



# WOMEN OPPRESSION IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD

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## ABSTRACT

Being an African woman who lived through colonialism, Buchi Emecheta's novels centre on the viewpoint of women in society. A rural Igbo woman named Nnu Ego is the subject of her book, "*The Joys of Motherhood*." Nnu Ego discovers herself in Lagos, Nigeria's urbanised capital. Patriarchy is frequently viewed through the feminist lens as a key factor in the oppression of women in both tribal and colonised countries. The novelist has also done a great job of capturing how the western sense of superiority negatively affects how people define themselves, particularly for those from third world nations. Based on these findings, the majority of critics debate both the irony of motherhood and the extent to which Nnu Ego is responsible for her oppression and eventual fall. However, some elements are disregarded by many critics in the cases of Nnu Ego and *The Joys of Motherhood*. Emecheta clearly introduces contradictions throughout the book, blurring the distinction between opportunity and victimisation, making it challenging to comprehend and evaluate Nnu Ego's character. The depictions of polygamy and economics in Lagos make clear these contradictions. It is clear that Nnu Ego occasionally plays a significant part in her own oppression. It portrayed the female world in Nigeria during the 20th century in the most accurate way possible through Nnu Ego. The study focuses on how motherhood has been viewed as nothing more than a custom or role of a woman community to reproduce, despite being highly cherished and privileged.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, feminism, joyless motherhood, marginalization, oppression.

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### INTRODUCTION:

*The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta tells the tale of a traditional woman, whereas Nnu Ego portrays the typical Nigerian woman of the 20th century. In such society, women are viewed as a tool for reproduction, particularly if they prioritise having only male children. The first question to be asked is why society only expects men from women when a woman is capable of achieving soul fecundity. Despite living in poverty, Nnu

Ego considers herself wealthy because she has three sons. She feels that with the assistance of her sons, she would have a comfortable old life in accordance with Ibuza custom.

Emecheta effectively illustrates the role played by colonial patriarchal regimes and capitalist politics in Third World women's marginalisation and dominance by presenting the persecution and pain Nnu Ego endures in Lagos. In this sense, it appears that Mohanty's theoretical worldview is put into practice in Emecheta's story. The tale closes with Nnu Ego's sorrowful, lonesome death after detailing her difficult life in Lagos, a colonial capital. Yet, far from being devoted to her children, exposing her joys of motherhood, Nnu Ego dies, "with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her. She had never really made many friends, so busy had she been building up her joys as a mother" (Emecheta, 2011, p. 224).

### **MARGINALIZED WORLD:**

In her book, Emecheta portrays the mother figure, Nnu Ego, as a stereotypical Nigerian woman who lacks freedom at any level of society. Emecheta, in fact, emphasises the consequences of capital politics and colonial patriarchal regimes in Third World women's marginalisation and control by presenting the persecution and pain Nnu Ego faces in Lagos. In this sense, it appears that Mohanty's theoretical worldview is put into practice in Emecheta's story.

Ona, who resides in the traditional hamlet of Ibuza, assumes the role of a boy kid for her father, who lacks any sons, and is given all the authority and duty that the first son would have. As a result, while the old patriarchy gives women a sense of masculinity, it also grants her male authority. When Agbadi was almost dying, she once let her steely mask come off. She is also prohibited from getting married. Her father had advised her not to let her daughter get married. Additionally, she is not allowed to keep Nnu Ego, her daughter. She moves to Agbadi's compound shortly after her father passes away to live with him and their daughter. She does, in fact, violate the established patriarchal by doing this. Ona soon had a second child, but they both passed away. In her analysis of Ona's passing, Emecheta emphasises the influence the patriarchal system has over women's lives and independence.

Because Ona challenged the indisputable patriarchal authority, she was given the death penalty. She was free, but in reality, old patriarchal rhetoric controlled and governed both her freedom and her life. She begs Agbadi, just before she passes away, to let her daughter be free, to marry whoever she chooses, and to be what she was not allowed to be a woman. She consistently makes bad choices because of her jumbled thinking and inexplicable confidence in parenting. These terrible choices clearly contributed to her fate. But when her upbringing is considered, along with the fact that other characters also exhibit limitations, the setting is questioned as a major contributor to her enslavement. It is particularly challenging to evaluate Nnu Ego's character because of the several operating factors at play in the story. She is further oppressed by the degraded nature of the labour force, World War II, and the Christian view of paradise.

**JOYLESS MOTHERHOOD:**

Every woman finds motherhood to be a rewarding experience at some time in her life. If a woman gets pregnant, her family will have numerous desires and expectations for the child and how they will be raised, regardless of the gender of the child. A male infant is given more emphasis in this story than a female one, even if a girl child is to be born. Although it is impossible to generalise about them as a whole, oppressive forces of race, gender, and class constantly harm female characters throughout the book. Mohanty claims that when Western feminists engage women in the Third World in unhelpful methods that disregard the diversity of women, they treat all native women as a single homogeneous group. However, women have distinctive identities, histories, and battles, and daily lives.

Buchi Emecheta presented women as overlooked or inaccessible by African male writers rather than just as mothers living in safe environments. According to the author even the male author in the society doesn't know the pain that is undergone by women both physically as well as mentally in the male dominated society. They are ignorant of what it means to live in African society as a woman.

