutherford proposed the idea of double colonisation for the first time (Ashcraft et al, 1995).

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Spivak's (1987) social and critical theories are an attempt to confront colonial practice's dark legacy. Spivak's critical works highlight the issues of Third World women, who are subaltern, marginalised, and powerless.

The colonial process "gnarled a lot of matrilineal or feminine-friendly cultures and practices" (Loomba, 2005). The slave trade, for example, triggered a significant decrease in farming, forcing males to migrate to urban areas where there were more opportunities to earn money for their families. As a result, women who used to play an important role in farming were reliant on their husbands who lived in cities (p. 141). Furthermore, Loomba claims that, in order to suppress women, native men often allied with white colonists because they, too, were oppressed. The native men therefore projected their manly authority as an alternative in their homes (p.142). Highlighting the double marginalization of native women, Nagy-Zekmi (2003) exclaims that not only the coloniser, but the patriarchy that surrounds them have removed their agency (p.1).

Jamal and Jamili (2014) analysed the theme of downgrading of African women in Coetzee's *Disgrace*. "Melanie" was one of the main characters in Novel, and she was demoted by the other character David Lurie and the university scheme on one occasion and her boyfriend began to exert influence over her once more. He humiliated her once more, and she was now the target of double colonisation. Earlier in the novel, Lucy, who plays another female character, was raped by Petrus' men. And she again lost her lands, handed them over to Petrus after which, in the hands of both patriarchal society and imposing regime, she became twice colonised. Fear of imposing obsession is one of the key points in the story. The male-controlled royal structure has a negative impact on South Africa; as a result, Coetzee seeks to highlight not only these but also females who are viewed as 'others'. The most important topics of *disgrace* are downgrading and dual colonisation. In this case, downgrading refers to people's or groups' inability to use various social power tools, which may result in a variety of events such as elimination and demotion.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is appropriate as there is a renewed interest in the study of African literature in the wake of growing indictment of Western literary accounts of Africa which are rooted in a preconceived orientalist view of the continent.

Research Questions:

In order to validate the interpretation of the selected text in the light of postcolonial feminism, this study seeks to find the answers of the following study questions:

Q.1 How did British colonisation disrupt indigenous familial and community structures and replace them with their own models?

Q.2 How does the chosen work serve as a source for highlighting the mounting burden placed on black women as a result of colonialism?

V. METHODOLOGY

The research uses qualitative data analysis techniques such as hypotheses and opinions to gain a deeper understanding of the selected text and to emphasise the impact of colonialism on black women's lives. Holst Petersen and Rutherford's Postcolonial Feminist perspective on black women's oppression under local hegemony and international influence provides a conceptual foundation for the debate to come. The primary text is closely examined in order to reveal British methods of disrupting the socio-cultural conditions of African people.

Colonization: Altered Gender Roles and Double Burden of African Women

Umeh (2008) argues that the shift tribal traditions, customs, gender roles and values under the colonial influence forced the African females to challenge the accepted notions about African women, mothers, daughters, and wives. When Nnu Ego migrated to colonial Lagos, she encountered the change in gender roles assigned to her in her local Ibuza village. In Lagos, Nnu is forced to marry Nnaife, an English lord's servant, who washes under garments of his English Madam in Nnu's Ibuza village, he didn't even deserve to be called a "man." Colonial Lagos proved to be a place of ultimate poverty for the Nigerian people. Nigeria had good economic conditions back at local villages with plenty of yams, wine and food and nobody would ever suffer or fell ill due to hunger. But Nnu's children had to suffer weakness and illness because of lack of food at Lagos and she had to set up small business to cope up with these conditions. Women were also closely affiliated with farming and giving a helping hand to their men at work prior to colonisation. Their fertility and productivity was linked to farming agriculture.

