

# A Feminist Approach to Buchi Emecheta's the Bride Price

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## Abstract:

One of Buchi Emecheta's well-known contemporary books, *The Bride Price*, features the voice of a female character. The paper discusses two topics: first is patriarchal society, in which women suffer and end up being the sole victims, and the second is African culture, which Emecheta harshly criticises. Men have complete authority over the entire family. The traditional African community adheres to its customs, especially when it comes to paying the bride from the groom's family. In certain ways, the study will identify and further explain the notion of "double colonisation" put out by Peterson and Rutherford (1986). It also reveals some cultural overlap between the two nations. Emecheta's female protagonists go through a painful experience in which they are dominated by two colonisers: the power of males and the actuality of colonisation by using the "double colonisation" idea.

**Keywords:** Double colonisation, bride price, feminism

## Introduction:

Buchi Emecheta is one of the contemporary African female fiction writers. More than thirteen novels and other types of literature are among her works. She was among the first female writers in African female writing to establish a tradition that was centred on the common experiences of African women. In her novel *The Bride Price*, gender and otherness interact and shows a picturesque of African society. Otherness and gender appear to be one of the modern issues of predilection highlighted in literature and literary disputes. This makes it such crucial subject in the African female novel genre. The paper's goal is to demonstrate how this African female author addresses questions of otherness and gender in *The Bride Price*.

The central character of the novel is named Aku-nna, which literally translates to "father's wealth," prevents her from having a say in what she wants and does not want. One of them is her forced marriage to a wealthy family, which comes with a hefty price that must be paid up front and in exchange. Emecheta wishes to demonstrate that a woman cannot express her decision(s) by illustrating that she is powerless to resist the choice made by her father. A patriarchal culture, in which women are expected to remain silent and refrain from objecting to any decisions made by men, is also being attacked.

The opening of the book is therefore a nightmare for Aku-nna, a lady with many spirits who intends to drastically alter her civilization. In colonial Africa, Emecheta is very concerned about the tensions between modernity and tradition. Aku-nna's father, Ezekiel Odia's was a hybrid of indigenous and European customs. There was always a focus on the European component. African practises were viewed as

outmoded and European practises as contemporary. The terrible blending of both in Lagos society leaves the characters unsure of which group they belonged to. Ezekiel was a typical outcome of this blending of cultures. He would have his children pray every morning, preach the gospel on Sundays, and sing praises to the European Living God. He was interred in a clash of two civilizations, much like he had lived.

In addition to the protagonist Aku-nna, Emecheta's voice may also be heard through Auntie Matlida, her mother, and other female characters. This is done solely to draw attention to the suffering of African women. Additionally, they have a common problem the oppressive patriarchy around them. To provide a specific example, let's say that every woman shares that fate and is forced to accept her lot in life. Aunt Matlida declares,

This is the fate of us women. There is nothing we can do about it. We just have to learn to accept... Aku-nna was sure they were saying all this by way of consolation and also to prepare her for what was going. They had tried to do so, but they had not succeeded. If anything, they had intensified her fear of the unknown. What was her fate going to be, she wondered? (p. 37).

Her uncle is certain that Aku-nna's marriage price must be paid. "The true test of woman continues to be the marriage institution," asserts Chukwuma (1989) in her article *Positivism and The Female Crisis: Novels of Buchi Emecheta*. "Through it, a woman attains a status acclaimed by the society and fulfils the biological need of procreation and companionship." (p 5) and Emecheta's emphasis that every woman must be married, whether they are free or slaves, in *The Slave Girl* (1977).

Thus, marriage serves as a focal point for social interaction among people, but often at a cost or under duress. Aku-nna argues that completing her education is more essential than anything else, so she travels to the school and meets one of her teachers, Chike. They both fall in love, and as soon as she becomes 18 they decide to get married. In the end, they both have happy marriages, but she passes away during childbirth and gives the kid the name "Joy". The term alludes to the next female generation's having a more promising future. Emecheta believed that in order to overcome these issues, one had to suffer a fatal injury. The story makes clear Emecheta's repeated examples by declaring in *Ibuza* that all the guilt is placed on the women. By putting a question mark in front of these ideas, she does more than just bringing the matter to the public's attention. In her neighborhood, women are specifically the only ones who are victimised, coerced, and blamed, and they are all women and only women. Emecheta believes that the situation involving black women would always exist. Emecheta titled one of the parts 'Escape' since it is the only option to get away from these issues.

In Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1997), Consolata passes away at the conclusion of the book, sharing with Aku-nna the same kind of escapism: death. Black female writers attempt to create a solution for the protagonist. Other girls have heard the notion that if the bride is not paid, she would pass away during delivery and these women become the oppressor for Aku-nna throughout her life. The use of the "kidnapping" strategy, which is popular in Africa against vulnerable women, is another approach to force the marriage. To compel women to consent to marriage is an act of exploitation yet nobody speaks up against it rather accepts it as fate of the girl. Emecheta opposes African culture and silence that victimize women. Emecheta portrays an image of women who find it difficult to resist, and she demonstrates this using Aku-naa's voice: 'This is the end of all my dreams', she thought. 'They are kidnapping me.' (p.65) Emecheta paints a precise portrait of femininity in which silence, victimisation, and suffering are the guests. Patriarchal institutions are pertinent in this discussion, and the novel gives a detailed account of double colonisation by men. Additionally, Aku-nna and Nna Ego are also Emecheta's victims through whom the silent voice is spoken and disseminated globally. The novel makes use of the 1986 essay "A

*Double Colonisation*" by Kristen H. Peterson and Anna Rutherford to demonstrate the plight of women in Iboza, In addition, Emecheta's *Aku-nna* and *Nnu Ego* are two female victims who are drowning and suffocating in a society where male authority is overpowering. Their voices go unheard. Emecheta brings up black women in a similar way to the concept of taking a fortune or paying the bride price, even if Austen's protagonists are white. They both believe that males are superior to women and hold this same belief. Women's inferiority in terms of worth, prestige, and economy is criticised by Austen. Emecheta goes into further detail on how black women endure in a restricted culture where paying the bride price results in lifelong pain.

Emecheta, shows the women being victimized because of the deeply rooted cultural beliefs which restricts them to understand several times that they are being oppressed. Her female characters serve as witnesses for her writing. Emecheta expresses her covert rage against the predominantly black society, a community that lacks societal support and life. They require a location where all women, regardless of ethnicity, sex, or gender, can practise womanhood. *The Bride Price* sends a message to people all across the world by demonstrating that women can be independent, capable of making decisions and adjustments. *Aku-nna* is unique among the inhabitants of Iboza, Nigeria. a woman whose voice cannot be silenced and who opposes all traditions that uphold patriarchy.

The study does not merely represent the reality that exists in Africa; rather, it was specifically chosen since the same problem hangs over the community in which the women live like a dark cloud. Uncomfortably and regrettably, male dominance controls women's authority and has full effect under the guise of religion, as is seen in Africa and many other nations, where women's rights are little more than some white ink on a piece of black paper. The persistence of this concept would undoubtedly be regrettable in the age of technological advancement and global civilization; nonetheless, it persists in every country and many developing nations.

The paper is not simply created to demonstrate the novel's flavour and provide a literary analysis on the one hand; rather, increasing self-awareness being the primary purpose and objective behind this small study.

To summarise what was discussed above, women should be in control of their own marriages rather than having them sold in their houses like other things in a market place. However, even if innovation and technologies are sweeping the globe, words and literature can be more potent in teaching people and expanding their capacity for thought. The moment is now to implement change; otherwise, gender disparities will quickly become a widespread problem, much like in those nations where race is an issue.

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