These factors, in addition to parenting and the previously noted paradoxes, provide insight into Emecheta's motivations for creating a figure as constrained as Nnu Ego. When the protagonist Adah is compared to Nnu Ego in her second book, *Second Class Citizen*, which is somewhat autobiographical, a new framework for assessing the character and Emecheta's purpose emerges. It becomes clear that Buchi Emecheta is writing Nnu Ego on design as a constrained character who participates in her own enslavement while simultaneously absolving herself of responsibility.

**SOLIDARITY OF BLACK WOMEN:**

The Typical Context of Conflict Women's solidarity, Mohanty's second significant idea, may be found in Emecheta's book, *The Joys of Motherhood*. While keeping in mind that several forces, including capitalism, colonialism, and native patriarchy, colonise and exploit the women in the society. Emecheta does seek to examine the fact that, despite their differences, women of colour understand that unity is the only thing that unites them within the power structures: "There was far more to be gained by communication" (p. 63). *The Joys of Motherhood* demystifies the common context of struggle among women of colour in Igbo society through description, unity of action, and blackness. In this way, they are united against the power structures by the constructed solidarity, as Mohanty (2003) argues in her theory. Nnu Ego, who is expecting, and her son Oshia live in poverty, which is made worse by the economic pressure, when Nnaife departs for Ferdinando Po. If Oshia ate a healthy meal each day, he was lucky. (p. 103)

The title of the book is an ironic attempt by Emecheta to make a point. She emphasises that a woman who chooses to lead an isolated, antiquated life in a rapidly changing world will not find joy in life or parenthood. In the end, what is at stake is the fundamental definition of motherhood's joys, more precisely the association of joy with motherhood and the unquestioning association that the public draws between the two.

## **GENDER ISSUES IN THE JOY OF MOTHERHOOD:**

*The Joys of Motherhood* also criticises capitalism, racism, and colonialism, but it also highlights how native patriarchy silences and oppresses women in ways that are unaffected by race or class. This in no way conflicts with the postcolonial feminist thesis. Because taking into account the interplay of gender, class, and race is the central concern of postcolonial feminist discourse. It is inappropriate to single out gender and sexuality as the only factors contributing to women's oppression in this setting.

In contrast to other black feminists who only work to expose African women's racial oppression within colonial society or the effects of racism on Afro-American women, Emecheta makes an effort to highlight black women's oppression within the patriarchal Igbo community as well. In her novels, she takes on racism, colonialism's economic, political, and cultural effects on the lives of oppressed African women, as well as the way the patriarchal tradition views and dominates Igbo women. She goes further to give voice to the oppressed African women through her female characters.

Emecheta criticises patriarchal violence by highlighting the pain and marginalisation experienced by women in Igbo society as a result of sexual oppression and gender inequality. In this way, she demonstrates how Igbo men are the oppressors and Igbo women are the oppressed by societal patriarchy. She attacks the local patriarchal domination in her book *The Joys of Motherhood* by exposing the violent tyranny and exploitation of the disenfranchised female character. She paints a picture of the Iboza culture, where gender determines who is accepted as the norm and who is seen as the subject and who is seen as superior. Lagos is not the focus of this discussion because it is a colonial city.

Additionally, by bringing up polygamy in *The Joys of Motherhood*, Emecheta highlights the severity of women's sexual oppression. They lose their sexual rights and desires when a new, gorgeous young girl steps in to take their place. More information on the topic of gender oppression in African feminist research is provided by her portrayal of the position of African women in the polygamous family.

*The Joys of Motherhood* by Emecheta emphasises how little attention is paid to women's sexual pleasure. We can understand Agbadi's long-term neglect of his wives through the novel: "He himself might take wives and then neglect them for years, aside from seeing that they each received their one yam a day; he could bring his mistress to sleep with right in his courtyard while his wives pined and bit their nails for a word from him" (p. 36). This passage demonstrates how severely the patriarchal Igbo society sexually devalues and oppresses women.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Emecheta has chronicled Nnu's fight for equality in a world dominated by men. By analyzing her book *The Joys of Motherhood*, an attempt is made to understand the author's perspective on motherhood and to show how she

depicts the irony of motherhood and the feeling of joyless motherhood in the African context, where customs and ties to the community are deeply ingrained in the Nigerian Ibo society, making women a willing hidden slave to the male-dominated society.

*The Joys of Motherhood*, a remarkable book that tells the tale of African women who are voiceless and invisible, tries to recreate a neglected period of history. In her book, Buchi Emecheta successfully exposes how colonial and native patriarchal regimes marginalised and oppressed women. *The Joys of Motherhood* subtly demonstrates colonialism. Native populations are required to adapt to those concepts and systems that are different from their own in the novel. Traditional culture is at danger due to a variety of issues, including Christianity and other idealistic foreign norms for behavior and education.

*The Joys of Motherhood* by Emecheta aims to investigate how Third World women's lives were impacted by colonialism, racism, and patriarchal society. She does, in fact, make it clear that efforts to address gender inequalities and the rights of Third World women can coexist with the fight for decolonization and the anti-racist movement.

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