As Lagos represents the colonial environment and all the changes brought by the colonisation process in the lives of the people of Africa, which changed gender roles in multifaceted oppression and increased the burden on colonised women. Emecheta integrates the effect of colonisation in the trials and challenges faced by her female character Nnu. Buchi Emecheta depicts colonial Lagos as a place where the protagonist, a woman, is confronted with a drastically different way of life brought on by British colonialism and imposed on Africans. In this new city, Lagos, Nnu Ego is portrayed as a defiant woman. She is subjected to dual colonisation: on the one hand, local patriarchal suppression, and on the other, the issues of life brought about by British colonists. Emecheta's novel spends a lot of time talking about these two issues that black women face.

Emecheta contrasts the lives of Nigerian women before and after the British colonisation of the continent. Nnu Ego in Lagos represents the shifts in African women's interests during and after colonisation, while Ona in Ibuza represents the generation of women before colonisation. It's worth noting that, despite the many challenges posed by the local Ibuza patriarchy, women wielded a disproportionate amount of influence, as symbolised by Ona. With the arrival of colonisation, women's influence in the African world began to dwindle.

The novel, as Ogundele (2002) points out, tells the story of Ibo society as it emerges from the depths of myths and rituals to be transformed into a newer system of slavery (p.135). Nnu Ego enters a strange world of colonial Lagos, where her husband Nnaife does not have an honourable position in the white men's service. Nnu Ego is dealing with a new family structure, a house they don't own, and a life in which food scarcity is the norm. The negative effect of colonisation on specific gender roles can be seen in Nnu Ego's reaction when she meets Nnaife in a new Nigerian city. She encountered a man who was diametrically opposed to her perception of Ibuza men, a man who walked in:

...with a belly like a pregnant cow...His hair, unlike that of men at home in Ibuza, was not closely shaved...like that of a woman mourning for her husband. His skin was pale, the skin of someone who had for a long time worked in the shade and not in the open air... (Emecheta 1979, p. 42).

The picture of Nnaife depicts the negative effects of colonialism on Nigerians. At Ibuza, Nnu compares Nnaife to her previous husband ... *She was used to her long wiry Amatokwu...not this short, fat, stocky man [...]* Nor, unlike men at Ibuza who had a healthy smell of wood and tobacco, did he smell healthier. He smells like he was over-washed and all soapy (Ibid, p. 44)."

The men from Ibuza were bigger, healthier and stronger. Reference to Nnaife's soapy smell that made him washed over implies the washing up of African people's traditional values and gender roles. The culture of the white men is a very serious threat for Nnu Ego's life in a variety of ways. All works in the household were related to women like washing and cooking back at Ibuza. But at Meers and other White Masters in Lagos Nnaife and many other men seem to be doing this work (p.41). Emecheta wishes to draw attention to the loss of manhood by African men under British colonisation with the characterisation of Nnaife and other servants of Ibo male servants. This pre-capitalist economic structure in Lagos flourished in the British colonisation. The native men were hired to do housekeeping chores such as laundry and cooking. They were, in reality, totally cut off from their lands and farming, which had been a part of their identity as honourable Ibuza men.

However, the loss of Ibo men's manhood integrity has little bearing on their relationship with native women, and it has multiplied the misery of native women. Nnu's reference to her former husband does not imply that women had honourable status prior to colonisation, but they were, at the very least, in their rightful position at house and farms. The overburdening of women and the degrading preoccupation of men in Lagos is a reference to the changed circumstances in Nigeria as a result of colonisation. Mrs Meers's dismissive attitude toward Nnaife indicates the:

... patronizing way, displaying the attitude which white people adopted towards their servants in the colonies (p. 83)." She rebukes and blames him for rainy weather "In the illogical way of women, she would thumb into the ironing room blaming him, talking in that strangling voice of hers as if he, Nnaife had sent the rain (p.82). The interactions between the colonised and the colonisers, as Nnu and Nnaife's relationship with the white masters demonstrates that it culminated only in extortion. Stress, intimidation, hate, and mistrust arose as a result of their connection. Nnaife's attitude toward his wife Nnu was influenced by his mistreatment by white masters. The white employers mistreated Nnaife, therefore he mistreated Nnu Ego in return. This is how oppression moved from one degree to another during colonisation. Nnu Ego, who has already been marginalised by local patriarchy and poverty in colonial Lagos, is now the target of yet another embarrassment. If we draw a hierarchy of how third-world women are oppressed by multiple oppressors, we can see how white men, as exemplified by Meers, influence African men, as exemplified by Nnaife, who oppress Nnu Ego, who exemplifies black women as colonial subjects. The way of life that the British introduced created a form of friction and a lack of contact between husbands and wives. They became so preoccupied with making ends meet that they lost sight of the true spirit of conjugal relationships. An examination of the passage below shows how the British invasion destroyed native family ties:

Like other husbands and wives in Lagos, Nnu Ego and Nnaife started growing slightly apart, not that they were that close at the start. Now each was in a different world. There was no time for petting or talking to each other about love. That type of family awareness which the illiterate farmer was able to show his wives, his household, his compound, had been lost in Lagos, for the job of the white man, for the joy of buying expensive lappas, and for the feel of shiny trinkets. Few men in Lagos would have time to sit and admire their wives' tattoos, let alone tell them tales of animals nestling in the forests, like the village husband who might lure a favourite wife into the farm to make love to her with only the sky as their shelter, or bathe in the same stream with her, scrubbing one another's backs (p.52).

In addition, native women are prevented from employment by colonists. They must, without a doubt, work to make ends meet, but in colonial Lagos, they lack capital and investment. Both domestic and workers positions, such as those at railways, are primarily provided to native men. As a result of traditional traditions and the colonial climate, Nnu Ego suffers twice.

Following Nnaife's forcible deportation to another country, British soldiers in Lagos visited Nnu Ego and told her she needed to leave the servants' quarters, where she was already depressed due to a lack of food and resources. The so-called colonisation only served to exacerbate the plight of Ibo women in one way or another. The sudden intrusion of British soldiers into Nnu Ego's house made her feel frightened and threatened, and her son Oshia felt the same way (p. 96).

Emecheta attempts to illustrate the ways in which British colonialism stripped native women of their independence, either directly by invasions into their private spaces or indirectly by depriving them of a helping hand from their men by sending them away to wars. Nnu Ego was completely "denuded" by this act by British soldiers:

Soldiers? I knew it would happen one day, now that Nnaife is not here and Ubani lives far away. I wonder what they want. She was going to peep through the kitchen window when a short European barged in through the open door. There were two big fierce-looking dogs in his wake barking furiously at Oshia, who ran and hid himself behind his mother. Nnu Ego begged the man in her halting Pidgin English to please stop the dog from frightening her "pikin" (p.96).

When she couldn't speak with the British soldiers in their native tongue, she felt totally paralysed. She doesn't understand a single word of English.

Another disaster befell African women as a result of the current imperialist economic structure. Adaku's adaptation to prostitution in colonial Lagos demonstrates how sex, which was once synonymous with reproduction, became commodified as part of the colonial process.

The Ibo woman is clearly described as a perplexed creature in *The Joys of Motherhood* by combining her native sufferings with the British system of local administration, which was fully operational in Lagos at the time.

A new religion was also placed on Africans as a new conviction in order to drive them away from their native religion or from *impure Ibo ways of life* (Brown,1993 p.660). This new religion served as a justification for British colonisers' methods of occupying and dominating Africa. The analysis of The Meers' complementary conditioning of Christianity over a native couple in *The Joys of Motherhood* could explain this. The analysis of The Meers' complementary conditioning of Christianity over a native couple in *The Joys of Motherhood* could explain this. These British colonists, such as The Meers, ruled over Africans in all aspects of life, from sociopolitical to spiritual. Before the birth of their first child, Nnaife's conversation with his wife echoes the British colonisers' order over him:

Well, if you are pregnant---and believe me, I hope to God you are--- there is still one problem. What will they say in the church? We have not been married there. If I do not marry you in church they will remove our names

from the church register and Madam here will not like it. I may even lose my job. So keep it quiet, will you? Ubani the cook had to marry his wife in the Catholic Church to save his job (Emecheta 1979, p.50).

A closer examination of these passages reveals that Nnaife seems to embrace the new religion more easily than Nnu Ego. In reality, he converted to Christianity more out of habit than belief. He was afraid that if he refused to embrace Christianity as a new religion, he would lose his work at Meers (p.50).

In this book, the colonial legislative structure interferes with the cultural life of Ibuza women on a different basis. The legislature passed a new law prohibiting native people from transporting their sick children to the dibia man, a native medicinal. When Nnu's first son died, she had no choice but to keep her sorrow hidden for fear of aggravating her injuries. People in Lagos had to rush to hospitals if they were critically ill. So, allowing anyone to die at home was illegal (p. 66).

Every wife in Ibuza had her own compound in her husband's home where she could feed her family separately. Native people could not afford such separate compounds in an urban environment, so they all had to rush into single-room houses in Lagos. At Lagos, Nnu Ego was denied the privileges that a senior wife could have in Ibuza. In colonial Lagos, this reflects Ibo women's declining status. *'She became aware of the fact that she could not be traditional in a modern setting'* (p.118).

Nnaife was also compelled to fight alongside the British colonisers in their war against India. It had a negative impact on Nnaife's mental health. His psychological state deteriorated every time he realised the reality of his forced involvement in war. To escape the truth of colonial injustice, he seeks refuge in wine (p. 199).

Emecheta emphasises the fact that colonial oppression moved to the oppressed and transformed them into oppressors for more oppressed ones through his explanation of Nnaife being a soldier in the British army. In the service of the colonisers, Nnaife lost his Ibo humanity and became a rapist and child killer (p.88). He was forced to forget his native cultural ideals while serving in the British army, and he began to side with the colonisers. Nnu noticed that Nnaife had become more sarcastic since he returned from the battle (p. 111).

The colonial environment in Lagos, as well as his wartime experience, influenced Nnaife's social behaviour to be violent and hostile. As Emecheta points out, he acted in a careless manner (p.116). Slavery and humiliation were a source of evasion for him. For him, the most important thing was to make money. Emecheta reveals this mindset of Ibo men through narrative speech, exclaiming that their men have lost their fundamental manhood long ago and are now mere robots to work for colonisers (p.53). Ibo men's disoriented behaviour is often defined by Fanon as alienation from their own humanity (p.526). With the Ibo identity of black physical appearance, they were pushed down from spiritual pedestals, and their behaviours were Europeanized as a result of colonialism.

Nnu became anti-social as a result of her knowledge of her situation in Lagos. She had isolated herself from a large number of people. Since she was separated from her native people, she was socially segregated. When a woman from Adaku's hometown visits her in Lagos, Nnu becomes envious:

Ibonoba's wife opened and shut her mouth in wonder. She had never in all her life seen such an anti-social behaviour. She had never been so insulted. What was the matter with the woman? She acted as if her nerves were taut and almost at breaking point (p.164).

Nnu's health deteriorated as a result of the emotional effects of colonisation. She became physically and psychologically. In colonial Lagos, she lost all her bravery and determination.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Emecheta's novel can be viewed as an effort to document African women's experiences under native patriarchy and British colonialism. Postcolonial authors, such as Emecheta, try to show that British colonialism did not have a humanising mission to improve the status of colonial subjects, especially women in Third World countries. On the opposite, they contributed to the enslavement of native African people. Black women are disadvantaged in a variety of respects. As women of colour, they are subjected to white men's suspicions on social and ethnic grounds, and they are often denied access to patriarchal standards in their communities (Ogunyemi, 1985). Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* serves as a spokesperson for black women in Third World countries who are doubly oppressed and disadvantaged, addressing the underlying complexities of black women's experience.

This research was limited to a gender review of the work; there is still much more to explore. One of the most pressing concerns of the novel is poverty, especially its effects on African children, who were subjected to severe hunger, malnutrition, and mental trauma under colonial rule. This research adds new dimensions to the field of literature for potential Pakistani researchers. The thematic concerns of this theory can be extended to the works of writers from the subcontinent, such as India and Pakistan, to see how they rewrite

the experience of women in these countries and discuss their problems within the ethnographic context, rather than trying to bring them up in line with Western women and conventional feminism.

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